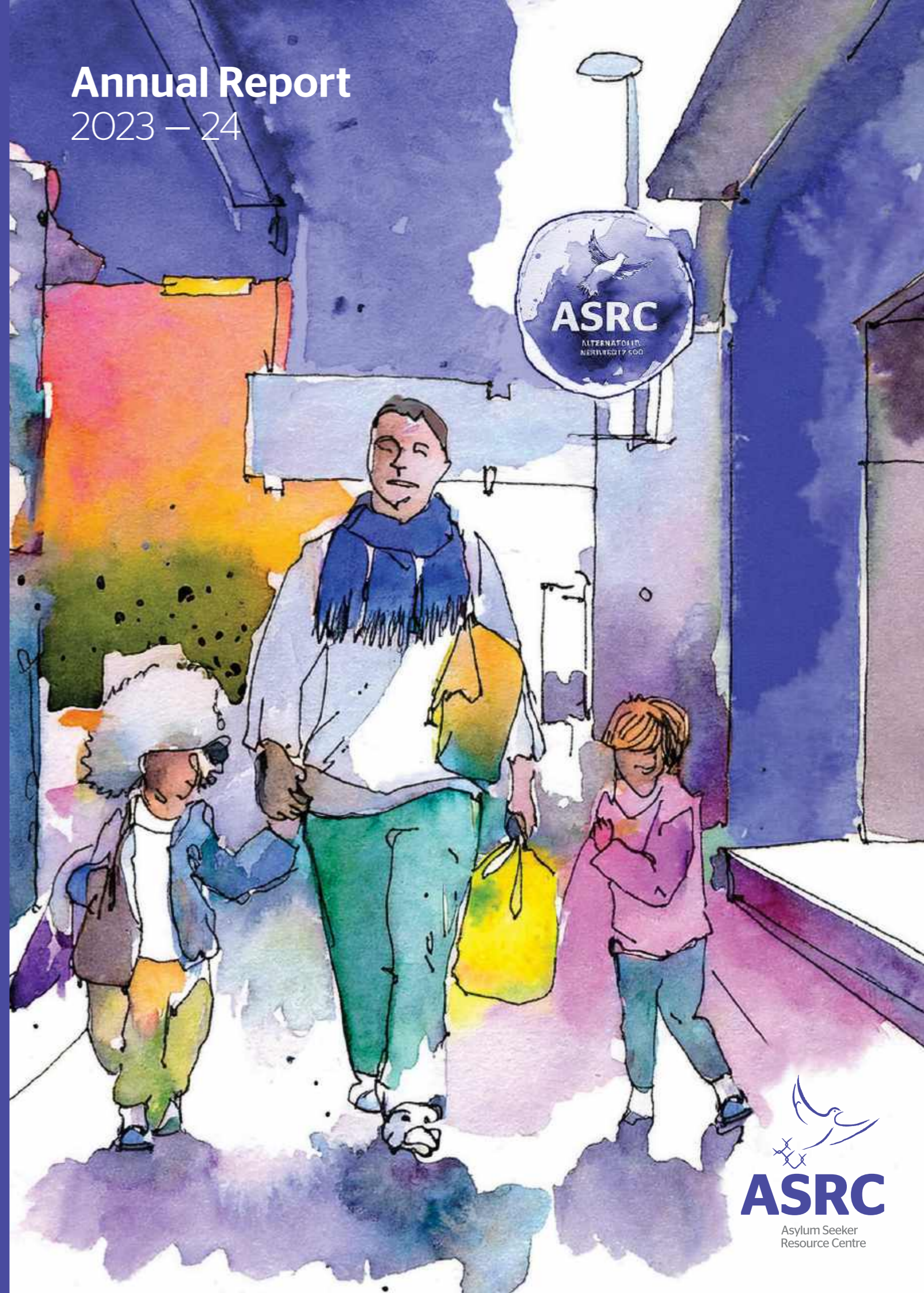


Annual Report

2023 – 24



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 @ASRC1

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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. We acknowledge that the land was never ceded and we pay our respect to them, their customs, their culture, to elders past and present.

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 wellbeing.

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.

Vision

Our vision is that people seeking asylum can live safely, sustainably, independently and equally.

Mission

Our mission is to support and empower people seeking asylum at critical junctions of their journey.

Building on our proximity to those with lived experience, we mobilise and partner for a community of compassion, justice and opportunity.

***Privacy disclaimer**

Throughout this report, some of the names, identities and details of people seeking asylum and their stories have been changed to protect their privacy.

ABN 64 114 965 815



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01

A message from the Chair



FY 24 was a year in which the ASRC systematically strengthened every aspect of our organisation and set our course to seize the opportunities of the future. With our characteristic focus and determination, our staff, volunteers, and community set our sights high.

Through the successful delivery of our 2022-2024 Strategic Plan, we:

- amplified and centred the voices of people with lived experience in everything we do
- embedded a human-rights based approach and mindset
- refocused our way of working to enhance our members' experiences
- aligned and supported the wider refugee movement through collaboration and sharing of expertise, resources and collective advocacy.

As we considered our next horizon, conflicts around the world – Sudan, Israel and Gaza, Haiti, Burma, Ukraine, Congo – reminded us of how important it is to have a fair and functional system for seeking asylum. This sobering reality and the draconian laws that continue to impact people's human rights in this country, prompt us to think how far away we are from our ambition of being able to close our doors due to our services no longer being required.

In the second half of the financial year, the ASRC Board worked collaboratively with our senior management team, employees and stakeholders to develop our new Strategic Plan FY 2025-27.

Through this process, we refined our mission and confirmed our strategic direction along three core themes:

- improving outcomes for people seeking asylum and refugees
- transforming the narrative and the policy environment with refugees and people seeking asylum
- continuing to evolve as an organisation, focusing on sustainability, agility and impact.

The ASRC aims to be the leading humanitarian response organisation in Australia for people seeking asylum and refugees. We look ahead with significant ambition and innovation, building on the vital work of the past year, which saw us transition from a needs-based charity to a human-rights focused organisation driven by the leadership of people seeking asylum.

Our mission is to be a community-powered organisation that provides culturally sensitive services to create systemic change and provide exceptional support for our community. To support this, we are building our organisational resilience to prioritise sustainability, effective governance and

staff safety and wellbeing. We also remain focused on addressing the root causes of the issues our community faces and shifting power to people seeking asylum. Your support is a crucial part of our efforts – thank you so much for walking with us and for your commitment to building safety in Australia for people seeking asylum and refugees.

I'm pleased to share that as part of investing in our organisational resilience and governance, we appointed three new board directors who each bring significant professional and board experience to the ASRC: Amy Auster (who joined us in FY 24), Guy Gilbert SC and Jennifer Kanis (who will join in FY 25).


Amy Auster, with over 25 years of experience as an economics and finance professional in the private and public sectors and is currently Managing Director at Scyne Advisory. Guy Gilbert SC, having recently retired from the Victorian bar after a 45 year practice in immigration and refugee law, criminal and OHS law and international extradition matters, has also served as a member of both the Refugee Review Tribunal and the Mental Health Review Tribunal. Jennifer Kanis leads Maurice Blackburn's dedicated Social Justice Project and has nearly three decades of public service, including as Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Justice and Mental Health, as a former Councillor for the City of Melbourne and as an experienced secondary school teacher. We are thrilled to welcome Amy, Guy and Jennifer.

We also share our heartfelt thanks to Marija Maher for her significant contribution to our organisation as she departed our board.

None of our work would be possible without the endless dedication of our supporters, donors, volunteers, staff, Board, stakeholders and broader community. Thank you once again. I would also like to take this opportunity to recognise the inspirational leadership of our CEO and Founder, Kon Karapanagiotidis, who was deservedly recognised as Melburnian of the Year in 2024.

At this time of escalating concerns in the global geopolitical environment, it's clear that the compassion, advocacy and fearless independent voice of the ASRC is needed more than ever. As your Chair, I'm proud to note that we've never been more determined as an organisation to fight for the rights of the courageous and resilient people that we're honoured to serve. We live in turbulent times, but we also move ahead with clarity and commitment when we take action to create the future we want.

It is my pleasure to present this year's Annual Report to you. Thank you for everything you do and for being a part of the ASRC.


Mike Sum

02

A letter from the CEO

After a significant period of work to strengthen the foundations of our organisation and ensure our long-term sustainability, the ASRC ends this financial year in its strongest position ever, looking towards an ambitious future. We successfully completed our 2022-2024 strategic plan, building a stable, accessible, and sustainable base for our work in the coming years. These changes reflect the significant efforts of our entire community – our members (clients), staff, volunteers, donors, stakeholders and other supporters.

I want to take this opportunity to especially thank the staff we farewell over the past year, as we had to resize our organisation (by 26%), as many charities have had to do too in this cost of living crisis. This restructure was central to ensuring our long-term financial sustainability. We successfully adapted our ways of working and core services to successfully continue our vital work, within our means. I am grateful to each person who has contributed to the ASRC and acknowledge that none of this would have been possible without their efforts. We are also pleased to share that we ended FY 24 with a break-even result, robust financial reserves and a FY25 break even budget too. This is thanks to our generous donors continuing to support our vital work.

Throughout this period of change, we focused on the refugee community we serve, strengthening our organisational foundations to ensure our long-term future, investing significantly in the physical and psychological safety of our staff and volunteers and ensuring we continue to meet our strategic goals, including being a genuinely diverse and inclusive workplace that reflects our community. I am pleased to report that in 2024, we hit our target of being an organisation where at least half our staff are people with lived experience of seeking asylum (53.5%).

We further improved the impact, efficacy and efficiency of our humanitarian services by prioritising and listening deeply to what our members told us they needed most. In 2024, our organisation successfully transitioned from a welfare-based service model to a human rights-based model. Instead of focusing on what resources we have to distribute, we focused on what we need to do to meet the human rights of our members. This has resulted in better service and outcomes for our people. We have also introduced a trauma-informed service model and adopted an organisation-wide theory of change to ensure we are always strengths-based with a focus on early intervention and working as one aligned, focused and united team towards the same strategic goals.

Throughout the year, we continued to scale the systemic impact of our frontline work with our national advocacy and organising work to change the unfair and unjust systems that put so many people in the position of needing to come to a

service like ours for basic essentials like food, health and housing. We will continue the fight to win a universal safety net for people seeking asylum that they continue to be denied, from the right to an income, work rights and access to Medicare for all.


In the past 12 months, the ASRC leveraged more than two decades of relationships and experience to contribute to one of the movement's most impactful years. As a sector, we successfully defeated the deportation and entry ban bill and saw the abolishment of the deeply flawed and failed 'Fast-Track' system.

The ASRC has been agile in responding to the NZYQ decision, commencing constitutional challenges and habeas corpus proceedings for multiple clients in the weeks following the High Court's decision, resulting in the removal of restrictive conditions such as ankle bracelets. Our advocacy efforts influenced the State Government to introduce new ASVET study opportunities for people seeking asylum, regardless of their visa status. We finished the financial year being part of a new High Court class action on behalf of South Sudanese refugees who have been detained indefinitely and are seeking their freedom. And we continued to work together with 8,400 people seeking asylum who have been in limbo for 12 years demanding permanent protection for all. We also continued to provide support and advocacy to refugees still detained offshore in PNG and Nauru.

We continued our focus on strengthening our operational foundations, risk management and governance by welcoming three new senior, seasoned and experienced leaders into our organisation: Andrea Reginato as Head of Giving and Experience, Kashif Hayat as Head of Governance, Risk and Corporate Services and Melissa Milner as Head of People and Culture. Building on the recruitment of our CFO, Angela Taylor (appointed at the end of FY23), who has led an intensive process to strengthen our finance systems through a raft of improvements, including enhanced financial performance tools, standards and reporting.

We also invested in succession planning by creating a Deputy CEO role, and I am thrilled to share that we recently, in the new financial year, appointed Jana Favero as ASRC's Deputy CEO. Jana, who also leads our Systemic Change team, is a highly respected national leader in our sector and has been with the organisation for 14 years.

Again, thank you for your tremendous support, generosity and faith in our work, we can only do all this amazing work thanks to you!


Kon Karapanagiotidis



03

Our Impact

146,973
NUMBER OF DONORS SUPPORTING
OUR FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

350
APPOINTMENTS OFFERED
BY LEGAL CLINICS

1,461
INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILY GROUPS ASSISTED
BY THE HUMAN RIGHTS LAW PROGRAM

7,035
PEOPLE SUPPORTED
BY THE ASRC*

9,657
COMMUNITY
MEALS SERVED

53.5%
STAFF WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF
SEEKING ASYLUM (INCLUDING CASUALS)

40,613
NIGHTS OF SHELTER
PROVIDED

3,769
PEOPLE WHO USED
THE ASRC FOODBANK

99
JOBS SECURED THROUGH
THE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

55,363
HOURS OF PAID EMPLOYMENT THROUGH
OUR SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

\$488,500
AMOUNT SPENT ON GROCERIES
FOR THE COMMUNITY

315
REFERRED STUDENTS
TO VET COURSES

6,093
HEALTH APPOINTMENTS
OFFERED

71%
OF OUR INCOME THAT WENT TO SERVICE
DELIVERY, ADVOCACY, PROGRAM SUPPORT
AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISES ACTIVITIES

118,275
HOURS OF SERVICE
BY VOLUNTEERS

\$146,396
AMOUNT OF MEDICAL BILLS
WAIVED

210
SUCCESSFUL VISA
GRANTS

106,514
EMAILS SENT TO POLITICIANS THROUGH
OUR ADVOCACY ACTIONS

26
PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE TRAINED BY THE
COMMUNITY, ADVOCACY AND POWER PROGRAM

\$136,228
TOTAL COST OF
PHARMACY WAIVERS

1,859
PEOPLE WHO USED THE
REFUGEE RESOURCE HUB

11,768
SUPPORTERS WHO SIGNED OUR PETITION TO
EVACUATE REFUGEES FROM PNG AND NAURU

1,627
NEW REQUESTS FOR LEGAL ASSISTANCE MANAGED
BY THE HUMAN RIGHTS LAW PROGRAM

*Based on average household size



04 Humanitarian Operations & Resilience

The long process of seeking asylum in Australia, along with the lasting impacts of COVID-19 and the ongoing cost of living crisis, have significantly increased vulnerability and trauma within the refugee community. These challenges meant the ASRC's humanitarian operations had to work harder and smarter than ever in FY 24 to help individuals access their rights.

We have aligned the client journey at our centres to ensure people can connect with essential support when they need it. This initiative has been strengthened by a dedicated team and the invaluable contributions of hundreds of volunteers. By emphasising empowerment, resilience-building, strategic partnerships, and short-term interventions, we have successfully helped more individuals stabilise their lives, sustain themselves and their families, and engage effectively with the refugee determination process.

Community Food Services

23 years ago, a group of volunteers embarked on a project to welcome and support refugees and people seeking asylum by providing donated food and essential items. This seemingly small act became the ASRC.

The Community Food Services Program, mainly recognised as ASRC Foodbank by the community, remains a central part of our organisation. We work to provide food relief and a sense of community to people seeking asylum.

ASRC Foodbank

The ASRC Foodbank is offered at both our Footscray Centre and at the Refugee Resource Hub (RRH) in Dandenong. Between June 2023 and June 2024, we saw a 33% increase in the number of people supported at the Dandenong Foodbank. This growth follows the RRH launch in September 2022, and we continue to see excellent growth in stakeholder engagement, local partnerships, community support and awareness of our services.

Across both centres, FY 24 saw significant shifts in the use of the ASRC Foodbank. Following a service redesign, we increased the range of items available and focused on how we could provide more support to our most vulnerable clients. A bigger

range of culturally appropriate foods at the Foodbank was welcomed by the community, as well as increasing the amounts allocated per person shopping. These changes were based on feedback from our users.

With the cost of living crisis, demand for food relief in the wider community has grown. Many people seeking asylum face many added challenges, such as living without an income safety net, work rights or Medicare. The second half of the financial year saw an increase in Foodbank service use at an unprecedented rate. Between November 2023 and June 2024, there was a 43% increase in the number of people accessing the ASRC Foodbank. By the end of 2023-24, the Foodbank experienced the highest number of visits since reopening the centre post-lockdown in September 2022.

We were able to respond to this increase in demand because of the ongoing support and generosity of hundreds of community food donors. Approximately 43% of the Foodbank goods provided to our clients came from in-kind donations. We are heartened and grateful the community continues to prioritise supporting the ASRC despite cost of living challenges.

Work to maintain and improve the sustainability of our program included:

- Engaging and partnering with various suppliers of food and goods.
- Increasing the number of in-kind donations through:
- our Food Champions Campaign, where schools and community groups collected single essential items in bulk for us
- outreach, ongoing engagement and stewardship of donors
- improving communications on social media channels
- establishing corporate partnerships
- establishing relationships with community organisations
- networking with other food relief organisations.

We are proud to have been able to respond to the demand for food relief and support our community.



Case Study



In 2021, Lakshmi* came to the ASRC to ask for support. A single parent of two children, she was struggling to pay bills and feeling very isolated and lonely. After arriving in Australia in 2019, the cost of living hit hard. With limited English, Lakshmi faced the challenge of rebuilding the close community she dearly missed from home.

Without the ASRC Foodbank, Lakshmi feared she would not be able to pay her rent and bills or purchase essential items for her children.

*Photo disclaimer: Not her real name/photo

“Because I am a refugee, the situation in my life is very hard. I am very thankful for the ASRC, everyone is very kind and helpful. It makes me feel happy to be there. Lakshmi*”

In FY 24 the ASRC Foodbank served more than 3,769 people at our centre in Footscray and the Refugee Resource Hub in Dandenong and was supported by more than 100 dedicated volunteers.

Community Meals

This year, we reinvigorated the ‘Member Recipe Project’, a collaboration with the Women’s Empowerment Program.

We engaged with three ASRC clients to share and teach their recipes to volunteers and other clients, with the aim of fostering empowerment and cultural exchange and increasing social connectedness. These recipes will be cooked and served as part of the Community Meals program.

9,657
community meals
provided (lunch and
takeaway)

3,769
people who used the
ASRC Foodbank

10,009
visits to ASRC Foodbank
across both sites

\$488,500
spent on food and
groceries to supply
our members

1,090
in-kind donations
to the ASRC Foodbank

28%
of clients accessed the
ASRC Foodbank at the
Refuge Resource Hub
in Dandenong

\$136,228

total cost of pharmacy
waivers

814

people supported
by the Health Program

6,093

health appointments

4,674

hours contributed by
volunteers

322

people used
pharmacy waivers
to buy medication
and healthcare items

165

medical bills waived

Health Program

The ASRC Health Program ensures refugees and people seeking asylum in Victoria have access to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health services they need, when and where they need them, without suffering financial hardship.

Our comprehensive, multidisciplinary service continued to be nurse-led in FY 24, supported by over 45 ongoing voluntary healthcare professionals who provided services including general practice, nursing, eye care, immunisations, and allied health.

Expanded Mental Healthcare Services

In FY 24, our service grew to meet the unmet and increasing needs of our members, including an expanded mental health offering as we built the foundations of a mental health pilot that will officially launch in FY 24-25. The pilot will be led by our Community Nurse, supported by volunteer psychologists and counsellors who have already started contributing their expertise to its development.

In the last 12 months, the program has also increased its mental health care capacity in response to a lack of external services, where we have seen a significant rise in wait times. Even where professionals are available, without Medicare, many people remain unsupported, and serious mental health presentations go undiagnosed and untreated. The Health Program will continue to support our members until they can access appropriate external services.

Internal and External Partnerships

The Health Program continued to work in collaboration with other ASRC services and programs, as well as strengthening our external partnerships with health providers and institutions. For example, we work closely with Social Services and Reception to make ourselves available to members who may be hesitant to access services. We have developed a system to clearly indicate which services are available at the Health Clinic each day, ensuring a trauma-informed approach that provides certainty and clarity of options to clients visiting in person.

Working with external partners, we started delivering education sessions on various health topics for the community. On average, 10-20 people seeking asylum attended each of the ten sessions held in FY 24. Health promotion partners include Monash Paramedic Students, The Water Well Project, Genwest, and Lifesaving Victoria. This is an area we hope to expand and formalise further in the coming year. The goal of this initiative is to support people to care for their health and provide a choice of accessible health services.

The program also led the creation of 'Meet the Neighbours' bimonthly meetings in April, bringing local support services together to network and discuss local shared issues and the opportunity to work collaboratively to serve the community and find ways to overcome the accessibility issues and complexity of the mainstream health system.

Case Study

Manon* came to the Health Program following concerns about his mental health. He had no support, no Medicare and no GP. After a blood test, he was referred to emergency services with a life-threatening condition easily confused with a mental health condition. Manon left the hospital, causing concern for his life, but a week later, he returned to our Health Clinic. ASRC's community health nurse, GP, and psychologist liaised with the hospital, and after treatment in the community, his condition stabilised. He has ongoing care at our clinic.

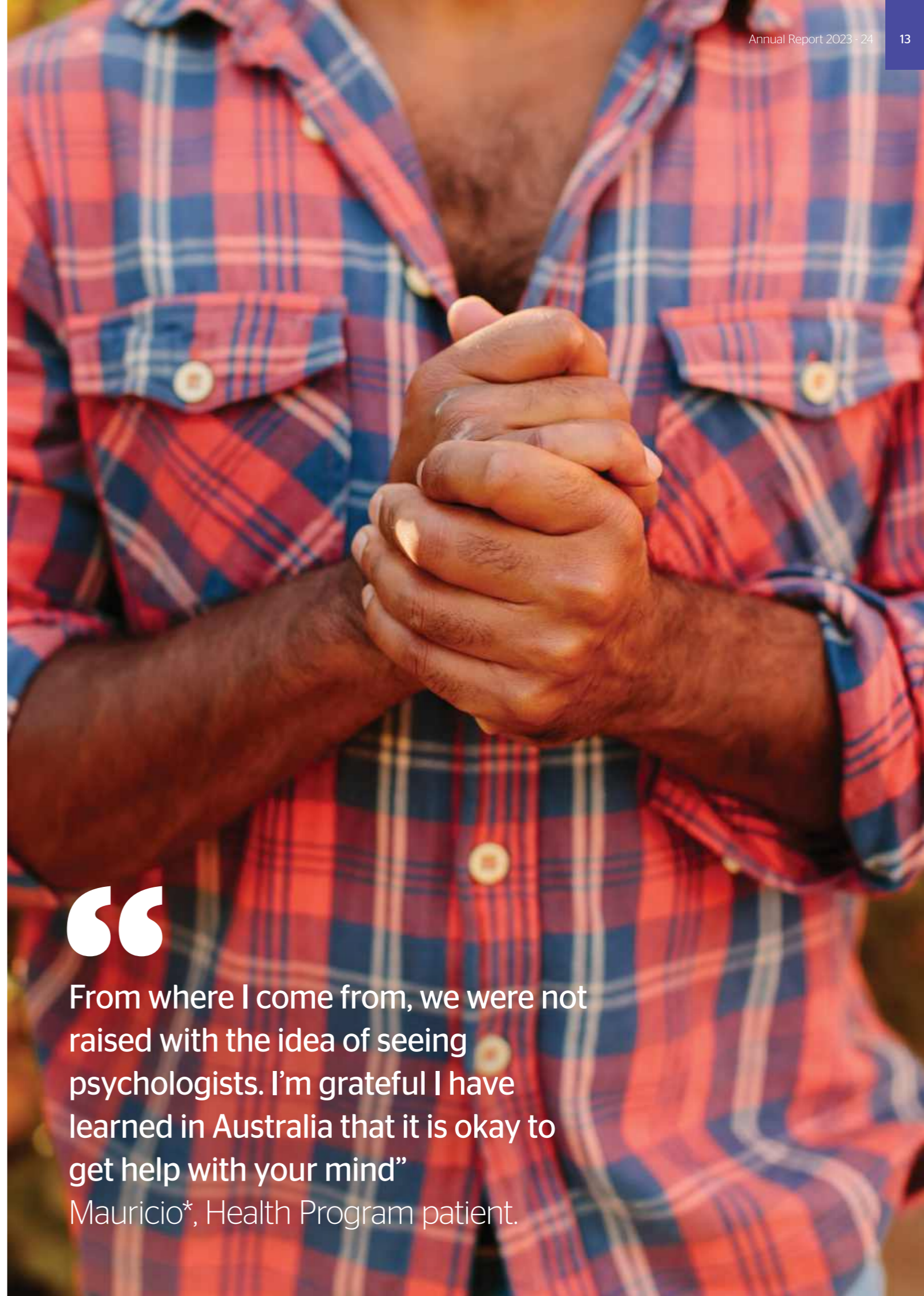
*Photo disclaimer: Not his real name/photo



“

From where I come from, we were not raised with the idea of seeing psychologists. I'm grateful I have learned in Australia that it is okay to get help with your mind”

Mauricio*, Health Program patient.



16,644 requests for support at reception in Footscray

9,246 internal program referrals

40,613 nights of accommodation secured

1,624 Myki top-ups provided

548 people supported by housing services

Humanitarian Services Program:

Client Engagement - Housing and Aid - Social Services

In FY 24 we transitioned to a restructured Humanitarian Services program operated through three key areas: Client Engagement, Housing and Aid, and Social Services. Across all areas, we focused on providing rights-based, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive practices that continue to guide our operations into the new financial year.

The transformation has been extraordinary. Before, our casework model meant that one person would accompany our clients. Under our new case coordination model, clients have more access to our entire team as part of an integrated drop-in service. Our entire team has worked together to ensure continuity and provide a secure scaffolding for the people who visit our service.

Thanks to our new model, we were able to respond to 270 Palestinians seeking our support, even during a period of high need across our existing clients and community. Our team quickly mobilised to provide care and support very early on to people from this group of Gazans who had managed to get to Melbourne. On one day, 14 families presented at once. This would have been far too many

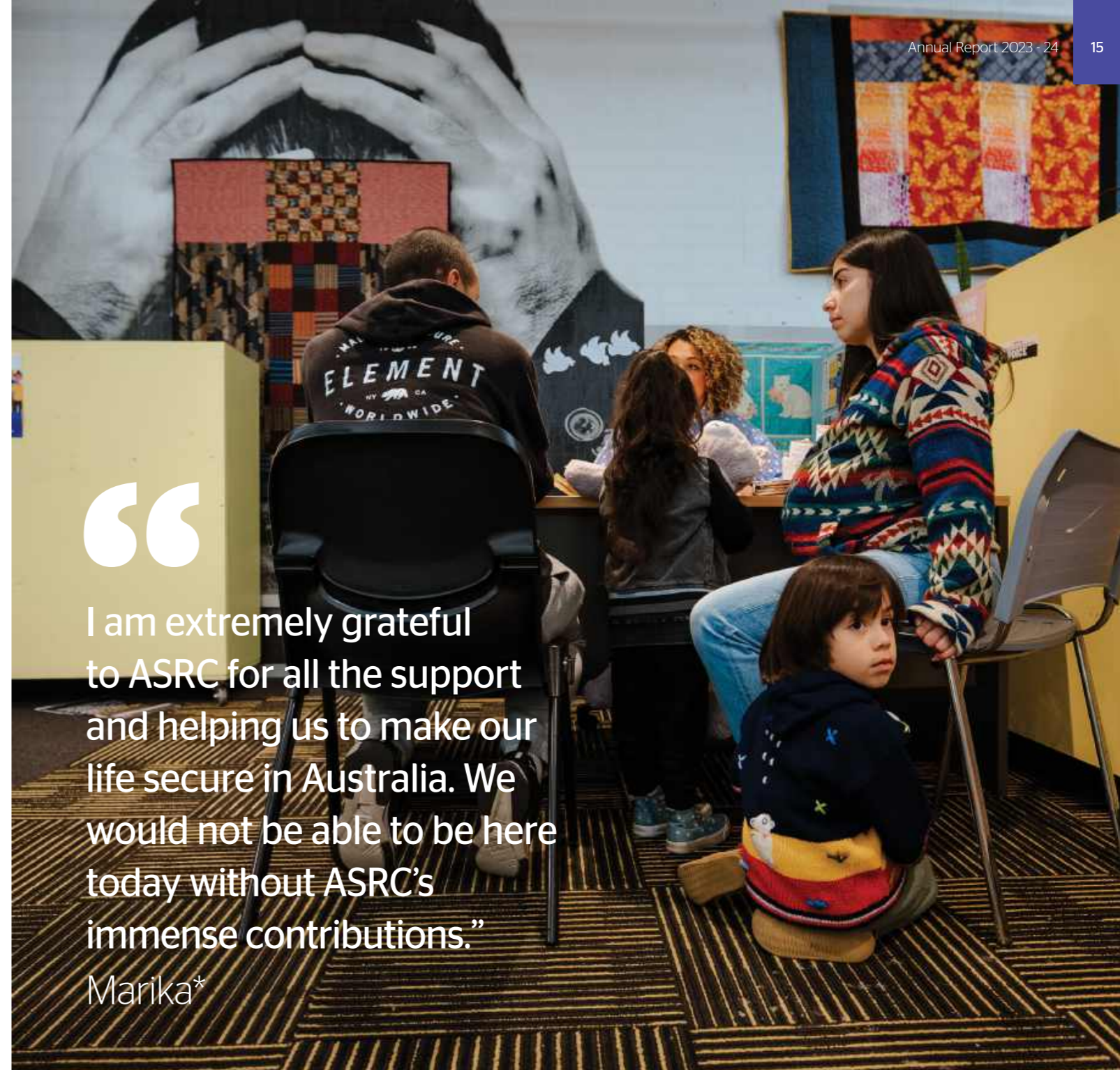
people to intake under our previous model. However, our new model meant we could quickly pool our resources to intake the families. This included working with one of our Arabic-speaking bi-cultural workers who did all the translation.

We immediately made our Palestinian clients eligible for the ASRC Foodbank, Myki top-ups, immunisations and other essentials like nappies. We also worked alongside other community organisations and leaders, for example, delivering food to be distributed by the Muslim Women's Council of Victoria to Palestinian families and supporting the Palestine Australia Relief and Action (PARA) foundation in collecting and distributing heaters and blankets for the new arrivals.

This is just one example of how our teams work together. In FY 24, we responded to more than 18,000 requests for support across the Footscray Centre and Refugee Resource Hub (RRH) in Dandenong. Of these, 9,246 were connected to ASRC services for more intensive service, with the remainder either resolved at the point of contact or referred externally. We supported 2,985 people over the financial year, prioritising people facing significant barriers such as homelessness, family violence, health concerns and forced labour issues.

We are seeing an increasing degree of complexity in the issues people are facing in their daily lives, particularly over the past 6 months. To best support someone dealing with a range of challenging issues, including trauma, mental and physical health concerns, homelessness, family violence and financial hardship, it takes a team approach using a trauma-informed practice to support that person. Our new model allows us to work with people's needs in a trauma-informed way to provide the best service possible when they visit us.

As well as providing direct assistance and case coordination to support people in making choices about the services they access, we focus on creating opportunities for ASRC visitors to build connections and community to reduce isolation and loneliness - as well as advocating alongside our clients to address the systemic issues that are at the heart of many of the problems faced by refugees and people seeking asylum.



“

I am extremely grateful to ASRC for all the support and helping us to make our life secure in Australia. We would not be able to be here today without ASRC's immense contributions.”

Marika*

Case Study

Bati and Deni arrived in Australia from Eritrea in January, seeking refuge from the violent civil war at home. Speaking very little English and at risk of homelessness, they came to the ASRC where we prioritised their cases. After six months of comprehensive support to overcome barriers, including housing, food bank, visa and legal, and intensive English courses and apprenticeships, both Bati and Deni secured full time jobs and are now renting independently. Their motivation and determination, combined with targeted support, set them up for this success.

*Photo disclaimer: Not their real name/photo





Vocational Pathways Program

FY 24 was the first year of the newly restructured Vocational and Empowerment Pathways (VEP) Program. Our Education, Employment, and Women's Empowerment programs are now integrated, bringing a holistic and streamlined approach to our work. VEP supports people to build skills, resources, and confidence and pursue the education and employment opportunities they desire.

Education

The Education Program referred 334 clients to education providers in FY 24. Our program is primarily delivered through the Asylum Seeker Vocational Education and Training (ASVET) initiative, which provides access to subsidised TAFE courses under the state government's Skills First Funding. We also partnered with Talent Rise to provide scholarships for young people to cover the non-subsidised costs of TAFE.

This year, we held several events for education service providers, including TAFEs, Learn Locals, and private training institutions, to build their capacity to support clients with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. We ran a professional development workshop, community of best practice conference, and three information sessions. They were an opportunity for service

providers to learn from each other as well as from ASRC members who generously attended to share their experiences with the education sector. Lastly, we worked on building sector awareness of the newly expanded eligibility criteria for different visa holders to improve people's opportunities to access education.

It's important to mention that our work, while focused on connecting our clients with the right opportunities, also contributed to advocacy efforts that succeeded in getting the state government to bring in new study opportunities for people seeking asylum regardless of their type of visa through ASVET.

Employment

In FY 24, the Employment Program provided personalised support to 251 individuals, helping 99 clients find a job. Through tailored coaching sessions, job skills training, and one-on-one guidance, clients received help in refining their resumes, improving interview skills, and identifying their professional strengths. 60 ASRC clients also participated in job skills training, which focuses on practical skills as well as essential soft skills like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.

We engaged with 70 employer partners and hosted multiple information sessions to connect clients with our employer partners. Job seekers could network directly with employers, asking questions to find out more about different industries and job opportunities. In 2024, we launched a pilot mentoring program in collaboration with the Property Council of Australia (PCA). Six mentors from PCA member organisations were paired with six ASRC clients, providing an opportunity to explore career pathways and build networks in their respective professional fields. With

all our employer partners, we focus on building their knowledge and capacity to promote inclusive and equitable hiring and workforce practices. These practical interventions on both the job seeker and employer side helped us support even more people to find and secure work, independence and financial stability in FY 24.

Women's Empowerment

The Women's Empowerment Program supported 105 women through a variety of activities aimed at personal and professional growth. Throughout the year, we organised 12 events including leadership training, financial literacy workshops, sewing classes, and social outings. These activities provided the group with opportunities to gain new skills, build confidence, and develop strong support networks.

Our program's holistic approach focuses on building community and belonging as well as offering opportunities to develop vocational skills. The program takes into account the unique challenges faced by all women, and provides opportunities for participants to explore new pathways, build connections and skills, and achieve financial independence. Through collaborations with the Employment and Education programs, we made sure participants had access to the broadest possible range of education and job opportunities.

A highlight of the year was our celebration of International Women's Day in 2024. We came together to reflect on our journeys and celebrate the success of each program participant. Participants had the opportunity to present their stories to the group if they wished to, providing a space to share experiences and recognise each person's many achievements.



Thank you for helping me get this job. I am working in finance and just completed a Certificate III in Business Administration. I feel blessed and lucky to have this as my first work experience in Australia. Thank you, ASRC."

Karen*

Case Study

Karen*, 42, arrived in Australia in December 2023 and came to the ASRC seeking legal support, health services, and help with finding work. Karen had worked as a teacher and had run a hairdressing salon. Karen attended work readiness training through the Women's Empowerment Program and Employment Program. After coaching and a traineeship with the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Karen applied for jobs on the ASRC jobs board and secured a full-time job on a 12-month contract, with potential for extension, earning above the advertised rate.

*Photo disclaimer: Not her real name/photo



362

referrals to education service providers

99

jobs secured through our employment program

251

individuals received employment personalised support

648

education advisory appointments attended

70

active employer partners

12

events organised for women

1,461

individuals and family units assisted – from telephone advice through to full representation in court

210

visas granted after support with the application, not including others won through legal appeals

628

full representation legal matters and 246 limited assistance legal matters conducted

79%

success rate in Australia's courts and tribunals

3,330

hours of pro bono assistance from HRLP partner firms

176

appointments for 106 highly complex and vulnerable clients and family groups at the Gender Clinic

174

appointments for 163 individuals and family groups at the Generalist Clinic, including at RRH in Dandenong

3

days average wait time by Q4 FY 24, down from 10 days in FY 23, helping clients to reach resolutions faster

Human Rights Law Program

In FY 24, the Human Rights Law Program (HRLP) continued to improve its service design to ensure we provide the best possible support to our clients whilst further developing our strategic litigation capacity. This led to multiple successes in unlawful detention matters and the provision of specialist court representation.

Our intake model reduced wait times and allowed us to respond to a larger number of new requests. This meant that, despite increased complex demand and a reduced team post-organisational restructure, we assisted 60% more people seeking legal help. We reduced the number of appointments required by clients to resolve their matters, reflecting improved use of resources and a trauma-informed approach prioritising our clients' time.

There continues to be an extremely unmet legal need for refugees and people seeking asylum. We continued to see many people receiving unlawful, discriminatory and damaging decisions regarding their refugee or visa status. As many people in the community do not have the resources to challenge these decisions, the same incorrect decisions continue to be made and cause harm, including forced return to persecution and permanent family separation. The ASRC seeks to support as many people with the legal support they need to challenge these decisions. This year, we brought litigation in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, the Federal Court of Australia, and the High Court of Australia, including successful challenges to detention, the imposition of debilitating visa conditions, and grave failures of the fast-track system. These cases protect the rights of individuals and their

families and set precedents that hold decision-makers accountable.

Our litigation work is supported by many generous barristers who represent ASRC clients on a pro bono basis. We would like to particularly acknowledge the support of the Victorian and NSW Bars for their leading work in the refugee space.

The HRLP continued work to reform unjust laws and policies in collaboration with the Systemic Change program. We prioritised gender-related advocacy, drawing on our expertise from the HRLP's Gender Clinic, which provides specialised advice to people seeking asylum due to gender-based violence, their sexual orientation or gender identity. We also provided input into the major reform of the Administrative Review Tribunal and the abolition of mechanisms of the failed fast-track system, including the Immigration Assessment Authority. We prioritised detention advocacy, including after the High Court's ruling in NZYQ and through ASRC's response to the proposed entry ban and deportation laws that passed the lower house in March 2024.

Members of our team are often sought out to share their expertise with the legal community. In the last year, our Principal Solicitor spoke at the Law Council of Australia Immigration Law Conference, presented with the Human Rights Law Centre and Doogue + George on the preventative detention regime, and gave presentations at universities, for the Court Network, for corporate partners, and in the media. Our team also presented at the Federal Community of Legal Centres Conference, and by invitation at a special event for the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia and Transphobia.



Significant Legal Cases 2023 - 24

HRLP achieved many significant outcomes with our clients in the past year. Outside of department visa grants and results achieved in triage and clinics, we won at least 10 cases in the General Division and 25 cases in the Migration & Refugee Division (MRD) of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal in the 23/24 FY. At least 18 of our clients have been released from detention. We received at least 20 Ministerial interventions, 14 citizenship grants and 30 AAT remittals. Many of these results have taken years of work, support, expertise and tenacity, and deeply impactful intervention from across ASRC services. Secure status is critical in allowing people to rebuild their lives and participate in their communities with dignity and security; each of these results, we hope, will have serious flow-on effects for our clients and their families and intergenerationally. We continue to work with each client who is still hoping for a positive outcome. We count amongst our wins being able to support our clients' dignity, resilience and tenacity throughout what can be a deeply damaging process.

Defending Critical Limits On Government Power

Raveje* arrived in Australia as a child refugee and, having been a part of the Australian community through his formative years, never realised he was not a citizen of Australia. As a young man bridging two different cultures and facing the long journey of recovering from trauma without adequate support, he received convictions for offences that were dealt with through the justice system. Unlike Australian citizens in the same circumstances, his permanent visa was cancelled. He was separated from his young son and his Australian family and held in detention for 7 years.

After careful assessment, various health experts, the department, courts and the Tribunal all positively remarked on his character. They found that he was not a danger to the community and observed that he had "turned his life around". Raveje was released from detention and lived in the community for a year. However, new laws were introduced that subjected him to a suite of visa conditions, including an ankle monitor and curfew. This caused Raveje* immense shame, further family separation and impacted his deteriorating health.

ASRC launched a constitutional challenge to the legality of the conditions in the High Court. Before the case could be considered by the Court, the Minister granted Raveje* a new visa without the ankle monitor and curfew conditions. In the months that followed, the ASRC supported multiple people in the community to also have these invasive conditions removed.

Challenges To Unlawful Detention

ASRC has a strong litigation practice, recognising the importance of correcting unlawful government decisions where the consequences include forcible deportation to persecution and permanent family separation and the difficulty people face in securing legal assistance.

Junio*, a father of 2, was born in a refugee camp. His early childhood was marked by violence and displacement. He was separated from his mother and arrived in Australia at the age of 12. Years later, after a visa cancellation, he was detained for six years and subjected to repeated unlawful government decisions, prolonging that detention.

With ASRC's representation, after expert and comprehensive independent arbitration, his good character was recognised, but he remained in detention.

In December 2023, the ASRC launched a challenge to that detention, and, when we succeeded in restoring his permanent visa status, we adapted that proceeding into a class action to have the most impact on others who went through similar experiences.

This year, the ASRC ran multiple successful court challenges to the legality of our clients' detention, as well as requests for intervention and other advocacy, resulting in the release from detention of at least 18 people, some of whom had been detained for nearly a decade. One man who arrived in Australia at the age of 2 and lived in the community for decades got his visa cancelled and spent 5 years in detention. After we secured a win in the General Division of the AAT he was released from detention. We spoke to him when he was en route home to surprise his mother and family after five long years.

Fighting For Families To Live In Safety And Security

Thiya*, a single mother and victim-survivor of family violence, fled persecution. She has two Australian-born children, one of whom is recognised to be a refugee and who has a disability for which she receives NDIS support.

The family struggled to survive in Australia, facing housing insecurity and, for Thiya*, declining health and distress.

Over the years, the ASRC supported the family to have the children's citizenship recognised, to advocate for Ministerial intervention to afford Thiya* security, and to ensure they had lawful status throughout, including working with the ASRC's housing and social support teams to prevent the family facing homelessness and other serious harm.

This year, after extensive advocacy, the Minister intervened to grant Thiya* permanent residence, finally affording this family the security and safety they need to rebuild their lives.

The ASRC has supported at least 14 children in getting their Australian citizenship recognised this year.

Protecting Gender-Based Rights

Mire*, a transgender woman from the Pacific Islands, sought safety in Australia after facing ongoing social alienation from her family and community, as well as physical and verbal violence at home. With no work rights and facing homelessness in Australia, Mire's mental health deteriorated. When she approached the HRLP for legal assistance, the Gender Clinic provided compassionate support through the trauma-informed appointment model and assisted her with drafting a statement in support of her protection claim. She was then referred for full representation, where her lawyer successfully advocated for the Minister to lift the no-work restriction on her visa. Ongoing advocacy from the HRLP saw the client granted a Permanent Protection visa, allowing her access to all rights afforded to those with permanency, like work rights and Medicare, and she now receives crucial healthcare for long-term issues.

Resolution Of Status (RoS) Visa Grant

Asad* was forced to flee from Afghanistan while his wife was pregnant due to persecution based on their religion and ethnicity, threatening their lives. He arrived by sea on Australian shores in 2012 but was subjected to the cruel fast-track system, depriving him of security. For more than a decade, he was separated from his wife and son, who lived as refugees in Malaysia, experiencing immense hardship. Asad was finally granted a Resolution of Status permanent visa after years of thorough legal representation and support from the HRLP team. When he was granted security, he flew to Malaysia and met his son for the first time. After 12 long years, he finally reunited with his wife and son, who hold UNHCR refugee status cards. This was the first time he met his son, now a teenager. He will now begin the process of reuniting permanently with his family in safety and security.

*Names changed to protect the privacy of people seeking asylum

“

I wanted to express my sincere gratitude for all the support you provided to help me gain my freedom from detention. Now I live in Australia with dignity, peace, and as a normal human being like other members of the community. To be honest, I feel like I have been reborn.” ASRC HRLP client



05

Refugee Resource Hub, powered by the ASRC

In its second year since opening, the Refugee Resource Hub, powered by the ASRC in Dandenong, welcomed 1,859 refugees and people seeking asylum. An extended arm of the ASRC, the RRH serves as a vital point of services, support, and empowerment in South East Melbourne. With a culturally diverse population, including one of the largest communities of refugees and asylum seekers in any Victorian municipality, the demand for its services remains high.

Establishing a second location has significantly increased our capacity to serve the community, enhancing accessibility for those who had to travel from the South East to Footscray.

The Refugee Resource Hub (RRH) continues to amplify its impact through internal services, co-located partners, and external collaborations, solidifying its role as a comprehensive “one-stop shop” for refugees and people seeking asylum in the local area.



Building Community And Collaboration

In the last financial year, the Refugee Resource Hub (RRH) has established itself as a vital place of hope and support for the local refugee community. We forged successful partnerships with co-located organisations and local media.

In 2024, the Refugee Resource Hub's Garden received the Landscape Architecture Award for Community Contribution, thanks to landscape architect Enlocus's pro-bono design centred around the Story Tree, which symbolises resilience, growth, and diversity of identity.

The RRH also gained valuable coverage of its 2nd birthday in The Dandenong Star, highlighting the impact on the community. The team has continued strengthening relationships with co-located partners while expanding collaboration with off-site organisations. Together with ASRC programs, these partnerships synergise at the RRH to support those seeking asylum, refugees, and migrants in vulnerable stages of their journeys in Australia.

The RRH team provided **2,302** instances of support to the community visiting the RRH.

ASRC Services Delivered On-Site at the RRH

The RRH offers a comprehensive range of services for people seeking asylum and refugees, including those provided by co-located partner organisations. Key services include Access and Support, the Human Rights Law Program, ASRC Foodbank, and Vocational Pathways (employment and education).

In this report for FY 24, you will find that ASRC programs reported their overall impact across both centres in each of their sections; however, the following information and figures specifically pertain to their operations at the Refugee Resource Hub in Dandenong.

Access and Support (Social Services)

In year two, the Access and Support team solidified its role as the heart of the RRH, driving service development and delivery alongside ASRC programs and co-located partners. The team focused on empowering people seeking asylum in Melbourne's Southeast, helping them overcome personal challenges and structural barriers while fostering social inclusion. By guiding individuals to recognise their strengths and potential, the team played a crucial role in enabling clients to navigate their journeys with greater resilience and confidence.

The Access and Support team played a vital role in intake assessments, triage, and assisting people with essential documents and applications, such as Medicare, public transport concession cards, and support letters advocating for the rights of people seeking asylum. They also facilitated referrals to ASRC services, including those at the Footscray centre, as well as external support services. The team established a well-defined structure, serving as the second point of contact after the Reception

team, which initially engages with individuals on a drop-in basis. Depending on each person's unique circumstances, they are directed to the appropriate internal or external services for further support.

ASRC Foodbank at the RRH (Community Food Services Program)

The ASRC Foodbank in Dandenong opened in September 2022, increasing our reach to the South East of Melbourne. This year, we saw a 33% growth in the number of people supported between July 23 and June 24 at the Foodbank at the Refugee Resource Hub. We have also seen excellent growth in stakeholder engagement, building local partnerships, its profile in the community and a rise in our supporters.

Human Rights Law Program

The Human Rights Law Program continues to offer specialised legal assistance to clients in the Southeast. We offer onsite appointments at the Refugee Resource Hub as part of our Generalist Clinic, and our team will often travel to the Dandenong office to provide legal representation and appointments for ongoing clients who reside in the area.

In FY 24, we held 60 legal appointments for 53 individuals or family groups at the Refugee Resource Hub who reside in Melbourne's South Eastern suburbs. These critical legal appointments provided support to people forced to flee their country of birth due to persecution. Maintaining our presence at the RRH through our clinic and full representation models, allows us to continue providing trauma-informed care to the increasing demand for assistance in this area of Melbourne.

Vocational Pathways (Employment, Education)

The Vocational & Empowerment Pathways (VEP) Program adopted a new structure to empower people seeking asylum and refugees toward self-sufficiency once their basic needs were met. Through the Refugee Resource Hub, the VEP team delivered targeted education and employment support, resulting in 167 employment advisory sessions and 13 clients successfully securing jobs. Additionally, 287 education advisory appointments were conducted, leading to 69 clients being referred for enrollment in various courses. These efforts helped individuals build skills and increase their opportunities for long-term integration within the community.

Health Program

The ASRC Health Program has strengthened its presence at the RRH over the past financial year. Recently, our health team travelled to RRH to meet the staff and explore ways to enhance our joint efforts. We also collaborated with Monash Refugee Health to address RRH's concerns regarding referral pathways and provided RRH staff with training on referrals to the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department (VVED).

The Health Program hosted two flu vaccination clinics at RRH, as many of our members are not eligible for free government-funded vaccines. In the first clinic, 24 vaccines were administered, and in the second—held during school holidays and attended mostly by children—28 vaccines were given. Each person vaccinated had their immunisation status reviewed, and many were identified as needing additional catch-up vaccines, which were offered at the ASRC in Footscray.

Additionally, the Health Program supported RRH in establishing the Monash Health Green Bus visits. We collaborated closely with Monash Health to ensure the Green Bus team understood the specific health needs and service barriers people seeking asylum face. To deepen their insight, Green Bus nurses also spent a day working at our clinic, gaining valuable experience in health services directed to people seeking asylum.

PARTNERS: Co-located and off-site

The Refugee Resource Hub proudly hosts several service providers and refugee-led organisations that enhance our support for the community. In the last financial year, these organisations were:

- SisterWorks Inc
- Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre
- Australian Hazara Women's Friendship Network
- Multicultural Youth Support Services
- Refugee Council of Australia
- Centre for Migrant and Refugee Health

In addition to these co-located partners, RRH collaborates with external organisations to deliver impactful initiatives:

Monash Refugee Health and Wellbeing Services

RRH has established a strategic partnership with Monash Health, providing essential health services to our members.

Monash Health Green Cross Bus Project

The Green Cross Bus Project is a community outreach program that brings health education and support directly to our members. Since April 2024, health practitioners—including nurses, physiotherapists, dietitians, podiatrists, counsellors, and psychologists—have visited the RRH, each time offering access to a different array of health professionals.

OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation

They have conducted three successful vision clinics at the RRH, providing free vouchers to our members for emergency visits to OPSM stores, and ensuring timely access to eye care.

Reclink Australia

RRH maintains a membership with Reclink Australia, which offers social and sports opportunities for our members through referrals from the Access and Support team.

These collaborations strengthen our ability to address the diverse needs of those we serve, fostering community well-being and resilience.

Case Study



Staff very excellent - from reception, foodbank, other teams. They are listening. Very cooperative. When we come here, we feel like family." Hadrees*

Sharif* is an Afghan man who arrived in Australia by boat in 2012. Unable to read or write, he found the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process overwhelming. After his protection visa was refused, he became homeless, lost his work rights, and disengaged from the system. For nearly six years, Sharif lived on the streets in Queensland and Victoria, suffering from deteriorating health. In 2022, he was referred to the Refugee Resource Hub, which helped him re-engage with the RSD process, secure housing, and access to healthcare. Now, Sharif is connected with his community, lawful, and working towards a better future.

*Photo disclaimer: Not his real name/photo

1,043
individuals supported by the ASRC Foodbank in Dandenong

1,859
refugees and people seeking asylum accessed services at the RRH

100
free eye tests provided in partnership with EyeSight

60
legal appointments held for 53 individuals or family groups at the RRH

2,302
instances of support provided by the Access and Support Team at RRH



Betia Shakiba, Vashini Jayakumar, Jana Favero, Asma Afzal - Parliament delegation in 2023

06 Systemic Change

As we entered the second year of the Albanese Government, we held high hopes that the positive reforms such as bringing closure and permanency for 19,500 refugees and an increase in Australia's humanitarian intake, would continue. The reality was much starker, with instability and bleak changes influenced by the politicisation of refugees.

Our key policy areas of Freedom, Fairness and Safety, informed by extensive consultation with people of lived experience, continued to guide our advocacy priorities and the work of the Systemic Change team. In FY 24, we advocated for reforms that will see fairer and more humane treatment for refugees and all people seeking asylum through policy, political lobbying, reports and strategic reactive and proactive media.

Refugee and asylum policy was heavily impacted by the NZYQ v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs high-profile case. This led to further demonisation of people seeking asylum and refugees in a negative external environment, making it difficult to strive for positive change.

Legal Advocacy

We had numerous opportunities to exercise legal advocacy at the same time that the Albanese Government continued to consult with the refugee sector while introducing a number of migration-related bills - some positive, some deeply concerning. The opportunity for legal advocacy was also heavily influenced by the unfolding crisis in Gaza.

The High Court's October 2023 decision in *NZYQ v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs* was a pivotal moment and established limitations for how long a person can be held in immigration detention when they cannot be removed from Australia. Unfortunately, this decision led to the spread of a negative narrative demonising people seeking asylum.

Moreover, the Government's response was to punish people who had been subjected to years of trauma in detention by hurriedly passing new laws, including the imposition of ankle bracelets and curfews. They then attempted to preempt further High Court decisions and to impose an entry ban and expand deportation powers. The ASRC staunchly opposed this legislation, and due to immense community pressure, the Entry Ban and Deportation Bill did not pass.

A more positive development was that, after years of advocacy by people with lived experience and the refugee sector, the government passed legislation in May 2024 to abolish the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, including the Immigration Assessment Authority. The reforms will establish a new review body, the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART), which will commence on 14 October 2024.



14 submissions to parliamentary and government inquiries/consultations

3 appearances at Parliamentary and Senate inquiry hearings

47 people with lived experience provided their insights for 36 ASRC media releases

Reach of 11.8 million through ASRC media in the last 5 months of FY 24



Media & Policy

ASRC in the Media

In the last financial year, the ASRC distributed 36 media releases to highlight the impacts of successive failed government policies on the lives of refugees and people seeking asylum, and the changes required to fix a flawed and broken immigration system. The ASRC's frank and fearless media commentary continues to be sought after and is influential in shaping national media narratives on refugee and asylum issues.

Key to building public understanding of the impacts of harmful policies is creating opportunities for the voices of lived experience to be heard and amplified through national media. Our media releases provided a platform for 47 people with lived experience to tell their stories. This led to further opportunities for refugee advocates to share their experiences through TV, op-eds, radio, podcasts and online media.

In the last five months of FY 24*, the ASRC reached 11.8 million people through approximately 453 media mentions across TV, print, radio and online media.

*Data available only from February 2024 through new media monitoring service.

Freedom, Fairness and Safety for People Seeking Asylum

Despite the continued and harmful politicisation of asylum and refugee issues, we've seen that pressure works and change across our advocacy priorities of Freedom, Safety and Fairness, is more important than ever for affecting meaningful, long-term change in the lives of ASRC clients.

Freedom - Finish this Crisis: 10 Years of Offshore Detention

To mark 10 years of offshore detention, the ASRC released a compelling report entitled *Finish this Crisis*: Stories exposing the horrors of offshore detention. It provided further evidence of the policy's failure and the long-term impacts of being subjected to medical neglect, sexual violence, suicide attempts, mental and physical abuse and countless other human rights violations that have occurred offshore.

Fairness - A fair Process for All

There were significant and long-fought-for wins in our Fairness policy area during FY 24. Our legal expertise is vital and influential when pushing for policy and law reform that will have lasting impacts for people seeking asylum.

Policy achievements in 23-24 included:

- abolition of the AAT and IAA (including Fast Track)
- increase in government-funded legal representation to people seeking asylum
- increased funding to address visa processing backlogs

Safety - Equal Access to Safety Nets

The ASRC advocates for all people seeking asylum, regardless of their mode of arrival, to be given the right to work, study and access Medicare and other mainstream social supports. The Federal Budget is a pivotal moment for the ASRC to take a firm public position on the policy changes and investment that must be provided by the Federal Government to address the unprecedented need facing people seeking asylum in the community.

As the Budget was announced in Canberra in May 2024, our media amplified those voices with lived experience of the Government's harmful policies and provided strong commentary against the slashing of social support for people seeking asylum by 54%.

850

instances of communications with clients in detention + thousands of WhatsApp messages

50

risk notifications to authorities to protect the safety and wellbeing of clients

2

evacuations of clients from Nauru supported

20

refugees, plus family members, provided with resettlement support from PNG to USA, Canada and New Zealand

98

new client intakes

30

instances where people seeking asylum in detention were consulted and provided insights for communications

Detention Rights Advocacy Program - DRAP

While we celebrated what we thought was the last transfer from Nauru to Australia in 2023, the arrival of people on our shores seeking asylum in late 2023 saw the reintroduction of offshore transfers. Once again, the numbers of offshore transfers increased to close to 100 in Nauru. For this group and those who remained detained offshore, DRAP continued to provide trauma-informed psychosocial support by providing assessment, information, referrals, advocacy, emotional support and crisis response through triage and case management services.

Our direct contact with people held offshore continues to inform our political lobbying with the extended Systemic Change team and allowed us to expose the inhumane conditions, medical neglect and unfair processes facing people offshore through our work with national media outlets.

This evolving situation forced us to adjust again and find ways to collaborate with other ASRC services and external organisations to respond to the growing crisis.

Part of the support provided was achieved in collaboration with the ASRC Human Rights Law Program to run three Nauru Intake Clinics to provide intake and assessment to 39 new people seeking asylum transferred to Nauru.

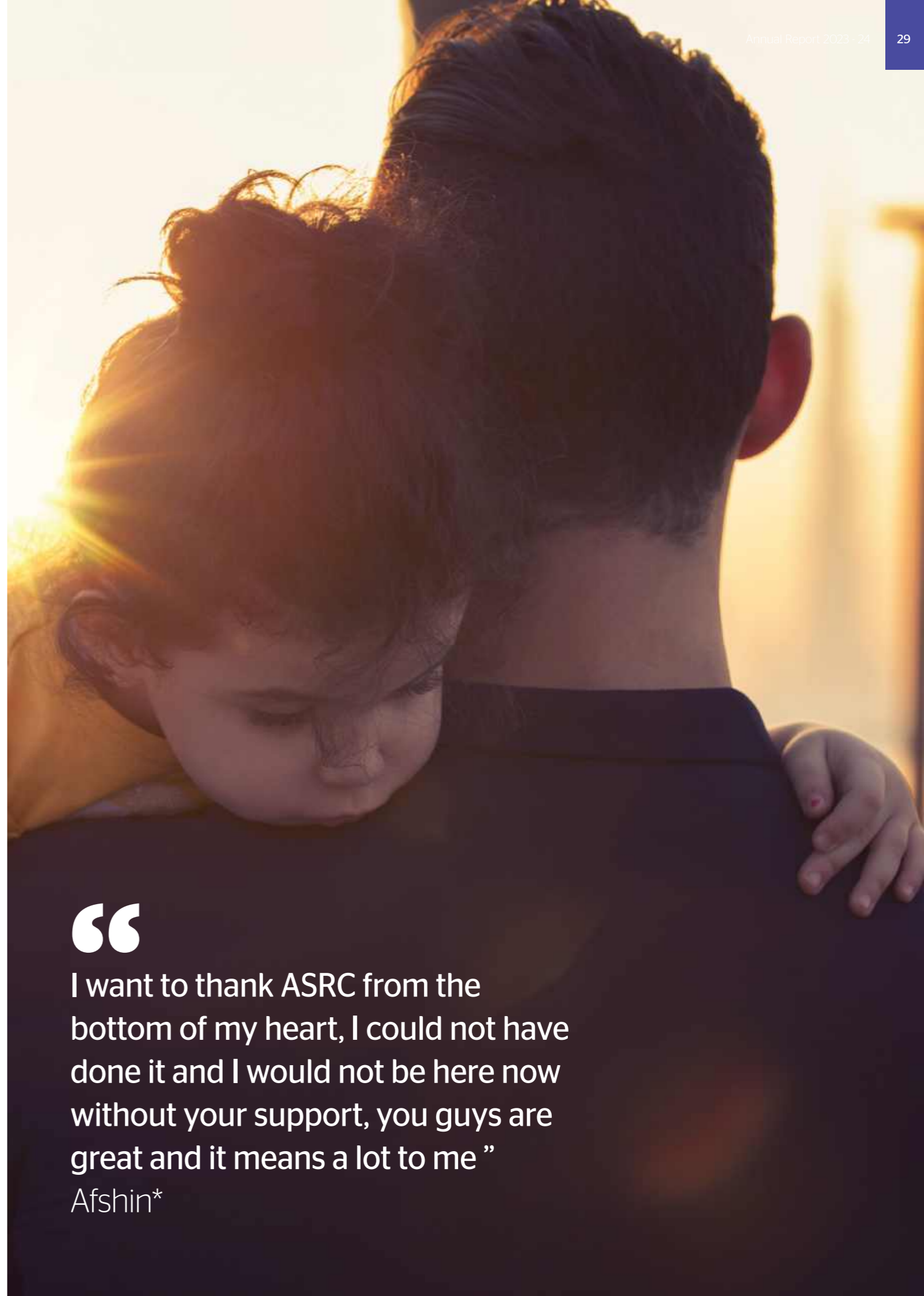
Unfortunately, we saw a growing health and humanitarian crisis develop in PNG that required our team of staff and volunteers to be in constant communication with the people affected. We also built new partnerships with key organisations such as the PNG Crisis Working Group and Manus Lives Matter to improve health, welfare and resettlement outcomes.

In response to the humanitarian crisis in PNG, the ASRC donated \$20,000 in humanitarian aid.

Case Study

DRAP provided a critical lifeline, hope and encouragement, long-term casework, and advocacy support to Afshin* during his indefinite detention in Nauru. DRAP tirelessly raised his case with authorities even eleven years after his detention started. Afshin was finally medically evacuated to Australia, where he is now rebuilding his life in the community, regaining his health, and recovering from his traumatic journey.

*Photo disclaimer: Not his real name/photo



“

I want to thank ASRC from the bottom of my heart, I could not have done it and I would not be here now without your support, you guys are great and it means a lot to me”

Afshin*



07

Refugee Leadership, Advocacy & Communications

The Refugee Leadership, Advocacy and Communications department has continued to build a powerful movement for change by centring the voices of refugees and people seeking asylum across our actions and communication channels. In FY 24, we have focused on shifting public opinion through impactful campaigns while creating leadership opportunities for those with lived experience and expertise.

By collaborating closely with the Systemic Change team, we have combined top-down approaches like lobbying and law reform with grassroots community building and organising.

Our politically independent role allowed us to contribute significantly to refugee sector coordination and provide support to advocates and grassroots groups. Together, we have strived to create a nationwide movement strong enough to protect the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum.



Case Study

“

I found CAPP very useful, though in the group I was the one with the very least English language skills. The program helped me learn public speaking and storytelling skills and with my advocacy journey. As a result, I was able to speak at a rally for permanent visas for people who were impacted by the ‘Fast Track’ policy.” Ghulam Reza, Refugee Rights Advocate & CAPP Alumni



Ghulam, a participant at the CAPP Sydney in 2024, arrived in Australia in 2013. After spending time in detention, he was released into the community, but shortly after, his protection claim was refused by the ‘Fast Track’ system. As a result, Ghulam spent years in the community without work rights and has been separated from his family for more than a decade. The CAP Program gave Ghulam the tools to share his story in an impactful way and raise awareness about his plight and the plight of others impacted by the failed ‘Fast Track’ system. Since graduating from CAPP, Ghulam has been featured in various media publications and has joined key community actions in Sydney.

Community Organising

In FY 24, our strategic focus was on further strengthening our collaboration with the refugee community to actively advocate for their rights as a joint front. Part of this close collaboration was maintaining open communication channels to understand the community’s unique motivations and concerns. Much like the process we followed to develop the ASRC’s advocacy priorities of Freedom, Safety and Fairness, through the Community Organising Program, we continued to listen closely to what the refugee community thought was important for the ASRC to focus our grassroots advocacy efforts on. This helped us ensure that our support of refugee-led groups is authentic and that their voices are amplified by the ASRC.

These connections with refugee leaders and refugee-led groups around the country helped us maximise our common efforts, increasing our collective ability to influence decision-makers and create lasting change.

In this financial year, we successfully held two rounds of the Community Advocacy and Power Program (CAPP) in Perth and Sydney. A total of 26 participants graduated from the program, gaining valuable knowledge in areas such as Australian History, First Nations Peoples, background on refugee policy, the Australian political system, storytelling for various mediums, podcasting, public speaking, organising and campaigning. The training sessions also focused on building skills to

effectively lead meetings with MPs and politicians.

After completing the program, graduates joined the ASRC’s CAPP Alumni program, which continues to allow people to expand their networks, influence and reach. The group provides a space for members to share and receive opportunities, information, and support for their advocacy work to continue their journey as leaders of the refugee community.

Additionally, graduates were invited to join the ASRC’s Speakers Program to further enhance their skills and continue creating systemic change by sharing their stories and educating the wider community.

26

leaders graduated from CAPP in Perth and Sydney

5

Workshops/Masterclasses offered to CAPP alumni in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth

22

women from the Refugee Women Action for Visa Equality group were supported by the ASRC in their walk to Canberra with material aid and a snap awareness campaign through social media and traditional media

54,243

supporters sent 106,514 individual emails to decision makers.

11,768

supporters added their name to the petition calling for the urgent evacuation of refugees and people seeking asylum in Papua New Guinea and Nauru

5,290

people wrote to their Federal MP calling on the Government to grant permanent protection for the thousands of people failed by the 'Fast Track' system

Campaigns

As an organisation advocating for and with refugees and people seeking asylum, we launched new large-scale public campaigns to champion our advocacy priorities of Fairness, Freedom and Safety.

One of our flagship campaigns this year was Home is Here. The campaign worked to call on the Albanese Government to let the women, men and children failed by the flawed 'Fast Track' system have the permanency they need to truly rebuild their lives as part of our community.

Ten years on after the then-Rudd Labor Government condemned people seeking safety to a life of danger and uncertainty in PNG and Nauru, another focus for us in FY 24 was to advocate for everyone who remains in PNG and Nauru to be immediately evacuated to safety and calling on the government to finally end this chapter of our shameful history for good.

We mobilised refugee-led communities to take action, supported rallies across the country that attracted thousands of people, organised events that brought together hundreds of supporters, **generated 106,514 individual emails to decision makers**, ran petitions that attracted thousands of signatures, **shared refugee stories and calls to action across all of our social media platforms which contributed to generate almost 22 million impressions across all social media platforms** and we continued to support refugee leadership and centring refugee voices as a core principle to all of our advocacy.

We continued to lead the refugee sector by hosting a monthly Refugee Advocacy Sector Call, sharing resources, delivering training sessions on Words that Work, updates and supporting our partners to develop impactful campaign strategies. Wherever possible, we supported other groups' campaigns, working across coalitions to amplify the refugee sector's impact.

Another highlight for our Campaigns team and extended Systemic Change program this year was standing with Behrouz Boochani in the Australian Parliament, demanding a Royal Commission into Immigration Detention and working with a coalition of organisations to launch this push.

We also launched reactive campaigns condemning proposed draconian laws that would negatively impact refugees in the wake of the NZYQ High Court decision (refer to Systemic Change - Legal Advocacy). Our public campaigns have visibly drawn attention to issues faced by refugees and people seeking asylum and have again this year led to many positive outcomes across our focus advocacy areas.

Case Study

In April, the Labor Government tried to rush through a new Trump-like Entry Ban and Deportation Bill that criminalises refugees. If the Bill passed through the Senate and became law, it could have led to refugees being banned entry to Australia or forced to return to countries where they face persecution or even death. In response, the ASRC quickly launched a reactive campaign opposing the bill, taking a leading role in the refugee sector by facilitating sector collaboration. We mobilised supporters through different community organising actions, including 'Email Your Senators to Stop Labor's Entry Ban and Deportation Bill'. As a result, 50,000 emails to politicians were sent from ASRC supporters, as well as hundreds of submissions to the Senate Committee reviewing the Bill.

As an outcome of the clearly visible community pressure, the Albanese Government did not manage to garner sufficient political support to pass the Bill and has not introduced it to the Senate for a vote.

Reaching Out to Our Community Through Digital Channels

The ASRC continued to invest in its digital channels to connect our community and bring them closer to the impact of their unwavering support while giving them practical ways to advocate and take action. In FY 24, our social media channels generated almost 22 million impressions and over 560,000 engagements with our native content. Video was the preferred format by our audience, reaching over 1.9 million video views in the financial year.

Our ASRC electronic mailing achieved an open rate of 41.68% with a 2.82% click-through rate.

22M

impressions through ASRC social media channels

200K

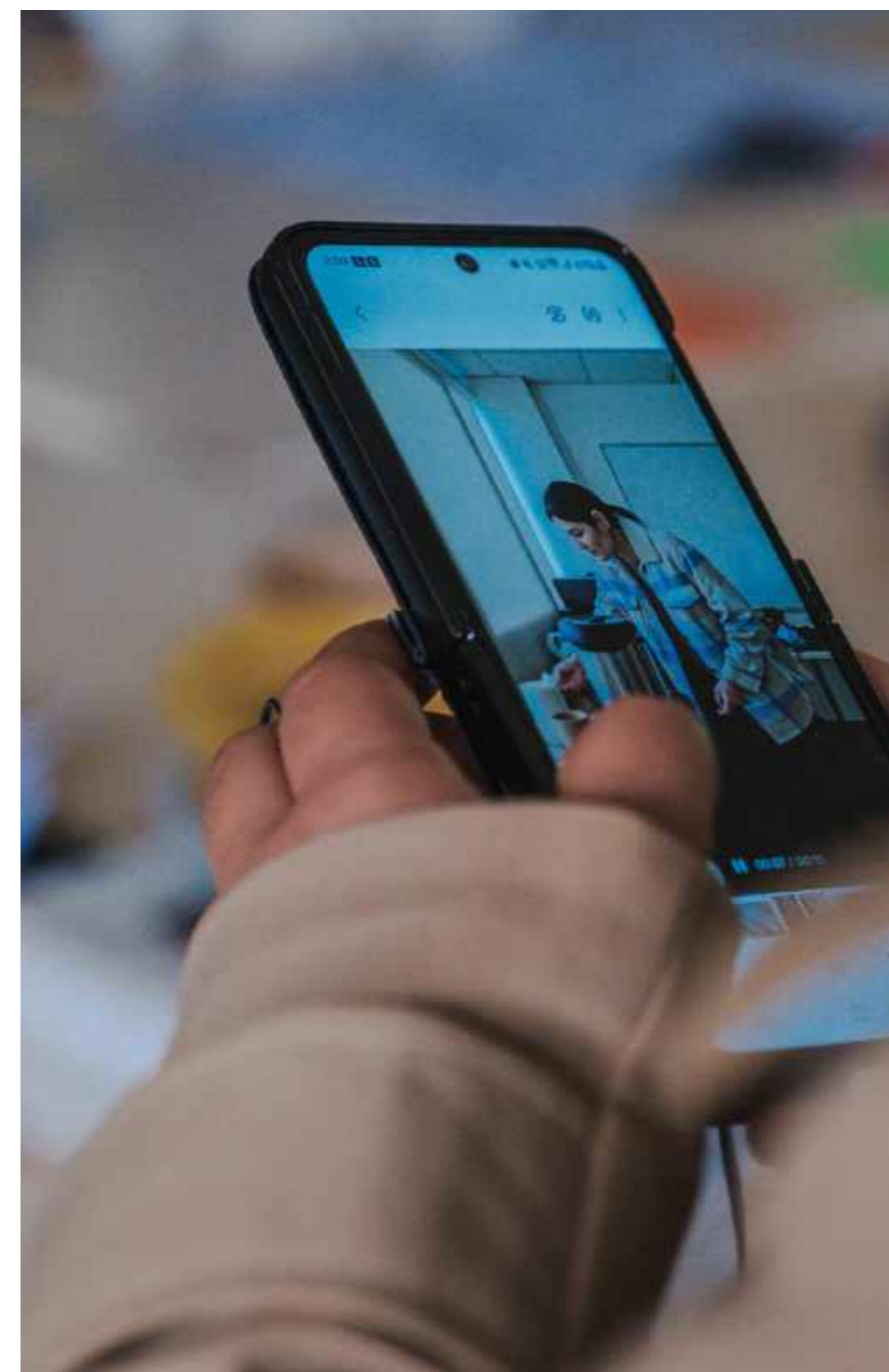
unique visits and 790K pageviews on the ASRC website

67K

unique visitors on the ASRC Social Enterprises websites

280,325

active subscribers to the ASRC bi-monthly newsletter







08 Giving & Experience

The ASRC stayed true to its mission to support and empower refugees and people seeking asylum in FY 24. While the federal government fell short on protecting people's human rights for yet another year, we stepped up our efforts. This was possible thanks to the unwavering commitment of our community of compassion. Our supporter base of generous donors and funders contributed an incredible \$19.2 million in the last Financial Year, exceeding our income budget target by \$1.2m.

The ASRC maintained a strong financial position in FY 24. Careful planning meant we ensured the sustainability of our mission, exceeding our income budget target by 7% even given the 25% drop in income from the previous year. This drop was anticipated after the unprecedented and incredibly successful FY22-23 Save the ASRC Appeal.

Our heartfelt gratitude extends to all the donors, trusts, foundations, corporate partners, and local and state government grantmakers who walk alongside the ASRC and the people we serve. Your ongoing commitment ensures that refugees and people seeking asylum have a safe place to find help and community. Together, we support people to access essential services and supplies, rebuild their lives in Australia, and be supported as the leaders whose voices demand lasting systemic change for refugees.



“

I come into work feeling really special, having the opportunity to speak to our Champions of Change daily. It’s wonderful to talk to people from all around Australia who each are so different in age and background, and yet are committed to making a change for people seeking asylum. The work that we do here at the ASRC is important, but none of it would be possible without the ongoing support from our donors. Each and everyone of them should be proud of themselves.”

Rhys Dolby,
Supporter Experience Telefundraiser

Individual Giving

In FY 24, our incredible community came together once again after the challenges of the previous year. While the cost of living crisis remained a pressing concern, donors and supporters rallied and even increased their generous giving in response to our fundraising efforts. This reflects the power in the stories of people’s lived experience of seeking asylum that we are grateful to be given permission to share. We saw these stories turn recognition, understanding and empathy into action and financial support.

The Individual Giving Program maintained a dynamic, diverse portfolio of campaigns and engagements. This allowed us to engage existing donors at the same time as securing and onboarding new supporters. Some 146,973 donors made a gift over the financial year, culminating in more than \$12 million funds raised from individual giving. Thank you to each and every person who made a gift to stand with people seeking asylum and refugees.

Regular Giving

Growing our income from regular giving was a top priority to support the ASRC’s long-term sustainability. Regular giving provides the organisation with a reliable income stream that supports our ability to respond to both immediate needs and work on long-term programs and projects. In FY 24, this regular support from generous, committed donors allowed us to strengthen our frontline services and advocacy efforts, responding to immediate needs and planning for the future.

In FY 24 the Regular Giving program raised an incredible \$4,668,144 from 9,275 committed monthly donors. This resulted from our strategy of combining the strong digital advertisement campaign with the efforts of our in-house Supporter Experience team with an external tele-fundraising partner. This approach allowed us to have meaningful conversations with existing donors to seek further support, reconnect with people who may have recently stopped their regular donations, and encourage existing ASRC supporters to consider starting a monthly donation. We are in awe of the support from our generous monthly donors, who are true Champions of Change.

Community Fundraising

The Community Fundraising program brought individuals, schools, churches, comedy clubs and other like-minded organisations together with participatory activities like fun runs, fitness challenges and bake sales. In FY 24, community fundraisers helped raise \$2,058,462 for the ASRC.

World Refugee Day Telethon, Powered by the ASRC

On the 20th of June 2024, we celebrated our 9th World Refugee Day Telethon. We held a full-day event at the ASRC in Footscray, with staff and volunteers working alongside refugee leaders, celebrities and influencers who volunteered their time and profile to bring in donations and support all outgoing communication efforts. This year’s event saw our best outcome of donations via SMS with a total of \$577,566 raised through this channel alone. In total, we raised \$1.419 million.

We thank Parisa and Mursal, graduates of the ASRC’s Community, Advocacy and Power Program CAPP, for their work as the faces and

voices of this year’s Telethon message and for highlighting the many voices, stories and values they want to see in the community.

Feast for Freedom

Feast for Freedom invites individuals, workplaces, schools, and community groups to host a participatory feast event, raising funds for refugees and people seeking asylum. In FY 24, Feast for Freedom participants raised \$301,292, with 572 hosts including 57 workplaces and schools. Connecting through food, Feast for Freedom brings those with lived experience of finding refuge and safety in Australia around the table to share their warmth, creativity and inspiration.

Schools Fundraising

Over 30 primary and secondary schools took the time and effort to fundraise for us with a variety of activities. We loved hearing about all the ways students get together to support the ASRC.

\$12,032,570

raised from regular giving, one-off appeals, community fundraising, gifts in wills and merchandise sales*

*Excluding major donors and grants

146,973

donors gave to the ASRC

9,275

monthly donors supported the ASRC, creating long term, sustainable impact

\$4,668,144

total donations from our Champions of Change

\$2,058,462

raised by community fundraisers

\$1,419,044

raised from ASRC Telethon





Jacob Varghese, CEO of Maurice Blackburn Lawyers

110

major donors supported our work

11

corporate partners

\$3,021,299

funding from local and state government grants

\$1,211,235

received in philanthropic grants

\$249,258

given by corporate partners

\$2,489,677

given by major donors

Philanthropy

During FY 24, our Philanthropy program structure remained split between Major Donors, Grants, and Corporate Partnerships. The three arms collaborated to bring 38% of the fundraising income to enable the ASRC services and programs that work directly with refugees and people seeking asylum.

Major Donors

In FY 24, the ASRC received generous gifts totalling nearly \$2.5 million from 110 major donors. Many dedicated donors give more than \$10,000 each year. A donation of this size, especially made each year, supercharges our programs and makes it possible for us to forward plan and do our most strategic work. We thank each person for believing so passionately in the work that we do and for making a commitment of this scale.

Grants

In FY 24, the ASRC continued to thrive with the support of generous Trusts, Foundations, and State Government Departments. These vital funding opportunities have allowed us to empower our programs, enhance our services, and reach more people needing support. We are deeply grateful for the trust these organisations have placed in the ASRC's vision for a fair and equitable future for people seeking asylum and refugees.

The **Noel and Carmel O'Brien Family Foundation** continued to support our Social Enterprises, allowing us to offer employment opportunities and career pathways through ASRC Cleaning and ASRC Catering. Their support allowed us to enhance our Pathway Development Plans, providing personalised training and experience so that people who work with us can develop the skills they need to enter the workforce and work towards independence. Find out more about this grant's impact on the Refugee Business section on page 43.

We acknowledge the **Helen and David Hains Foundation** for their financial support of the ASRC's Human Rights Law Program as they diligently defended and advocated for the human rights of some of our clients who experienced high intersectional vulnerability, including persecution relating to gender, sexuality, or family violence¹.

Multi-year grant funding from the **Victorian Department of Health** played an essential role in enabling our Health Program to support people seeking asylum. We provided GP appointments to people without Medicare, pharmacy waivers, and multidisciplinary support, including mental health services. State funding is crucial to our ongoing services, and the continued support of the State Government highlights the vital work the ASRC provides to the community².

Corporate Partner

11 corporate partners generously gifted \$249,258 in financial donations to the ASRC for FY 24. A highlight was World Refugee Day when we secured an incredible \$20,000 from our generous partners at Maurice Blackburn, encouraging the community to give and have their donations doubled.

In addition to financial support, many partners provided in-kind and pro-bono services directly to our programs. Amongst the many generous donations were Nelson Alexander Foundation providing an incredible 5,724kg of rice to the ASRC Foodbank through their Nelson Alexander Foundation day, Airbnb generously donating a \$1,000 gift card towards our World Refugee Day Telethon Auction and Aesop ensuring the ASRC Foodbank was continuously stocked with personal care products for our community.

We also reintroduced our corporate volunteering with a pilot program. Our corporate partners donated an incredible 202 hours of volunteering across six different partner organisations. Volunteering ranged from working in our Foodbank to assisting our Refugee Business social enterprises with packing 800 gift boxes for sale during the festive season.

These corporate partners highlight the various touchpoints an organisation partnered with the ASRC can have and the collective effort of our generous community to achieve tangible and impactful results for our members.

“

At Virgin Unite, we believe in a world where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their circumstances. Partnering with the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre allows us to support individuals seeking safety and a fresh start in life. Together, we are committed to empowering asylum seekers, advocating for their rights, and fostering a community of compassion and inclusivity and work to create lasting change for Australian asylum seekers.”

Sheetal Vyas, Virgin Unite Managing Director



¹Read more about the impact of the Human Rights Law Program on page 16

²Read more about the ASRC Humanitarian Operations, including Health Program, from page 7



09 Refugee Business

In FY 24, our Refugee Business unit, formed by our social enterprises ASRC Catering (including Journeys Cafés) and ASRC Cleaning, reinforced its commitment to empowering people seeking asylum and refugees through meaningful employment and career development. Our focus on growth and innovation aligned with ASRC's mission of advancing social justice and financial sustainability. Notable achievements included enhancing service delivery, deepening strategic partnerships, and streamlining operations to boost efficiency and elevate customer satisfaction.

Through early intervention and the provision of stable employment, the ASRC Refugee Business fostered resilience, reduced reliance on welfare, and promoted financial independence among participants. In FY 24, we generated \$3.5 million in revenue and strengthened partnerships, including a significant collaboration with the University of Melbourne. Our commitment to creating inclusive, supportive workspaces, alongside hands-on training in hospitality and customer service, fostered employability and social connections. By offering pathways to self-reliance, we have laid a foundation for sustainable community well-being and individual empowerment.

Social Impact

With the generous support from The Noel and Carmel O'Brien Family Foundation for the second year, Refugee Business has actively advanced its Pathway Support Program for employees with lived experience. The initiative boosted workforce confidence, enhanced capabilities, and created meaningful pathways for professional growth and empowerment among our staff.

Refugee Business continues to focus on creating real job opportunities for refugees and people seeking asylum, with plenty of support and training along the way. Our goal was to boost employability by helping our team build skills like English language, resume writing, and interview preparation. In collaboration with other like-minded organisations, we were able to offer pre and post-employment support. **We also supported the professional growth of more than 47 team members through Pathway Development Plan appointments.**

Success meant learning our employees' unique journeys and empowering everyone through personalised training. We know that everyone's journey is different, so we focused on tailoring our support to suit each person's strengths and goals.

ASRC Cleaning

In FY 24, ASRC Cleaning continued to deliver high-quality domestic cleaning services, with a strong focus on our most popular offerings: end-of-lease and steam cleaning. Our Team Leaders collaborated closely with a dedicated group of casual staff, travelling together in our Cleaning van to foster a positive, team-oriented environment. Through comprehensive training, staff gained proficiency in using the carpet cleaning machine and developed expertise in deep cleaning and vacate cleaning.

These skills translated seamlessly to our commercial services, enabling our cleaning team to expand their offerings to include commercial deep cleans, end-of-lease, and steam cleaning—services we hadn't provided commercially the previous year. This expansion was driven by the team's growing skillset, bolstered by positive customer feedback and testimonials that reinforced our reputation within the community. Overall, we achieved a 10% growth in our Professional Carpet Cleaning and End-of-Lease services compared to the prior year.

Our Team Leaders, who have been with us since 2021, advanced further this year through professional development and management training. They also took on more client-facing roles, assisting our admin team with commercial quotes and tenders to meet the growing demands of our commercial clients.

Throughout the year, we successfully onboarded 55 new staff members, resulting in a 22% increase in our regular domestic and commercial customer base. This growth contributed to total revenue of \$1,536,926, marking a 10% revenue increase from the previous year.



When I clean, the feedback from the customer will come back to my manager. The customers put a smile on my face so I have to put a smile on their face as well. Working has made a big difference in my life. It even helps me improve my English. Other cleaning businesses are out there, but they operate differently. My children, my husband - we are happy. It supports us, so we are not left behind. I'm independent and I'm strong. I can do anything." Rebecca Atagomo

47

Pathway Development Plans (PDPs) completed for our staff with lived experience across Refugee Business

1,430

hours of paid training across Refugee Business

55

casual staff members onboarded, all with lived experience of seeking asylum or refugees

33,927

hours of paid employment

10%

revenue increase from the previous year

3

permanent Team Leaders continued, who are people with lived experience

ASRC Catering

ASRC Catering continues to bring unique culinary experiences to customers through authentic recipes inspired by the homelands of our diverse team members. We are committed to providing meaningful employment opportunities for refugees and people seeking asylum, enabling them to share their cultural heritage through food while gaining vital skills and experience.

In FY 24, we achieved a consistent level of employment for our catering staff and saw a steady demand for our seasonal menus. Over the year, we received 1,714 orders and sold 258,047 food items, averaging 150 items per order. Our ASRC Catering Gift Boxes, reintroduced for Christmas 2023, included specialty items like Harchana's Malaysian pineapple jam and Walima's Bangladeshi curry paste. This initiative allowed us to test retail interest while raising an additional \$61,371, totalling 1,788 boxes sold.

Expanding our impact, we launched a second Journeys Café at the University of Melbourne's Southbank campus. These cafés serve as training and employment hubs, where staff gain hands-on experience in coffee making, customer service, and hospitality, offering affordable and nutritious meals to students, staff, and the public. In FY 24, we onboarded eight new starters with lived experience and recruited an experienced Chef de Partie, whose expertise has been invaluable in mentoring and developing our catering team. Additionally, our Catering Team Leader with lived experience is now pursuing a Certificate 3 in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery), positioning her to work as a qualified chef upon completion.

ASRC Catering strategically shifted focus from individual meal services, initially introduced during the pandemic, back to event catering. This transition has allowed us to concentrate on higher-value revenue streams and strengthen our position in the hospitality and event sector. With refined processes and alignment with industry standards, we have enhanced efficiency and service quality.

The past year saw a 15% increase in our customer base, contributing to a total income of \$1,570,197 and a 2% growth in catering revenue. ASRC Catering's commitment to creating employment pathways and promoting cultural exchange continues to drive our success and inspire our community.



The level of empathy and support is a hallmark of ASRC Catering, where the team goes beyond typical employer-employee relationships to create a nurturing and inclusive environment. They truly care about us, not just as workers but as people. ASRC Catering gives asylum seekers a chance to gain local experience, which is incredibly important for us." Nigusse, ASRC Catering Driver and Catering Attendant

8

casual staff members onboarded, all with lived experience of seeking asylum or refugees

15%

growth of customer base

1,714

events catered by our social enterprise

4

permanent Team Leaders continued, who are people with lived experience

21,436

hours of paid employment



10

People & Culture

The people behind our services and programs are the soul of the ASRC. In FY 24, moving past a period of change, the People and Culture department focused on consolidating efforts across the organisation to create opportunities for staff to share ideas, develop skills, and receive recognition. Likewise, our volunteers, who remained crucial to the ASRC's success, were prioritised to receive optimum guidance and support while harnessing their enthusiasm and skills.

To support our staff, we conducted a People at Work Survey to address psychosocial stressors, and we've implemented strategies to tackle post-COVID workplace challenges, including welcoming staff back to the office to improve collaboration and support. We are also strengthening the workplace experience for staff with refugee or seeking asylum backgrounds by establishing a Lived Experience Advisory Group to inform strategic decisions and enhance opportunities in our Refugee Business department.

Human Resources & Occupational Health and Safety - OHS

Human Resources

After a period of significant change, the People and Culture team advanced key priorities, including workforce safety, increasing volunteer numbers, and boosting representation of people with lived experience of seeking asylum. A new Head of Governance, Risk, and Corporate Services sharpened our focus on risk management, while the recruitment of a Head of People and Culture filled a critical senior role, positioning the organisation for continued success.

Occupational Health and Safety - OHS

In FY 24, we focused on psychosocial safety and occupational violence awareness, investing in training for staff, volunteers, and managers to identify and address workplace psychosocial hazards. We enhanced support

systems with structured reflective practices, professional supervision, and an upgraded Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

In December, our People at Work Survey achieved a 67% response rate, with ASRC's results falling within the optimal 'minimal concern' zone for job demands vs resources. Our Refugee Business staff (social enterprises: ASRC Catering and ASRC Cleaning) also benefited from our safety improvements through updated induction processes, specialised workplace safety training and manual handling, leading to fewer incidents.

Additionally, upgrades to the ASRC Footscray reception entryway improved access and created a safer, more secure work environment.



In terms of personal and professional growth, I have had the opportunity to learn so much. We've got very diverse team members. I really think that diversity enriches the teams and makes things better."

Abbas Amiry, Team Leader - Refugee Resource Hub

227
Employed staff members

Employment Basis
(incl fixed term contracts)
Full time - 34%
Part time - 27%
Casual - 39%

Gender Profile
Male - 19%
Female - 40%
Not Stated - 41%

53.5%
of staff with lived experience seeking asylum*

*this includes all casuals from social enterprise on the assumption that they have lived experience of seeking asylum

Volunteer Engagement

463
people volunteered at the ASRC

Volunteers contributed
118,275
hours of volunteer work*

8
people who use the ASRC services became volunteers

\$4,056,832
was the estimated volunteer value brought to the ASRC by our volunteer force

*Calculation based on total number of volunteers x 5.5 hours p/w x 49 weeks

In FY 24, Volunteer Engagement focused on building an inclusive, impactful program aligned with the ASRC's mission to support refugees and people seeking asylum to maximise their own physical, mental and social well-being. A key goal was to create a volunteer journey that fostered connection, learning, and meaningful contribution, which was achieved by improving our communication channels with our volunteer workforce.

This year, we proudly received an Inclusive Volunteering Award for our commitment to diversity and inclusion and became a Volunteering Australia Strategy Supporter, reinforcing our dedication to national volunteer standards.

A major success achieved in conjunction with the Corporate Partnerships team was reviving corporate volunteering, expanding its impact, and contributing to fundraising efforts through meaningful connections with businesses and organisations.

Continuous improvements included streamlining recruitment, enhancing training, and strengthening feedback channels. Volunteers played key roles across departments in legal services, food relief, and community engagement.

Volunteer Engagement remains central to the ASRC's success, empowering volunteers to make a meaningful impact.



I've been at the ASRC since 2002, drawn to its holistic approach that cares for the whole person. The ASRC isn't just about services—it's about human rights. Even as challenges continue, I'm proud to be part of an organisation that provides a safe place for volunteers, staff, and members alike. Without the ASRC, I wonder where those we support would turn. It's an honour to contribute to something so essential."

Joan Lynn, Reception Volunteer since 2002



11

Organisational Reflection: A New Strategic Plan on the Horizon

Evolution from 2022 - 2024

The ASRC's previous Strategic Plan, marked a pivotal shift for the organisation. It transitioned us from a needs-based charity to a more intentional, human rights-focused organisation, driven by the leadership of people seeking asylum. It established a comprehensive framework including a Theory of Change, and an Outcomes Measurement Framework, which this strategic plan will build on and continue to evolve.

The new Strategic Plan 2025 - 27 builds upon the strengths of our previous Strategy 2022 - 24 while incorporating necessary adaptations. Our focus is on:

- **Stability and continuity:** Leveraging existing initiatives and building on our established direction.
- **Evolution and elevation:** Strengthening our impact by refining and enhancing our strategic goals, and building on our commitment to be guided by lived experience and expertise across all of our work.
- **Organisational resilience:** Prioritising safety, well-being, sustainability, and effective governance.
- **Strategic integration:** Embedding strategic objectives into daily operations for maximum impact.

By aligning our efforts and resources, we aim to create a more sustainable and effective organisation capable of delivering exceptional support to people seeking asylum.

Looking Ahead 2025 - 27, Our Challenges and Opportunities

External Environment

The current socio-political and economic landscape presents both significant challenges and opportunities for our organisation. The ongoing instability and hostility of the political and federal legislative climate towards refugees and people seeking asylum, is placing unprecedented pressure on our services. RBA projections highlight a challenging economic environment with ongoing high inflation and escalating costs, creating headwinds ahead. The current geopolitical climate and situation within the Middle East is exacerbating an already dire humanitarian crisis worldwide, which will have a significant impact on our work during the next few years. Climate-induced displacement is also a growing threat for the longer term that will deepen the crisis for our clients unless urgent action is taken.

Despite these challenges, the external environment also offers potential avenues for growth and impact. Leveraging our strong brand and comprehensive service portfolio, we can continue to pursue strategic growth through funding diversification, impactful advocacy, and collaborative partnerships. Concurrently, we can optimise operations and foster innovation to elevate service delivery.

Internal Environment

Post COVID, there is a growing emphasis on building a resilient workplace culture that prioritises the wellbeing of our staff. This is essential for maintaining high levels of employee and volunteer engagement and productivity. Additionally, balancing the opportunities presented by a rapidly changing technological environment with the challenges of adhering to complex and evolving cybersecurity, privacy, and AI regulatory frameworks, is critical to our continued success.

Strategic Imperatives

To thrive in this dynamic environment, we must seize opportunities to:

- **Empower clients:** By giving people with lived experience a stronger voice in policy and practice, we can position the ASRC as an indispensable partner to decision makers.
- **Build organisational resilience:** By investing in our people, strengthening our operational efficiency, and embracing technological advancements, we can create a sustainable and adaptable organisation.
- **Drive social impact:** By addressing the root causes of the issues our clients face, we can create lasting change and contribute to a more equitable society.

Our strategic priorities for the next three years, position the ASRC as a leading force in creating positive change with refugees and people seeking asylum and communities.

12

Financial Performance

For the 2023/24 financial year, we achieved a break even result (\$1.5m surplus in FY 2022/23), reinforcing our commitment to financial sustainability following significant resizing of the organisation. All income generated was directed to our programs and service delivery across food, health, housing, providing legal support and our advocacy efforts. This result could not have been achieved without the continued strong commitment from our donors and our community.

Revenue for the year was \$24.0m, representing a 19% (\$5.8m) decrease from the prior year, as expected, and slightly better than planned for. This reduction is in line with the rise of cost of living pressures impacting fundraising income and our changing income portfolio. In contrast to that trend, our Social Enterprise business was able to achieve income growth (+\$0.4m, 13%) resulting from opening two on campus cafes in collaboration with the University of Melbourne.

Expenditure (excluding property revaluation) for the year was reduced by 18% (\$5.1m) to \$23.0m, down from \$28.1m in the previous year. This reduction is the result of cost saving measures undertaken to rightsize the organisation to our new income profile. Changing real estate conditions required the ASRC to commission an independent valuation of our Dandenong building. The result of this valuation was a \$1.0m reduction in asset value. We will continue to drive maximum impact delivered from our Dandenong Refugee Resource Hub.

We are proud that 71% of income went to service delivery, advocacy, program support and

social enterprises activities, demonstrating our commitment to maximising support and impact for the communities we serve. The highlights of our impact are shared throughout this Annual Report.

Our Balance Sheet strength was maintained. The ASRC holds financial reserves equivalent to a minimum of four months of operating expenses for the organisation to safeguard operations, in addition to reserves held to mitigate fundraising income risks and to allow for strategic investment.

As the ASRC does not draw on federal government funding, maintaining prudent reserves protects our independence and sustainability. The ASRC's Reserve balance as of 30 June 2024 is \$14.6m.

As part of the rightsizing activities over the past year, the ASRC's Leadership team was redesigned and shaped to deliver our strategic goals effectively.

Management is confident that the organisation is financially well-positioned going into FY 24/25 to best service our community.

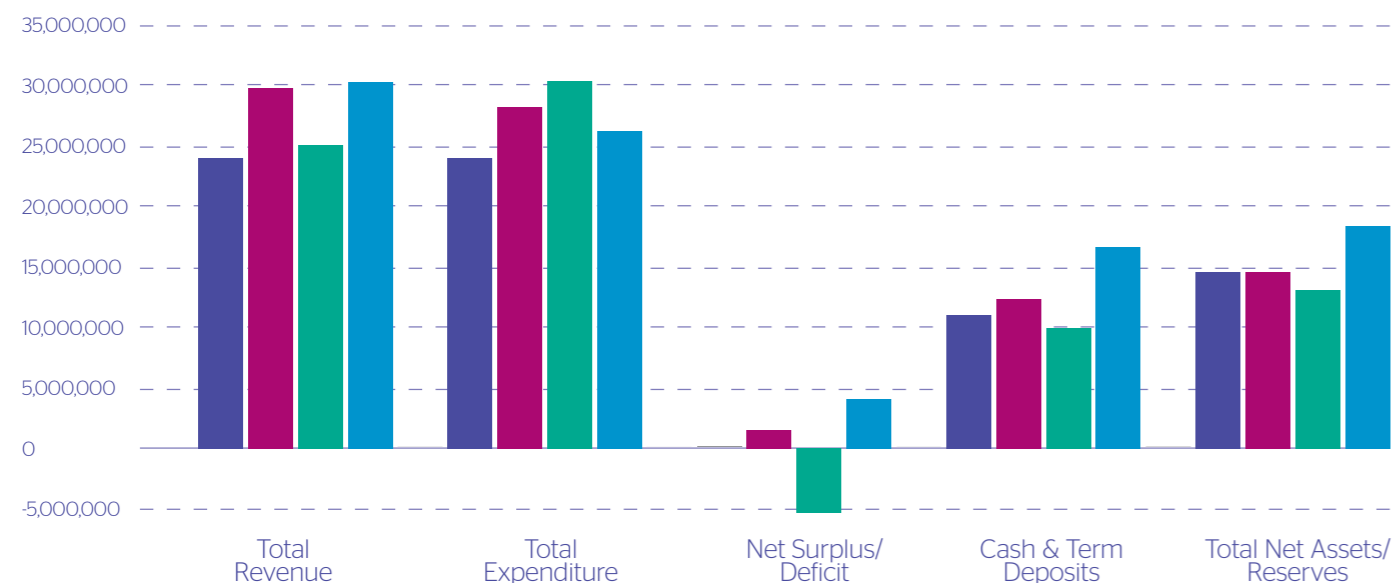
Should you wish to view a full copy of the Annual Financial Report, please scan the QR code or visit asrc.org.au/annual-reports



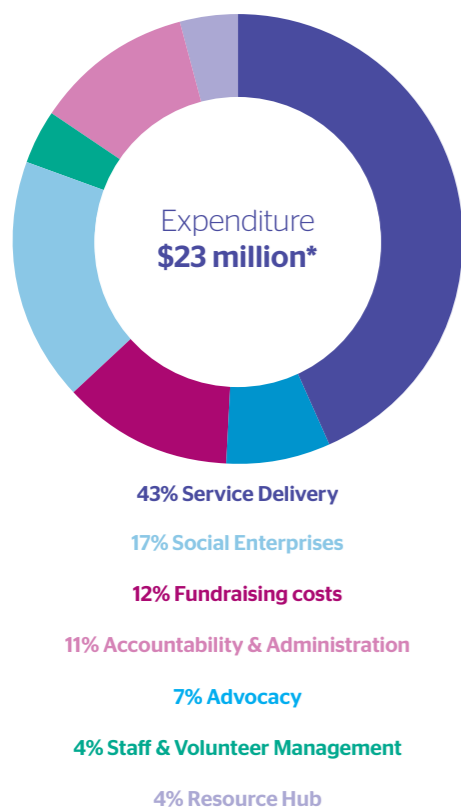
Financial Snapshot

Changes in key balances

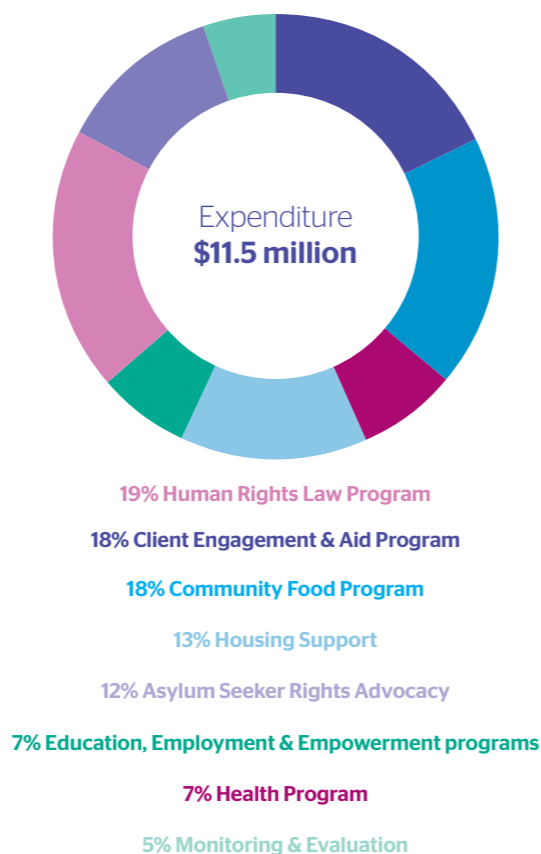
2023 - 2024 2022 - 2023 2021 - 2022 2020 - 2021



Where the money went



Service delivery & advocacy



*Excluding revaluation.

Financial Summary

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

At 30 June 2024
\$'000

2023-24 \$ 2022-23 \$ 2021-22 \$ 2020-21 \$

	2023-24 \$	2022-23 \$	2021-22 \$	2020-21 \$
Revenue & Expenditure - Core				
Total Revenue & Other Income	20,649	26,804	22,444	28,792
Total Expenditure	19,996	24,188	26,942	23,449
Operating Surplus / (Deficit) - Core	653	2,615	(4,498)	5,343
Revenue & Expenditure - Social Enterprises				
Total Revenue & Other Income	3,343	2,964	2,599	1,488
Total Expenditure	4,000	4,061	3,394	2,758
Operating Surplus / (Deficit) - Social Enterprises	(656)	(1,097)	(795)	(1,270)
Revenue & Expenditure - Total				
Total Revenue & Other Income	23,992	29,768	25,043	30,280
Total Expenditure	23,995	28,250	30,336	26,207
Operating Surplus / (Deficit) - Total	(3)	1,518	(5,293)	4,073
Assets & Liabilities				
Total Assets	19,902	19,420	17,704	23,353
Total Liabilities	5,325	4,840	4,642	4,999
Net Assets	14,577	14,580	13,062	18,354
Cash Flows				
Net Cash from Operating Activities	(720)	2,989	(4,836)	3,529
Net Cash from Investing Activities	(8,823)	(267)	(1,513)	(1,071)
Net Cash from Financing Activities	(363)	(315)	(332)	(328)
Cash and Cash Equivalents at 30 June	2,450	12,356	9,949	16,630

Financial Summary

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS & OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

At 30 June 2024 \$'000	2023-24 \$	2022-23 \$	2021-22 \$	2020-21 \$
Income				
Fundraising	6,357	10,538	7,234	7,914
Donations	8,463	10,636	10,169	9,428
Grants	4,379	4,573	4,847	9,970
Social Enterprises	3,343	2,964	2,599	1,488
Interest Received	489	57	1	32
Other Income	142	236	193	1,447
Goods Donated in Kind	819	764	-	-
Total Income	23,992	29,768	25,043	30,279
Expenditure				
Salaries and Wages	16,291	18,712	19,631	17,487
Operating Expenditures	6,715	9,397	10,705	8,720
Revaluation	989	141		
Total Expenditure	23,995	28,205	30,336	26,207
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	(3)	1,518	(5,293)	4,073

Financial Summary

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

At 30 June 2024 \$'000	2023-24 \$	2022-23 \$	2021-22 \$	2020-21 \$
Assets				
Current Assets				
Cash and Cash Equivalents	2,450	12,356	9,949	16,629
Trade and Other Receivables	1,773	1,372	1,307	1,411
Inventories	0	0	116	60
Prepayments	150	275	325	109
Term Deposits	8,586	0	0	0
Total Current Assets	12,959	14,003	11,697	18,209
Non-Current Assets				
Plant and Equipment	4,616	5,246	5,633	4,459
Right of Use Assets	2,318	108	323	599
Prepayments	9	63	50	86
Total Non-Current Assets	6,943	5,417	6,006	5,144
Total Assets	19,902	19,420	17,703	23,353
Liabilities				
Current Liabilities				
Trade and Other Payables	1,191	1,991	1,968	1,584
Contract Liabilities	153	705	259	1,013
Lease Liabilities	431	164	315	288
Employee Benefits	1,551	1,838	1,752	1,248
Financial Liabilities	0	0	0	138
Total Current Liabilities	3,326	4,698	4,294	4,271
Non-Current Liabilities				
Lease Liabilities	1,945	0	164	523
Employee Benefits	54	142	184	205
Total Non-Current Liabilities	1,999	142	348	728
Total Liabilities	5,325	4,840	4,642	4,999
Net Assets	14,577	14,580	13,061	18,354
Members' Funds				
Retained Surpluses	14,577	14,580	13,061	18,354
Total Members' Funds	14,577	14,580	13,061	18,354

Financial Statements



RSM Australia Partners

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Report of the Independent Auditor on the Summary Financial Statements

Opinion

The summary financial statements, which comprise the financial snapshot, financial performance, statement of financial position as at 30 June 2024, and the statement of profit and loss and comprehensive income for the year then ended, are derived from the audited financial report of Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Inc for the year ended 30 June 2024.

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 2024.

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 18 November 2024.

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

Melbourne, VIC
 Dated: 18 November 2024

THE POWER OF BEING UNDERSTOOD
 AUDIT | TAX | CONSULTING

RSM Australia Partners is a member of the RSM network and trades as RSM. RSM is the trading name used by the members of the RSM network. Each member of the RSM network is an independent accounting and consulting firm which practices in its own right. The RSM network is not itself a separate legal entity in any jurisdiction.
 RSM Australia Partners ABN 36 965 185 036
 Liability limited by a scheme approved under Professional Standards Legislation



13 Senior Management Team

The Senior Management Team (SMT) of the ASRC comprised the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer and the Heads of Departments.

The SMT's 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.

- Kon Karapanagiotidis, Chief Executive Officer
- Anastasia Magriplis, Head of Humanitarian Operations and Resilience
- Andrea Reginato, Head of Giving and Experience
- Angela Taylor, Chief Financial Officer
- Camille Walles, Head of Program Quality & Impact
- Flor Sedighi, Head of Refugee Business
- Jana Favero, Head of Systemic Change
- Kashif Hayat, Head of Governance, Risk and Corporate Services
- Melissa Milner, Head of People and Culture
- Nandini Bose, Executive Assistant to the CEO
- Ogy Simic, Head of Refugee Leadership, Advocacy and Communications
- QutbiAllah Timor, Head of Refugee Resource Hub

We would like to thank and acknowledge the following people who were part of our Senior Management Team during the year but have left the ASRC.

- Amanda Schofield, Head of Giving & Experience
- Kate Grimme, Head of Giving and Experience (interim)
- Matt Pritchard, Director of Corporate Services

In addition to the organisational restructure in early 2023, the ASRC further reorganised our leadership team with the roles of Executive Directors disbanded after their departure.

Board and Committees

The ASRC Board is the governing arm of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre - ASRC Inc. 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.

The Board is supported in its duties by the Finance and Risk Committees, both of which have membership from the Board as well as external experts in the field.

Board Members

- Mike Sum, Chair
- Amy Auster, Board Member (Start date: 12/2023)
- John Pham, Board Member
- Katelyn Bonato, Treasurer - Board Member
- Lucy Chen, Board Member
- Marija Maher, Board Member (End date: 12/2023)
- Rebekah Lautman, Board Member
- Omar Kassab, 2023 Board Observer (End date: 12/2023)
- Sarah Nega, 2024 Board Observer (Start date: 12/2023)

Finance Committee

- Katelyn Bonato - Treasurer, Board Member
- Rebekah Lautman - Board Member
- David Gunn - External Finance Committee Member
- Francis Killackey - External Finance Committee Member

Risk Committee

- John Pham - Co-Chair, Board Member
- Lucy Chen - Co-Chair, Board Member
- Emily O'Neill - External Risk Committee Member

These Committee members departed the organisation in the last financial year

- Gloria Yuen - External Risk Committee Member (12/2023)
- Madeline Wilson - External Risk Committee Member (12/2023)
- Matthew Colledan - External Risk Committee Member (12/2023)

The ASRC would like to express our gratitude to the Board and Committee Members for their service on a volunteer basis and unwavering support in advising the strategic direction of the organisation. Your commitment has been pivotal, and your efforts are the backbone of our sustainability and integrity in our mission to support and empower refugees and people seeking asylum at critical junctures of their journey.



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Acknowledgements

Our Supporters

Thank you to the following people, organisations and community groups for their contribution to the ASRC who gave the equivalent of \$10,000 or more in funding or \$20,000 in-kind or pro bono support in 2023-2024. This acknowledgement also extends to our generous donors who chose to remain anonymous.

Adam Hochroth	Georgina Costello KC	Roberts Pike Foundation
Adley Burstyner	Gordon & Kathy Robison	Robmeree Foundation
Aesop Foundation	Gourlay Charitable Trust	Russell Kennedy
Airbnb	Guy Coffey	Ruth Eisner
Alan Jones	Hardie Grant Books	Shannon Finegan
Alex & Rusty Russell	Helen and David Hains Foundation	SHAPE Australia
Alison Martyn	Hoffman Foundation	Simpson Family Foundation
Ann Miller	Indigo Mountain Foundation	Slater and Gordon
ANZ	Iruka Pty Ltd t/a Burton Family Foundation	Soap Aid
Australian College of Optometry	Janaline Oh	St Vincent's Pathology
Ben Dunne	Jannie Brown	Stephen & Jill Goggs
Benjamin Duncan Group	Joanne Parkinson Foundation	Summers Family Stewardship Trust
Bernie McIntosh	Jocelyn Luck	Sunnyside Foundation
Beverley Jackson Foundation	Joseph Palmer Foundation - Halkyard Bequest	SWOP Clothing Exchange PTY LTD
Blue Birch Foundation	Julie Zhou	Taldumande Youth Services
Bruce McMullin Foundation	Kate Bones	Talent Rise
Camilla Sorsbie	King & Wood Mallesons	The Body Shop
Catherine Bourne	Krishna Somers Charitable Trust	The Brown Family Foundation
Cathy Quealy	Kristin Brown	The Elizabeth and Barry Davies Charitable Foundation
Chobani	Kylie McInnes	The First Eddystone Foundation
Chris Honnery	Leonie Van Raay	The Harry Kestin Foundation
Chris Smyth	Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation	The Kimberley Foundation
City of Greater Dandenong	Maribyrnong Council	The Mercer Family Foundation
Community Impact Foundation	Matthew Albert	The Metamorphic Foundation
Corden and Green	Maurice Blackburn Lawyers	The Noel and Carmel O'Brien Family Foundation
Craig Lenehan SC	McLeod Family Foundation	The Ray & Margaret Wilson Foundation
Da Gama Pinto Foundation	McNally Family Foundation	The Serp Hills Foundation Ltd
Dawna Wright	Melfire (Melbourne Fire)	The Stewart Foundation
Department of Education and Training	Mim and Mike Bartlett	The Wood Foundation
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	Min Guo	Thomas Wood
Department of Health	Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart	Tom Ballard & Will Anderson
Dr Adam McBeth	Naylor Stewart Foundation	TopCat
Dr Jai Nathani	Nelson Alexander	Tsuno
Dr Julian Murphy	Nicholas Wood SC	Une Parkinson Foundation
Dr Nina Zimmerman	Oz Harvest	Vaibhav International
Dr Sandy/Releaf Clinic	Peter George	Valeska Bloch and Ben Friis O'Toole
Drakensberg Trust	Polaron	Victoria Legal Aid
Eric and Elizabeth McKay	Professional Footballers Australia	Victorian Managed Insurance Agency
Essential Services Commission	Property Council of Australia	Victorian State Government
Evelyn Tadros	Rachel Van Zetten	Vincent Chiodo Charitable Foundation
Firetail Consulting	Readings Books	Virgin Unite
Foodbank Victoria	Red Rocketship Foundation	Ward-Ambler Endowment
Gadens	Robert C Bulley Charitable Fund	White & Case
Gailey Lazarus Charitable Foundation	Robert Nicoll Veterinary Imaging Pty Ltd	

Acknowledgements

Champions of Hope

The following people and organisations supported the ASRC through the extent of their public influence; have partnered with the ASRC Social Enterprises; have extended employment and education opportunities for people seeking asylum through our services; or have otherwise provided in-kind support for our work in other forms.

3CR Radio
3RRR FM
Abiola Ajetomobi
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Alfred Health
Alicia Gardiner
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AMES-Australia and Learn Locals
Amyl and the Sniffers
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Ben Brown
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Dan Sultan
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Diana Nguyen
Donna Sherwani
Dr Abbie Cloherty
Dr Jack Green (Dermatologist)
Dr Shona McInyre
Dr Siew Kar Chen
Duy Tien Dinh
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Ella Hooper
Em Rusciano
Emily O'Neill
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Hannah Kent
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Melanie Zanetti
Melbourne International Comedy Festival
Melissa Leong
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Monash Refugee Health and Wellbeing Services
Monash University paramedic students
Moose Toys
MorningStar

Nicole Chamoun
Not A Trace
Odyssey Victoria
Oliver Coleman
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P&G PaperTubes
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Wise Foundation
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Yarraville Community Centre
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Zana Fraillon

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Volunteers

Thank you for your 3-5 years of volunteer service

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Juliet Wright-Single
Ana Gargano
Cara Cross
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Anne Earley
Anna Michalska
Lynn Gray
McRae Dunbar
Gerard Powell
Irena Poloczek
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Meredith Jones
Lenora Lippmann
Lenora Lippmann
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Merry Lovell

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Myf Evans
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Thi To Uyen Nguyen
Dale Mackie
Duoc Nguyen
Janet Bodycomb

Thank you for your 20+ years of volunteer service

Jean Nash
Rob Mathew
Joan Lynn



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ASRC Statement of Affirmation of Solidarity with First Nations Communities

As a human rights organisation that speaks out against injustice with refugees and people seeking asylum, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) reaffirms our commitment to voice, truth and treaty for First Nations people.

Alongside many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities, we were devastated at the result of the 2023 Australian Indigenous Voice referendum. As we stated from the beginning of our public allegiance to reconciliation and the Yes campaign, our vision is that everyone in this country, including First Nations people and those who have come here seeking asylum can live safely, sustainably, independently and equally.

We imagine a future where First Nations people's cultures, histories and rights are recognised and valued by everyone in our community, forming a proud part of our shared national identity.

The ASRC's commitment as an ally continues every day. As long as there is injustice for some, there is injustice for all. As an ally, we will maintain the following actions:

- Supporting a right to self-determination and amplifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, campaigns and initiatives.
- Continuing to learn about the land, sky and waterways we are on and always recognising those who came before us, those whose land has been stolen and colonised.
- Acknowledging and calling out institutional racism and will march, chant, walk and take action alongside First Nations communities and grassroots organisations in their fight for justice.
- Promoting and supporting meaningful reconciliation actions that center First Nations people.

Our commitment to reconciliation is unwavering, with the highest level of support from the CEO and representatives of the ASRC Senior Management Team. These initiatives are not just a part of our organisational strategy, they are embedded in our core values and actions.

The ASRC would also like to share with our supporters the state of our RAP Working Group at the time this annual report is published in the new financial year. We created our Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan in 2022 with the aim of providing a strong example to our sector and community by demonstrating our commitment to reconciliation in all of our work. As mentioned above, our alliance remains intact and we'll continue to take steps to reconciliation as allies. However, without Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander representation in our working group, we can't move onto the next level of the action plan, Innovate.

This does not change our commitment whatsoever and we will continue to attend rallies, share educational and relevant information about First Nations peoples, encourage our teams to do acknowledgements of country, and overall, remain actively amplifying a call for voice, treaty and truth. From the new financial year and until further notice, our internal group will be identified as ASRC Reconciliation Working Group, continuing to meet on a monthly basis with CEO, Deputy CEO, Senior Management and staff representation.

Yours in solidarity,

ASRC Reconciliation Working Group

ALWAYS WAS AND ALWAYS WILL BE ABORIGINAL LAND