


AUSTRALIA.
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BOAT PEOPLE.

ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE
ANNUAL REPORT 2011-2012

- 
- 1 Chairperson's welcome
 - 3 Patron's message
 - 4 CEO's welcome

AID PILLAR

- 6 Material Aid
- 7 Foodbank
- 8 Community Meals

COMMUNITY PILLAR

- 10 Volunteer Support and Member Participation
- 11 Community Speakers
- 12 Youth and Students
- 13 Philanthropic and Corporate Engagement
- 14 Communications
- 15 Fundraising
- 16 Campaigns

EMPOWERMENT PILLAR

- 18 Social and Community Development
- 19 Employment and Training (ASSET)
- 20 Pathways to Participation (P2P)
- 21 Education
- 22 ASRC Catering

JUSTICE PILLAR

- 24 Health
- 25 Casework
- 26 Counselling
- 27 Human Rights Law
- 28 Supporting Asylum Seekers at Appointments (SASA)

SUSTAINABILITY PILLAR

- 30 General Manager, HR, Finance, IT, Administration
- 31 Financial Report
- 32 Thank you

In 2011–2012, the ASRC delivered
25 programs to over 1250 asylum
seeker members with the help of 778
volunteers and 40 paid staff.

Chairperson's welcome

In 2011–2012, the number of asylum seekers presenting to the ASRC doubled. Through innovation and effort, this challenge was met with incredible achievement across every program at the Centre.

Within the Justice Pillar, our casework team effectively fielded 1300 new people seeking support and strengthened partnerships with other agencies to improve access to adjacent services such as health and housing. With similar strength, the Counselling Program offered 140 sessions per month, SASA assisted 204 asylum seekers with their appointments, and our Health Program took an average of 125 appointments per week. The Human Rights Law Program delivered two successful High Court applications, launched the online legal resource 'Asylum Explained', and most importantly, won protection for 130 people.

Within our Aid Pillar, the ASRC chaired NASAVic's Emergency Relief working group, while our teams sustained material aid delivery including community meals for 120 people a day and Foodbank support to 160 families a week.

Our Community Pillar has engaged widely, reaching over 13,500 people from 173 different groups. Through the team's efforts, philanthropic, state government and corporate partners contributed more than one million dollars in the last financial year. The team also launched an important Corporate Prospectus, provided outreach to thousands of school students, and has been an active and sought-after media contributor.

The Employment Program's partnering with the Department of Transport (DOT) to implement the 'pathways to career opportunities' is just one example of the many innovations that the Empowerment Pillar has developed to advance social inclusion and engagement for asylum seekers. The Victorian government's funding to 2014 of our VET program, which subsidises training for asylum seekers, is validation of the industry-leading quality of these innovations.

Our Sustainability Pillar continues to develop the operational maturity of the Centre and ensure our delivery to budget despite challenging economic times and increased demand.

The International Year of Volunteers Plus 10 (IYV+10) was celebrated in 2011, giving the world an opportunity to remember that volunteering and community engagement empower people to change the world from the grassroots, especially when enabled by partnerships. This financial year, 340 people completed full induction to volunteer with the ASRC, bringing the total number of active volunteers to 778. **Volunteers are our lifeblood, they are a measure of our vibrancy and relevance to society**, and I thank them on behalf of the board for giving so generously and contributing so substantially to the work of the ASRC.

Our ability to achieve depends on the dedication of a large number of individuals. The board would especially like to recognise our consummate CEO Kon Karapanagiotidis, the ASRC Pillar Directors and management team, the staff, our Patrons and Ambassadors, and the donors, partners and financial supporters who have helped us help asylum seekers. My personal thanks also to the board for their service and support.

As we reflect on the many achievements of 2011–2012, it can feel like time has flown by. With all our challenges, the changing landscape, the pace of demand, a year can disappear in the blink of an eye. But for those in circumstances of persecution, moments are like eternities, and for those senselessly languishing in detention a year might feel like a life already lost. In 2012–2013, **the ASRC will continue to pursue its vision that all those seeking asylum in Australia will have their rights upheld**, and all those seeking asylum in our community receive the support and opportunity they need to live independently. We will continue to chart and prove the vision of a better way.

It gives me great pleasure to present the ASRC Annual Report for 2011–2012.

Matthew Tutty
Chairman



We are now Australia's leading asylum seeker human rights organisation and an award-winning, independent national institution whose eminent patrons and ambassadors attest to the importance and sector leading quality of our programs.

Message from Eva Cox OAM, ASRC Patron

In 1939, as a one year old, I became a refugee from Hitler when we arrived in England. My penniless mother and I were taken in by an elderly Quaker woman in a seaside village in Norfolk. When the war started seriously some months later, we had to move in case, as an enemy alien, my mother would signal Nazi submarines.

I grew up in England till I was eight, lived in Rome from 1946-1948 where my father resettled displaced people for the UN, and then came to Australia as a refreo, so I experienced being an outsider. I recently found out that the Chifley Government limited the numbers of post-war Jewish immigrants because they were scared of public opinion, but had they followed the Gallup polls, my family wouldn't have made it.

I tell this story to remind us that Australia has both a good and bad history of welcoming groups of displaced people. So what is happening now is another example of how mixed these responses are. The current out groups may eventually become in groups, and maybe some older out groups have forgotten their pasts. The current pushing of misinformation that arrivals are 'queue jumpers' is just the latest episode of bad attitudes and policy.

What really counts, both for the wider Australian society and for the newer arrivals, welcomed and unwelcome, is that good people are prepared to take a stand both politically and personally, and promote the well-being of those who need asylum.

There have always been people that have offered help and hands of friendship to those in need, and have fought hard for the rights and legitimacy of the rejected. Groups like the ASRC are essential to remind the wider population of why we should all recognise communalities across national, racial, religious and political boundaries. The communities of volunteers and paid staff make extraordinary efforts to both meet the needs of individuals and to promote political and social changes.

We live in difficult political times, with many of our fellow citizens turn away from the discomfort of issues that challenge their beliefs. The widespread views that have, unfortunately, been promoted by both major political parties create unfounded fears of those seeking asylum. Therefore we need organisations that can show alternative views are both possible, and, in fact, desirable. The wider benefits for communities and the wider society go beyond helping individuals, whose lives are deeply improved by the services offered, to offering evidence and a light on the hill to those who need to reclaim faith in human goodwill.

It is very scary for many of us to see the levels of anti refugee and asylum seeker sentiments because these views have the potential to create social divides that can further undermine the ethos of an inclusive good society. It is therefore very important that we have organisations that offer both services and evidence of alternate ways of seeing wider social and communal responsibilities.

Congratulations to the ASRC for another year of very hard work in increasingly difficult times. I believe you have more than practised the aims on your website:

The ASRC recognises the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family. It is the vision of the ASRC to enact the change we want to see in the world and to build a community which defends the ideals of dignity and justice for all.

Thank you all for what you do. The ASRC shows how good community services contribute to the making of the good society we want to enjoy.

CEO's welcome

I started the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) 11 years ago with a simple vision: **to provide a place of sanctuary, survival and hope for people seeking asylum in Australia**. I wanted the ASRC to live and breathe the values of compassion, inclusion and justice. We were to turn no asylum seeker in need away.

In the last 11 years more than 8000 people have walked through these doors. We have borne witness to unimaginable horrors that people have escaped from. We have supported thousands through tough times they thought they would never get through. We have kept hundreds of families safe from harm, homelessness and hunger. We have won freedom for thousands of people who would otherwise ended up dead or political prisoners back home. In the past 11 years, without any Federal Government funding, we have delivered over 1.5 million hours of free help worth over 150 million dollars to asylum seekers.

The last year has been as tough as any before. The numbers seeking our help are at an all-time high. The complexity of need and gaps in service are at their peak. We are seeing both record numbers of asylum seekers being damaged in detention and also record numbers being released into the community into destitution. The ASRC continues to champion a community based processing model, because it works, is humane, affordable and creates meaningful and successful long term outcomes for asylum seekers. What we need is investment at all levels of Government in a holistic, early-intervention model. A model of settlement that enables asylum seekers to participate as equals in our community and our economy. There is always hope and in the last year we continued to drive a new vision for Australia.

WE ARE CHANGING THE CONVERSATION

The ASRC lead the way in changing the conversation over the past year. We achieved this through using the tools of training and education (via our TAFE scheme and Victoria's only Employment Program for asylum seekers) to break the cycle of poverty. We built capacity by helping bring the asylum seeker sector in Victoria together for a State-wide Planning Day.

We launched a world first website, 'Asylum Explained', providing asylum seekers with practical and accessible advice on their rights. We had everyone from State Government Ministers, dozens of schools; Business Leaders and the Governor General of Australia pay us a visit to see our work first hand, a reflection on how what we are championing is resonating with the broader Australian community.

WE CONTINUE TO BUILD OUR LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

In the last year we invested in building our capacity, influence and reach by:

- > **Increasing our volunteer numbers** to almost 800
- > **Collaborating with other agencies** in policy submissions to government, for example to the Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers
- > **Helping to promote our financial sustainability** by launching a regular giving program
- > Launching a **Corporate Prospectus**
- > **Developing meaningful partnerships** between ASRC programs and government and business including the Victorian State Government and National Australia Bank.

WE'RE ENABLING ASYLUM SEEKERS TO SUCCEED

We're not just interested in asylum seekers merely surviving in the community, we want them to grow and succeed. We don't want charity but for people to invest in the next generation of Australians. We see our people as resilient and resourceful who just need the door of opportunity to open. We are embedding education, orientation, mentoring, social enterprise, training, micro credit and employment pathways into all our work.

By building capacity and resilience we are creating our next wave of great Australians that will do us all proud.

Kon Karapanagiotidis OAM
Founder & CEO

Aid
Pillar

Material Aid

'ASRC is a very special place for us. Without tickets I don't know how I could go to doctors. One day I would like to help here and give my time.'

ASRC member

The Material Aid Program has a strong focus on enhancing, and advocating for, asylum seeker access to mainstream material aid and emergency relief providers. The program also directly distributes material aid items, including Metcards (train, bus and tram tickets), regional transport tickets, nappies, baby's clothing, local/international phone cards, bedding, kitchenware, mobile phones, department store vouchers and winter clothing, to destitute asylum seekers

This aim of enhancing access was furthered over the course of the year through the development of relationships with key agencies and the facilitation of advocacy efforts by chairing the Emergency Relief working group of the Network of Asylum Seeker Agencies (NASAVic). We also worked with external service providers such as St Vincent De Paul to increase organisational capacity to assist asylum seekers.

The program advocated to, and collaborated with, Public Transport Victoria (PTV) and the Transport Ticketing Authority (TTA) on implementation strategies for the MYKI ticketing system. The ASRC worked closely with the state government to ensure that MYKI would not disadvantage asylum seekers. This advocacy resulted in securing a contract with the Transport Ticketing Authority (TTA) to become a MYKI retailer. This means that the **ASRC will be equipped with a hand held device and software to provide bulk MYKI fares to asylum seekers**, enabling the ASRC to continue providing transport assistance to asylum seekers with no income, so that they can pick up their food each week and attend vital health and welfare appointments.

In the past year, we **provided material aid services to 588 members**, reaching a total of 1290 people including family members.

THE PROGRAM PROVIDED

- > **157,394 hours of access** to Melbourne's public transport system.
- > **23,071 nappies** to families with little to no income.
- > **\$12,295** worth of **public phone calls**.
- > **104 mobile phones** to asylum seekers.
- > **6,582 presentations** for Material Aid assistance.

IN THE YEAR AHEAD, WE WILL FOCUS ON

- > **Meeting an increasing demand.** With the increased release of asylum seekers from immigration detention facilities, it is becoming increasingly prevalent that asylum seekers live in the community with no access to income. The proportion of Material Aid service users that experience severe destitution is set to increase in 2012–2013 and this poses significant challenges. The ASRC has been unable to increase the Material Aid program's level of funding and the program must distribute its limited resources amongst an increasingly impoverished population. Cooperation between the asylum seeker sector and mainstream emergency relief services and charities is more important than ever.
- > **Adapting to the MYKI ticketing system.** Providing emergency transport assistance is the core business of the Material Aid program. It allows asylum seekers to move freely in the community and to access much needed health and welfare services. The ASRC will focus on educating the asylum seeker community on how to effectively utilise the MYKI system through face-to-face advice and the facilitation of Transport Ticketing Authority workshops.

Material Aid staff

1 part time staff (.8FTE) 9 volunteers

Foodbank

'I am so thankful to ASRC and people who support ASRC with food and to give food to us. Without food from ASRC Foodbank . . . [long pause] . . . I don't know. Very bad for me.'

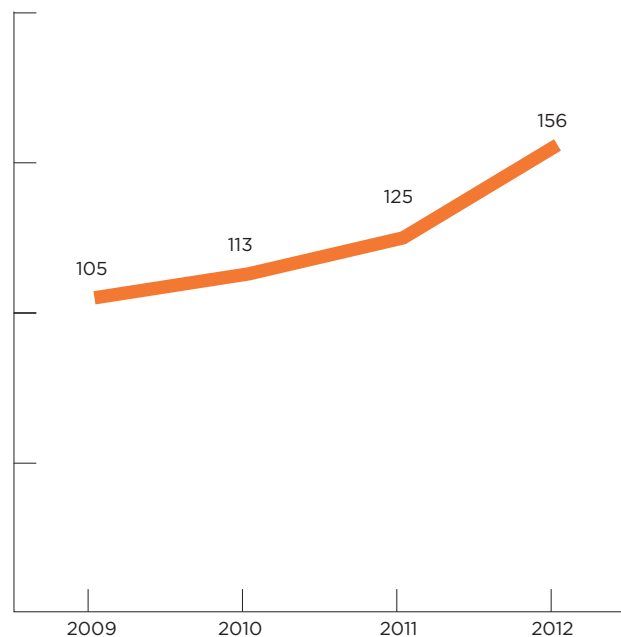
ASRC Member

The core work of the Foodbank is to ensure food security (healthful and sufficient food on an ongoing basis) to members of the ASRC. Currently, 34 per cent of Foodbank clients have no income at all (no job, no Newstart, no Red Cross payments), with an additional 50 per cent living below the poverty line. In 2011-2012 we provided food to 160 families per week (reaching 352 individuals). **We provided the Foodbank service 7195 times over the year.**

Every asylum seeker who came to the Foodbank was provided with an entire week's food for their family. The ASRC Foodbank does this on a **budget of \$6 per person per week**, with donations from the Survival Network (schools, families, individuals, places of worship etc) and SecondBite, FareShare and Foodbank Victoria.

The focus for the ASRC Foodbank, year in, year out is to provide healthy and sufficient, culturally-appropriate food, distributed in a manner that prioritises fairness and dignity. In the coming year, the Foodbank will focus on continuing to provide an entire week's groceries to all eligible members despite ever increasing demand.

In the past three years the demand for the Foodbank has increased from just over 100 families per week to 160. To get an idea of the scale of the program, that's enough food to last one person 352 years!



Weekly numbers in the Foodbank 2009-2012

Foodbank staff

1 part time staff (6EFT) 49 volunteers

Community Meals

'In the last 12 months we have not sent anyone away hungry because we have had more help in the kitchen and better equipment to make more food.'

Volunteer, Community Meals Program

The Community Meals Program aims to provide nutritious, tasty and culturally-appropriate foods to asylum seekers, staff and volunteers at the ASRC. The act of sharing a healthy meal in a communal dining area increases opportunities to build relationships, learn from one another, socialise, and provide an inclusive environment.

The program continued to promote wellness and reduce social isolation by providing a welcoming environment where friendships and community develop. The Community Meals Program is now serving an average of 120 people a day - a 20 per cent increase from last year.

This year saw **greater nutritional quality and quantity through improved food storage and ongoing donations of fresh produce**. Through very generous donations we received a new commercial sink and dishwasher that have improved sanitation and have saved our volunteers. Both member and non-member volunteer retention has increased, helping the program to meet the needs of more asylum seekers each day.

In partnership with Cultivating Community, the Community Meal program is planning cooking classes for refugees and asylum seekers that aim to increase the nutritional knowledge of participants and increase social supports in the local community.

The program serves

120
PEOPLE,

on average, a day.

Community Meals staff

1 part time staff (2EFT) 37 volunteers (5 member volunteers)

Community
Pillar

Volunteer Support and Member Participation

'It's been great to see such a large increase in the number of people who want to support asylum seekers and be able to match those people to volunteer roles where they can use and develop their skills at the same time as making a difference.'

Volunteer

As we entered our 11th year, volunteers continue to remain at the heart and soul of the ASRC. This year saw an increasing number of community members motivated to do something to support asylum seekers.

The Volunteer Support team focused on making sure we engaged those who are passionate and motivated in volunteer roles that matched their skills and experience with the needs of the organisation. To ensure we continued to be responsive to the expanding needs of the ASRC, the Program reviewed the way in which new volunteers are recruited and selected – we streamlined our induction training, and we worked with coordinators to improve volunteer reward and recognition. We also introduced online registrations and applications for potential and new volunteers, and started to increase our data collection through exit interviews.

There are now

778
ACTIVE

volunteers at the ASRC.

FOR THE PAST YEAR, WE CELEBRATE

- > **899 prospective volunteers** attended four information evenings and learned about the work of the ASRC (an increase of over 200 on last year).
- > **340 attendees** went on to complete our full induction program and commence as volunteers – bringing our **total active volunteers to 778**.
- > **11 members** were referred to the Member Participation Program for potential volunteer roles.

In the year ahead the program will develop a targeted recruitment strategy to fill some important but hard-to-fill volunteer roles. We'll be working on better engaging with our volunteers and improving their opportunities for development, and working with staff to build their capacity to select and manage their volunteers. Underpinning all of this will be a focus on improved data collection and management, recording program processes and building up a strong Volunteer Support team.

Volunteer Support and Member Participation staff

1 full time staff 14 volunteers

Community Speakers

'You have no idea how much you have moved and inspired this office.'

Feedback from speaking engagement

In 2011–2012 the Speakers Program blossomed into a strong and professional team of 16 diverse speakers who have successfully engaged, educated and captivated audiences across Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Our team includes speakers from a tapestry of backgrounds including, medicine, law, arts, teaching, and business. Through a dedicated promotion strategy we dramatically increased the number of groups we reached by 70 per cent – we spoke to over 13,500 people from 173 different groups.

To ensure our speaking engagements result in substantive outcomes we developed dedicated reporting and follow up and doubled the number of volunteers working to support the Speakers Program. Speaking to groups has resulted in an increase in the interest in volunteering at the ASRC, more community fundraising events, and audiences committed to telling the facts to more people. The Speakers Program has directly contributed towards achieving our goal of promoting positive attitudes towards asylum seekers.

The program engaged

**13,500
PEOPLE**

from 173 different groups.

Community Speakers staff

1 volunteer coordinator (unpaid) 4 volunteers

Youth and Students

'I love working with school groups. There is enormous satisfaction in educating the next generation in asylum seeker issues and challenging the beliefs of those whose opinions are based on ignorance and misinformation. Most of all I love their questions, especially those that begin with "But why...?"'

Volunteer

The Youth and Students Program continued to grow and inspire the lives of thousands of school students in the past year. The primary focus continued to be the education of students to foster positive attitudes to asylum seekers and to empower students to counter negative and ill informed attitudes in their communities.

We provided accurate, up to date information as to who asylum seekers are, the legality of seeking asylum and the numbers involved both in Australia and around the world. We talked about the role of the ASRC in supporting asylum seekers and supported schools and/or individual students to fundraise for the organisation.

A major project linked to the program is the annual Refugee Week Competition for schools which takes place in June. A range of schools are approached to involve their students in a competition relating to asylum seekers and refugees. This year's theme, 'Australia. Built by boat people' saw a range of entries from both government and non-government schools.

FOR THE PAST YEAR, WE CELEBRATE

- > **Speaking to over 40 different school groups.** This involved approximately 3500 students and their teachers – doubling the reach of the past year.
- > **Developing a quarterly newsletter for schools** providing a valuable resource and curriculum guide.
- > **Receiving a grant from the Readings Foundation** to develop school and curriculum resources.

The program involved approximately

**3500
STUDENTS**

and their teachers.

Youth and Students staff

1 part time staff (.4EFT) 2 volunteers

Philanthropic and Corporate Engagement

'It was fantastic meeting people from all corners of the world and providing them with some semblance of safety and care.'

Corporate Volunteer

Philanthropic, state government and corporate partners contributed more than one million dollars in the last financial year helping the ASRC achieve its strategic priorities.

The ASRC could not offer quality services to asylum seekers without the assistance of the nearly 40 philanthropic trusts and foundations that support our programs. We gratefully acknowledge their continued support and investment, and the significant role they play in the long-term viability of the centre. With their generous contributions we continued to introduce very much needed new and innovative programs and support services within the Victorian community.

We would also like to thank and recognise the Victorian Government for the financial support and collaboration in our Material Aid and Education Programs. These programs allowed practical support by providing families with food and material goods and allowing asylum seekers to enter TAFE courses.

We would lastly like to thank our 15+ corporate partners for their ongoing support and enthusiasm in supporting asylum seekers. Our corporate partners not only provided vital funds for our work, but supported the ASRC in many other ways such as workplace giving, goods in kind, employment opportunities, skilled volunteering and more.

Our philanthropic, state government and corporate partners allow the ASRC to concentrate on what we do best, providing services and support to very vulnerable members of our community.

FOR THE PAST YEAR, WE CELEBRATE

- > Launching our new **Corporate Prospectus**.
- > The development and implementation of our first **Philanthropic Engagement Strategy**.
- > **Finalist for the Melbourne Awards**, City of Melbourne (Contribution to the Community by an individual, ASRC CEO).
- > **Finalist Mentor of the year – Legal Institute of Victoria** – ASRC Human Rights Law Program Coordinator.

The ASRC is assisted by

40
TRUSTS

and foundations.

[Philanthropic and Corporate Engagement staff](#)

1 full time staff 8 volunteers

Communications

'Thank you so much for speaking to the PR and Communications students this morning. As always, you made a big impression and feedback from the session was very positive indeed. I hope some of the enthusiasm turns into volunteers for the ASRC!'

University of Melbourne.

In 2011-2012 the Marketing and Fundraising Program at the ASRC was separated into two distinct programs - the Communications Program and the Fundraising Program. This enabled a greater focus and dedicated resources in these important areas resulting in an increase in income generated and quality of communications published. All communications at the ASRC are developed to generate income and or promote positive attitudes towards asylum seekers through information, education and collaboration.

The Communications Program continued to develop and implemented a robust communication strategy to work towards achieving the key goal of promoting positive community attitudes towards asylum seekers. A key achievement of the ASRC Communications Program was to facilitate a state wide planning day with 100 people from over 30 different asylum seeker and refugee support organisations in Victoria. This collaboration resulted in the development of action plans in key areas including advocacy, casework, orientation, housing, employment and settlement. This was the first time such an event had been organised and was highly praised by all who participated.

FOR THE PAST YEAR, WE CELEBRATE

- > Launch of **new Facebook page** (3,000 likes).
- > Strong social media presence (**4,000 Twitter followers** and trending nationally on asylum seeker issues)
- > The publication of **fact sheets, myth busters and statistics** ensuring the community is provided with up to date and accurate information regarding asylum seekers (10,000 unique hits on our website a month).
- > First point of contact for media stories regarding asylum seekers, contributing to an average of 15 news pieces a month.
- > Sharing asylum seeker voices on Human Rights Day.

Communications staff

1 full time staff (8EFT) 9 volunteers

Fundraising

'I decided to hold a luncheon with my close friends and hold a silent auction. It was a huge success! We raised over \$1600! We had a volunteer speaker from the ASRC speak for ten minutes and really helped us understand the problem that Australia has with asylum seekers and what the ASRC really do. It was my first fundraiser and I am already organising to do another one soon! There is no better feeling knowing you are helping people who really deserve it.'

Community fundraiser

For the first time in 11 years, the ASRC developed a dedicated Fundraising Program. The main aim of the program is to provide support to people in the community who want to act to help asylum seekers in a very tangible way - by contributing funds. Through the dedicated efforts of these wonderful supporters and their events, large and small, essential ASRC programs are funded - nearly one million dollars in income is generated for the ASRC by the community.

We spoke to at least two people every week who were in the stages of planning an event on our behalf. We held our bi-annual appeals, launched our Champions of Change pledge donor program to give the ASRC financial sustainability, embarked on developing relationships with high net worth donors, launched an online e-commerce platform for the social enterprise shop and implemented a database to manage our donor relationships more professionally.

The community
generates close to

ONE
MILLION

dollars for the ASRC.

Fundraising staff

1 part time staff (.8FTE) 2 volunteers

Campaigns

The main aim of the Campaigns Program is to advocate and lobby on individual cases seeking release from detention, medical assistance for people in detention and addressing the human rights breaches of asylum seekers in both community and in detention. In conjunction with the Communications Program, the Campaigns Program also seeks to educate the public through talks, media stories and articles.

This year the Campaigns Program has been involved more than ever in advocacy as we have seen the human rights of asylum seekers both in the community and in detention wound back. We have lobbied better policies through submissions and appearances at committee hearings.

The most promising development has been the release of hundreds of people from detention into the community while their claims were processed. Another significant achievement was the contribution to a chapter to the book *Left Turn: Political Essays For The New Left*.

The 2012-2013 year presents enormous challenges as both political parties unite to diminish their commitment to the Refugee Convention and human rights for asylum seekers. More than ever we need to reach out to the community and explain what is being done in their name.

We need to remind ourselves that positive social change happens when good people stand up and get counted and force politicians to listen.

FOR THE PAST YEAR, WE CELEBRATE

- > Seeing people walk out of detention after intense advocacy efforts and seeing them rejoice in their freedom.
- > Working with groups across the country in support of asylum seeker's rights.
- > **Advocating at the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCS)** hearings for ASIO clearances for three refugees to enable them to be granted their visas and seeing this happen.
- > **Developing and facilitating a national advocate network** for people working with asylum seekers.
- > Participation in the **UNHCR annual NGO consultations**.
- > Input into **NGO and Government submissions** including:
 - Written and verbal submission to the Senate Committee on National Children's Commissioner,
 - NGO report on the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC),
 - Written and verbal submission to the Joint Parliamentary Enquiry into Australia's Detention Network,
 - National Anti-Racism Strategy,
 - UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants,
 - Australia's Humanitarian Program,
 - Deterring People Smuggling Bill,
 - Refugee Council of Australia's National Consultations,
 - Australia's Human Rights Action Plan,
 - ALRC Family Violence and Immigration Inquiry,
 - Secure Jobs Better Future panel.

Campaigns staff

1 full time staff 6 volunteers

Empowerment Pillar

Social and Community Development

'Best day I've had since coming to Australia.'

Member who went on day trip to Serendip Sanctuary

The Social and Community Development Program provides a range of activities to empower, support and encourage asylum seekers to create a sense of belonging and connectedness and to reduce loneliness and social isolation. The activities provide an opportunity for asylum seekers to interact with the ASRC beyond a reliance on charitable services and supports.

For the past year, we celebrate involving 470 members in program activities. We involved an average of 15 members per monthly outing and 20 in weekly activities such as our music and soccer programs. Our two standout achievements for the year were the

- > Redevelopment of the ASRC soccer team, which has received great support from VicSoccer league, Melbourne City Council and has had immense benefits for the members involved as well as the broader soccer community.
- > Success of the ASRC Summer Discover Parks Program as funding by Parks Victoria. Throughout the year the ASRC has taken members on day trips to the following places; Wattle Park, Serendip Sanctuary, Karkarook Park, Herring Island, Arthurs Seat.

ORIENTATION

- > Provided over **180 tours of the CBD and local areas** for asylum seekers to familiarise them with the CBD and local landmarks and support services.
- > Made linkages to libraries, community health centres, neighbourhood houses, ethnic groups or organisations, places of worship, social & recreation groups, gym/sporting/swim centres, markets, education services
- > **Built and maintained new partnerships** to benefit asylum seekers (Reclink, YMCA)

MENTOR PROGRAM

- > Screened, trained, matched, resourced and supported over 80 matches.
- > Developed monthly social outings for mentors and mentees places such as the Zoo, tour of St Kilda and ACMI.
- > Redeveloped the **Mentor Program Exit Strategy**.
- > Conducted graduation ceremonies for mentors and mentees successfully exiting the program.
- > Built and maintained partnerships with external mentoring programs, i.e. Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance.

SOCIAL AND RECREATION

- > Grew the weekly **Music Program** - the highlight of the year was a visit by Goyte, performing at La Mama theatre to a sell-out audience and linking in members with **Key of Sea project** with CD being launched October 2012).
- > Re-established the weekly Soccer Program as part of the VicSoccer League.
- > Monthly social and recreation outings, largely supported by Parks Victoria.

Social and Community Development staff

1 full time staff 72 volunteers 1 student placement

Employment and Training (ASSET)

This was where the sessions with the ASRC were really important; it reminds you that these are just people looking for a break and they will be just as nervous as any other new starter in the workplace. It was also helpful to understand the work the ASRC had done in selecting each applicant with the position in mind and that, in effect the ASRC had acted like a quasi-recruitment consultant. It was immediately apparent that whoever the ASRC chose for DOT would be able to come in and contribute right away.

Manager, Department of Transport (DOT)

Over the last 12 months the Employment Program has assisted over 200 people through 1200 appointments seeking asylum to identify and achieve their employment related goals. **This resulted in 186 work placements.** A large part of the year has been focused on consolidating and developing systems and processes to improve the Program's foundations. This has resulted in improved outcomes for our clients through better resourcing of volunteers and clearer processes and information for asylum seekers accessing our service.

The Employment Program has also continued in its commitment to continual improvement. In addition to consolidating our fundamentals, we have created a number of valuable employer partnerships, enhanced interconnection with the Education Program, and boosted relationships with State Government and other service providers in the sector.

In 2011, the **Employment Program partnered with the Department of Transport (DOT)** to implement the 'pathways to career opportunities' – a mentoring program to assist asylum seekers in gaining vital experience in the Australian work place. Training for both managers and participants was provided by the ASRC prior to the work placement as well as ongoing supervision to ensure all involved were ably supported.

FOR THE PAST YEAR, WE CELEBRATE

- > **New business partnership with progressive recruitment company Staff Australia.** Staff Australia and the ASRC Employment Program have worked together to develop an asylum seeker specific recruitment arrangement. This partnership has already seen a number of asylum seekers placed in ongoing work.
- > **Completion of the first Pathways to Career traineeship program with the Department of Transport.** The ASRC provided specialised training and ongoing support for the participants and their managers, which ensured the pilot was a great success. Out of the seven asylum seekers who undertook the traineeships as administration officers, six went onto ongoing contracts with the Department.

Employment and Training (ASSET) staff

1 manager (BEFT) 1 casework coordinator (BEFT) 32 volunteers

Pathways to Participation (P2P)

Louisa completed the course and undertook her NMIT Work Placement in a local nursing home. She was offered work by the Nursing Home where she did her placement, and started the week after her placement finished.

In August 2011, the ASRC received a grant from Skills Victoria's Access and Equity program to develop a model of practice to support access to training and employment for asylum seekers and refugees. This grant was one of six given to agencies working with hard-to-reach learners (others included Indigenous, disabilities, homelessness and youth). The ASRC, in partnership with NMIT, was selected to represent the asylum seeker and refugee sector.

The Pathways to Participation (P2P) engaged 15 asylum seekers into education and training courses at NMIT during the first half of 2012. These 15 ASRC 'clients' formed the cohort from which a 'wrap around' model of support was developed and documented.

The project experienced a high retention and success rate, with 14 of the 15 participants either still in their course or having completed them by the time the project finished. Thanks to support from the Employment Program and the P2P Project Officer, seven of the eight who completed their courses found work.

Education

'ASRC is my home, my second home. It gives me the possibility to be something in this country because through you I am studying.'

Female client, 46, studying Diploma of Community Development at Chisholm.

The Education Program is divided into three areas of work: the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Program, the Home English Teaching (HET) Program and the onsite ESL classes (five classes are run per week, with different levels). **320 asylum seekers were assisted through these three programs** - 50 in HET, 96 in ESL classes and 219 through the VET Program (some people participated in more than one program).

A priority of the VET Program has been to build relationships with education providers across Melbourne in order to facilitate a smooth enrolment and study experience for our members. As the VET Program is a new program at the ASRC, we have also focused our energies over the past 12 months on building and equipping our team of volunteers so as they are confident in providing sound education advice and supporting students throughout their studies. We have also focused on putting systems in place that will allow for growth in the program over the coming years, while maintaining the high level of support to members, which is vital for positive course outcomes.

Due to the success of the 18 month pilot VET Program in which the government allowed access to asylum seekers to subsidised training for the first time in Victoria, the government has granted the ASRC funding until 2014 to continue this program. Without this funding, it would be near impossible for asylum seekers to access training as they would be required to enrol as full-fee, international students.

During the VET Pilot Program, we assisted 219 asylum seekers to enrol in government subsidised training. As a small number of asylum seekers study more than one qualification on their pathway to employment, there was a total of 278 confirmed placements in courses made across 31 training providers.

We continued to provide free English classes to asylum seekers five days per week at the ASRC as well as a ten-week workplace English Program which was run three times last year. Our Home English Teaching Program assisted 50 asylum seekers who could not attend classes to learn English within their homes. Within both of these programs, planning has been taking place that will allow for significant program changes over the coming year to meet the changing demands of the programs. Within the onsite ESL Program, structured ESL classes will begin later this year. Classes will be delivered in ten-week blocks, five days per week. Within our HET Program, planning has taken place to implement a new structure within the Program. Volunteers have been recruited to take on the role as Home English Support workers. The aim of this is to increase the level of support provided to volunteers in the program and to provide a structure that will allow for future growth in the Program.

Education staff

1 full time staff 88 volunteers

ASRC Catering

'I can't recommend ASRC highly enough. I knew they would provide delicious and interesting finger food for our wedding high tea, which of course they did and so many of the guests commented on the excellence of the food. But I was so pleasantly surprised at how professional and delightful the ASRC Catering Manager was to work with, there was never a "communication problem" of calls or emails left non-responded. Of course all the people from ASRC that helped create our wedding high tea were professional and good natured, our guests also commented how friendly and engaging they were. From start to finish a fantastic experience with ASRC!'

ASRC Catering client

Despite having no advertising budget ASRC Catering has gone from strength to strength in 2011-2012 and all increases are due to word of mouth. This social enterprise has employed over 20 asylum seekers, and catered for more than 320 events from our kitchen in Brunswick, which we rent courtesy of Baptcare. The program employs and trains many asylum seekers and refugees and watching their confidence increase as their skills improve is another benefit of the catering business.

New customers include the Bendigo Bank, Australian Nursing Federation, The Cranlana Programme, Malthouse Theatre, Designinc and Parks Victoria. Other catering events include weddings (in a wide variety of locations), after work cocktail parties, conferences, annual general meetings; as well as 2nd, 21st, and 80th birthday parties, a 40th wedding anniversary and a number of wakes. We are the preferred caterer for Arts House, Australian Catholic University, The University of Melbourne, RMIT University and The Centre for Theology & Ministry. A highlight of our year was catering for a number of events comprising of 400+ guests and receiving excellent feedback from the clients.

ASRC catering employed

20
PEOPLE,

catering for more than
320 events.

ASRC Catering staff

3 part time staff 5 volunteers 20 asylum seekers employed

Justice
Pillar

Health

'The ASRC doctors have been very kind and helpful to me, especially helping me pay for my medicines.'

ASRC Member

The ASRC Health Centre is the largest service of its kind in Australia. We provide a broad range of health services for vulnerable, at risk, community residing asylum seekers. Throughout the year, the Health Program provided medical, allied and complementary-health-care services to over 250 members through 125 appointments per week.

A daily primary health clinic was delivered by volunteers consisting of nine medical doctors, four physiotherapists, two massage therapists, an acupuncturist and a podiatrist. These clinic sessions address the lack of healthcare access in mainstream services for asylum seekers that are deemed ineligible for Medicare.

Daily clinics run by ten nurses, provided a range of subacute and acute nursing health care, along with health education and advocacy to external health care providers.

The quality of primary health care provided to members would not have been possible without the support of a number of pro bono service organisations that provided a range of diagnostic services including pathology and medical imaging. Health program staff liaised with public hospitals and community health centres to arrange referrals for specialty care and to strengthen a member's continuity of care in the community

Throughout the year, routine and acute dental care was organised for members through one of Victoria's community dental health facilities. An important service for asylum seekers is the provision of essential prescription medication. The health program paid for the medication of 80 families who would otherwise be unable to afford treatment.

The Health Program works closely with the Australian Red Cross to advocate for members to gain financial support who are unable to work for various medical reasons.

The ASRC Health Program faces the continuing challenge of being a leader in providing community education and awareness-raising of asylum seeker health issues; a focal point in easing referral pathways to mainstream services where appropriate; and continuing to provide best practice, holistic healthcare for asylum seekers who are not able to access this elsewhere.

FOR THE PAST YEAR, WE CELEBRATE

- > **Commencement of pro bono podiatry services** provided by Footscape Inc enabling ASRC members to have access to clinical assessment, education and referral for podiatry services in a timely and efficient manner.
- > **Commencement of pro bono acupuncture services** provided by Prickle. Prickle Community Acupuncture is a non-profit organisation with the mission of providing acupuncture to people with marginalised backgrounds. This relationship offers ASRC members the opportunity to consult with a registered and qualified acupuncturist and Chinese medicine herbalist, who offers individualised treatment based on a patient's presenting complaint.

Health staff

4 paid staff (1 EFT, .4FTE, .6FTE, .2FTE) 26 volunteers

Casework

'We direct, assist and advocate on behalf of asylum seekers and connect them to our own services as well as linking them to external providers. We are very proud to be a part of the casework program and we know we make a difference.'

Wednesday Casework team

In 2011–2012 the Casework Program underwent significant change and growth. Changes within the sector, such as asylum seekers being moved from detention and placed in the community, have resulted in unprecedented demand for the ASRC and its programs, and, being the entry point to the ASRC, this has presented significant challenges and opportunities for the Casework Program. The Casework Program is currently assisting 1265 members with ongoing casework support and has seen over 1300 new presentations of people requesting support from the ASRC in the last financial year. The number of new presentations is more than double the amount of the previous year.

To meet the growing demand, the program increased staff numbers and developed specific volunteer roles. The Intake Coordinators manage intake support casework volunteers to manage an increasing waitlist and provide support to all new presentations and have developed many internal processes to ensure the ASRC is prioritising asylum seekers to ensure the ASRC continues to 'fill the gaps.'

To assist with the duty and housing needs a new position was created. The Duty/Housing Coordinator role manages all duty queries and provides support to all Casework volunteers in relation to housing issues, in addition to strengthening networks within the housing sector, and ensuring better housing outcomes for all asylum seekers.

This financial year has also witnessed an increase in members presenting with complex needs and the Complex Case Coordinator continues to provide support to complex clients. In addition the position continues to provide essential support and training to staff and casework volunteers in relation to working with complex clients.

The Casework Program maintains an ongoing commitment to training and development and supported seven student placements from various universities and colleges. This much sought after experience provides real learning opportunities ensuring a commitment to supporting the development of future social work and welfare workers.

Continued development and investment in partnerships with other welfare agencies have resulted in strengthening access for asylum seekers to other relevant services such as housing, health and mainstream welfare agencies.

FOR THE PAST YEAR, WE CELEBRATE

- > Managing increasingly high demand for ASRC services, double presentations and maintaining caseloads with increasingly complex clients. The newly formed casework team all working together with casework volunteers to achieve the best possible outcomes for asylum seekers.
- > The 2011–2012 period found the Casework Program struggling to maintain casework volunteers due to the welfare/asylum seeker sector recruiting heavily. Almost half the casework volunteers (approximately 30) in 2011–2012 have been provided with paid employment as a result of their experience working with asylum seekers at the ASRC casework program. We are pleased that the experience of working in the Casework Program has provided many volunteers with valuable and highly coveted experience.

Casework staff

6 paid staff (3 X 1 EFT, .8FTE, .6FTE, .4FTE) 73 volunteers 7 placements

Counselling

'The days that I come to the ASRC are my happy days, this place is the only place I feel at home.'

ASRC member

The Counselling Program provides specialist pro bono counselling and mental health services for asylum seekers who are experiencing high levels of psychological distress. Our program is made up of experienced psychologists, social workers, counsellors and psychiatrists.

The Counselling Program attempts to alleviate some of the distress of asylum seekers who have suffered trauma, grief and loss. In 2011-2012, the Counselling Program offered over 140 counselling sessions per month to over 80 asylum seekers, 40 psychiatry appointments per month and had ten Kidszone gatherings for the year.

THE ASRC COUNSELLING PROGRAM OFFERS A FULLY INTEGRATED SERVICE WHICH INCLUDES

- > An independent and flexible counselling program that allows counsellors to respond to the needs of clients as they arise.
- > A daytime counselling program for individuals, children, couples and/or families who require long-term counselling and assessment.
- > A psychiatric assessment and treatment program that runs during weekdays and out-of-hours on Saturday mornings by pro bono psychiatrists.

- > Counselling and psychiatric report writing for legal services and funding applications.
- > A counselling program that supports clients of the ASRC legal clinic.
- > A monthly Kidszone social program for children, young people and families.
- > Professional supervision and de-briefing services for all ASRC staff and volunteers.
- > Training and development for ASRC counsellors and staff.

FOR THE PAST YEAR, WE CELEBRATE

- > **Commencement of pro bono counselling services** provided by Cairnmillar that enables ASRC member's to have access to community based counselors which has strengthened and built the capacity of the ASRC Counseling Program significantly reducing the wait time for asylum seeker to see a counsellor.
- > **Collaborating with Little Big Shots and the Melbourne International Film Festival for Kids** to create a short film called 'My Puppet and Me' that through puppetry tells the stories of the asylum seeker children that created the project.

Counselling staff

4 paid staff (EQUIVALENT 2 FULL TIME) 1 volunteer coordinator 65 volunteers

Human Rights Law

'I remember the day that the Legal Program said they were going to assist me. My wife, two young sons and I were faced with deportation. No one would help us. Now we have PR thanks to the ASRC fighting for us, and I can breathe again.'

Sri Lankan client receiving PR after ten and a half years

This year, the Human Rights Law Program continued to provide a robust legal service to asylum seekers throughout the refugee determination process. The legal program provided advice, support and/or representation to 547 asylum seekers at various stages of the refugee determination process. Of these, 382 received full legal representation and 144 were new clients and 50 cases were post-refugee determination family reunion matters.

The Program continued to thrive with strengthened internal operating procedures and systems, including a new legal intake policy and procedure. Strengthened procedures ensured that the program continued to benefit from the high number of volunteers and pro bono legal services whilst maintaining a highly professional approach to legal advice and representation. It also resulted in a more efficient intake of asylum seekers requiring legal representation.

FOR THE PAST YEAR, WE CELEBRATE

- > **Two successful applications to the High Court**, in particular one outstanding win for a woman from Malaysia whose case regarding a risk of domestic violence advanced jurisprudence on the issue of relocation.
- > Developing significant partnerships with Allens Arthur Robinson and Mallesons.
- > The **launch of our Asylum Explained website** in early 2012 by Julian Burnside QC has revolutionised the on-line accessibility of important legal information regarding the refugee determination process in Australia.
- > Winning protection for 130 people – an average of 2.5 visas per week.

In the coming year, the program will balance its minimal resources with the intention to meet the legal needs of a high number of asylum seekers with complex cases. It will have to confront challenges posed by the number of clients being released from detention seeking legal representation at the end stages of the refugee process. The Program will continue to work towards improving the understanding and implementation of the complementary protection regime. We also hope to increase our role in strategic litigation to highlight systematic and systemic failures in Australia's refugee processing policy.

[Human Rights Law staff](#)

4 full time staff 1 coordinator 100 volunteers 5 placements 3 internships

Supporting Asylum Seekers at Appointments (SASA)

I feel privileged to be part of the SASA team. What I have learned from working with asylum seekers is that their desire for freedom and a safe and secure life drives them to do extraordinarily courageous and dangerous things. Freedom is not just a word to them, it is something tangible, something they are prepared to take huge risks and make incredible sacrifices for.

SASA volunteer

SASA's main priority is to support ASRC members who would like someone to accompany them on official appointments, the most frequent being the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC).

The primary objective of the program is to reduce the levels of stress and anxiety that these appointments can cause asylum seekers. To achieve this, the program offers one-to-one support by a team of volunteers, who are available at least twice a month to attend an appointment.

In the past year, SASA assisted 204 asylum seekers through over 220 appointments.

Of the 220 appointments, 76 per cent were to DIAC including lodgement of application for a protection visa, biometrics and Compliance for BVE extensions. The other reason for appointments include medical, Red Cross, Medicare and dental.

SASA works collaboratively with other programs at the ASRC especially Legal, Casework, Health and Administration to identify further opportunities for SASA appointments and increase support services for asylum seekers. By providing this support to our members, SASA helps to increase the process of self-reliance and combat feelings of social and cultural isolation.

FOR THE PAST YEAR, WE CELEBRATE

- > ASRC member granted Permanent Residency after seven years of SASA support.
- > Continuing support of volunteers who have been with the program since its creation.

The program assisted

204
PEOPLE
through 220 appointments.

SASA staff

1 volunteer coordinator (unpaid) 20 volunteers

Sustainability Pillar

General Manager, HR, Finance, IT, Administration

Just wanted to say thanks for my new computer.
It is making an enormous difference to my work life.

Staff member

The Sustainability Pillar witnessed significant change and challenges in 2011-2012 as the number of asylum seekers presenting to the ASRC doubled. In addition to this, the number of volunteers and staff in the centre increased resulting in additional strain on crucial resources such as IT, staff welfare, finances and administration. The Pillar strived to **balancing keeping the ASRC on track to meet the Strategic Plan while ensuring the organisation remained sustainable and true to its mission and values** – that is to turn no asylum seeker in need away.

In line with our focus on employee welfare, retention and development the ASRC employed a Human Resources Advisor in April 2012. Subsequently the sustainability pillar conducted an Employee Satisfaction Survey which has provided valuable input into helping to develop an HR strategy for 2012-2013.

In 2011-2012 the Finance program focussed on supporting the decision making processes of the Board and Management Team through providing a stewardship function in the areas of financial reporting, internal control and budgeting.

The ASRC's Administration and IT teams are made up entirely of volunteers which is no mean feat. It is testament to the volunteers that these programs are run seamlessly while providing services that are at the heart and soul of the ASRC.

The ASRC's reception operates as the first point of contact for asylum seekers entering the building. For members and potential members, who are often confused and anxious, the administration team provides calm and reassuring direction to appropriate programs and responds efficiently to the needs of members. Always a dynamic and evolving environment to work in, administration provides a vital reference point and conduit within the ASRC.

FOR THE PAST YEAR, WE CELEBRATE

- > 150 IT Helpdesk issues solved.
- > Initial phase in of newer, more reliable workstations running Microsoft Windows 7.
- > Upgrade to the Client Database to reflect the needs of different programs.
- > Restructuring Chart of Accounts to meet the expanding financial reporting needs of the ASRC.
- > Successful completion of 2012 Audit in line with statutory requirements.
- > Meeting budget in a challenging and tough environment.

General Manager, HR, Finance, IT, Administration staff
4 paid staff 2 volunteer coordinators 30 volunteers

Financial Report

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2012

	2012	2011
	\$	\$
INCOME		
Fundraising events income	577,093	190,637
Catering	366,495	364,125
Donations	424,691	708,684
Merchandise sales	40,009	33,845
Sponsorship and grants	1,186,539	885,729
Miscellaneous income	24,644	8,976
	2,619,471	2,191,996
EXPENDITURE		
Program expenses	309,908	296,550
Administration	385,347	384,902
Employment expenses	1,779,270	1,603,877
Fundraising activity costs	63,312	51,166
Catering costs	78,419	63,319
	2,616,256	2,399,814
Operating profit	3,215	(207,818)
Interest income	58,024	73,625
Profit before income tax	61,239	(134,193)
Income tax expense	—	—
Profit after income tax	61,239	(134,193)
Retained Profits at the beginning	726,141	860,334
Retained profits at the end of the financial year	787,380	726,141

ASSETS AND LIABILITIES STATEMENT 30 JUNE 2012

	2012	2011
	\$	\$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash	1,261,807	1,463,734
Trade and other receivables	151,628	127,731
Inventories	53,763	29,170
Total Current Assets	1,467,198	1,620,635
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	124,987	102,243
Total non-current assets	124,987	102,243
Total Assets	1,592,185	1,722,878
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Amounts received in advance	543,227	795,117
Trade and other creditors	170,924	109,540
Provisions	78,475	72,959
Total current liabilities	792,626	977,616
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Provisions	12,179	19,121
Total non-current liabilities	12,179	19,121
Total liabilities	804,805	996,737
Net assets	787,380	726,141
MEMBERS' FUNDS		
Retained profits	787,380	726,141
Total members' funds	787,380	726,141

These abridged financial statements are prepared from the full audited financial statements. A detailed copy of the audited financial statements are available on request.

Thank you

The ASRC would like to thank and acknowledge the following donors, supporters and partners for their key role in helping us help asylum seekers in 2011-2012.

Abey Foundation | Andyinc Foundation | Aesop | Australian Nursing Federation | Australian Red Cross | Baptcare | Bell Charitable Fund | Bokhara | Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) | Calvary Silver Circle | City of Melbourne | Citywide | Circus Oz | Department of Human Service (DHS) | Department of Premier and Cabinet | Department of Transport (DOT) | Directioneering | Envato | Eirene Lucas Foundation | Ecumenical Migration Centre | Fareshare | Feed Melbourne | Foodbank Victoria | Fouress Foundation | Freehills Foundation | George & Freda Castan Families Foundation | Hoffman Foundation | Human Rights Arts and Film Festival (HRAFF) | Igniting Change | Inner North Community Foundation | Isobel and David Jones Family Foundation | Jagen | Jobs Australia | King & Wood Mallesons | Kinfolk | LG Pro | Lord Mayor's Charitable Fund | Margaret Lawrence Bequest Foundation | Marian & E H Flack Trust | Mary MacKillop Foundation | Mercy Foundation | Melbourne Business School - University of Melbourne | Mim Bartlett | Morris Family Foundation | Myer Foundation | National Australia Bank | North Melbourne Football Club (The Huddle) | NMIT | Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship (OMAC) | Parks Victoria | Perpetual Trustees | Portland House Foundation | Public Transport Victoria | PSA Project Manager | RACV Club | Rali Foundation | RE Ross Trust | Readings Foundation | Red Rocketship | River Capital | Robert Half | SecondBite | SCARF | Staff Australia | Stephen Roberts | Telstra Consumer Affairs | Rotary Club of Melbourne | Rural Australians for Refugees - Maryborough, Surf Coast and Phillip Island | Spotlight Charitable Foundation | Summers Family Sponsorship | Suzi Carp | Sisters of Mercy | St Francis Xavier Parish | Synergistiq | The Benevolent Society | Uniting Care | United Voice | VCOSS | Victorian Skills Commission | Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust | Winston Churchill Memorial Trust | William Angliss (Victoria) Charitable Fund

'Our newest immigrants are also our future achievers. The ingenuity, persistence, courage and resilience which the refugee experience demands are characteristics which can lead to a productive life in Australia.

Most asylum seekers do get permanent visas, so the earlier they receive appropriate help, the faster they will become part of the community. They'll get jobs and start paying taxes too. They will see Australia as a nation with a sense of care and concern. That's so important for a cohesive society. It helps build a sense of belonging. And in terms of common decency, it's what should be happening.'

The Right Hon Malcolm Fraser AO, Former Prime Minister of Australia



Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
12 Batman Street
West Melbourne, Vic. 3003
Telephone +61 3 9326 6066
www.asrc.org.au