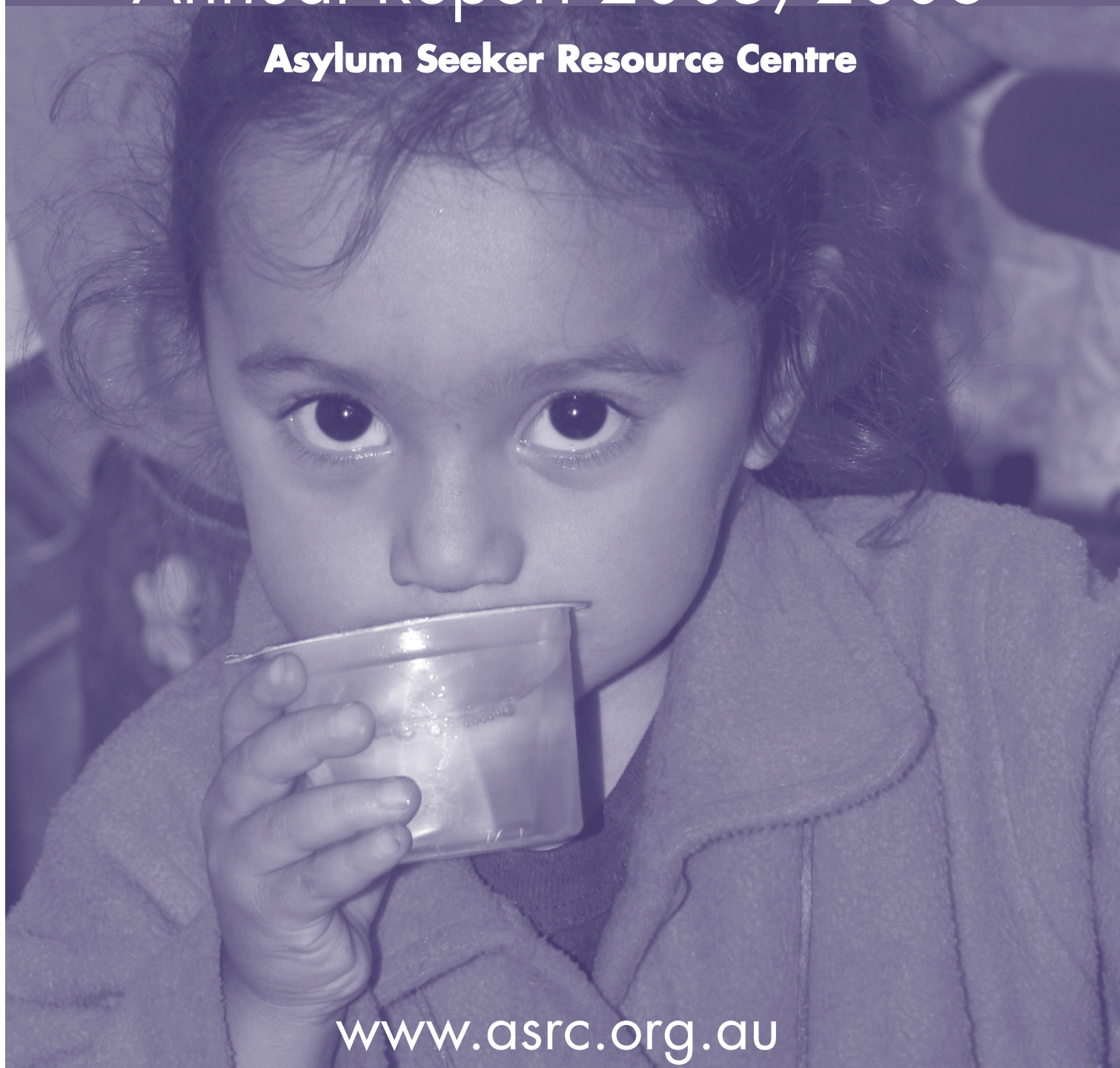


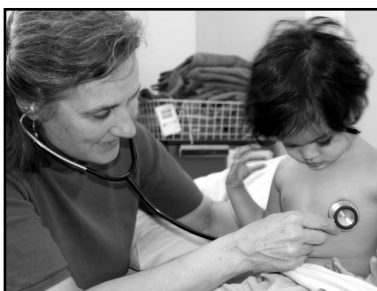
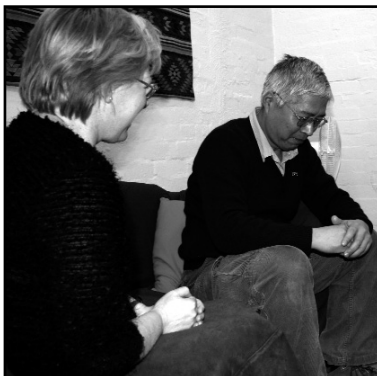
Annual Report 2005/2006

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre



www.asrc.org.au

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1.0 Chairperson's report

It is with great pride and hope that I present this year's annual report. I want to firstly thank all the volunteers and staff of the ASRC for their unwavering commitment and tireless work on behalf of asylum seekers. I also want to extend my deep appreciation to all our donors from the philanthropic trusts to everyday Australians who give what they can to help keep our centre going. Without all of your generous support none of this will be possible.

Whilst we face many challenges in the coming year with our Federal governments continued hardline and inhumane approach to people seeking asylum unlikely to change in the near future; we are confident we are ready to meet the challenges. We will continue to turn no person seeking asylum away and be there for people when they have nowhere else to turn. We will continue to be a symbol of hope and freedom for people fleeing oppression and persecution.

It is a testament to the loyalty and commitment of our people that in the past year we welcomed 1400 new people to our centre in times of need and were able to care and support each one. We are excited about continuing to grow our services, number of volunteers/staff and the quality of care, advocacy and support that we can provide in the coming year. Furthermore, to remain the innovative and groundbreaking organization that has always been about people and doing whatever we can to make the world a better place for people seeking asylum, the secret to our success.

Steve Mullins

ASRC Chairperson

2.0 Snapshot of the ASRC

The past year has been an extraordinary year for the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre. We celebrated our 5th Birthday and continued to go from strength to strength as an organization.

In the past five years since we opened our doors we have: assisted over 3000 people seeking asylum from more than 80 countries; won asylum for hundreds of families; given more than 30,000 food parcels to families; provided over \$250,000 in financial aid; opened Victoria's first asylum seeker health service, employment program, detention friendship program and home English tutoring program; run community education talks for more than 35,000 people; and provided more than 40 million dollars of free assistance to asylum seekers via our team of 650+ volunteers, to name but a few of our achievements.

This past year we continued to lead the way in caring for asylum seekers in Australia. We were the only one stop shop for asylum seekers, offering more services to a greater number of asylum seekers than any other NGO. Our great work was recognized by being awarded the NAB National and State Community Volunteer Organization of the year award.

We continued to focus on filling the gaps in service delivery that no one else is able to do for asylum seekers. We were the last resort for the most vulnerable and at risk asylum seekers. A day would not pass without a person turning up on our doorstep who was: homeless and poor having been dumped from a detention centre into the community with no support, or a scared and distressed pregnant woman with no Medicare, not knowing where she would have her baby or a seriously ill person with cancer with nowhere else to turn. We continued our proud tradition of turning no one away and approximately 75% of the people we assisted had no right to income, Medicare or work. We had 1400 new people come to our centre seeking help in crisis and we responded and helped each one. Also, we strengthened communities by working closely with all key refugee NGO's to support, integrate and settle asylum seekers in their local communities. We continued to lobby for a humane refugee system through our advocacy and law reform work.

We provided 205,000 hours of free assistance through our team of 700 volunteers at a financial value of over 14 million dollars. The real value of this outstanding achievement was that each of those hours were spent providing aid, hope, humanity and care for people who often had nowhere else to turn. We kept the flame of hope burning brightly in the hearts of thousands of people seeking asylum and the dream of freedom alive by always being there.

We are a special place, a place where small miracles happen every day, our people are its strength and our inspiration is the people who entrust their lives to us each hour of each day. I want to thank every person that has opened their heart and given their support to our centre, without all our wonderful volunteers, staff and supporters none of this would be possible. Finally, thank you to the real heroes, the people seeking asylum, for they have risked their lives to struggle on behalf of us all, for a world where we are all free of oppression and injustice. Let's all keep the dream alive.

Regards

Kon Karapanagiotidis
ASRC CEO



3.0 Program reports

The ASRC continued to offer over 20 aid, advocacy and direct service programs in 2005/06. In the proceeding pages, program coordinators recall the highlights, achievements and challenges experienced by their program over the past 12 months.

ASRC PROGRAMS:

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ADVOCACY

- Campaigns
- Community Awareness
- Publications

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

- Home English Teaching
- English Language Classes
- Employment Program
- Social Enterprise & Small Business Unit

FOOD

- Food-bank Program
- Daily Lunches

HEALTH

- Health Centre
- Counselling
- KidsZone Program
- Casework

LEGAL

- Human Rights Law Program
- Supporting Asylum Seekers at Hearings (SASH) Program
- Women's legal advocacy program

SOCIAL & RECREATION

- Detention Friendship Visiting
- Social & Recreation Program

SUPPORT SERVICES

- Administration
- Fundraising
- Volunteer Support Program
- Information Technology "IT"

3.1 ADVOCACY

Campaigns Program

The year to June 2006 has seen some softening in the implementation of immigration department policy but no change to the legislation underpinning the indefinite mandatory detention of asylum seekers, off shore warehousing of people seeking Australia's protection, the Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) with its punitive conditions and the Bridging Visa E (BVE) with its complete denial of the right to work, Medicare and income support.

The Campaigns program faces these continuing challenges with a multi-layered approach of community awareness education, lobbying at the political and department level, strategic media work, as well as the letters, emails and phone call campaigns at pivotal moments of opportunity. One such moment came in June 2006 when the Federal government proposed changes to the migration legislation with its Designated Unauthorised Arrivals Bill. The Asylum Seeker Campaigns team held a successful street theatre action and the ASRC volunteers mounted an intensive email, faxing and calling campaign along with many advocates across Australia. The actions of Liberal dissidents led by Petro Georgiou led to the withdrawal of the Bill. This was the first major victory for the refugee human rights movement in years.

We have engaged in community awareness education with talks throughout regional and city Victoria as well as interstate in Canberra and Perth. We have been rewarded not only with changed attitudes but many boxes of food, Met tickets and donations. We are involved in Refugee Week planning and events as well as community events such as the Fringe Festival and the Canberra SIEV-X Memorial.

Our intense lobbying on individual cases has been successful in getting some long term asylum seekers released from detention with the combined efforts of the ASRC legal team and the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project. The Brigidines have been able to offer accommodation where this was the last stumbling block to release which has been invaluable. The denial of any settlement services to those released from detention has resulted in the immigration department contacting the ASRC when a newly released detainee is arriving in Melbourne from Baxter, often at only a few hours' notice. While not wanting to assist the department in a policy of dumping refugees, the ASRC welcomes the new arrivals, providing accommodation and assisting them to get linked up with Centrelink, Medicare, English classes and employment. The Casework program provides this practical assistance while the Campaigns program continues to remind the department of this discriminatory settlement policy and lobby for the inclusion of access to government-funded settlement services for all refugees. This collaborative response is possible because of the close working relationships of all ASRC staff united in a common goal of providing the best possible resources to our members.

We have continued to engage the radio, print and television media in educating the community and putting pressure on the government in the areas of work rights for bridging visa holders as well as medical care for those who have become mentally ill in detention. SBS flew nine asylum seekers to Sydney for the Insight Program and some managed to speak about the alienation of having no right to work. Another area of campaigning is the right to family reunion for all refugees. This is currently denied to those on TPV's and is a cause of great distress to those separated from wives and children for years.

The ASRC networks through monthly meetings with agencies in Victoria through the Network of Asylum Seeker Agencies in Victoria (NASAVIC) and across Australia through the monthly telephone conferencing auspiced by the Refugee Council. Through these forums we can raise the difficulties encountered by the asylum seekers and refugees under the current policies. The ASRC is contacted by asylum seekers and their advocates in detention, both on and off shore, seeking advice and support. Their issues can be carried through the refugee forums increasing the lobbying actions on their behalf.

The Campaigns program operates at a broad level, representing asylum seeker and refugee issues whether in detention or in the community, advising and assisting asylum seekers and refugees. This program exists to challenge the current refugee policy and work for change by publicising the inequities, celebrating the victories and working alongside refugees, supporting them in their fight for a fair go. While we have had individual successes, the cruel and unjust legislation underpinning refugee policy continues so our struggle is ongoing.

Pamela Curr – Campaign Coordinator

Community Awareness

A small team of about 4 people started preparing notes and guidelines for volunteers prepared to visit schools and adult groups early in 2005 under the leadership of Jane McGeough and then Clare Whishart. Both ladies have now left the ASRC and I believe are involved in full time teaching.

Since June 2005 I have tried to coordinate and collate material for this team. Our aim is to visit as many places as possible, to talk to as many people as possible, raising awareness of the ASRC and the plight of asylum seekers and to raise funds. Pamela Curr is our mentor and advisor.

Our team currently consists of approximately 20 volunteers who offer their availability when a call is emailed out for a speaker. Those who have classroom experience, and those that prefer to talk to adult groups, have the choice to work where they feel most at ease. All our speakers are regular volunteers in various areas of the ASRC, with most of the co ordinators prepared to give talks. After a day's work at the Centre, an evening speaking assignment is much appreciated, as is also travelling long distances on 'days off' to attend a lunch time talk.

From June 2005 to June 2006 we visited a minimum of 50 venues. From June 2006 to the end of this year, we have at least 20 scheduled visits. Many volunteers are contacted directly to return and give repeat talks and subsequently forget to add this visit to the database!

In July 2006 we had our one and only meeting of the Community Awareness team. Pamela spoke on some current issues and 'stories' and brought us up to date on a number of facts. Briefing notes and 'facts & figures' were handed to those who needed them. All felt that communicating via email was satisfactory and there was no need for regular meetings.

We also hosted a number of visits to the ASRC from adult groups (for example RAR) and students. It was found that if the number of the group was below 12, it was logistically possible to walk them around the centre without being too disruptive. It is imperative that an appointment is made and someone be available to escort them through. It is also suggested that each person in the group make a donation, which could be in the form of a Met card.

It has been a pleasure to coordinate this team and many thanks to all who gave so generously of their time.

Carolyn Berger – Community Awareness Team Coordinator

Publications

The Publications Program have had a number of volunteers over the 2005-06 period, with 4 regular volunteers. The key achievements over this period included:

- the design, writing, editing and production of two issues of *Journeys* (the Centre's full colour, 4-page quarterly magazine)
- writing and editing an 8-page A5 brochure highlighting the Centre's key programs to be printed in the next financial year
- updated and designed a number of brochures for some of the Centre's programs: health brochure; Volunteer Pledge Form; a number of items for the Catering Group, adapted the ASRC logo to incorporate the Catering Group; designed Menu, Terms & Conditions flyer, and banner signage for a major Catering event
- prepared a number of fundraising A4 and DL flyers: Young Professionals For Charity Ball; BBQ Fundraiser; Fundraising Open Garden scheme; Easter Appeal fundraiser; Music from the Heart fundraiser; Metcard Appeal
- signage for Fundraising Open Garden scheme
- formatting of numerous reports e.g. Dumped at the Gate Report; formatting of Induction Kit for Volunteers; Casework Manual

- starting an image library for use by the Centre, (and photographing a number of ASRC events, and different ASRC program activities)
- preparing door signage for Centre
- designing and producing ASRC Christmas Card and bookmarks

The team over 2005-06 were a fun, committed team that are to be commended and thanked for their time and efforts.

Liz Butler – Publications Coordinator

3.2 EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

Home English Teaching

The Home English Teaching program has continued strongly over the past year. Every week, more than 60 volunteers visit asylum seekers in their homes, or in some instances at a local library, to provide highly personalised English lessons. In some cases, the tutoring might involve quite formal lessons; in others, the focus is on informal social conversation. Some learners have relatively advanced English skills; others are complete beginners. Most learners work individually with a tutor; in some cases, a tutor may be matched with a couple, or perhaps some housemates who wish to learn together. In all cases, the approach is focused on providing tutors, lesson times (daytimes, evenings or weekends), locations and teaching styles that can cater for extremely diverse requirements and circumstances.

Currently, approximately 70 asylum seekers, from more than 20 countries, receive tutoring. They live in many suburbs in and around Melbourne, from Dandenong in the southeast to Ardeer in the west. The motivation to learn and use English is high, and the one hour of tutoring per week that we promise (as a minimum) meets a very real need. Most asylum seekers who access tutoring lack the means and mobility that would allow them to attend English classes. For example, learners include mothers looking after young children; men and women with the right to work who are putting long hours into jobs or job-seeking; and people isolated by emotional or physical health issues and/or financial hardship. Even if circumstances would allow a major commitment to English study, visa restrictions may make this impossible. For example, the federal government funded Adult Migrant English Program is available only to people who have been granted permanent residency. However, if people's circumstances allow, or they are granted a permanent visa, we help them access classes as appropriate. This could be by helping secure a place in a locally run English program (e.g. at a neighbourhood house) or by helping with the transition to AMEP.

The ASRC's tutors either join the program with a qualification in teaching English as a second language, or undertake a free training program tailored for volunteers working in a one-to-one situation. This training, through the AMES Volunteer Tutor Enhancement Project, involves one evening per week over six weeks. Thirty new tutors have completed training in the last year. All tutors commit to working with an asylum seeker for at least six months – the minimum needed for such a personal role – and most remain in the program for much longer, sometimes with the same learner for a number of years. Every few months, tutors get together for an evening meeting at the ASRC to share experiences and teaching ideas. This contact and support is an extremely valuable and important part of being a volunteer in the program, as is communication with the program coordinator, by phone and email.

An ongoing challenge in coordinating the program is predicting how many new learners will need tutors, when, and in which locations. In the coming year, we will be continuing to recruit new tutors so that we can meet needs as they arise.

Sue Nash – Home English Teaching Coordinator

English Language Classes

English language classes at the ASRC are offered on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Our objectives are to ensure that all students acquire basic survival English; to provide more advanced students with practice in reading, writing, listening and speaking and, if requested, assistance with preparing resumes and course applications; to steer students towards additional or alternative English classes within their community; and to foster a welcoming, supportive atmosphere.

We have also continued to assist students preparing for the IELTS (International English Language Testing System). A student who had previously scored poorly on this test was coached and recently achieved a score of 5.5, which should help her application for skilled migration.

Thirteen teachers have worked in the program, six of them recruited this past year to cope with increased numbers. Two teachers have left, one due to work commitments, the other to return to the U.K.

Eighty-three students have attended classes. Some have attended only briefly, dropping out for a variety of reasons: legal appointments; the requirement to attend DIMA or the RRT; uncertainty, depression and inability to plan for a settled future. On the positive side, others have found employment, been admitted to study courses, and occasionally and happily, been granted permanent residence. The availability of Met tickets has been a tremendous benefit to those students willing and able to attend regularly, and teachers have enjoyed the resulting continuity and the marked progress in students' language skills.

Preparation of relevant materials is ongoing. Our Survival English folder meets such basic language needs as form-filling, understanding Met maps and directions, describing medical problems, making appointments and applying for a job.

In January we purchased new post-beginner reading and comprehension materials, which include migrant stories and descriptions of various occupations. The students find them useful and enjoyable. We try to ensure that every student has access to a bilingual dictionary and/or phrasebook. This can be a challenge, despite Melbourne's excellent foreign language bookshops. Amharic and Burmese dictionaries, for example, have to be tracked down by online searches.

Toni Chang – ESL Coordinator

Employment Program

The ASRC Employment Program started in July 2004 thanks to a grant of \$40,000 per year from WISE Employment. In May 2006, WISE generously agreed to renew its grant for another two years, for \$41,500 per year. The ASRC Employment Program has also secured funding from the philanthropic fund AndyInc for one extra day per week for the program coordinator, to work specifically with young asylum seekers (under 25 years old), from June 2006.

In 2005-2006, the Employment Assistance Services provided support to 115 people with work rights, and advice to another 12 who only had the right to study. This brings to 206 the total number of people who have received assistance from the service in its two years of existence.

Gender: Out of the 115 people supported in 2005-2006, 89 (77%) were men and 26 were women. This high proportion of men (much higher than the previous year) can be explained by the fact that many new clients were long-term detainees who were released on Temporary Protection Visas (most were single men as families had been released previously) or men who arrived on their own and were granted Bridging Visas.

Visa: 45 clients (40%) were on Bridging Visa with work rights, 38 (33%) on Temporary Protection Visas and another 32 (27%) obtained permanent residency during the year. The ASRC's policy with clients who become Permanent Residents is to maintain services for six months and then refer them to agencies who can provide similar services.

Employment outcomes: At the end of June 2006, 69 clients (60%) were working more than 15 hours per week. While clients seem to find employment in about three months after they contact us, this employment is rarely sustainable, and even more rarely at their level of skills. Refugees and asylum seekers working in their area of expertise are extremely rare, and they often turn to positions such as cleaning, hospitality or factory work to earn an income. This is particularly the case if they are on Bridging Visas, as the uncertainty surrounding their visa and their length of stay in Australia make finding sustainable employment almost impossible.

We have found in our contact with employers that despite the well-advertised skill shortage, employers remain rather inflexible in their expectations: they are looking for skills and experience, and often neglect to take into account the person's ability to learn and be a reliable and committed worker. We have several clients with engineering, welding or motor mechanic training who cannot find employment due to their lack of Australian experience and employers' reluctance to 'take a chance' with them. Another factor that plays against our client group is the role played by labour-hire agencies and the fact that it is increasingly difficult to deal with employers' directly. Finally, the changes in industrial relations mean even more vulnerability for refugees who are not in a position to 'bargain' and find themselves at the bottom of the heap when applying for jobs.

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Training

The Service was able to offer a range of training courses to clients this year, through a combination of WISE Employment courses and courses donated by Geelong Employability (now Encompass Community Services). In January 2006, Geelong Employability (now Encompass) donated to the Employment Service all their ESL training hours for the year, which has allowed for the provision of the following courses under the umbrella of Certificate III in English as a Second Language: Certificate I in Hospitality, Food Handling (2 courses), Responsible Service of Alcohol, First Aid Level II and Interact with Customers. Courses have been tailored to participants' English level by being extended from one to two days. While the catering service staff have been the prime beneficiaries of these courses (some, such as Food Handling and Interact with Customers, are mandatory), altogether more than 30 job-seekers have attended and obtained the relevant certificates. Information Sessions were also run on Apprenticeships and OH&S.

Volunteers have also received training in working with traumatised clients (run by Foundation House).

Advocacy & Networks

A large part of the work of the coordinator is taken by systemic work, advocacy and the establishment of relationships with other agencies and services. Advocacy work this year has included the Right to Work Campaign, which highlights the plight of Bridging Visa holders without work rights and access to Medicare; quarterly meetings of the Asylum Seeker Employment Network (initiated by the ASRC); the development of relationships with trade unions to highlight abuses and industrial issues around the employment of asylum seekers on temporary visas and successful lobbying of the state government to include Bridging Visa holders as a beneficiary group of the Workplace Participation Partnership program. The Employment Coordinator is a key member of the RMIT Asylum Seeker and Refugee Project's Advisory Group, and has been actively involved in successfully lobbying the university for the continuation of the program past the Pilot Stage.

In October 2005, the ASRC Employment Program was nominated for a Diversity @ Work award in recognition of its innovative work with refugees and asylum seekers.

The Employment Coordinator was a member of the Steering Committee set up by GAPCO/Brotherhood of St Laurence to advise on a research project conducted by Deakin University into refugees' employment outcomes. This report is now available and can be provided on request.

Sophie Dutertre – Employment Program Coordinator

Social Enterprise and Small Business Unit (SESBU)

SESBU continued to go from strength to strength with the flourishing of its first social enterprise project a Catering Service staffed by people seeking asylum, the creation of an Asylum Seeker Small Business Network and the further development of the Small Business Unit.

Catering Service

This year has seen the development of the Catering Service, which started in May 2005. The service has been able to employ 28 part-time workers including a supervisor for 30 hours per week. The turnover for the first year of operation has been over \$100,000. The service has catered for 120 events, ranging from 5 to 300 people (and one event for 600 people a night). The Service has catered for conferences, cocktail parties, openings, weddings and the Footscray City Primary School Canteen.

Highlights included:

- Catering in October 2005 of the entire season of the show *Odyssees* at the Carlton Exhibition building, where 600 patrons were catered for every night
- The Catering Service receiving media coverage through a full-page article on the show in *The Age*
- Catering for SEPAA, a charity art benefit for Sudanese held at Federation Square in May with 200 people in attendance.

The Catering Service was started by Pablo Gimenez and we were sad to see Pablo leave to travel indefinitely overseas in June 2006. We thank Pablo for all of his energy, passion and hard work to ensure that the Catering Service Enterprise was established, up and running. Since Pablo's departure, the Catering Service has been managed by Caroline Sturzaker, who has more than 15 years' experience managing restaurants in St Kilda. Caroline is currently redesigning the menu to include a wider variety of sit-down meal selections to complement the existing finger food range.

Pablo Gimenez: Catering Coordinator from June 30th 2005 to June 1st, 2006

Caroline Sturzaker: Catering Coordinator from June 1st 2006 to current

Small Business Unit

The Small Business Unit of SESBU has advised and assisted a number of asylum seekers with various issues in relation to their small business ideas and business plans over the last financial year. The group has organised and run a series of introductory small business sessions, providing information about setting up small businesses in Australia and referring the interested temporary protection holders (and other asylum seekers with work rights) to specific small business advisers within the group. Over 20 Asylum Seekers have been assisted.

The Asylum Seeker Small Business Network

The unit has also created a peer discussion group open for all asylum seekers interested in creating a small business in Australia. The group meets monthly, and is run by asylum seekers and facilitated by SESBU. The group has set up a group email account and has developed a web page: www.aseekbiz.bravehost.com. The Asylum Seeker Small Business Network has provided one-on-one assistance to asylum seekers in developing business ideas and worked with people to help build their capacity to realise their idea through mentoring, information and training.

Asylum Seeker Capacity Building Project

This project is still in its development stage and it aims to utilise the skills and abilities of asylum seekers to provide educational opportunities for the broader community. Asylum Seekers who have the right to work and have skills in an area that we could run a short course in (such as cooking, languages and arts and crafts) are then linked up with a volunteer who mentors and supports them to run a short course at the ASRC for the general community. The general community pays a fee, the asylum seeker receives

employment and a good income and the project has some key positive outcomes: employment for asylum seekers, building bridges with the general community and education to show the skills and abilities that asylum seekers have to contribute and building the capacity of asylum seekers by preparing them for the workplace and integrating within the broader community. Our first pilot is a short cooking course to be run by an asylum seeker before the end of the year.

Kon Karapanagiotidis – Acting Social Enterprise and Small Business Unit Coordinator

3.3 FOOD

Food-bank Program

The Food Program endeavours to provide a secure, adequate and nutritious food supply for all ASRC members.

Key achievements for this year include:

- established reliable supplies of fresh fruit and vegetable through deliveries on 3 out of 4 days – up from 1 out of 4
- responded to individual requests from Casework e.g. delivery of food to people with special circumstances
- initiated and implemented policy to give preference to asylum seekers with no income with regard to essential foods in short supply
- initiated opportunity for volunteers to work on Wednesday evenings in the Food Program
- established two new drop off points for food donations – in Fairfield and Malvern – to assist people in northern and southern suburbs to more easily support asylum seekers by way of donating food
- established relationship with a new corporate donor who is now regularly providing supplies of healthy dried fruit snacks for children
- improved program administration
- better communication between volunteers through a weekly newsletter
- more efficient management of donors' records and communication by moving to an email group
- more reliable statistical reporting

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The program supplied food to over 450 individuals per month. The ASRC's centre in Jeffcott Street continued to be the location to distribute food on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 11 am – 3pm. The Thornbury Centre was open on Thursdays and Saturdays until its closure in December.

Persons who are registered with ASRC can collect food by presenting their card. The larger proportion (65%) of those receiving food are on a visa with no income entitlements.

The Community Action Network has continued with distribution of a monthly email giving the achievements of the ASRC during the month, as well as what is most needed. Some of the most recent themes have been: Festive Foods, Tin Anniversary, Men's Needs, Spring into Spring. The emails have generated consistent donations; however, more is always needed.

The Food Program has approximately 60 volunteers either in the Shop itself distributing and packing food, or delivering and collecting food. Most volunteers are dedicated to a weekly time slot and work approximately six hours per shift. With the more demand being placed in the food area, our numbers of volunteers need to stay consistent, or increase.

The continuing source of stress in the Food Program has been the lack of time to commit to the Food Program coordination. The current coordinator is a volunteer who has full time employment elsewhere and fits the many demands of this role between other commitments. Food Program administration meetings are held on a monthly basis to sort through the many tasks associated with food.

The budget for the Food Program during this year was again \$60,000 – which represents an allocated budget of \$2.50 per person week.

Approximately 80% of this budget is spent on bulk purchasing of staple foods such as flour, eggs, rice, oil, sugar, pulses to ensure a reliable supply of these items. Some items (e.g. rice, milk powder, sugar and pulses) are bought in one tonne lots.

Rita Malavesi – Food-bank Coordinator

Daily Lunches

Every weekday the kitchen program prepares and serves a lunchtime meal for everyone at the centre. Coffee and biscuits are available at any time. We not only aim to provide a nutritious and welcoming meal in a social setting for asylum seekers but also to provide an opportunity for volunteers to relax and socialise. We believe this informal get together is essential when such a diverse and large group are working together.

The number of meals served varies from about 70 on Fridays to 30 on Wednesdays, totalling between 200 and 250 each week.

13 We have 11 volunteers rostered to work at least half a day per fortnight. This number includes 5 asylum seekers. Another 8 asylum seekers help on an ad hoc basis.

This year Counselling has included volunteering in the kitchen as an option for asylum seekers to help them benefit from the social setting and activity. The kitchen certainly has benefited from the assistance.

It is common for people who have been granted asylum to visit at lunchtime and catch up with those who have assisted them and friends they have made while being helped by the centre. It is particularly touching to see a number of mothers visit with their babies to catch up with “aunties” and “grandmothers”. We believe the kitchen has is emblematic of the whole centre, where everyone is welcome as equals.

Kate Kennedy – Kitchen Coordinator

3.4 HEALTH

Health Centre

The ASRC health centre continues to be the largest and most comprehensive health service in Australia assisting the most vulnerable asylum seekers living in the Australian community to access the health care they need. Over 90% of the ASRC health centre’s clients are asylum seeker men, women and children living on Bridging Visa Es without the right to work, no Medicare and no government support.

The ASRC health centre uses a community health and advocacy framework and the program aims are:

- to provide essential health care to asylum seekers who are prevented from accessing health care anywhere else in the community
- to provide a high standard of holistic health care to asylum seekers
- to provide a service that is welcoming, respectful, dignified, non-judgmental and individualised to people's needs
- to offer a health service that empowers asylum seekers and encourages independence, autonomy and self-respect.

The program has continued to grow in the past 12 months with demand for services escalating as it has each year since the service was established in 2002. From July 2005 to June 2006 the program assisted 380 individual clients and conducted 1872 consultations. This included 1357 GP consults, 282 physiotherapy consults, 208 massages, 7 podiatry consults and 17 medical specialists consults including

paediatric. Asylum seekers from over 50 different countries attended the program, including Sri Lanka, Turkey, China, India, Ghana, Ethiopia and Iran.

The program changed its name from the Bula Bula health clinic to the ASRC health centre in late 2005 to reflect the program's expanding holistic health care nature. Along with a general practice medical service to asylum seekers, the program provides massage, physiotherapy, nursing and midwifery, podiatry, health education and referral services to pro bono health care including dental, optometry, pathology, radiology, medical specialists, hospital and rehabilitation care as well as financial assistance for other health care needs such as medications. The ASRC health centre is conservatively estimated to provide services in excess of \$500,000.

30 volunteer health professionals and a paid coordinator staff the ASRC health centre. The 30 health professionals provide on average 100 volunteers hours per week and the dedicated team includes; 8 GPs, 3 medical specialists including a paediatrician, 7 physiotherapists, 1 massage therapists, 4 nurses/midwives, 1 podiatrist, 2 pharmacists and 4 research/medical administration volunteers. The ASRC thanks these health professionals for volunteering at the centre and providing free, essential primary health care to asylum seekers.

Key highlights for 2005-2006:

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1. Expanding and Improving the accessibility and availability of the service.

In the last 12 months the ASRC health centre has increased the number of GP sessions from 2-3 per week to having a GP available 5 days a week most weeks of the year. A monthly podiatry clinic started in April 2006, and a third weekly physiotherapy session started in May 2006 that included a fortnightly Feldenkrais specialty clinic. The weekly massage clinic provides a popular and effective means of relieving the tension and stress asylum seekers often feel as a result of their precarious immigration status and a second weekly massage session will commence soon. Throughout the 12 months, 2 pharmacists and a GP have assisted the program to collect and maintain a comprehensive store of donated samples from GPs across Melbourne. These donated medications have accounted for two thirds (approximately to the value of \$1000/\$1500) of the weekly medication requirements. The ASRC health centre files were also reorganised and transferred over to a new system and a new health manual was compiled.

2. More asylum seekers are actively using the ASRC health centre.

Since July 2005 there has been an increase of over 40% in the number of clients seen at the program. There were 259 clients seen last year compared to 380 this year. There has also been a significant increase in the formal number of individual consultations provided by the ASRC health team, with a nearly three fold increase from 760 to 1872 consultations. It remains difficult to estimate the number of informal consultations including drop-ins and phone consultations, conducted by the volunteer nurses and the coordinator on a weekly basis, but it could be estimated between 20-100 extra consultations per week.

3. Achieving state public health policy change.

After lobbying the Victorian government alongside the AMA and other asylum seeker agencies, the ASRC health centre was successful in achieving a positive change in the state health policy. Now, asylum seekers without Medicare are entitled to health care at public hospitals without being charged. More details at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/health/hospitalcirculars/circ05/circ2705.htm

Future program directions:

To develop a comprehensive dental network to assist asylum seekers.

Currently most asylum seekers have no access to a dentist and poor nutrition resulting in poor dental health.

To increase our focus on researching and raising awareness about the health issues asylum seekers face.

In July 2006 we will commence research into the food habits of children living in Bridging Visa E families

to inform a child nutrition project funded by Brambles. A second research project together with La Trobe University and the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Health Network is planned for late 2006 and will focus on health data collection. During the past 12 months a number of the health team members have spoken at universities and hospitals and more presentations are planned for 2005/2006.

To improve the immunisation and nutrition of asylum seekers and the health care we provide to children. An immunisation program will be developed and commenced in the next 12 months.

The health program also plans to target the nutritional needs of ASRC clients in collaboration with the ASRC food bank.

Since 2004, the support of the Colonial foundation funding has been vital to the functioning of the ASRC health centre and has paid the salary of the program coordinator. In mid-2006 the Colonial Foundation generously refunded the ASRC health centre for another 3 years with \$100 000 per year, to pay the salary of the coordinator in a full time capacity and to pay for the medical fund. The ASRC health centre thanks the Colonial foundation for their continued support.

Joanne Kirk – Health Coordinator

Counselling

The ASRC provides a free Counselling Program for asylum seekers, who come from backgrounds of torture, war and trauma, and who are living with the uncertainty of the refugee determination process. We work with clients who are at any stage of the refugee determination process.

We were very grateful to receive funding from the Ian Potter Foundation, which enabled us to employ a coordinator for the Counselling Program for 4 days per week; Mary Harvey was appointed in September 2005. Unfortunately, the funding was not renewed and we are currently seeking further funding through alternative philanthropic organisations.

The Counselling Program has grown significantly since its humble beginnings in 2003 when we started with three volunteers. We now have a team of 52 volunteers which includes:

- 7 administration volunteers – 1 to assist KidsZone, 3 to cover Saturday morning clinic, 3 to help the Counselling Coordinator during the week
- 14 counsellors in the general counselling program (individual, couple and family counselling)
- 12 volunteers in the child and adolescent programs (KidsZone and TeenZone)
- 5 counsellors in the Wednesday night Legal Support Program
- 5 psychiatrists and 1 psychiatry registrar
- 2 external supervisors who provide group supervision to the counselling volunteers
- 5 external supervisors/debriefers for the Supporting Our Supporters program
- 2 external supervisors/debriefers for support of paid staff

With an average of three new referrals per week, our greatest need is for more counsellors to provide individual, couple and family counselling, and this is an area of ongoing recruitment. Some innovative options to meet client need are being considered, including our soon to be piloted Relaxation Skills Training Program, which aims to teach clients, in a group context, skills to manage stress and to relax. On our wish list is funding for another paid counsellor to work at least 3 days a week in the program, which would help significantly with the smooth running of the program and enable us to provide more timely access to counselling services.

We have also experienced a significant growth in client referrals to the program:

- 2003 – 10 clients referred
- 2004 – 43 clients referred
- 2005 – 121 clients referred
- 2006 (half year only) – 99 clients. The majority of these are men.

Referrals come from a variety of sources including other ASRC programs (mostly legal, health and casework), as well as from the Red Cross, Hotham Mission, Foundation House, Victorian Legal Aid and the Refugee Immigration Legal Centre.

Other achievements/activities during the past 12 months include:

Support group for people who had been released from long term detention:

In collaboration with psychologists from Foundation House (Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture Inc), we piloted a group for people released from long-term detention. One of the aims of this group was to bring people together who had been traumatised by their experiences in detention and foster a safe environment where they could learn about living in Australia, as well as talk about some of their detention experiences. Prior to this group, many of these people refused to see a counsellor or a doctor because of the very negative experiences they had with health professionals in detention. As a result of this group, many of them have sought individual counselling.

Debriefing Program for ASRC volunteers: We established a debriefing program for general volunteers called Supporting Our Supporters (SOS) – a team of 4 external professionals skilled in group supervision provide a rotating roster of one session per week. The aims of this program are to provide opportunities for support for volunteers and to help them to sustain their volunteer commitment at the Centre.

Established a debriefing/supervision program for the paid staff each fortnight. This program aims to provide staff with a forum to talk about the challenges, etc. of working at the Centre and the personal impact of this work.

Established a group supervision program for counsellors: two psychologists provide pro bono group supervision for our counsellors.

Established an Involuntary Repatriation Program: In collaboration with the Casework Coordinator, we have established an Involuntary Repatriation Program, designed to work with clients who are facing the prospect of forced return to their country of origin.

Developed a brochure for the Counselling Program

Gave several presentations to external organisations: about the work of the ASRC, with the emphasis on the work of the Counselling Program

In collaboration with the Casework Coordinator, have **developed and delivered training** to the Casework Team and General Volunteers re psychosocial issues for asylum seekers

Strategic Plan: Participated in the development of the first ASRC Strategic Plan and coordinated the Strategic Planning Weekend held in February 2006.

Challenges

While there are many challenges for us, one of our main challenges is to recruit enough counsellors to match client referrals and to develop creative strategies to meet clients' psychological needs until counsellors are available.

Thanks

The Counselling Program is staffed by a team of wonderful volunteers. Without their dedication and commitment we wouldn't be able to provide this necessary service to our clients. Thank you to all the team!

Mary Harvey – Counselling Program Coordinator

KidsZone

The KidsZone program continued to meet on the first Saturday of each month, with the exception of January, when we organised a family activity at Federation Square instead of meeting at the centre. KidsZone is an activity-based program, which aims at providing the children in families seeking asylum with a place to have fun, an opportunity to relate to other kids in a similar situation, and most of all, the opportunity simply to be kids. We try to provide a range of activities, which become vehicles for children to express themselves both verbally and non-verbally. While the children are involved in the focal activity, parents meet together over afternoon tea, until the last half-hour of the program, when the families come together, and the focus is more relational. Increasingly, however, parents have spontaneously joined in with their children in whatever activity is taking place, and KidsZone has become much more a venue for parents and kids to have fun and communicate together through art, play, music, co-operative tasks, and listening to each other's stories.

Activities during this year included (amongst other things) the following:

- body Jam and belly dancing
- an 'alternative' Melbourne cup
- family massage
- circus skills
- a beach day
- an excursion to VUT's Youth week program
- puppet-making
- making our own banner

Numbers of families attending have increased significantly, with 32 families now on our list, and an average of 12 – 16 people attending regularly (though it has been as many as 32!) The children attending range in age from 7 months to 15 years.

Initiatives within this year included:

- the development of our own newsletter, which is sent out each month to all the families who have been referred and who attend KidsZone
- an improved system for sending out Met tickets to families who want to attend
- the development of a more user-friendly database
- the development of a database of families with older children, from which to publicise the developing TeenZone program

These have all been possible with the help of administrative support from Susan Conduit, who joined the team in April, 2006.

The original volunteer team of five continued through this financial year to do a mighty job, particularly given that the attendance at KidsZone can vary immensely, and not all volunteers could attend every session. The latter half of 2006 however, promises to bring more flexibility with a new group of volunteers making themselves available to the KidsZone program – a very welcome development! What's more, they bring some different backgrounds and talents to add a new dimension to the current counselling-based team: we are delighted! This will enable us to extend into TeenZone, develop creatively, and increase the possibilities for working with and advocating for these children.

KidsZone is moving toward the end of its second year. Whilst each month brings a different group of families, we now have ongoing relationships with a strong core group of parents and children. One of the more recent challenges for us has been saying goodbye to some of our regular families, as they have had to return to their countries of origin. Inevitably though, they leave a large part of them with us in their artwork, the photographs that we take each session, and in the memories that stay with the group as a whole. We hope they take a bit of us with them in some way also.

Pam Rycroft - KidsZone Coordinator

Casework Program

Achievements

With Bennelong Foundation support, the ASRC has, for the first time, been able to employ a full time Casework Coordinator. The last year has been significant for the Casework program and the ASRC.

Key achievements include:

- complete overhaul of the casework program
- introduction of a high quality casework training program
- training up to 40 casework volunteers who achieved great outcomes for asylum seekers by providing holistic needs assessments and individually tailored actions plans, information, advice, advocacy, referral and support around a range of needs and issues, including income, health, mental health, homelessness/housing, immigration, legal, employment, education, material aid, counselling, social and recreation activities/groups, repatriation support
- provided material aid (MET tickets, nappies, phone cards etc) to hundreds of asylum seekers
- defined the ASRC client group and Casework role
- developed program infrastructure and operating systems—appointment times, case allocations, review of cases, communications systems, support for volunteers, created new membership cards, brochures
- created and developed a casework manual, an invaluable resource for caseworkers
- overhauled client filing system to make files legible, accessible, uniform/consistent
- coordinated research students to research data from the casework files and casework database around basic information, needs and trends like ASRC client numbers, country of origin, visa, family constellation etc. This information provided a snapshot to the ASRC about our client population, and will assist with strategic planning and service development
- initiated action research into the level of homelessness and housing issues for asylum seekers in the community to use for lobbying purposes
- participated and contributed to key networks including: the Interagency Casework Meeting, the Asylum Seeker Interagency Group, the Interagency Housing Group, the Interagency Involuntary Repatriation Group, and the Network of Asylum Seeker Agencies Victoria (NASAVic), and Interagency Community Care working group
- developed and more clearly defined relationships, linkages and networks with external organisations as the Australian Red Cross; the Asylum Seeker Project, Hotham Mission; the Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre; the Asylum Seeker Centre; the Urban Neighbourhood of Hope; the Brigadeen Sisters; the Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture; the Refugee Immigration Legal Centre; the Salvation Army; Argyle Housing; Preston Migrant Resource Centre; Metrowest Housing Services; Coburg Legal and Financial Counselling Centre , Hanover Housing Services; Wombat Lanigiro Housing Services, St Vincent De Paul
- formalised referral protocols with the Australian Red Cross; Hotham Mission and the Preston Migrant Resource Centre
- collaborated in advocating, campaigning and lobbying government around homelessness and housing for asylum seekers, working in an interagency housing group with Australian Red Cross, Hotham Mission and the Network of Asylum Seeker Agencies Victoria, to write a submission to the Victorian Government (Minister Candy Broad)

- contributed to the development of a Statewide Assessment and Referral Framework for Housing Services by the Victorian Department of Human Services, providing information on the needs/issues of asylum seekers, how to identify/address these within assessments, and details of organisations that will receive referrals of asylum seekers with housing needs
- worked with the interagency housing group to brief the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Housing on the situation for asylum seekers relating to homelessness (up to 70% for those on Bridging Visa E), housing insecurity and exclusion from public housing; and also for refugees on temporary or permanent protection visas

Casework volunteers also engaged in a range of exciting community development projects including:

1. developing information kits for new ASRC clients
2. phone card appeal
3. orientation program for newly arrived asylum seekers
4. data collection form for action research into homelessness and accommodation insecurity for asylum seekers;
5. advocacy to improve access to free childcare for asylum seekers with no income;
6. Material Aid Research – improving the number of donations we receive, raising community awareness and fundraising
7. developing Country information profiles
8. developing asylum seeker access to material aid
9. exploring the need for information sessions and group work for asylum seekers,

Current challenges for the casework program include:

- ensuring continuity of care for asylum seekers
- DIMA policy and practice changes impact upon ASRC service
- meeting an increasing need and increasing number of high risk/complex clients
- ensuring high risk asylum seekers are prioritised and receive the care they need

Where to from here?

- having a Senior Caseworker, to work with the most at risk asylum seekers will ensure that we are providing a higher quality of care
- hopefully the ASRC will be successful in receiving funding for a specialist Housing worker and a Domestic Violence worker
- exploring more community development projects

3.5 LEGAL

Human Rights Law Program

One door closes and another one opens... 2006 saw the closure of a number of sorry chapters in Australia's troubled immigration and asylum history, and perhaps the beginnings of a new more flexible approach.

2005 will be remembered primarily for Cornelia Rau, dramatic changes to Australia's policy of immigration detention and for the grant of Permanent Residence to thousands of Afghan and Iraqi Temporary Protection Visa holders.

2006 was marked by the dramatic arrival of 43 West Papuan asylum seekers from Indonesia, throwing into the spotlight once more the highly politicised nature of the refugee determination process, particularly when we are confronted with human rights abuses occurring on our doorstep and a government prepared to compromise international protections for diplomatic relations.

The year concluded with the significant rejection of the government's proposed immigration legislation, which would have prevented any asylum seekers arriving in Australia by boat from having their refugee claims assessed in Australia. Under sustained pressure from community advocacy and welfare groups, including the ASRC, the Immigration Department also developed a 'Community Care' pilot to try and deal with some of the welfare issues arising for unsuccessful asylum seekers and migrants in Australia.

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The ASRC Human Rights Law Program focused on three main areas during 2006:

- (1) assisting asylum seekers with the proper representation of their refugee and humanitarian claims
- (2) lobbying for reforms to the refugee and humanitarian migration program, the treatment of asylum seekers and migrants during processing of their applications and overhaul of the immigration detention system
- (3) increasing the professionalism of the Law Program and the quality of client advocacy

A significant achievement during 2006 was registration of the ASRC with the legal Services Board and as Victoria's newest Community Legal Centre. This will expand the type of work the ASRC can undertake, open further funding possibilities and allow us to benefit from the amazing resource that the Federation of Community Legal Centres network provides in Victoria.

On the casework front we continued to try and explore strategic and creative ways of obtaining visas for clients with complex welfare and human rights concerns. Many of these cases fall outside of the terms of the Refugee Convention. Without a Bill of Rights or any other domestic mechanisms for enforcing international human rights standards, our tools are limited. Working on these cases is, in equal parts compelling, frustrating and hugely rewarding for those cases in which we make a difference.

Significant outcomes for 2006 included the following:

- obtaining permanent protection for an Iranian asylum seeker who was recognised as a refugee on his third visit to the Refugee Review Tribunal (following two successful appeals to the Federal Magistrates Court)
- successfully representing possibly Australia's longest outstanding asylum application. Our client applied for refugee status in 1991 and was granted his visa in 2006. The ASRC commenced acting for Mr H in January 2006 when he had been unlawful with paranoia and mental health issues for 8 years. By July 2006 Mr H held a permanent refugee visa.
- obtaining a permanent humanitarian visa for a Russian family of four following a communication to the UN Human Rights Committee.
- obtaining a permanent residence visa for a seriously mentally ill immigration detainee on his seventh application to the Minister for humanitarian consideration. Mr D was suicidal following repeated efforts by DIMA to remove him from Australia.

- obtaining permanent residence for a Bangladeshi asylum seeker who had been in immigration detention continuously for over five years.
- assisting Afghan and Iranian escapees from Woomera and Baxter detention centers regularise their immigration status after many years on the run and subsequently obtain refugee status.

The ASRC is unique in its role as an interface between legal and welfare issues for asylum seekers and migrants. As a lawyer it is important to be continually challenged by health and welfare professionals about the practical effects of the law on a client's welfare. In the end the law must reflect the values of Australian society and this involves the fair and compassionate treatment of persons with compelling legal and moral claims to remain in Australia. Such claims may involve consideration of a variety of human rights under international Conventions including rights for non-migrant children, stateless persons, persons with serious physical or mental health issues and those persons who have substantially integrated within Australia. Immigration law, in many respects, is blind to such arguments and the role of the ASRC is, and remains, to attempt to shine some light into the dark corners of our immigration program.

Martin Clutterbuck – Human Rights Law Coordinator

21 Supporting Asylum Seekers at Hearings (SASH) Program

This has been another busy year for SASH volunteers. Although the number of bookings has dropped from 296 to 258, it has felt as though it has been busier. This has been mainly due to the lack of consistency of bookings so that volunteers rostered on a Monday and Tuesday may, in a particular week, have no bookings while for Wednesday there are five which is more than they can handle and reinforcements must be found. Those volunteers who have answered the call on these occasions are particularly thanked.

Due to the brave actions of Petro Georgiou and other Liberal members, the number of those on TPV (Temporary Protection Visas) who have to attend either the Department or the Refugee Review Tribunal for interviews has diminished. However, we have many more who have to attend the Compliance Department on the fifteenth floor of 2 Lonsdale Street in order to renew their Bridging Visa Es (BVEs). These are the people who have applied to the Minister on Humanitarian grounds to be allowed to stay permanently in Australia. The law requires that such people must forfeit their work rights, which also makes them ineligible for Medicare, as well as study rights. These BVEs are only granted for limited periods of time e.g. one month, six weeks to three months.

It is hard to describe how stressful the experience of renewing a BVE is for asylum seekers. One of the causes is the memories of the days before the Palmer Report when the DIMA personnel would often see no need to treat those seeking asylum with respect. It must be said that this year has seen the rapid improvement in the staff's behaviour although there are the occasional exceptions and the memories of past slights, rudeness and lack of dignity in their treatment, are still there.

Once again, tribute must be paid to the volunteers who make up the program. Some new ones have come on board partly so that we can more easily cope with multiple bookings on a particular day. It is not an easy task to be a SASH volunteer because one can never guarantee that no problem will occur in what was thought to be a routine task. Also, we thank the Administration volunteers who are a lifeline to the Centre relaying the bookings to us on a daily basis and to the legal team who provide essential support.

Margaret Howes – SASH Program Co-ordinator

Women's legal advocacy program

The Victorian Women's Trust continues to fund this program in which we assist women and children with asylum claims and humanitarian intervention. Many of the claims involve gender based persecution as well as family violence both in the country of origin and here in Australia. Significant complication arises where family law issues are also involved. The holistic nature of the ASRC, with medical and counselling services, lends itself to effective support of women in these situations. We have had a number of successes for women during 2005/2006 and take the opportunity to thank the VWT for its ongoing support.

Shelley Burchfield – Women's Legal Advocacy Coordinator

3.6 SOCIAL and RECREATION

Detention Friendship Visiting Program

The friendship program of visiting the Maribynong Immigration Detention Centre continues although there have been fewer actual asylum seekers in this detention for most of this year. It has meant that many of the people we visit are there for reasons other than seeking asylum. All of the detainees, some of whom have been there for over a year certainly appreciate our visits. It goes without saying that being incarcerated with the uncertainty of when and how one is to be released or deported takes its toll.

We have heard that several Sri Lankans have arrived recently since the outbreak of violence and this means that there are more opportunities for others to get involved. This year the detention centre has been totally renovated and refurbished. The visiting area is unrecognisable from when we first visited 4 years ago. There has also been some quite amazing changes for the detainees who are allowed mobile phones (as long as they don't have cameras) as well as each detainee now having their own email address and access to the internet.

Nevertheless they do have to share a bedroom with at least four other people, however their access to bathrooms I believe has improved.

Joan Lynn – Detention Friendship Program Coordinator

Social and Recreation Program

The June and September 2005 school holiday program proved to be a wonderful success with activities such as visits to the Melbourne Museum, ACMI, Aquarium, Science Works, Art Gallery, and the Docklands Winter Wonderland. Members also had the opportunity to attend a long weekend in Bright where children had the chance to go tobogganing at Mt Hotham. This was a fantastic event where the ASRC teamed up with the Bright RAR (Rural Australians for Refugees) group who provided us with accommodation.

The highlight of 2005 was undoubtedly the End of Year Party at the Yarraville Gardens. The party provided plenty of food, rides and games for the children, including an animal farm, circus acts, a hip hop workshop and a beautiful concert by our asylum seeker friends and musicians. A three day Toy Shop was established this year for parents to come and choose presents for their children which was supported by the Brotherhood of St Laurence who provided the bulk of the toys. The Toy Shop was a great success and the parents appreciated the opportunity of selecting toys for their own children.

January and March 2006 school holidays had more fantastic planned activities including film visits, a picnic outing to Hanging Rock & Mt Macedon, three group outings to Alexandra Gardens and another weekend away, this time to Phillip Island to see the Penguin Parade & Koala Park. The ASRC worked in collaboration with the Phillip Island RAR group who provided accommodation.

At the end of March 2006 Euthy Sephton resigned as Social and Recreation Program Coordinator and the position was then undertaken by two sisters, Emily and Melinda Fajerman. At the beginning of March the program consisted of five volunteers; it has continued to grow and currently it consists of twenty. Emily and Melinda established formal program aims, objectives and developed a new internal referral system, which has benefited many asylum seekers and other ASRC programs that have previously experienced difficulty in handling individual's social needs. The referral system has contributed to an improved understanding of the social and recreational needs of individuals and groups at the ASRC. The feedback has been phenomenal. Individual accounts of participation within our program have proven to offer "relief, support and companionship", and continually provide opportunities that would otherwise be beyond people's means. As a result of the social and recreation program noticeable relationships between ASRC members have formed and continue to foster supportive friendships. The program has initiated a new approach focused on continuous activities rather than a school holiday program. In doing so, the program has endeavored to establish two events or activities every month to accommodate individuals and families.

Several partnerships have been formed following the new coordination including art and cultural organisations such as Melbourne International Film Festival, Circus Oz, Multicultural Arts Victoria, The Melbourne Museum and Scienceworks who donated numerous tickets for asylum seekers to benefit from. Other organisational partnerships include the Red Cross Yconnect Program, the Refugee Minor Program, the Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre and YWCA Girl Storey.

In June 2006 the ASRC celebrated its 5th Year Anniversary Party with plenty of adult and children's entertainment. The 2006 football season also gave several asylum seekers the opportunity to enjoy free tickets to matches, which in turn created many new Western Bulldogs fans.

December school holidays are yet to come with plenty of activities lined up including the End of Year Party. The social and recreation program will certainly end this year on a high note. Apart from the contribution of all volunteers in the Social & Recreation Program, a special thank you must be expressed to everyone who attended or contributed to our events and those that helped make the End of Year Party and the establishment of the Toy Shop in 2005 a wonderful success. Judging by the accomplishments in the social and recreation program during June 05 – 06, the further progression of this program appears to be promising.

Looking forward to an exciting and enjoyable time in the future!

Social and Recreation Program Coordinators – Emily and Melinda Fajerman

3.7 SUPPORT SERVICES

Administration

Despite having a regular team of 26 volunteers working either half day or full day shifts each week day, Admin is pleased to get new volunteers to add to our roster. Our staff have to be versatile, with a wide range of administrative duties such as reception, phones, mail, receipting donations, making legal appointments etc., plus general problem solving – and sometimes the lot at once. Because of our reception function, Admin is often the first port of call for asylum seekers coming to ASRC. It is important that their impression of the organisation is as relaxed, welcoming and informal as we can make it, even if the phone is ringing non-stop, the photocopier is jammed or the fax is being temperamental.

Fundraising

The Fundraising Program in the past year continued to be the financial backbone of the ASRC, ensuring its financial security and ongoing future. The program, run entirely by volunteers, had many outstanding successes this past year that have placed the ASRC in its best financial position that it has been in since its inception. Its achievements include:

- helping build its self-sustainability with the ASRC over the last 2 years, achieving a 247% increase in gross revenue and a 282% growth in net income
- completing 34 submissions and raising \$505,750 from grant applications
- finalised, with the assistance of Pitcher Partners, a 3 year business plan
- organised or helped facilitate over 50 fundraising events for the ASRC that raised over \$150,000
- established and launched a membership program for the ASRC
- ran quarterly open days for the philanthropic and corporate community
- re-secured funding for core paid staff and obtained funding for new key positions including Fundraising and Foodbank Coordinator
- with the assistance of 'Our Community' established an on – line donating facility that has raised over \$25,000 for the ASRC in online donations
- established a strong fundraising profile via the new ASRC website
- launched a merchandising arm to the ASRC fundraising activities

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Submission Writing Team

The submission writing team consists of 25 volunteers with around 15 being active at any one time. The team of writers prepare submissions for grant applications from funding bodies such as the State Government, philanthropic trusts and corporate bodies. During the 05/06 financial year, 34 submissions were completed with \$505,750 being granted to the ASRC. A number of lunches were held at the ASRC for potential or current funders.

Events Team

The Events Team has spent the last year taking a creative and hands on approach to fundraising, seeking every fundraising opportunity no matter how small. Over 50 fundraisers for the ASRC were held in the past year, many by our volunteers and others from the general community with our support. These events played an important fundraising role and were also a great social awareness exercise as well, bringing the plight of asylum seekers into the mainstream and exposing many people for the first time to the work of the ASRC. Our events spanned everything from our Annual Trivia Night, to cooking courses, movie nights, Circus Oz bucket collections, music concerts, raffles and photography auctions to chocolate drives and speed dating nights!

Membership, Appeals and Pledges Team

The Membership, Appeals and Pledges team made some real progress in the past year. We were able to finally launch our membership program and doubled the number of monthly pledges. We created an up to date database of supporters that enabled us to keep all our financial supporters up to date and ensure they received our quarterly *Journeys* magazine. We also successfully held a number of appeals that raised tens of thousands of dollars overall for the ASRC including: Christmas, End of Financial Year and Easter Appeal.

Information Technology "IT" Program

First of all, I would like to thank all the IT volunteers who were there to support me when I came onboard as the new IT Co-ordinator, especially Bevan, Hugh & Pete from IT.... along with Joan Lynn, Joanne Kirk, Johanna, Kon, Heidi, Martin, Mary, Pablo, Pamela, Rita, Simon and Sophie from other programs.

IT has expanded to a much bigger and better program during this one year period. There have been a couple of major accomplishments making numerous happy faces at the ASRC.

IT's key achievements include;

- New website development thanks to Bevan. The new site is aimed at catering to a larger target audience, with better contact management, a fresh and concise look and last but not least it is easy to update by anyone with basic computer knowledge. The progress has been steady and it is near completion.
- With the help of Evan (IT volunteer), we finally conducted the IT inventory. Precise details of the existing IT hardware, software & network layout are now in hand. This is very important for the maintenance and upgrade of existing IT infrastructure.
- Allocated data space on server has been increased to insure it caters to the ever-increasing demands.
- The response time for IT support has been reduced by a great margin. Emails and calls were returned promptly as IT has gained much greater breadth and support from the staff and volunteers.
- The task to connect the volunteers database to MS Access has been accomplished by Michelle and it is operational. Volunteers details are being updated and added regularly. Further testing and evaluations would improve the functionality.
- The issues of printer shortage/problems/high operational costs have been addressed. We adopted a policy of replacing all inkjets printers with laser ones due to less operational costs, better printouts and faster speed. I am very pleased that we have replaced all inkjets with laser printers. We have also installed 4 more high-speed laser jets, which has increased the total number of laser-printers to 7. The old & troublesome printers were replaced by better performing units. We now have a colour LaserJet, which will be great for printing flyers and banners etc.
- Daya has been actively developing/upgrading databases for legal & employment-catering. The new upgraded legal database is operational and work is in progress on the employment-catering database after Pablo & Sophie gave specifications.
- Regular computer classes have being held every Thursday noon by Barry since April 2006. These classes have proven to be popular and regular participants' means that basic computer knowledge is free and accessible to anyone.
- IT is expanding and we now have 8 active volunteers... about a 50% increase since last year. We are also having regular IT meetings, which has resulted in a much more efficient and high performing team.

Various activities:

- I designed a number of name-tag templates. The matter is pending due to the large number of volunteers, however it's in progress and hopefully soon everyone will own a uniform ASRC name tag.
- Another task after coping with network cables is to re-route or re-design the existing telephone cable 'network', which eventually would lead to ASRC being a cable free environment ?

I remember a notable incident, amongst quite a few others, when I started as a volunteer here. I sent everyone an acknowledgment for their role in IT. However, despite being very careful, there was an error stating the website was developed by Martin; which in-fact was Bevin. Quite politely but promptly, Bevan replied by an email asking "is there anyone else working on the website as well as I thought I was the only one? "

I immediately clarified the situation to him and everyone else. However it was hilarious and makes me giggle even now when it comes to my mind – especially after seeing Bevan!

Last but not least, I'd like to thank Barry, Bevan, Daya, Eddie, Evan, Hugh & Michelle; who continually made it to the centre for the ever-increasing demands on IT @ ASRC. Without these fine people, IT wouldn't have succeeded in doing so much for such a good cause.

Mansoor Janjua I.T. Co-ordinator

Volunteer Support Program

The wheels of the ASRC kept turning again this year, largely to the incredible dedication, passion and hard work of the ASRC's amazing volunteers. Across all programs, new and existing volunteers have committed countless hours, energy and skills to assist the people we call asylum seekers.

As the ASRC reached its fifth year of existence in June 2006, we turned to the long-standing volunteers who have been committing their time week in week out, since the centre's inception. It was very encouraging and moving to hear reflections from volunteers who have been with the ASRC for many years and remain incredibly passionate and resolutely committed to making a difference in the lives of individuals and families seeking refuge in Australia.

Equally inspiring has been the interest from prospective new volunteers. Over the last 12 months the ASRC held seven volunteer information evenings; open to all interested in learning about the centre. Overall, there were 721 attendees at Volunteer Information Evenings, which are designed to both attract prospective volunteers and act as community education sessions.

The Volunteer Support Program reshaped the Volunteer Induction Training and Orientation Program, requiring all new volunteers to undertake two compulsory training sessions facilitated by a number of ASRC's program coordinators. There were 491 new volunteers, who completed the Volunteer Induction Training in 2005/06, who were subsequently matched to appropriate roles across the ASRC's 20+ programs.

Key achievements of the Volunteer Support Program include:

- winning the 2005 National Australia Bank "Volunteer Organisation of the Year Award," as the State and National Winners. This award provided recognition of the ASRC's commitment to best practice volunteer standards and volunteer management. The award provided a \$10,000 grant, which was utilised (in conjunction with the R.E. Ross Trust's existing funding) to see the expansion of the Volunteer Coordinator Role from 3.5 days per week to a full time role.
- development of the ASRC's new electronic volunteer database. The Volunteer Support Program volunteers have done an amazing job in entering and maintaining all volunteer records in the new database. This has proven to be quite a task with a total of 500 weekly active volunteers and 200+ volunteers who are active on a less regular basis. With a total of over 700 volunteers, the new electronic database is a great asset!
- the expansion of ASRC programs to commence two new program teams:
 - (1) a transport team: the transport team was initiated in conjunction with the ASRC's Health Coordinator, Jo Kirk, in response to the need for transportation of members who were unable or too unwell to access public transport. This team is comprised of volunteers who assist with transportation for members who would otherwise be unable to access services. This has proven to be a vital service on a number of occasions.
 - (2) a research team: the research team commenced in 2006 largely due to the skills and willingness of new volunteers. This group was divided into two small project teams and worked independently on the casework data research study and a food prescription/ health nutrition project; providing much needed research data and information which will be of great benefit.

- the student placement program was revised in an attempt to ensure a more streamlined and equitable placement application process. The ASRC continues to accept a number university, TAFE and high school work experience students on placement. In 2005/06 student placements have been undertaken in the following programs: health, employment, casework, counselling, food-bank, research and the catering service. The students have participated in a variety of direct practice and project-based placements, contributing significantly to the ASRC. We have had a high calibre of students undertaking placements and hope that this will continue.

My sincere gratitude and admiration goes to all volunteers at the ASRC (both those at the centre and those working tirelessly behind the scenes!) for your continued dedication and awesome spirit, I feel very fortunate and inspired to work with you all. Special thanks to the Volunteer Support Program volunteers for all of your wonderful works and fantastic support!

Finally, thanks must go to the R.E. Ross Trust who continue to generously fund the Volunteer Coordinator role.

Johanna Burns – Volunteer Coordinator



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4.0 Finances

Income Statement for year ended 30 June 2006

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	2006 \$	2005 \$
INCOME		
Fundraising Events Income	172,734	113,382
Donations	398,525	175,850
Sponsorships & grants	387,626	273,323
Employment Course Income	-	2,915
Extended Table Income	-	2,230
Miscellaneous Income	549	337
	<u>959,434</u>	<u>568,037</u>
Fundraising Activity Costs	84,820	43,752
Gross Profit	874,614	524,285
EXPENDITURE		
Program Expenses	170,369	155,413
Administration	102,348	83,596
Employment Expenses	490,353	277,113
	<u>763,070</u>	<u>516,122</u>
Operating Profit	111,544	8,163
Other Income - Interest	32,633	19,391
PROFIT FROM ORDINARY ACTIVITIES	<u>144,177</u>	<u>27,554</u>
ACCUMULATED SURPLUS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR	<u>157,706</u>	<u>130,152</u>
ACCUMULATED SURPLUS AT THE END OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR	<u><u>301,883</u></u>	<u><u>157,706</u></u>

**BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 30 JUNE 2006**

	Notes	2006 \$	2005 \$
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash	3	764,750	543,853
Receivables	4	7,556	12,669
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		<u>772,306</u>	<u>556,522</u>
TOTAL ASSETS		<u>772,306</u>	<u>556,522</u>
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Amounts received in advance	5	367,967	346,686
Creditors and accruals	6	60,986	36,017
Provisions	7	41,470	16,113
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>470,423</u>	<u>398,816</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES		<u>470,423</u>	<u>398,816</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>301,883</u>	<u>157,706</u>
MEMBERS FUNDS			
Accumulated Surplus		301,883	157,706
TOTAL MEMBERS FUNDS		<u>301,883</u>	<u>157,706</u>

5.0 Acknowledgements

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The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre could not survive without the wonderful support each year of thousands of individuals and dozens of philanthropic trusts, companies and groups who donate to us. There are too many individuals to thank for them to be listed but we would like to say a big thank you to them all for their extraordinary support. Below are a list of groups and organizations who have at one time or another played an important role in supporting our work and we just want to say thank you.

- Actors for Refugees
- Andy Inc.
- Annamil Pty Ltd
- Aspire Foundation
- Australian Ethical Investments
- Baker Foundation
- Becharie Charitable Association of Victoria
- Bennelong Foundation
- Besen Family Foundation
- Brambles
- Brigidine Sisters
- Circus Oz
- City of Melbourne
- Colonial Foundation
- East Web
- Echo 1
- Encompass Community Services Inc.
- Finkel Foundation
- Fleur Spitzer
- Forest Hill Early Childhood Foundation
- Fouress Foundation
- Freehills
- Grasslands Grocery
- Helen McPherson Trust
- Hyam and Associates
- Ian Potter Foundation
- Jack Brockoff Foundation
- Julian Burnside and Kate Durham
- Lord Mayor's Foundation
- Mallesons Stephens Jacques
- Melbourne Community Foundation
- Mene Foundation
- Michael and Silvia Kantor
- Minter Ellison Lawyers
- Morawetz Social Justice Fund
- Myer Foundation
- National Australia Bank
- Pilotlight
- Portland House
- Pratt Foundation
- R.E Ross Trust
- Reichstein Foundation
- Rotary Club
- Rural Australians for Refugees
- State Government
- St. Lukes Anglicare
- Sunshine Foundation
- 3CR Radio
- The Dara Foundation
- The Panel Christmas Wrap
- Token Artists
- Toshiba
- Uniting Church (Glen Waverly Parish)
- Victorian law Foundation
- Victorian Women's Trust
- William Buckland Foundation
- WISE Employment

