

Foundation

Courage

Trust

Listen

Respect Nourish

Relationship Hope

Future Celebrate

Milestones

Thanks

More Than Just Words

The 20th Anniversary
of the Victorian Foundation
for Survivors of Torture



Foundation
House

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture

More Than Just Words

The 20th Anniversary
of the Victorian Foundation
for Survivors of Torture
(Foundation House)

2007

Contents

4	The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture: Specialised services for refugees
6	Patrons of The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture 1987–2007
8	Introduction
10	Acknowledgements
13	Foundation
19	Courage
25	Trust
29	Listen
33	Respect
37	Nourish
41	Relationship
45	Hope
49	Future
53	Celebrate
61	Milestones
71	Thanks

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture: 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 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** through a partnership with **LaTrobe University's Refugee Health Research Centre**, 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 and in rural and regional areas of Victoria.

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Patrons of The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture 1987–2007

The late Mr Ron Castan AM QC

Emeritus Prof. Max Charlesworth AO

Prof. Hilary Charlesworth AM (from 2007)

Ms Dur-é Dara OAM

Prof. David de Kretser, AC, Governor of Victoria, and Mrs Jan de Kretser (Patrons-in-chief from 2007)

Mr Andrew Demetriou

Hon. Mr Justice Marcus Einfeld AC CMG (to 2007)

Hon. Mr Justice Michael Kirby AC CMG

The late Honourable Dame Roma Mitchell, AC, DBE, CVO, QC

Prof. David Penington AC

Prof. Beverley Raphael AM (to 2007)

Mr David Scott AO



Word

(*n*) any sound or combination of sounds, or printed symbol, forming a meaningful element of speech, conveying an idea



Introduction

“WE STARTED with one house and a pile of dreams. There was an incredible and sometimes naïve belief in what we were going to accomplish. We started off thinking that if we could get 8 to 10 staff, things would be great. When you look back over 20 years and trace how we have grown from 1 to 10, to 24, to 50 and now to over 100 staff, and think about the scope of our work, the Foundation is always changing – for the better.” — PARIS ARISTOTLE, DIRECTOR, VICTORIAN FOUNDATION FOR SURVIVORS OF TORTURE)

The 20th Anniversary of the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Foundation House) is a significant milestone. To commemorate this milestone the Foundation decided to create a publication that would document something of the history and the work of the organisation, through the stories of clients, staff, Committee of Management Members, Patrons, supporters and friends.

The first stage of this process involved a series of twelve interviews that took place in August 2007. People were asked to describe their impressions and memories of the organisation. With permission these conversations were recorded and then transcribed.

Clients told stories of their arrival in Australia, the memories they carried with them and the sheer relief they experienced in finding much needed support through Foundation House. Committee members, staff and supporters described their involvement in, and history with the organisation. Many spoke of the humbling impact that Foundation House had had on their lives. All of them described the sense of community and purpose it had engendered.

During these interviews people said that putting their thoughts and feelings about Foundation House into words was no easy task. Conversations were peppered with phrases like, ‘words don’t really do it justice,’ ‘I’m not sure if I have the right words,’ or ‘it’s hard to put it into words.’ Yet, each and every one of these conversations contained a rich collection of very powerful and poignant words. Words like respect, courage, hope and trust emerged again and again creating a ‘word perfect’ picture of a much loved and highly respected organisation.

A small selection of these words constitutes the framework for this publication. Each word marks the beginning of a section of stories, with each story aiming to reflect the meaning and poignancy contained in the word. *Foundation* tells stories about the birth of the organisation, *Courage* reveals stories of bravery and resilience, *Listen* pays tribute to the importance of truly hearing the stories told, while *Relationship* describes the friendships and close bonds that have formed along the way. Stories from clients sit alongside stories from staff, Committee Members and friends. Together they tell the larger story of Foundation House.

But as the title suggests, they are more than just words. This selection of words provide their own simple narrative, their own story, from the laying of the foundation of the organisation, to the hope that is generated through people meeting people and seeing new possibilities and a means to move forward.

As a means to mark and commemorate this 20th anniversary, a number of Patrons, supporters and staff were also asked to 'write a few words' as to their thoughts and feelings about Foundation House. These reflections have been assembled under the word *Celebrate*.

Throughout its 20 year history, Foundation House has grown substantially and has made invaluable contributions to this field of work. Key achievements have been summarised in a timeline, entitled *Milestones*. This timeline attempts to provide a broad picture of the range of activities undertaken over this 20 year period.

Finally, MORE THAN JUST WORDS, aims to 'put into words' the story of an inspirational organisation created by dedicated people. It is a story about the power and strength of the human spirit and what can be achieved within an atmosphere of love and grace. It is a story for our times.

Acknowledgements

The following people agreed to be interviewed, willingly sharing their time and their stories, in order to make the creation of MORE THAN JUST WORDS possible.

Paris Aristotle AM – Director, Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, a position he has held since the organisation's establishment.

Rana (not his real name) – Client from Sri Lanka who has recently been granted permanent residency.

William – Client from Burundi, singer, songwriter and musician.

Lynne Haultain – Chair, Committee of Management since 2000, Committee Member since 1997.

Genevieve Timmons – Secretary, Committee of Management, Committee Member since 2000.

Sundes – Client from Iraq, now working as a settlement officer.

Susan Brennan – Barrister, Member and donor.

Mary – Client from Iran, involved with Foundation House since 2001.

John Gibson – Founding Chair, Committee of Management, current President of the Refugee Council of Australia.

Faye and Keith West – Members and supporters.

Ida Kaplan – Direct Services Manager, Foundation House.

Najewa and Hindawi – Clients from Sudan, involved with Foundation House since 2001.

Thanks also go to the following Patrons, supporters and staff who offered thoughts and reflections in celebration of Foundation House and its 20th Anniversary.

Hon. Mr Justice Michael Kirby AC CMG

Mr Lindsay Tanner MP, Shadow Minister for Finance, Federal Member for Melbourne

The Hon Bronwyn Pike MLA, State Member for Melbourne, Minister for Education

The Hon Philip Ruddock, Attorney General

Professor David Penington AC

Professor David de Kretser, AC, Governor of Victoria

Mr Andrew Demetriou, CEO, Australian Football League

Ms Caroline Hogg, Former Victorian Health Minister

Mr Tony Burke MP, Shadow Minister for Immigration, Integration and Citizenship
Mr Carlo Carli MLA, State Member for Brunswick
Emeritus Professor Max Charlesworth AO
Mr David Scott AO
Professor Hilary Charlesworth AM
Ms Dur-é Dara OAM
Ms Cora Torre Franca, Human Resource & Administration Coordinator, Foundation House
Mr Conrad Aikin, Counsellor Advocate, Foundation House
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Mr David Manne, Coordinator/Principal Solicitor, Refugee & Immigration Legal Centre Inc.

MORE THAN JUST WORDS Project Team

Tricia Bowen – Interviews, concept development, writing
Susanne West – Project co-ordination and editing
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Paris Aristotle – Research and writing 'Milestones'
Ian McKenzie – Photography
Mark Carter/markmaking – Design
Braemar Graphic Reproductions – Printing

Foundation (*n*) solid ground or base, body or ground on which parts are overlaid, basis or underlying principle



THE FOUNDATION stops people from drowning. They pull people up from drowning in deep water. My situation was taking me down. They stopped me. If people who are in these difficult situations can contact Foundation House immediately they can be saved from that drowning. — RANA

IT WAS DECEMBER 1986 when that first meeting happened. One of the constant themes in my 20's and 30's was to try and get involved in causes related to human rights and torture and trauma and the legal and psychological aspects of that. It was a very interesting group in attendance. We had doctors, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists and administrators. After the speakers had done the lead up, describing the need for a service for survivors of torture and trauma, we were asked to indicate our willingness to be involved, as a steering committee. There were about 15 of us there and we all stood up. — JOHN GIBSON

FOUNDATION HOUSE helped me build a foundation for my family. They supported me, as a person without any family here, just two daughters who depended on me. The people I saw were so encouraging. — SUNDES

WE KNEW we would have to look to the government for funding but we didn't want to be part of a government department. We wanted to maintain our independence. We were given a \$17 000 grant from the Myer Foundation, which was quite a lot of money in those days, and that enabled us to employ Paris. — JOHN GIBSON

THE POSITION was advertised in *The Age*. The job had a strong human rights flavour to it. There was also a practical local refugee agenda to it that appealed to me. They only had funding for six months to get set up and I'd had a bit of luck setting up different organisations. I'd been managing community centres in Kensington for years and working at the Kensington Community School but I was tired and about to resign and take the big trip overseas. I went on a holiday to the Whitsundays and took an autobiography with me by a Guatemalan woman and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Rigoberta Menchu. It was the story of her struggle and her family's struggle in Guatemala. I remember trembling when I was reading that book. It made me think, it's only six months, I could help them get set up and then go on my trip. I just thought it would be a good thing to do. — PARIS ARISTOTLE

Foundation



JOHN GIBSON

on

I WORKED at the Reichstein Foundation for 12 years so Foundation House was part of my early history. My first week at Reichstein included a move to new premises. My very first meeting was with Paris Aristotle. This was in 1988. We had most of our stuff still in boxes, new furniture still in plastic bags. At that stage Foundation House had funding from the Myer Foundation for one half time person for six months. That was Paris. When he came I remember we actually sat on boxes. But when I listened to what he was talking about, it was a kernel, it was a dream. He was saying that if we could get funding to show the government of Victoria how best to work with people that had suffered trauma and torture we would end up with something significantly different as a service. — GENEVIEVE TIMMONS

THE FIRST PERSON I worked with was a Latin American woman who had been living in Europe with one of her sons. She had another son here. Back in her country her home had been raided by the military. They were looking for her son who had been involved in the trade union movement. At the time she was at home with her husband and her daughter. They shot her husband and knocked her unconscious. She described waking up and reaching for her daughter who was slumped against the fridge. She reached for her, telling her that they had killed her father. Her daughter slid into her arms and she realised she had also been killed. It was this encounter that shaped my view that by hook or by crook we were going to have to get this thing set up. — PARIS ARISTOTLE

I REMEMBER PARIS described people coming from other countries, suffering torture and trauma, not trusting government officials. They did not expect that police would look after them. They didn't expect that health officials would necessarily be there for their care because often they had been tortured by these people or betrayed by them. Paris put this all out on the table for me and explained it in such simple terms. I thought, how could we not fund this?
— GENEVIEVE TIMMONS

IT WAS VERY INTERESTING working out what we were going to call ourselves. There was an initial debate, which was the distinction between victims and survivors. Very early on we thought that this was to be a very positive experience, people were to be helped, to be healed and I use that term in its broadest sense, to move forward. That's why the name is so important. It is dealing with refugees and asylum seekers who have been tortured and traumatised severely and it has kept to that. — JOHN GIBSON

WE OVERCAME the tension between the idea of establishing a medically oriented model or a community development model. It was an important issue because in other parts of the world services had split along these lines. I desperately didn't want that to happen. My view was that we operate within the community development framework but within that framework it was the clients' needs that would determine what we delivered. If they needed medical and specialist services, then our obligation was to get the best care available for them. If they needed social workers, masseurs, psychiatrists, we had an obligation to provide the best of these services also. We made a decision about our model that kept the clients at the core. We didn't pay lip service to that. — PARIS ARISTOTLE

I'D ALWAYS SAY, 'we need everybody working together,' and that ultimately was our great strength. The different streams of people, different backgrounds, different disciplines and the great strength of it demonstrated over the past 20 years, starting from that background, is that we have maintained that—this extraordinary holistic approach, medicine, natural therapies, counselling, psychiatric treatment, mainstream medical services. It's what makes it unique. — JOHN GIBSON

FROM THE BEGINNING it has been described as holistic, taking into account people's physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing. It was extraordinary that at the time people had that vision. — LYNNE HAULTAIN

WE WOULD ASK ourselves, do we have a reason to exist and how would potential clients find us? We thought about that. But essentially the word spread, people were working in different areas, with different communities, from all that it spread out, people started coming, different waves of refugees. For 20 years the Foundation has been people, not the property. Our first Christmas party and AGM was a ripper. We had about 50 people there who were part of the initial group and one of the features ever since is that people believe they belong to the place. — JOHN GIBSON

FOUNDATION HOUSE will welcome you and try to help you. Foundation House is like a mother that feeds her baby and watches it grow up to become one of the members of this society and contribute to different things in Australia.

— NAJEWA

IT IS DIFFICULT to fully describe Quentin Buckle's contribution to the creation and development of the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST). What began as a seed of hope amongst a group of committed community groups, professionals and human rights activists, has grown into a flourishing and innovative service for thousands of people who have survived the horrors of torture and persecution. Quentin's passion to shape the service into one that had the courage to sit with the pain and anguish that survivors feel and to help them rebuild their shattered lives is borne out in the actual stories of rebuilding. He advocated that we build a service holistic in its approach, grounded in the community and committed to valuing the cultural diversity of the people with whom we work. Our good fortune is not that Quentin crossed our path but that we managed to lay the path together. Quentin was a founding member of the VFST, a Committee of Management member from 1988 to 2001 and was awarded life membership in December 2001. He passed away in February 2003. — PARIS ARISTOTLE

Courage

(*n*) bravery, courage of one's convictions, courage to act up to what one believes

IN MY COUNTRY you could not say what you wanted to say. That was my life. I told myself I should do something. I should take some kind of action. I told myself I should do something, for myself and my son, because I was deprived of so many things. I didn't want this disaster to happen to my son. I came here and saw other problems. But I didn't stop. I experienced a lot of loneliness. But I was talking to God and I was thinking I should tolerate this for the sake of my son. — MARY

MY MOTHER is in Denmark with my sister. My brother is in Canada. We are all scattered. People flee from the North East of Sri Lanka because there is so much pressure and danger. I have been here in Australia for seven years. I have felt isolated for all these years. Sometimes it felt like a punishment. I didn't expect to face these difficulties. I imagined that my children could study happily, that I could live peacefully and apply for protection. But it has been a huge, long struggle. — RANA

I DIDN'T PICK this country as such. A smuggler brought me here. He only took me to places at night so that he could transfer me safely. Then he said you are going to Australia. I said there is no difference for me. He took me to Perth then I went to detention. I didn't know what would happen to me. I was always frightened. But I would always have hope that at least this was a good country. It's not that I wanted to be unlawful. I just wanted to live my own life. Here I can go to church and no one is asking me why. — MARY

IF SRI LANKA was a peaceful country I would not be sitting here now. The situation made me do the things I did. Every day your family life is in danger. Everywhere there are checkpoints, so many checkpoints. How they treat people. The humiliation. They ask vulgar, rude questions. Even young girls, your sister, your friend, someone, they strip search. All soldiers, male soldiers, you feel like your blood is boiling. But you can't do anything. You can't even change the expression on your face. If you change your face, that is it, they will take you away. It is a very dangerous place. Every day there are killings. — RANA

I ARRIVED ALONE, just me and my daughters. I had no family members. No friends. No one. I knew no one. It was so hard for me. — SUNDES

Courage



MARY

IN A DESPERATE SITUATION you will find something in you, when there is no other way. It will push you to move. When I arrived here I had to find a place to live. I found the very cheapest available at the time, just so there was somewhere to put my bags. Slowly I started from there. I had no vehicle or car. So I found one old Melways at the temple and I located the schools. I didn't even know how to look in the Melways. Somehow I worked it out. I found my local area and found two or three schools that were in the area. The schools had reservations about my children because I didn't have a visa. They said I had to wait for three months. I wrote to the Department but I didn't hear anything from them. For three months my children were sitting at home. So I found old story books for one dollar and that is how I kept them learning. — RANA

THE CLIENTS DEMONSTRATE what is possible in the human spirit. And that's not to romanticise it because I know it is full of terrible things that they have to deal with but to get up in the morning, get out that door and still be there for their kids, or to know how to come for help, or to be willing to struggle again and again, that is amazing.

— GENEVIEVE TIMMONS

YOU MEET HUMBLE, beautiful people who had been through things that I simply can't imagine surviving, trying to make a fist of things, find a new way to build a new life in a country where they might feel safe. Those very early groups of clients shaped my perspective. There was a couple I worked with, they had been targeted by rebel groups, not the government. They were seen as collaborating but I don't think there was any collaboration. They dragged them out of their house and set their house on fire. Their two year old son was still inside. It's interesting the little things that torturers do. They held them apart so they couldn't console each other as it was happening. It was like they had thought through to the last little detail how to make this as horrific as possible. I'll never forget her words. She looked up at me, her eyes brimming with tears and said, 'I can still hear him crying. He cried all the way to the end.'

— PARIS ARISTOTLE



PARIS ARISTOTLE

WHEN I ARRIVED in Jordan people would say to me Australia is too difficult to get to. But after three years of suffering I went to the Australian Embassy. I didn't even know how to get there. I took a bus. I met a family, also from Iraq, and asked them where is the Australian Embassy. They told me they were walking there. They asked me if I had a proposal to go there. I said no. They asked if I had a qualification as a skilled person. I said no. They said you may as well go back because they will not call you. But I put myself in God's eyes. I asked a person at the counter if I could apply to be a refugee. She gave me the forms. They asked me personal things. I didn't want anyone to hear about anything that happened to me in Iraq. I wrote my story myself and I went to the translating office and they translated it for me. I remember there was a man there who said he would write me a story. I will write anything, he said. But I said no, this is my story. I put everything in there. After only two or three weeks they called me for an interview. I went for the interview and I remember I was crying because I was thinking about all those things that had happened when I was telling my story. Then she said, we accept you. I just cried. I couldn't believe it. She said go and tell your daughters. Believe me, it was like a dream. — SUNDES

THE REFUGEE CAMP? Your roof is made of coconut leaves tied together. The ground is just sea sand. No beds, just leaves. It's not planned or anything. It is just haphazard. There is a pump for drinking water. Maybe for 500 people there are five toilets. At the time I was there, there were probably 1000 people, maybe many more. It is difficult to know because you can't see. People stay there for 10 or 15 years. There would be some that stay there indefinitely. When it rains it is terrible. The rain comes in. There are no windows to close. But as days pass people invent their own systems to survive. They bring posts or planks or tin. They do their own renovations. — RANA

IF YOU WORK in human rights in Sudan, you live in fear all the time, all the time. That is no way to live. — NAJEWAWA

Trust



(n) firm belief in the reliability, truth or strength of a person, confident expectation, obligation or responsibility

THE GREAT STRENGTH of the Foundation was that we were always somewhere safe and the clients felt it was their place. It is a haven. It is something solid, that's there, that people can go to. — JOHN GIBSON

IN MY COUNTRY you couldn't say anything against the government. You have to be for them. If you are against them they will catch you. Trusting people is very difficult. I had a problem with my close friend, my very close friend. I was talking with him about these things, then after coming from his house I was arrested. I was in jail for three weeks. When I was released my brother-in-law told me it was my friend who had me arrested. So I had to say to him, 'I can't continue my relationship with you.' We were such close friends. We did everything together. You always saw us together. It is a very successful way to break up relationships between people. People in my country are very poor. The government gives them money. Trust becomes difficult, very difficult. — HINDAWI

OUR BUREAUCRACY, our explaining of confidentiality doesn't really mean anything to people who come from places where confidentiality has never operated and where the system is often the perpetrator, or the system changes so quickly that it may be your friend who then becomes your enemy. — IDA KAPLAN

IT TAKES TIME you know. Even my muscles, the physical therapist told me have been tight for 20 years. They will not relax overnight. Being with the psychiatrist, being like a friend with her helped me to look at the positive sides of my life. When I first arrived I could see everything was very nice but there was something sad deep inside me. I could not enjoy it. I knew being here was a dream but I could not feel it. I could not enjoy it. Now with the help of the therapists and psychiatrists I have passed through this time. — SUNDES

I HAD COME from a country with a different language, different people and a different culture. There were lots of differences. We had so many troubles in our country and then in Egypt. We suffered there too. When we came here we were very scared. But when someone from Foundation House visited us we felt peace. It helped us to feel settled.
— NAJAWA

Trust



NAJWA

FOR ME, Australia was all the good things. It was secure. Safety and peace were here. I could be myself. You could have your own ideas. Before I could not. Here I could do anything but the most important thing was the safety and the security I felt. I was looking for that and I found it here. — SUNDES

ONE OF THE THINGS we were very conscious of in the early days was the need to protect clients in terms of their privacy. We were working with clients coming from countries run by awful regimes. There was the idea of having secure places to lock things away, personal documents and the like, and not disclosing information unnecessarily. That was an important part of our initial plan. — JOHN GIBSON

YOU KNOW here in Australia, you can say your opinion about the government if you don't like them. Recently I saw a man on television. The Prime Minister wanted to shake his hand and this man said, 'I don't want to shake your hand.' That is not possible in my country. You can't write what you want about the government. You can't say what you want. If you do say, 'I don't like this government,' you are arrested. Nobody will know where you are. You just disappear. People need to feel safe. People need to feel they can trust others. — NAJEWA

MY FIRST WORK at the Foundation was with asylum seekers. It was very important that they had an opportunity to talk about what had happened to them in a situation that wasn't feeling like interrogation, for example the Immigration Department or the Refugee Review Tribunal, because there their story is being scrutinised for the truth, people can experience it as quite an assault on their dignity. They experience an attitude of not being believed. I became very motivated to work in a situation where people could talk about what had happened to them and they would experience some sense of trust and certainly a preparedness to believe their stories. — IDA KAPLAN

OVER THE YEARS we have been incredibly lucky to have had the support of a wide range of philanthropic trusts and foundations. Wherever we have wanted to be innovative and pilot something new, they have always been a principle source of support. In return, we have always tried to honour the faith and trust they have shown in us by delivering the best possible outcomes we're capable of achieving. — PARIS ARISTOTLE

WHEN I ARRIVED here I was safe. You know I loved Australia before I arrived. I had some general ideas about it. I knew I needed a place that meant peace for me. That was the most important thing. — SUNDES

Listen

(*v*) make effort to hear something,
hear with attention the person
speaking

OUR CLIENTS and our staff need to know the door is always open and there is always someone there to listen and then to act. — LYNNE HAULTAIN

WHEN YOU FIND the people, you get the support. You go to the people to explain what you want. You've got a problem? Just come here and explain how you are feeling. They will listen to you. — WILLIAM

I THINK THE VOICES of people themselves are very important and alongside that you have to recognise that some things are not spoken because they are unspeakable or because people don't want to talk. It is about being able to anticipate what people need through an understanding of what they have been through and what arriving here means, and then being a voice for them at times but also knowing how to facilitate them expressing themselves.

— IDA KAPLAN

THE FIRST TIME I came to Foundation House there was a gentleman who gave me some explanations of what Foundation House did. The help that he offered me was to listen to whatever I wanted to describe. — MARY

IT'S ABOUT UNDERSTANDING cross-cultural differences, not in a simplistic way, difference is very complex, as it is in any culture as well. Everyone we see is a survivor of torture and traumatic circumstances. Everyone is facing a cross-cultural encounter and everyone faces the challenges of settlement. That is a very rich combination of things and our principle is to consider all of those things and to be able to listen well and generate solutions, but without that comprehensive understanding you don't know what you are listening to. — IDA KAPLAN

JUST BY LISTENING to me they did me such a big favour. Just to listen is so important. They helped me to look at the positive, not the past or what had happened to me. — SUNDES

TO HEAL, you have to be able to talk about it, even if it takes months or years. The people who are there to listen are our staff. I realise there is this deep respect and commitment for the client and the staff are willing to absorb what it is that the client has to let go of. The staff need their own counselling and their own debriefing to actually stop carrying it as well. But their willingness to be there for the long haul and to stay; when I became a Board Member I came to understand how incredible that is. — GENEVIEVE TIMMONS

Listen



IDA KAPLAN

WHEN I ARRIVED in Australia I was just so fearful. I saw people on the road. I felt different, alien to them. Frankly, I think I was in shock. How am I going to live my life here? My children and my wife depended on me so I was the one facing these things, carrying them. When I was experiencing a very desperate situation in Australia, Foundation House helped me to overcome it. They also helped me with health issues. Every week I came here. I found such good advisers. I described my daily pattern and they could give such good guidance. They helped me with my struggle. I am so fortunate to be in contact with them. Otherwise I would be someone with no direction in a disastrous situation. — RANA

AFTER THE ARRIVAL of the Kosovars in Australia I remember going to Portsea one weekend and meeting some of the people who had arrived. The Government had geared up Army bases for them and I had lunch with one Kosovar family in this huge dining hall. The mother was a nurse and the father was a mechanic and they had two young boys. I was talking to the mother, who had great English, and she was devastated that she could not cook for her boys. You may remember there was some negative publicity at the time about what kind of food was available. There was a backlash from some, suggesting that we'd brought them here, we're feeding them, why are they complaining. But I listened to this mother who was watching her children still losing weight even though they were in a safe place, but completely displaced from everything they had ever known, and her boys were getting thinner and thinner by the day. They didn't like the food on offer and she couldn't persuade them to eat it and she couldn't cook for them herself. It was awful to think how difficult that would be for her. — LYNNE HAULTAIN

I HAD SO MANY different feelings when I came here. I came from conflict and I was confused with all that background. I didn't know how I could live here. I couldn't imagine it. Foundation House opened the door for my husband and me. The people in Foundation House are like angels. I worked with so many different people at Foundation House and all of them are very good. Those people are always with me. — NAJEWAWA

YOU NEED PEOPLE who you talk to. You have so many things inside you that need to come out. When you come from a conflicted area you need to talk to another person who will listen and understand. You just need to get it out.

— HINDAWI

Respect (v) pay heed to, regard with
deference, esteem, honour

WHAT I SEE Foundation House doing is all about respect for the dignity and rights of every person. There is so much rhetoric about that in the human rights sector but that's exactly what they do. — SUSAN BRENNAN

AS SOON AS I ARRIVED I was treated as any citizen who has been here for 20 years. From that first day I was treated that way. I was treated as a human being. I had lost that before. — SUNDES

THERE IS DEEP RESPECT for people. Quick fixes don't have much of a place. Lots of conversations and dialogues after you have proven your credentials mark the beginning of the process and out of that you can share knowledge and deepen your understanding. — IDA KAPLAN

IT'S ABOUT EVERYONE deserving a level of safety, compassion and respect. That is at the centre of the work.
— LYNNE HAULTAIN

FOUNDATION HOUSE is successful because of the vision that they have and the way they choose to work with people is so distinctive. It's a sense of connection and compassion, a deep ethical response to people's circumstances, something that considers the whole person, not just finding them shelter or finding their kids the appropriate school to go to, it's about sustaining their emotional, physical and spiritual self as well. Given what we know of the many kinds of experiences that many refugees have, I think all of that is an incredibly important part of welcoming and what we do in Australia. — SUSAN BRENNAN

WE RECOGNISED EARLY on that the work was really harrowing, so we introduced fortnightly debriefing for all the direct service staff and whoever wanted it. We were able to make those decisions that on one level made it a more expensive service but it was the only way to look after our staff, to make sure the quality of the work they were delivering was not being diminished because of how the content of the work was affecting them. Support for staff meant an ability to deliver services at a consistently high level. — PARIS ARISTOTLE

Respect



SUSAN BRENNAN

ONE GREAT STRENGTH of the Foundation has been its ability to sensitise mainstream services. That basically meant getting a group of medical practitioners, dentists and others who were prepared to work, unfunded, half funded, to provide services that would be sensitive and respectful to the needs of torture survivors. It was like dropping a pebble into the water. It all expanded. — JOHN GIBSON

PEOPLE COME TO WORK with a commitment to being here and supporting each other. You are surrounded by really good people. Anyone in this organisation could walk out and get paid more somewhere else but they don't. We have a very, very small staff turnover. It says so much about who they are and how they see their place in the world.

— PARIS ARISTOTLE

FROM THE VERY BOTTOM of my heart I want to thank Foundation House for the support they have given me to bring my son, my husband, my family here. However I could thank them, it wouldn't be enough. — MARY

ONCE YOU START meeting clients the work is completely compelling. Their extraordinary resilience and what they have to teach us about the capacity of humanity to deal with horror and come through the other side and create a new life is amazing. Once you know that, how can you not help? How can you not contribute to something that allows that process to be easier? — LYNNE HAULTAIN

PEOPLE WORKING HERE have common goals and common aims. It's a community of people gathered together, paid or voluntary, with those aims. It's a culture of support. That's what you see all the time. Clients are looking for an environment of support and friendship. If they can see a smiling face here it makes all the difference. — KEITH WEST

Nourish

(*n*) sustain with food,
foster or cherish,
nourishment (*n*) sustenance

WITH ALL THE CLIENTS and the cultures we work with, food is a way of celebrating. It's about caring for one another. It's pivotal. It has become an intrinsic way of how to interact and engage. It's how we are as human beings, it doesn't have to be verbal and everyone can contribute in some way, shape or form. That's just a part of saying this is who we are and this is what we do. When you think about the nutritional sustenance you get from food, there's a direct parallel with the emotional sustenance you get from relating that way. It can help to counter the difficulties.

— PARIS ARISTOTLE

THE FIRST TIME I came here I was thinking if there was no such office as this what would happen to me? This is what I thought. If it didn't exist, what would happen to me? — MARY

HOW DO I EXPLAIN? Foundation House is a place for all of us, refugees, people from Africa, Asia, people from all over the world. Foundation House deals with these people because they have all asked for opportunity. — WILLIAM

WHEN I WAS in a very difficult time I attended counselling. They taught me about reducing my stress. They showed me exercises and techniques. They taught me how to follow certain procedures. That made me keep going, even with the heaviest stress. I was able to manage. Otherwise I don't know, I think maybe sometimes I would have gone mad.

— RANA

I THINK WE ARE probably the only government funded agency in the country that has a natural therapy program as part of its service. Also we employed people as counsellor advocates even though the award structure was there to employ social workers or psychologists. We thought the job was about responding to a person's needs whatever they were. — PARIS ARISTOTLE

WHEN THEY CAME to us and said we have a team of naturopaths to provide massage, aromatherapy, I loved the fact that they could link so positively to holistic natural therapies. — GENEVIEVE TIMMONS

Nourish



LYNNE
HAULTAIN

PEOPLE UNDERSTAND natural medicine. Also, something like massage reintroduces people to trusting a gentle human touch. Sometimes clients express the most enormous grief in ways that from the outside you may not expect. Massage is one of those ways. — LYNNE HAULTAIN

IT'S NOT JUST MASSAGE, they also listen to me, they take care of me, as a person, as a human being. They explain my body to me. They give me medical advice. When I don't understand things I can ask people here. — SUNDES

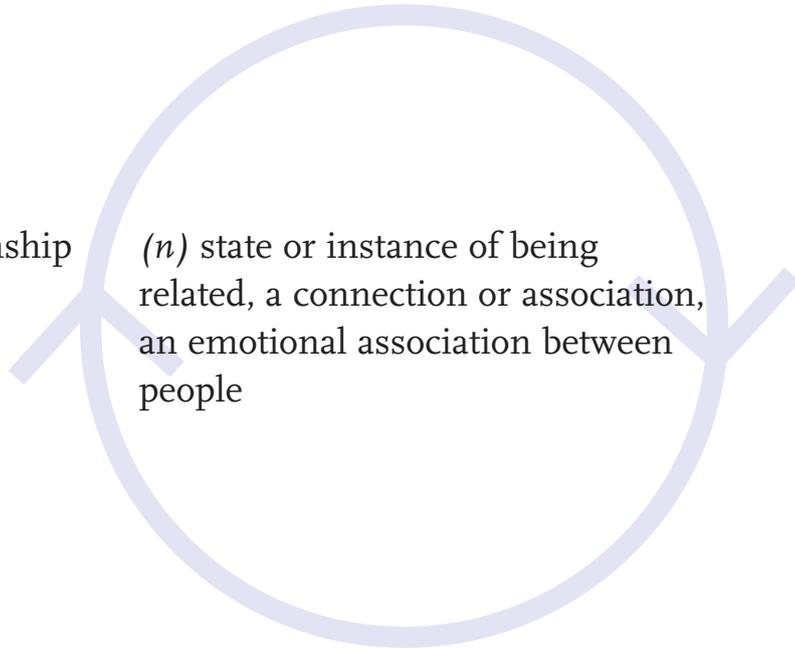
THEN THERE ARE the school programs. Some children turn up at school and teachers and other children recognise there's something really difficult that that child might be dealing with. Say for example, the fire engine goes past, all the kids look up and run to the window. But there is one child under the table, scared stiff because the last time they heard a siren was when terrible things happened. We don't know how to be with that child and help them move forward. So to train people and to work with a large network of schools, to get teachers ready and able to respond and then get teachers working with the kids in their class, it means everybody can be on the same page.

— GENEVIEVE TIMMONS

WE HAVE TO PUT our hands out to Foundation House. They can give people good things to go on forever. They are good for people who come here to Australia from different countries and different cultures. Foundation House covers people from the harsh sun. — NAJEWA

Relationship

(*n*) state or instance of being related, a connection or association, an emotional association between people



WHERE WOULD WE BE without friends? Just imagine that. Imagine coming to a country and not knowing anyone after having been through all those experiences, all that loss. Imagine having no one to talk to, how soul destroying that would be. Just think about times when you have been away from friends and people that you love and what it feels like when you reconnect. — PARIS ARISTOTLE

WE'VE BECOME really good friends with Najewa and Hindawi. I remember when they invited us for dinner. I offered to bring dessert. I made a chocolate ripple cake because I wanted to take something that seemed a bit Australian. Najewa and Hindawi's boys just loved it. That chocolate ripple cake just disappeared. Najewa was onto me then asking me how to make it. She wanted me to show her so that her husband would know exactly what to buy at the supermarket. So, the next week I went over there. I took all the ingredients and made it in front of her. Now when they make it, they call it Faye's pudding. — FAYE WEST

FOUNDATION HOUSE opened the door for my husband and me. We have such a good relationship with them. You need a friend, someone you can talk to. — NAJEWA

IT COMES BACK to having relationships with people you are engaged with. Not just clients and staff, but other service providers, people working in governments, because nothing happens in the world without relationships. We only get on in life by the way we communicate, whether it's at the shop or at the doctors, at Centrelink, wherever, it's all about relationships and communication. Once you understand that you can maintain quality and you can overcome all barriers. It opens up all sorts of possibilities. In simple terms that is what doing this work is about.

— PARIS ARISTOTLE

HERE GOD as well as the people supported us. I arrived from a country that was not my country. I escaped three years of suffering. When I arrived here there were no family members. No one. I had just simple English. But with Foundation House, the doctors and the therapists, I found help. — SUNDES

Relationships



FAYE & KEITH WEST

nip

I THINK WE MET Najewa at an annual meeting. Najewa's husband came up to me and asked, 'I want to speak English to somebody, can I ring you sometime?' Our friendship just rolled along from there. We go and read their kid's school reports. We always get those. The kids sit with us and read. We know quite a bit about Sudan now too. Hindawi asked if I'd like to know something more about his country. I said of course I would. He gave me this wonderful book.

— KEITH WEST

BEING PART of that community, just watching how people hold a culture together, we have the family feel, the loving if I can use that word, the wholeheartedness. I never get tired of that. — GENEVIEVE TIMMONS

FOUNDATION HOUSE offers a sense of meaning and some wonderful relationships with people. That is very important. At the end of the day you see you are doing something to combat all the injustices in the world. — IDA KAPLAN

FOUNDATION HOUSE are able to bring people's actual story to people so they are no longer a statistic. They tell people there is a family, a story and a life. I think that's powerful, being able to take that story and turn it into something that governments are willing to listen to. — SUSAN BRENNAN

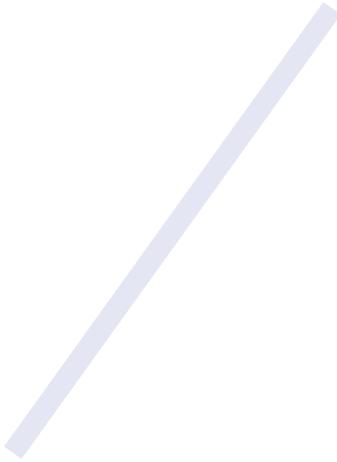
WE TOOK NAJEWAWA and Hindawi's little one, Ahmed, to a Collingwood versus West Coast game. Our seats were only seven from the front. His eyes just popped out. He's a St Kilda supporter but he's so taken with Nathan Buckley. He knew every player. I could call out the numbers and he could tell me the player's name. Ahmed was recording the scores for both teams. Well Buckley marked it, 30 metres out, directly in front. What does Ahmed do? He puts it down as a goal. We laughed and said, 'not yet, you'll put the mozz on him.' Then what does Buckley do? He misses it. Ahmed told me he'd just rub it out. — FAYE WEST

WE HAD A MARVELLOUS night at the football. I remember as we were walking out I had both hands full, a Sudanese boy on one hand and this other little fellow we took on the other hand. It was such a big crowd. I was telling those kids to hang on tight to my hands. I wasn't letting go. — KEITH WEST

I THINK THE CLIENTS have always got somewhere to come back to, even after they've made friends and finished here so to speak. They might be working but Foundation House is somewhere they can always come back to. — FAYE WEST

Hope

(*n*) expectation
and desire,
person or thing
giving cause
for hope, what is
hoped for



FOUNDATION HOUSE helped me to see the opposite side of my life. I used to think in only negatives. I used to be able to only look at the bad things that had happened. When I came here to Foundation House and saw the psychiatrist and the natural therapist they did such a great job. Those two people working together helped me so much.

— SUNDES

THE SENSE I GET is that Foundation House are there to help people rebuild lives that have been shattered and harmed in some way. It is an optimistic view of the world, not a bandaid. — SUSAN BRENNAN

IT WAS A TERRIBLE situation in Iraq and just as terrible outside of Iraq waiting for some place to accept us. But now I can look at my children and look at the sky and think it's beautiful. — SUNDES

I WAS AWARE that our move from the Parkville site would have an impact on how people felt. Parkville was a series of old houses. It was a place with a gentle community feel, set in parkland opposite the zoo. When we moved to the purpose built facility in Brunswick we did a lot of making sure people were across the planning and development. Given all that, it has been remarkably smooth. For our clients it's a bonus because of the proximity to trains and trams. It's also had the bonus of giving staff, and to a certain extent the clients, a sense of their value and their professionalism. This was at a time when we had grown a lot, in a sense our professionalism had happened before the move, but I think it was cemented by those bricks and that mortar. — LYNNE HAULTAIN

I THINK for communities that have a strong collective value then other people's children are important, healing might take place by looking after other people's children. Nothing can erase the pain of loss of children but if you see other children as belonging to your responsibility then that is a healing process, giving to others, looking after others, is part of the healing process. Most people you meet as refugees are seeking to bring family members out. That is vital. The rebuilding of family, even though it is never the same, but rebuilding family, rebuilding community, rebuilding the future, goes some way to healing that loss. — IDA KAPLAN

Hope



SUNDES

PEOPLE COME, whether they are staff or clients or Board members or Patrons and they put down deep roots because they believe in it and they are part of it. You can find meaning and purpose and inspiration. The organisation has given me the chance to be one of the people that puts my hand up for the count to say I believe in these people and I don't want to be part of an Australia that is alienating and isolating. — GENEVIEVE TIMMONS

WE KNOW HOW to celebrate. We know how to have fun. That's been a big part of this organisation. There's a lot to be really distressed by but it is impossible to deal with everything. You can't stay in that dark place. If you do, it would be all over very quickly. There's also a lot to be really proud of in the work. Sometimes we choose to focus on that. — PARIS ARISTOTLE

PEOPLE WHO SUFFER a lot can become a different person, more open to the light. My faith and my beliefs have kept me strong and the help of Foundation House, believe me, for three years, they have helped me. I hope it will continue. — SUNDES

I ALWAYS THANK GOD, even though I struggle so much because in the end there are good things. This is a place where my children can live peacefully. My children are very fortunate. They won't see the military with guns surrounding them. — RANA

Future

(n) of time to come,
from now onwards



I AM WORKING now. I started as a community guide working with the new arrivals to show them the way, how to settle, how to use public transport. Then I trained and now I am working as a settlement officer. I work three days a week. — SUNDES

BECAUSE OF MY BACKGROUND in Africa I love soccer but my son Ahmed loves Australian footy. I watch it with him now every weekend. I can ask him who is playing today and he knows. We can enjoy sport together. It's like music. It connects people. All my family love singing and music as a group. Now we watch Australian Idol. Ahmed loves Australian Idol. — HINDAWI

WHEN WE FIRST ARRIVED my children would just follow me and I would do the talking. They could not say anything. Now they just giggle at me and say that I speak an imported language. I used to tell them I want you to eat the language, speak as much as you can. I used to worry. Now they speak for me. They mix with children here and understand everything. Also they speak Arabic and go to Arabic school. It will help with their VCE. I am changed. I used to be scared all the time. I used to worry about everybody else's ideas but now, no more. As long as I don't hurt anybody else I have nothing to worry about. — SUNDES

YOU CAN CONNECT yourself up with a family and you can see they are finding their way into the future and they are doing it themselves and it just makes it worth it. I think the entire annual budget is worth that one family getting their life back. That sort of thing takes you a long way. — IDA KAPLAN

FOUNDATION HOUSE gave me the opportunity to find some musical instruments. I play guitar, bass and I write songs. I play hip-hop, some reggae music. I play African music. That is my roots. I play with people here now. We will play together for Foundation House this year. — WILLIAM

Future



HINDAWI
WITH HIS SON
AMJED

I HAVE A DREAM to go back to Sri Lanka one day and help the people in those refugee camps. Work for a non-government aid agency. When my daughters are settled in their own lives, maybe I will do that. — RANA

I HELP OTHER REFUGEES now, people who speak our language, because there are so many refugees from the church. They call me and I go. Some people are very sad. I go to their house and stay for two nights. If they don't know how to shop or go to places on public transport I show them the way. I help other people as they have helped me. It doesn't make any difference for me if they are from other countries. — MARY

NOW I HAVE permanent residency I'm just enjoying the relief. I can sleep a little better. I can drive down the road and think, this is okay, this place has adopted me. That's the sort of feeling. Previously every scene felt different. This was not my place. I didn't have a country. Uncertainty creates so much anxiety. But now I can see a future with my children here. They are no different to Australian children. They are very happy. — RANA

THE IDEA IS always so much bigger than the people. So to know that Foundation House has created an environment where people will be able to carry on the vision long after the people who have started it have gone, that must be something that is really important, to know that the work will continue. — SUSAN BRENNAN

I THINK CERTAINLY in our lifetime organisations like Foundation House will be needed. We see so many examples of where people are going to need it. I love this country. I can walk down Sydney Road with people from many different cultures. I can have coffee with a Muslim family. I can nurse their children. I don't want to lose that. I want that to grow. — KEITH WEST



Celebrate

(v) mark with a ceremony,
praise publicly

CONGRATULATIONS to the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture on 20 years of support of refugees and other victims of torture and trauma. Truly, this is spiritual work. But it is also highly practical. I honour those who are engaged in it. — HON. MR JUSTICE MICHAEL KIRBY AC CMG

AS A PSYCHOLOGIST and counsellor there are many ways that I can do work that helps others. Foundation House is one of those special places where we can help people who have suffered incredibly at the hands of other human beings. Every time we contribute to someone's capacity to survive the torture and torment and get on with living, loving and contributing, we are advancing human rights. I have a great sense of gratitude that I can be part of people's recovery, settlement and journey onward. — CONRAD AIKIN, COUNSELLOR ADVOCATE, FOUNDATION HOUSE

AT PRESENT there are a number of thinkers and politicians arguing that torture can be justified on 'security' grounds in the so-called war against terror. However, the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture has unwaveringly reminded us that torture is the unforgivable sin against humanity and that state endorsed torture is itself a grotesque form of terror. We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to the Foundation for its 20 years of witness.

— EMERITUS PROFESSOR MAX CHARLESWORTH AO

I WANT TO RECOGNISE and thank all the staff and volunteers at Foundation House for their dedication and significant contribution to helping the members of our community who have experienced unimaginable suffering and trauma. Foundation House challenges the whole community to care for the most vulnerable in our midst and prompts Government to address the causes and consequences of injustice.

— THE HON BRONWYN PIKE MP, MEMBER FOR MELBOURNE, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

REFUGEE SURVIVORS OF TORTURE who come and live in Victoria, discover that Foundation House is a safe haven for the protection, restoration and nurturing of their spirits, hearts and souls. I consider my involvement and connection to the staff and recipients of this organisation, an honour and a privilege. — MS DUR-É DARA OAM

Celebrate



GENEVIEVE
TIMMONS

TWO EMOTIONS SURFACED when I visited Foundation House. First was the sense of horror about what our fellow humans have had to endure at the hands of others. The second was a sense of relief and exhilaration to know that dedicated, empathetic and caring staff are assisting in the healing process through a highly skilled holistic program aimed at repairing the damage, both psychological and physical that had been inflicted.

— PROFESSOR DAVID DE KRETZER, AC, GOVERNOR OF VICTORIA

THINKING BACK, what emerges most prominently for me are the clients, and their stories. These are stories of individual and family histories, colliding with national and international histories. They are stories of resilience, strength, wisdom, love, pain and courage. Ultimately, they are stories about hope, or as one client unforgettably put it, “They can put out the street lights, but they can never put out the moon.”

— MARIA TUCCI, COUNSELLOR ADVOCATE, FOUNDATION HOUSE

IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE I offer my congratulations to the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture on your 20th anniversary. I commend the work of the Foundation, for it upholds Australia’s opposition to all forms of torture. By providing assistance to refugee survivors of torture, you offer hope, support and dignity when it is often needed most. — THE HON PHILIP RUDDOCK, ATTORNEY GENERAL

IN THE BEST OF WORLDS, we would not have need of an institution such as Foundation House. But thank heavens we have it; it has been a beacon of hope and commitment to human rights over the last two decades. Congratulations on this anniversary. — PROFESSOR HILARY CHARLESWORTH AM

THE VICTORIAN FOUNDATION for Survivors of Torture are genuine heroes. For 20 years they have worked tirelessly to help severely traumatised people whose suffering is sometimes exacerbated by their experiences with immigration processes in Australia. I applaud the Foundation’s contribution, and wish it many more productive years.

— LINDSAY TANNER MP, SHADOW MINISTER FOR FINANCE, FEDERAL MEMBER FOR MELBOURNE

CONGRATULATIONS to all at Foundation House for the marvellous work you do in helping survivors of torture. Over the past 20 years, thousands of people that have come from countries where they suffered oppression and torture have received comfort, hope and help as a result of the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture’s work. I am privileged to be a Patron of an organisation that is so committed to providing a better and safer future for people who have been subjected to such trauma through no fault of their own. — MR ANDREW DEMETRIOU

WHEN I JOINED Foundation House, I was amazed at the contrast between the exuberance of staff and the unspeakable stories they confronted daily. I quickly realised the inspirational nature of hope after horror, and the inextricable link between the resilience of clients and the morale of staff. It's been a joy, a privilege and a rewarding journey to work with the clients, my colleagues and all our partners at Foundation House.

— THERESE MEEHAN, RURAL LIAISON COORDINATOR, FOUNDATION HOUSE

THE FOUNDATION has done remarkable work since its inception in providing sensitive and professional support for people who have survived devastating experiences. Australia should take pride in this vital commitment.

— PROFESSOR DAVID PENINGTON AC

SOME PEOPLE have walked and walked while carrying a heavy load of fear, anger and lack of safety in their lives. Foundation House helps people recover from that journey and offers new hope, vision and life to those torn apart by war. Finally, those who have suffered so much have found a place to belong.

— JOYCE SADIA-PETER, EARLY INTERVENTION COUNSELLOR ADVOCATE, FOUNDATION HOUSE

I WAS SCEPTICAL of the need for an organisation to be called the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture when John Gibson asked me if I would like to be a Patron 20 years ago. Torture seemed remote and its victims all in other countries. The Foundation has sensitised a large number of people, like me, to the realities of torture and its increasing use and sophistication in many so-called civilised nations, as well as providing a unique service for all its victims in Australia. — MR DAVID SCOTT AO

AS A SUPPORTER, it is fantastic to congratulate Foundation House on all your years of valuable work. I am particularly pleased to see your successful relocation to Brunswick. You are a valued member of our local community.

— CARLO CARLI MLA, MEMBER FOR BRUNSWICK

OFTEN AFTER a day's work at the Foundation, I feel as if I have been taken on a journey around different pockets of the world. On these journeys, people are brave enough to share stories of unspeakable pain and horror, but out of this horror – as we witness their pain – we also witness their strength of spirit. Witnessing the courage of others is liberating beyond words. Over the years and despite the organisation's expansion, the sense that we share a common goal remains very strong. — GRACIELA LOPEZ, COUNSELLOR ADVOCATE, FOUNDATION HOUSE

FOUNDATION HOUSE ensures that those that have fled persecution receive the best health care and support that Australia can offer. The work carried out by Foundation House is something Australians can be extremely proud of.

— TONY BURKE MP, SHADOW MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION, INTEGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP

FOUNDATION HOUSE has provided invaluable support for both staff and students at Debney Park Secondary College over many years. A large number of students with refugee backgrounds have relied on caring, empathetic and highly appropriate counselling to give them the strength to work through the really hard times that they inevitably experience during their settlement in Australia. Teachers have been grateful for background information regarding these students and consequently have been able to develop programs that meet their very specific needs.

— MICHAEL O'BRIEN, PRINCIPAL, DEBNEY PARK SECONDARY COLLEGE

CONTINUITY – that's the main thought that came to mind reflecting on this wonderful organisation with which I have been associated, in one way or another, virtually since the beginning. For all the changes, most significant of all is the continuity of vision, of energy, and of commitment.

— JOSEF SZWARC, MANAGER, MOVEMENT RELATIONS AND ADVOCACY, AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS

WHEN I WAS FIRST TOLD of the existence of the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture I was very curious, very interested. Watching the work of Foundation House over 20 years and learning the stories of just a few of the people who've been helped so imaginatively, so respectfully—that's been inspiring.

— CAROLINE HOGG, FORMER VICTORIAN HEALTH MINISTER

AS A COMMUNITY LIAISON WORKER, I help members of my community adjust to the culture as new arrivals in Australia, and help them overcome the torture and trauma experienced in their original country. I visit with my clients, listen to them talk, laugh and sometimes cry with them. I treat them as my family, and then I come back to work to my second family – that is my colleagues, who are there to help me carry the load.

— SALAM DANKHA, ASSYRIAN-CHALDEAN COMMUNITY LIAISON WORKER, FOUNDATION HOUSE

FOUNDATION HOUSE is a true leader in the sector – building on 20 years of direct experience with the worst affected survivors of torture and trauma. The organisation continues to provide a high standard of care to its clients, while also being committed to providing the most crucial support and training to community agencies. The Foundation's staff, past and present, should be congratulated on their achievements in making Foundation House the remarkable agency that it is today. — CAZ COLEMAN, ACTING CO-ORDINATOR, HOTHAM MISSION ASYLUM SEEKER PROJECT

FOUNDATION HOUSE were instrumental in the development of the refugee health service that is provided at Western Region Health Centre. Their ongoing leadership, passion and commitment in providing services and challenging existing practices, inspires all of us to continue to develop ourselves to respond to the challenges. Congratulations on 20 years of success. — CLARE AMIES, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, WESTERN REGION HEALTH CENTRE

IF THE MEASURE of a healthy society is how it treats those most disadvantaged and vulnerable, Foundation House has made a truly profound contribution to the health and humanity of Australian life. It has demonstrated remarkable leadership in enriching, repairing and dignifying the lives of so many refugees and their communities, and marked itself as an innovator and leader in giving refugees a face, a voice and a far better life.

— DAVID MANNE, COORDINATOR/PRINCIPAL SOLICITOR, REFUGEE & IMMIGRATION LEGAL CENTRE INC.

YEARS AGO, when I stepped into Foundation House, there was an air about the place. Years on it could finally be described as warmth, compassion, understanding. Words that still only scratch the surface of what Foundation House stands for, a little corner of humanity, that neither time nor place could change.

— CORA TORREFRANCA, HUMAN RESOURCE & ADMINISTRATION COORDINATOR, FOUNDATION HOUSE

Milestones

(*n*) significant event or point in a life, history or project



1987-89

Refugee communities join with health, legal and community professionals at a public meeting to discuss establishing a service for survivors of torture in Victoria.

The Victorian Foundation for Victims of Torture (VFVT) becomes an incorporated association.

Royal Park Hospital provides a house rent free for use by the VFVT.

Myer Foundation provides \$17,500 to employ a coordinator for six months.

VFVT appoints Paris Aristotle as coordinator.

Reichstein Foundation provides funds to secure a further two years for the coordinator position and service development.

State Government provides a one-off grant of \$40,000.

Name changes to the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST).

VFST begins to develop a network of general practitioners committed to assisting survivors of torture.

Victorian Government provides initial core funding of \$150k per annum.

Department of Immigration provides funding for three years to employ a full time caseworker.

VFST management committee adopts a community development framework for the establishment of services.

Direct counselling and casework services for survivors of torture are expanded.

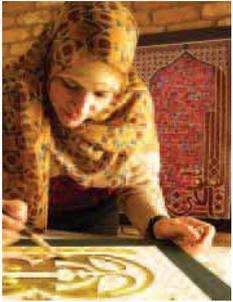
Professional training and development programs are developed and implemented.

VFST supports the development of services in Adelaide, Canberra and Perth.

First library of resources to specifically focus on work with torture and trauma survivors developed in Australia.

Tiananmen Square massacre occurs, generating large scale applications for asylum.

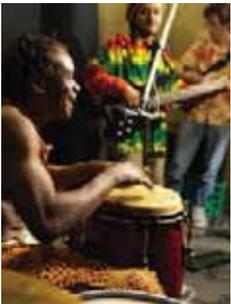
Migration Act reviewed and new Act introduced, substantially changing the process for asylum seekers.



1989/90

NUMBER OF CLIENTS SUPPORTED	TOP FIVE CLIENT BACKGROUND GROUPS	NUMBER OF STAFF EMPLOYED	\$ TURNOVER
185	El Salvador Chile Vietnam Cambodia East Timor	7 EFT (Equivalent Full time)	\$196,484

- 1990–91 — Funding increases to enable employment of 5.5 staff.
- VFST holds refugee women’s art exhibition.
 - Funding is received to employ community access workers to work with Indo Chinese and Middle Eastern communities.
 - VFST appointed to the Victorian Department of Health’s Ethnic Health Task Force.
 - Supervision and debriefing programs built into VFST direct service model.
 - Cambodian asylum seekers arrive by boat.
 - VFST formalises the establishment of a client database.
 - Staff team increases to 8.5.
 - VFST proactively initiates a review of the organisation structure to ensure it operates effectively.
 - Introduction of Port Hedland Detention Centre and mandatory detention.
 - Iraq invades Kuwait and Gulf War begins. VFST opposes the use of war to resolve this crisis.
 - VFST director appointed to Federal Government Settlement Advisory Council and continues until 1996.
 - Conflict in the former Yugoslavia begins to escalate.
- 1992–93 — Large numbers of Iraqi refugees arising from the Gulf War begin to be resettled in Australia.
- Priority of Australia’s humanitarian program focuses on refugees from the former Yugoslavia.
 - Victorian Government changes necessitate development of a new set of relationships and strategies to maintain services.
 - Funding received to commence a natural therapies program.
 - Funding received to employ a family support worker and commence program.
 - Expanded service in Springvale/Dandenong commences, based at the Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau.
 - Training resource ‘*Spirit is Stronger than Force*’ produced and launched.
 - VFST works in partnership with other agencies to develop interpreter services for female survivors of trauma.
 - First approach made to Federal Government for core funding (approach rejected).
 - VFST conducts assessments of all Cambodians held in detention (for over three years) and provides a report to Federal Government that helps achieve a resolution.
 - VFST assists in development of new dialogue process between NGO’s and Department of Immigration aimed at improving communication and policy development.



- 1992–93 — Bosnian conflict escalates and pilot funding received to develop services for refugees from Bosnia.
- A new program to address the specific needs of young refugees commences, leading to a progressive expansion of work in this field.
- Assessment and reports prepared for the Department of Immigration seeking the release of 17 East Timorese asylum seekers held at Curtin Air Force Base after arriving in Australia by boat.
- VFST provides support to services in Thailand, Burma and Nepal in association with the Jesuit Refugee Service.
- VFST writes and negotiates a submission to the Commonwealth Department of Health for a new program to fund torture and trauma services in Australia.

- 1994–95 — Critical stage reached in development of case work service model.
- VFST negotiates funding from Department of Immigration for an Early Intervention Program for newly arrived refugees.
- \$5.2m national funding received for Program Assisting Survivors of Torture and Trauma (PASTT) to fund services in each state and territory.
- Early Intervention Program pilot expanded.
- VFST completes a comprehensive report about the torture and trauma experiences of East Timorese asylum seekers in Australia to assist in advocating for granting of protection.
- Inaugural meeting of the National Forum of Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (NFSSTT).
- VFST’s Family Support Program selected by the Commonwealth Government as one of 13 exemplary approaches to working with families.



1994/95

NUMBER OF CLIENTS SUPPORTED	TOP FIVE CLIENT BACKGROUND GROUPS	NUMBER OF STAFF EMPLOYED	\$ TURNOVER
378	Former Yugoslavia Iraq Timor Somalia Sri Lanka	15 EFT	\$694,449

- 1996–97 — ‘A Guide to Working with Young People who are Refugees’ produced.
- Development of national strategy and funding received through Department of Immigration to expand Early Intervention Program for newly arrived refugees.
 - Core funding from the Victorian Government increases by \$400,000.
 - National funding for Early Intervention Program is achieved.
 - Staff team increases from 21 to 36 and new organisational structure developed.
 - VFST selected for a humanitarian award by Adult Multicultural Education Services.
 - Early Intervention Program granted an award for public health excellence.
 - VFST elected to the Council of the International Society for Health and Human Rights.
 - ‘*Refugee Health and General Practice*’, the first comprehensive resource for doctors and primary health workers, is produced.
 - VFST director appointed to the newly established Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council (RRAC) to provide strategic advice to the Federal Government about refugee resettlement programs. This appointment continues through to 2007.
- 1998–99 — Development of the *Rainbow Program*, a new schools-based group work program for refugee children.
- The VFST produces training manual ‘*Rebuilding Shattered Lives*’, which forms the basis of all future training programs.
 - VFST and Western Melbourne Division of General Practice awarded high commendation in public health for production of ‘*Refugee Health and General Practice*’.
 - VFST engaged to provide mental health and trauma services for Kosovar and East Timorese people evacuated to Australia in Operation Safe Haven, establishing two new sites and doubling its staff team in a period of four weeks.
 - VFST engaged to provide debriefing to UN staff on mission in East Timor in the lead up to the independence ballot and subsequent evacuation.
 - Attendance at UNHCR executive committee meeting as part of an Australian delegation.
 - Representation on Victorian Ministerial Multicultural Advisory Council.
 - Significant growth and a requirement to leave the Parkville site require VFST to begin the process of seeking new premises.
 - Significant increase in the arrival of asylum seekers to Australia by boat.



- 1998–99
- Government introduces new restrictions on entitlements for asylum seekers including the introduction of temporary protection visas.
 - Formation of a National Health and Medical Research Council accredited research ethics committee.
 - VFST is represented on the National Mental Health Prevention and Promotion working group.
 - VFST receives Public Health Award for *‘Easing the Transition’*, a resource about improving food and nutrition for refugees.

1999/2000

NUMBER OF CLIENTS SUPPORTED	TOP FIVE CLIENT BACKGROUND GROUPS	NUMBER OF STAFF EMPLOYED	\$ TURNOVER
1817	Bosnia Iraq Kosova Iran Croatia	43 EFT	\$3,385,696

- 2000–01
- Mandatory detention policy hardens with the opening of Woomera Detention Centre.
 - Escalation in adversarial and hostile relationships between non-government and government agencies over treatment of asylums seekers held in detention.
 - Project development work expanded to incorporate community leadership programs, expanded work with schools and new resource development.
 - Foundation House wins Primary Health Care Award for its Early Intervention Program for refugees and survivors of torture.
 - Client waiting lists continue to grow.
 - Formal research program is implemented.
 - Active participation in UNHCR global consultations process.
 - Presentation of two papers at the first UNHCR International Conference on Resettlement and Integration as members of the Australian delegation.
 - Attend the UNHCR Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) as part of the Australian delegation.
 - Increased involvement in escalating detention issues including VFST director’s appointment to the Immigration Detention Advisory Group (IDAG)—a position he continues to hold.



- New school based programs for children and adolescents begin.
- September 11 terrorist attacks in the US escalate issues for many Foundation House clients.
- The Tampa asylum seeker event becomes a central theme in the Federal election campaign, which leads to a dramatic hardening of new policies in the treatment of asylum seekers.
- Offshore processing detention centres for asylum seekers are established by the Federal Government on Nauru and Manus Island.
- Contracted by UNHCR to produce their International Handbook on Reception and Integration.

2002–03

— UNHCR handbook *'Refugee Resettlement: An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration'* completed and launched at UNHCR executive committee meeting in Geneva.

- Training provided to representatives from over 20 NGO's in Indonesia and the development of a tailored resource for the group's continued use.



- Coordination of national refugee awareness campaign in partnership with The Body Shop Australia.

- Training program provided to staff from agencies working with women survivors of violence in Nairobi.

- Awarded Strategic Impact Program funding by ANZ Trustees, which enables establishment of Service Innovation Program.

- The Refugee Health Research Centre is established in partnership with La Trobe University, giving the VFST a unique, credible and rigorous research capacity.

- VFST completes report for Department of Human Services (DHS) about improving refugee health care in Victoria.

- Public Health Award for Excellence in Health Research received for the *'Off to a Healthy Start'* project.

- Funding received from VicHealth for five year refugee youth research project *'Good Starts'*.

- VFST helps to establish Refugee Education Partnership Project.

- VFST helps to develop alternative models for managing asylum seekers in Australia in partnership with other Victorian NGO's and through capitalising on its role with IDAG.

- VFST hosts several meetings of senior Department of Immigration officials and key NGO's with the aim of improving communication in the management of asylum seekers in Australia, particularly those held in detention.

- Quentin Buckle, founding committee member and first life member of the VFST, passes away.

- 2004-05
- Increased focus on provision of group work and professional development programs in Victorian schools.
 - Commencement of community development project with South Sudanese community.
 - VFST works collaboratively with DHS Cultural Diversity Unit on the development of a refugee health strategy to improve healthcare for refugees.
 - Health Minister Bronwyn Pike launches the Victorian *Refugee Health and Wellbeing Action Plan* with DHS.
 - Continued advice provided to Federal Government through the RRAC and IDAG.
 - Preparation begins for new tender for the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy.
 - Relocation to new purpose built building in Brunswick and official opening.
 - Publication of '*School's in for Refugees*', a resource to assist schools meet the needs of refugee students.
 - VFST takes on lead agency role for the Refugee Education Partnership Project after the closure of the Victorian Schools Innovation Commission.
 - VFST engaged to visit Nauru and report on the mental health of 27 asylum seekers who have been held there for four years. Mental health report about Nauru provided to Minister Amanda Vanstone and visas granted to 25 asylum seekers.
 - VFST engaged to coordinate and provide initial settlement and health services for arrivals from Nauru in partnership with the Australian Red Cross.
 - Launch of new logo and website.
 - Successful tender outcome for Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy and commencement of new contract.



2004/05

NUMBER OF CLIENTS SUPPORTED	TOP FIVE CLIENT BACKGROUND GROUPS	NUMBER OF STAFF EMPLOYED	\$ TURNOVER
3102	Sudan Iraq Ethiopia Afghanistan Liberia	50 EFT	\$4,167,154

2006-07

A group of 43 West Papuan asylum seekers arrive on the Australian mainland. VFST becomes involved in facilitating communication between stakeholders and community groups and coordinates initial settlement support services in partnership with the Australian Red Cross and the Refugee and Immigration Legal Centre.

After several years of advocacy through IDAG and in partnership with other key NGO's, the Federal Government establishes the Community Care Pilot to test alternative arrangements for accommodating and supporting asylum seekers in the community.

Lex Lasry QC speaks at first annual oration to mark the UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

Training programs developed for Australian government officers assessing refugee and humanitarian decisions for the 'off shore' humanitarian program.

Training delivered to staff at the Australian embassies in Nairobi and Cairo in assessing trauma and torture with humanitarian program visa applicants.

Presentation to UNHCR ATCR about the needs of torture and trauma survivors in the settlement process.

VFST develops new community liaison program employing staff from six emerging communities.

Rural and regional work a priority in locations such as Shepparton, Warrnambool and Mildura.

A donation for three years of funding from Annamila Pty Ltd for the VFST Service Innovation Program is received.

The VFST supports the development of a refugee women's singing and dance program in partnership with the Boîte.

Continued strategic advice provided to Federal Government through RRAC and IDAG.

Launch of report and recommendations by the Refugee Education Partnership Project about improving education programs and outcomes for refugee students.

Continued growth of professional development and training programs.

Professor David de Kretser, AC, Governor of Victoria and Mrs Jan de Kretser agree to become Patrons-in-Chief.

Professor Hilary Charlesworth AM becomes a Patron of the VFST.

VFST provides expert advice to the UNHCR as part of a pilot project to develop a new Heightened Risk Assessment Tool for use in protracted refugee situations.

Presentations at UNHCR ATCR on the outcomes of the pilot project in Bangladesh and on the flaws of using 'integration potential' as selection criteria for resettlement.



2006-07

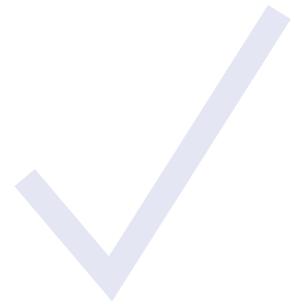


- Foundation House marks its 20th Anniversary.
- Training provided to Australian Embassy and UNHCR staff assessing Iraqi refugee claims in Dubai, Amman and Damascus.
- New pilot program Ucan2 aimed at assisting older adolescent refugees in education and vocational pathways funded and commenced.
- VFST provides training sessions to two delegations of officers from the Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights.
- New resources to assist African families to settle and adjust to life in Australia finalised and launched by the Hon. Kevin Andrews, Minister for Immigration Integration and Citizenship.
- The third edition of a guide for general practitioners and primary care workers, *'Promoting Refugee Health'* is completed, with the new version also available online.
- VicHealth funds three year project Beaut Buddies to assist young refugees in the education system.
- Design for extension of VFST Brunswick site completed and search commenced for new permanent location for South-East team to accommodate growing service delivery programs and staff.

2006/07

NUMBER OF CLIENTS SUPPORTED	TOP FIVE CLIENT BACKGROUND GROUPS	NUMBER OF STAFF EMPLOYED	\$ TURNOVER
4213	Sudan Burma (Myanmar) Iraq Afghanistan Ethiopia	75 EFT	\$6,077,287

Thanks (n) expression of gratitude



SO MANY people over so many years have contributed so much to Foundation House
and we would like to say...a final word

Thanks

Clients

Staff

Committee of Management members

Members

Patrons

Ethics Committee Members

Government funding bodies

Philanthropic trusts

Private donors

Corporate supporters

Contractors and suppliers

Volunteers

Refugee, health and community sector colleagues

Victorian Government

Commonwealth Government

Local Members of Parliament

Media representatives

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture

Organisational Principles

- Torture is an unacceptable violation of human rights regardless of who is the perpetrator or for whatever purpose it is utilised.
- All survivors of torture have the right to rehabilitation and support services, regardless of their country of origin, their political beliefs, religious beliefs, and regardless of the circumstances surrounding the incidence of torture.
- In accepting the responsibility of providing a home for survivors of torture, the Australian community must also accept responsibility for providing them with appropriate community and health services.
- Services provided should be multi-faceted and operate within a community development framework.
- The Foundation shall remain politically neutral except in relation to the denunciation of the use of torture by any regime.
- Services must encourage the development of self esteem, human rights and the positive reinforcement of the individuals' struggle. Self determination and independence will be fostered at all times.

Foundation
Courage
Trust

Listen

Respect Nourish

Relationship Hope

Future Celebrate

Milestones

Thanks



Foundation
House

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture