



sttars
supporting survivors of
torture & trauma

Annual Report
2015-2016



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BACK COVER IMAGE

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OUR VISION

A community in
which survivors
of torture and
trauma thrive
and flourish

Ministerial Address

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate STTARS on another year of providing vital services and programs that give heart and hope to people who may have come to South Australia with little of either.

People come to South Australia seeking a better life for themselves and their families. We embrace their friendship and contributions to our society.

Our many new arrivals present a wonderful opportunity to benefit from a wealth of diversity, skills and talents. But migrating to a new country is a difficult process, particularly for those who may have suffered terrible trauma and loss.

STTARS' staff and volunteers provide wonderful compassion and care in helping people overcome sometimes heinous obstacles.



I would like to thank STTARS for helping to make South Australia a safe place where everybody belongs and can aspire to live their dreams, and its staff for undertaking their duties with such dedication and effort.

Hon Zoe Bettison MP

Minister for Communities and Social Inclusion

Minister for Multicultural Affairs

“ What I can say about hope is this - I had this feeling that I have to live... I have to live. ”



From the Chair

2015-16 was another year of significant change for STTARS after similarly eventful periods in the previous two years.

In both 2013-14 and 2014-15, there were significant changes in senior operational leadership and Board membership as well as losses of large numbers of experienced staff. Increased interest by the STTARS membership resulted in contested Board elections at both the 2014 and 2015 AGMs, which is quite unusual for STTARS.

In mid-2014/15, a new CEO was hired with a brief to make significant changes in STTARS administrative, financial, ICT and governance systems and undertake a review of clinical services. The CEO, staff and members of the Board worked very diligently throughout the first half of 2015-16 to complete the great majority of the planned changes which has left the organisation in a sound position administratively and financially. Unfortunately, more than 30 staff departed during the 2015 calendar year. The number of staff departures slowed considerably in the second half of the financial year, with four staff departing, which was a marked improvement.

With four Board resignations between the last AGM and the end of the 2015-16 financial year, Gay Gardner and David Shepherd were co-opted as board members to ensure Board viability until elections at this AGM.

I thank the current and departed Board members and staff for the commitment, skills and diligent work they contributed to achieving positive organisational results for STTARS during 2015-16. Although Stephanie Miller resigned as CEO some weeks into this new financial year, I also thank her here for her achievements in leaving STTARS with administrative improvements that should serve us well into the future. New ICT infrastructure and the installation of a new client information system that 'went live' on 1 July this year are expected to provide STTARS with greatly enhanced capacity to effectively manage service delivery information and generate reliable reports when required.

The incoming Board after the 2015 AGM included four members with combined extensive clinical and teaching experience in refugee torture and other trauma informed counselling. The first major resolution of the new Board was to set aside the Clinical Services Review (CSR) Report and Recommendations endorsed by the previous Board in October 2015. The majority view was that the evidence base sourced in the Review was not sufficiently focussed on the human rights based, repeated, complex and persistent trauma sustained by refugees and did not reflect current best practice for successful clinical work in STTARS type services nationally and internationally.

A working party of Board members was formed in January to research and create a more appropriate clinical practice model and this was presented to the Board in June where it was endorsed pending consultation with clinical staff and the Leadership Group in July. The main features of the new clinical services model include a phased based approach to counselling and the restoration of both the central Counsellor Advocate role and a specific child and youth program.

Full operationalisation of the model is likely to continue for the remainder of 2016-17 and require dialogue and collaboration between the Board and STTARS operational leadership.

The work of STTARS requires ongoing attention to stakeholder relationships with other service providers and organisations where our combined or coordinated efforts enable better outcomes for our clients.

These are often service providers in the settlement, health and education sectors. Many of these organisations are listed elsewhere in this report and we thank them for working with us and look forward to future collaboration for mutual success.

The Board is grateful for funders who understand the necessity of our work and who together provide for one of the best systems of refugee resettlement and torture-

trauma rehabilitation services globally. STTARS core funders are the Commonwealth Department of Health and Department of Immigration and Border Protection; and the South Australian Department of Health and Department for Communities and Social Inclusion.

I would also like to acknowledge the value and active support of the FASSTT network. FASSTT is the Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma which is made up of the Directors or CEOs of all the State and Territory based services like STTARS. It exists to provide mutual support, cooperation and development of excellence in service provision and to contribute to national policy and program development. The accumulated experience and knowledge in the network is a valuable resource to support member bodies in developing best-practice models and achieving quality standards. STTARS is grateful for having this resource in its current and future work.

In this the 25th anniversary of STTARS, it is also important to acknowledge the membership. STTARS is a member based organisation and it relies on them to choose Board members to ensure STTARS continues to achieve the objectives of the association and fulfil the vision of the founders in 1991.

The membership has grown and been active in recent years as evidenced by increased nominations for Board positions. I thank the membership for their ongoing support and Board members for volunteering thousands of hours of time towards successful services for our clients. There has been a series of events throughout the year to celebrate our 25th Anniversary and I draw your attention to a description of some of these later in the Annual Report.

Dan Haller

Chair

Board Members 2015-2016

Chairperson

Dan Haller

Vice Chair

John Oliphant

Treasurer

Judith Davis

Secretary

Carol Irizarry

Luci Lovelock

Maggie L'Estrange

Sandra Gault

Steven Thompson

Gay Gardner

(appointed May 2016)

Di Gursansky

(retired 30 November 2015)

Marilyn Lennon

(retired 30 November 2015)

Bill Militios

(until 25 February 2016)

Daniel Moya

(retired 30 November 2015)

Penny Munro

(until 1 December 2015)

Nilo Najimi

(retired 30 November 2015)

From the CEO

STTARS is proudly celebrating its 25th year of providing services to survivors of torture and trauma and I am proud to again be involved with this wonderful organization on its special anniversary.

The year just past has been very eventful and turbulent with many changes in personnel including the recent resignation of CEO Stephanie Miller. We are thankful to Stephanie for her leadership during her time with STTARS when progress was made in many areas. Pending the appointment of a new permanent CEO, I have stepped into the role on a short term basis.

The year has seen a considerable turn-over of counselling staff resulting in the loss of some very experienced and skilled people. However STTARS has been able to recruit some young, talented and enthusiastic new staff who are already making their mark and will make an enormous contribution in the future. During all this time our services to clients have remained paramount and continue to be delivered with great care and dedication through our amazing teams of counsellor/advocates and case workers.

Following the establishment of an outpost in Mount Gambier we have been able to deliver services to refugees in the South East of SA including to clients in Bordertown and Naracoorte where there are sizeable populations of refugees from mainly Afghan and Middle Eastern backgrounds.

Despite very significant staff turnover and far less than predicted numbers of asylum seekers in the South Australian community, STTARS met target for number of counselling clients for 2015-16. In addition, the proportion of clients receiving greater than 10 hours of service increased from 7% in 2014-15 to 26% this financial year.

Besides individual counselling STTARS also works with groups to build community, assist refugees to make

social connections and develop a sense of belonging. While there was relatively little group-work activity in the first half of 2015-16, a large number of groups were started or restarted in the latter half. You can read about our work with many groups later in this report but I would like to mention particularly the drum-beat program for school children from refugee backgrounds, including recently arrived children from Syria and Iraq, which is proving very popular with the children. As the therapeutic value of this program becomes evident we hope to expand its reach to other schools.

In July 2015, STTARS received funding from the Department of Communities and Social Inclusion to provide family counselling services in the eastern Adelaide Region. After a period of development and promotion, family counselling services are now being delivered. We have had excellent feedback on the outcomes achieved so far and the demand for services is expanding.

STTARS has an active education and training program directed towards helping mainstream service providers understand and adapt to the special needs of traumatized clients from refugee communities.



During the year sessions were conducted to 22 different organisations including educational institutions, social support services and health services. A total of over 632 participants were involved.

I have been in the role of CEO for sufficient time to be able to assure our members and stakeholders of the competence, professionalism and dedication of the people who work for STTARS. I wish to extend my personal thanks to the senior leadership team who have welcomed me as acting CEO at short notice, shared with me their concerns and hopes for the future of STTARS and cooperated with the many changes that are in train, sometimes with personal effect. The counsellors and case workers handle difficult, complex and sometimes distressing situations on a daily basis with skill, care and patience and we can be proud of them. We are also greatly appreciative of the ongoing services and support provided by professional clinicians in the Refugee Mental Health Service located within STTARS.

My thanks to all the staff of STTARS, whether in administration or client services for the work that you do towards the achievement of our mission and for your commitment to our clients.

Australia has agreed to accept around 12,000 refugees from war-torn Syria and Iraq and we have begun to see people arriving under this program. At this stage the numbers are small but with the expected arrival in the State of large groups of people from Syria we are anticipating an increase in demand for STTARS services. Consequently we are in the process of recruiting additional resources to meet the need.

Whilst I am only here for a short period it has been a privilege to lead this organization in a period of transition. I have great confidence that STTARS will build in the effectiveness of outcomes for clients and in the scope and range of services it provides and will continue to be a place of welcome, of safety, of healing and of restoration for many hundreds of new arrivals to our country.

David Shepherd
Acting CEO

Staff Members 2015-2016

Chief Executive Officer
Stephanie Miller

Manager Client and Clinical Services
David Tully
(to September 2015)

Acting Manager Service Development and Partnerships
Kathrine Cock
(July - December 2015)

Interim Manager Client Services
Zheela Vokes
(from January 2016)

Interim Manager Clinical Services
Sandy Policansky
(from November 2015)

Manager Corporate and Community Services
Anne Nixon

Manager ICT
Daryl Eckermann

Client Services
Rima Abu-Assi
Nellie Anderson
Amritha Aparnadas
Kerri Berardi
Ryan Carr
Sophie Coote
Slavica Dedijer
Abigail George
Rebecca Goudie
Carolyn Grace
Keltie Grant
Ami-Louise Harrison
Lisa Jenkins
Gulshan Hussein
Mehak Khandeparkar

Ghani Nasery
Wah Wah Naw
Mthobeli Ngcanga
Donatien Ntikahavuye
Melanie McGuigan
Dale Peterson
Teresa Puvimanasinghe
Gemma Sadler
Karl Schmitz
Matt Seabrook
Riziki Saidi
Biji Seby
Megan Semczuk
Melissa Tweedie
Alica Varesanovic
Mini Varghese
Manja Visschedijk
Elly Wild

Corporate and Community Services
Ashlynn Bayley
Jane Cooper
Karma Dolkar
Graeme Duncan
Lisa Howe
Clementina Humphrey
Marina Lever
Zoe Lyons
Penny Payne
Sahar Rezaee
Ghavamabadi
Sallyanne Scholefield
Maria Siros
Komang Sukraeeni-Francis

Visiting Mental Health Consultants
Dr Daya Somasundaram
Dr John Raftery
Melissa Tweedie

Students
Tess Cunningham



“ Australia was such a different world, I could not believe it. Nobody trying to kill you. It felt safe. I felt so blessed by God. ”

OUR WORK WITH CLIENTS

Our Work with Clients

STTARS provides services to individuals, families and groups. We work with adults, children and young people. Our services include psychological treatment and assessment, with a particular focus on people from refugee, refugee like and asylumseeker backgrounds transitioning from war, conflict and violence into settlement and safety.

Promoting recovery through a strengths-based, client-centered approach, counsellors and caseworkers not only provide specialized trauma-informed counselling but also assist clients with access to mainstream services, including education, employment, income support, housing and health, within South Australia.

STTARS services also include the provision of therapeutic groups and community education activities to enhance access and inclusion opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers.

Our staff are experienced in undertaking comprehensive assessments to establish appropriate therapeutic goals with clients; in recognizing and responding to the effects of torture and trauma; and providing counselling that is trauma-informed, strengths-based and recovery oriented.

We provide these services at our Adelaide CBD site and at outreach sites in Bowden, Salisbury and Mt Gambier and, as required, in schools, community centers and clients' homes.

Our service delivery sites are increasingly responsive to ease of access for client needs and we continue to monitor patterns of where new arrivals are settling in urban and regional SA to respond to growing demand.

STTARS has a strong and unwavering commitment to refugees and asylum seekers and the capacity to meet complex needs across multiple client groups



It has been a successful year for STTARS service provision, as we strive to provide best practice interventions to clients and meet funding agreement targets.

Referrals and Assessment

STTARS operates a managed waiting list and a full-time Intake Coordinator provides the first point of contact for all referrals. Clients have an intake interview within 48 hours of referral. If eligible for STTARS services, clients are either allocated to a counsellor for assessment and services, or placed on the waiting list to be seen by the first suitable, available counsellor. Priority is determined by severity of symptoms and the availability and adequacy of other supports. Children, young people and sole parents receive additional consideration and are seen as quickly as possible.

While on the waiting list, clients are telephoned regularly to monitor and respond to any deterioration in condition and provide assistance with issues such as housing, finance, and access to physical health services. Information and advice on self-care is also provided. Many clients are referred through to our case work service, where appropriate, to resolve practical issues and provide links to mainstream services.



Photo Credit: UNHCR

Adult Refugees

STTARS provides psychosocial counselling and support to survivors of torture and trauma from a variety of cultural backgrounds, who have arrived in Australia from a range of countries, including: Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Pakistan, Sudan, Liberia, Pakistan, Somalia, Rwanda, Congo and Egypt, Burma and Sri Lanka.

Adult clients are referred to STTARS through a variety of sources, with the majority being self-referrals or referral by General Practitioners. Interventions through counselling range according to the needs of the client from utilising techniques such as mindfulness, relaxation, and sleep hygiene to narrative therapy, grief and loss counselling and cognitive behavioural approaches.

Children and Young People

STTARS provides therapeutic programs for children, young people and their families. The majority of our support is specialised trauma counselling for individuals and families with complementary group programs to support this work in schools and youth agencies. The group programs aim to address the needs of students from refugee backgrounds with histories of psychological and physiological trauma. These programs are aimed at refugee children with significant challenges in both the school and family context.

As deemed appropriate, STTARS counsellors provide services to children and young people at their schools. Not only has this improved the therapeutic support for students from refugee backgrounds, but it has also built collegial relationships between staff and counsellors and provided much needed consultancy to teaching staff.

We work in partnership with the Department of Communities and Social Inclusion, the Department of Education and Child Development (DECD) and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) to provide training to staff regarding working with children and young people from a refugee background. Since 2006, we have worked collaboratively with these agencies through the Intensive English Language Centres (IELCs - formerly the New Arrivals Program) to support the mental health needs of students.

This year STTARS provided support in more than twenty schools in South Australia. The most intensive support was provided at the Adelaide Secondary School of English where STTARS counsellors were present on a weekly basis throughout the year.

“ After talking to you, the ‘big’ feelings in my stomach have gone down – I feel better. ”



Intensive Family Support Program

In 2015 -2016, STTARS introduced a new counselling program for families, funded by SA the Department of Communities and Social Inclusion, specifically for families from a refugee background living in the Eastern Adelaide Region. The purpose of the Intensive Family Support Program is to support families with children who are experiencing difficulties with cultural transition as a part of their settlement, so that they can manage the problems and challenges which they face using a strengths-based approach.

The IFS service implements a holistic and family counselling approach to provide early intervention with the aim of preventing family breakdown, child abuse and neglect, family violence and drug or alcohol abuse. It identifies personal strengths and skills to build resilience and assist family members to feel safe. As appropriate, it provides psycho-education, information and strategies to resolve conflict between individual family members. The program also aims to increase family social connections, encouraging families to participate in their local communities, as well as to improve confidence to access mainstream services.

To date, relationships have been formed with a range of organisations and providers such as, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), Department of Education and Child Development (DECD), Eastern Domestic Violence Services, Norwood Dental and Medical Centre, Hope's Café; Eastern Adelaide Region Schools Mental Health Hub; Gilles Street Intensive English Language; East Torrens Primary School, Norwood Morialta High School, a number of Catholic and Independent Schools; and Adelaide Metropolitan Multicultural Services Network (which encompasses approximately thirty services).

Asylum Seekers

Asylum seekers in Australia can be particularly vulnerable to psychological and physical distress and can therefore be in need of specialised support services. They can face prolonged periods of uncertainty while awaiting a decision about their claims for protection to the Australian government, which can generate fear and anxiety, increasing symptoms associated with previous torture and trauma experiences.

Throughout the year, STTARS has continued to provide torture and trauma counselling and other vital assistance to asylum seekers living in the South Australian community while they await the outcome of their visa applications and to clients who are staying in the Adelaide Immigration Transition Accommodation (AITA). Within the period 2015-2016, STTARS assisted 158 Asylum Seekers, within the city and the South Eastern of SA.



STTARS works hard to develop and maintain positive partnerships with key service providers for asylum seekers. We have maintained positive working relationships with the Australian Migrant Resource Centre, Australian Red Cross Migration Support Programs and the Life without Barriers National Immigration Support Service.

STTARS Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS)

In 2012, asylum seeker status determination was effectively suspended by the Australian government for people arriving by boat. In December 2014, Inverbrackie Alternative Place of Detention was decommissioned. Upon closure, most Inverbrackie detainees were granted bridging visas or placed on community detention and settled in the Adelaide region. The same year, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) changed the asylum seeker support programs to the (current) Status Resolution Support Service. As such, all asylum seekers are now provided



with services under this program, whether in held or community detention or living in the community on a bridging visa. Since this time, many asylum seekers have been granted bridging visas and have been waiting for the opportunity to lodge a claim for protection, to be granted either a temporary protection visa (TPV) or a safe haven enterprise visa (SHEV). In June 2015, the Federal government introduced a 'fast track' process.

STTARS provides services to people seeking asylum in Australia, of any age, through the Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS). The majority of these clients came to Australia via boat between August 2012 and January 2014, however there are a small minority who arrived in Australia via plane.

Changes in the way asylum seeker protection applications are assessed and how the Australian government deals with/detains asylum seekers have impacted the way in which STTARS provides services to asylum seeker clients. One of the most significant changes occurred when DIBP combined all detention and community asylum seeker programs under the one umbrella program, called the SRSS.

- STTARS has worked closely with International Health and Medical Services (IHMS), SERCO, DIBP staff and AITA management over the year, to continue to provide counselling services to those in held detention at the AITA, although the numbers have dropped significantly over the year.

- STTARS continues to liaise with settlement providers such as Australian Red Cross, the Australian Migrant Resource Centre, Life Without Barriers and all other stakeholders regarding clients in both community detention and on temporary Bridging Visas. Individual adults, families, and unaccompanied minors living in community detention are being referred for torture and trauma counselling. STTARS continues to respond to these referrals, providing counselling, while also continuing to liaise with stakeholders regarding client well-being and their emerging needs.

Some asylum seekers are 'unfunded', which means they have been assessed as having adequate supports and do not require support through the SRSS. These clients must rely on their own resources to access services, housing and employment. Although not finally determined, these clients often find themselves very vulnerable, particularly in relation to resettlement and torture and trauma issues. One reason for being exited from SRSS is due to a negative decision from DIBP. This is often a crisis point for our clients and can affect their mental health and well-being significantly. This is the point at which the client is most vulnerable and most at risk, requiring regular support and contact. STTARS continues to provide counselling support to these clients as a matter of priority.



Outreach Services

A number of STTARS clients experience difficulties in attending office based appointments. Some of the difficulties impacting such clients include physical or mental health problems, family care responsibilities or limited access to transportation. STTARS therefore continues to provide a large number of outreach services and therapeutic counselling out of the office, dependent upon appropriateness, in schools or other health settings where our clients feel most comfortable.

In 2015 STTARS identified the need to provide ongoing support for clients residing in the northern suburbs who found it difficult to access our city office. The decision to form a collaborative partnership with Life Without Barriers in Salisbury was implemented, and a shared work space was developed to service our clients. Since November 2015, counsellors and case workers have been providing weekly sessions for clients from this Salisbury site, assisting the growing demographic of clients residing within that region.

Regional: South East South Australia

STTARS has established a prominent presence in the South East region of South Australia, with an office in Mount Gambier and services in Naracoorte offering counselling and support to asylum seekers and refugees.

There is a STTARS counsellor based in the South East who has continued to provide specialised trauma services to existing clients in both Mount Gambier and Naracoorte, as well as respond to additional new referrals. She has worked closely with schools in the region, providing advice and training on how to best support young refugee students who have been affected by trauma. Using a community development approach, she has provided ongoing support to over 20 agencies within the South East region within the past year.

STTARS has responded to new client referrals from Bordertown, received from January onwards. Two counsellors from the city office visited Bordertown to conduct initial assessments, and then provided



counselling services and consultancy to local schools. Working in close partnership with the Australian Migrant Resource Centre, STTARS has received the majority of referrals from this source within the Bordertown area.

Visiting Mental Health Consultants

The Refugee Mental Health Clinic is based on a service model originally developed by the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture and Trauma and Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit. Under the auspices of STTARS, a number of registered mental health practitioners with specialist expertise provide a dedicated service to refugees and asylum seekers under the Medicare-funded 'Better Access to Mental Health Care' initiative. Psychologists and psychiatrists from the clinic work jointly with STTARS staff to offer comprehensive services to our clients.

As a result of the work of the Refugee Mental Health Clinic STTARS has been able to increase the range of services provided to clients and has improved access for clients to public sector mental health services. Staff have also valued the opportunity to consult with visiting specialists on complex client issues and collaborate on providing care to STTARS clients.

Interpreters

Interpreters are an integral part of STTARS service provision. We would like to acknowledge Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS National) in their provision of



fee-free interpreting services to our clients. This enables survivors to fully understand the recovery processes they are engaged in, and for STTARS counsellors to engage meaningfully with them. Interpreters work tirelessly with STTARS clients and in many cases assist clients in other environments to ensure their wellbeing and smooth settlement into their new communities and lives. Thank you to all those interpreters who have been involved with our clients in 2015-16. We greatly appreciate their professionalism, accuracy and community connections.

Case Work

Settlement in Australia can be a stressful process, because of persistent difficulties associated with experiences in countries of origin, dangerous flight and precarious transit. The STTARS case work service is available to clients to assist in addressing the many social and practical issues that are often present while people are dealing with the ongoing effects of torture and trauma in their lives.

Critically, resolving these issues can be complicated by a number of barriers, which include:

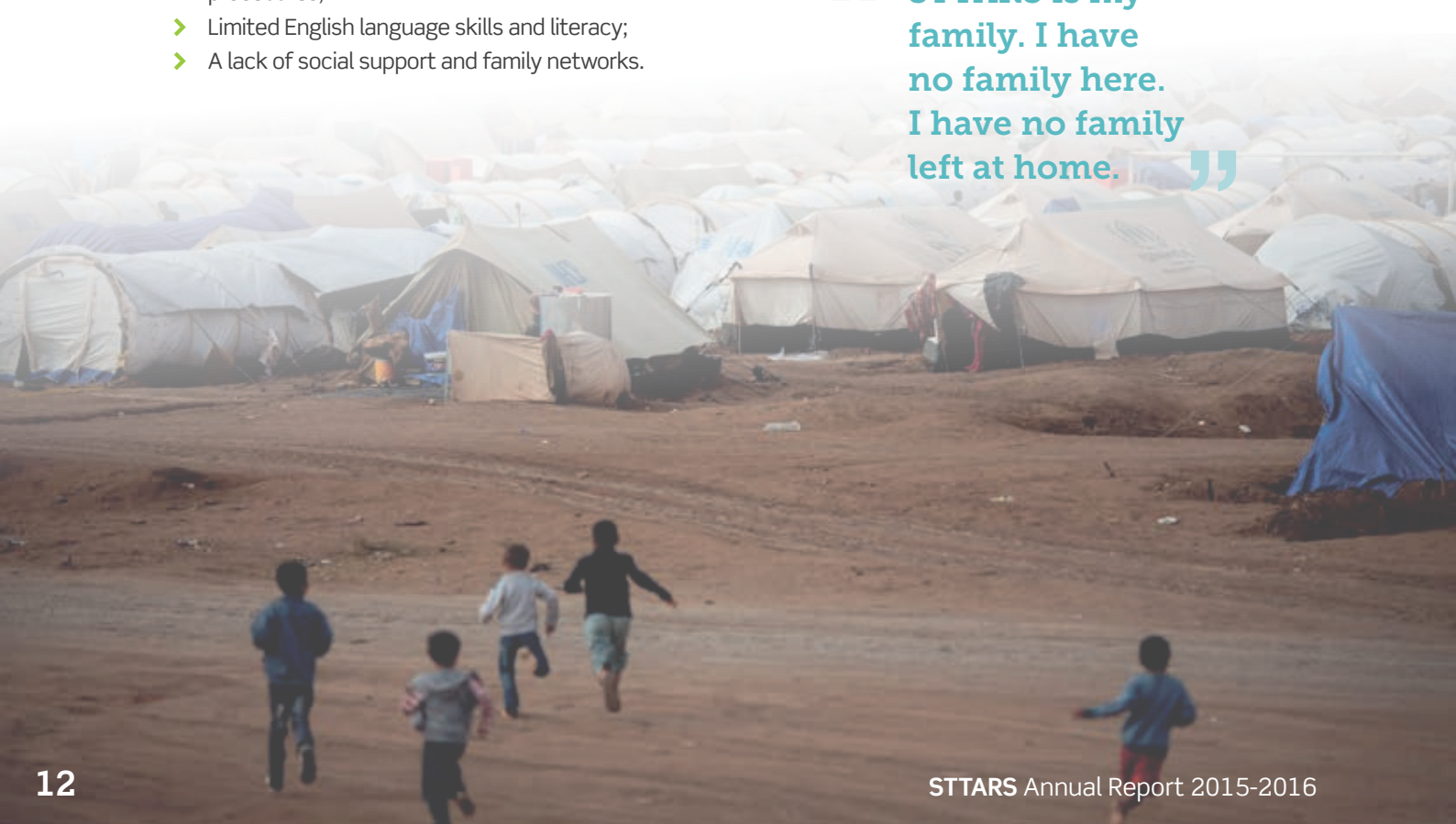
- Complex and confusing formal systems and procedures;
- Limited English language skills and literacy;
- A lack of social support and family networks.

STTARS recognises that these stressors can often exacerbate trauma symptoms and employs specialised case workers to provide practical support to clients. STTARS case workers facilitate access to mainstream and specialist services to assist in the recovery process. Such support includes information provision, direct support and advocacy, such as:

- Assessment of practical support needs
- Skills development e.g. referral to programs such as English or household management; providing education on use of interpreting services
- Linking with services, key programs and people e.g. legal, financial and health; specialist services such as homelessness services, domestic violence services and other family support services; Centrelink and Medicare
- Linking with cultural and wider community/ies
- Assistance with housing
- Disability Support Pension applications

Due to the particular issues of the client group, case work can be intense in terms of complexity. For this client group, specialised case work has been invaluable.

“ **STTARS is my family. I have no family here. I have no family left at home.** ”



Group Work

In addition to individual services, STTARS has conducted a range of therapeutic groups and activities for adults, children and young people. In 2015-16 STTARS facilitated 19 groups with a total of 150 participants.

‘Reconnections’ - Chronic Pain Group

Following the success of the initial STTARS Reconnections Chronic Pain Group in 2015, counsellors decided to run another Reconnections Program this year. Eligible clients had a history of unresolved and often unexplained pain issues adversely impacting on their health and wellbeing.

A framework that aims to facilitate a broader understanding of chronic pain issues and its management in a cross-cultural context underpins the program. It also aimed to improve client's quality of life, restore hope, confidence, trust and build upon broad social and cultural connections pertinent to client wellbeing.

This year's group consisted of eight males and four females from various age groups and cultural backgrounds with sessions running at the Welcome Centre in Salisbury for four hours every fortnight over sixteen weeks.

By utilising a range of evidence based therapies, staff explored multiple coping strategies aimed at supporting individuals living with chronic pain including nutrition, diet, exercise, sleep hygiene, medication management, mindfulness, relaxation techniques, group discussions and narrative based principles of individual's storytelling.

Evaluation of the program on its completion by the counsellors showed that clients reported a decrease in their pain scores and an increase in their daily coping strategies.

Recently counsellors made a submission to present these findings at the FASSTT conference in Sydney in March 2017.

“ **The Pain Group has become my medicine.** ”



STTARS Counsellor Dale Peterson and STTARS Board Member Luci Lovelock

Colours of Life Group

In February 2016, STTARS held a community art exhibition at our head office in Adelaide to showcase the work undertaken by clients from “The Colours of Life” art therapeutic group. This event was a component of STTARS 25th Anniversary events program. Colours of Life was a group that was held over a span of more than two years and was accessed by both male and female clients of STTARS, many of whom previously never had the opportunity to use art or creativity as a form of expression, or indeed, as a method to assist with traumatic experiences.

The artwork was framed and curated and the artists were invited to attend the launch and celebrate this process, along with their supporting counsellors and interpreters who had been involved in the group. Siamak Fallah, who been the group educator and facilitator, spoke at the launch about how he personally experienced changes in the “The Colours of Life” participants through the course of the group. He emphasised how the ability to share stories in a supportive environment relating to their art - and often relating to their trauma - was conducive to individual growth and confidence building.

When asked about how the project had been of value to them, one participant said:

“The Colours of Life project gave me the opportunity to experiment with drawing and painting and gave me experiences that became a catalyst for an inner transformation.”

One piece of artwork displayed at the launch entitled, “The Map”, by ‘The Colours of Life’ artist Saad Tlaa, was chosen for reproduction as a postcard through full sponsorship by Avant Card. This resulted in a nation-wide distribution of over 10,000 postcards throughout Australia, featuring Saad’s story and outlining STTARS services.

‘The Map’, depicts Saad’s journey as a refugee over a period of 20 years and is, “colour coded from red to purple to warm yellow to green”. As Saad describes the image: “the background is a mixture of colourful swirls that depict turmoil and turbulence that constantly engulf the world. Australia is like a green zone whilst the rest of the world is in chaos”.

Saad described his journey from Iraq to Kuwait as moving from one unsafe place to another. He felt that it

was by destiny that he arrived in the Philippines, as he had hoped this would be his final destination, however, the Philippines also turned out to be unsafe for him and his family. Finally, after being on the move for almost 20 years, Saad arrived in Australia - which he hopes will be his final destination.

‘Team of Life Soccer Day’

In mid- 2016, STTARS facilitated the ‘Team of Life Soccer Day’ school holiday activity. This program was directed at young people aged between 16 – 25 years, both male and female. Clients from Afghanistan, East and Central Africa and Sri Lanka participated in indoor soccer and basketball games. With the use of the gym and sporting equipment at the community centre, the young people had fun with the other participants and shared time together in an environment conducive to feeling connected as a team.

Supported by STTARS counsellors, the young people were engaged in a Narrative Therapy approach to assist with group connection and to develop their personal story within the structure of the group. They discussed dealing with their histories in the context of life in Australia. Conversations were facilitated about the meaning of belonging and identity, how this



‘The Map’ by Saad Tlaa

interweaves with their settlement in Australia, and what their futures can become. The young people spoke about what recovery goals may look like for them and how they can be achieved. As a group, the young people expressed how a day such as the 'Team of Life Soccer Day' enabled social connection and expressed that they felt they had developed a stronger sense of confidence and resilience.

Trauma Informed Yoga Therapy Group

STTARS recognises that many refugee trauma clients suffer from pain, discomfort and physical injuries. A healthy living foundation, including diet, sleep and exercise, is crucial to coping with the stressors of resettlement and dealing with trauma symptoms. STTARS provided a trauma informed yoga therapy group, in conjunction with counselling talk therapies, with the goals of achieving:

- Increased awareness of body sensations, behaviours, emotions and thoughts
- Relief from existing pain and discomfort
- Improved well-being and increased fitness and mobility

The group was presented as a four-session program, which took place weekly at the STTARS office in Angas Street. Women from more than four cultures came to connect socially, and to learn gentle yoga exercises and meditation techniques. With the addition of psycho-education, the STTARS counsellor and yoga teacher shared information and self-help strategies to manage emotional issues and assist with improving sleeping patterns. The women reported that they felt more able to connect to their breathing, which they said was calmer and more regulated over time.

With a regular home practice and a focus on discussing improvements at each class, the women began to see changes in their ability to feel more comfortable in the different postures (asanas), and they enjoyed taking time for themselves to connect body and mind. The women found that within a relatively short period of time, they identified the different movements, without assistance from the interpreters, and learned how to position well by watching the yoga teacher and counsellor. The yoga teacher observed that following

the initial class, the clients developed a high degree of participation and interest in the group.



Group Drumming Programs

Drumming has been part of traditional healing rituals in many cultures throughout the world and has been used to develop therapeutic strategies. Drumming builds on the foundation of the therapeutic value of musical expression and integrates discussions and themes into a program.

STTARS counsellors conducted numerous Drumming Groups across local primary and high schools in Adelaide and included over 50 children and young people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Participants in the group presented with symptoms of torture and trauma, anxiety, hyperarousal, concentration problems and behavioural difficulties. The Drumming Groups served as a safe, fun and comfortable environment for the children to learn to manage these symptoms.

Some of the themes covered during the groups were drawn from analogies made between the drumming experience and everyday life, including communication, building social connections, problem solving, self-expression, emotions and teamwork. Interactive games and discussions were also included as part of the sessions.

Positive outcomes of the groups were observed on three dimensions, developed by staff, called the "Three C's", including Concentration, Connectedness and Confidence. Participants became aware of and how to manage their stress responses, learned strategies



for emotional regulation, and developed strong relationships with other group members over the course of the group. Results also indicated that their levels of self-esteem, school attendance, cooperation and collaboration had increased considerably.

Afghan Women's Group

The experiences that refugees have may make them fearful or suspicious. When torture and trauma survivors come together in safe groups, they are able to learn to trust again. They can make friends, support one another, learn together and share their grief. In addition, group members can benefit from the experiences and insights of other group members and approach counsellors for advice and assistance in an informal manner.

Through the months of April and May this year, STTARS counsellors facilitated opportunities for female Afghan clients to meet at a venue in the city, with the objective of decreasing social isolation, creating connections and sharing stories. The Afghan women reported to their counsellors that they looked forward to these occasions so much that they counted down each day, until they met once more.

Using the skills of Narrative Therapy practice, the women spent time recreating memories together, discussing stories of culture and belonging, and talking about how resettlement had posed both challenges and opportunities. The women spoke about how they had learned techniques to assist with adapting to Australia and learning skills, such as developing a sense of humour and reliance upon spirituality, which have supported them through this process. The Afghan women brought in items from their home country, such as, jewelry, photos, and embroidery, to give context to their rich stories and enable them to show their group aspects of themselves which they hold sacred.

Seeds of Life

During 2016, seven STTARS clients accompanied by two counsellors, an interpreter and three gardening group facilitators participated in a horticultural therapeutic program, 'The Seeds of Life'.

The 'Seeds of Life' group gathered weekly at Fullarton community Garden under the sponsorship of Cancer Care. With a strong focus on overcoming social isolation and depression, the group explored how gardening could

be therapeutic activity. For some of the clients who had come from rural farming backgrounds it was an opportunity to reconnect with familiar activities while providing an opportunity for them to share their skills and knowledge with other participants who had not gardened before.

Participants reported that attending and taking active participation in the group have a positive influence on their well-being. The participants described that the group promoted coping skills, facilitating change and developing new skills. Participants valued their experience of a supportive group dynamic where each member learns and is valued equally. Some members who had previously been particularly isolated learned the skills required to get to the group by themselves, attended regularly and made arrangements to meet up with other participants outside of the group activity.



Others reported that the mindfulness of the gardening activities, learning and sharing knowledge helped to reduce their symptoms of depression.

One participant's wife reported:

.....
"When he comes home, he is motivated, he looks after our garden and he spends more time in the garden. Earlier he used to spend time behind closed doors and I had not noticed any smile on his face."
.....

“ One day I would like to see my family. Maybe in the future, with God’s blessings, maybe they can come here and share this wonderful life in Australia. ”



**CLIENT
STATISTICS**

WHO ARE OUR CLIENTS...

AGE & GENDER

2014-2015				2015-2016		
AGE	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
0 - 10	21	36	57	13	29	42
11 - 20	90	120	210	44	76	120
21 - 30	84	109	193	70	62	132
31 - 40	111	161	272	94	130	224
41 - 50	110	125	235	111	95	206
51 - 60	62	62	124	73	70	143
61 - 70	13	14	27	14	23	37
71+	14	2	6	2	1	3
TOTAL	495	629	1124	423	499	922

VISA TYPE

529

Permanent Resident

158

Asylum Seeker

118

Permanent Protection Visas

33

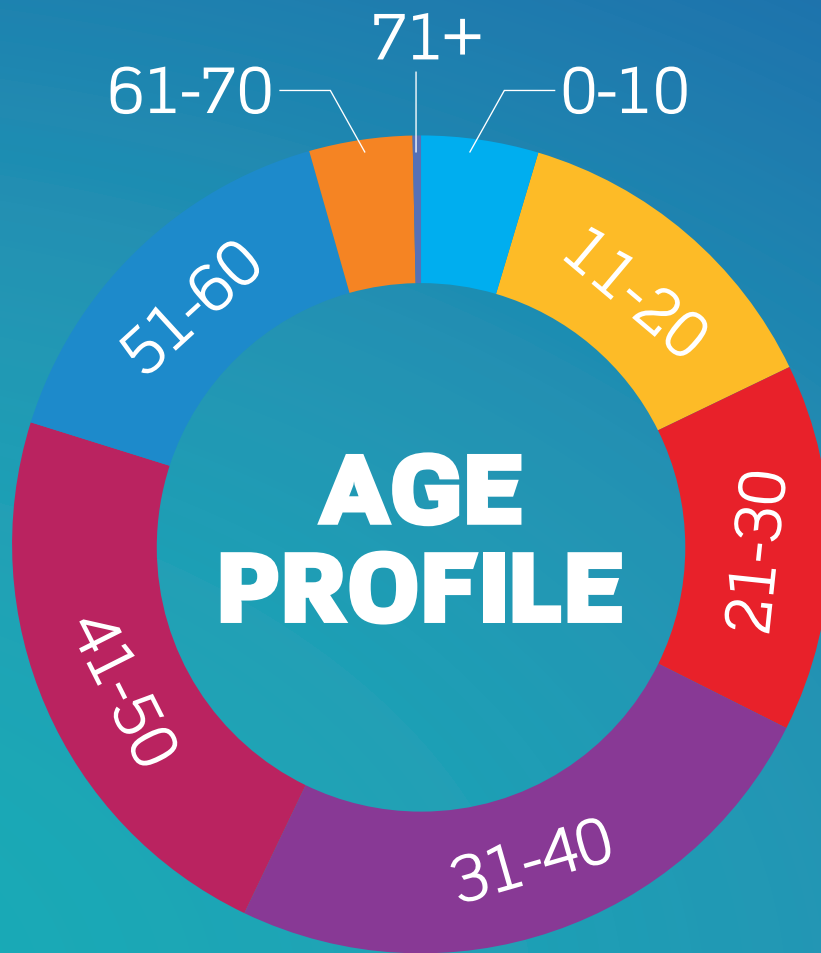
Australian Citizen

15

Temporary Visa Other

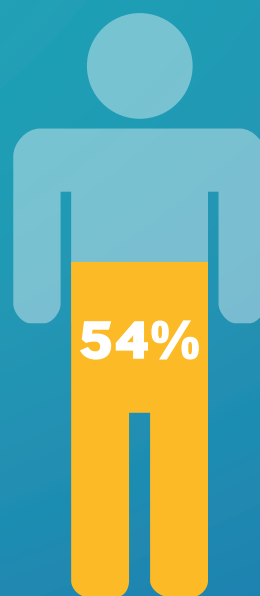
25

Other

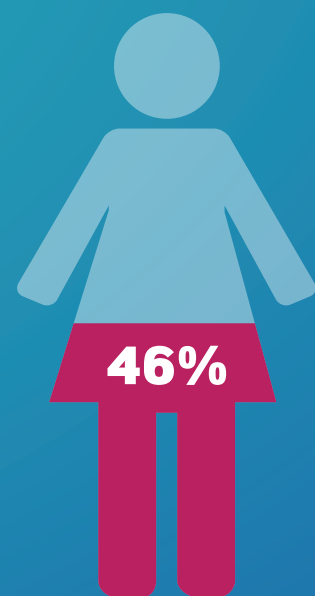


TOTAL
922

GENDER PROFILE



499



423

44

Immigration
Detention

5

WHERE OUR CLIENTS ORIGINATE FROM...



* China excludes SARs and Taiwan Province

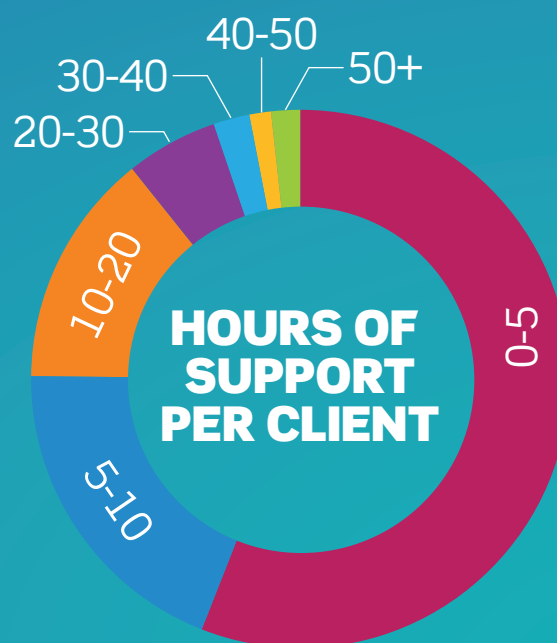


HOURS OF SUPPORT PER CLIENT IN 2015/2016

9294

Total number of Counselling Sessions

HOURS	2014-2015	2015-2016
0-5	815	516
5-10	230	177
10-20	71	130
20-30	6	51
30-40	1	20
40-50	1	12
51+	0	16
Total	1124	922



SOURCE OF NEW REFERRALS

12

Accommodation Service

53

Asylum Seeker Support Service

4

Client – family/friend

106

Client – self

35

Community Welfare Organization

2

DIBP

142

Education: Primary/Secondary

4

Education: Tertiary

5

Employment Services

5

FASSTT Other

15

Health: Allied

313

Health: General Medical

34

Health: Mental

60

HSS

1

Legal: migration

8

Legal: Non-migration issue

17

Other Services

9

Settlement Support Service

2015-2016 TOTAL
825

Training and Community Education

Through extensive relationship building with service providers supportive of our clients, STTARS has been responsible for the provision of training and sharing knowledge with numerous health, education and community organisations.

Within the 2015-16 period, STTARS delivered 22 training programs across South Australia, reaching 632 participants. It was agreed that through these trainings, opportunities were created not only to network efficiently, but to profile the work undertaken by STTARS.

STTARS provided training to the following organisations, including but, not limited to: Department of Communities and Social Inclusion; Women and Children's Health Network; Adelaide University Graduate Program in Counselling and Psychotherapy; Royal Adelaide Hospital Social Work Department; Northern Health Network; The Australian Centre for Social Innovation; South Australian Psychiatry Branch; Salisbury TAFE; Uniting Communities Burundi Association; and various primary schools throughout Adelaide and the metropolitan region.

Some topics of professional development, which have been commonly requested, have included:

- Introduction to the refugee experience and the work of STTARS
- Recognise and respond to survivors of torture and trauma

- Skills for culturally competent practice
- Working with children and young people
- Working with asylum seeker and refugees in the health context.

As part of the development of building relationships premised on efficacy and the provision of expert trauma related service, STTARS has worked with: the Department of Communities and Social Inclusion, the Department of Education and Child Development (DECD) and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) throughout the previous twelve months. We are looking at new avenues to extend this training into 2016-17.

In order to support young people from a refugee background with trauma histories, STTARS has been working with the Intensive English Language Centres (IELCs - formerly the New Arrivals Program) throughout the year, and in fact, this relationship has been maintained since 2006 as a collaborative directive to ensure best service delivery for our clients attending this program. STTARS has counsellors located at the Adelaide Secondary School of English on allocated days, in direct response to the increase in requests from staff, to provide therapeutic support for students from refugee backgrounds.

“ **Counselling opens the doors of kindness to me.** ”



One Thousand Lifetimes in One Lifetime

- November 2015

In partnership with The Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre at the University of South Australia, STTARS hosted 'One Thousand Lifetimes in One Lifetime', a photographic exhibition showcasing the work of award-winning documentary photographers Barat Ali Batoor and Kate Geraghty.

The photographic exhibition ran at The Hawke Centre for several weeks and the launch event on 5 November was opened by His Excellency, the Honourable Hieu Van Le AC, Governor of South Australia.

The exhibition enhanced the message of "hope in the face of increasing global conflict and displacement". The powerful images displayed offered a unique insight into the unfolding of the lives and journeys of the survivors who access our services, their resilience and the importance of hope and connection to the recovery journey.



His Excellency Mr Hieu Van Le AC,
STTARS CEO Stephanie Miller and
photojournalist Barat Ali Batoor



Sustainable Rehabilitation for Survivors and their Communities

- 8 June, 2016

Paris Aristotle AM, Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc. (VFST), was invited by STTARS to present a partnership event held at The Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre at the University of South Australia, on June 8, 2016 in acknowledgement of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

This event was a component of STTARS 25th Anniversary events program. Paris is also Chair of the Settlement Services Advisory Council, and advisor to the Australian Government on refugee and asylum seeker policy. He was invited to speak about global trends in refugee migration and how Australia can respond to the growing humanitarian crisis which to date, has ensured the displacement of an estimated 18 million people in Syria alone.

More than 300 people were in attendance for Paris' presentation as he reviewed current settlement issues



within Australia. In this address, Paris focused upon the most effective ways to "Support Life after Torture", not only for the intake of 12,000 Syrian/Iraqi refugees displaced as a direct cause of the terrifying war and ongoing conflict within that region, but to highlight concerns for refugees already living in Australia. He reviewed the challenges posed by current Australian government policy for service providers in the refugee and asylum seeker sector, for successful settlement for humanitarian refugees in Australia and how we, as global citizens, can respond to the growing humanitarian crisis.



Strategic Directions 2015-2020

OUR VISION | A community in which survivors of torture and trauma thrive and flourish

► OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

We provide trauma-informed, culturally responsive services that recognise the values, needs and aspirations of our clients

We work with communities to build health literacy, social capital and resilience

We develop collaborations for innovation, growth and service improvement

We inspire courageous governance, service excellence and a vibrant and inclusive organisational culture

► OUTCOMES

- 1** Client needs are met and their expectations exceeded
- 2** Clients participate in and actively contribute to our society
- 3** Improved mental health and wellbeing

- 1** Clients, their families and communities influence how services are planned, delivered and evaluated
- 2** Improved individual and community health literacy
- 3** People can manage the problems and challenges they face with resilience

- 1** Improved stakeholder relations
- 2** Lead agency for responses to refugee and asylum seeker torture and trauma
- 3** Innovation and excellence through collaborative service planning, delivery and evaluation

- 1** Our culture and systems foster wellbeing, innovation and excellence
- 2** Increased and diversified funding for sustainability and growth
- 3** We meet and exceed contractual performance targets and deliverables

► STRATEGIES

- 1** A client centred recovery oriented practice framework
- 2** A clinical workforce strategy to support our practice framework and delivery of these service outcomes
- 3** Advise and educate health and other services in trauma-informed, culturally responsive approach
- 4** Systems and processes for effective service planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation

- 1** An active and valued client reference group
- 2** Work with communities to identify and support opportunities for capacity building and peer education
- 3** Develop and promote relevant health literacy resources
- 4** Work with community leaders to reduce stigma

- 1** A stakeholder engagement strategy
- 2** Explore and develop strategic co-location opportunities
- 3** Develop and respond to research proposals and partnerships
- 4** Establish a sector development consultancy
- 5** Co-ordinate a strategic forum of services for survivors of torture and trauma

- 1** A continuous quality improvement strategy
- 2** A business development strategy
- 3** Refresh and sustain excellence in clinical and corporate governance
- 4** Professional development pathways and employment practices that support cultural diversity and inclusion

Laying the Groundwork

In 2015-2016, STTARS undertook a number of projects and initiatives that are all linked to implementing our Strategic Directions 2015-2020, helping us to continue to work with and connect with our client communities in meaningful and effective ways, and strengthening our ability to plan and deliver responsive, high quality services.

New Electronic Client Management System

A major focus for STTARS during 2015 and 2016 was a project to investigate and then purchase and implement a new electronic system for managing client data and client clinical records. This is always a big undertaking for any organisation and can often be challenging. STTARS, as member of the national FASSTT network, has made a commitment to ongoing improvement in collecting and reporting data and working towards standardising this, where possible, to improve our collective record of the work that we do, as well as to offer increased opportunities for shared service planning and research.

A new electronic “client management system” (CMS) also helps us deliver our services better, moving us beyond paper based client files. This makes it possible for staff to be more flexible and mobile in providing services to our clients, using portable electronic devices and still able to access important client information. It ensures that we can retrieve information more efficiently and accurately and integrate our records where clients participate in different services that we offer, providing a more holistic picture of their care.

A STTARS working group was led by Daryl Eckermann, Manager ICT. The group completed a very comprehensive and robust scoping of our requirements and then looked at a range of different systems in use across the country. The final recommendation was that we should purchase a CMS that has been developed by our sister organisation in NSW: Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of



Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS). This approach has offered fantastic opportunities for collegial work between our two agencies. We purchased the system in December 2015, “as developed” by STARTTS. Next began the process of re-configuration so the CMS would cater for South Australia-specific funding programs, our specific service offerings and localisation of the system for our use in South Australia. Then came the task of putting systems and processes in place to preserve all client demographic data and transfer it into the new CMS.

This project of CMS implementation has also included client case note data auditing, review of our case-noting structures and practices and significant standardisation of our data collection and recording practices, all of which has contributed to overall quality improvement for our services. The new electronic client data management system successfully “went live”, on schedule, on 1 July 2016, the first day of our funding and financial reporting periods.

Website Project

In 2016 STTARS commenced a project to refresh and rebuild our website and at the same time, to develop an integrated social media strategy. That includes ensuring we have an active and engaging STTARS Facebook page. These resources are very important for our engagement with our client communities and our wider stakeholder groups.



The redesign for our new website has focussed on making sure it is easy to use for our identified target communities: clients, supporters, professionals and those who refer to STTARS services. We know that our website needs to be optimised for use on mobile phones and our design approach has included working with meaningful imagery and ensuring ease of navigation. We are also looking forward to making donation to STTARS a very easy process, since STTARS is a registered charity, meaning all donations are 100% tax deductible. We'll be featuring specific campaigns and projects and providing easy opportunities for the public to support us in achieving them. Watch this space for the launch of the news STTARS website!

STTARS Stakeholder Engagement Framework

In 2016, STTARS developed and implemented a Stakeholder Engagement Framework. This framework provides us with an approach which is underpinned by our organisational strategic directions and gives guidance for ensuring consistent and appropriate engagement processes for our planning, service development, initiatives and projects.

When stakeholder engagement is done well, it helps to ensure inclusive participation in decision-making, assisting in putting the voice of clients and those who engage

with our services at the centre. Understanding who our stakeholders are and strengthening our relationships with them improves our practice and adds value to our work with the community. Stakeholder engagement can “join up” activities in the sector that we work in, building links and multiplying the effects of our efforts, together.

Client Advisory Group

This year STTARS reviewed our processes for engaging with client communities and developed new terms of reference for the establishment of a Client Advisory Group. This reflects our desire to ensure that STTARS operates via a community consultative process. Participation in this group is intended for clients who are securely positioned on their recovery pathway, and for clients who are no longer requiring our service, but feel they can advise on our service delivery improvement, while developing skills which can enable confidence building. The Client Advisory Group is intended to provide a mechanism for meaningful partnership with our clients and their communities, enabling more direct client and community participation reflective of the STTARS vision, to support a community in which survivors of torture and trauma thrive and flourish.

“ **STTARS is like my home - I feel this home, when I enter these doors.** ”



Messages of Support



Australian Red Cross THE POWER OF HUMANITY

Australian Red Cross celebrates the positive contribution that STTARS has made to enhance the lives of asylum seekers and refugees over the past 25 years. We value the effective and collegiate working relationship that has developed with our Migration Support Programs.

In our humanitarian work within the South Australian community, we see a strong alignment with our ways of working, and your focus on self-empowerment and being a SURVIVOR rather than a victim. We acknowledge the enduring value of your counselling programs for some of the most vulnerable people in our community. In particular we commend the professional and compassionate understanding and support your services provide and the sense of hope this brings to the lives of so many people.

Helen Connolly
Chief Executive Officer



Welcome to Australia is grateful for the amazing work and services that STTARS provides to people seeking asylum and refugees living in the community. Many of our friends at the Welcome Centre rely on the counselling from STTARS, to deal with their past experiences and to move forward in order to build prosperous lives here in South Australia.

The Welcome Centre aims to be a safe place of refuge where every day Australians and people of asylum seeker, refugee and new arrival background are given a space to interact and build relationship. We can't do this without the wonderful work of STTARS.

I would like to thank the former CEO of STTARS Stephanie Miller for her incredible work and leadership and commend her on her achievements.

Mohammad Al-Khafaji
Chief Executive Officer



The Migrant Health Service and STTARS have had a long and successful collaborative relationship – as sister agencies providing support and therapeutic intervention to some of the most vulnerable and traumatised 'new settlers' in our community. Professional collaboration between the MHS and STTARS counselling teams, and participation in joint training opportunities has ensured that clients of both services receive a consistent best practice and evidence based approach to care - while professional peer support strategies have enhanced staff resilience in this challenging work. We value the skill and dedication of the STTARS team, as an integral partner in the refugee sector and offer congratulations for 25 years of leadership, advocacy and service excellence.

Jan Williams
Migrant Health Service - Clinical Service Coordinator



Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) has been proud to work in collaboration with STTARS and DECD in providing mental health consultation to staff working in Intensive English Language Programs since 2007. We value the partnership with STTARS and their commitment to working holistically with young people and families who have experienced torture or trauma prior to coming to Australia. This complex and difficult work enables many people's lives to be transformed and offers new hope. CAMHS looks forward to strengthening our partnership with STTARS into the future, as we work together to assist young people and families to work towards their future goals.

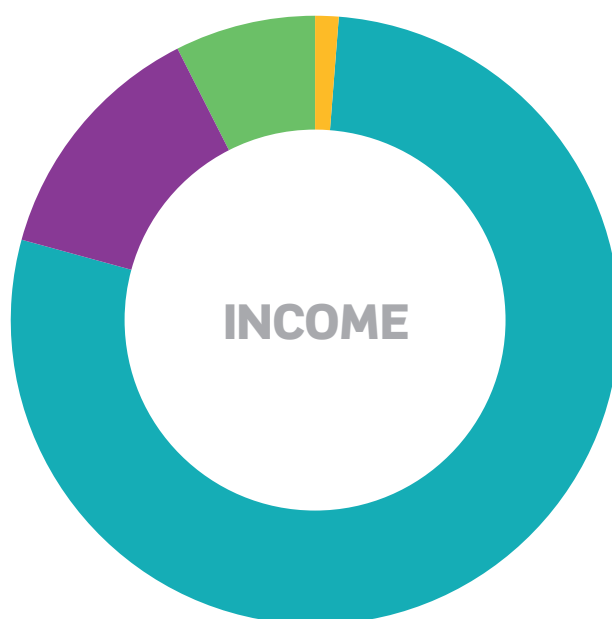
Monica McEvoy
Nurse Practitioner Multicultural Mental Health

Financial Summary

Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service
Statement of Profit and Loss and other Comprehensive Income
For the year ended 30 June 2016

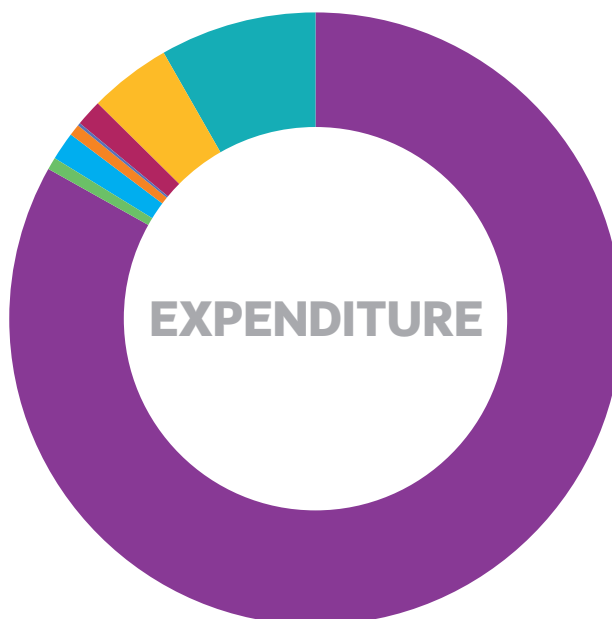
Income

Grant Income	\$3,231,990
Trade & Operating Income	\$188,698
Interest	\$32,170
Other Income	\$18,372
TOTAL INCOME	\$3,471,230



Expenditure

Salaries, Wages & Employee Expenses	\$2,528,641
Audit & Accounting Fees	\$19,745
Client Expenses	\$45,216
Depreciation	\$18,398
Insurance	\$4,452
Occupancy Expenses	\$42,363
Rent	\$131,736
Other Operating Expenses	\$251,209
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$3,041,760
OPERATING SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	\$429,470



For a full audited report provided by
Nexia Edwards Marshall visit www.sttars.org.au

Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service
Statement of Financial Position
As at 30 June 2016

Current Assets

Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$1,959,568
Debtors & Other Receivables	\$201,248
Prepayments	\$201,248
Inventory	-
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	\$2,178,325

Non Current Assets

Property Plant & Equipment	\$108,445
TOTAL NON CURRENT ASSETS	\$108,445

TOTAL ASSETS **\$2,286,770**

Current Liabilities

Trade & Other Payables	\$266,817
Grants Received in Advance	\$288,499
Income Received in Advance	\$16,478
Employee Provisions	\$159,282
Other Provisions	-
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$731,076

NET ASSETS **\$1,555,694**

TOTAL EQUITY **\$1,555,694**

Integrated Drawing Therapy
workshop with STTARS
counsellors 2016

*Drawings by Loganathan;
Sri Lanka*





STTARS gratefully acknowledges funding
from the following agencies in 2015-2016



Australian Government
Department of Health



Australian Government
**Department of Immigration
and Border Protection**



Australian Government
Department of Social Services



**Government
of South Australia**
SA Health



**Government
of South Australia**
**Department for Communities
and Social Inclusion**



sttars
supporting survivors of
torture & trauma

**Survivors of Torture and Trauma
Assistance and Rehabilitation Service**
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Adelaide SA 5000

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F 08 8223 2218
W www.sttars.org.au