



Asylum Seeker Resource Centre



Annual Report 2006-2007

www.asrc.org.au

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CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT



On behalf of the board of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, I present this year's annual report to our members. I want to thank all of the staff and volunteers of the ASRC for their resolute commitment to the cause of asylum seekers, and the dynamic way that everybody associated with the organisation goes about their work. The board also wishes to extend its gratitude to all of our donors, from the general public who give what they can and who provide such strong support for the cause, through to the philanthropic trusts whose contributions assist the ASRC to plan for the future. Without your support the ASRC would not exist, and we are truly thankful to everyone who has contributed to the organisation over the past twelve months.

In 2006–07, the ASRC faced many challenges, including dealing with the human cost of the Bridging Visa E policy that denies people the right to work, being stretched to almost breaking point to continue to respond to the welfare needs of asylum seekers, and working for social change and justice within one of the most punitive refugee systems in the western world. In the face of this the ASRC remains committed to protecting and upholding the human rights of asylum-seekers—both in the community and in detention—through the provision of essential services, the raising of public awareness of the plight of asylum seekers and, importantly, maintaining our freedom to advocate on their behalf.

With an election being held in 2007, and the possibility of a new federal government, our hope is that in the next twelve months we will see more caring and respectful policies, including the abolition of temporary protection visas, an end to the Pacific solution, and a commitment to stop the use of negative

language, such as 'queue jumpers' and 'illegals', when discussing issues around asylum seekers and refugees.

At the end of 2006, the board farewelled our chairperson, Steve Mullins. On behalf of the ASRC, I would like to extend my thanks to Steve for his stewardship of the ASRC during his time as chair, and as a member of the board. In 2007, we welcomed Julie Francis and Sadou Diallo to the board, and look forward to their contribution to the governance of the ASRC.

From July 2006 to June 2007, the ASRC welcomed over 3000 people through our doors; more than one-third were new clients to the centre. This shows that the demand and need for our centre continues to grow. While we are pleased to be able to provide these services to asylum seekers, our long term hope is that, in the future, centres such as the ASRC will not be required, and refugees and asylum seekers will be treated by our governments with the respect and care that they deserve.

Dr Paul Harrison
ASRC Chairperson
July 2007

CEO REPORT



'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.' Margaret Mead

This year we celebrated six years since we opened our doors in a little shopfront in Footscray and what a time it's been! In the last six years we have provided over one million hours of free help, assisted more than 5000 people and won asylum for over 1000 people! In this last year we have continued our proud tradition of fearlessly rabble-raising for a more just refugee system and working tirelessly at the coalface to ensure no one in need is ever turned away, ever.

At the lobbying/campaign level we:

- highlighted the poverty and homelessness facing asylum seekers due to the Bridging Visa E regime through our Just a Fair Go Campaign (including spending a night sleeping outside the Department of Immigration)
- led the charge in publicly pushing for a close to the Christmas Island Detention Centre
- were a member of 16 different working groups/ campaigns, including the national Right to Work Campaign, seeking a more just treatment of asylum seekers.

At a grassroots level we continued to achieve extraordinary outcomes, financially on the smell of an oily rag, thanks to our amazing team of volunteers, staff, community supporters and the philanthropic trusts which support us. We continue to exist with no Federal government funding and with 94% of our funding coming from philanthropy and donations from the community. Some of the highlights (to name just a few) included:

- caring for the medical needs of 93% of all community based

asylum seekers through our health service and helping get access to free ambulance care for asylum seekers in Victoria

- acting for the majority of asylum seekers left in Australia's mainland detention centres, successfully freeing dozens of people from detention centres and providing more than 7000 legal advice appointments
- establishing Victoria's first Small Business Program for asylum seekers
- providing over 215,000 hours of aid, advocacy, health, counselling, ESL, legal, casework, support, information and advice
- on the aid front, providing food parcels for over 400 people a week, 10,000 meals for the year, \$100,000 worth of Metcards and nappies and financial aid for emergency accommodation for homeless asylum seekers released from detention.

The ultimate dream of the ASRC is to one day be able to close its doors. This will be the day when hunger, homelessness, injustice and oppression are no longer the signposts of the asylum seeker experience of Australia. Sadly, we still have a long way to go under the current Howard Government with its punitive, ruthless and immoral refugee policies. We hope for a change of government and the dawn of a new day where a 'fair go' actually means something when it comes to how we treat people seeking asylum in this country of ours. Until then we will continue to work, together with the extraordinary, amazing and courageous people that come through our doors each day, to keep their dream of hope and freedom burning brightly in all our hearts.

Kon Karapanagiotidis

CEO, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre



PROGRAM REPORTS



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ADVOCACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS LAW

CAMPAIGNS

The ASRC Campaign team remains at the forefront of the struggle for justice for refugees and asylum seekers, presenting their story to the public. Humanising refugees and asylum seekers helps to counteract negative opinions amongst sections of the public, who have been led to believe that these people are a threat.

In the short-term, we are developing human rights campaigns to foster a groundswell of community based action and an awareness of the plight of asylum seekers, which in turn leads to more intensive lobbying of politicians. This produces incremental changes, such as access to health care at public hospitals and the community care pilot scheme, which has been established to support people with special needs.

In the long-term, we are working to change the current legislation that legalises indefinite, non-reviewable, mandatory detention and the detention of children, the denial of family reunion and the insecurity of temporary protection.

Following are some of the key projects that have been undertaken in the past year.

Let us Work Campaign

This campaign has raised the profile of asylum seekers on Bridging Visas living in the community with no right to work, Medicare or Income Assistance.

While Coalition policy still denies the right to work, pressure has resulted in some people gaining work rights. We are still waiting for the results of an internal Departmental Review of this policy. The review commenced in 2005 and we have been promised the results soon.

The ASRC has intensively lobbied the Labor party on this matter. We were invited to

Sydney to discuss the policy with Labor before the conference. Through this we gained an agreement that the default position on automatic denial of work rights will change. We are working with members of NASAVIC (Network of Asylum Seeker Agencies in Victoria) on this campaign.

A by-product of this campaign has been a commitment from the Victorian State Government to direct public hospitals in Victoria to treat all asylum seekers. This followed the AMA launch of a policy for asylum seekers at the ASRC, in recognition of the medical services offered by the ASRC healthcare program. Asylum seekers and their families will not be turned away from public hospitals in Victoria, which will make a real difference in the lives of impoverished asylum seekers.

Permanent Visa Campaign

The Iraqi Permanent Visa (PV) campaign has resulted in almost all Iraqi Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) holders getting PVs. Consequently, many are now able to reunite with lost wives, husbands and children.

This campaign also continues to highlight the discriminatory nature of the TPV visa which blocks access to English classes and employment services. People on this visa are denied access to education that would enhance their skills and professional standing. They are also blocked from taking up apprenticeships at a time when industry in Australia is crying out for trade skills. The campaign program works alongside the ASRC employment program in lobbying and educating industry and politicians on these matters.

Currently we are lobbying for early Permanent Visas for people who were detained for between three and seven years, and then released on TPVs. These people still have to wait another three to five years for a Permanent Visa. Family separation is the overwhelming reason why this treatment is so painful. There are fathers who have children they have not seen for years,

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husbands separated from wives, and sons and daughters separated from parents.

In addition to our campaign on this issue, the legal team is applying for early PVs for many of our clients. The ASRC campaign has provided information and materials for other community groups to campaign on this issue and we continue to work with agencies nationally to change this policy.

Refugee Resettlement

ASRC volunteers produced the *Dumped at the Gate* report, which described the lack of support and assistance for refugees coming out of detention centres. This research documents the hardship faced by refugees who fall outside the Government's settlement services and is used to lobby for settlement services for refugees. While this is a work in progress, we have achieved some small success with the introduction of a community care pilot and other assistance to those asylum seekers who are sick or vulnerable.

Community Education

This program has seen the ASRC campaigns coordinator and volunteers talking to diverse groups—schools, churches, community organisations, universities, TAFEs, Rotary, Lions, businesses and groups throughout regional Victoria—about refugee and asylum seeker issues.

These people then become advocates, lobbying their local members and helping the public to understand why people flee their homelands, and to see the potential contribution refugees and asylum seekers can make to Australia with just a little help.

In return, we ask for food donations and Metcards. This is a wonderful way to get the message across and we are rewarded by the generosity of the community.

Advocacy

We work alongside the ASRC Casework program in advocating on individual matters and for systemic change. We are advocating for legislative change, which is informed by the individual cases of disadvantage that we witness in the daily life of our members.

Examples of this include:

- mentally ill asylum seekers released from detention as advised by their doctors. This is not an automatic process and often requires intense advocacy to achieve
- deported asylum seekers returned mid-flight, and imminent deportations stopped, when there was evidence that the person being removed faced death or persecution on return to their country of origin
- a young couple, expecting a child, allowed to leave detention to have their baby.

This work requires coordinated and strategic targeting of politicians and media. At the ASRC we have developed a record of success in these areas.

The ASRC facilitates the monthly NASAVIC (Network of Asylum Seeker Agencies in Victoria) meetings at our centre. These meetings provide an opportunity for all Victorian agencies working with asylum seekers and refugees to come together to share ideas, identify problems, discuss solutions, initiate strategic lobbying and take effective action.

To facilitate communication between refugee and asylum seeker agencies across Australia, the ASRC campaign volunteers have produced a *National Directory of Agencies*, which will be made available in hard copy and as a pdf file for agencies to download and use. Until now, no up-to-date comprehensive directory was available. Without the volunteer commitment, this time-consuming database could not have been established.

Pamela Curr – Campaign Coordinator

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COMMUNITY AWARENESS

The community awareness team visits as many places and talks to as many people as possible, raising awareness of the ASRC and its objectives. Our aim is to educate people about the plight of asylum seekers and to raise funds.

Our team currently consists of eight volunteers who offer to speak when a request is emailed out. Volunteers with classroom experience, and those who prefer to talk to adult groups, can choose to work where they feel most at ease. All our speakers are volunteers in other areas of the ASRC. Most of the coordinators are prepared to give talks, often after a day spent working at the Centre. Many travel long distances to do so, or give lunchtime talks on their days off.

From June 2006 to the end of 2007, we visited more than 60 venues. Many volunteers are contacted by a venue they have visited and asked to give repeat presentations. Sometimes this information is not added to the database.

I feel that communicating via email is satisfactory and there is no need for lengthy meetings. The speakers keep well informed about current matters and are aware of the issues that need to be presented.

We have also hosted a number of visits to the ASRC from adult groups (for example Rural Australians for Refugees) and student groups. It was found that if the group numbered fewer than 12 it was possible to walk them around the centre without being too disruptive. It is essential that an appointment

is made and that someone is available to escort them through. It is suggested that each person in the group make a donation, which could be in the form of a Metcard.

It has been a pleasure to coordinate this team and many thanks to all who give so generously of their time. Our service is not advertised, which means we are usually able to respond to the requests that do come in. I extend my special thanks to Pamela Curr, both for her advice and for taking on the major talks.

Carolyn Berger – Community Awareness Team Coordinator

HUMAN RIGHTS LAW PROGRAM

In 2006-2007 the Human Rights Law Program continued to assist over 1000 asylum seekers and their families with a staff of one full-time solicitor and two part-time solicitors, including a women's caseworker who specialized in women's asylum claims. The Program continued to provide training to over 100 legal volunteers in refugee law, and to publish information guides and brochures for volunteers and clients alike. The Law Program's membership of the Federation of Community Legal Centres and the Law Institute of Victoria allowed us to expand our work, access additional resources and continue our advocacy work.

On an annual operating budget of just \$110,000 the Human Rights Law Program's achievements were remarkable and included:

- providing one of Australia's largest pro-bono law programs with over 21,000 hours of free legal assistance
- freeing numerous high risk and suicidal asylum seekers from Australia's detention centres
- remaining the only refugee legal service in Australia with a 'turn no one away' policy
- providing the only specialist asylum seeker women's advocacy service in Australia



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- offering the only multidisciplinary legal program in Australia where counsellors, doctors and social workers work together with lawyers to provide an integrated, holistic, case-management role
- playing an important role in policy and law reform including submissions to every Senate inquiry into the workings of the Department of Immigration
- providing a place of learning and development for lawyers and law students who have an interest in human rights, with over 100 people giving their time to the law program over the last year
- establishing, in partnership with our counselling and casework programs, the first Repatriation Program in Australia for failed asylum seekers to ensure that people who have to return do so in a dignified and humane manner.

As well, in partnership with other community legal centres, we have been able to provide a non-refugee law outreach clinic at the ASRC for asylum seekers on issues such as family law, debt and intervention orders.

In January 2007 Kevin Andrews MP was appointed the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship replacing Amanda Vanstone MP. The Minister may have changed but the ongoing need for reform to Australia's immigration and asylum policies remains.

The ASRC Human Rights Law Program focused on three main areas during 2006-07:

- assisting asylum seekers with the proper representation of their refugee claims at the Department of Immigration and the Refugee Review Tribunal. This was in no small part due to working with the ASRC's doctors, psychiatrists, counsellors and other experts to achieve successful outcomes.
- 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. This included having regular meetings with senior Departmental staff to discuss policies and procedures.

- exploring strategic ways of obtaining visas for clients with complex welfare and human rights concerns. We advocated for alternate migration paths for many clients and continued to take matters up with the Human Rights Committee in Geneva, UNHCR Canberra and the Ombudsman as was appropriate.

Significant client outcomes for 2006 included the following examples:

- obtaining permanent protection for a Russian asylum seeker who was in immigration detention for approximately three years and had developed serious mental health issues
- assisting a 14 year old Asian girl to gain permanent residence through Ministerial intervention. Prior to this the ASRC has assisted with a High Court appeal and Tribunal hearing. The young girl became a client of the ASRC three years earlier when she was facing immigration deportation, alone, at age ten, to a situation where her safety and well being would have been at significant risk following an unsuccessful asylum claim in which she was not legally represented
- obtaining visas for several clients through humanitarian intervention, including by advocating for alternate migration paths such as spouse, parent and skilled visas. In March 2007 we successfully obtained an intervention, after a third request to the Minister, for our client and his spouse from Sri Lanka. They had been in Australia for almost ten years and their asylum claims had been refused. Our client

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had exceptional skills as a chef and two of his children were Australian permanent residents

- following continuous lobbying of the Department of Immigration for our clients facing repatriation, their work rights were reinstated and other welfare and resettlement issues were addressed.

EMPLOYMENT EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

Annual Report Highlights:

- The Employment Program is nominated for a Diversity @ Work award for the second year running.
- The Employment Assistance Coordinator is invited to present at the 7th International Conference on Diversity in Amsterdam (03-06 July 2007).
- The ASRC offers training courses in Hospitality, Customer Service and First Aid—free of charge.
- Referrals from agencies increased again this year, with more than 140 people approaching us for help. We remain the largest program nationally providing employment support to asylum seekers.
- The Catering Program is offered the use of an industrial kitchen by Melbourne City Mission, allowing it to take on more work and staff.
- We obtain funding for a part-time Small Business Coordinator position.

Wise Employment has funded the ASRC Employment Program since July 2004. The two-year grant was renewed in May 2006. With an increase to meet CPI, the total funding now stands at \$41,500/year. The WISE grant covers part of the salary of the Employment Assistance Coordinator (0.4) and

the Chef-Trainer in the Catering Service (0.4).

In the financial year 2006-2007, the Employment Assistance part of the program has also received funding from AndyInc (\$15,000) which has allowed the Coordinator to work a third day every week, with a focus on young people. In November 2006, the program also received \$5,000 from the Mercy Foundation for a micro-credit scheme.

Since May 2007, the Chef-Trainer has received funding for another two-days/week from direct ASRC funding (interests on savings).

Employment Assistance Service

1. Human Resources

The Employment Assistance Service is a volunteer-based service, employing five to eight volunteers at one time for an average of one day/week each. We try to recruit volunteers who offer a range of age and experience, with backgrounds in trades, management, justice and human resources. Since October this year we have benefited from the experience of two retired employment professionals.

We have strengthened our relationship with the RMIT Refugee Access Scheme, which offers 20 full-time annual scholarships for tertiary education and an unlimited number of TAFE scholarships for asylum seekers. An excellent outcome of this relationship has been the fact that the RMIT scheme's coordinator is now volunteering in the ASRC Employment Program one afternoon/week to answer all clients' education-related questions.

2. Clients

In 2006-2007, the Employment Assistance Services saw 105 new clients with work rights, and referred another 20 to agencies that could support them through State Government Funding (WPP).

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We also provided advice and referrals to 18 people who have study rights only.

This brings the number of people we have been able to help since the program started three years ago to more than 360.

Out of the 107 people currently on our 'active client list' as at June 2007, 25 are women and 82 are men. This high proportion of men has been a phenomenon of the past two years. Many of our male clients have arrived alone and were granted Bridging Visas.

In regards to our clients' immigration status, the decline in the number of Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) holders continues. TPV holders used to be the majority of our client load, but now that detention centres are almost empty, very few new TPVs are granted, and those on TPV are applying for (and, 90% of the time, obtaining) permanent protection.

A new phenomenon this year has been the number of people on Bridging Visa Es (usually without work rights) who were granted the right to work. They, alongside people on Bridging Visa A (granted if asylum is sought within the first 45 days of arrival), represent more than half (58) the number of people we are helping. Others either gained permanent residency this year (28), are on TPVs (17) or on other temporary visas (4).

Clients come from a great range of countries, from Cameroon and Congo to Ukraine and Russia via China and India. When the program started three years ago most clients were from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran. Now the number of countries of origin has increased and covers most of the developing world.

3. Employment outcomes

At the end of June 2007, 67 clients (62%) were working more than 15 hours/week. Another 33 did not work, five had just joined us and were awaiting their work rights, and two had lost them during the year.

As mentioned in our last annual report, 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.

The increase in the number of Bridging Visa holders in our client base is a challenge for us, as people on a Bridging Visa are traditionally those who struggle the most to find work, due to the temporary aspect of their visa. They can go from a BV A to a BV E anytime, thereby losing the right to work. This is accentuated by the fact that some of the people on BV E who have been granted work rights received them 'on departure grounds', i.e. only for two or three months before they have to leave the country. This makes it very hard for them to find work.

Relationships have been developed with some employers who have subsequently approached us to recruit staff. We have been able to place clients on a casual or permanent basis with the following organisations:

- St Mary's College at Melbourne University has employed five asylum seekers in its kitchen, due the support of its catering manager Ram Rajoo.
- Woods Automotive Repairs employs a panel beater recommended by us.
- Silver Circle (Aged Care) approached us to offer their support to the ASRC, and subsequently employed three clients (one in administration and two in Aged Care).
- TSL Manchester outlets have provided casual work to some of our clients and have recently approached us to recruit full-time positions in a new store.
- ASS Cleaning Services has employed four ASRC clients as cleaners/removalists.

We thank them all wholeheartedly for their continuing support.



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4. Training

The Service was able to offer a range of training courses to clients this year, through the generosity of *Encompass Community Services*.

For the second year running, *Encompass Community Services* has kindly offered the Employment Program all of its 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), First Aid Level II and Customer Service. Courses have been tailored to participants' English level by being extended from one to two days. More than 40 job seekers have attended and obtained the relevant certificates.

We have also established in-house training in Job Skills, with a day/month offered to provide either interview skills or job search training. This pilot has been very successful and we are currently working on a more extensive program that would offer four sessions over one week, every month, to cover basic job search skills. One of the volunteers in the Employment Program is a trainer with more than 20 years of experience and is currently designing the training program.

5. Advocacy and 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:

- Chairing the *Right to Work* campaign, under the umbrella of the Network of Asylum seeker Agencies in Victoria (NASA-Vic). This ongoing campaign highlights the plight of people on Bridging Visa Es, who have no work rights and no access to Medicare. In 2006, some of the activists working on this campaign (including the ASRC Employment Program Coordinator) visited the then Industrial relations

Minister Kevin Andrews to advocate for the Right to Work for all asylum seekers. Kevin Andrews has since become Minister for Immigration.

- The *Right to Work* campaign has recently been renamed the *Let us Work* campaign, and is focusing on lobbying the ALP and the Government prior to the federal election. Our lobbying brought results at the ALP conference in April, and we are hoping that the changes in the Bridging Visa conditions will figure on the electoral platform of both parties at the next elections.
- The Employment Coordinator is a key member of the RMIT Asylum seeker and Refugee Project's Advisory Group. In coordination with the RMIT project coordinator, we set up a network of universities offering scholarships (which now includes Melbourne University and Monash, and the idea is being investigated by Swinburne University).
- We were successful in obtaining scholarships for two young asylum-seeking women to attend the YMCA conference *Changing it, Loving it* in Melbourne on the 13th and 14th of April. The aim of the conference was to build young women's confidence, self-esteem and networking skills. This was a great opportunity to get the voice of young women seeking asylum heard on a wider stage, and our two representatives received coverage in *The Age* newspaper.
- At the end of June 2007, the Employment Assistance Coordinator will travel to Amsterdam to take part in the 7th *International Conference on Diversity in Organisations, Communities and Nations* (3-6 July). The Employment Coordinator's presentation, entitled *Giving Asylum Seekers the Right to Work: The Case of Australia*, will outline the *Let us Work* campaign. This conference represents a fantastic opportunity for the ASRC to take its work to the international stage,

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and to use this platform to publicise our *Let us Work* campaign, thereby representing many other agencies involved in this campaign. We are the first ASRC staff members to have been invited to an international conference, and the networking opportunities will be substantial. We also intend to use this time to visit asylum seeker agencies in the Netherlands, well known for having progressive programs, particularly in the area of employment. We received \$5,000 from *AndyInc* to cover the flights for the Employment Coordinator and the Campaign Coordinator (who will present a paper on the role of communities in supporting Asylum seekers).

- In October 2006, the ASRC Employment Program was nominated for the second year running for a *Diversity @ Work* awards in recognition of its innovative work in placing refugees and asylum seekers in employment.

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AND SMALL BUSINESS UNIT

Social Enterprise – Catering Service

This year has seen the further development of the Catering Service, which started in May 2005. The service is now going by the name of ASRC Catering. We have been able to employ 25 part-time workers including a coordinator for 23 hours per week.

In September 2006 Matthew Smith was employed for 15 hours per week as a training/mentoring chef. Matthew has had many years in the restaurant industry including Mattees in North Fitzroy. Matthew's role is

to work alongside asylum seekers and train them in the ways of a functioning commercial kitchen, improving their skills, confidence and employability. Some of our staff have then gone on to find employment in cafes and restaurants around Melbourne. In April this year it was decided that it would be beneficial to the catering business if Matthew were to receive an extra 15 paid hours. Matthew, now working 30 hours per week, has improved the professionalism and smooth running of ASRC Catering.

The turnover for this second year of operation has been more than \$80,000. The service has catered for over 110 events—conferences, cocktail parties, openings and weddings—ranging in size from 20 to 350 people. Highlights included:

- numerous weddings in places as varied as Carlton Gardens and Daylesford. The feedback from all the weddings was extremely positive and we are looking forward to catering more of these types of functions when the wedding season comes around again in spring
- catering for the 50th birthday of ABC broadcaster Jon Faine in September 2006; he was very pleased with the food
- a cooking demonstration and talk given by Matthew and one of our key staff at the Sustainable Living Festival in February this year. This event introduced ASRC Catering to a whole new audience.

I have been the catering coordinator for almost one year now and I am noticing that we are receiving numerous requests to cater for people and organisations that we have catered for in the past. This is the ultimate compliment, and indicates that we must be giving the customers what they want. In May this year we finalised the new look menu with a slight price increase, and a wider variety of menu options.

Most recently the staff, Matthew and myself were interviewed for an article in the Epicure section of *The Age* newspaper. This

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article should increase the awareness of the catering business when the article comes out. Two smaller articles have also appeared in *The Melbourne Times* and *The Mail*. I also contribute a regular recipe section in *Aduki* magazine, a healthy living quarterly.

In May 2005 the Catering Service won the tender to provide daily meals and snacks for the Footscray City Primary School Canteen. Due to delays related to the school renovating the kitchen to commercial standards, the Canteen only started on 1st May 2006. The emphasis was on healthy, affordable vegetarian food (organic wherever possible).

Unfortunately, turnover and demand did not reach expectations and the organic food and staff costs were too high. Although parents were encouraged to volunteer alongside asylum seekers in the canteen it was often a struggle to get people to volunteer on a regular basis.

In September 2006 it was decided that the Footscray City Primary School Canteen should be closed. This was a sad day for the ASRC and The Footscray City Primary School but necessary, as the ASRC could not continue to financially support the venture. Some of the canteen staff were then either employed by ASRC Catering or found other positions elsewhere.

The Asylum Seeker Small Business Network

In 2006-2007, the Small Business part of SESBU took the form of a volunteer-run program, the Asylum Seeker Small Business Network. This peer discussion group is open for all asylum seekers interested in creating a small business in Australia. The group meets monthly; it is run by asylum seekers and facilitated by coordinator Dave Kelly. The group provides a forum for asylum seekers to discuss their small business ideas and the challenges they face along the way. The unit also refers asylum seekers to professionals in the community and has the capacity to provide interest free micro-credits (worth up to \$2,000) for asylum seekers with well-developed business plans. The group has set

up a group email account and has developed a web page: <http://aseekbiz.bravehost.com>.

In May 2007, thanks to funding from Aspire Foundation, the ASRC was able to employ a part-time paid coordinator to set up a Small Business Mentoring Program. Sarwat Rehan started on June 18th, and will work on Monday and Tuesday. Her role is to provide direct advice to asylum seekers interested in setting up a small business, and to recruit and train a team of mentors to be matched with asylum seekers for ongoing support.

HEALTH

HEALTH PROGRAM

Snapshot of 2006/2007

After five years the ASRC health centre remains the largest health service, in Victoria and in Australia, providing primary health care to asylum seekers living in the community. In a recent research study conducted in partnership with La Trobe University, it was found that the ASRC health program assisted 93% of all asylum seekers seen at the three asylum seeker specific health clinics in Melbourne (Correa-Velez et al). At least 85% of the health program's clients are asylum seeker men, women and children living on Bridging Visa E without the right to work, no Medicare and no government support.

The Colonial Foundation continues to support the vital work of the ASRC Health Program by funding the full time salary of the coordinator and the medical budget to purchase essential medications and medical supplies for asylum seekers. Funding has also been provided for an additional community health worker position for two days a week over 12 months. This position commenced in November 2006. The addition of this position has been highly successful and has improved the daily management of the program, added more nursing and midwifery support, a monthly mother and baby health education session, and support group and monthly health promotion activities.

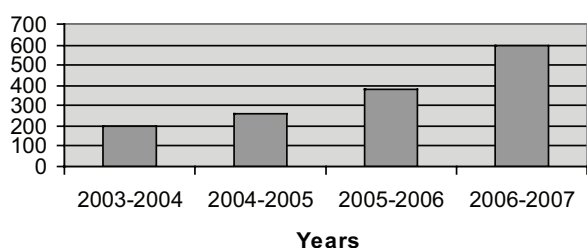
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Without the committed team of over 30 volunteer health professionals working alongside the two paid positions the health program would not function. This dedicated team provides the equivalent of a high quality, comprehensive primary health care centre offering General Practice (GP) care daily; physiotherapy up to three times a week, including a speciality Feldenkrais clinic; massage up to twice weekly; nursing care daily; midwifery, and child and maternal health care; podiatry monthly; immunisations; health promotion and education; and referrals to dental, optical, hospital and specialist medical care. This year, through the Victoria University student clinics, the program was able to add acupuncture, osteopathy and Chinese medicine to the pro bono referral list.

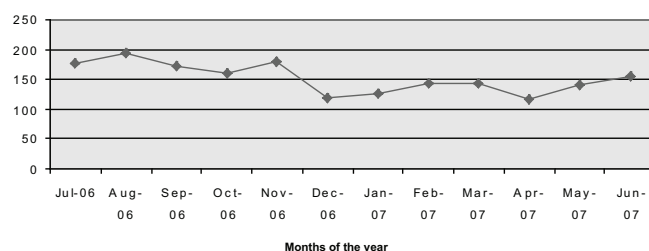
The number of asylum seekers seen in the past year has increased, as it has each year (see below). For the year 2006–2007 the program saw an increase of over 50% of the number of clients seen. At June 2007, the health program had 599 clients and had seen over 1000 since 2002. The demographics of the clients seen at the health program over the past year have remained similar to other years. 42% were female and the mean age was 34 years with clients ranging from 0–89 years old (1). The largest group of clients were born in Sri Lanka (25%), with approximately 45% of clients reporting their region of origin as being from Asia, 16% from the Middle East, 15% from Africa, 10% from Europe, 10% from Australia/Oceania, and 2% from Latin-America.

Number of active health clients

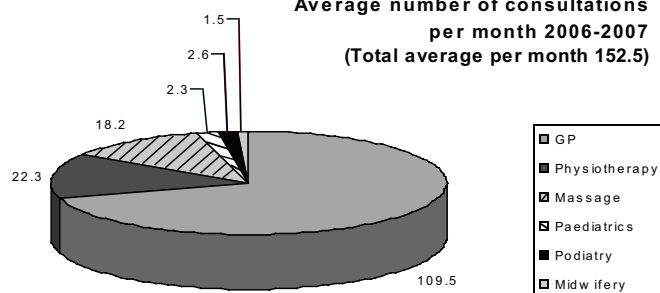


In the past year the health program has conducted 1830 formal individual consultations, a similar number to the previous year. Of these, 1314 were GP consults, 267 physiotherapy consults, 218 massages, seven paediatric consults, 18 podiatry consults and six midwifery consults. The numerous informal consults such as drop-in and phone consults conducted by volunteer nurses and the paid staff remain difficult to assess but they are estimated to be between 50 and 150 per month. The total formal monthly consults over the year (1830) and on a monthly average (152) are detailed below.

Total Health Consultations 2006-2007
(Total consultations for year 1830)



Average number of consultations per month 2006-2007
(Total average per month 152.5)





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Research, Committees, Publications and Presentations

1. RASHN and ASRC data collection project with La Trobe University

This research project included a file review, of all ASRC health files and the files of the two other asylum seeker specific health clinics in Melbourne, of clients that had seen a GP at least once in the 12 months from June 2005–June 2006. Apart from collecting demographic and health status information, the project aimed to develop a data collection tool to be utilised by the three clinics. The most common reasons for GP encounters were general and unspecified symptoms/problems (60 per 100 encounters), musculoskeletal conditions (27 per 100 encounters), and psychological problems (26 per 100 encounters). Approximately two out of every ten encounters were prescription-related. The three clinics providing services to asylum seekers in Melbourne delivered care to a significant number of clients with complex health needs, across multiple consultations. The complete findings will be published in October 2007.

2. Child nutrition/food prescription project

Two volunteer researchers working with the health program and the foodbank have led a child nutrition project since July 2006 to research the food habits of asylum seeker children and families living on Bridging Visa Es. The results of this project, to be finalised in late 2007, will inform the spending of a food prescription fund through the food bank.

3. Committees

Dr Gillian Singleton, ASRC volunteer GP and RACGP representative is a member of Department of Immigration And Citizenship Detention Health Advisory Group.

Joanne Kirk, ASRC health program coordinator is a member of the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Health Network Advisory Committee, re-established in 2007 as the Refugee Health Network.

4. Presentations/Publications

Numerous presentations were made to health organisations within Melbourne including Diabetes Victoria, and the Australian Nursing Federation.

Two conference presentations were made by Joanne Kirk, ASRC health program coordinator:

- *Living without the right to health care: Asylum Seekers in Australia*

Tackling the Determinants of Health from the Bush to Bondi: 37th Public Health Association of Australia Annual Conference, 25-27 September 2006, Sydney

- *The Special Health Needs of Asylum Seekers*

Newly arrived refugees and drug prevention: Addressing the needs and barriers, Australian Drug Foundation Seminar, 24 October 2006, Melbourne.

Publication of articles regarding the work at the ASRC health centre were included in the Australian Nursing Journal, Physio Journal, GP Journal, and various local newspaper articles over the last 12 months.

Future program directions

In the coming year the ASRC health program plans to continue to be a leader in the health sector providing health care to asylum seekers ineligible for Medicare. The program hopes to add health services in response to asylum seekers' health needs including a more structured and formal immunisation program by the end of 2007.

Along with other ASRC programs the health program aims to continue to advocate, campaign and lobby on behalf of asylum seekers. The program will hold an open day in July 2007 to raise community awareness

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about the health status and health issues faced by asylum seekers.

In 2007/2008 the program plans to increase the self funding component that commenced this year, by continuing to access funding for consultations from Red Cross assisted clients and Medicare rebates when clients are eligible for Medicare.

Reference

Correa-Velez I, Johnston V, Kirk J, Ferdinand A. Community based asylum seekers' use of primary health care services in Melbourne: Development of a data collection framework. Refugee Health Research Centre (La Trobe University) and the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, Melbourne (To be published October 2007).

Joanne Kirk, RN – ASRC Health Coordinator

COUNSELLING PROGRAM

The ASRC provides a free Counselling Program for people seeking asylum, 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, as well as those facing return to their country of origin.

The Counselling Coordinator position was funded for another 12 months by a generous donation from the Collier Foundation. Funding to engage face-to-face interpreters was also received from the Myer Foundation and Mr. Andrew Myer, CEO Eclipse Films & Sestriere Investments Pty Ltd.

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:

- seven administration volunteers: one to assist KidsZone, three to cover Saturday morning clinic, three 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)
- five counsellors in the Wednesday night Legal Support Program
- five psychiatrists and one psychiatry registrar
- two external supervisors who provide group supervision to the counselling volunteers
- five external supervisors/debriefers for the Supporting Our Supporters program
- two 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 situation, to manage stress and to relax. On our wish list is funding for another paid counsellor to work at least three 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—ten 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 Red Cross, Hotham Mission, Foundation



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House, Victorian Legal Aid and the Refugee Immigration Legal Centre.

Other achievements/activities during the past 12 months include:

- establishing a 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
- establishing a debriefing program for ASRC general volunteers called Supporting Our Supporters (SOS). A team of four 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
- establishing a debriefing/supervision program for the paid staff each fortnight. This program aims to provide staff with a forum to talk about the challenges of working at the Centre and the personal impact of this work
- establishing a group supervision program for counsellors. Two psychologists provide pro bono group supervision for our counsellors
- establishing an Involuntary Repatriation Program. We've established an Involuntary Repatriation Program

in collaboration with the Casework Coordinator, for clients who are facing the prospect of forced return to their country of origin

- developing a brochure for the Counselling Program
- giving 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, developing and delivering training, on the psychosocial issues faced by asylum seekers, to the Casework Team and general volunteers
- participating in the development of the first ASRC Strategic Plan and coordinating 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 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 – Coordinator, Counselling Program

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CASEWORK

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) extends heartfelt thanks to the Bennelong Foundation for re-funding its Casework Coordinator position at the ASRC. The Casework Coordinator and Casework program have been able to achieve the following outcomes in support of asylum seekers, due solely to your invaluable and generous support.

The ASRC has continued its policy of never turning away an asylum seeker in need and has continued to achieve good outcomes for asylum seekers, as illustrated by the case example at the end of this report.

Continued development of Casework program

- A Senior Caseworker has been appointed for two days a week. This position has been created to work with the most at risk asylum seekers and those with complex needs.
- A full time Duty caseworker has been appointed. This worker will undertake generalist casework and work with some complex needs asylum seekers.
- The ASRC has applied for funding for a Domestic Violence Support Worker and a Housing Advocacy Support Worker. We have received \$8,800 for a Housing Advocacy Support Worker from the Victorian Multicultural Commission.
- Improvements in Casework training has resulted in improved volunteer retention. This in turn has meant that the Casework volunteers have successfully obtained employment as a result of the highly regarded community work experience they have had at ASRC.
- The Casework Aid program has been overhauled. A special assistance register has been established for asylum seekers with special needs who require extra Metcards; back to school assistance has been formalized, as has Christmas

giving; starter packs (bedding, clothes, stationary and toiletries), for newly arrived asylum seekers and asylum seekers coming out of detention, have been created; a volunteer Aid Coordinator position has been established; and a new Aid database.

- An evaluation of Casework volunteer experience at ASRC has been conducted with pleasing results.

Continued development of Casework program infrastructure and operating systems has included developing a Casework Manual, resources, data collection systems and an asylum seekers filing system.

Continued community development and capacity building projects

- Information kits for newly arrived asylum seekers have been developed and an orientation program, also for newly arrived asylum seekers, is well underway.
- An Asylum Seeker Social Group will commence soon.
- Research into asylum seeker housing and homelessness is underway.
- ASRC is seeking free access to gyms and swim centres for asylum seekers.

New projects include:

- assisting Human Powered Bikes, the group who do bike charity work and who donate bikes to ASRC, to become a registered business
- providing Financial Counselling Information sessions and clinics to asylum seekers
- providing Casework outreach to single asylum seeker men who are housed by the Brigadeen Sisters
- developing a network of community members who will house asylum seekers
- creating an Asylum Seeker Drama group
- possibly recommending a Friendship program for asylum seekers.

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- Inter-program work at ASRC in multi-disciplinary team meetings has been strengthened.

The ASRC Repatriation program for unsuccessful asylum seekers has been developed.

Professional development training for staff and volunteers has been organized including Working with Trafficked Women by Project Respect, Working with Interpreters by Sherron Dunbar and How the roles of migration agent work and social welfare conflict and compliment each other by Sherron Dunbar.

Continued interagency work has included:

- developing connections with Melbourne Youth Support Services, Consumer Affairs, Project Respect
- working with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), particularly sections of Compliance, Case Management, Complex Cases
- providing training to the Australia Red Cross around working with asylum seekers who have to leave Australia.

Continued advocacy work has included:

- meeting with a Superannuation lawyer to improve access to superannuation for asylum seekers
- advocating with State Housing Minister, resulting in the likelihood that the State government will provide funding to the Network of Asylum Seeker Agencies Victoria (NASAVIC) for housing for asylum seekers
- meeting with State Govt to advocate for Metcards for asylum seekers.

These achievements have been possible due to the generosity of the Bennelong Foundation. The Casework Coordinator position is demanding as it involves developing the program; recruiting, training, resourcing and supporting two paid workers and 40 volunteers; coordinating casework and community development projects; providing some direct casework support to

asylum seekers; and participating in broader advocacy.

The Casework Coordinator position has been integral to the ASRC for many reasons. It ensures that asylum seekers needs are properly assessed at an early stage and that they receive the appropriate care and support they need while they await an outcome on their refugee status. The ASRC looks forward to more enjoying more successes that will come from the Casework Coordinator position.

CASE EXAMPLE

Mr and Mrs X, aged 83 and 81 respectively, arrived in Australia in October 1997 from Sri Lanka. Mr and Mrs X are Christians of Tamil ethnicity. The ASRC first assisted Mr and Mrs X in lodging their application for asylum with the Department of Immigration shortly after their arrival in Australia.

Over the past ten years, Mr and Mrs X have been involved in the complex refugee determination process, which has involved an appeal to the Refugee Review Tribunal and submissions requesting humanitarian intervention. All of this involved long delays with no access to Centrelink benefits and extended periods without access to Medicare.

During this time, the ASRC has provided free health care, legal advice and extensive casework support to Mr and Mrs X. In September 2006, the then Minister intervened, granting Mr and Mrs X an invitation to apply for an Aged Parent visa. The family's initial joy and relief at this news quickly turned to heartache when they realised this would involve being placed in a queue and waiting for another ten or more years without a permanent visa, or any access to Medicare.

Shortly after this news, Mr X had a stroke resulting in significant loss of speech, some paralysis and mobility impairments. Mrs X has also been seriously ill, recently spending one week in a Coronary Care Unit for heart problems. During this time the ASRC's casework program launched a broad

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advocacy appeal for assistance based on the X's compelling welfare situation. This involved contact with Immigration Minister Andrews; the Immigration Secretary, Andrew Metcalfe; Christopher Callanan; the Victorian Deputy State Director of DIAC; and other Members of Parliament, including Petro Georgio and Stephen Fielding who wrote to the Minister on behalf of Mr and Mrs X. This broad advocacy campaign was coordinated by the Casework program, in addition to case-managing and facilitating the family's ongoing needs for access to health and welfare supports and services.

Recently, in response to the Casework program's involvement, there has been some positive news for Mr and Mrs X. The broad lobbying and advocacy has resulted in the Immigration Department's Ministerial Unit presenting a proposal to the Immigration Minister which will probably see Mr and Mrs X granted permanent residency by the end of 2007.

While we are still awaiting finalisation of this, it appears highly likely that Mr and Mrs X will receive their permanent residence, which will allow access to Medicare and other mainstream health and welfare services. This very positive outcome almost certainly would not have been achieved without the continuity of support of the ASRC's casework program. This consistency is made possible through the funding of the casework position.

SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL PROGRAM

As a result of generous funding from the Fouress Foundation the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Social and Recreation Program has seen many changes. New relationships between ASRC members have formed and are continuing to foster supportive friendships.

The program has initiated a new approach focused on continuous activities rather than just a school holiday program. The program has endeavoured to establish two events or activities every month to accommodate individuals and families. The feedback has been very positive. Individual accounts of participation show that our program provides relief, support and companionship, and opportunities that would otherwise be beyond people's means.

Each activity has provided an opportunity for up to 30 asylum seeker children, families and single adults to access social and recreational opportunities. For each organised social and recreation activity, food and transportation costs are included.

June 2006

The 5th Anniversary Party was a success, with face-painting lolly-bags, music, dancing and a magnificent lunch.

Free tickets to some of the 2006 football games resulted in many new Western Bulldogs fans.

We received 100 tickets to Circus Oz which we used over three weeks. This was a huge success.

A wonderful day was had at Winter Wonderland in Docklands. Approximately 20 mothers and children attended and were unanimous in proclaiming it great fun.

July 2006

The Social and Recreation Program acquired several tickets to the Melbourne International Film Festival. Several asylum seekers attended the screenings, both independently and in small groups with volunteers. Some of the

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people who attended reported that allowing time for a movie, coffee and chat brought some 'normality' into their lives.

A new partnership with Red Cross Y Connect? meant some teenage asylum seekers, and some of their parents, attended the school holiday program. As well as providing the opportunity for fun, there was the chance to meet others of their age group.

August 2006

A visit to the Rialto Level 55 Observation Deck gave a small group of single adults a new view of the city.

Asylum seekers and volunteers all had a great time at the wonderful Multicultural Arts Victoria African Music Festival event Visible.

September 2006

Feedback from the Warrnambool Weekend was very positive. Members of the centre had the opportunity to create lasting friendships when they stayed in the homes of Rural Australians for Refugees group Members. Asylum seekers had the opportunity to go whale watching, play beach cricket, attend a Sudanese catered dinner, take a short hike up an extinct volcano to feed emus and see the koalas, and finally play in Warrnambool's wonderful parklands. The Warrnambool RAR group is interested in hosting another event for the ASRC. The trip also saw new friendships begin between asylum seekers.

October 2006

Twenty-five people went on the outings to the Melbourne Museum and Scienceworks. It was a great learning experience for both children and adults.

In October we were given complimentary tickets to the International Arts Centre and a circus.

November 2006

The Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre Cultural Music Group conducted music sessions with different cultural groups. Approximately 20 asylum seekers attended each session with the support of volunteers. This led up to an end of year performance.

December 2006

The End of Year Party was a wonderful day in Flagstaff Gardens. Approximately 200 volunteers and asylum seekers came. The day included a hip-hop dance workshop for the teenagers; a jumping castle and slide, face-painting, lolly bags and other activities for the children; and karaoke and dancing for the adults. A wonderful and relaxing time was had by all, following a month of preparations.

The toy and gift shop operated, providing Christmas presents for asylum seekers and their families.

January 2007

Trips to IMAX, Melbourne Aquarium and bowling were organised as part of the Holiday Fun Program for asylum seeker children and families. Between 25 and 30 people attended each outing.

February 2007

A group of ten went to the movie The Pursuit of Happyness. Food was provided and people were able to choose exactly what they wanted to eat and drink. It was a great success and the feedback was fantastic.



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March 2007

The Studley Park Boathouse Picnic was a wonderful day. Forty people attended, including volunteers from the Social and Recreation Program. There was a BBQ, fruit patters, chips, breads, dips, drinks, salads and lots more. This was a particularly popular outing and appreciated by all.

The Weekend Away to Phillip Island is scheduled for the 24th and 25th of March.

This year the Social and Recreation Program is planning the following activities, among others

- Collingwood Children's Farm
- Zoo
- more weekends away
- more day outings (BBQ's, picnics etc)
- Melbourne International Comedy Festival
- FINA World Swimming Championships
- movies
- Art Gallery
- Malmsbury Doga camp
- ACMI
- Ian Potter centre at the botanical gardens
- Barbeques on the river
- Puffing Billy train
- Cricket
- Music at the Arts centre

As well as planned day outings the Social and Recreation Program will build more structure into the program for both asylum seekers and volunteers. The suggested development includes working with asylum seekers on an individual and group needs basis. Volunteers within the program will have the option of being involved in both individual and group activities.

The possibility of a Friendship Network between volunteers and asylum seekers is currently being developed. Other proposed projects include a music group and arts therapy group. These have been delayed due to the lack of space within the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre and the expense of renting/hiring rooms outside of the centre.

EDUCATION

ASRC ENGLISH CLASSES

ESL at ASRC is a regular service coordinated and delivered by qualified and experienced volunteer teachers who possess high-level cross-cultural understanding. Our program is essentially self-managed and demands little by way of financial resources. In this year we have around twelve volunteer teachers; some work both Tuesday and Thursday mornings, and others work one morning only. We keep rolls, registers and statistics. Our volunteer joint coordinators carry out induction, assessment and coordination on our teaching days at the Centre, and administrative and planning tasks from home by email or phone contact. We regularly liaise with ASRC Home Tutoring to facilitate the best opportunities for asylum seekers who need to extend their English Language skills.

Without English, asylum seekers are severely disadvantaged in their daily survival; in their prospects for future employment; in their ability to access resources and services; and in understanding the Australian legal system, and their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society. The Howard government provides no funding for asylum seekers on temporary protection visas. Most are denied access to AMES English classes and do not have study rights. The English language classes at ASRC attempt to meet this need by providing small group tutorials aimed at individual language levels. Qualified teachers take these classes at the ASRC building, on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 10am to noon, followed by the community lunch. Over a given week, we normally have 12-18 students on Tuesday, with a similar number on Thursday. Over the year, over 50 students attended one or more of the classes offered.

Towards the end of the year, numbers increased; fortunately we were able to recruit a few new tutors. On some days full attendance, with new students, meant a very tight squeeze in our allocated teaching space, and noise levels became challenging.



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Nonetheless, the students enjoyed the classes, and worked hard to extend their language skills in English. We continued to act as a referral service for alternative or additional English language courses, preferably near to students' homes.

Over the past year we have seen an increase in the number of students from the Middle East, Myanmar, East Timor, Africa and Sri Lanka, and an increasing number of students with little or no English.

The highlight of the year was our group adopting 'relevance' as an integral component of our teaching strategy, using teaching resources focusing on self-reliance and everyday usage. In this context we focused many of our lesson plans on:

- 'Survival English' especially for newcomers
- 'How to get around' covering Melbourne and the rest of Australia
- public transport: access, customs and manners, street directories and maps
- leisure, sport, travel
- Australian political structures
- celebrations and special days
- dealing effectively with bureaucracies: completing forms; approaching hospitals, doctors and Centrelink among others
- Australian Studies: English study materials that incorporated information about Australia life, history and culture, religious and political freedom
- indigenous Australia, citizenship and society
- education in Australia—how to deal with schools (for self and family)
- gender roles in Australia
- employment: jobs in Australia, expectations of workers and employers, how to apply for jobs, how to search in newspapers, how to write a resume and covering letter.

ESL at ASRC is a transition program which assists asylum seekers to learn and improve their English until they are eligible to move on to AMES, RMIT or other providers. We also provide ongoing support, and our ex-students often retain contact and report their ongoing successes. Home Tutoring has a valuable role in helping those unable to attend the Centre, providing not only English Language tuition but also assistance with settling into Australia, friendship and the fostering of self-reliance. The special bond formed by home tutoring interaction is invaluable; similarly strong friendships are formed between teachers and students in our program.

Our teachers often express concern that we are unable to monitor or offer sequential lesson plans, owing to irregular attendance. We experience a high drop out rate for unknown reasons, but many of the absentees turn up again at a later stage. The time of asylum seekers is often taken up with legal, economic and family matters, and the cost of public transport and limited Metcards affects the ability of students to attend the Centre.

In mid-2007 our classes increased in size, and it became obvious that we were not providing sufficient opportunities for our students to attend classes. Some students were missing out because they could not attend during the day on Tuesday and Thursday. We began offering an evening class on Wednesday from six to eight pm. Once this was successfully established we began negotiating to provide English classes every day, after the move to Batman Street.

We look forward to the day when English Classes at ASRC are no longer required, when newcomers are provided with all the essential services they need to settle in and enjoy their new life in Australia. In the meantime we will continue providing the best service possible to assist Asylum Seekers to become proficient in the English Language.

Val Campbell and Helen Mansfield – Joint Coordinators 2006/2007

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HOME ENGLISH TEACHING

Home English Teaching provides volunteer tutors for asylum seekers who want to learn English at home. All the tutors have ESL qualifications and/or have completed the AMES tutor training course. The tutors are a great bunch and some do more than the weekly hour of teaching that we offer learners. For example, tutors have been known to take learners to the football, help get a stove fixed, write letters of support for appeals to the Minister, help families with homework, and obtain assistance from other ASRC programs. Some tutors and learners maintain their friendship after the tutoring role has finished.

Learners come to our program via other ASRC programs (mainly Casework, Counselling and Employment) and from Red Cross and Hotham Mission. This year ESL options for asylum seekers improved, as ASRC classes are now five times a week and RMIT is providing scholarships to enable asylum seekers to attend English classes at RMIT. Our program is now having more interaction with the ESL program at the centre, which is positive.

Providing for asylum seekers who live in outer suburbs (such as Meadow Heights and Endeavour Hills) is a challenge, requiring constant work recruiting suitable tutors. Johanna, as Volunteer Coordinator, has been a great help with recruiting—always efficient and helpful.

Janet King is a wonderful assistant, helping with Information Nights, talking things over, helping tutors with teaching strategies, and doing home visits to prospective learners.

The main change this year was the move to the Batman Street building, which has been wonderful for our program. We now have computer and phone access and our teaching resources are more attractively displayed and accessible for tutors to use. Apart from the move, we have not needed to make major changes this year. The program has continued to run well, providing a great service to asylum seekers who have difficulty in travelling to the Centre.

FOOD

FOODBANK

The stated goals of Foodbank are Good Nutrition, Fairness and Dignity. The move into Batman street was a wonderful opportunity to reform Foodbank policies and procedures in order to improve Fairness and Dignity.

Without going into too much detail, we changed from a food-parcel system (where asylum seekers were given a food parcel but didn't have much choice about what went into it) to a supermarket-style system. The new system allows members to browse the shelves, see what is available, and make choices according to their wants and needs.

There are systems in place, often using points, to determine how much each member can take from different sections (x number of tins, bags of legumes, eggs, tinned fish etc.) to which our members quickly become accustomed. Counters are used to keep track of items, which is especially useful if the member and the volunteer assisting don't share a common language. The system is constantly refined, and generally caters well for varying family size and levels of need. Foodbank's wonderful volunteer army (over 40 great people) have adapted brilliantly to the new system and have suggested many refinements that have been successfully implemented.



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On the Good Nutrition front there is a constant struggle to keep the shelves stocked. As always, Foodbank would not exist without donations from individuals and groups such as schools, churches and workplaces. There has been no great progress made in this area but donations have remained more or less steady. It is the primary goal of the Foodbank coordinator in this next year to focus on increasing donations from individuals, groups and corporations.

KITCHEN REPORT

The kitchen program had a very successful year in 2007, providing a nutritious midday meal on all weekdays the centre was open.

The relocation to a new centre caused difficulties due to limited facilities; however we managed to adapt, and are optimistic about future plans for the area.

There has been a slight increase in numbers dining at the centre. We now serve about 60 meals each day except Wednesday, when between 30 and 40 meals are served.

A major aim for 2007 was to have one leading core volunteer for each day with a backup of members and less experienced volunteers. We are pleased that in the main this has been achieved.

The goal of encouraging member ownership of the area has been partially achieved. All Members who have volunteered, regardless of their cooking skills, have been included in our team. Encouraging members to look after their area, especially around the computers, has been less successful and will be worked on in 2008.

The goal of providing a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere for members has also been achieved. It has been heartening to see the number of members who have returned for a visit months and even years after getting asylum. One single man with permanent residency explained 'When it is hard for me I just come back and sit here with my family'.

SUPPORT SERVICES

ASRC FUNDRAISING REPORT

Close to 94 per cent of ASRC funding comes from donations and grants from within the community, and from the philanthropic and corporate sectors. It could be said the ASRC runs on goodwill. While it might sound clichéd, it's true to say if it weren't for the generosity and compassion of our wonderful supporters, the ASRC would not exist.

In January 2007, thanks to a grant from the Pratt Foundation, the ASRC employed its first full-time Fundraising Coordinator. Prior to this fundraising was in the very able hands of Kon and a band of dedicated and talented volunteers; however with a full-time coordinator on board the ASRC has been able to take advantage of more opportunities to raise money, and adopt a wider and more strategic approach to working towards sustainability and financial self-reliance.

Thanks to a small band of committed submission writers, we continued to apply for funding from philanthropic trusts and corporate foundations. Many of these



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applications have been successful, allowing us to continue running core programs, and expand some programs facing high demand.

Early 2007 saw an exciting collaboration between the ASRC and students studying tourism and hospitality at William Angliss Institute of TAFE. The students received valuable hands-on experience while helping organise several successful ASRC fundraising events including the Search for the Smartest Law Firm trivia night and Drawing the Line art exhibition and auction.

Another event, which doubled as the official opening of the new ASRC premises, was the Inaugural ASRC Global Gourmet Fair. Delicious food, amazing music and beautiful weather made the day enjoyable and memorable for the hundreds who attended.

Of course, there were plenty of other opportunities for supporters to get involved: a Hot Cross Bun Drive, Doughnuts for Dough, Chocolate Drive, Cooking for a Cause—Kon's Greek Cooking Course, ASRC merchandise sales and more!

There are so many individuals, businesses and groups who have very generously contributed their time, talents, products and money—sometimes all of the above—to ensure the success of the many ASRC fundraising endeavours. To all of those who assisted in any way, large or small—thank you!

The financial year 06–07 holds many challenges, and many opportunities for ASRC Fundraising. We need to expand our supporter base, launch a monthly giving program, implement a workplace giving scheme, build new relationships, and get to know our existing supporters better, and so much more!

With the continued backing of our friends and supporters, we will be able to meet these challenges head on and grow to meet the needs of the people we help.

IT PROGRAM

The IT program is responsible for maintaining and improving the ASRC's PCs (more than 60) as well as the server, network, databases and internet connectivity. We provide IT assistance to asylum seekers, staff and volunteers.

This year saw the IT team position itself to better respond to the ASRC's evolving needs and to make more efficient use of the hundreds of hours donated by the team of IT volunteers.

Several changes have enabled the IT team to provide better support more quickly, despite our limited on-site presence.

- helpdesk@asrc.org.au is now the single point of contact for all IT support, so requests can be tracked to completion
- IT documentation has been vastly improved and expanded, and can be accessed online by all of the IT team
- New procedures for tracking support requests mean we can readily assign them to team members based on expertise and availability.

On-site support now takes place regularly on Thursday evenings. Encouraging all the IT team to attend on a Thursday evening has resulted in improved communication, better team morale and a better experience for new volunteers.

The ASRC's relocation was a key project for the team. The many evenings and weekends invested ensured a smooth transition and meant we were able to capitalise on the opportunity to build a better, more reliable IT infrastructure.

Many thanks to all of the staff and volunteers who have supported our work and helped us implement these improvements.



PROGRAM REPORTS

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The ASRC relies heavily on the volunteer workforce to provide essential services including health, legal, counselling and food to asylum seekers. With over 700 volunteers active at the ASRC the coordination, recruitment, training, support and management of volunteers is essential to the smooth running of the ASRC. The Volunteer and Operations Coordinator is key in providing this.

Achievements in 2006/7

A diverse group of 35 volunteers from many different ASRC programs are now accredited First Aiders having completed Senior First Aid and CPR training.

Following feedback from volunteers and staff, the volunteer induction training has been enhanced and expanded to 3 x 2½ hour sessions, and now covers the legal process for asylum seekers in Australia, the psycho-social journey of asylum seekers and an overview of the services provided by the ASRC.

Professional Development and Training opportunities for existing volunteers have been expanded. Volunteers are offered the opportunity to attend Cross Cultural Communication Training and Working with Interpreters training.

Successful recruitment of professional volunteers has continued. Approximately 400 volunteers have been recruited over this period in a variety of roles including medical, legal, administration and counselling.

The ASRC is continuing to raise awareness of asylum seeker issues in the community by hosting Information Evenings. Eight information evenings were held in 2006 and five in 2007 with between 70 and 100 attendees at each.

Revision and improvement of volunteer procedures and policies has included:

- drafting policies on volunteer performance feedback meetings at 1 month and 6 months

- introduction of procedures for a warning system in cases of poor volunteer performance
- inclusion of policies and procedures in the volunteer induction kit.

Goals for 2007/8 include:

- providing further volunteer management support to ASRC Program Coordinators through training (external and internal) in volunteer management strategies
- establishing procedures for the roll out of Working with Children Checks according to government guidelines
- utilising the Volunteer Database to its full capacity, so that it can be an effective tool in volunteer management and reporting
- finalising the updated Volunteer Induction kit to include all ASRC policies and procedures and to include updated policies (currently in draft form).

Publications

The Publications Program had a very small team of volunteers in 2006-07 which made it difficult to maintain the same level of output as previous years. It merged with the Fundraising team mid-year.

The key achievements over this period included:

- the production of April Journeys
- the production of a general ASRC brochure highlighting the Centre's key programs
- signage for the new centre

The small team in 2006-07 were a fun, committed team that are to be commended and thanked for their time and efforts.

Liz Butler – Publications Coordinator

ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE INC.

**FINANCIAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
30 JUNE 2007**

ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE INC.

**FINANCIAL REPORT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
30 JUNE 2007**

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ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE INC.

**INCOME STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
30 JUNE 2007**

	Note	2007 \$	2006 \$
INCOME			
Fundraising Events Income		206,074	172,734
Donations		528,806	398,525
Sponsorship & Grants		559,153	387,626
Miscellaneous Income		3,186	549
		<u>1,297,219</u>	<u>959,434</u>
 EXPENDITURE			
Program Expenses		208,442	170,369
Administration		155,520	102,348
Employment Expenses		636,585	490,353
Fundraising Activity Costs		60,082	84,820
		<u>1,060,629</u>	<u>847,890</u>
 Operating Profit		236,590	111,544
 Interest Income		<u>64,142</u>	<u>32,633</u>
 Profit before income tax		300,732	144,177
 Income tax expense	2	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
 Profit after income tax		300,732	144,177
 Retained Profits at the beginning of the financial year		<u>301,883</u>	<u>157,706</u>
 Retained Profits at the end of the financial year		<u><u>602,615</u></u>	<u><u>301,883</u></u>

The accompanying notes form part of this financial report.

ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE INC.

**BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 30 JUNE 2007**

	Note	2007 \$	2006 \$
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash	3	1,507,213	764,750
Trade and other receivables	4	19,107	7,556
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		<u>1,526,320</u>	<u>772,306</u>
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, plant and equipment	5	13,168	-
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		<u>13,168</u>	
TOTAL ASSETS		<u>1,539,488</u>	<u>772,306</u>
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Amounts received in advance	6	769,382	367,967
Trade and other creditors	7	84,369	60,986
Provisions	8	83,122	41,470
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>936,873</u>	<u>470,423</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES		<u>936,873</u>	<u>470,423</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>602,615</u>	<u>301,883</u>
MEMBERS' FUNDS			
Retained profits		602,615	301,883
TOTAL MEMBERS' FUNDS		<u>602,615</u>	<u>301,883</u>

The accompanying notes form part of this financial report.

ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE INC.

**STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
30 JUNE 2007**

	Note	2007 \$	2006 \$
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Receipts from Fundraising		207,375	172,734
Receipts from Sponsorship, Grants & Donations		1,443,864	807,431
Other receipts		-	549
Payments to suppliers		(364,021)	(456,365)
Payments to employees		(594,932)	(336,085)
Interest received		<u>64,142</u>	<u>32,633</u>
Net Cash provided by operating activities	9	<u>756,428</u>	<u>220,897</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Payments for purchase of property and equipment		<u>(13,965)</u>	<u>-</u>
Net Cash provided by (used in) investing activities		<u>(13,965)</u>	<u>-</u>
Net increase (decrease) in cash held		742,463	220,897
Cash at the beginning of the year		764,750	543,853
Cash at the end of the year		<u><u>1,507,213</u></u>	<u><u>764,750</u></u>

The accompanying notes form part of this financial report.

ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE INC.

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
30 JUNE 2007**

Note 1: Statement of Significant Accounting Policies

This financial report is special purpose financial report prepared in order to satisfy the financial reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporations Act (Vic.). The committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity.

The financial report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act (Vic.) and the following Australian Accounting Standards:

AASB 112	Income Taxes
AASB 1031	Materiality
AASB 110	Events after the Balance Sheet Date
AASB 119	Employee Benefits
AASB 137	Provisions

No other applicable Accounting Standards, Urgent Issue Group Interpretations or other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board have been applied.

The financial report has been prepared on an accrual basis and is based on historical costs and does not take into account changing money values or, except where specifically stated, current valuations of non-current assets.

The following material accounting policies, which are consistent with the previous period unless otherwise stated, have been adopted in the preparation of this financial report.

a. Income Tax

The charge for current income tax expenses is based on profit for the year adjusted for non-assessable or disallowed items. It is calculated using tax rates that have been enacted by the balance sheet date.

The Association is exempt from paying income tax by virtue of Section 50-45 of the Income Tax Assessment Act, 1997. Accordingly, tax effect accounting has not been adopted.

b. Fixed Assets

Leasehold improvements and office equipment are carried at cost less, where applicable, any accumulated depreciation.

The depreciable amount of all fixed assets are depreciated over the useful lives of the association commencing from the time the asset is held ready for use. Leasehold improvements are amortised over the shorter of either the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful lives of the improvements.

c. Employee Entitlements

Provision is made for the Association's liability for employee benefits arising from services rendered by employees to balance date. Employee benefits that are expected to be settled within one year have been measured at the amount expected to be paid when the liability is settled. Employee benefits payable later than one year have been measured at the present value of estimated future cash outflows to be made for those benefits.

ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE INC.

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
30 JUNE 2007**

Sick Leave is provided for on the balance sheet at the rate of 100% of the actual liability of the Association.

d. Provisions

Provisions are recognised when the Association has a legal or constructive obligation, as a result of past events, for which it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will result and that outflow can be reliably measured.

	Note	2007	2006
		\$	\$
Note 2: Income Tax Expense			
Prima facie tax payable on operating profit at 30% (2006: 30%)		90,220	43,253
Less tax effect of:			
- non-taxable member income arising from principle of mutuality		(90,220)	(43,253)
Income tax expense		<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Note 3: Cash and cash equivalents			
Cash on Hand		950	450
Cash at Bank		<u>1,506,263</u>	<u>764,300</u>
		<u>1,507,213</u>	<u>764,750</u>
Note 4: Trade and other receivables			
Deposits Paid		8,383	5,083
Sundry Debtors		9,395	1,049
Prepayments		<u>1,329</u>	<u>1,424</u>
		<u>19,107</u>	<u>7,556</u>
Note 5: Property, plant and equipment			
Motor Vehicles - at cost		13,965	-
Less: accumulated depreciation		<u>(797)</u>	<u>-</u>
		<u>13,168</u>	<u>-</u>
Note 6: Amounts Received in Advance			
Grants, Sponsorship & Donations in advance		364,017	240,597
Distribution Funds in advance		385,365	127,370
Other Liabilities		<u>20,000</u>	<u>-</u>
		<u>769,382</u>	<u>367,967</u>
Note 7: Trade and other payables			
Trade Creditors		36,778	22,682
GST payable		(3,762)	2,411
Payroll Liabilities		<u>51,353</u>	<u>35,893</u>
		<u>84,369</u>	<u>60,986</u>

ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE INC.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
30 JUNE 2007

	Note	2007 \$	2006 \$
Note 8: Provisions			
Current			
Provision for annual leave		36,374	16,640
Provision for sick leave		46,748	24,830
		<u>83,122</u>	<u>41,470</u>
Note 9: Reconciliation of Cash Flow from Operations with Profit from Ordinary Activities after Income Tax			
Profit after income tax		300,732	144,177
Cash flows excluded from operating profit attributable to operating activities			
Non-cash flows in profit			
- Depreciation		797	-
Changes in assets and liabilities, net of effects of purchase and disposal of subsidiaries			
- (Increase)/decrease in trade and other debtors		(11,551)	5,113
- Increase/(decrease) in trade and other payables		23,383	46,250
- Increase/(decrease) in amounts received in advance		401,415	-
- Increase/(decrease) in provisions		41,652	25,357
Net cash provided by Operating Activities		<u>756,428</u>	<u>220,897</u>

ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE INC.

**STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE
FOR THE YEAR ENDED
30 JUNE 2007**

The committee has determined that the association is not a reporting entity and that this special purpose financial report should be prepared in accordance with the accounting policies outlined in Note 1 to the financial statements.

In the opinion of the committee the financial report as set out on pages 1 to 6:

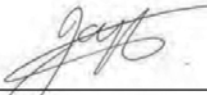
1. Presents a true and fair view of the financial position of Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Inc. and its performance for the year ended on that date.
2. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Inc. will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Committee and is signed for and on behalf of the Committee by:



Dr Paul Harrison – Chairperson

Dated: 26.02.07



Jema Stellato-Pledger – Treasurer

Dated: 26.02.07

INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE INC.

Report on the Financial Report

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Inc., which comprises the balance sheet, statement of cash flows as at 30 June 2007, and the income statement, a summary of significant accounting policies, other explanatory notes and the statement by members of the committee.

Committee's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The committee of the association is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report and have determined that the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statement, which form part of the financial report, are consistent with the financial reporting requirements of the Associations Incorporations Act (VIC 1981) and are appropriate to meet the needs of the members. The committee's responsibilities also include establishing and maintaining internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error; selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies; and making accounting estimates that are reasonable in the circumstances.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. No opinion is expressed as to whether the accounting policies used, as described in Note 1, are appropriate to meet the needs of the members. We conduct our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. These Auditing Standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risk of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the committee, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

The financial report has been prepared for distribution to members for the purpose of fulfilling the committee's financial reporting under the Associations Incorporation Act (VIC 1981). We disclaim any assumption of responsibility for any reliance on this report or on the financial report to which it relates to any person other than the members, or for any purpose other than that for which it was prepared.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Independence

In conducting our audit, we have complied with the independence requirements of Australian professional ethical pronouncements.

Auditor's Opinion

In our opinion, the financial report of Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Inc presents fairly, in all material respects the financial position of Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Inc. as of 30 June 2007 and of its performance for the year then ended in accordance with the accounting policies described in Note 1 to the financial statements.

Sean Denham

Dated:

ASYLUM SEEKER RESOURCE CENTRE INC.

CERTIFICATE BY MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE

I Dr Paul Harrison, and Jema Stellato-Pledger, certify that:

This annual statement was/will be submitted to the members of the association at its annual general meeting.



Dr Paul Harrison – Chairperson

Dated: 26.02.07



Jema Stellato-Pledger – Treasurer

Dated:

26.02.07



Asylum Seeker Resource Centre

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