Increasing client numbers require staff to undertake increased front line services. Although the data able to be reported may be significant to the departments receiving it, the impost at the worker level is considerable particularly when multiple new systems are introduced with no additional funding being provided for administration. This has meant that staff are required to undertake these additional tasks from existing work hours and resources resulting in a required reduction in services directly to clients.

During the year our staff and volunteers have continued to provide the highest standard of service to our clients and we are grateful for their dedication and commitment which goes well beyond the hours they are actually employed to work. During the year our part time housing support worker and lead camp program facilitator Melly Niotakis welcomed a new baby Luca, unfortunately meaning that Melly has been unable to continue as housing worker. Melly's work with ACRO through various programs has been exemplary and we are hopeful that Melly will be able to continue to work with the young people in the school holidays program. Celia White took on the role of housing support worker early in the year and has continued to provide a high quality of support to our supported accommodation tenants. ACRO has also had several casual support workers during the year who assisted Fiona with the housing and welfare pro-

acknowledge Edwina Kempe and Judit Turk. Long term volunteer Frank Koopal who has worked diligently for ACRO across a number of our programs announced his "retirement" from volunteer work for ACRO this year. Frank is well known to clients particularly in the Home As-HACC program and his considerable contribution to ACRO will be sorely missed by staff and clients alike. Our core Staff members Fiona, Jennifer, Nancy, Cora, Ben, Ed, Paul, Harry and Graham continue to provide invaluable service to our client base and for that I am extremely grateful. Our Programs Manager, Fiona, has again provided outstanding service to ACRO this past year. We are indebted to her contributions and remarkable capacity. We sadly bid farewell to Cora our Accounts Manager who will retire in December. Her contributions to ACRO have been appreciated as has her lovalty and support for our work. We wish her well in her retirement. Her position

will be filled by Luis Amaya.

We welcome Luis to the

ACRO family and hope that

his time with us is produc-

tive and enjoyable. Our ex-

tremely competent Execu-

tive Committee continues to

drive the organisation with

reasoned decision-making

utilising their extensive ex-

perience and knowledge. I

thank Ian, Chris and Steph-

anie for their unwavering

grams and we would like to

commitment to ACRO. The tragic loss of Julie Stewart this year has significantly impacted on the spirit of the organisation. Julie was one of our biggest supporters and a wonderful human being. In honour of her long -standing involvement with ACRO we have instituted an educational bursary in her name. The inaugural recipients are two refugee children whose family circumstances are less than favourable. I am sure that Julie would be happy with the choice. Together with the Frances Killion bursary, ACRO is continuing to help young people in need to find their place within our community.

Right: Programs Manager Fiona Begg with Olga's at Shorncliffe Staff Sophie and Dominik Below Left: Olga's at Shorncliffe Junior Staff Jeremy and Emily. Below Right: Olga's cook Julie

This has been another successful year for ACRO and. more importantly, our clients but you can't help but get the impression that governments are viewing us more as dinosaurs than as partners who assist in the augmentation of social services. Time will tell what future lies ahead for usand for many others like us. I wish all our supporters a very Merry Christmas and an outstanding 2014.











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"It is somewhat ironic that amongst the first to feel the cut of economic rationalisation during periods of recession are the poor and dispossessed."

The end of each year gives us the opportunity to reflect upon achievements and plan for the future. This has always been the case with ACRO and I am pleased to report on our performance for the period 1 July 2012 – 30 June 2013 and to foreshadow changes during the next financial period. As recipients of public funds it behoves us to ensure that our processes are transparent and that our outcomes are measurable in the context of our objectives as a Public Benevolent Institution and that these outputs are in line with government expectations. I am pleased to advise that we have maintained, and surpassed, the requirements of us as articulated in the various funding Agreements between the organization and government. The results of activity across our various programs form part of this Report and are published below. We acknowledge that it is the prerogative of government to define and redefine its policy objectives. Similarly, we acknowledge our role in seeking to augment these policy shifts for the betterment of those within our community who fall within our purview of responsibility and who otherwise are disadvantaged. Sometimes these policy shifts are likely to be contested, that is, that our independent charter and objectives are not in alignment with government policy. In a democratic society vigorous debate on contentious issues is desirable and this is an important role that ACRO and others has in stimulating and enlightening discussion on matters that appear to divide groups within our society. It has become increasingly evident that the voice of the nongovernmental sector is being muted as economic rational decision-making moves funding previously available to the sector to other places. This is not a unique situation in Australia's financial history which has ebbed and flowed between good times and bad since federation. It is somewhat ironic that amongst the first to feel the cut of economic rationalisation during periods of recession are the poor and dispossessed. We are currently in an economic climate that has led to many hard political changes that are disintegrating safety nets for these people. Many independent Charities are feeling the sting of government cutbacks – and some are no longer in existence as a consequence. ACRO has felt the impact of losing one full-time position and a significant reduction in funding during the year. And there is more to come. As an organization we are trying to move towards independence from government funding but I am unsure as to whether we can achieve our objective in this regard prior to the anticipated finalization of major government-funded projects in 2015. The pervasive view of "bigger is better" that will see the concentra-

tion of service delivery towards mega nongovernmental or corporate organisations is an experiment that has no failsafe. If the public service is replaced by a new bureaucracy from within the corporate or nongovernmental sector that is burdened by similar inefficiencies, then there is no net gain to the community. In the meanwhile, established community organisations, like ACRO, will have fractured beyond repair. Many of the processes that are disadvantaging smaller charities are being implemented by the current government but were commenced by the previous government – at both State and Federal levels. There is scope for circumspection by both to review those previously crafted strategies and properly assess their merits before it is too late. We will continue to do our work in the best interests of our constituency. We simply ask that government carefully consider the consequences of a greatly diminished sector that has historically provided support to it in a highly cost-effective manner. For our part ACRO will continue to find avenues of funding to ensure its survival and, as reported previously, this includes the development of for-profit ventures such as Olga's at Shorncliffe. We will persist because we collectively believe in the work that we are undertaking.

Housing The Housing program for ACRO has been particularly busy this year with a record number of families receiving support. Over 16 000 bed nights were provided either through our short term crisis housing or short term head lease program. The numbers of families supported has been enabled as a consequence of the ongoing support by the short term head lease program in the Portfolio Management area of the Department of Housing. Over the past twelve months 202 individuals have had a support period with ACRO (86 adults and 116 children). The majority of those accommodated were born overseas with our highest number of families originating from Sudan, Somalia, Myanmar, the Congo, Eritrea and Ethiopia. We have also assisted clients from Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iran, Liberia, Bangladesh, Burundi, Chile and Guinea. Clients speak a range of languages including Dinka, Arabic, Somali, Vietnamese, Karen, Chin and Rohingyan to name a few. Of the client families supported, 41 were successfully transitioned to longer term housing with 25 families receiving properties through the Department of Housing and three moving to longer term community housing. (68% of families who completed a support period with ACRO secured a department of housing or community housing property). The balance of

VALE: JULIE STEWART



2013 was a very sad year

with the loss of one of our longest supporters, Julie Stewart. As the wife of our chairperson lan and mother of ACRO treasurer Chris, Julie had provided an incalculable degree of support to ACRO both directly and indirectly. Julie was a regular attendee at many an AGM and ACRO function over the years. It was a considerable shock to learn of her unexpected death in May of this year and she will be greatly missed by us all. Julie personified in her life the word "giving" and always did so in a spirit of generosity and optimism. Her most memorable time with ACRO was accompanying the Australian Teens Change Advocating (ATAC) tour of north Queensland where Julie acting as chaperon, and at times referee, travelled with Clive and ten teenagers in the ACRO Hiace mini bus from Brisbane to Cairns and back. For this alone Julie deserved a medal but she contributed so much more in her career as a teacher, as a member of her local community and as part of a family who have given so much back to the community. We are grateful that she was part of ACRO for so long and we celebrate her effect on all our lives whilst at the same time being greatly saddened at

her passing.

Executive Director's Annual Report 2013

"We will persist...."

Dr Clive Begg, Executive Director

families who completed a support Council Community Grants period secured private rental housing with support by our housing staff.

As well as providing case management support during their housing stay ACRO also provide Community Organisations assistance to clients in moving in and public servants with and out of properties and sourc- whom we work in partnership ing furniture and fittings—as many of our clients have very little when they come to us. To this end we would like to acknowledge the considerable support provided by a number of organizations and individuals who have assisted in helping families with much needed items to start their new homes. Donations through the Givit Website have been much appreciated as well as the following people who responded when the call went out : Ana Oertel, Jen Dainer, Amanda Karo, Scout, Melly, Celia, the Munro Family and Mary. Thank you to all those who have assisted us particularly at the last

Unfortunately there are still families that we are unable to assist due to lack of vacancies and there were 350 persons who sought accommodation for themselves and or families whom we supported accommodation were unable to assist this year.

minute.

Welfare ACRO has received funding from both the state and federal governments for emergency relief. This has enabled us to assist 410 people this year. The majority of this assistance is provided through food assistance to families, particularly through our annual Christmas projectwhich includes families of prisoners as a particular group in need. However a growing level of assistance has also been requested and provided in relation to rent arrears, utilities (gas and electricity) and moving costs.

Other acknowledgements:

We are extremely indebted to many supporters including the Rotary Club of Toowong (who provide free movie tickets annually for families in our crisis accommodation; the Brisbane City

Program; our volunteers. particularly Fay, Christina, Del and Frank: Staff from the Outlook at Boonah particularly Aisha and Rob; Other to assist clients in particular staff from Multicultural Development Association (MDA) especially Zuleiga, Julie Anne and Lailah: the Department of Housing area office staff particularly the Inala office; the members of the Stafford Community Development Group; Kylie and staff from the Community Place; St Vincent De Paul Settlement Services staff (Goodna) in particular Simon, Judit and Brenda; Yen from the Vietnamese Community Centre at Darra and Lawrence from the Portfolio Management area of the Department of Housing and Public Works. As you can see, ACRO has forged important partnerships in order to achieve positive outcomes for our clients.

100 % of clients in ACRO crisis housing program received offers of public rental housing within a three - six month period from the department of housing. This is an outstanding achievement and we acknowledge the Department of Housing.

Day Tripper Program - This program continues to grow in



DayTripper Lone Pine Cruise



DayTripper Albert River Winery



DayTripper Old Government House



DayTripper Mystery Tour 2012

popularity with 350 people participating in bus trips South-East throughout Queensland this past year. Thanks to Nancy for her continuing coordination of the program amongst her range of other duties. We also thank our great volunteers.



HAS/HACC This program celebrates its

20th year of operation within

ACRO this year with our

12000th client registered. The program currently has over 9000 active clients. With just over 3000 jobs completed through the state funded Home Assist Secure (HAS) program and over maintenance jobs completed for Home and Community Care (HACC) eligible clients and an additional 1700 modifications for HACC clients being completed. This year HACC funding changed for clients who are under 65 with a disability. The State government department of Community Care assumed responsibility for HACC eligible client funding for those under 65 (people with a disability or a carer) whilst the federal government takes responsibility for those HACC eligible clients over 65. ACRO currently has funding agreements in place until 2015 for HACC minor maintenance and modifications. The state based Home Assist Secure funding (over the last couple of years) has only been on an annual basis and this situation remains with the state government announcing continuation of funding for the program until 30th June 2014. The significant outcomes that this program provides to older people and people of any age with a disability wanting to remain living independently in their own homes should not be underestimated. By ensuring qualified, reliable tradespeople, assisting with the cost of labour for essential home maintenance and modifications and providing invaluable information to clients about a range of health, safety and security issues, this program value adds significantly to the lives of older

people and people with a

Youth Camps 25 Young people took part in the camps this year with camps undertaken during school holidays at Stradbroke Island, Harrys Hut near Noosa and the Outlook at Boonah.

No Interest Loan Scheme (Nils) Program: ACRO commenced this program this year. In the first nine months of operation we have written six (6) loans for low income clients for a range of household items. Three of these loans have been repaid already and one client has commenced a second loan. The program provides loans of up to \$1200 for low income clients accessing ACRO services for essential household items or health and education needs. We hope to increase our number of loans in the coming year but are looking for volunteers to assist in the program. Fiona attended the Australia wide NILS conference in Melbourne in June and found it a very valuable networking experience.

Student Accommodation As a result of government funding reductions to the organisation a decision was reached by the Executive Committee to refurbish one of its properties as a student accommodation service It was decided that the accommodation would be set up as a rooming facility for international students. Accordingly, some internal renovations took place to create four bedrooms, two discrete kitchens two bathrooms and three living areas. The facility was furnished to a basic level. The first student was accommodated in December 2012 with three others coming to us in January 2013.

Olgas at Shorncliffe The opening and operation of Olga's at Shorncliffe has impacted positively on the public profile for ACRO. The commencement of Ol-

ga's at Shorncliffe was made as investment in future income and profitability to replace projected losses of grant income and profits. It was also established as a social enterprise. As such, ACRO has applied commercial strategies to maximize improvements in human and environmental well-being, rather than maximising profits for external shareholders. This objective retains a consistent approach with charitable objective.

Whereas many commercial enterprises would consider themselves to have social objectives (but commitment to these objectives is motivated by the perception that such commitment will ultimately make the enterprise more financially valuable) social enterprises differ in that, inversely, they do not aim to offer any benefit to their investors, except where they believe that doing so will ultimately further their capacity to realize their social and environmental goals. Social





High Tea at Olga's at Shorncliffe

enterprises are differentiated through transparent evidence

ACRO Staff members (L to R) Ed Wilson, Ben Green, Nancy Pitinga, Paul Green, Harry McKinnon, Graham Kersnovske. Insert: Jennifer Abdur-Rahman (far right); Cora Mijares (far left)



ACRO Programs Manager Fiona Begg

that their social aims are

primary, and that profits are secondary. Olga's is moving towards profitability; the work of the organisation is better understood and more directly supported by customers, and local citizens are engaging either by direct support of the business or by way of donations. Olga's website www.olgas.net.au. thank Olga's clients for their ongoing support and for their many financial donations. We also acknowledge the work of our Staff in maintaining the high standards required in hospitality. I particularly note the efforts of Dominik, Julie, Sophie, Jeremy and our juniors Emily and Tom. We all are working towards a progressive growth in the business as an income replacement project and as a visible social enterprise that enhances the work of the Charity. Challenges. The biggest

challenge for staff this past year has continued to be the increasing administrative burden (emanating from public servants) in relation to increasing levels of reparticularly porting, through the introduction of multiple databases and "portals" simultaneously.