



Foundation House

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc.



Advancing the health, wellbeing and human rights of people of refugee backgrounds who have experienced torture or other traumatic events

ABOUT US

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, also known as Foundation House, was established as a small agency at a single site in 1987. Today we work throughout Victoria and have offices in Brunswick, Dallas, Dandenong, Ringwood and Sunshine. We also provide services in partnership with other agencies in Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Mildura, Shepparton, Swan Hill and the Latrobe Valley.



WE

- › Provide services to clients across the lifespan, including children and adolescents who are survivors of torture or other traumatic events, in the form of counselling, advocacy, family support, group work, psycho-education and complementary therapies
- › Work with client communities to improve their capacity to access services and to enable them to support recovery
- › Offer professional and organisational development, consultancy and resources to assist health, education, employment and other community service providers, to enhance the responsiveness of their services for people of refugee backgrounds
- › Work with the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments to ensure that policies and programs are responsive to the needs of people of refugee backgrounds
- › Conduct and contribute to research about people of refugee backgrounds.

Foundation House is funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments, philanthropic organisations and donations from private individuals. It is constituted as a not-for-profit, charitable organisation managed by an elected Board of Management.

“I had so many different feelings when I came to Australia. I came from conflict and I was so confused and sad. Even though I had to leave my home, I didn't know how I could live here.....I couldn't imagine it. Foundation House opened the door to a new life for my husband and me.”

Foundation House client



OUR CLIENTS

Our clients are people living in Victoria from refugee backgrounds who have experienced torture or other traumatic events. Our clients have had to leave their home countries and are unable to return because they were (or were at risk of) being seriously harmed through persecution or other gross human rights violations.

The lives of refugees are characterised by extensive exposure to traumatic experiences such as physical and mental torture, arbitrary arrest and imprisonment without charge, and direct experience of or witnessing violence inflicted on individuals, groups or communities. Children as well as adults may be intentionally targeted or suffer because their parents or other adult carers have been killed or abducted or families have become separated when fleeing danger.

Refugees commonly spend protracted periods of displacement in countries adjacent to those from which they fled. Displaced populations are often deprived of adequate food, shelter, access to health services, education and basic security. Women and girls, especially if they are unaccompanied by an adult male, are at particular risk of sexual and gender based violence.

The effects of pre-arrival experiences may persist long after arrival in a safe country, Psychological symptoms and disorders can interfere with meeting the challenges and demands of settlement such as

learning English, finding employment, participating in education and forming supportive relationships with other people in the community. As well as affecting individual survivors, the refugee experience can undermine cohesion and supportive relationships within families and communities.

In recent years, Foundation House has assisted thousands of clients annually, originating from more than 50 countries, with the largest groups coming from Iraq, Afghanistan, Burma (Myanmar), Ethiopia, Sudan and Iran.

“I was taken prisoner by the militia. I was tortured and imprisoned for almost 2 years. I watched my friends be tortured too. I will never forget the beatings, the death, the sleep they withheld from me and the never ending hunger. Every day I remember those times and am grateful that I survived.”

Foundation House client

PATRON IN CHIEF

Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AM
Governor of Victoria

PATRONS

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- Ms Dur-é Dara OAM
- Professor David de Kretser AC
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DONATIONS

To donate to support the work of Foundation House please visit www.foundationhouse.org.au or phone 03 9388 0022. The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc. is a registered charity (Public Benevolent Institution) and is endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient. All donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

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