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# Annual report

## 2020 – 21

Founded in 2001, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) is Australia’s largest human rights organisation providing support to people seeking asylum.

We are an independent not-for-profit organisation whose programs support and empower people seeking asylum to maximise their own physical, mental and social well being.

We champion the rights of people seeking asylum and mobilise a community of compassion to create lasting social and policy change.

The ASRC movement is proudly supported by a community of committed volunteers and supporters.

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**Acknowledgement of country**

The ASRC would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation as traditional owners and custodians of the land on which the ASRC stands and we acknowledge all Traditional Owners across this country and pay respects to their ancestors, past and present. We acknowledge sovereignty of these lands has never been ceded.

By including recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the ASRC supports ending the exclusion that has been so damaging.

**\* Names**

Throughout this report, the names and identities of people seeking asylum have been changed to protect the identities of individuals.

# Welcome from the Chair

Kon Karapanagiotidis founded the ASRC on 8 June 2001. What a journey it's been - but there was certainly precious little time in 2020-21 for us to acknowledge the 20th year of our existence.

With creativity and determination, the ASRC's management, staff, and volunteers defiantly continued to provide food, shelter, employment, health services, legal advice and fearless advocacy in support of people seeking asylum relentlessly throughout the year, navigating all of the challenges that COVID-19 and harsh Federal Government policies were able to throw at us. The 2021-21 year was marked by continued lockdowns which impacted our people and our operations, but most certainly, affected the lives of people seeking asylum more than most. Increased need saw record investments in areas such as food access, housing and healthcare - strategic financial decisions that were wholeheartedly supported by the Board of the ASRC.

Alongside these investments were moments of resolve - successive lockdowns and ongoing restrictions saw our long-running social enterprises deeply impacted. With a staff of almost 100, providing ongoing employment and training to people seeking asylum, I'm proud that our Board committed to our social enterprises, covering all staff salaries during this time to provide security and safety to our people.

And you, our supporters and donors, backed us to the hilt. We cannot thank you enough.

The ASRC today is an organisation that is more impactful and more influential than at any other point in our 20 year history. We're financially strong, stable and sustainable. As we embarked this year on the development of our new Strategic Plan for 2022 - 2024, our Board challenged ourselves and the organisation to capitalise on this platform to be bolder and more ambitious than we have ever been.

We took the challenge seriously and invested in a detailed, rigorous listening process with a diverse range of stakeholders, including our members, that broke new ground.

What we learned was both rewarding and an opportunity for growth.

On the one hand, it was clear that the impact we were having for our members was incredibly positive and very often life-changing. At the same time, we were not helping as many people as we could, or should - and for those we were helping, sometimes their experience with us could be better.

Our employees and volunteers told us they were engaged, passionate and had a deep belief in what we do. But it was also noted that sometimes our processes were not as efficient as they could be.

While the ASRC's profile, influence and impact is respected throughout the sector, there is still more we could do to support other organisations, particularly grassroots refugee-led groups, and to amplify the voices of people with lived experience.

Through in-depth collaboration and engagement involving our whole organisation, we took these findings on board and committed to building a new, enduring future for the ASRC.

The result of that commitment is our Strategic Plan for 2022 - 2024, in which we have firmly embedded the human rights and voices of people seeking asylum at the heart of everything we do.

What will this mean in practice? We will work even more closely together with people seeking asylum and refugees to drive systemic change. We will magnify their influence, invest in refugee-led organisations, sharpen the focus of our services and advocacy around their human rights, and realign our operations to provide the best possible experience and outcomes for our members. We will continue to build a movement, and build valued partnerships that help realise the rights of people seeking asylum.



My thanks go to my fellow Board members and to Kon for their unwavering leadership; and to all of our employees, volunteers, members and supporters without whom none of this would be possible.

Throughout the ASRC, we are unified and energised by the challenge ahead.

*Michael Sum*

**Mike Sum**  
Chair, ASRC Board

# CEO year in review

The past year can feel like one of daily loss, grief, limbo and of life in a holding pattern and nothing more. I take a different view. It's been a year where we have risen to the challenge of our times, where we have found hope, growth, community and unity in the darkest of times with your support.

**It's been a year where the ASRC faced into this pandemic with compassion, courage and a commitment to do better. And you were equal to the task supporting us all the way.**



We found ways to keep our doors open when many others closed around us, help record numbers of people seeking asylum, innovated from Foodbank home delivery to hybrid service delivery models to laying no staff off, continuing to pay our casual refugee staff in our social enterprises when there was no work and having zero community transmissions due to our preparedness and prudence.

We provided more than 109,000 nights of shelter to individuals and families who were at risk of homelessness and at the peak were housing nearly 500 people each night. On top of this we invested another \$700,000 to support people freed from detention nationwide.

We delivered 30,000 critical food parcels to keep families fed, and an additional 5,000 meals to people trapped in the snap lockdown of the Housing Commission Towers, as well as providing food security to other refugee charities.

We were also in the fortunate position to employ 106 people seeking asylum as new critical staff through the Working For Victoria Initiative, providing many with their first Australian workplace experiences. All while continuing to work on building our new Refugee Resource Hub in Dandenong, set to open in early 2022.

When we acknowledged our 20th year of operation in June we took it as a time not for self congratulation, but rather to challenge ourselves to do even better - to seize this pandemic and this anniversary as a chance for robust self-reflection, self-evaluation and transformation by asking more than 700 members (our clients) what they wanted our organisation to be going forward and how they wanted to be included and seen.

We have come through this time with a bold new three-year Strategic Plan, one that centres the community we serve at the heart of all we do. From affirmative action targets that intentionally ensure we reflect the community we serve and that people with lived experience are at the table of decision making as equals, from the Board down, to a commitment to invest millions in refugee leadership across the nation and Asia Pacific Region as part of our commitment to building capacity and transferring power to refugees themselves. Taking a global approach to what is a global humanitarian issue. Our new strategy is bold and ambitious and will positively impact the lives of tens of thousands of refugees over the next three years.

Implementation of this plan will start in 2021-22 and we look forward to tackling the challenges ahead with courage, collaboration and authenticity as we move away from a welfare based model to a human rights approach that focuses on ensuring all we do and how we operate is about saying "Yes" and finding a way to help everyone, in some way, who comes to us for support. This new approach will allow us to be even more flexible, accessible, adaptive and responsive. It also importantly is about affirming the strength and agency of people seeking asylum and refugees to work with us as equals and partners in their struggle for equality and freedom.

This is what is most exciting, making the decisions now to ensure one day we at the ASRC will not need to be here anymore, because refugees themselves will be thriving and leading with their voices, expertise and solutions and driving all that is done in their name. I cannot wait for that day.

*Kon Karapanagiotidis*

**Kon Karapanagiotidis**  
CEO, OAM

# Our impact in 2020-21

**418**

households on average were supported by Foodbank each week

**\$761,292**

worth of food was donated to the Foodbank

**1,087**

people on average accessed Foodbank each week, 90% of people on average had no income

**43,654**

hours of employment provided through our social enterprises

**2,040**

new people supported through the General Access Program

**2,300**

people supported through casework with information, advice, advocacy and referrals

**36,252**

food packs were distributed to ASRC members and refugees in Victoria

**7,159**

people seeking asylum were supported by the ASRC

**74%**

of members had no study rights

**66%**

of members had no work rights

**86%**

of members had no income

**256**

job placements were secured by members despite the pandemic

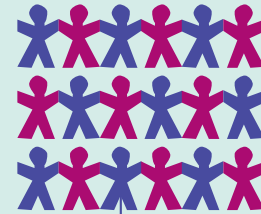
**36**

new people were supported to secure work with ASRC's social enterprises



**18**

people were released from detention on visas



**296,335**

hours of service provided by volunteers (worth \$13.37 million in wages)

**127**

people provided access to public transport through Myki top-ups

**47**

households per month supported with their basic needs (total 1,024 people)

The ASRC is powered by a community of compassion who make change possible

**+37,000**

people demanded detention release by signing the #TimeForAHome petition

**38,970**

people made a donation to an ASRC appeal

**119**

children per week received nappies & baby wipes

**514**

people housed = 109,213 nights of shelter

**43**

temporary or permanent protection visas secured

**1,111**

people received free legal assistance

**260**

people referred to RTOs for subsidised VET courses

**\$1.67 million**

raised by +15,000 donors at the ASRC Telethon on World Refugee Day



## The pandemic & political context

**Despite the public health risks and economic impacts of the pandemic, the Australian political environment regarding asylum policy remained more hostile than ever this year. The Federal Government continued their mandate to demonise and punish people seeking asylum throughout 2020-21, excluding people seeking asylum from public health and economic responses and maintaining their position regarding temporary protection visas and no resettlement for people who arrived by boat.**

Tens of thousands of people on temporary visas were pushed further into poverty due to a lack of safety net and over 1,400 people remained in Australian and offshore immigration detention facilities, with the average time in detention at record high numbers.

With repeated attempts to pass laws and policies that would have a significant negative impact on the lives of refugees, it was clear that the Federal Government remained ideologically opposed to people seeking safety. The fight to uphold peoples' right to a fair process, justice and a safety net had never been more important.

As the pandemic took hold, the Federal Government response to keeping the Australian population safe completely ignored people seeking asylum.

In normal times, many people going through the refugee determination process cannot access Medicare and this exposed people seeking asylum to even greater danger during the early stages of the pandemic. Without Medicare, people seeking asylum and other temporary visa holders were initially denied access to the Government's free Covid testing service, having instead to pay for testing.

Fortunately, where the Federal Government was slow to respond, State Governments stepped up in response to advocacy from the ASRC and the broader refugee sector. Working with the Victorian Government, the ASRC was able to provide some support to respond to the immediate needs of people left behind and minimise the risk to the broader community.

The Federal Government's refusal to acknowledge the needs of people on temporary visas placed further and significant pressure on the sector to support those ineligible for Centrelink and excluded from JobKeeper and JobSeeker. A lack of Government information available in multiple languages compounded the community confusion. More than a million people on temporary visas were excluded from accessing JobSeeker, JobKeeper and all safety net provisions available to the broader Australian community and losses in employment as a result of the pandemic and associated lockdowns resulted in a surge of people presenting to the ASRC at imminent risk of homelessness and destitution.

The greatest increase in need occurred from June - December 2020, driven by lockdowns. The casualised nature of people's employment, compounded by the loss of employment or reduced work hours and the exclusion from JobKeeper and JobSeeker resulted in people losing all income and many individuals and families faced the reality of sleeping rough during a global pandemic. Through the continued commitment of the Victorian State Government and use of ASRC reserves, the ASRC was able to provide triple the number of people with housing support compared to the previous year (refer to 'An essential service in the pandemic' for more details).

Throughout the year, housing stress continued to be the most pressing issue people faced, followed by food security, then health concerns.

Investment from the Victorian State Government provided increases in housing, food and financial support within the sector. In addition to the existing +2,200 clients supported by the ASRC through our long term casework, we saw 1,237 new people presenting to the ASRC for the first time requesting support from our General Access Program. The State Government funding supported the ASRC to provide significant increases in crisis housing.

Homelessness, or risk of homelessness affects all aspects of peoples' lives. Families in this situation also faced extraordinary barriers, including accessing education for their children. As schools closed and home learning was implemented during lockdowns, many people seeking asylum were unable to access home internet or access the resources needed for managing their children's education. The ASRC was able to provide data for phones, pay for internet access as well as provide children and young people with back to school resources.

Lockdowns and no Medicare also impacted people's ability to access health services. While many services moved to remote delivery models, mental health resources and responses were under extreme pressure across mainstream and specialist providers and many required Medicare to access. As a result people seeking asylum and refugees, who were already experiencing significant trauma from their past and that inflicted by the refugee determination process, were even more at risk during the health crisis.

For those who were eligible to access healthcare through the Medicare system, the transition to telehealth during this time provided additional barriers to accessing remote mental health services. The lack of Federal Government consideration of the needs of people struggling with access to technology again resulted in this group relying on the support and services of charities, not for profits and the local community for critical support.

Communications about the pandemic response, including testing and isolating continued to ignore the language needs of people seeking asylum and refugees. The lack of culturally appropriate and in-language information resulted in people missing vital information around staying safe, including testing procedures.

Despite being in the midst of a global pandemic and the increased barriers to accessing essential services faced by people seeking asylum, the Federal Government still prioritised attempting to pass laws that would have a significant negative impact on the lives of refugees, increased court fees by nearly 400%, refused to extend a safety net and support people on temporary visas and rushed through a Fast Track blitz deadline with no notice.

### CASE STUDY

**Government neglect has put people seeking asylum in a position of increased vulnerability and disadvantage during the pandemic.**

Binti was working in a local family-run business and living in a small flat with her daughter. When the pandemic hit, Binti's employer laid her off because she did not qualify for JobKeeper payments.

Like all people seeking asylum, Binti was also excluded from other Government safety nets like JobSeeker and Centrelink.

With no job or income support, Binti soon fell behind in her rental payments. Without a formal lease agreement in place, Binti and her daughter were asked to vacate their home.

Binti's story is not unique as many people seeking asylum experienced extreme disadvantage during the pandemic. Barriers to employment and a lack of available safety net made people seeking asylum acutely vulnerable and at risk of destitution. As a consequence the ASRC has seen a three-fold escalation in demand for many of our services in 2021-21.



# An essential service in the pandemic

People seeking asylum are not eligible to access Centrelink or other Government safety nets and many work in casual or part-time jobs in service industries which were most impacted by the pandemic lockdowns. Mass job losses, coupled with the exclusion of people seeking asylum from pandemic safety nets like JobKeeper and JobSeeker, resulted in the ASRC seeing an increase in people who had never before accessed support from us. The protracted nature of multiple lockdowns had a severe impact on the wellbeing, economic participation and social inclusion of many – resulting in some people presenting in a highly vulnerable and distressed state.

## Preventing homelessness and meeting basic needs

Mass employment losses due to COVID-19 affected many people seeking asylum, who often work in casual or 'gig economy' jobs. Our Homelessness & Basic Needs Response Program (HBNR) prioritises support for those with no income or access to other housing services to keep people in safe housing and meet their basic daily needs.

We invested an unprecedented \$2,459,568 as part of our COVID-19 response, which focussed on meeting people's needs through:

- rent assistance
- crisis accommodation brokerage
- new presentation crisis accommodation

Through direct payment of rent or crisis accommodation we provided 109,213 nights of shelter to 320 adults and 194 children.

Our HBNR Program provides services related to keeping people and families seeking asylum, in housing and meeting other basic needs including financial assistance for paying rent and utilities, access to crisis accommodation and material aid. Each month we met the basic needs of 47 households, representing a 79% increase in the number of households receiving financial support.

Until December 2020 we operated the COVID-19 Limited Rent Assistance (CLRA) Program to help prevent homelessness for individuals and families who were unable to

pay rent, due to a loss of income in the context of COVID-19. The majority of people supported had previously been financially independent prior to the pandemic.

In April 2021 we introduced a more flexible Crisis Accommodation Brokerage Model (CABM), designed to address primary homelessness through a period of brief crisis accommodation.

As the Government moratorium on rental evictions ended in early 2021, we also supported people at risk of homelessness with a one-off Moratorium Arrears Assistance (MAA) payment to meet rental arrears accrued.

The new Basic Needs Support Service (BNSS), implemented in January 2021, prioritised support for people not already receiving assistance through other ASRC services or sector agencies. Replacing the previous Emergency Relief support, the new approach provides a more tailored response to help people with their unique needs (utilities, petrol, Myki transport card top-ups, household items, nappies and baby wipes, essential clothing) and educate them about their rights and other ways to access direct financial aid. We saw a 79% increase in families requesting assistance with their basic needs of living in 2021-21.

## Prioritising healthcare in a health crisis

The Health Program provided 1,470 people with continuity in healthcare during the COVID-19 health crisis, despite the challenges of operating during Victoria's periods of forced lockdowns and a reduced volunteer workforce.

Operating a scaled-down COVID-Safe delivery model, health appointments still increased this year. Through a hybrid model of onsite and telehealth consults (via phone and online) we provided 5,474 patient health appointments, prioritising support for those without access to Medicare.

During the peak of the crisis, monthly appointments reached almost 600 and demand for the Health Program's doctor, nurse and immunisation appointments remained high throughout the year.

The healthcare needs of clients became increasingly complex and were exacerbated by the loss of work and income. We saw clients affected by:

- increased mental health challenges
- acute healthcare issues
- increased need to access medication subsidies
- limited availability of GP appointments
- suspension of some allied health services
- longer waiting times for primary health services.

Through improved advocacy efforts, we were able to waive 94% of medical bills for clients, valued at \$44,756.

Other important advocacy and education efforts continued, including:

- welfare calls to vulnerable clients
- providing advice on COVID-19 and vaccination
- advocating for people without Medicare to access COVID-19 vaccines
- improving access to childhood immunisations
- educating clients on how to access local health services
- partnering with sector organisations to improve access to healthcare services

## Addressing food insecurity

During the pandemic, demand for food relief tripled as large cohorts of people faced increased vulnerability and destitution through job losses.

We provided an average of 1,087 people with equitable access to culturally appropriate food and groceries each week via our Foodbank. From July – December 2020, when lockdowns were in place, we operated a home delivery service to limit the need for people to travel to the centre. At its peak during this period we provided

food security to 1,644 people per week of which 97% of people had no income. The number of people accessing the Foodbank who do not have an income remains much higher than pre-COVID times at 90% of people (average for the year).

During the stage four Melbourne lockdown (July – December) we also provided emergency food packs to an additional 1,718 refugees and people seeking asylum each month via ten partner agencies. A total of 36,925 emergency food packs were provided to ASRC members and refugees living in the Victorian community. A warehouse in Sunshine was leased to facilitate the expansion of Foodbank services in response to the increased community food insecurity. The ASRC also provided 223 food packs to partner agencies supporting refugees recently released from detention in Melbourne.

The Community Meals service has remained closed since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020. For those visiting the centre for help in March 2020 – June 2021, ASRC Catering delivered 50 culturally appropriate take-away meals each day, funded via donations from the community. This also provided further work hours to people seeking asylum employed through the ASRC Catering social enterprise.

In addition to our investment in ensuring people have food security, which is funded by the community, we also received \$761,292 worth of donated food and grocery items - approximately \$100,000 from OzHarvest, \$50,000 from Foodbank Victoria and \$53,000 from the COVIDSafe Festive Food Drive in December. The Harvest of Hope food garden continued to provide an annual value of \$56,000 of fresh produce to the Foodbank.

## Supporting people in crisis

People who are not members of the ASRC but are in need of crisis support can access the ASRC's help through the New Presentation Program (part of the General

Access Program). Requests for emergency support almost doubled this year with 2,040 people assisted, mostly with emergency housing, food, pharmacy, material aid and mental health support plus referrals to other ASRC programs and external service agencies. Almost half of the people supported through New Presentation had never sought help from the ASRC before.

Mass job losses, restrictions and lack of access to other Government safety nets like JobKeeper, JobSeeker and Centrelink and barriers to employment drove the demand for services as people lost their financial independence and had no other form of support. As a result, crisis accommodation costs rose to the highest levels on record, spending \$152,420 to meet the increased need in the community.

During this time the Federal Government also continued to exit vulnerable families and individuals from the Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) payment, leaving people with no income or casework support.

## Providing comprehensive casework support

Seeking asylum in Australia can be extremely uncertain, complex and stressful. Our casework program helps people at all stages of their refugee determination process to gain access to support services while they seek permanent protection. Our casework team provided 10,140 case work related contacts during the year, supporting 2,300 clients with information, advice, advocacy, referrals and connecting people to other ASRC and community services.

We invested in a specialised and dedicated team of social workers who conducted initial needs assessment and connected people with short term support and provided ongoing casework support with various issues including health, immigration, legal, social and recreational, financial, material aid, employment, education, and counselling.

“This centre helped me a lot. In all cases, they supported me, especially in the field of health. The medical staff and nurses all helped me compassionately. My tongue is short of thanking them. Millions of thanks to Dr. Janet and the caring nurses Elen and Jenny and all medical staff.”

— Ali\*



514

people housed  
= 109,213 nights of shelter



47

households per month  
supported with their basic needs  
(total 1,024 people)



119

families per week received  
nappies and baby wipes



127

people provided access to public  
transport through Myki top-ups



2,040

new people supported through  
General Access Program





# 5,474

patient health appointments  
(1,470 patients accessed the clinic)



# \$44,756

worth of medical bills  
waived for patients



# 1,087

people on average accessed  
Foodbank each week, 90% of  
people on average had no income



# 36,252

food packs were distributed  
to ASRC members and refugees  
in Victoria



# 1,718

refugees and people seeking  
asylum received emergency food  
packs via partner agencies  
(July - December 2020)

“Fresh fruit and vegetables, these are very good for children. And daily essentials like rice, oil, different kinds of lentils, bread, biscuits, also toilet rolls, pads – these are very helpful for me and my family. Without ASRC, we would have to buy food but there would be limits. We would take less so there is enough for our daughter – less fruit and vegetables, less milk for us.”

— Amira\*



## Providing detention support and advocacy

Our Detention Rights and Advocacy (DRAP) team continued to provide individual advocacy, casework and crisis intervention to people indefinitely detained in offshore processing centres and in onshore detention. Our DRAP team worked collaboratively with the Human Rights Law Program, Campaigns & Advocacy Program and sector partners for systemic change.

In March 2021, we established the Preventing Homelessness Fund, investing \$500,000 in housing solutions to support Medevac refugees released from detention who were at risk of homelessness. Through the fund, the ASRC provides financial support to individuals or state-based housing service providers to cover multiple months of rental payments and assistance with bond and utility costs. An additional \$1,000 Eftpos card was provided to all

Medevac refugees released across the country to support people with their other needs, providing dignity and choice. In late 2020 we also provided 653 Eftpos cards valued at almost \$100,000 in total to people in detention to support their ongoing wellbeing and meet their needs. The Eftpos cards have provided a vital lifeline to the outside world through the purchase of essentials like mobile handsets, phone credit and data as well as other items they have been deprived of while being detained. Simple things like phones, credit and data have meant refugees have been able to keep in touch with family and friends as well as community supports and legal assistance.

“

In my country there's no human rights, they kill us and take everything from us. Here ASRC is giving me food and a house. I don't know what we would do without the ASRC. When we get our visas we will do everything we can to give back to you guys to help others.”

— Abdul\*





## Working for Victoria provides employment

In early 2020 the Victorian State Government announced the Working for Victoria Initiative, a \$500 million investment designed to provide employment to Victorians who had lost work during the pandemic. As part of this initiative, the ASRC applied for and was successful in receiving \$3.6 million in funding for an additional 90 FTE positions, providing meaningful work opportunities and Australian work experience to people seeking asylum who had been seeking work or had lost their jobs due to the pandemic.

Employment plays a significant role in the successful settlement of migrants in Australia. Nevertheless, people seeking asylum are frequently excluded from successful participation in the Australian labour market. In normal times, people seeking asylum face heightened risks of long-term joblessness, homelessness, destitution and welfare dependency. Even when they manage to find work, they are more likely to be offered insecure, unsafe and exploitative casual or temporary employment well below their skills and experience.

During the pandemic, people seeking asylum were among the most impacted in Australia. Many were the first to lose their jobs or had their work hours reduced but were excluded from Federal Government safety net packages such as JobKeeper and JobSeeker and remained ineligible for Centrelink while they looked for work. This meant the best possible 'safety net' available to people seeking asylum was to find stable paid employment, and quickly.

In partnership with the Victorian Trades Hall Council, the ASRC secured funding for an additional 90 FTE positions to help increase our short-term capacity and provide meaningful employment to people seeking asylum.

In June 2020 we placed 106 people with lived or living experience of seeking asylum into new roles within the ASRC, across crucial service delivery and operational areas. People were employed on six-month contracts to help build our capacity at the height of the

COVID crisis in Victoria, including the ASRC's own frontline humanitarian services which faced unprecedented demand during the pandemic.

The areas of employment were diverse and varied – leveraging people's existing knowledge and skillset, while supporting skills development for further employment readiness, post-placement. Working for Victoria staff were employed in logistics and operations roles in the ASRC's food warehouse, as paralegals and bi-cultural health workers, and in support and technical roles in marketing, supporter and customer care, IT and in a range of data, research and reporting roles.



For some, this enhanced their skills within an area of expertise, building professional contacts that can act as referees. For others, their placement helped them overcome the barrier of a lack of Australian workplace experience, which can stifle long-term engagement with the labor market.

The objectives of the ASRC Working for Victoria Initiative were to:

- restore income and stabilise the lives and livelihoods of people seeking asylum who had lost jobs or work hours during the Covid-19 Pandemic
- maintain recruits' work skills, employability, and career adaptability into the future

- enable people to contribute to their communities, and
- enhance the service capability of the ASRC by placing people seeking asylum (their lived experience, expertise and voices) at the heart of the organisation's communications and service delivery

Working for Victoria was an opportunity to not only provide employment to people seeking asylum, but to build capacity and opportunity for our members in the medium to long-term, and support them to secure new work opportunities after their time at the ASRC. This was coupled by intensive training and mentorship of participants, including a midway skills and workplace conference for all employees, led by ASRC staff.

Impressively, the outcomes of the Initiative, as qualified by the Centre for Social Impact, were immense. These included:

- an increase in digital and soft skills
- increased confidence to participate in the Australian workforce
- better access to income that supports general wellbeing and health.

The ASRC's Working for Initiative delivered a Social Return on Investment of 1.21, demonstrating a significant benefit to society. Almost 70% of the people employed with the ASRC as part of the initiative had gone on to secure new roles, predominantly full-time and in their preferred fields, within two months of finishing their contracts. The experience has provided a catalyst for career restoration and recovery for many who had prior professional experience.

There is no greater evidence of the success of our Working for Victoria Initiative than being offered a second round of funding and we recruited an additional 24 people seeking asylum in new support roles within the ASRC in May 2021 on six-month contracts. Further, the two recommendations of the formal evaluation, including 'valuing and recognising lived experience as a skill for service design' are now embedded focus points of our new Strategic Plan.

The ASRC partnered with the Centre for Social Impact at Swinburne University to undertake a research study that would report on the value and impact of the Initiative on people seeking asylum and the community. More on this report can be read at: [www.asrc.org.au/resources/publications/](http://www.asrc.org.au/resources/publications/)



“

It's my first office experience in Australia and I've been able to adapt myself well to office-based work. It's been very educational – I've learned something new almost every day. I noticed a big improvement even over the past month in my English, due to writing emails, recipes and project plans and having to think in English all the time.”

— Luka\*



For people like Luka\* the ASRC's Working for Victoria Initiative has created a pathway for skills development and career progression. Starting work as a Foodbank Delivery Driver with the ASRC's Community Food Program in the first round of Working for Victoria funding, Luka\* demonstrated reliability and adaptability, during a year of rapid change. Luka\* rejoined the ASRC team in May 2021 as a Foodbank Support Assistant, in a role that utilised his statistical knowledge and provided an opportunity for further career development.



## A voice for human rights & systemic social change

The ASRC's vision for systemic social change is centred on effective advocacy, attitude change and policy reform. Our advocacy work over the years has transformed the ASRC into a key refugee campaigning organisation in Australia. Leveraging our strengths and leading for change gives us the best chance to achieve our vision that people seeking asylum can live safely, sustainably, independently and equally. Central to our top-down and bottom-up grassroots approach is having people with lived experience play a lead role in all elements of our systemic advocacy work.

### Our role as advocates and allies

Throughout the year, we made sure the voices of people seeking asylum and the need to protect their human rights were heard by the Government, legal authorities and the media.

To drive effective social change in 2020-21, our advocacy work was informed by the people who are impacted by asylum policy. Working closely in partnership with people seeking asylum, the ASRC pursued policy changes that would have the most significant and positive impact in the lives of the community we support. We focussed our advocacy efforts on detention release and resettlement, safety net and preservation of legal rights and entitlements.

We also supported other sector campaigns such as #HometoBilo and #HandsOffOurCharities to help protect our right to advocate for people seeking asylum and work for systemic change.

### Focus on detention release and reform

Recognising the critical situation in detention across Australia, and offshore in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Nauru, the ASRC realigned our detention work in late 2020 to ensure the best possible support and focus on release for those in detention. While prioritising detention release, we also focused our efforts on creating systemic change across the detention network.

The three ASRC programs focusing on detention share the same strategic goals: detention release and reform, advocating

We provided numerous briefings to politicians on specific issues relating to the lack of access to a safety net, as well as the implementation of an expedited interview deadline for Fast Track applicants, the exclusion of people seeking asylum from Government pandemic supports, increases in court fees and permanent pathways and family reunion for refugees on Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs).

We continued to work closely with the refugee sector on the #NobodyLeftBehind campaign and contributed to broader social services advocacy around extension of a safety net for people on temporary visas.

### Preservation of legal rights and entitlements

Our law reform efforts included participation in roundtables and policy forums at all Government levels. In addition to contributing to joint sector statements, delegations to Canberra, briefings and input into policy development we also contributed to six Submissions to Parliamentary and Senate inquiries, to help uphold peoples' rights to justice including advocating against increasing the Minister's powers to detain people, highlighting the issues facing people on temporary visas, calling for people to be granted a safety need and resisting proposed court fee increases.

A major achievement was securing opposition to the passage of the Migration Amendment (Prohibiting Items in Immigration Detention Facilities) Bill, which sought to ban people in detention facilities from having access to their mobile phones. This included meeting with politicians, providing a sector advocacy brief to ensure coordinated lobbying, providing comment to various media outlets, and briefing UN Special Rapporteurs. These efforts, in addition to a public mobilisation strategy which engaged hundreds of thousands of people, resulted in the majority of Senators opposing the bill.

### Systemic change through collaboration

We led sector collaboration to advocate against the passage of three concerning Bills before Parliament and were called on for our expertise in migration law and our understanding of the on the ground situation facing people seeking asylum and refugees during Parliamentary sittings periods.

Additionally, we contributed to the Victoria Law Reform Committee's Inquiry into Sexual Offences by providing information on the specific barriers facing women seeking asylum in accessing the justice system.

## My voice for freedom

It feels like someone has sliced open my neck and I have not yet died. Every day is incredibly painful. We are innocent. We sought asylum, but instead of being given safety we were punished. For eight years I was held in detention. We were never told when we would be released. We were separated from our families. For months at a time we were locked inside, unable to feel the sun on our skin.

Now some of us are outside. But we are suffering on temporary visas. There is no certainty in our future. We cannot endure any more pain. We want to be free. I have never really had a permanent home. When I was a child in Sri Lanka, we were always on the move because of the war. Thousands of innocent Tamil people were murdered. Not long after the government announced that any Tamil person could be arrested without reason, my parents told me I needed to leave: 'Anywhere you live, we will be happy. So long as you are alive. That's all we need.' I was twenty years old and alone when I left my country. I registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Malaysia. They interviewed me and recognised me as a refugee. But their recognition didn't give me anything except a card that said I was a 'refugee'. I had no citizenship, no passport, no support and no options for building a life.

I came to Australia by boat. We were seeking safety. I thought they were welcoming us when we arrived. I thought I would be able to start my new life. I believed my dreams would come true.

We were separated into two groups. One group of people were kept on Christmas Island and eventually they were sent to Australia; the other group was exiled to

Manus Island in Papua New Guinea. To this day we don't know on what basis they chose the two groups.

I was among those transferred to Manus. The UNHCR rules state that it should only take a maximum of six months to process a refugee application. I spent eight years in detention.

The first of us to die was Reza Barati. We carried him to the gates and begged the guards to take him for emergency medical treatment. He did not get treatment. His body lay waiting at the gates for hours. The next day we found out he had died.

Year after year, I watched my friends die. They lost their lives and their futures waiting for freedom. We screamed but our screams were not heard. Every morning I woke up with one dream in my mind – my only dream, which is freedom. But when I thought about my situation, tears fell from my eyes. Day after day, my situation remained unchanged.

I didn't have any solution to release my pain. We had no control over our lives or our bodies. Even criminals know the length of their sentence, but in our case we were detained indefinitely.

They chose to forget that we are human beings, not border protection tools. After six years of unbearable pain, I attempted suicide by taking an overdose of pills. Because of this, I was transferred to the Mantra hotel prison in Preston, Melbourne. I was expecting better conditions there than in PNG – perhaps I would finally get the mental health care that I needed to recover. Instead, they kept me inside a hotel room for nine months. Without sunlight on my skin or fresh air in my lungs. How did being locked in a room help me?

I have survived to this day because of the love from thousands of wonderful Australian friends who have supported us through this suffering. Their protests speak truth to power; they have touched our lives with compassion. We would be dead without them.

Minutes after I was finally released, I spoke to mainstream media at a press conference organised by ASRC to appeal for freedom for those friends still detained. This led to an ABC 7.30 Report interview.

In the past few months since my 'release', I have worked tirelessly to continue my advocacy. I have spoken to hundreds of students about my experiences, I've met with politicians in Canberra and I've appeared in exhibitions, magazines – I even went on stage at a concert.

And now through an ASRC paid internship, I am sharing the expertise from my lived experience with others and further consolidating my advocacy skills. Networking with other people with lived experience to assist in amplifying their voices has also been a big part of my work.

Although some of us have been 'released' from detention, many of my friends are still imprisoned indefinitely. Even for those of us who have been 'released', our temporary protection visas offer no certainty.

I will not stop until every one of my friends has found what they came here for: permanent safety and freedom. Every weekend I go to a new place in Sydney and try to relax my mind and forget about my past. I want to celebrate my happiness. We cannot endure any more pain. We want to be free.

— Thanush, Human Rights Advocate and Medevac Refugee



## Access to justice & protecting human rights

The Human Rights Law Program (HRLP) is the ASRC's Community Legal Centre providing free and specialist legal advice and representation to people seeking asylum at all stages of the refugee determination process. We work with people living in the community as well as in immigration detention to ensure that people seeking Australia's protection are treated fairly, with dignity and in accordance with international human rights standards and refugee law.

### Providing increased access to justice

The HRLP works to give people seeking asylum the best possible chance of a fair legal outcome and durable protection in Australia to prevent their return to situations of persecution and harm in their home country.

Despite lengthy lockdowns and moving to a remote model of service with a significantly reduced volunteer workforce, we assisted 1,111 clients across 903 legal matters during the year. We provided more people with access to justice this year, providing full legal representation to 441 clients and families and a further 462 clients and their families received a level of assistance through our legal clinics or staff lawyers. The remote service model, while ensuring the continuity of service, presented particular challenges for some client cohorts (particularly those facing family violence or pursuing gender-based claims) as legal appointments had to be done in their homes over the phone.

We saw similar levels of new requests for legal assistance this year. Of the 1,332 new requests for help, we provided legal advice and assistance in 818 cases and 563 of these were provided with substantive legal assistance by either being allocated to a legal clinic or daytime lawyer. Through our Wednesday Night Clinics, a generalist refugee law clinic, operated by legal volunteers and paralegals under the supervision of an ASRC lawyer, we offered 360 appointments, helping 293 people with their legal matters.



A further 103 people facing gender-based persecution in their home countries were provided legal assistance through our specialised Gender Clinic. Now in its sixth year, the Gender Clinic aims to protect people who are at risk of family violence or harm due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. The Clinic also assists people experiencing or at risk of family violence in their home country and Australia.

Despite the pandemic, our Phase 2 Accreditation as a Community Legal Centre under the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) was confirmed and our accreditation under Phase 3 of the new National Accreditation Scheme (NAS) was progressed.

In addition to providing direct legal assistance and fighting for individuals' visas, the HRLP continued to work collaboratively with our Campaigns and Advocacy Program and sector partners for systemic change. By contributing to law reform processes and advocating for the human rights of refugees and people seeking asylum with politicians from all parties and in the media, our efforts sought to reverse the many

punitive legal measures and policies introduced by successive governments designed to deter people from pursuing their asylum claims. (Refer to "A Voice for Human Rights and Systemic Social Change" for more information).

### Fighting for detention release and improved conditions

A significant number of our clients are in immigration detention. This includes people in offshore detention in Nauru and Papua New Guinea and Medevac refugees transferred to Australia from offshore facilities who are now living in Australian detention centres or designated hotel detention. Where people are eligible, we assist with their visa applications while also pressing for them to be released from detention and advocating for improvement in accountability for their treatment while in detention.

We secured visas and the release of 18 detention clients, some of whom had been held in immigration detention by the Australian Government for more than six years.

In addition to providing direct legal assistance to detention clients, we helped achieve improvements in detention conditions for a further 27 people, including the provision of medical treatment, through 46 complaints lodged with the Department, Human Rights Commission or Ombudsman on behalf of detained clients.

Of particular concern this year was the poor Government response to the risk posed by COVID-19, the reopening of the Christmas Island detention facility, the continued use of hotels for detaining people transferred to Australia under the Medevac legislation, and the release of some people while leaving others inexplicably and arbitrarily detained.

We continued to advocate for people held in detention, demanding accountability for incidents of disproportionate or unlawful use of force against detainees and protested the transfer of detainees to other detention centres away from their families and their legal, health or community supports. We also demanded independent investigation and accountability for the unrest which occurred at the Christmas Island detention centre in January 2021, and called for the Centre to be permanently closed.

### Fast Track procedural unfairness

Another cohort of people who faced a further spike in procedural unfairness this year were those subjected to the Government's so-called 'Fast Track' process, impacting people who arrived in Australia by boat on or after 13 August 2013.

In April the Government imposed a deadline of 30 June to complete all remaining Fast Track applicants' interviews. Fast Track applicants were provided with only two weeks notice of their primary assessment application interviews, providing insufficient time for people to engage with their lawyers and update their applications which had been lodged seven to eight years prior.

Through additional resourcing and outreach to affected communities we provided assistance to Fast Track clients, managing 157 individual inquiries and providing ongoing assistance to 55 families with their Fast Track interviews (including application updates, interview attendance, post-interview submissions).

Working with other legal organisations, we demanded the Department modify aspects of the process and provided regular documentation highlighting the predicted problems being faced by applicants now being rushed through the process and not provided with conditions to ensure standards of procedural fairness.



### Building the sector's capacity to help

We continued to build valuable relationships with community legal centres, private law firms and barristers to expand the capacity of the legal sector in meeting the needs of people seeking asylum. The growth and consolidation of these partnerships increased our reach and capacity to help more people through:

- the collaborative Visa Cancellation Working Group, which provided additional pro-bono support to people whose visas have been cancelled
- a regular sector meeting to share resources and discuss trends in sexual orientation, gender identity, and family violence based claims for protection
- increased legal education to the LGBTQIA+ community and those facing family violence
- implementation of collaborative legal strategies to secure the release of immigration detainees and increased referrals to partners to bring court actions for detained clients
- improving the education of partners and increasing their ability to provide pro-bono assistance on refugee legal matters.

### Strategic litigation targets systemic issues

We ran a number of judicial review and strategic litigation cases in the courts, covering a wide range of systemic issues with significant legal outcomes.

We won a High Court matter (Plaintiff M7/2021 v. Minister for Home Affairs) which gave our client another chance to put forward his claims for protection which related to his sexual orientation. This case highlighted the serious legal barriers and prejudice that LGBTQIA+ clients face when seeking asylum and the importance of legal representation.

We won a matter in the Federal Circuit Court (FCC) (CRW20 v Minister for Immigration & Anor [2021] FCCA 18) challenging the legal reasonableness of the Immigration Assessment Authority's (IAA's) refusal to provide an extension of time for providing submissions under the IAA's new Practice Direction, creating a precedent to benefit others facing similar issues in their cases.



1,111

people received legal assistance



818

new legal assistance requests supported



18

people were released from detention with visas



43

temporary or permanent protection visas secured



55

families supported with Fast Track interviews

Significant legal cases 2020-21

There were many important wins for our clients over the past year. These involved issues pertaining to detention, LGBTQIA+ claims, bridging visa issues, SHEV renewal challenges and issues of family reunification. Below is a snapshot of some of the cases which highlight the many flaws in our legal system and the sheer unfairness and cruel treatment facing refugees and people seeking asylum.

Detention

We assisted a long standing detained client to be released from closed detention to hospital, and then later to be completely released on a bridging visa. He arrived by boat in 2013 and was held in continuous arbitrary detention for more than 7 years. He became very unwell and spent almost a full year in hospital, and was also at times detained in hospital under the Mental Health Act and facing involuntary electroconvulsive therapy treatment. We succeeded in having the guards withdrawn from guarding our client while he was detained at hospital. It was a long process of negotiation, however the hospital agreed to take responsibility for his security. This was a huge relief for our client whose mental and physical health recovery was being retarded by the presence of the guards who were also preventing him from undertaking rehabilitation exercises in the outdoors and attending the gym. He eventually recovered enough to be discharged from hospital and able to take up his Bridging Visa E while living in the community. While he still has an ongoing court case regarding his protection visa and therefore no durable protection as yet, his recovery is truly amazing as he has shown such courage over such a long time, and it is fantastic to see him finally have the chance to enjoy some freedom. This case highlights the serious and enduring impacts that detention has on people seeking asylum's mental and physical health and the difficulties that clients face to access medical treatment in dignity.

Bridging visa limbo

We secured a bridging visa for an elderly client who arrived in Australia in 2010 and who has been left unlawful and in legal limbo for many years. Unlike most of our other clients who arrived by boat before 2012 who were invited to apply for protection visas in 2019, he and at least 50

others around the country, were cruelly and inexplicably left out of this opportunity. Around three months ago, we finally secured the opportunity for him to lodge a protection visa application, and also for a bridging visa with work rights and medicare. He has suffered major mental health issues, to the point he was made an involuntary patient in 2011 before finally being released into community detention in 2012 - a credit to his resilience for re-engaging in the very process that had harmed him. His case shows the arbitrariness and cruelty of how the government treats people seeking asylum who arrive by boat, including by denying them bridging visas to live with dignity and safety while their protection claims are assessed.

SHEV renewal

We secured a SHEV renewal for a client who arrived as a 16 year old unaccompanied minor from Afghanistan and was granted a TPV in October 2019. In 2018 he was part of the group of people affected by the Ashmore Reef decision, meaning that he should not have been treated as a fast track applicant and given more rights in the process. A further legal consequence of this was that he was barred from lodging another visa application. Despite our efforts to get the bar lifted in time, he was unable to apply for renewal of his TPV by the deadline and became unlawful. We pushed hard for a bar lift from the Minister and two months later he was finally allowed to apply for his SHEV renewal and was granted a bridging visa. Given his circumstances we pushed for early processing of his SHEV visa (as there are still thousands of people whose first applications still have not been decided and hundreds more waiting in the queue for renewal of their temporary visas). Soon after this, his SHEV was granted. Our client had been able to secure a university scholarship to study politics but only received a partial scholarship and was

unable to continue his study due to his bridging visa status. Hopefully now he can continue his study and move on to a better phase of his life. This case highlights the unfair treatment of people who arrived by boat via the Fast Track process and the prohibitive legislative framework that creates both intended and unintended barriers for people to apply for visas unless the Minister personally intervenes.

IAA

We won a case for a Sri Lankan Tamil woman and her children before the Immigration Assessment Authority. Less than 6% of Sri Lankan cases are remitted by the IAA so this is a rare and significant win. She and her children fled by boat in 2013 but it was only as the boat departed that she realised all the women and children had been pushed onto the boat and her husband was not on board. He remained trapped for several more years before managing to get to Australia and he now has a separate case from her and their children. She was successful due to her particular profile and experiences and the gender-based risks she and the children would face returning to Sri Lanka as a female-headed family. They will now complete health and character checks, and will then be granted a 5 year protection visa. Hopefully her husband will later succeed too, or else they may later face separation again. This case highlights the difficulties that people seeking asylum face in having their cases fairly heard before the IAA and also demonstrates the complexities for families who have their protection applications being heard separately due to the legislative framework which prevents them from being joined at a later date.

TPV - Temporary Protection Visa  
SHEV - Safe Haven Enterprise Visa

Acknowledging 20 years of hope, dignity & justice

When the ASRC began as a community-run food bank in June 2001, our aim was simple - to prevent refugees and people seeking asylum from going without food for their families. Now 20 years on, touching on the lives of more than 20,000 people, and with the unwavering support of our community of compassion, the ASRC is affectionately known as the 'Home of Hope' - a place of welcome and safety for people seeking asylum and refugees.



On the 8th of June 2021, we acknowledged our 20th anniversary and reflected on the beginnings of the ASRC with a view to the future too, as Australia's largest independent human rights organisation delivering support to people seeking asylum.

For two decades, we have stood as a force for change for people seeking asylum and as a beacon of hope and decency. In our first ten years of existence, the ASRC helped over 7,000 people seeking asylum and now in our 20th year, we welcome more than 7,000 people through our doors annually.

Together with our community, we have never wavered in our commitment to support and empower those who came here in search of safety and freedom, and to do so with compassion and dignity. Our 20th anniversary provided an important moment for us to pause and acknowledge all that has been achieved in the fight for justice for and with people seeking asylum. It also provided a moment to recognise and celebrate people seeking asylum for their strength, resilience and capability to thrive in Australia - when given the opportunities to access what they have a right to and a place where they are welcomed.

While we know the challenges ahead are significant, we know that with the continued support of this powerful movement, we will continue to do good work, make an impact and help drive the refugee movement forward. What started as that Foodbank, the ASRC now encapsulates more than 30 different programs to provide people a hand up and advance their future.

Twenty years on, we have embarked on a new three-year Strategic Plan that will be more ambitious and courageous than ever before, centred on the voices, experiences and needs of the people we support (refer 'Looking to the future' for more information).

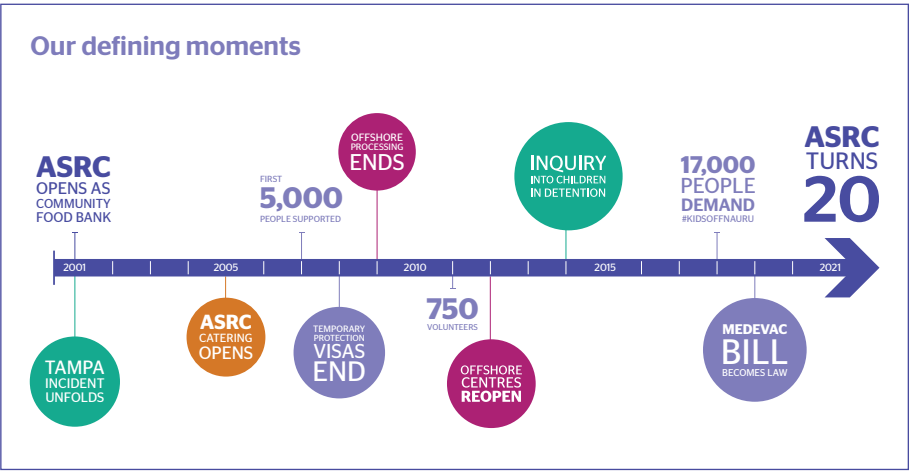
At our 6th ASRC Telethon on World Refugee Day (June 20th) we shared our new strategic vision with our community and announced a new multi-million dollar and multi-year investment to help build the capacity of the refugee sector and help fund refugee-led organisations and projects that power change. On a day that belongs to refugees and people seeking asylum we amplified their voices which inspired more than 15,000 people to make a donation, part

of which each year will help build a refugee-led future. Looking to the next 20 years, this will be the ASRC's future, and it's legacy.

Backed by our community of compassion, we will continue to lead with our shared values and centre the voices of lived experience to realise our vision that people seeking asylum can live safely, sustainably, independently and equally. Thank you for being a part of this movement and making change possible.

Our achievements and defining moments

During our 20 year history, hundreds of thousands of Australians have come together to build a movement of hope and compassion for refugees and people seeking asylum. Every act of kindness and compassion has helped transform the lives of more than 20,000 people seeking asylum. Visit [www.asrc.org.au/20th-anniversary/our-defining-moments/](http://www.asrc.org.au/20th-anniversary/our-defining-moments/) to look back at our biggest achievements and defining moments.







256

jobs were secured by people with the support of our Employment Program



759

people were actively engaged with our Employment Program, with 360 new member referrals received



61

university scholarships and fee waivers secured by ASRC members



1,110

online hours of English classes offered



260

people referred to VET courses

## Empowerment through employment & education

People seeking asylum face unique and complex barriers with finding employment and are one of the few in Australia who are denied income support while looking for work. During the pandemic, people seeking asylum were further excluded from the JobKeeper and JobSeeker safety nets due to their visa status. As a result of growing unemployment, demand for employment support increased significantly this year.

### Building economic security through employment

In 2020-21 our efforts to enhance the economic security and inclusion of people seeking asylum through employment continued. The Employment Program supports people seeking asylum to find safe, suitable, and sustainable work in their preferred fields and supports people to succeed on the job and progress their careers in Australia. This allows people seeking asylum to support themselves and their families, enhancing their personal and economic agency, social participation, and overall quality of life.

Because of the barriers people seeking asylum face when finding employment they often work in casual or part time jobs in sectors that were most affected during the pandemic. Due to mass job losses and restrictions that forced the closure of much of the business sector, we saw an increased need for employment support this year with 759 people actively engaged in our Employment Program, of which half were new referrals.

We delivered individual employment casework support to 265 people, providing personalised, in-depth support to help people become skilled, independent job-seekers in their own right. Through our employment preparation support and strong partnerships with 156 employers including 46 new employers, we referred 369 work-ready candidates and helped 256 people secure new jobs (including 36 within our social enterprises).

This year, we also matched 22 people with professional mentors from their industry to help them navigate their career aspirations and we are close to achieving gender parity in job placements.

In June 2020, the Employment and HR Programs led the Working for Victoria Initiative, directly employing 106 people seeking asylum in six-month roles across the ASRC. After completing their contracts with the ASRC approximately 70% of people went on to secure full time or temporary jobs. (Refer to 'Working for Victoria Initiative provides employment' to learn more).



“

I improved a lot, learned how to target my job search, aimed higher and applied only for jobs that were related to my goals and profession. I have now found a job that I wanted.”

— Rahul\*

### Empowerment through higher education

Through the Asylum Seeker Vocational Education and Training (ASVET) Program, which we manage on behalf of the Victorian Government, we provide advice and referrals so eligible people can study with Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). The only program of its kind in Australia, the ASVET Program also supports education providers to facilitate the engagement and enrolment of eligible students.

While education and retraining remained an important option in the pandemic due to growing unemployment, the need to secure paid work (over study) resulted in less referrals being made and a reduction in education appointments compared to pre-pandemic times. Despite this, 532 appointments to assess access to VET courses were undertaken and 260 people were then referred to a VET course. The disparity between male and female referrals continues to rise in the pandemic - with 21% more males referred than females (as women are most likely the primary caregivers and their ability to study was impacted most in the pandemic). This is an issue the ASRC continues to work to address.

In pre-pandemic times, people seeking asylum are able to drop into English language classes, catering to all levels of fluency. This year we offered 1,110 online hours of English classes across 578 student contact hours. Challenges with home learning during lockdowns, generalised anxiety, and low levels of digital access and literacy impacted attendance rates. An additional 400 contact hours of English

classes were delivered by our Pathways to Employment (PTE) advisors and teachers via phone calls to students with low digital literacy skills. This provided an additional opportunity to give job-seeking advice and address social isolation.

### A holistic, informed and centralised service

The Empowerment Program facilitates social and community activities for people seeking asylum to build confidence and agency and help people immerse themselves in their new community. In 2020-21 the Empowerment Program moved to the Humanitarian Services stream of programs to provide frontline critical support and commence the change to a central access model - creating a single intake point for becoming an ASRC member. We conducted 264 new member intakes, mostly remotely. The Empowerment Team was unable to run group-based engagement activities for much of 2020-21 however during this time, staff were re-deployed to offer critical wellbeing support to new presentations of people in need - some who were re-presenting, impacted by the pandemic after having previously been living independently in the community. When activities resumed, 77 adults and children attended the monthly outings such as beach days in partnership with Surf Life Saving Victoria, with attendees self-reporting increased positive mental health and well being directly following those activities.

As part of the Working for Victoria Initiative we hired 12 new staff with lived experience of seeking asylum to help improve member engagement and inform our operations and service delivery. We also engaged 100 members via phone calls to provide feedback on the ASRC's service delivery in response to the pandemic. Respondents emphasised their satisfaction with the practical support they had received, particularly help with food, income and medication and then support with education and employment, legal support and English classes.

“ These outings provide comfort to those (of us) who are living in stress, trauma and anxiety, some comfort time, relaxation and time to learn from each other.”

— Diya\*





92

people employed in  
social enterprises

43,654

combined hours of employment  
provided, generating \$1.65 million  
in combined revenue

9,999

domestic and commercial  
cleaning jobs

7,015

ASRC Meals ordered

## Impact through social enterprises

The ASRC Cleaning and ASRC Catering social enterprises create meaningful opportunities and employment pathways for people seeking asylum. In supportive and professional environments, participants gain direct experience of the Australian workplace, with training that improves their longer-term employability.

The ASRC's social enterprises were significantly affected by the COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions. From July to October 2020, ASRC Catering remained closed and ASRC Cleaning experienced a 90% downturn in business. Cancellations of services and lockdowns forced us to look for new ways to provide stability and financial security for our staff, while supporting community health and wellbeing, and the focus remained on creating employment pathways for people seeking asylum.

During the closures we committed to pay all casual staff across the enterprises for their cancelled shifts or hours lost due to lockdowns, ensuring they would receive a stable wage during uncertain times. Where possible, furloughed staff were redeployed to support other programs in the organisation. The cost incurred to the organisation was significant (in excess of \$1.26 million) but meant both enterprises were well resourced to resume operations and plan their business recoveries, while in the meantime, offering additional skills training to staff. ASRC Cleaning returned to pre-COVID-19 activity across income and hours of employment by January 2021. By the end of June 2021, ASRC Catering had also begun to return to pre-pandemic revenue and both enterprises recommenced their social impact measurements.

### ASRC Catering

ASRC Catering employed 30 people seeking asylum, generating 17,476 hours of paid employment. The enterprise was closed from May - September 2020 and generated 57% less revenue than the previous year.

When the enterprise re-opened in October, the new range of heat-at-home ASRC Meals drove business recovery, generating \$240k

for the year. This included being part of Moving Feast, the pandemic-inspired meals distribution collective, and ASRC Catering also played a key role in the July 2020 snap-lockdown of housing towers across Victoria, preparing some +5,000 meals. Traditional function catering begun to return in December and once again became the dominant activity, generating \$290k for the year. However, function catering revenue over this period was volatile due to snap lockdowns and changing restrictions. ASRC Meals provided stability in operations and work hours for staff, alongside new product innovations such as corporate gift hampers.

[www.catering.asrc.org.au](http://www.catering.asrc.org.au)  
[www.meals.asrc.org.au](http://www.meals.asrc.org.au)

### ASRC Cleaning

ASRC Cleaning continued to generate strong support from the community and deliver similar levels of impact, despite the forced closure of non-NDIS domestic cleaning services and some non-essential commercial services during lockdowns. From July to October, ASRC Cleaning saw a 90% downturn in business. As soon as restrictions eased, domestic cleaning and commercial office cleaning resumed. Across our domestic and commercial portfolio, we employed 62 people seeking asylum and provided 26,178 hours of paid employment, only a slight decrease of 8% on last year, with the highly sustainable commercial and social procurement of contracts supporting people's long-term employment.

Staff were also provided additional job opportunities at ASRC Catering as delivery drivers and support staff to help with the high demand for the new ASRC Meals service.

[www.cleaning.asrc.org.au](http://www.cleaning.asrc.org.au)

### CASE STUDY

“I feel free living in Melbourne, I can walk down the street without fear. I am proud of who I am as a transgender woman and I am proud of what I have achieved.

My dream is to open a small restaurant and start over again. In my home country I was running a catering business mostly for weddings and other events. We would cook in huge pots and make enough to feed 800 guests.

For nearly four years I've been working here at ASRC Catering. In May last year I was promoted to Team Leader Cook. I have proven myself here and earned responsibility and respect.

I am really enjoying this position. I am in charge of deliveries, meal preparations and supervising the kitchen so that everything runs smoothly, which it does most of the time but sometimes it does get crazy when we are very busy.

What I am learning here is preparing me to pursue my dream to open my own restaurant. I am so proud to be a team leader, not just for myself but to inspire other staff.”

— Janu





# Building a movement that makes change possible

The ASRC takes a whole-of-society approach to lead effective social change in partnership with the wider refugee sector. We engage and mobilise diverse segments of society in large-scale campaigns that raise awareness, inspire new conversations, help change attitudes and provide our movement with a chance to take political and financial actions that make social change possible.

## A movement that demands change

In 2020-21 our online community grew to more than 442,000 compassionate supporters and advocates. Together they were stronger than ever in their united solidarity with people seeking asylum and their commitment to creating a fairer and more welcoming Australia for refugees.

We continued to mobilise our community around advocacy campaigns, both online and at the grassroots level, with a strong focus on detention advocacy. Working across the broad refugee sector and in partnership with ally organisations, local community groups and with people living the experience of seeking asylum, we played a leading role in the #TimeForAHome campaign. More than +140 organisations signed on to the campaign and +37,000 Australians signed the supporting petition calling for the release and resettlement of refugees and people seeking asylum in

immigration detention in Australia. The enormous grassroots collaboration persuaded decision makers and contributed to the release of almost 100 people from arbitrary detention throughout the year.

We supported hundreds of thousands of people to take action in support of refugees and social change. We mobilised 60,000 people to call Senator Jackie Lambie which held back the dangerous Migration Amendment Bill that had sought to prohibit key items in immigration detention facilities. A further 1,000 people attended an online rally centred on the voices of lived experience.

## Advocacy at the grassroots

Our team of community organisers in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland continued to work with local grassroots groups, providing support and resources and offering training in messaging,



conversation skills, and activist strategy. We worked directly with people in immigration detention, and we also supported and trained 438 people who are part of the ASRC's community of advocates to have Breakthrough Conversations on refugee issues, in order to affect change.

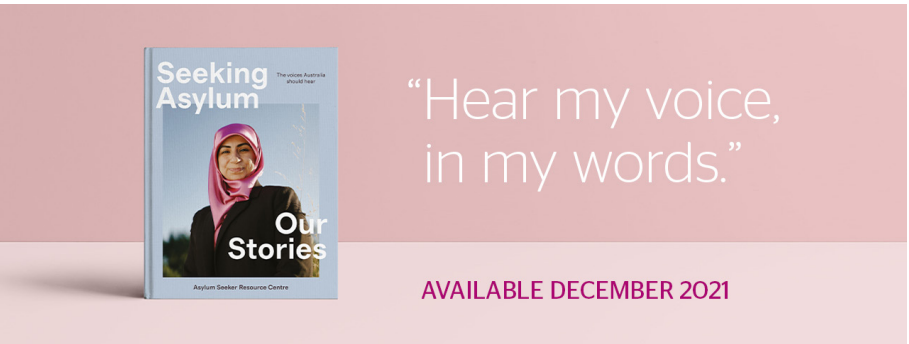
## People seeking asylum driving change

At the heart of our work and this powerful movement are people seeking asylum driving the change. By centering the voices of lived experience, and sharing their stories of hardship, resilience and courage we can hope to humanise the politicised issue of seeking asylum and return to asylum policy that is grounded in fairness and safety, not politics.

Underpinning this strategy is the commitment that people with lived experience lead the conversation on the issues they face. Through our Community Advocacy and Power Program (CAPP) we trained 25 people with lived experience to become powerful advocates and leaders in the refugee movement, work that continued via each participant's individual community projects. We also continued our support of a speaker's program this year and handed the microphone to advocates with lived experience at various ASRC advocacy and brand events including the ASRC Telethon on World Refugee Day which reached more than 1.9 million people. In June the ASRC-backed book Seeking Asylum: Our Stories became available for pre-order. Featuring the stories of 23 people who have lived the experience of seeking asylum, 100% of net proceeds are dedicated to funding projects that support refugee-led initiatives or projects like CAPP that build peoples' capacity to tell their story in their own way.

## Merchandise: A new way to show support

People express their support for the refugee movement in a variety of ways. In late June 2020 we piloted a small range of ASRC branded merchandise items - giving supporters a way to demonstrate their solidarity with refugees, express their values and support the ASRC, with 100% of net proceeds returned to fund our work. Based on insights from supporter feedback, the pilot range of products included responsibly sourced t-shirts, tote bags and stationery, marked with the value-based statement of support "I stand with Refugees" and were launched as part of the ASRC Telethon on World Refugee Day. More than 300 purchases were made during the pilot. In November 2020 we collaborated with Melbourne-based graphic artist Beci Orpin to launch a limited edition range of t-shirts, totes and magnets and



expanded the ASRC range of products to include stationery, tea towels, drink bottles, sweaters and more, including the addition of a "Home of Hope" collection. In 2020-21 more than 1,800 people purchased an ASRC merchandise item, generating \$128,343 in sales, of which 100% of profits were reinvested to help fund ASRC programs and services.

## Community engagement through fundraising events

During the pandemic, our compassionate and diverse community continued to stand with, and fundraise for, refugees and people seeking asylum at record levels. Some purchased a new ASRC merchandise item to wear their support on their sleeve, while others hosted friends and family for a Feast for Freedom in their homes. Others held their own fundraisers for their birthdays or as a way to stay connected to their community during lockdowns. Virtual trivia became a highlight for many through lockdowns, as did Zoom gatherings.

While community fundraising event Run 4 Refugees was cancelled, other community engagement activities reached new participation and fundraising records. More than 1,200 people registered to host a Feast for Freedom in March, cooking recipes gifted by refugees Niro and Aheda and collectively raising \$641,845. Across Australia, more than 5,000 people attended Feast events, celebrating refugees and the things that unite us while having conversations for change. In June, a further 15,000 people were inspired by the voices of people with lived experience at the ASRC Telethon on World Refugee Day, raising a record breaking \$1.67 million

to help create a fairer and more welcoming Australia for refugees.

## Change that is powered by community

As an organisation that is independent of Federal Government funding, we rely on donations from the community to power our work and make change possible. Every dollar donated makes a difference in the lives of people seeking asylum and ensures we can be an independent voice for justice and hold our leaders to account. Beyond funding our service delivery and ongoing advocacy work, a donation to the ASRC is seen as a powerful form of activism by our community and a protest against the poor policies that keep people from rebuilding their lives in safety.

Support from our community of compassion has never been stronger as tens of thousands of people demonstrated their solidarity with a donation. In 2021-21 more than 38,970 people made a donation to an ASRC appeal. A further +2,000 people signed up to become a Champion of Change monthly donor, an annual group of now more than 7,000 that supports our work in the most sustainable of ways.



+100,000

More than +100,000 people took a political action in support of refugees



38,970

people made a donation to an ASRC appeal



15,000

people donated to the ASRC Telethon



+5,000

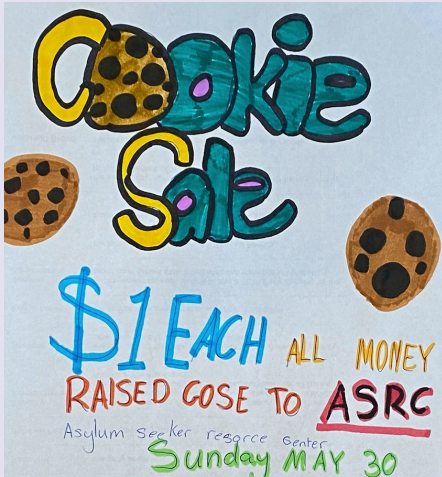
people donated to or took part in a Feast for Freedom



442,000

people in our community standing in solidarity with refugees







## Building capacity through fundraising, philanthropy & partnerships

**Fiercely independent of Federal Government funding, our work is powered by compassionate donors who share our goal that everybody who comes to Australia can live in safety and with dignity. Every gift enables our service delivery and advocacy work and empowers people seeking asylum to thrive in the community. Throughout 2020-21 these gifts ensured the ASRC could make it's most significant investments in responding to people's most critical needs during the pandemic.**

### The importance of individual giving

An individual gift, either on occasion or a monthly basis, is the cornerstone of what makes the ASRC's ongoing work possible. Individual donations from like-minded and passionate supporters are targeted towards the areas of greatest need as well as ensuring the sustainable operation of the ASRC.

The generosity of our donors in 2020-21 was enduring and has allowed us to remain financially strong through the pandemic, while also being able to plan for the future. In total more than 100,000 donations were made to an ASRC appeal, community fundraising activity, as a one-off general donation or as a regular monthly gift and we also welcomed around 19,000 new people into our donor network.

Gifts in Wills continue to be a growing income stream for the ASRC, and play a vital role in ensuring we can continue to protect, support and empower people seeking asylum so they can advance their own futures. A legacy gift supports strategic investments and transformational projects, alongside our ongoing work. In 2021-21 we received 15 bequests left to us by donors in their Will and we thank them and their families and acknowledge the powerful legacy they leave.

Monthly donors are also essential to our sustainability. At the end of 2021-21 we had 7,700 people making a monthly donation through our Champions of Change program, up from 6,300 in the previous

financial year. Approximately 2,000 people made their first regular donation to support our work into the future.

### Building a new hope in Dandenong

A combination of individual giving in the community, philanthropic and grant funding, and a range of partnerships saw the ASRC's Building Hope Appeal provide the final funding required to finish the build, fit out and operational needs of the newly named Refugee Resource Hub. This included essential items such as a lift to enable access, a kitchen and foodbank, education rooms, murals, equipment for fit out, as well as building works. Over a multi-year period, \$2.4 million of funding has delivered the restoration of the new building, it's fit out and secured staff and partner organisations to begin the work of the Hub in 2022.

### The power of your philanthropy

Despite the uncertainty of the pandemic, individuals and families with the capacity to make transformational gifts have continued. We have been fortunate in being able to grow our philanthropic donations and demonstrate the value of our supporters' generosity, through effective communications and impact reports.

Strong relationships with more than 400 financial intermediaries, individuals, families and private ancillary funds during these turbulent times has seen philanthropic contributions increase, with 115 new philanthropists welcomed into our

community of giving. In some cases, donors brought their gifts forward in order to bolster the ASRC's income to ensure services were able to pivot in a timely manner.

For the first time, philanthropic supporters also became involved in the ASRC Telethon on World Refugee Day, providing matched donations commensurate with community support - doubling everyone's impact.

### Grant-making for good

The ASRC proudly partners with a range of trusts and foundations, local governments and the Victorian State Government through single and multi-year grant funding arrangements. These grants support the ASRC to deliver core program activities and projects in line with our Strategic Plan, often targeted at specific projects, programs and outcomes. The 2021-21 financial year was unprecedented, with \$9.97 million of grants expended or recognised in response to the impacts of the pandemic. This included more than \$4.2 million of (mainly) one-off Government grants, with the generosity of trusts and foundations continuing for the majority.

This year the ASRC focussed on securing grants that would further enable us to meet the increasing needs of our members in response to the pandemic. We worked closely with our grant partners to identify areas of need and in response our generous funders provided 31 grants, including 27 philanthropic grants and four government grants totalling \$0.63 million and \$2.72 million respectively of ongoing funding, while Working for Victoria Phase 1 came to its conclusion and Phase 2 began, a secured investment of more than \$4.5 million over two years.

### Sustainable partnerships for long-term impact

The ASRC highly values and is incredibly passionate about fostering long term strategic partnerships. A proud example of our valued, long-standing relationships is that

of the Barlow Foundation who co-fund the Human Rights Law Program's Gender Clinic.

Multi-year funding from the Barlow Foundation enables the ASRC to attract and retain specialist legal staff in an ongoing capacity who are experts in their field and trained to provide specialised legal assistance to the most vulnerable of people seeking asylum who are facing persecution on the basis of their gender or sexuality. Many of these clients are in the harrowing situation of both seeking asylum and experiencing domestic violence, meaning that for many women and their children they're not safe in their home country or in their homes here in Australia. More than 100 individuals were supported this year through the Gender Clinic.

Barlow Foundation generates change in the lives of each and every client of the Gender Clinic while also driving systemic change, through legal advocacy on asylum seeker policy, domestic violence and LGBTQIA+ making Australia a safer place to live not only for people seeking asylum and refugees, but also for all women, children and people who identify as LGBTQIA+.

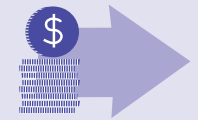
### Our regulatory commitment to our donors

The ASRC is committed to upholding ethical and responsible fundraising practices under the Fundraising Code Authority. As noted in our 2019-20 Annual Report, the ASRC accepted a record \$3.3 million in donations for our 2020 Emergency Appeal. With these funds being dispersed throughout this financial year, a COVID-19 Impact Report was released outlining funding disbursements, which can be viewed at [www.asrc.org.au/publications](http://www.asrc.org.au/publications)

### Sustainable fundraising and marketing practices

Our investment in fundraising grew slightly, with a number of key infrastructure projects, short-term roles and strategic investment for the future rationale. Fundraising expenditure is expected to remain static, while the yield from these investments is realised; the total cost of fundraising as a percentage of fundraising income (excluding grants) was 15%. This reflects a slightly lower return on investment than last year, as every \$1 we invested in fundraising generated a return of approx \$6, whilst still maintaining a strategic level of investment to be able to continue to grow sustainable funding for the organisation, including our social enterprises.

We also know that for many people, their generous gift is a form of advocacy and we're committed to investing further into raising awareness amongst new audiences to help support effective mobilisation strategies that drive change within the community.



## \$9.97 million

of grants expended or recognised in response to the impacts of the pandemic



## \$4.5 million

in funding secured over two years through Working For Victoria Initiative



## 115

new philanthropists welcomed into our community of giving



## 7,700

regular givings supporting our work each month

# A sustainable & thriving organisation

In order to achieve our mission and purpose, the ASRC continues to strive to operate sustainably and ethically to ensure we are accountable to our community and can best serve our members. At the heart of this is our strategy, the workforce that brings it to life and the infrastructure that underpins our capability and capacity to ensure the best outcomes for people seeking asylum.

### Values Refresh

The ASRC's values are a bedrock of our voice, identity and organisational culture, and sit at the centre of decision making in all that we do. As the ASRC entered into its 20th year of operation, with a new and ambitious strategic plan on the horizon, it was timely to reconsider the organisational values that would guide our future endeavours.

Through an extensive participatory process that included staff, volunteers and members, we reviewed our existing values, identified gaps and determined opportunities for our organisation which had grown considerably since our values were first formed. This then connected to the ASRC's future identity and thus began the process of defining our new values.

In the year ahead we will focus on embedding the new values across internal systems, culture and operations to guide all that we do.

The new ASRC Values are:

- Welcoming
- Authentic
- Courageous
- Collaborative

### Responding to the pandemic

A core focus of the organisation has been keeping our doors open to provide help to those who need us during the pandemic. To achieve this, we introduced a range of protocols and mechanisms to support both people and place. Paid pandemic leave became accessible to all staff, including casual staff, ensuring that if our people were sick, needed to isolate or get vaccinated, they could do so safely without fear of losing work or leave entitlements.

Onsite, the ASRC introduced free PPE for the workforce and visitors/members, and maintained a Team A/B functionality across all ASRC sites that ensured the Centre could stay open in spite of COVID-19 cases. A Wellbeing and Safety Manager was also introduced during this time as a key support to staff, especially as working from home arrangements became enduring and thanks to generous partners, staff were afforded care and wellbeing packs throughout the year.

### Strategic Plan 2021 - 2024

As the third year of the 2018 - 2021 strategic plan was coming to its conclusion, the ASRC commenced planning for its new three-year plan, partnering with the Incus Group and led by the Board of the ASRC to focus on four key goals. This process was undertaken with the intentionality of centering lived experience voices in all that we do, with consultation and engagement the most thorough it had ever been. We incorporated the formal feedback of more than 700 people who are members of the ASRC's services in the planning process. For more information on our Strategic Plan head to the back cover of this report.

### A new home in the East set to open

Throughout the year, building works continued on the ASRC's new home in Dandenong. While continual delays occurred due to the impacts of COVID-19 and construction density limits, the building is due to be completed in late 2021. Throughout 2021, a community consultation process began to also name the new Centre so as to reflect its intended future. As we look to open in early 2022, the

Dandenong Integrated Services Hub will now be known as the Refugee Resource Hub - a place of welcome, community partnership and safety for people and their families in Melbourne's south-east.

### Monitoring and Evaluation Review

In 2021 a Monitoring and Evaluation review was conducted to mark the almost 5 years since the organisation made an ongoing commitment and investment into programmatic reporting of outcomes and logic models to ensure our work was making an impact. This review has helped inform a new partnership with the Centre for Social Impact.

### Financial Management

As a complex, multi-layered organisation with significant service expenditure, public income and grants, maintaining high standards of financial reporting and accountability is an ongoing priority. In early 2021, the ASRC continued its annual investment in technology with the introduction of a new accounting system and package designed to meet the growing needs of our social enterprises, income management, extensive and diverse expenditure reporting and overall fiduciary governance of the Board and Finance-Sub-Committee, with outcomes including increased accountability, further reporting transparency and efficiency gains across the organisation, in line with the Australian Account Standards.

# Backed by an army of volunteers

Our volunteers are a vital part of the ASRC community and their continued support during the pandemic has been inspiring. While the numbers of volunteers were reduced during lockdowns, every program across the ASRC felt the benefit and commitment of our army of volunteers in 2020-21. Passionate and tireless in their efforts, their skills and support is critical to our ability to deliver services.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the ASRC. We acknowledge and are grateful to the 1,015 volunteers who together, provided 296,335 hours of their time to ongoing outreach and support for thousands of people seeking asylum.

At the beginning of the pandemic more than 500 volunteers were placed on temporary leave for a range of pandemic rationales, including the pause of work and for health and safety reasons. Others were redeployed where possible. Many volunteers returned to the centre in November which greatly supported service continuity. However many were not in a position to return, which was a continued trend throughout the year.

Interest in volunteering remained high. We had 595 new volunteers fill 98 separate roles. More than 5,000 people also expressed their interest to volunteer with us, despite a reduced number of recruitment rounds and opportunities.

The volunteer roles available continued to be diverse, including legal administration and support, foodbank and warehouse roles, social workers and welfare support, reception and triage staff. We benefited from further skilled volunteering in areas such as ICT, fundraising, marketing, teaching and employment support.

We continued to develop the capability and resources to support the volunteering function, mapping program requirements and implementing a new volunteer supervision and performance management tool for staff.

Our Volunteer Engagement team continued to minimise the impact of COVID-19 on our volunteers and the work they do.

Our response included:

- effective communications regarding lockdowns and operations
- adapting to changing COVID-Safe measures
- weekly video updates and more informative weekly bulletins
- adapting roles to be remote or remote or hybrid.

As we acknowledged the ASRCs 20th year of operation in June, we also acknowledged the 20th anniversary of our longest serving volunteer Rob Mathew. We are incredibly grateful for Rob's contribution and dedication to helping support and empower people seeking asylum.

The National Volunteer Week in May has become an important event to acknowledge and celebrate our volunteer army and the celebrations were held online again.

“When I started volunteering, I didn't think that I would still be needed 20 years later. Sadly people seeking asylum are still being punished for the crime of seeking our help.”

- Rob Mathew



1,015

Volunteers (approx. 173 FTE roles), of which 24 member volunteers



\$11.78 million

in wage value of volunteer time\*

\*As measured under the SCHADS Award, or industry equivalent.



296,335

hours of time and expertise provided by volunteers

Rob Mathew





## Leadership Team

The Leadership Team is comprised of the Chief Executive Officer, General Manager and the Stream Directors. Its primary responsibilities are to: implement the strategic plan; ensure responsible delivery of programs and services in line with funding agreements; manage and develop our people; manage risk and compliance appropriately; role model our values and foster a culture of inclusion, teamwork and accountability.



**Abiola Ajetomobi**  
Innovation Hub



**Anastasia Magriplis**  
Advocacy & Service Operations



**Alan White**  
Fundraising, Marketing & Enterprise



**Gregory Storer**  
General Manager



**Jana Favero**  
Advocacy & Campaigns



**Joanne Kakafikas**  
People & Services  
Acting General Manager



**Kon Karapanagiotidis, OAM**  
CEO & Founder



**Sherrine Clark**  
Humanitarian Services



**Kate Mohay**  
Finance



**Robyn Stevens**  
Human Resources

## The Board

The ASRC Board is the governing arm of the ASRC Association. Its primary responsibilities are the governance and sustainability of the ASRC, as well as strategic, fiduciary and monitoring functions that include ensuring the organisation remains viable and effective, to secure its long-term future.



**Mike Sum**  
Chair



**Rebekah Lautman**



**Marie Sellstrom**



**Greg Tucker**



**Haleh Homaei**



**Chester Hii**

## Financial performance summary

During 2020-21, ASRC continued to expand its direct service delivery to continue to deliver its mission to protect, empower and support people seeking asylum in line with the increased need for these services. Of the \$4.1M surplus for the year, \$3.7 million related to grant income received under the Work for Victoria Initiative to support members during the pandemic through employment.

### Income

Total revenue of \$30.3 million in 2020-21 is slightly higher than prior year (\$28.5 million, 6% increase). Majority of the growth came from grants and donations, with lower than prior year fundraising. JobKeeper and Cash Flow Boosts made up \$1.3 million of 2020-21 income. 2019-20 also saw an in-specie donation of \$2.8 million, and without this donation, income was \$4.6 million higher than prior year.

Social Enterprises continued to be adversely impacted during 2020-21, with restrictions limiting service offerings in Cleaning and Catering; the pivot to take-away reduced the possible impact. Social Enterprises contributed \$1.5 million to the total income, a 39% drop on prior year.

### Reserves and Cash

The organisation's reserves have been lifted to \$18.4 million as a result of the operating surplus for 2020-21. At current activity levels, this equates to approximately nine months of core operating expenditure (above the reserves policy guidance of four to six months - [asrc.org.au/reservespolicy](https://www.asrc.org.au/reservespolicy)). As ASRC does not receive federal funding, maintaining prudent reserves in the current environment protects our independence and sustainability.

Cash and cash equivalents were \$16.6 million as at 30 June 2021 (an increase of \$2.1 million on 2019-20), of which \$1 million relates to grant funds received in advance that are committed to be spent on future programming. The remaining funds have come from fundraising and philanthropic

support, as well as one-off funding directly related to Covid-19. These funds will continue to support the increased demand in operational spend due to the increased needs of members as a result of the pandemic, as well as investment in the new strategic plan that will see ASRC better support its members into the future. This includes investment into Refugee Leadership, and our Social Enterprises.

### Assets

Total assets increased by \$1.7 million from the prior year, predominantly from higher cash reserves. Property, plant and equipment has also increased as work has progressed on the new Dandenong site opening 2022, offset by a reduction in trade and other receivables.

### Liabilities

Total liabilities reduced in 2020-21 by \$2.3 million compared to 2019-20. Prior year liabilities included a large liability for contract liabilities (\$3.6 million), which reduced to \$1 million in 2020-21. This is predominantly related to a grant agreement that enabled ASRC to employee people seeking asylum during the pandemic, providing income and stability for six months to those employed.

### Cash flow

ASRC reported a positive cash flow in 2020-21 of \$2.1 million, 56% lower than 2019-20. Net cash inflow from operating activities was \$3.5 million, offset by net cash outflow of investing activities of \$1 million and net cash outflow from financing

activities of \$0.3 million. Investing activities is predominantly investment in the Refugee Resource Hub in Dandenong opening in 2022.

### Expenditure

Total expenditure for 2020-21 was \$26.2 million, \$6.2 million (31%) higher than 2019-20. The main areas of additional spend were:

\$4.6 million increase in direct service delivery, including legal representation, food, housing, social services, education and employment support.

\$1 million increase in Fundraising and Marketing costs to support increased income, social enterprise marketing and awareness raising in the community.

\$0.5 million increase in Centre operations as ASRC continues to invest in systems, processes and governance to ensure ongoing growth across our programming, social enterprises and fundraising.

\$0.2 million investment increase in advocating for the rights of people seeking asylum.

A drop in expenditure for social enterprises of \$0.1 million, due to the limitations on operations.

NOTE: The 2020-21 ASRC full financials can be viewed via the ASRC website at [www.asrc.org.au/publications](https://www.asrc.org.au/publications)

6%  
increase in total revenue

\$2.3 million  
increase in donations

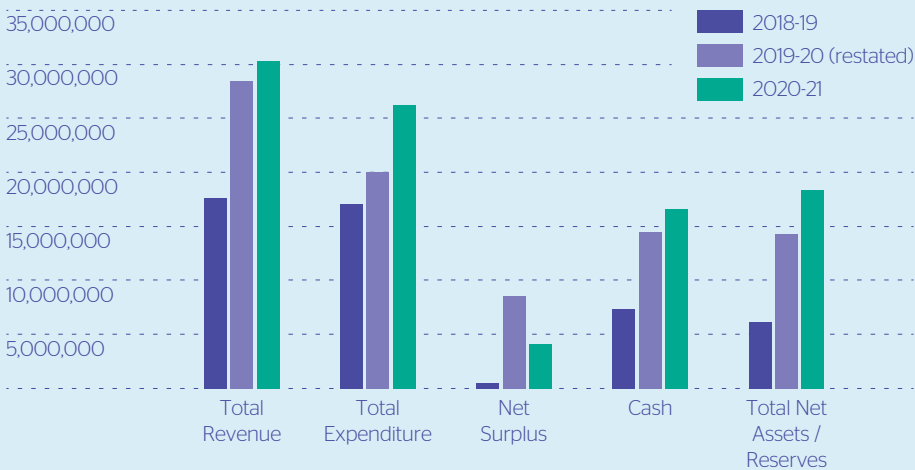
\$4 million  
returned to reserves

39%  
decrease in social enterprise revenue

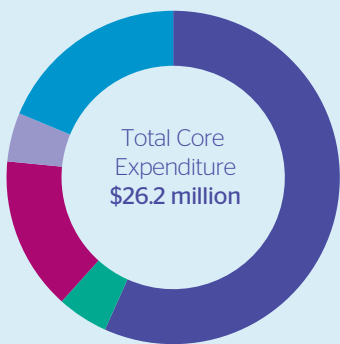
Of the \$17,487,053 spent on salaries and wages in 2020-21, 28% related to the salaries and wages of the combined social enterprises (11%) and Working For Victoria initiative (17%).

# Financial snapshot

Changes in key balances

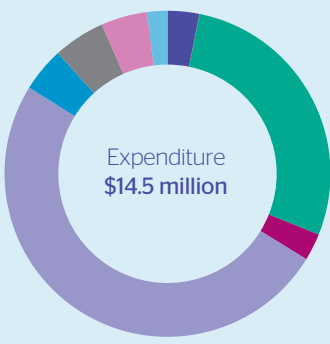


Where the money went



- 57% Service Delivery
- 5% Community Engagement
- 15% Fundraising and Marketing Costs
- 5% Staff and Volunteer Management
- 19% Accountability and Administration

Service delivery & advocacy



- 3% General access and material aid
- 28% Community Food Program
- 3% Health
- 4% Education, Employment and Empowerment programs
- 5% Detention Rights Program
- 5% Humanitarian Rights Law Program
- 2% Asylum Seeker Right Advocacy
- 50% Housing support

# Auditor's declaration

Celebrating

100

Est. 1922  
in Australia

RSM

RSM Australia Partners

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F +61 (0) 3 9286 8199  
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## REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT AUDITOR ON THE SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

**Opinion**  
The summary financial statements, which comprise the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2021, the statement of profit and loss and comprehensive income and the statement of financial performance for the year then ended, are derived from the audited financial report of Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Inc for the year ended 30 June 2021.

In our opinion, the accompanying summary financial statements are consistent, in all material respects, with the audited financial report for the year ended 30 June 2021.

**Summary Financial Statements**  
The summary financial statements do not contain all the disclosures required by the Australian Accounting Standards and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Act 2012* applied in the preparation of the audited financial report of Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Inc. Reading the summary financial statements and the auditor's report thereon, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the audited financial report and the auditor's report thereon.

**The Audited Financial Report and Our Report Thereon**  
We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the audited financial report in our report dated 6 November 2021.

**Management's Responsibility for the Summary Financial Statements**  
Management is responsible for the preparation of the summary financial statements based on the audited financial report.

**Auditor's Responsibility**  
Our responsibility is to express an opinion on whether the summary financial statements are consistent, in all material respects, with (or are a fair summary of) the audited financial report based on our procedures, which were conducted in accordance with Auditing Standard ASA 810 *Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements*.

  
**RSM AUSTRALIA PARTNERS**  
  
**K J DUNDON**  
Partner

Dated: 10 March 2022  
Melbourne, Victoria  
**THE POWER OF BEING UNDERSTOOD**  
AUDIT | TAX | CONSULTING

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## Statement of profit or loss & other comprehensive income

For the Year Ended 30 June 2021	2021-21 \$	2019-20 (restated) \$
<b>Income</b>		
Fundraising	7,913,672	9,157,110
Donations	9,428,315	7,182,851
Grants	9,970,289	5,531,424
Social Enterprises	1,487,825	2,431,701
Interest Received	32,382	78,145
Other Income	1,447,249	4,125,985
	<b>30,279,732</b>	<b>28,507,216</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Salaries and Wages	17,487,053	14,048,249
Stream Operations	8,719,573	5,922,500
	<b>26,206,626</b>	<b>19,970,749</b>
<b>Surplus for the year</b>	<b>4,073,106</b>	<b>8,536,467</b>
<b>Total Comprehensive income for the year</b>	<b>4,073,106</b>	<b>8,536,467</b>

## Statement of financial position

As at 30 June 2021	2021-21 \$	2019-20 (restated) \$
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	16,629,570	14,499,730
Trade and other receivables	1,411,069	2,094,698
Inventories	59,667	17,712
Prepayments	109,169	220,101
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>18,209,475</b>	<b>16,832,241</b>
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>		
Plant and equipment	4,458,956	3,895,833
Right-of-use assets	599,104	852,226
Prepayments	85,900	0
Total Non-current Assets	5,143,960	4,748,059
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>23,353,435</b>	<b>21,580,300</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Trade and other payables	1,583,930	1,329,675
Contract liabilities	1,013,107	3,551,641
Lease liabilities	287,818	299,160
Employee benefits	1,248,064	1,063,434
Financial liability	138,150	9,245
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>4,271,069</b>	<b>6,253,155</b>
<b>Non-current Liabilities</b>		
Lease liabilities	523,022	839,221
Employee benefits	204,984	206,670
Total Non-current Liabilities	728,006	1,045,891
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>4,999,075</b>	<b>7,299,046</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>18,354,360</b>	<b>14,281,254</b>
<b>Members' Funds</b>		
Retained surpluses	18,354,360	14,281,254
<b>Total Members' Funds</b>	<b>18,354,360</b>	<b>14,281,254</b>

# Financial performance

At 30 June 2021	2020-21 \$	2019-20 \$ (restated)	2018-19 \$	2017-18 \$	2016-17 \$
Revenue & Expenditure – Core					
Total Revenue and Other income	28,791,907	26,075,515	15,065,942	13,039,545	9,099,649
Total Expenditure	23,448,943	17,086,503	14,561,100	11,866,786	8,224,182
Operating Surplus / (Deficit) - Core	5,342,964	8,989,012	271,201	1,172,759	875,467
Revenue & Expenditure – Social Enterprises					
Total Revenue and Other income	1,487,825	2,431,701	2,547,045	2,111,695	1,663,909
Total Expenditure	2,757,683	2,884,246	2,564,549	2,028,181	1,721,740
Operating Suplus / (Deficit) - Non-core	1,269,858	(452,545)	216,137	83,514	(57,831)
Revenue & Expenditure – Total					
Total Revenue and Other income	30,279,732	28,507,216	17,612,987	15,151,240	10,763,558
Total Expenditure	26,206,626	19,970,749	17,125,649	13,894,967	9,945,922
Operating Suplus / (Deficit) - Total	4,073,106	8,536,467	487,338	1,256,273	817,636
Assets & Liabilities					
Total Assets	23,353,435	21,580,300	10,364,482	9,317,028	8,128,228
Total Liabilities	4,999,075	7,299,046	4,303,367	3,743,251	3,810,724
Net Assets	18,354,360	14,281,254	6,061,115	5,573,777	4,317,504
Cash Flows					
Net cash from operating activities	3,528,675	8,034,420	818,472	1,069,562	1,123,977
Net cash to investing activities	1,071,294	(508,175)	(491,934)	(74,204)	(100,977)
Net cash from financing activities	327,541	(353,845)			
Cash and cash equivalents at 30 June	16,629,570	14,499,730	7,327,330	7,000,792	6,005,434

## Our Supporters

Thank you to the following people, organisations and community groups who gave the equivalent of \$10,000 or more in funding or \$20,000 or more in-kind or pro bono support in 2020-21.

ABC Philanthropy Acorn Nursery Aesop Aesop Foundation Albert Johnston Alex and Rusty Russell Allens Philanthropy Committee Angel Aleksov Anne Ross Arcare Family Foundation Ash Keating Aurecon Australian Garlic Producers BandM Essential Cleaning Banyule City Council Barlow Impact Group BatesSmart Beci Orpin and Raph Rashid Bernadette Welch Bernie and Virginia McIntosh Besen Family Foundation Beverley Jackson Foundation Black Inc. Blum Breathe Architecture Brigid Bruer BSL Given the Chance Bunnings Warehouse Cameron Foundation CareerSeekers Catherine Quealy CERES Fair Food Charles Gutjahr Chris Smyth and Jan Wright City of Darebin City of Greater Dandenong City of Melbourne City of Yarra Claire Keating and Lester Hughes Clothier Anderson Immigration Lawyers cohealth Collier Charitable Fund Collingwood Yards CommBank Staff Foundation Consolidated Cleaning Cooper Investors Philanthropy CSI Swinburne: Social Startup Studio Darebin City Council David Loggia Dawna Wright and Peter, Liam and Myles Riedel Daye Gang Department of Education and Training Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Department of Health and Human Services Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions Department of Premier and Cabinet Dr Jai Nathani Dr Kym Jenkins Dr William Lewis Drakensberg Trust E C White Trust as managed by Equity Trustees Eirene Lucas Foundation Ellen Koshland and James McCaughey Elton Groups Enlocus Estate of Stanley J S Harrison Fairlie and Dennis Nassau Foodbank Victoria FPOV Free2Feed	Gadens Gandel Philanthropy Garner Davis Architects Genevieve Reynolds Genny and Tony Nunan Give2Asia GoDaddy Registry Goodwill Wine Gourlay Charitable Trust Graeme Hugo Greg and Jenny Vero Gum Tree Foundation Harry Kestin Foundation Hart Line Fund (ACF Sub fund) Haverstock Hill Foundation Heather Drew Hochroth and Gild Family Hon. Gabrielle Williams MP Howard Packer i = Change Ian and Margaret Nowak Igniting Change Indigo Mountain Foundation Ines Pirslin Isobel and David Jones Family Foundation. Jamsheed Wines Jeannie Howard Jeffrey Appleton and Denis Gibson Jennifer Monger Jennifer Smith Jenny and Evan John Jenny Kurg Jesse and Megan Mallen Jo Wodak Joanne Parkinson Foundation Jocelyn Luck John and Jo Grigg John Holland Jonamare at the APS Foundation Joseph Palmer Foundation – Halkyard Bequest Judy Hodgens' Estate Kamener Family Kate Leavey and Peter Savage King and Wood Mallesons Knauf Kowadlo-Aharon Family Endowment, part of the Community Impact Foundation Krishna Somers Charitable Trust La Trobe University Lawrence Acland Foundation Leo and Mina Fink Fund Leonie Van Raay Lesley Roxon Limb Family Foundation LUCRF Super Community Program MaiTri Foundation Malcolm McGrath Malcolm Wright Margaret S. Ross AM Maribyrnong City Council Mary Choate Matthew Albert Maurice Blackburn Lawyers McConnell Dowell McLeod Family Foundation Meg Paul Metro Trains Michael and Amanda Da Gama Pinto Michael Nossal and Jo Porter Miele Mike and Mim Bartlett Mike and Tanja Chester Min Guo	Monash University Moose Toys Moreland City Council Naylor-Stewart Ancillary Fund Neel Bhattacharjee Nexia Melbourne Nick Wood Nola Karapanagiotidis Norin Alam O'Shea Thompson Family Fund (ACF Sub fund) O'Rourke family Office of Zoran Konjarski Olaf Ciolek Open Borders/Sophie Baring OzHarvest P and G Paper Tubes Penelope and Ian Ward-Ambler Peter George and Catherine Murphy Philip Chun Pooli Kheng Lee and Barry Newstead Pool of Dreams Sub-fund, a part of the Community Impact Foundation Ratio Red Rocketship Foundation Regional Opportunities Australia (ROA) RMIT University Robison Fund (ACF Sub fund) RobMeree Foundation Rosemary Geer Household Rosemary and Michael Tabak Rowe Family Foundation Rural Australians For Refugees Russell Kennedy Lawyers Ruth Eisner Rylock Scanlon Foundation Schwartz Media Seasol Seasonal Supplies Pty Ltd Seljak Brand Serp Hills Foundation Simon Lusted and Sally Bond Simpson Family Foundation Siobhan Bourke Slater and Gordon Lawyers Smith and Shepard Fund (ACF Sub fund) Social Firebrand Social Traders Sophie Baring - Open Borders South Eastern Program Alliance Spotlight Foundation State Street Foundation STREAT StreetSmart Australia Summers Family Stewardship Trust Swinburne University Tanglin Gift Fund The Australian Ballet The Body Shop The Brown Family Foundation The City of Greater Dandenong The Elizabeth and Barry Davies Charitable Foundation The First Eddystone Foundation The Jack and Hedy Brent Foundation The Jack Brockhoff Foundation The Kimberley Foundation The Mercer Family Foundation The Metamorphic Foundation The Moore Family The Noel and Carmel O'Brien Family Foundation The Ray and Margaret Wilson Foundation	The Robert and Irene Gilbert Family Trust The Roberts Pike Foundation The Ross Trust The Scanlon Foundation The Shine On Foundation The Skrzynski Family Sky Foundation The Sunnyside Foundation The UHG Foundation The Wood Foundation Therese Joyce Thyne Reid Foundation Tony Hartnell Trisha and Terry Constantini Tsuno UFS Dispensaries Une Parkinson Foundation University of Melbourne Valeska Bloch and Ben Friis-O'Toole Household Vanguard Investments Australia Victoria Legal Aid Victoria Parsons Vincent Chiodo Charitable Foundation Virgin Unite Australia Volunteer West Wai-Hong Tham Wayne Cleaning Systems Pty Ltd wellseated Home Western Program Alliance Whitler Philanthropy Fund William Buckland Foundation WT Partners
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## Our Volunteers

The following people have provided between 3 and over 20 years of volunteer service to the ASRC. We thank you for your amazing contribution.

**20+ years**

Rob Mathew

**15-20 years**

Anne Bartley  
Elaine Brundle  
Elizabeth Stewart  
Emma White  
Helen Gourlay  
Jean Nash  
Joan Lynn  
Kevin Barry  
Nicky Dorevitch  
Pam Rycroft  
Ruth Coulthurst

**10-15 years**

Alan Drummond  
Andrew Trembath  
Angela Woolard  
Anne Beuchat  
Anne Lord  
Brian Derum  
Bronwyn Duncan  
Carole Wigg  
Catherine O'Leary  
Dale Mackie  
Duoc Nguyen  
Ian Partridge  
Jan Brady-Fry  
Janet Bodycomb  
Jenny Shao  
Jill Crawford  
Joan Taylor  
John Molloy  
Kiera Stevens  
Margie Welsford  
Merron Selenitsch  
Philip Robson-Garth  
Rosa Morstyn  
Uyen Nguyen  
Valma Byers  
Zara Thompson

**5-10 years**

Abdul Razzaq  
Andrew Barker  
Andrew Button  
Andrew Falkland-Brown  
Andrew Minko  
Angela Lane  
Anne Briggs  
Anne Klaric  
Anthony Lewis  
Ashlea Randle  
Bea Jones  
Bev Scott  
Brenda Todd  
Brendan McCarthy  
Britt Haller  
Bruce Parr  
Caroline Odell  
Catherine Guinness  
Catie Pitman  
Chris Kennedy  
Christine Barrett  
Christopher Higgins  
Christopher Loo  
Ciara Boyle  
Claudia Tory  
Danielle Miles  
David Cramond  
David Mendelovits  
Denise Fraser  
Dianne Fisher  
Doug Beecroft

Eliza Considine  
Elizabeth Zenner  
Esmat Ansari  
Femida Hunter  
Frances Collison  
Frances Nininahazwe  
Gabrielle Cullen  
Gayle Napier  
Genevieve Moore  
Geoffrey Love  
Geraldine Burne  
Geraldine Butler  
Gillian Fawcett  
Gina Di Paolo  
Glenda Hutchinson  
Glenda Strong  
Graeme Robinson  
Graham Warren  
Grant Nimmo  
Gwen White  
Haans Lewin  
Hani Vodstrcil  
Hannah Gibney  
Hans Zerno  
Helene Orwin  
Jacqui Hagen  
Jan Hipgrave  
Jan Howard  
Jane Wilson  
Jennifer Simpson  
Jill Baird  
John Loon  
Jonathan Teh  
Judy Carman  
Kate Russell  
Kathleen Love  
Kathy Hill  
Kay Pentland  
Khalida Shaheen  
Laura Viglietti  
Laurence Beesley  
Louise Hayward  
Lyn Andressen  
Lynette Crellin  
Madeline Wilson  
Maha Alomar Albarazi  
Marg Bergin  
Margot Clark  
Matthew Price  
Melanie Malakunas  
Melanie Wilson  
Michel Beuchat  
Michele Velik  
Millicent Rees-Jones  
Morag Milton  
Myf Evans  
Naomi Saporta  
Nazish Rafique  
Nicky Lo Bianco  
Nino Bucci  
Pam Every  
Pam Walford  
Patrick Boushel  
Pauline Cleaver  
Peter Conlon  
Peter Dapiran  
Peter Hanrahan  
Peter Hoare  
Phil Libbis  
Phil McMillan  
Rebecca Kierce  
Ross Howie  
Ruth O'Rourke  
Sam Fung

Sandra McAuliffe  
Sarah Kennedy  
Sarah Sorsby  
Scott Blair-West  
Simon Reynolds  
Sofia Drinjakovic  
Sophie Adley  
Stephen Lavender  
Steve Baird  
Suellen Irving  
Susan Ackroyd  
Susan Fisher  
Susan Werner  
Symon McCallum  
Taariq Hassan  
Tadhg Dowling  
Tahntip Powtawe  
Timothy Patton  
Tony Kent  
Traudl Moon  
Val Maher  
Willem Drent  
Yatueta Usa  
Yogi Pillay  
Yosuke Chapman

**3-5 years volunteers**

Ajaz Taghar  
Alan Gruner  
Alex Hazelman  
Alison Kirwan  
Alon Kaiser  
Amanda Baldwin  
Andrea Hall  
Anna Michalska  
Anne Balloch  
Anne Earley  
Anne Ellis  
Ashleigh Stefanovski  
Beth Morgan  
Beth Walter  
Bina Fernandez  
Bining Lu  
Brendan Ternus  
Bruno Doring  
Carina Mammone  
Carl Moller  
Carole Poon  
Caroline Bean-Hodges  
Caroline McComb  
Charlotte Duke  
Chloe Lewis  
Chris Darmanin  
Chris Laverdure  
Christine Carr  
Christine Vale  
Claudia de Quadros  
Constance Honaker  
David Godden  
Delanie Cutler  
Diana Edwards  
Drew Grant  
Ebony Yin  
Eiddwen Jeffery  
Elizabeth Rowswell  
Elizabeth Spencer-Hogbin  
Emma Fenech  
Emma-Jane Byrne  
Evelyn Flitman  
Fiona McDermott  
Geoff Fitzpatrick  
Gerard Powell  
Gilbert Mak  
Givens Otuo-Acheampong  
Grace Dennehy

Grazia Dennerstein  
Haleh Homaei  
Henry Stern  
Ian Sadler  
Ida Talback  
Imogen Hines  
Ingrid Camilleri  
Irena Poloczek  
Isabella Hallegraeff  
Ivan Sorokhan  
Jack Bennett  
James Lomas  
Jane Mills  
Jazmin Zamburro-Migliore  
Jessica Clothier  
Joany Sze  
Jody Guerow  
Joshua Baravelli  
Joytun Ara  
Kamla Wati  
Kate McCracken-Bell  
Katherine O'Flaherty  
Katie Henderson  
Kendra Smith  
Kerrie O'Neill  
Laura Benson  
Laura Coburn  
Lenora Lippmann  
Lenore Stephens  
Leonore Ryan  
Lesley Willett  
Lewis Baker  
Linda Eksteen  
Linda Weston  
Lisa Milne  
Liz Barrow  
Lynn Gray  
Madeline Pilgrim  
Mali Wilson  
Marc Barbieri  
Marie Sellstrom  
Mark Russell  
Martin Hemingway  
Mary McGuirk  
Matthew Colledan  
McRae Dunbar  
Meredith Jones  
Meredith Lovell  
Mithran Vyravipillai  
Nicole Brown  
Nicole Ogden  
Nicolette Nieuwoudt  
Olakunle Adegbola  
Pam Billings  
Peter Kadar  
Phoebe Baker  
Pragya Kapil  
Rachel Allitt  
Ran Wei  
Ray Wittman  
Rebekah Lautman  
Rebekah Politis  
Reuben Cumming  
Robert Webb  
Sam Keevers  
Sanduni De Silva  
Sarah-Jane Black  
Sassy McKenzie  
Shaibu Iddrisu  
Simon Gilbert  
Stella Stamatakis  
Steph Brown  
Sue Boxer  
Sue O'Reilly

Suganyaa Vishnuraj  
Sunday Cutbush  
Susan Goding  
Suzanne Clarke  
Swathi Shanmukhasundaram  
Tamsin Stanford  
Tegan Carleton  
Terrie Hamilton-Smith  
Thea Martin  
Thomas Williams  
Thulasi Weerasekara  
Tim Corcoran  
Ursula De Almeida  
Victoria van Bavel  
Wendye Jameson  
William Lei  
William Robey  
Yasmeen Sultan  
Yung Nguyen

Looking  
to the  
future

“ASRC changed my life positively. With their help I could obtain my protection visa and restarting a new life in Australia... I could not survive without their support.”

— Male, 5+ years at ASRC

## Looking to the future

The ASRC, in reflecting on the culmination of its 2018 – 2021 strategic plan, undertook a transformative review process that was inspired by a reflection of our past 20 years, while looking ahead with courage and confidence at the future of the ASRC and in turn, building an enduring legacy towards long-term change for and with people seeking asylum.

One of the most significant parts of this process was ensuring the voice of people seeking asylum was heard in the review, but also, the development of our new plan, too - 700+ members participated in our review. It's why today, the organisation's 2021 – 2024 plan is built on the foundations of lived and living experience – centring the rights, voice, opportunity and pathways forward for refugees and people seeking asylum here in Australia and overseas.

This plan encapsulates new ideas, innovation, transformational change and a focus on the very people the ASRC was founded to stand alongside, but the core of the Arc's purpose still remains true. We continue to be led by our values and are relentless and fearless in the pursuit of injustice. And our independence continues to be maintained uncompromisingly, allowing us to fill in policy gaps through service delivery, while seeking long-term change in the political landscape for people seeking asylum.

**We do so, wholeheartedly, in partnership and collaboration with refugees and people seeking asylum.**

Out of this process, the ASRC has established four key pillars of intent – our goals, that will guide the delivery of the organisation's work, and the ethos of how we work with our sector and the community.

## Our goals 2022 – 2024

1.

We will prioritise and embed the voice and rights of people seeking asylum and refugees in our work

2.

Our services, advocacy and culture will be aligned to the human rights of people seeking asylum and refugees

3.

Our integrated, streamlined approach will deliver the best possible experience and outcomes for people seeking asylum and refugees

4.

We will work with the movement as a valued advocacy and sector partner to realise the rights of people seeking asylum and refugees

“ASRC helped me to find a job. Because of this I feel independent and that made a difference to my life.”

— Female, 3-4 years at ASRC

## Year 1 Strategic Plan actions

Over the next 6 months, the ASRC, thanks to your generosity, will be making a transformational investment in the future of how and why we deliver on our work, with more than \$3 million of initial increased investment planned by 2023.

By June 30, 2022 we will have begun this transformation under eight key actions:

### Action 1

The implementation of an Affirmative Action Policy that grows the representation of people with lived experience across our workforce, from the leadership of the organisation through the Board, cascading across all facets of our service delivery, advocacy and operations.

### Action 2

Accelerate cultural change through the delivery of diversity and inclusion training that builds on the opportunities of building a strong, diverse multicultural workplace, unconscious bias and privilege and promotes allyship.

### Action 3

Transform all our services to align with the Victorian Equal Opportunity Human Rights Commission – Human Rights Based Approach that builds new accessibility to our service programs. Our aim is to have this approach fully operationalised by June 2022.

### Action 4

In this time, our humanitarian work will transition to a service model that is based on rights and prioritisation, building more access to a wide range of services for people, including current and new members.

### Action 5

Create a new standalone holistic triage service at the Footscray Centre. This service will operate 5 days a week, with all service delivery programs represented, working together at the same time, in the same space, and with the same access points.

### Action 6

Through a new way forward, we'll map the current member journey to identify opportunities for improvement in our service delivery; act on these and also develop a plan for future work .

### Action 7

Identify our priority areas for advocacy and establish roadmaps for each policy area to drive systemic change, in partnership with community members.

### Action 8

Further refine and develop the Refugee Leadership and Capacity Building fund in collaboration with the lived experience community, building its mechanism and governance frameworks and disbursing the first round of funding. The future of our work is refugee-lead and advised and this fund will ensure the ASRC plays an important ally role, amplifying and building the capacity of the wider refugee sector.



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