



The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture

Annual Report 2007/2008



Foundation House

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture

Introducing Foundation House Specialised services for refugees

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Foundation House) was incorporated in 1987 to meet the needs of people in Victoria who were subject to torture or trauma in their country of origin or while fleeing those countries. It is non-denominational, politically neutral and non-aligned.

Foundation House is constituted as a non-profit organisation managed by an elected committee of management. While many of its innovative programs are funded by charitable trusts and private donations, its core funding is provided by the Victorian Department of Human Services and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship also make a substantial contribution to Foundation House's funding base through the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy. Foundation House provides direct services to survivors of torture and trauma in the form of counselling, advocacy, family support, group work, psycho-education, information sessions and complementary therapies.

Drawing on this practice experience, it:

- offers **training and consultancy** to other service providers who have contact with survivors of torture and trauma;
- develops **resources** to enhance the understanding of the needs of survivors among health and welfare professionals, government and the wider community;
- works with government, community groups and other providers to develop **services and programs** to innovatively meet the needs of survivors;
- works with State and Commonwealth governments to ensure that relevant **policies** are sensitive to the needs of survivors;

- works with international organisations towards the **elimination of torture and trauma**;
- conducts and contributes to **research** to enhance the understanding of the needs of survivors and the best possible ways of meeting them.

Foundation House's primary locations are at **Brunswick** and **Dandenong** and a number of services are provided on an outreach basis across Melbourne. Through contracts with local regional counselling services, short term torture and trauma counselling is also provided in Geelong, Colac, Swan Hill, Bendigo, Ballarat, Mildura, Shepparton, the Latrobe Valley and Wonthaggi.

Indigenous acknowledgment

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture's primary locations at Brunswick and Dandenong are on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people. In keeping with Foundation House's aspirations to heal individuals and communities we recognise the loss of land, children, language, lore and spiritual and physical well being of the Wurundjeri peoples and other Indigenous Victorians due to the impact of colonisation. We believe that acknowledging the past and its impact on the present is vital in building strong Victorian communities.

We recognise the survival and precious treasures of Victorian Indigenous culture in spite of such dispossession and aim to build respectful and informed relationships with the Victorian Indigenous community based on the acknowledgment of their unique position as the traditional owners of Victoria. As such, Foundation House is committed to the acknowledgment and participation of Indigenous Victorians within Foundation House events and this is reflected in our official protocols.



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Kankelay Choir performed to an enthusiastic crowd during the 5th World Conference on the Promotion of Mental Health & the Prevention of Mental and Behavioral Disorders "From Margins to Mainstream" PHOTO: SNAPPY PICS

Patrons

Patrons not only associate their names and reputations with our work but also give generously of their time, networks, support and encouragement. We offer our sincere gratitude to our esteemed Patrons for their generous participation.

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THIS REPORT

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Reproductions

Chairperson and Director's report

Paris Aristotle (Director) and Lynne Haultain (Chairperson, Committee of Management) share their thoughts in relation to the 2007/08 year. They discuss programs and partnerships, the continued growth of the organisation, the ongoing commitment of staff, committee members and supporters and some of the Foundation's goals for the future

PROGRAMS AND PARTNERSHIPS

LYNNE Our ongoing service delivery is fundamental to the life of this organisation. This year we have seen an expansion of the service, particularly from the satellite operations in Dandenong and regional Victoria. We have also had the flowering of key programs, one being Ucan2 which is about engaging young people and the other being the Family Strengthening program which has reached a point of consolidation that is really impressive. I think these programs stand as testament to our capacity to take innovative ideas and turn them into mainstream projects.

PARIS I think the Family Strengthening and Ucan2 programs are good examples of where we have been able to draw down on direct service expertise and develop programs that can model a new way of going about work in this field for others in the sector, as well as for governments to look at in developing policy and programs. Both programs are strategic in that sense but highly responsive to the client group. The good thing for us is that these issues keep emerging out of our casework.

In this past year, we have seen positive results coming out of the school-based piloting we ran with private philanthropic support, initiatives such as out-of-school-hours learning, homework clubs and general school support programs. The success of these programs was acknowledged and recognised in the Government's most recent release of A Fairer Victoria.



These initiatives have now been picked up and funded as government programs and we no longer require the philanthropic funding. That then frees up philanthropic money for us to pilot new initiatives like UCan2.

LYNNE That's what I was getting at when I described UCan2 and Family Strengthening as being service innovations that we could consolidate to the point of becoming mainstream programs. It also enforces our credibility to philanthropic funders to where they are confident in our capacity to deliver extremely responsive and effective programs to the client base. It's become self-reinforcing now because we have set a high bar in terms of the quality of the programs that we have rolled out and the engagement we have with the communities we are working with.

PARIS Part of the success I think is that we have had a strong partnership emphasis where we have worked very closely with different agencies like the Centre for Multicultural Youth, Migrant Resource Centres, Berry Street, The Brotherhood of St Laurence, Centrecare, and other agencies such as these. We've also worked with government departments including the Department of Human Services, the Department of Education, The Victorian Multicultural Commission, as well as non-government statutory and government agencies in the conceptualisation and roll out of these sorts of initiatives. It's meant that everyone has had an appreciation of them from the outset and there has been a strong sense of ownership. Ultimately, that has been a key to their success. That whole concept of partnerships, leveraging off each other and working with government and other agencies, as opposed to in opposition to them, has meant that we've had quite a degree of success.

LYNNE I think that government support at a Federal and State level has been remarkably consistent through 2008. That's probably not a surprise to us given the work that Paris does to stay in touch with key people in terms of the bureaucracy and the development of policy but also with Minister's offices and decision makers at that level. Our relations with government from both sides of the aisle have maintained a very positive perspective for a long period of time. That doesn't come without commitment and a great willingness to engage. We have long made it a strong ethic of this organisation that we are not party political. I think that if you present solutions or opportunities to decision makers, whatever their political stripes, then they will engage with you.

PARIS We've played that with a very straight bat, keeping our objectives very focused on client needs and working with anyone in any government who's interested in supporting that. That doesn't mean we haven't been prepared to be critical or challenge areas of policy we felt have been antithetical to the needs of our clients but we've seen the value of working with government. In the previous government's last budget, to their credit, and to the credit of Tony Abbott, the former Health Minister, there was a 12.2 million dollar increase to torture and trauma services across the country. They made it recurrent rather than a lapsing program. The new government has expressed its continuing support for that and sees the value in that investment. I think in the politics that go on a lot of the time, you can still find people across the spectrum to engage with, that understand these issues and want to support them. That's how it should be. In a humanitarian area like refugees, it has to be bi-partisan.

LYNNE For me, it's all about the centrality of the direct service and, for want of a better word, the authenticity that offers us in terms of our responsiveness to particular needs as they arise, our development of new services, and the credibility we have to go to policy makers and talk about the issues that need to be addressed. We come with a wealth of experience and a profound understanding of what it's like to be in Australia as a refugee or trying to come.

PARIS Also, I think our programs work because they are not constructed out of our own imagination. They are constructed out of what our clients tell us and say to us in group sessions. They come out of our meeting with community groups or what our community capacity building staff tells us from their work within communities. I think that is always the key. Instead of coming with an abstract concept and trying to implant it into a community it is a much more organic process.

LYNNE The other element is our very long-term commitment to capacity building. For as long as I have been involved with the Foundation we have always been talking to doctors, social workers and teachers, anyone who has contact with our clients, in order to expand their understanding of how best to support them. We work very hard to ensure that other people who are part of this experience for refugees understand what it is that people are going through.

CONSOLIDATION AND GROWTH

LYNNE This year we have been pleased that the extension at our Brunswick space was completed so quickly and attractively. This was made possible through extraordinary support from the philanthropic sector. There is one private family trust that has provided a no interest loan. That has been an incredible contribution because it has allowed us to complete that work without any further repercussions for the finances of the organisation. The space is still quite cosy but it's functioning well, as opposed to the ongoing space issue at our Dandenong site. There has been a considerable increase in our client engagement in Dandenong. We are growing still and we're very pleased to be able to run as much direct service and programs as we do but there are considerations we have to make in order to make that happen.

PARIS One of the issues for us is that we are not sure we want to get much bigger on the Brunswick side of town. With the current housing difficulties, communities are being pushed further a field in order to find more affordable places to live. We need to be where they are. We have a small outpost in Ringwood now and we're building a small outpost in Werribee in partnership with other agencies such as the New Hope Foundation. It makes the service more accessible to clients. It's fantastic to have the central hub in Brunswick and we are desperate to try to acquire the resources and find something that is more suitable for us in Dandenong. But we still need to continue to look at outposts, offering small satellite services, which we will want to do in partnership with other agencies.

CELEBRATING THE COMMITMENT

LYNNE We celebrated our 20th anniversary at the end of last year at Government House. We introduced the Governor and his wife as our new Patrons in Chief. That was an enormous thrill for all of us. I have to say it was probably the most moving occasion I have had at Foundation House over the past 14 years out of many, many, moving occasions. To see the world gathered in the ballroom of Government House dancing, singing and talking was one of the most positive experiences of my life.

I would like to offer my love and thanks to my Committee of Management. The fact that we have had such an extraordinarily stable group of people at all levels of the organisation over such an extended period of time has also meant that we can grow and diversify to the point that we have. If we didn't have that corporate knowledge, and that core emotional and intellectual commitment, at all those tiers of the organisation, it would never have been so smooth sailing as it has been.

PARIS Similarly, my thanks go to the staff. I think you would be hard pressed in any organisation of this type, anywhere in the world, to find the same volume of collective experience that exists here, given that we have many staff that have been here for 10, 15 and 20 years. We have committee members that have been around for up to 10 and 12 years. That depth of expertise is extraordinary.

LYNNE It says two things. It supports the organisation in the way I described but it also means that there is enormous sense of family here. It is a one-way door. The organisation has an extraordinary magnetism. It's very difficult to break down why that is the case. It's a mix of factors around a commitment to the work and the people. We have an enormous amount of respect going in all directions and at all levels.

THE WORK CONTINUES

PARIS Looking to the year ahead we are very focused on making whatever contribution we can to help bed down improvements and changes in the way in which the offshore humanitarian program and the onshore determination and detention areas function. It's an ongoing, clear commitment to transporting what we know from our practice into the policy domain. That will continue to be a big emphasis for us.

The UCan2 and the Family Strengthening programs are developing areas that we're trying to integrate across the agency and in partnership with other organisations. The other key area is the continued development and bedding down of our research program. This is moving towards a much more substantial initiative as a result of very significant financial support provided by the Myer Foundation and the William Buckland Foundation. This support has meant that we can really build a research program that is currently not available in Australia in this field.

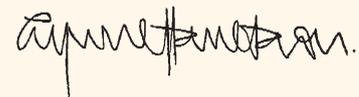
LYNNE I don't think I would be exaggerating if I said that really puts us, when it comes to its full fruition, in the international mix in terms of research in the field. We have grown our reputation in that regard on a number of fronts over the past few years. This was something that the Committee of Management identified, probably six years ago in our strategic planning processes. We could see the complete synergies around those three areas of activity; you develop service innovation out of your direct service, then you do research and evaluation that supports what you do and this, in turn expands directions to further service innovations. Those three aspects of the Foundation's work create a virtuous circle.

PARIS We are one of the only centres if not the only one that has a research program integrated with a direct service program, and a whole service innovations area.

LYNNE This year has been a hard thinking year and for all that an extremely successful one, one where we have made a strong transition from the IHSS (Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy) type process, where we were engaged with every single arrival to a maturing of our organisation, where we are focusing on particular cases and families. This gives us the capacity to be very innovative.

PARIS I think what we've done is that we have helped build a system and now we're trying to refine that system so that the most complex needs are able to be addressed by the Foundation. The more generalised areas of need can more readily be picked up across other agencies with our support through training and secondary consultations.

LYNNE We did a lot of reflection last year as to the journey we had taken as an organisation, I am exceptionally proud of the fact that we have stuck to the ethic and the values that were inherent in the beginning. That continues to be my mission and I know that it is completely supported by the Committee of Management and by all our staff. That singularity and commonality of purpose that sustains Foundation House, at times of great growth, when it's often difficult to hang onto the reasons to be and things are changing around you, we have never averted from our commitment to the clients and to their communities. I think that's been really critical to our success and growth.




Foundation House says thankyou!

Each year, the list gets longer. Ever increasing numbers of organisations, groups and individuals have stepped forward to work together with Foundation House as it assists individuals, families and communities from refugee backgrounds to build their lives in Australia. In addition to financial support, Foundation House and its clients have benefited from a range of in-kind and pro bono assistance. It is very reassuring to have so many friends committed to supporting our work. We appreciate the assistance and we value the relationships we have formed with the people who offer it.

Foundation House would like to acknowledge the financial and in-kind support of the following organisations and individuals.

FUNDING — GOVERNMENT

Victorian Department of Human Services
 Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
 Dental Health Services Victoria
 Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing
 Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Citizenship
 Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

OTHER FUNDING

AndyInc Foundation
 ANZ Trustees
 The Myer Foundation
 Donkey Wheel Fund and Charitable Trust
 Heartfelt Foundation
 Helen McPherson Smith Trust
 Hugh Williamson Foundation
 Invergowrie Foundation
 Melbourne Community Foundation
 McLeod Family Foundation
 Portland House Foundation
 Reichstein Foundation
 Mr and Mrs Victor and Fleur Spitzer
 Victorian Health Promotion Foundation
 William Buckland Foundation

DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

Andrew Demetriou
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 Anna Wearne Trust
 Brian Doyle
 Caroline Coleman
 Carwatha College
 C. Ennis
 David Bilander
 Prof. David Penington AC
 Department of Justice – Broadmeadows, Sunshine and William St Magistrate's Courts
 Estate of John Francis Horwood
 Fortress Investments Group Australia
 Genevieve Timmons
 Geoffrey Charlesworth
 Helen Casey
 Hilary Charlesworth
 Hillalia Akokonei
 Ian Anderson
 Ian McKenzie
 John McFarlane
 Loretta Little
 Louise Doyle
 Lucy Charlesworth
 Lynne Haultain

Margaret Becher
 Mark Madden
 Max and Stephanie Charlesworth
 Meadow Heights Primary School
 Melissa Conley Tyler
 Michael Hains
 Michael Kane
 Michelle Groves
 Paul Fisher
 Pia Ziong
 Ricci Swart
 Richard Franklin
 Tim Barnett
 Solomee Jentzen
 Susan Brennan
 Susan Robertson
 Teresa Zolnierkiewicz
 The Body Shop
 Warren Borg
 William G Wiglesworth

IN-KIND SUPPORT AND SERVICES

Adult Multicultural Education Services
 Alexander Stitt & Partner
 Australian Football League
 Circus Oz
 Clayton Utz
 Cranlana
 goodcompany.com.au
 Ian McKenzie
 Jenny Mitchell and John Clarke
 LaTrobe University
 Margaret Wehl & Family
 Mediherb
 Minter Ellison Lawyers
 Southern Light Herbs
 The Body Shop
 UNHCR Regional Office Canberra

The Foundation House contribution to policy, advocacy and the broader debate

Over the last twelve months the change of government has had substantial implications for the work of Foundation House. Paris Aristotle elaborates on this and the ongoing work contributing to refugee and asylum seeker policy and the broader debate.

AS FAR AS AREAS OF SIGNIFICANT impact on the organisation over the past year, the change in government has been the biggest. We have always sought to improve policy and practices in the refugee resettlement, asylum seeker and detention areas and have had considerable success even in very difficult circumstances. The new government has articulated a commitment to significant changes in these areas and so there is an opportunity to carry that work further.

The new Federal Government Minister, Senator Chris Evans, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship is on the record expressing his keenness to reform some of the areas around detention and open up the possibility of increasing Australia's refugee intake in a way that perhaps we haven't heard for a long time.

For example, the new government moved quickly to end the Pacific solution and in the last budget they announced an increase of 500 places in the Humanitarian Program for 2008/09 rising to 750 more in 2009/10. No one in the sector anticipated that happening in the first budget, particularly with all the talk about problems with rising inflation. There is also an expressed desire to look at more increases in the future which we would also like to see.

The decision by the previous immigration minister to introduce an integration test for people coming out of camps, so they could assess whether refugees would be able to integrate well into Australia before they were given a visa was quietly overturned earlier this year. We had extreme concerns about the test, both in terms of the validity of attempting to do it but also the ethics of that sort of concept. An integration test

would have made the need for protection secondary to the so called "integration potential" of the person which is both unrealistic to do and against the spirit and intent of the UN Convention.

In a speech to the National Press Club, the minister announced a new approach to detention:

"The key determinant of the need to detain a person in an immigration detention centre will be risk to the community...the presumption will be that persons (of no risk) will remain in the community while their immigration status is resolved"

(Senator Chris Evans, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, July 2008)

The Minister struck a balance between communicating that it was not a free-for-all and that there will be risk-based determinations, but his speech fundamentally challenged the way in which the policy was being applied previously. Contributing to this change process has required a lot of work but it's work that feels very optimistic. It feels like we are on a footing to have a conversation about issues where values are not dissimilar, where the view of the world is not incompatible.

In the detention area, one of the biggest changes in policy has centred around the Community Care pilot. It's a new model for looking after vulnerable asylum seekers in the community and not in detention centres. It's an area we have been working on for several years now along with Red Cross, Hotham Mission, other non-government organisations and the International Organisation for Migration. This was originally supported and piloted with the previous government. The new government has continued the pilot

and is now looking at turning it into a national program which would be a dramatic transformation in thinking about how to respond with this group. What the pilot has proved and what we had tried to argue for many years was that the detention model had a corrosive effect on people's psychological wellbeing and as a result affected their ability to make rational decisions about their own situations. The community care model supports the wellbeing of vulnerable asylum seekers, helps to get more timely outcomes of cases and doesn't damage people in the process. It also improves collaboration between the sector and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, has achieved a much higher rate of voluntary returns of people who were not granted visas than was ever achieved from detention centres and costs much less to operate. On every level it is more effective than the use of mandatory, indefinite detention.

One big area of concern has been the use of ministerial intervention to deal with compassionate cases that are unsuccessful in the refugee determination process. The Minister said not long after coming to office that he did not want to "play god" with these decisions. We have been closely involved in dialogue about how to reform this area and in particular how to design a new complementary protection system. Non government organisations have been arguing for such a system for many years now and to be able to have a genuine conversation about how to structure and implement one is big relief. I know that we have a great deal to offer along with the other NGO's involved and that if we work well together we will get an

outcome that will be a huge improvement on what currently exists. We also had quite a bit of input into the case management system that the Department now runs and which provides a more humane and sensible approach for the Department to manage the difficult area of people seeking asylum.

We've always seen it as our responsibility to draw on what we learn from our casework and projects to improve government policy and change systems and structures. If you were to compare the policies and resources in settlement and other services at both a state and federal level for example, say 15 years ago, there would be no comparison. When we first started working on developing the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy 8 years ago there was 12.5 million dollars available for services nationally. This year that figure will be in the vicinity of 60 million dollars and will deliver more and better services than could have been possible in those earlier days.

When we first negotiated the Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma, funded through the Commonwealth Department of Health, the national budget was 1.5 million dollars. In the last federal budget of the previous government that was increased to an annual figure of 4.5 million dollars nationally. It meant that torture and trauma services around the country could deliver services to many more clients, develop new programs in rural communities and provide more training and professional development to the field. Australia has the only national network of this type in the world.

Our work with the state government has contributed to the development and refinement of the Refugee Health and Wellbeing Action Plan and new and exciting programs in the Department of Education. We are not solely responsible for that but we have worked in partnership with other NGOs, government departments and statutory organisations such as VicHealth to be a significant contributor.

There are all sorts of government

policies where, because we are a direct service agency, because we have had a commitment to being rigorous in the process of that work and being thoughtful and strategic in how we carry that into policy domains and government circles, regardless of who is in government, we are often able to contribute in a substantial and constructive way.

There have been many more areas of policy that we have had, and will continue to have input into as a natural part of our work. We always want to do it in a client focussed, politically neutral way and in partnership with others

because we know that no one agency has all the answers. We can get more done and find great strength in genuine collaboration across the sector. We also know that the collective efforts of agencies and governments bring about the best results in terms of better policy and programs. Ultimately this brings better services for refugees. We know that responding to problems and supporting individuals is crucial but so too is changing and improving systems and we really want to play our part in that."



Extension completed to Brunswick building

DURING 2008, AN EXTENSION TO the building at Foundation House's Brunswick site has been completed. As demand for Foundation House services and programs grew, the need for more staff and consequently more space, had become significant during the preceding year.

Built to accommodate this growth in staff numbers across the agency, the building encompasses office space for 26 people and a dedicated meeting room for 12. While fully self-contained with its own kitchen and bathroom facilities, the building is linked to the existing premises via an enclosed corridor providing a seamless link for staff to move between facilities. The building was completed within timeframes and budgetary limits and is now occupied by staff from the

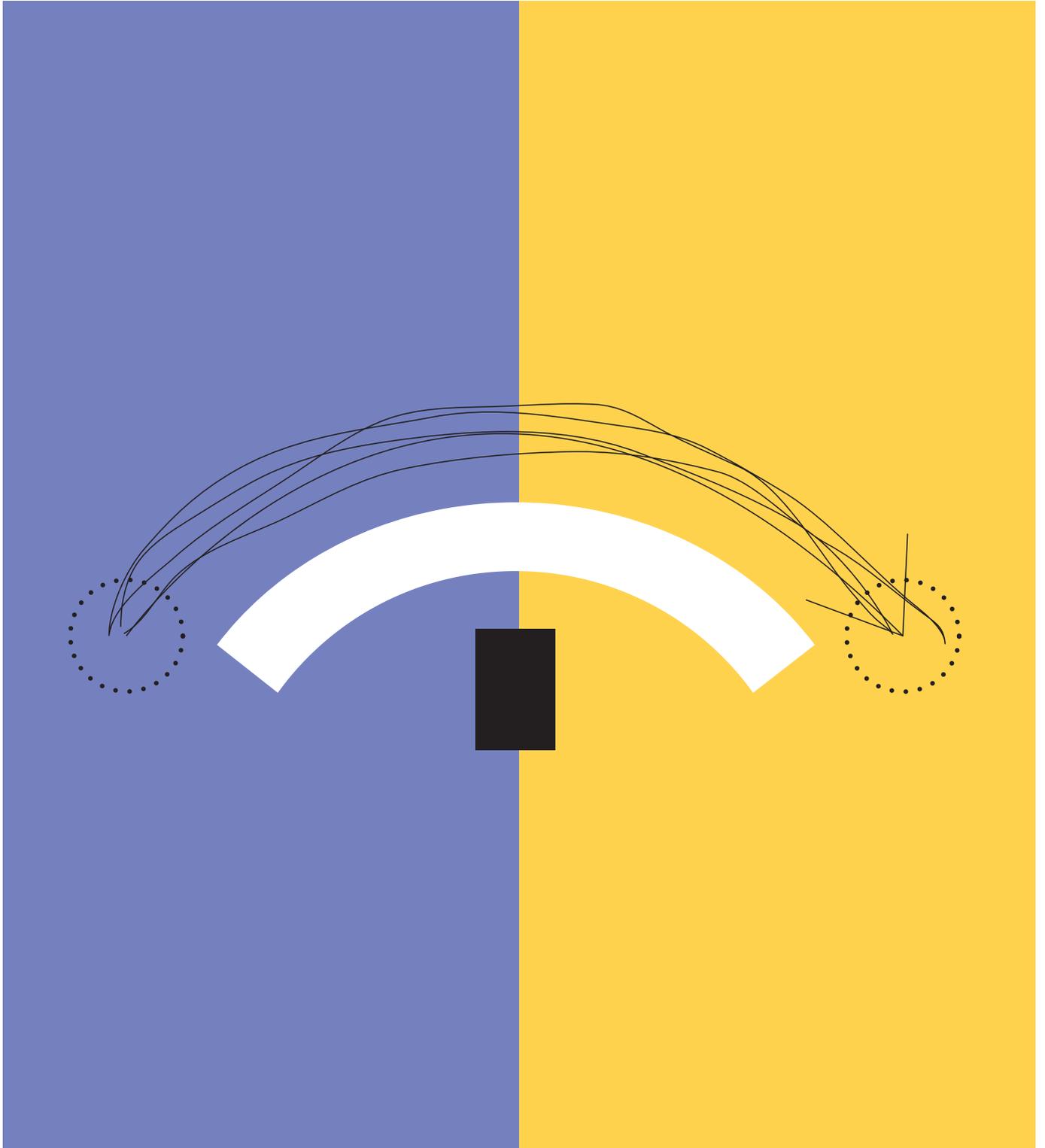
Service Innovation, Research and Health Sector Development teams, some of whom had previously been located in offsite rented office space.

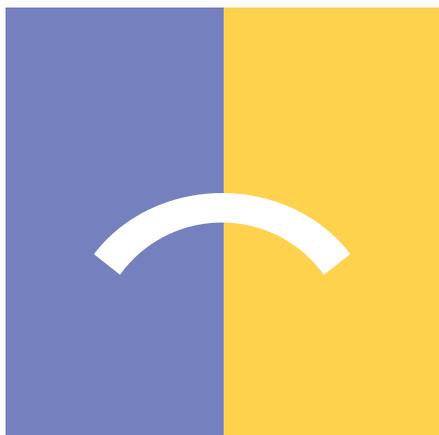
Landscaping of the surrounds has assisted in "blending" the building in to the existing facilities. Newly landscaped areas are supported by two large water tanks which collect rainwater from the roof of the entire Brunswick building.

Foundation House would like to convey its thanks for a smooth and successful building process to:

- Department of Human Services
- Mackie, in particular Michele Cobelens
- MSM & Associates
- Landarche

The bridges we build





The symbolism of bridges, across religions and cultures, is widespread. A bridge provides passage over some sort of obstacle such as a valley, a road, or a body of water. Crossing a bridge suggests progress from one state to another.

UCan2

 “My name is KoKo and I was born in Burma. I stayed in Burma till I was six years old and then because of the problems in my country, I moved to a refugee camp on the Thai border. I lived there for thirteen years. It was not possible for us to stay in Burma so it was good that we got the chance to come to Australia.

I arrived here in March 2007 when I was nineteen years old. I came with my Mum and my two brothers. When I came to Australia I felt like I was lost. I went to school at AMES. And then I joined UCan2. It was really good for me. I now have more friends in this country. They taught me so many things. They taught me how to deal with the culture in Australia and Australian society.

Through UCan2 we have mentors. The mentors help each student. They guide you through so many things. I can have fun with my mentor. You can call the mentor and you can make a time to see each other and talk about any problems.

There were many students in my UCan2 class so when we first joined together we didn't know each other properly. Once we were in UCan2 we grew so close. We became very close friends. Sometimes we had picnics along the Yarra River. We'd eat hamburgers together. They would organise games as a way for us to introduce ourselves and make us more confident with one another. There are so many fun things in the UCan2 class. I've learnt so much about Australian culture and the people.



UCan2 also taught me about work. In my case, it was about all aspects of working at Coles. They taught us everything, how to find things on the shelves and how to match code numbers on stock. Now I'm working there as a casual worker. UCan2 also encouraged me to think about what kind of work I want to do in the future. I have decided that I want to study medicine. I will try. If I can't do medicine I will do nursing.

This year I did half of my Year Eleven studies. Next year I will do Year Twelve. I have a friend who will do Year 12 with me. Study can be difficult because I have been living in a very different culture. When I was in the refugee camp life was hard. After I got out of there things changed for me. Everything was new. Everything was so different. I have learned so much. I enjoy life in Australia.”

— **KoKo Shwe joined the program in 2007. He now speaks to others about the nature and value of UCan2**

 “UCan2 came out of a concern for older kids leaving language schools and making a poor transition into mainstream pathways in education and employment.

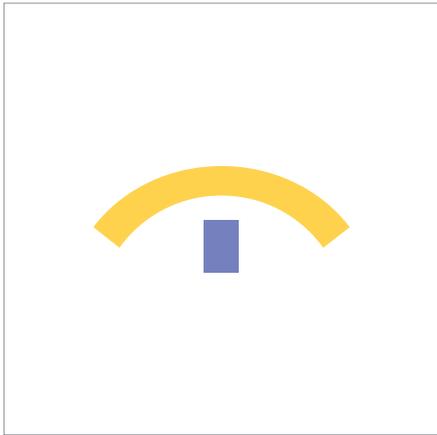
Their families didn't like it and didn't understand why their kids were failing. But the profile was of kids coming from very long term stays in refugee camps, with no formal education, who were dropped into a school, asked to sit next to kids with twelve years experience of schooling, and then asked to do things they couldn't do.

We wanted to enhance what was happening in the language learning so that people's relationship to what came next was completely different. We needed relevant, integrated curriculum with language teachers and Foundation House staff working together.

We looked at part time work and having a component of the curriculum that was oriented to getting a part time job. We wanted young adults from Australian backgrounds to come in, be part of the program and build in experiential learning. We wanted that social learning to be acknowledged.

We wanted more opportunities for social networks so that people were bridged out of their community. The objective was very simple. We wanted to see people maintained in the system, maintained on a pathway that was consistent with their aspirations.”

— **Chris Pierson, Manager, Service Innovation Program**



Bridges may also offer the solution to a difficult or confronting situation.

Community liaison work at Foundation House

Meet Salam and Dina



DINA We work with the newly arrived Assyrian Chaldean. They have seen war, separation, loss, trauma and grief. We let them know that there is help for them here at Foundation House.



SALAM Some of our clients are longer term. We continue working with them until they can manage by themselves. The Assyrian Chaldean community have a long history. They are Christian, and originally from Iraq but they moved into differing neighbouring countries such as Iran, Syria and Turkey. I'm Assyrian but was born in Syria.



DINA Most have left Iraq and have been in a transit country for two, three or four years. During that time they have been applying to come to Australia through a humanitarian visa. Generally, the first thing that people talk about when we go to see them is their anxiety about family members that are still in Iraq or the country of transition. We try to do some education around counselling. Counselling is a new word for people in our community. We don't have that concept in our culture. Thinking about your feelings can be a luxury when you are thinking about survival.



SALAM When you leave your country, you are leaving everything behind. Imagine it. You are leaving every small thing. It could be a plant that you have planted or a tree that you have watched grow. Memories that you have made over years you leave behind.

On the borders it can be so hard. The smugglers who may have helped can often betray you. Sometimes people have to swim across water to reach safety.



DINA People go through such difficult experiences before they come here. Often because they lived in Iraq as a minority group they were persecuted for two reasons, ethnicity and religion. When we go and see people they have only been in Australia for three or four months so they haven't had a chance to think about the difficulties they have experienced. They are too busy with resettling and starting their new life. Then after a while, things start to come back. They start to think about how they managed to survive. Then, they have to learn everything again. The language. The law. Everything is new. Add to that the pressure of separation from family members. Then there is the financial pressure. It might be a single mother here in Australia but she may be sending money back to other family members to help them survive. On Centrelink payments she cannot save money and it is not easy to find a job. That is the guilt and the pressure she is living with all the time.



SALAM Many of the women are here by themselves. Their husbands may have been killed, or are missing, so they had to leave Iraq by themselves with their children. When they tell us their stories, it can be difficult. We can't do anything but listen. Forgetting these memories is very difficult for them. Our role is to help them to live with those memories. We encourage them to understand that we at Foundation House are there to listen and to help.





DINA Sometimes you hear of suffering in the country of transition. You hear clients saying, 'we would sleep the whole day because we had no food. We could only eat once a day, so it was easier just to sleep than be hungry.'



SALAM It's part of our role to do home visits, especially because they are new arrivals. It's very difficult for them initially to use public transport and travel to Foundation House. They are not familiar with the layout of the city. At first, they may be unsure about Foundation House. We explain the different services and provide information about the importance of psychological health in their life as well.



DINA We sometimes go jointly with a Counsellor Advocate. We act as the bridge between the family and the Counsellor Advocate. Our role in breaking through any suspicions about counselling is made easier if we are with the Counsellor Advocates. Foundation House is trusted. It makes it easier for us to build that relationship of trust.



SALAM The workers from Foundation House also want to have a better idea of our culture. We might sit with them and explain some of the traditions. Also, people from the Assyrian Chaldean community see many things in this culture that they do not understand. We need to explain things to them, describe how life is here. Our community is open to talking. If you encourage people to feel comfortable they will talk to you.



DINA Originally I came to Australia as an asylum seeker in need of help. Sometimes I share my story with clients just to show that it may be difficult at the beginning but it will be better. People here at Foundation House always support us in our work. If you come from a home visit upset, you can always talk to someone here. There is always help if you need it.



SALAM We help to build the connections. We aim to make the counsellor understand what the client is talking about and also try to make things clearer for the client.



DINA Our working relationship with the Counsellor Advocates works well. After the visits we talk together. They ask us what we think and feel about the session. We need their knowledge and experience and they need our community expertise.



SALAM We also organise groups. We have a women's group and a parenting group. We organise cooking classes and occasions. We have meals together. It's about making people feel more comfortable and sharing something together.

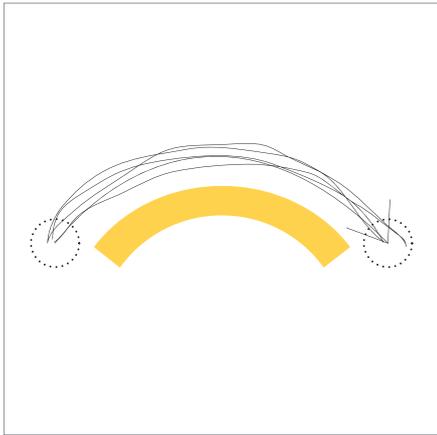


DINA Our parenting group is fantastic. People like it because it is a chance to be social. In Australia it is often just you. You don't have the extended family to help you. There is the school to think about and looking after your children. Then there are issues with teenagers. We all know how hard that can be. It can be difficult in your own country so what happens when you change country? Within the actual family communication can become an issue. Everyone is so busy. The parents are busy, maybe finding work or working. The kids are busy with school. Often there is no communication within the family. That's when conflict can emerge. Everyone is going through their own grief, but for them they don't talk about it because feelings are something you don't talk about.



SALAM We often have excursions with our groups. Just recently we went to the Melbourne Aquatic Centre. We had over 60 people there. You could see all the women, in the water, simply enjoying themselves. When we were watching them we could only feel how much they needed it. The work here at Foundation House gives me so much experience. Sometimes you cry with clients as they cry. Sometimes you laugh with them, very loudly. Our clients like it at Foundation House because the environment is relaxed and friendly. I remember one of my clients used to say, 'just by walking in the door I feel calm.'

Foundation House currently employs workers who provide support like that described by Salam and Dina to the Chin, Karen, Sudanese and Sierra Leone communities.



The Bridge is a symbol of the power of human ingenuity to overcome obstacles and forge connections.

Family Strengthening

I arrived in Australia in 2006. At the beginning I was referred to Foundation House by my doctor. Then through the Afghan Association I was referred to Family Strengthening. I think the network that is Family Strengthening is very useful because it will make relationships better between families. Every parent wants the best for their family. We have to find people and places in Australia that provide support for families, so that people can open up and tell what is in their heart. At the moment it is very hard for some families. They need help to open up and say what they really think.

— DR ABBASSI,
Afghan Community Network Advisor,
Family Strengthening South-East

The refugee experience changes people and their relationship to each other. The resettlement process also changes relationships within families. This creates challenges to the cohesion and the resilience of families. We settle nuclear families here but people have lived in extended families. At the very time you need the support of the extended family it is not there. Family Strengthening attempts to address these challenges. The intention was to look at how we could get mainstream support agencies to strengthen and maintain that resilience by providing services. Family Strengthening aims to bring families, communities and services together so that relationships can be formed. People aren't going to be using services or accessing support in the absence of relationships.

— CHRIS PIERSON,
Manager, Service Innovation
Program

We come from a society based on the idea of living as a collective; people living together, uncles, nephews, aunts, cousins, they live together. Here it is very hard. People don't have their extended family. The family might be living in a suburb where there is no other Sudanese family. People are so disconnected.

— WILLIAM ABUR,
Family Support Worker Berry Street,
Family Strengthening North-West

People find things here in Australia they could not find before. They have a house. They have their health. They are settled. But they think, why am I not happy? It is because they do not have their family, their friends and their community around them.

— NAFISA ALI MOHAMED,
Family Support Worker Berry Street,
Family Strengthening North-West

Separation from family is very difficult. Our country is a long, long way from Australia. For some people there are real financial problems. They can't travel home. For others, they are not educated so they cannot pass their citizenship test and they don't have documents to travel. Also, it seems so quiet for people when they come here. There are such big differences. It can cause depression and mental health problems.

— FAHIMA,
Afghan Community Network Advisor,
Family Strengthening South-East

The Family Strengthening strategy, North-West network, is an open door for the Sudanese community, a link between the Sudanese and the service providers. Previously, there was not a good connection between the service providers and the community. The community was standing back. Some service providers, like Foundation House, did have a great connection with newly arrived refugees. But other service providers didn't have that connection. Families weren't coming for the service. Also the workers had no idea of what services the Sudanese community were lacking and the challenges they were facing.

— WILLIAM ABUR,
Family Support Worker Berry Street,
Family Strengthening North-West

We have had several Family Strengthening meetings for the Afghan community, South-East network. At the beginning the advisor's role was to go to other community members and ask about problems and potential problems in their families. Then they brought those problems back to the network so they could discuss them with other members. People were encouraged to contribute ideas about how to bring families together and make their relationships closer.

— DR ABBASSI,
Afghan Community Network Advisor,
Family Strengthening South-East

We're working with the Sudanese, Afghan, and Karen communities. We spend some months with the communities getting to know advisors, men and women drawn from the community. We form groups. Then we bring the family service agencies, agencies such as Berry Street and others, to the advisors. The community advisors tell the agencies what their needs are in terms of family support. Then agencies tell advisors how they would respond to those issues in a mainstream context. This information exchange is the process where we can develop practice principles most appropriate to the community.

— CHRIS PIERSON,
Manager, Service
Innovation Program



NAFISA

My community are not yet in the Australian system. They don't use the available services. If they have neighbours, they don't talk much, they don't connect with other cultures. This society is diverse and we need to interact with different people. I am hoping that my community can have a good life in Australia and not be isolated.

— NAFISA ALI MOHAMED,
Family Support Worker Berry
Street, Family Strengthening
North-West

People come to Australia with huge expectations. When they catch the plane they think they are going to heaven. For the first day after they arrive community members come from different directions to welcome the newly arrived family. By the next day you find everyone goes back to minding their own business. The person is going to be left there in the house. They know nothing about where to go for help. People have a lot of challenges. Sometime it is very difficult.

— WILLIAM ABUR,
Family Support Worker Berry
Street, Family Strengthening
North-West



WILLIAM

The difficulties we had to overcome are that people did not necessarily look to people or agencies outside their family for support. There's been long history of new arrivals not using services and services haven't really looked at a new direction.

— CHRIS PIERSON,
Manager, Service Innovation
Program

It is not common for people to access community services in my country. Usually, if there were major problems in the family, there would be a different response in the village compared to the town. If there were a problem in the village, it would be solved by the chief or the elders of the village. In the city, the problem may be solved by government officers.

— DR ABBASSI,
Afghan Community Network
Advisor, Family Strengthening
South-East

In the Western culture if a family has a problem they may come straight to the service provider and say I have this problem and I need to be helped. But in the Sudanese culture that is not the case. So they might have a problem in their house until it reaches crisis point.

— WILLIAM ABUR,
Family Support Worker Berry
Street, Family Strengthening
North-West

We brought the advisors together, and then we brought the agencies together. We discussed the key issues facing the family functioning in this community. Then we decided what we wanted to address as priority issues once we had workers employed.

— ANNEROSE REINER,
Coordinator Family Strengthening
Strategy, North West

A big issue for the Sudanese community is the relationship between teenagers and their parents. Teenagers have adapted to Western culture. Their parents are still holding onto Sudanese culture and they are not happy with the way the children have adapted. This creates conflict in a family. It is about educating both sides, giving the proper skills to parents and also giving the teenagers the appropriate skills.

— WILLIAM ABUR,
Family Support Worker Berry
Street, Family Strengthening
North-West

One of the biggest problems that exist within families in the Afghan community is with parents and their teenage children. They have grown up in a totally different culture and environment and that's where the conflict usually starts happening. These children are going to high schools. They are learning new things. Even though I have been in Australia for a very short time I have heard stories about families who have problems with their teenage children.

— FAHIMA,
Afghan Community Network
Advisor, Family Strengthening
South-East

Teenagers have two channels of information, one from the family and one from mainstream culture. It makes it complicated. Some families lose their kids because of this. If you are going to transfer to another culture you have to reach some kind of balance.

— NAFISA ALI
MOHAMED,
Family Support
Worker Berry
Street, Family
Strengthening North-West



FAHIMA

We need time to work with people. They need to be educated so they are prepared for their teenage children coming home and bringing in new ideas.

— DR ABBASSI,
Afghan Community Network
Advisor, Family Strengthening
South-East

The Family Strengthening strategy has an employment component. The advisors write a position description that identifies what kind of people and skills are needed. We do a needs assessment where the advisors tell the agencies what their issues are in terms of family support. We advertise within the community and one man and one woman are placed within a support agency for 12 months to help to build a bridge.

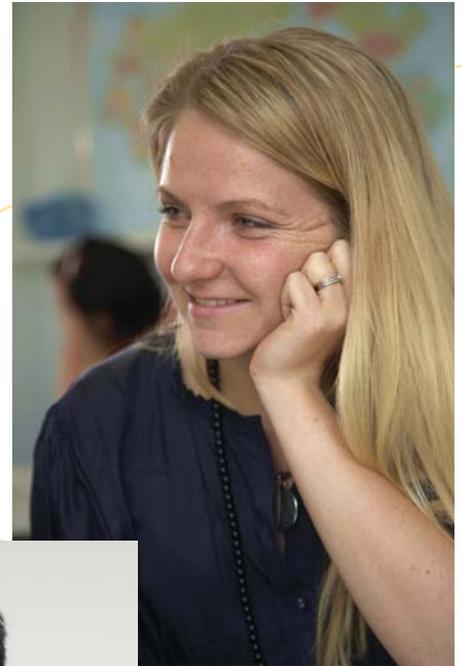
— CHRIS PIERSON,
Manager, Service Innovation
Program



DR ABBASSI

At the moment our network is at the stage where we are advertising for two people to be employed to work within two service agencies. Once we employ those two people and they have contacts within those agencies, we as network members can be introduced to those services and know about the work that they do. Then we can take it back to our community and explain what is available. Also those two workers will come back on a monthly basis and report on their progress.

— DR ABBASSI,
Afghan Community Network
Advisor, Family Strengthening
South-East



CHLOE

When it reached the stage in our network where they wanted to employ workers I knew it was something I needed to do. I have been involved with Foundation House since the Family Strengthening program was initiated, as one of the advisory members. I found myself with an interest in wanting to

help my community. I applied for the job, based here at Berry Street and I got it. Day to day my work is about understanding the issues that families are facing and addressing them and connecting them to the right service.

— WILLIAM ABUR,
Family Support Worker Berry
Street, Family Strengthening
North-West

I know that my community has a lack of knowledge and information in many areas so I thought that by doing this job I could help. I have face-to-face meetings. I do home visits. I go with a family worker from here at Berry Street. Initially, some people don't accept other people from the mainstream agencies to be involved in their problems because they don't have knowledge of that. But when William and I talk to them they feel more confident to use the services.

— NAFISA ALI MOHAMED,
Family Support Worker Berry Street, Family Strengthening North-West

Foundation House are the facilitators between the Sudanese community, the advisors, Nafisa and William and the mainstream agencies. We have a group of community advisors and representatives from the family agencies that come to the monthly meetings. Nafisa and William and Foundation House are there too. We are able to compensate all the community advisors for each attendance so that there is acknowledgement for their time and contribution.

— ANNEROSE REINER,
Coordinator Family Strengthening Strategy, North-West

We have a group of 15 community advisors in the Afghan community network, nine men and six women. There are many different groups within the Afghan community yet we have been able to bring this group together, to sit at one table, with the common aim of strengthening families.

— DONNA CHESTERS,
Coordinator Family Strengthening Strategy, South-East

The network advisors work with the community. They pass the information on to people. They tell them, we now have these workers at Berry Street. They speak your language. They are from your community. They know we are going to listen.

— WILLIAM ABUR,
Family Support Worker Berry Street, Family Strengthening North-West

Since William and Nafisa were employed here at Berry Street, I have been their manager. On a personal level, Family Strengthening has opened me up to this community. I have learnt that the Sudanese community is complex and is not comparable to the community I sit in. There is something new to learn every day.

— CHLOE L'HUILLIER,
School Focused Youth Services Coordinator Berry Street

I think the attitude of the people from my community has completely changed. They are confident now that there is someone here within this agency that can speak their language, who can understand their culture and their issues.

— WILLIAM ABUR,
Family Support Worker Berry Street, Family Strengthening North-West

It's about building bridges. It's also about building skills. It's about highly qualified family support workers, the social workers and the psychologists, doing the interventions, while Nafisa and William are the cultural conduits that support the work. It is also about up-skilling people internally about working with the Sudanese community, where they might acquire some of the knowledge that they gain from William and Nafisa. Some agencies have people like William and Nafisa but when they leave they haven't left a rich legacy behind of understanding their culture. Foundation House wants that knowledge to remain inside Berry Street.

— ANNEROSE REINER,
Coordinator Family Strengthening Strategy, North-West

It has been fantastic to work with the Afghan community. The Family Strengthening program here in the South East has seen this diverse community working together towards a common goal. We now have two family support agencies involved, Connections and Windermere, and we will be employing family support workers to start very soon. It's great to see how communities can be involved in such a process.

— DONNA CHESTERS,
Coordinator Family Strengthening Strategy, South East

What Nafisa and William are working on here at Berry Street, with the Sudanese community is enormous. It is so complex. Berry Street can look at the way we work now and realise there is a gap. But once you've identified the gap you can work with it. There is a lot of work to be done.

— CHLOE L'HUILLIER,
School Focused Youth Services Coordinator Berry Street

It has been eight months since I arrived here in Australia. I had a good feeling when I joined the Family Strengthening network. I feel happy to know I am part of something good. By attending these meetings I can share information and ideas with other people. I've become aware of different Afghan community members and their families. I have a husband and a young son. I hope my involvement in Family Strengthening will contribute to strengthening my own family.

— FAHIMA,
Afghan Community Network Advisor, Family Strengthening South-East

Direct Services

During the last year, Foundation House has continued to receive a high rate of referrals for new clients to access services. In 2006/2007 Foundation House provided services to 4213 clients from over 40 different countries of origin and this year (2007/08) services have been provided to 3973 clients (Table 1).

The countries from which clients are arriving have changed in the last two years with most clients now of Burmese origin. The next largest intakes are from Sudan, Iraq and Afghanistan. Countries of origin reflect zones of conflict in the world and most of our clients even those of a young age have been exposed to extreme levels of hardship, violence, displacement and loss (Table 5).

The types of services offered include individual and family counselling, advocacy and a range of complementary therapies (Table 3). Group work has also been used to address a range of special needs. In the south east of Melbourne, there are a number of families from Afghanistan. Challenges typical of settlement in a new country have been exacerbated for these families by the long periods of separation that women and children have had from husbands and fathers. Group programs have worked with fathers and children with the aim of rebuilding relationships and addressing experiences of loss. An additional group has commenced with men who have been ex-combatants to explore the impact of their pre-arrival experiences on their settlement.

Generally, cases being referred to Foundation House have been particularly complex in nature and challenging in that clients often have a wide range of needs to be met (Table 4). The nature of Foundation House work presents many challenges for staff and in the case of increasing demand, staff teams often find themselves to be under sustained levels of pressure.



Foundation House clients meet the Governor of Victoria, Prof. David de Kretser, AC

Over its twenty year history, Foundation House has continually invested in systems designed to provide both professional development and support to staff, enabling both a low staff turnover and staff to continue to provide high quality levels of service.

Further information about Foundation House services or referring a client to our service is available on our website.

Direct Services data

TABLE 1

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF VFST CLIENTS IN 2007/08

	IHSS	Generalist	Both	Total
Afghanistan	233	155	75	463
Albania		12	1	13
Bosnia and Herzegovina		40		40
Burma (Myanmar)	953	88	232	1273
Burundi	18	67	17	102
Cambodia		14		14
Congo, Democratic Republic of	50	16	18	84
Eritrea	8	25	12	45
Ethiopia	38	84	9	131
Iran	27	43	6	76
Iraq	199	151	87	437
Kosova		18	5	23
Liberia	45	44	36	125
Serbia	8	4		12
Sierra Leone	15	10	4	29
Somalia	3	41	10	54
Sri Lanka	8	51	1	60
Sudan	306	269	178	753
Turkey		25		25
Former Yugoslavia	17	4	1	22
Other**	6	21	2	29
Other***	25	121	17	163
TOTAL	1959	1303	711	3973

NOTES
 For children born in Australia (n=38), the country of birth of their parent(s) is listed.
 IHSS: Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy
 Generalist: Clients that arrived in Australia more than 12 months ago and IHSS clients who received long-term counselling
 Both: Have received a service under IHSS and Generalist
 ** Countries not listed in ABS at time of entry
 *** 38 countries with number less than 10

TABLE 2

VFST CLIENTS BY AGE, GENDER AND PROGRAM 2007/08

	IHSS		GENERALIST		BOTH		NATURAL THERAPIES		MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
0-10 years	284	267	67	101	86	85	6	8	3	2
11-20 years	230	297	144	157	113	101	8	5	5	5
21-30 years	188	198	101	113	62	41	39	7	9	21
31-40 years	135	125	127	131	74	42	48	14	31	39
41-50 years	81	65	115	103	34	25	46	19	46	36
51-60 years	26	30	59	61	19	14	29	12	20	23
61+ years	16	17	13	11	9	6	6	3	1	6
TOTAL	960	999	626	677	397	314	182	68	115	132

Note: Number of clients under Natural Therapies and Mental Health Clinic are included in the IHSS and Generalist program figures

TABLE 3

TYPE OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO VFST CLIENTS 2007/08
 (Hours % Direct Service Time)

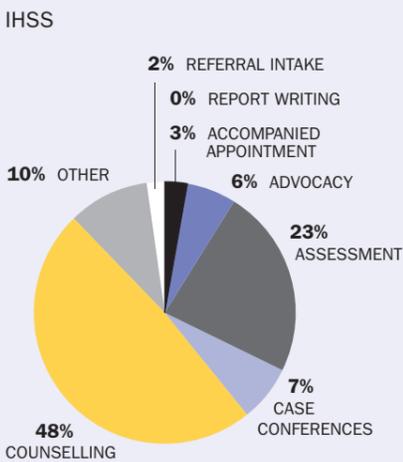


TABLE 4

NEEDS AND PROBLEMS OF VFST CLIENTS 2007-2008 % frequency at assessment

		0-17 years		18+ years	
MEDICAL					
Dental	IHSS	16	14		
	GENERALIST	8	11		
	BOTH	12	12		
General Practitioner	IHSS	62	72		
	GENERALIST	51	58		
	BOTH	53	63		
Optometry	IHSS	4	8		
	GENERALIST	2	7		
	BOTH	0	6		
Specialist	IHSS	1	5		
	GENERALIST	3	6		
	BOTH	2	5		
Specialist: Psychiatry	IHSS	1	1		
	GENERALIST	1	13		
	BOTH	0	3		

TABLE 5

VFST CLIENTS' EXPERIENCE OF TORTURE AND TRAUMA 2007/08 (% frequency)

		0-17 years		18+ years	
PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE					
Dangerous flight	IHSS	36	65		
	GENERALIST	55	69		
	BOTH	42	74		
Detention of family or friends	IHSS	8	11		
	GENERALIST	18	39		
	BOTH	10	15		
Disappearance of family members	IHSS	11	20		
	GENERALIST	27	43		
	BOTH	19	31		
Forced separation from family	IHSS	24	52		
	GENERALIST	48	70		
	BOTH	30	66		
House raided	IHSS	9	21		
	GENERALIST	13	36		
	BOTH	9	30		
Solitary confinement	IHSS	0	2		
	GENERALIST	1	9		
	BOTH	0	3		
Subject to mock executions	IHSS	2	7		
	GENERALIST	2	7		
	BOTH	1	6		
Threat of harm to family	IHSS	37	63		
	GENERALIST	67	80		
	BOTH	47	79		
Witnessing violence	IHSS	30	57		
	GENERALIST	57	75		
	BOTH	40	76		
Witnessing others killed	IHSS	8	23		
	GENERALIST	10	36		
	BOTH	15	40		

		0-17 years		18+ years	
SOCIAL LIVING DIFFICULTIES					
Family Violence	IHSS	2	3		
	GENERALIST	12	15		
	BOTH	7	4		
Marital or Family Discord	IHSS	6	7		
	GENERALIST	17	33		
	BOTH	15	15		
Family Breakdown	IHSS	7	9		
	GENERALIST	25	32		
	BOTH	10	12		
Employment	IHSS		25		
	GENERALIST		42		
	BOTH		34		
Financial: Income Support	IHSS		33		
	GENERALIST		46		
	BOTH		39		

		0-17 years		18+ years	
Financial:					
Other	IHSS		24		
	GENERALIST		43		
	BOTH		32		
Higher Qualifications Not Recognised	IHSS		3		
	GENERALIST		16		
	BOTH		5		
Housing	IHSS		34		
	GENERALIST		49		
	BOTH		40		
Immigration (Sponsorship)	IHSS		48		
	GENERALIST		43		
	BOTH		56		
Major Illness or Handicap in the Family	IHSS		8		
	GENERALIST		15		
	BOTH		30		
	BOTH		12		

		0-17 years		18+ years	
Mental Illness					
	IHSS		3		4
	GENERALIST		9		16
	BOTH		7		4
School Attendance	IHSS		15		18
	GENERALIST		13		11
	BOTH		21		27
Significant Concern for Family Overseas	IHSS		37		67
	GENERALIST		42		63
	BOTH		49		73
Since Arrival, Death of a Close Relative or Friend	IHSS		4		7
	GENERALIST		7		26
	BOTH		2		7
Social Isolation	IHSS		25		41
	GENERALIST		42		55
	BOTH		40		55

		0-17 years		18+ years	
PHYSICAL VIOLENCE					
Under Combat Fire	IHSS	14	32		
	GENERALIST	23	32		
	BOTH	24	41		
Damage to teeth, genital mutilation or other	IHSS	2	7		
	GENERALIST	5	14		
	BOTH	3	7		
HARDSHIP					
In Hiding	IHSS	8	20		
	GENERALIST	11	18		
	BOTH	8	21		
Internal Displacement	IHSS	9	19		
	GENERALIST	23	27		
	BOTH	18	25		
Lack of Food or Water	IHSS	16	27		
	GENERALIST	27	23		
	BOTH	23	39		
Lack of Shelter	IHSS	14	25		
	GENERALIST	26	23		
	BOTH	16	36		
Refugee Camp	IHSS	41	46		
	GENERALIST	42	27		
	BOTH	44	49		

		0-17 years		18+ years	
LOSSES					
War Related Loss*	IHSS		4		13
	GENERALIST		10		16
	BOTH		8		17
Non War Related Loss*	IHSS		1		2
	GENERALIST		1		3
	BOTH		1		2
Forced Separation from parent or child	IHSS		6		13
	GENERALIST		9		15
	BOTH		12		20

* 10 is equivalent to a death of a parent for a young child or death of a child

Client snapshot: Hilal's story

Hilal is a 19 year old young man from Sierra Leone. He arrived in Australia in 2007. He grew up in Sierra Leone and recalls many happy days as a child, helping his dad to work on cars, going off to school each morning and working in the school garden. Hilal remembers his dad being very busy in his work as a builder and a mechanic, but always making sure he was there for his family too.

When Hilal was 10 years old, word came that the rebels were on their way to his town. Hilal and his family fled with only the clothes they were wearing alongside others from their town. In the months that followed, Hilal and his family lived from the kindness of strangers, staying in houses and abandoned buses, and scavenging for food. At times the buildings they stayed in were shot at, burnt down and their lives were in constant danger. They reached the border after a few months in Guinea and arrived at the refugee camp, Conakry. Soon after arriving in the refugee camp, Hilal's father left to go in search of his parents-in-law. Not long after this, word came that Hilal's father had been killed. One of Hilal's older brothers went in search of their father and he is still missing. After 7 years in the refugee camp Hilal (then 16), his mother and younger siblings were sponsored to come to Australia.



Hilal says 'When I came to Australia, I started English language school but I always wanted to become a mechanic like my dad. In Australia, it's a great country to live in and there is a lot of opportunities'.

Gaining access to these opportunities was initially difficult for Hilal, as he spent his days going to school and caring for his mother and five younger siblings. With the support of his counsellor/ advocate at Foundation House, Hilal enrolled in HandbrakeTurn, an eight week automotive training course which aims to support disadvantaged young people to "get their lives on track".

Hilal says 'Going to HandbrakeTurn has given me a lot of experience and skills and the people here are really helpful and friendly. I am happy that I have got some new skills but I am sad that I lost my dad. I know he is proud of me.'

Hilal has recently completed the eight week course including a two week work trial at a major car company. He was offered a mechanics apprenticeship with them and has started immediately. At his graduation at HandbrakeTurn, he received the overall 'best workmanship award' and a set of tools to start him off.

Hilal is a courageous example to his younger siblings and all around him of what is possible. He works hard, wants to learn and honours the memory of his father in his life. 'I want to open up my own business one day, to have my own mechanics workshop'. Given his motivation and enthusiasm, Hilal has wonderful opportunities ahead of him.

Refugee Health Research Centre

The Refugee Health Research Centre (RHRC) is an innovative partnership between Foundation House and La Trobe University.

Established in 2003, the RHRC plays a key role in bringing together research and education with service delivery and community development. It is funded by Foundation House, LaTrobe University, a number of research project grants and funds from philanthropic trusts.

The RHRC promotes the health and well-being of refugee communities through applied and foundation research, teaching, continuing education and professional development.

Refugee Health Research Centre highlights this year include:

- The completion of the 5-year Good Starts Study for Refugee Youth. The study followed 120 newly arrived young people from refugee backgrounds to investigate social contexts and determinants that promote their mental and social wellbeing.
- The commencement of a longitudinal study of refugee men's health and resettlement (SettleMEN Project). Over a 2-year period, the study is investigating the health and settlement experiences of 242 recently arrived adult men from refugee backgrounds.
- A successful symposium held at La Trobe University entitled "Pathways to understanding: Somali community, family and youth in Australia".
- Screening throughout Melbourne of the film outcomes of the Good Starts Arts project. 'See through me' and

'Crazy', have explored the experiences of discrimination and identity among young people from a refugee background living in Melbourne.

- Continuation of a pre-evaluation study that aims to reach agreement about recovery outcomes for survivors of torture and trauma. This study is taking place through qualitative interviews with Foundation House clients and staff.
- Publication of the report "Refugee resettlement in regional and rural Victoria: Impacts and policy issues".
- Publication of the report "Promoting sexual health amongst resettled youth with refugee backgrounds", a study which focused on how young people from refugee backgrounds receive, interpret and implement sexual health information.

- The commencement of a new research project, "The relationship of family reunion to refugee resettlement and wellbeing". The study focuses on the impact of family reunion, or lack thereof, on the settlement and wellbeing of refugee communities in Victoria.
- Receipt of significant and ongoing funding support from the William Buckland Foundation and The Myer Foundation.

For further information on the Refugee Health Research Centre and any of these projects visit

www.latrobe.edu.au/rhrc

Complementary therapies

The Foundation House Complementary Therapies program of naturopathy, massage, shiatsu and physiotherapy combined with psychological, social and support services has created a unique and holistic range of support to aid recovery.

Programs of traditional medicine and complementary therapies have been embraced by clients from cultures in which traditional herbal remedies are widely used and often preferred over other approaches.

Complementary Therapies highlights this year include:

- Increased demand led to an expansion of the service provision of herbal medicine, nutritional medicine and massage with the

addition of naturopath & massage therapist Margy Carney to the team.

- Establishment of natural therapies services in two outposts—Women's Health East in Ringwood, and ISIS Primary Care—Hoppers Crossing.
- The facilitation of a Karen Women's group in Werribee focusing on the use of natural therapies to assist with managing symptoms such as headaches, sleep disturbances and body pain.
- The presentation of a seminar by Professor Gerry Bodeker from Oxford Medical School in the UK on the global use of traditional and complementary medicine.

Training and professional development

With over twenty years experience in service delivery to survivors of torture, the provision of training to individuals and organisations involved in supporting people from refugee backgrounds, is a vital focus of Foundation House.

Foundation House regularly holds training and information sessions for a range of professionals including health and welfare workers and teachers from both its Brunswick and Dandenong locations. Outreach and custom designed training is also available by arrangement. Modules and training sessions cover a wide range of topics, reflecting the emerging professional development needs and concerns of workers.

Training and professional development highlights this year include:

- The provision of training sessions/programs to over 6000 participants.
- The delivery of new “Follow-on Practice Seminars”—advanced training for those who have completed the “Course for Counsellors”.
- The development of a new “Course for Incidental Counsellors” with a specific child/youth focus.
- Certificate 4 Training & Assessment course completed by members of the Foundation House training team.

- A review (currently nearing completion) and expansion of the depth and content of training courses and new training delivery opportunities.



Kankelay Choir performed for participants at the 2008 “From Margins to Mainstream” Conference PHOTO: SNAPPY PICS

Victorian Refugee Health Network

The Victorian Refugee Health Network, now coordinated by Foundation House, was formed in 2007 to support health services to be more responsive to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in Victoria.

Around 3,600 new refugees and humanitarian entrants from many parts of the world come to Victoria each year, many of them settling in outer metropolitan and rural areas. It is important that they can readily access health services given the impact on their health and well-being of experiences of trauma, hardship and the many adjustments of resettlement. The network provides a forum for health services and practitioners to work collaboratively to address these needs. It brings together a wide range of representatives from the health, settlement and community sectors who actively participate in various projects and initiatives. This work builds on the many activities and programs around the state, past and current, to support refugee health and wellbeing.

VRHN highlights this year include:

- Establishment of the Reference Group and working groups on oral health, asylum seeker health, GP engagement, access to specialist care and mental health—almost 200 practitioners and services have been directly involved in these Network activities this year

- Development of a website which provides news and information on services, resources, research, links and training opportunities
- Facilitation of a forum for service providers in rural areas working with refugee clients
- Provision of support for the annual GP Refugee Health forum
- Staging a roundtable meeting on TB screening and services for refugees and humanitarian entrants

The network is looking forward to building and expanding its projects in 2009. To contact the Network or visit our website go to www.refugeehealthnetwork.org.au

Management and staff

Foundation House brings together an increasingly diverse management and staff team whose commitment to human rights and achievement of high quality levels of service to survivors is unparalleled.

FOUNDATION HOUSE AGENCY MANAGEMENT TEAM

- Paris Aristotle AM
- Chris Pierson
- Ida Kaplan
- Leslie Heath
- Lew Hess
- Mardi Stow
- Roslyn Leary
- Sandy Gifford
- Sue Casey

FOUNDATION HOUSE STAFF TEAMS

- Agency Operations
- Direct Services
- Early Intervention and Capacity
 - Building (North West)
- Generalist (North West)
- Health Sector Development Program
- Refugee Health Research Centre
- Service Innovation Program
- South East Regional

FOUNDATION HOUSE COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT



- Lynne Haultain (Chair)
- David Bilander (Deputy Chair)
- Kathleen Walsh (Deputy Chair)
- Genevieve Timmons (Secretary)
- Mick Kane (Treasurer and Public Officer)
- Dick Sloman
- Helen Casey
- Ian McKenzie
- Lenora Lippmann
- Michelle Groves
- Teresa Zolnierkiewicz
- Tim Barnett

A final word of thanks

So many individuals and organisations make contributions large and small to the work, service and achievements of Foundation House, and we don't know how we could ever accurately list them all. What we do know is that we couldn't do what we do without the generosity, commitment and collaboration of each and every one of you. Please accept our warm and sincere thanks for your support during the past year.

Thank You!

- Clients
- Staff
- Committee of Management members
- Members
- Patrons
- Ethics Committee Members
- Neighbours – The Bouverie Centre and Milparinka
- Government funding bodies
- Philanthropic trusts
- Private donors
- Corporate supporters
- Contractors and suppliers
- Volunteers
- Refugee, health, education and community sector colleagues
- Victorian Government
- Commonwealth Government
- Local Members of Parliament
- Media representatives

Financial reports

THE VICTORIAN FOUNDATION FOR SURVIVORS OF TORTURE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2008

	2008 \$	2007 \$
REVENUE		
Department of Health and Ageing	845,344	1,121,857
Federal Government – other	523,854	138,784
Department of Human Services (VIC)	1,742,431	1,613,112
Various trusts and funding sources	1,276,716	-
Non-recurrent grants	144,472	-
IHSS contract – DIAC	2,197,396	1,723,116
Consulting and training fees	29,827	24,537
Interest	69,466	65,693
Membership subscriptions	5,361	5,436
Donations	100,190	99,271
Publications	6,445	515
Profit/(loss) on sale of assets	(19,590)	(25,429)
Reimbursement, national forum and other income	343,130	393,858
Total revenue	7,265,042	6,077,287
EXPENDITURE		
Salaries, wages and on-costs	(4,925,929)	(4,008,206)
National forum	(14,245)	(11,394)
Annual general meeting	(25,806)	(25,399)
Bank and credit card charges	(1,658)	(2,111)
Building and occupancy costs	(169,990)	(174,461)
Equipment, computing/IT and furniture supplies and depreciation	(120,956)	(96,524)
Conferences, seminars, publications and professional development	(54,797)	(16,657)
Interpreting costs	(435,954)	(333,126)
Program, consultant, contractor and client costs	(583,738)	(765,411)
Advertising, volunteer, agency and committee expenses	(40,259)	(42,656)
Motor vehicle expenses and depreciation	(372,476)	(263,396)
Client travel expenses	(46,514)	(39,996)
Printing, stationary and postage	(90,770)	(56,209)
Telephone expenses	(88,450)	(78,213)
Audit fees	(14,186)	(8,200)
Total expenditure	(6,985,728)	(5,921,959)
Operating profit/(loss)	279,314	155,328

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2008

	2008 \$	2007 \$
RETAINED EARNINGS		
Opening balance	664,403	509,075
Surplus for the period	279,314	155,328
Closing Balance	943,717	664,403

THE VICTORIAN FOUNDATION FOR SURVIVORS OF TORTURE BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 2008

	2008 \$	2007 \$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,721,618	1,165,412
Term deposit	25,000	25,000
Trade and other receivables	583,523	275,387
Total current assets	2,330,141	1,465,799
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	1,294,472	655,925
Total non-current assets	1,294,472	655,925
TOTAL ASSETS	3,624,613	2,121,724
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	736,803	535,257
Borrowings	67,719	—
Deferred income	950,170	298,769
Provisions	350,872	359,389
Total current liabilities	2,105,564	1,193,415
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Borrowings	280,939	—
Provisions	294,393	263,906
Total non-current liabilities	575,332	263,906
TOTAL LIABILITIES	2,680,896	1,457,321
NET ASSETS		
	943,717	664,403
EQUITY		
Retained earnings	943,717	664,403
TOTAL EQUITY	943,717	664,403

Full copies of the audited accounts are available on request.
The notes form part of these financial statements.

STATEMENT BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

In the opinion of the committee the financial report:

1. Presents a true and fair view of the financial position of The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture as at 30 June 2008 and its performance for the financial year ended on that date in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements and other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Accounting Standards Board.
2. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture 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:



David Bilander
Deputy Chairperson
21 October 2008

Michael Kane
Treasurer



Chartered Accountants
& Business Advisers

**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE VICTORIAN FOUNDATION FOR
SURVIVORS OF TORTURE**

We have audited the accompanying financial report of The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, which comprises the balance sheet as at 30 June 2008 and the income statement, statement of changes in equity, and cash flow statement for the year ended on that date, a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes and the Statement by Members of the Committee.

The Responsibility of the Members of the Committee for the Financial Report

The members of the committee are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards (including the Australian Accounting Interpretations) and the Associations Incorporation Act 1981. This responsibility includes establishing and maintaining internal controls 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. We conducted 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 the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgement, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk 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 members of the committee, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

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 followed applicable independence requirements of Australian professional ethical pronouncements.

Audit Opinion

The financial report of The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, is in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Act 1981 including:

- (i) giving a true and fair view of the entity's financial position as at 30 June 2008 and of its performance and cash flows for the year ended on that date; and
- (ii) complying with Australian Accounting Standards and the Associations Incorporation Act 1981.

PKF
East Coast Practice

28 October 2008
Melbourne

J A Mooney

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