

A woman with a joyful expression, wearing a white headband with white squares, a wide, colorful floral-patterned dress, and a silver choker necklace. She has her hands raised in a gesture of celebration or surprise. The background is a bright blue and yellow fabric.

OUR MISSION

To help survivors
of torture and
trauma to find
their voices
and to rebuild
their lives



Chairperson's Report

2017/18 has witnessed another period of welcome stability at STTARS.

At the AGM of 2017, members were advised that the following Board members had renominated for the STTARS Board: Sandra Gault, Carol Irizarry and John Oliphant. This left two vacancies due to the retirement of Tanja Stojadinovic and Nicola Trenorden.

One of these vacancies was filled by Bernadette McGrath, who had been formally nominated for the Board. Kaz Eaton was nominated at the AGM by the members present and she accepted the nomination. No further nominations were put forward. All Board members were therefore elected unopposed. The addition of Kaz and Bernadette brings a wealth of valuable knowledge and expertise to the Board. My thanks go to all Board members for their considerable contribution to the organisation.

As mentioned in last year's report, we were delighted that Robyn Smythe had agreed to accept the ongoing role of Director of STTARS. Robyn's knowledge of the organisation, leadership, dedication and hard work has been invaluable this year. I am pleased to report that staff turnover has continued to be minimal this year.

One of the Board's commitments last year was to re-establish a Complementary Therapies Program. Donations from the Peggy Charitable Foundation have been instrumental in helping us to re-establish this program. Services have been offered to clients during the past year and an expansion of the program - with additional volunteers - is planned for 2018/19.

A major achievement of this Board has been the revision and modernisation of the STTARS Constitution. I am pleased to report that this new STTARS Constitution was unanimously adopted by the STTARS membership at the Special General Meeting held in early September and is now in effect.

In last year's report I mentioned the importance the Board places on having a staff representative.

Historically, STTARS has had such representation at Board level, so I am pleased to report that this is now enshrined in the new STTARS Constitution.

During 2017/18, the Board committed funds to enable a major refurbishment of the Hawker Street site. The grand opening of this site formed part of the 2017 AGM in November. The site now has excellent facilities for outreach counselling and group work, with specialist areas available for art therapy, sand tray therapy and gardening groups. We would like to acknowledge the support of Housing SA in assisting with some of the refurbishments, such as the repainting and floor coverings.

As always, we would like to thank our funding bodies, without whom we could not continue. Our primary funders are the Australian Government's Department of Health, the South Australian Department of Health and Wellbeing (a sub portfolio of Government of South Australia - SA Health), the Government of South Australia - Department of Human Services, and the Adelaide Primary Health Network.

Finally, I would like to thank all our staff for their skills, hard work and dedication to assisting refugees and asylum seekers. Our clients continue to face an increasingly challenging environment and this makes the work of our staff more demanding. We are fortunate to have such a passionate and committed team to aid and support some the most vulnerable members of our community.

John Oliphant
Chair

2017-2018 Board Members



John Oliphant
Chairperson



Perla Soberon-Brittle
Treasurer



Ken Bridge
Secretary



Gay Gardner
Vice Chairperson



Sandra Gault



Janine Harrison



Carol Irizarry



Dr Abdul Stanikzai



Bernadette McGrath



Kaz Eaton



Director's Report



We seek a world where human rights are respected and hope for a day when torture and war-related trauma are no longer a reality. Unfortunately, the

current global environment means that the need for torture and trauma services remains high.

In the past year STTARS provided services for over 1,360 people - an increase of over 300 people (29%) on the previous year, yet this was still not sufficient to meet the demand for support.

As a result of the larger numbers of humanitarian arrivals settling in the eastern states, there was a commensurate redistribution of funds. This unfortunately meant that at the end of the financial year we needed to reduce a number of positions. We were sad to say goodbye to some good staff and we thank them for the valuable contributions they made. We were fortunate that the restructure was small and that the Board allowed the use of some reserves to ensure that the impact on service delivery was minimised. We have a skilled and compassionate staff whose dedication to supporting our clients has ensured that a high level of service has been maintained throughout these changes.

We are grateful for the ongoing support of our funding bodies in enabling us to continue this important work. In the past year, contracts for our core funding from both State and Commonwealth were renewed, providing added certainty for the coming years.

This year we were excited by the commencement of some new programs and the re-introduction of others:

- Many of our clients have described experiencing significant barriers when attempting to access primary health services. This year, funding from the Adelaide Primary Health Network allowed us for the first time to employ two Refugee Health Nurses. Our nurses work in partnership with bi-cultural workers from the

Australian Refugee Association to help individuals and families overcome these barriers and to build capacity within health services to better support people from refugee backgrounds

- We worked in partnership with the Bhutanese Martyrs Memorial and Torture Survivors' Society (BHUMMATSS) to develop culturally appropriate supports including a trauma-informed yoga program, to reduce the ongoing pain experienced by survivors within their community
- With the support of Dr Jill Benson we were able to provide our first General Practitioner Residency placement for Dr Jane Asteriadis. This allowed survivors to have extended appointments during which the physical causes of ongoing pain were explored and appropriate responses developed
- With the support of Dr Jackie Amos we also hosted our first Psychiatry Residency placement for Dr Anna Pereira. We look forward to Dr Pereira joining us on an ongoing basis in our Refugee Mental Health Clinic in the coming year
- Thanks to generous donations from the Peggy Charitable Foundation and the work of Lyn Butler, our Complementary Therapies program is up and running again, and providing invaluable relief to clients who experience ongoing pain
- A STTARS Community Garden has been established at our Hawker Street site thanks to the generous donations from the Unley Gardeners' Plant Rescue Group, Jill & Richard Wilson and Dianna Bickford
- We have reintroduced our Volunteer Program. Although this program has started small, we are already seeing significant outcomes in the expanded capacity of the Complementary Therapies program, the establishment of our community garden and the development of new resources to assist clients. I would like to offer my sincere thanks to our volunteers

The list of achievements for 2017/18 is long, and while many are listed in this report, inevitably others will have been left out.

I am immensely proud of the work of our staff in making these achievements possible. Nothing that we do would be possible without our skilled and compassionate staff, volunteers and interpreters. I commend every member of our team for the passion, commitment and the skill they contribute to assisting survivors of torture and trauma to rebuild their lives.



Recovery from torture and refugee trauma is a journey. When people seek support from STTARS we are invited into the privileged position of walking alongside the survivor for a part of their journey. The fundamental work of STTARS is done by survivors – those who have experienced persecution, violence, displacement and multiple losses. While we combine our experience and knowledge with theirs, it is the survivor who ultimately possesses the courage, resilience and strength to undertake that journey and make that remarkable recovery from the inhumanity suffered at the hands of others. We value highly the trust that is placed in us, and

are constantly mindful of the privilege in being invited to journey together with our clients on their path to recovery.

I feel immensely honoured to be the Director of STTARS and to have the opportunity to work with the clients, communities, staff and Board that make STTARS such an exceptional service.

Robyn Smythe
Director

Afghani Girl

A poem by Adela

My heart is torn in the city of Kabul
I'm standing on a bridge, shattered by sadness
My body is from Ghazni, but I'm somewhere else
My flowers in Ghazni are fading,
My tongue is not confident to say,
My heart is getting torn to pieces,
Afghans are on the path to evolution.
But books of reasoning now lie in pieces.

The girl becomes a student at school
Then, like tiny flowers she has seen blown up
Her hopes are shattered.

The young girl, walking down a path of a new country
She jumps in happiness.
She's starting a new life,
Starts building new hopes,
Communicating with new people,
Thinking of a better life.
She starts to learn the language of her hopes,
She gets the things that she thought she dreamt of, shattered in the past
She understands she is a lucky person.
She starts to get a good education for her hopes
She understands that bad things happen to good people
She wants to be safe and hold on to her hopes
She knows that life is hard in a different country
She is brave.
She will do everything to achieve her hopes and dreams.



Our Staff

Director

Robyn Smythe

Executive Assistant

Jane Cooper (to June 18)

Clinical Services Managers

Ana Maria Allimant Holas
Lisa Johnson (to June 2018)

Counselling Team Leaders

Karl Schmitz
Matthew Seabrook
Maria Morales
Riziki Saidi
Mtho Ngcanga

Intake & Clinic Coordinator

Alica Varesanovic

Complementary Therapies Coordinator

Lyn Butler

South East Regional Coordinator

Sophie Coote

Community Engagement Officer

Ashlynn Bayley (to Jan 2018)

Senior Counsellor/Advocates

Dale Peterson
Teresa Puvimanasinghe

Counsellor/Advocates

Akar Pardedar
Amritha Aparnadas
Dart Russell
Donatien Ntikahavuye
Gary Outten
Ghani Nasery

Gulshan Hussain

Hayley Johnston (to June 2018)

Keltie Grant (to Aug 2017)

Mehak Khandeparkar

Melanie McGuigan

Melissa Tweedie (to Nov 2017)

Milijana Stojadinovic

Mini Varghese

Nellie Anderson

Rhett McDonald

Sarah Moya

Steve Thompson

Refugee Health Nurses

Bridgit McAteer

Muslima Huka

Maurisa McColm (May 18 to July 18)

Refugee Mental Health Clinic

Dr Daya Somasundaram

Dr John Raftery

Dr Rick Curnow

Manja Visschedijk

Hayley Johnston

Senior Caseworker

Slavica Dedijer

Caseworkers

Hellen Magoi (to Sept 2018)

Nasim Mosaffa

Rima Abu-Assi

Sandy Wai (to June 2018)

Manager ICT

Daryl Eckermann

Senior Finance Officer

Graeme Duncan

Office Coordinator

Marina Lever

Admin Assistants

Carol Cantlon

Hayley Radford (to March 2018)

Karen Bailey

Karma Dolkar (to June 2018)

Komang Sukraeni-Francis

Maria Siros

Students

Anna Pereira (Psychiatry Registrar)

Ashwin Joshi (M Social Work)

Dashielle Allain (PhD School of Creative Industries)

Dhan Kumar Rai (School of Creative Industries Internship)

Hellen Magoi (M Social Work)

Jane Asteriadis (GP Registrar)

Juan Pablo Escobar Betancur (M Social Work)

Narayan Dulal (School of Creative Industries Internship)

Volunteers

Avash Asl (Mural Project)

Dhan Kumar Rai (Film Maker)

Jane Asteriadis

(Pain Management Project)

Jill Wilson (Garden Project)

John Khateb

(Feedback & Participation Projects)

Robin Mellors

(Complementary Therapist)

Narayan Dulal (Film Maker)

Richard Wilson (Garden Project)



OUR WORK



Our Work

STTARS provides services to individuals, families and groups. We work with adults, children and young people.

Our services include psychosocial and psychological assessments, counselling and advocacy. Our approach is centred around the needs and experiences of survivors of torture and trauma including refugees, asylum seekers and people from refugee-like backgrounds.

Promoting recovery through a strengths-based, client-centred approach, counsellor/advocates and caseworkers not only provide specialised trauma-informed counselling but they also assist clients to access mainstream services such as education, employment, income support, housing and health within South Australia.

STTARS also facilitates 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. They recognise and respond to the effects of torture and trauma, and provide counselling that is trauma-informed, strengths-based and recovery-oriented. Our approach is fundamentally relational in that we place significant emphasis on establishing culturally appropriate relationships - built on safety and trust - with those who access our service. This in turn creates opportunities for us to learn from the people with whom we work.

Some STTARS clients find it difficult to attend office-based appointments due to physical and/or mental health problems, family care responsibilities, or limited access to transportation. STTARS therefore continues to provide a large number of services, primarily therapeutic counselling, not only in its Adelaide CBD rooms but also at outreach sites in Bowden, Salisbury, Mount Gambier, Naracoorte, and Bordertown and, as



required, in schools, community centres, healthcare settings and clients' homes – in fact wherever they feel most comfortable. Our service delivery sites are situated to best meet client needs in terms of proximity and accessibility, and we continue to monitor patterns of settlement of new arrivals across urban and regional South Australia to enable us to respond accordingly to emerging needs. In the past year, approximately one third of all appointments were provided as an outreach service.

STTARS has a strong commitment to refugees and asylum seekers and an equally strong capacity to meet complex needs across multiple client groups.

STTARS is also committed to constantly creating 'spaces' for reflecting on and learning from the work that we do with survivors, as we consider their contribution to the counselling relationship to be critical.

Referrals and Assessment

STTARS operates a managed waiting list, and a full-time Intake Coordinator provides the first point of contact for all referrals. Those seeking to access our service are offered an intake interview within 48 hours of referral.

The purpose of this interview is to determine eligibility and priority for our services. The interview may be conducted face to face and/or via the telephone. We engage professional interpreters for this interview process, where required. If the person's needs are not related to counselling, our Intake Coordinator provides support so that the person can access appropriate alternative service/s.

If they are deemed eligible for STTARS' services, the client is then either allocated to a counsellor or placed on the waiting list to be seen by the first available suitable counsellor. Priority is determined both by severity of symptoms and the availability and adequacy of other supports. Children, young people and sole parents receive special consideration and are seen as soon as possible. While on the waiting list, clients are telephoned regularly. This allows us to monitor and respond immediately to any deterioration in their condition. Information and advice on self-care is also provided during the waiting period.

Intensive Family Support Program

This program focuses on families from refugee backgrounds living in the Eastern Adelaide region. The purpose of the Intensive Family Support (IFS) Program is to support families with children who are experiencing difficulties with cultural transition as a part of their settlement, and provide them with the skills to manage the problems and challenges they face using a strengths-based approach.

The IFS program 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 and/or alcohol abuse. It identifies and nurtures personal strengths and skills to build resilience, and assists family members to gain a sense of safety. As appropriate, it provides psychoeducation, 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 building their confidence to access mainstream services.

Asylum Seekers

In our experience, asylum seekers in Australia continue to be particularly vulnerable to psychological and physical distress and can therefore be in need of specialised support services. While separated from family members who may still be living in situations of danger, they face prolonged periods of uncertainty as they await a decision about their claims for protection from the Australian government. This can cause fear and anxiety, compounding 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. During the period 2017-2018, STTARS supported 137 asylum seekers.





STTARS works hard to develop and maintain positive partnerships with key service providers for asylum seekers to ensure that together we provide the best support possible. We have maintained strong working relationships with the Australian Migrant Resource Centre, Australian Red Cross Migration Support Programs and the Life Without Barriers' National Immigration Support Service. We have also worked closely with Circle of Friends, Welcome to Australia, the St Vincent de Paul Society and others in order to secure practical support for this vulnerable group, and we give special thanks for their generosity.

During this year, we have seen that some of the asylum seekers we are working with have been granted a Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) or a Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (SHEV) under the 'Fast Track' process, which was introduced by the federal government in June 2015. Others, however, have received negative determinations, despite being survivors of torture or war-related trauma. This is often a crisis point for our clients and one which can significantly affect their mental health and wellbeing. It is the point at which the client is most vulnerable, most at risk and most in need of regular support and contact. It is unfortunately also the point at which asylum seekers often lose funding and/or access to services. STTARS continues to provide counselling support to these clients as a matter of priority. The STTARS Board has maintained a strong commitment to the provision of counselling and support for all survivors of torture and trauma – regardless of their visa status – and allows us therefore to draw on our financial reserves in order to maintain support for unfunded clients.



An environment of safety and trust is essential to the provision of torture and trauma counselling, but it is especially critical for those who are still seeking asylum.

STTARS therefore ensures the highest level of confidentiality possible for all clients who access our service. STTARS continues to protect the rights of our clients and communities to enjoy privacy and confidentiality to the maximum extent permissible by law.

Counselling

STTARS counsellors work face to face with individuals and groups of people from refugee (or refugee-like backgrounds) who have survived experiences of torture and trauma. Counsellors use a multicultural, flexible, client-centred approach and a wide range of interventions and therapies. This approach is based on a trauma recovery framework.

Most refugees have experienced traumatic events before coming to Australia. Many have been brutally tortured, seen loved ones killed, or have escaped from a war zone. Some may have experienced all three...but all of them have fled for their lives.



The physical and psychological effects of trauma are often devastating and difficult to overcome and, when combined with the challenges of settling into life in an unfamiliar country, can pose severe and complex challenges. Refugees are survivors and most do extremely well.

Refugees are people who have survived horrific situations and they can also be people of many strengths, skills and resilience of spirit. By working with a counsellor, these strengths of survival are drawn upon, making it possible for our clients to overcome traumatic experiences and rebuild lives that have been severely impacted by torture, brutality and exile.

STTARS works with clients across the spectrum of their settlement journey. Those eligible for our services include people who arrive on a humanitarian visa or are seeking asylum, whether they are recent arrivals or have been here for many years.

Our counsellors aspire to provide a safe and respectful environment in which survivors of torture and trauma can better understand, manage and recover from the physical and emotional pain of their experiences.

Our service is free, voluntary and confidential, and is conducted with qualified counsellors and interpreters.

Counselling at STTARS may take a number of forms. It may be supportive in terms of finding solutions to current settlement-related problems, or it may offer strategies that help clients cope with the painful or unpleasant psychological symptoms they are experiencing.

Counselling may also take the form of an exploration or a journey. It may touch on emotional or spiritual pain. If past painful experiences arise they can be discussed in a supportive and safe way, relieving the emotional pain gradually over time.

STTARS counsellors use a recovery framework to address the psychosocial impacts of torture and trauma on the individual, the family and the community.



Child and Youth Program

At STTARS we employ specialist child and youth counsellor/advocates to deliver a holistic service for children and young people.

Children and young people are not spared the human rights abuses that drive people to become refugees. They may experience these traumatic events as part of a family or on their own, and be forced to flee their homes with little understanding of the reasons. STTARS employs specialist child and youth counsellor/advocates to deliver a holistic service (including outreach) and work collaboratively with key people and organisations in their young clients' lives including family members, guardians and carers, schools, support workers and communities.

In response to the great diversity of experiences amongst the children and young people with whom we work, we have developed various programs that aim to engage them and offer support in a way that best suits them as individuals. In addition to one-on-one counselling, we run group activities including open school holiday programs which allow us to connect with children and young people. We also run closed therapeutic groups that are tailored and targeted to address specific needs. These are usually run in partnership with schools and/or other community organisations.

While working alongside teachers in schools, our counsellor/advocates not only share their expertise but also gain valuable insights. This collaborative relationship allows the most effective and appropriate supports to be developed within the school environment for students from refugee backgrounds.



Complementary Therapies

The physical impact of torture and trauma is stored in the body in the form of injury and pain. STTARS addresses this through its Complementary Therapies Program.

Most torture and trauma agencies in Australia offer complementary therapies as part of their program. The range of modalities offered however, varies from service to service. Some mirror traditional therapies from the cultures of our client groups, such as yoga for example, which is common to many countries. Gentle, non-invasive body therapies can assist in the restoration of trust and in the alleviation of the physical and psychological effects and after-effects of trauma.

Many clients express psychological distress through somatic complaints such as headaches, backache and general body tension. They may also complain of other physical problems which are shown, after thorough investigation, to have no medical basis. Research demonstrating the biological effects of trauma is described in Bessel A. van der Kolk's work 'The Body Keeps the Score: Memory and the Evolving Psychobiology of Posttraumatic Stress' (1994), in which he states that 'trauma seems to affect people on multiple levels of biological functioning' (p. 215). Some people and some cultures find it safer to deal with trauma through physical rather than psychological manifestations. In whatever ways trauma manifests, it is essential that clients are encouraged to participate in all aspects of decision-making regarding their treatment regimens.

STTARS' Complementary Therapies Program includes:

- › Client Assessments
- › Health habits and routines for sleep
- › Instructions for self-care

- › Mindfulness and relaxation techniques
- › Trauma-informed yoga
- › A massage clinic

These therapies are always used in conjunction with counselling and have been shown to be highly effective for torture survivors who suffer from ongoing pain and discomfort.

Clients seeking access to STTARS' Complementary Therapies Program are required to commit to becoming active participants in their own program for better health.

Refugee Mental Health Clinic

The Refugee Mental Health Clinic at STTARS has been providing services to survivors of torture and trauma since 2008.

Many people from refugee backgrounds find it difficult to access mainstream Medicare-funded services that understand the refugee experience and arrange interpreters, as interpreter fees are not usually covered for psychology or mental health social work appointments.

STTARS supports a number of registered visiting mental health practitioners with specialist expertise to provide a dedicated service to asylum seekers and people from refugee backgrounds under Medicare funding, including the 'Better Access to Mental Health Care' initiative.

STTARS provides administrative support and books interpreters for the Refugee Mental Health Clinic. Those accessing the Clinic are also offered casework support to help them overcome practical/settlement difficulties and link them to other vital services.



Clients accessing the Clinic can be easily referred to other services within STTARS such as groups or counselling support, if required, and they may contact the duty worker if they need urgent support in the periods between appointments with their specialist.

To be eligible for the Refugee Mental Health Clinic a client must be an asylum seeker or from a refugee background and have an appropriate referral from their GP. Referrals are processed by our Intake & Clinic Coordinator.

Farewell Dr John Raftery



This year we say goodbye to Dr John Raftery as he retires after almost 10 years at STTARS, initially as a counsellor and then as a visiting psychologist in our Refugee Mental Health Clinic.

John has had a longstanding interest in the effects of traumatic events on the lives of people affected by war. This led to him to undertake a PhD on the topic and subsequently write the book 'Marks of War'. He was a founding member of the Australian Society for Traumatic Stress Studies and has continued to read, research and contribute to knowledge in this field.

For John, clients have always been a priority. As our organisation has grown over the years, John has built and maintained strong connections with colleagues, management and interpreters in order to provide the best possible support to his clients. He has brought a unique understanding of and approach to working with the impact of trauma on refugees and asylum seekers.

John, we wish you well and express our heartfelt gratitude for your contributions and the time you have spent with us. Your expertise, compassion and wisdom have enriched the lives of countless asylum seekers and refugees.

Casework

STTARS' service model recognises that psychotherapeutic interventions alone are unlikely to resolve distress for people from refugee backgrounds. STTARS therefore aims to address clients' critical welfare and material needs (including service access difficulties), as well as their therapeutic needs.

For a variety of reasons, people from refugee backgrounds often encounter difficulties when attempting to access mainstream services such as income support, housing and so on. Services that are available in South Australia may be different from those available in their country of origin, or may not have existed at all. Experiences of torture and trauma can also inhibit the survivor from accessing and negotiating essential services, either due to pervasive symptoms or because of past negative experiences with government authorities. When approaching services, people from refugee backgrounds may also face barriers such as language, or a lack of cultural understanding, sensitivity or interpreting services when services are approached.

Casework/advocacy at both individual and systemic levels is therefore considered essential at STTARS because a family without housing or income - or experiencing a legal crisis - will not respond to psychological support while their primary needs are not met.

The role of caseworkers at STTARS is to assist our clients find solutions to problems of social adjustment and settlement that are difficult for them to navigate on their own. This involves linking them to services that enhance their wellbeing and help meet their basic human needs. Caseworkers take on the cases of individual clients or families, providing them with information, and advocating on their behalf where necessary. In this way, the STTARS caseworker/advocate offers them a safety net, ensuring that survivors of torture do not 'fall through the gaps' in our health and welfare systems.

Clients accessing Medicare funded services from psychiatrists, psychologists or mental health social workers through STTARS' Refugee Mental Health Clinic also benefit from casework support. Our caseworkers, whose cultural and linguistic backgrounds reflect those of our main client groups, also act as an important resource for other staff within STTARS by sharing their knowledge and experience to ensure that clients receive the best overall service possible.



Training and Research

TRAINING

This year STTARS delivered a total of 24 training sessions to various agencies including non-government organisations and educational institutions at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. The number of participants attending these trainings varied from six to over 100 per session. The profile of training participants included university and TAFE students, psychiatry trainees, housing support workers, mental health and domestic violence workers, secondary and primary school teachers, and members of various refugee-background communities.

STTARS is pleased to announce that in the coming year it will reintroduce a number of scheduled training sessions including:

- Core Competencies in Working with People from Refugee Backgrounds, and
- 'Accidental' Counsellors: Responding to Refugee Trauma Related Behaviors

RESEARCH

During the past year, STTARS has participated - at the request of various universities - in research projects being undertaken by them. STTARS has also taken a proactive approach to research by developing a partnership agreement with the University of South Australia's Division of Education, Arts and Social Sciences to complete a URIPA (Utilising University Research Investment - Performance Allocation) funding application in order to investigate the psychological wellbeing and settlement outcomes of refugee and



migrant youth and the role of support services available to them. Having a Senior Counsellor who works part-time for both STTARS and the university has been invaluable in furthering this work. The partnership has also resulted in an Adjunct Research Position being granted to another staff member at STTARS.

In further recognition of our work, the University of South Australia's School of Creative Industries has invited STTARS to sit on a supervisory panel as 'Industry Advisor' for a PhD student in the Research Centre for Languages and Culture whose work focuses on the experience of refugee-background youth in their transition from education to employment. These initiatives constitute a significant source of mutual learning which enhances both our knowledge and practice in working with survivors of torture and trauma.

Interpreters

Interpreters are vital to the work that is done at STTARS. For clients who do not yet have a grasp of English sufficient to engage in counselling, access to professional interpreters is considered a matter of basic human rights. STTARS is very fortunate to work with a group of highly professional interpreters who understand the impacts of trauma and provide a high level of care for our client group.

The contribution made by interpreters enables survivors and the people who work at STTARS to develop meaningful relationships and mutual understanding - an essential foundation for everything we strive to do.





CLIENTS STATISTICS

WHO OUR CLIENTS ARE...

AGE & GENDER

AGE	2016-2017			2017-2018		
	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
0 - 10	31	44	75	39	52	91
11 - 20	80	107	187	110	170	280
21 - 30	56	64	120	65	76	141
31 - 40	106	128	234	146	125	271
41 - 50	118	137	255	133	170	303
51 - 60	69	71	140	98	91	189
61 - 70	21	23	44	33	41	74
71+	1	3	4	5	6	11
Unknown	1	2	3	5	2	7
TOTAL	483	579	1062	634	733	1367

VISA TYPE

99

Asylum
Seeker

1034

Permanent
Resident

108

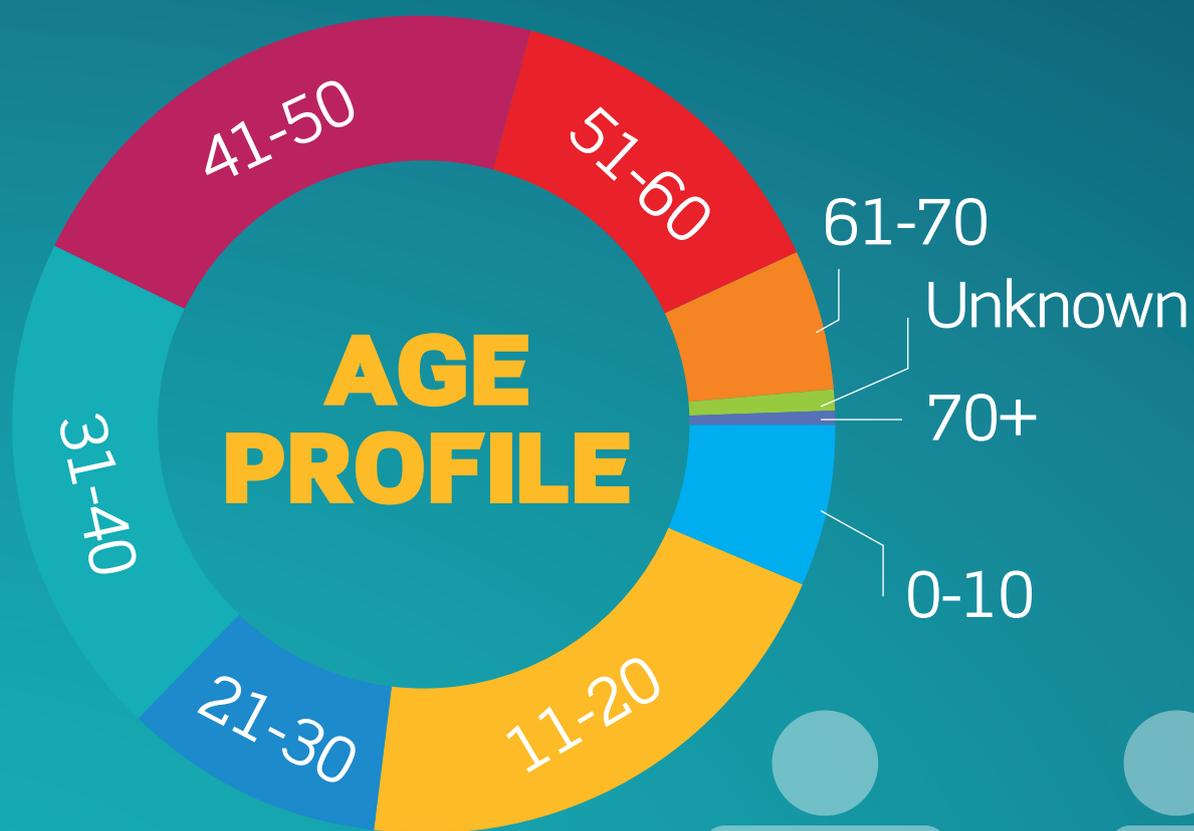
Australian
Citizen

77

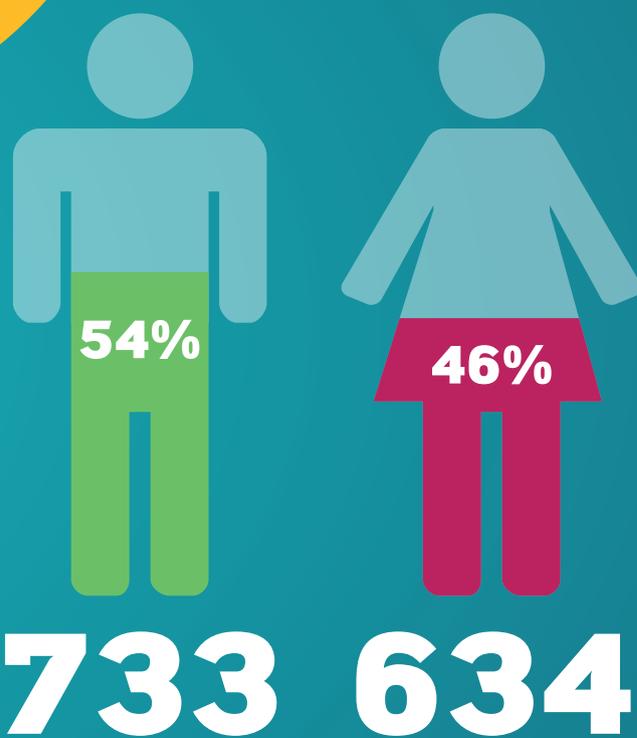
Temporary Humanitarian
Visa Holder

49

Other



GENDER PROFILE



TOTAL

1367

WHERE OUR CLIENTS ORIGINATE FROM...



COUNTRY	2016-2017	2017-2018
Afghanistan	286	372
Syria	172	275
Iran	131	143
Bhutan	61	109
Iraq	104	95
Sri Lanka	60	59
Sudan/Sth Sudan	13	36
Congo	18	35
Burma (Myanmar)	21	32
Other	186	74
Total	1062	1367



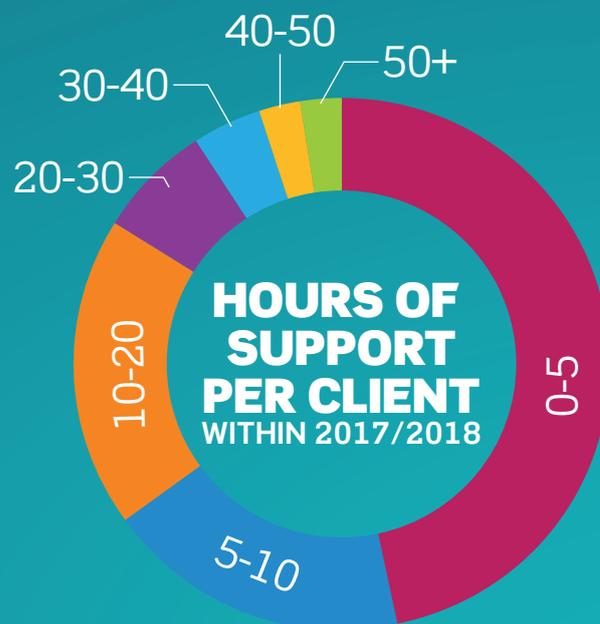
TOTAL
1367

HOURS OF SUPPORT PER CLIENT IN 2017/2018

11,566

Total number of Client Sessions

HOURS	2015-2016	2016-2017
0-5	658	640
5-10	161	251
10-20	160	256
20-30	48	97
30-40	17	55
40-50	10	34
51+	8	34
Total	1062	1367



SOURCE OF NEW REFERRALS

14

Accommodation Services

27

Asylum Seeker Support Service

1

Centrelink

30

Client – family/friend

67

Client – self

25

Community Welfare Organisation

8

DIBP

142

Education: Primary/Secondary

2

Education: Tertiary

11

Employment

3

FASST Other

49

Health: Allied

480

Health: General Medical

34

Health: Mental

84

HSS

7

Legal: migration related

1

Legal: Non-migration related

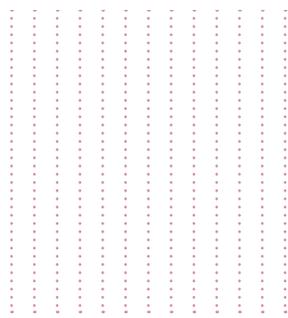
366

Other

16

Settlement Support Service

TOTAL 1367



The role of interpreters is complex; they not only translate the words of clients but also the nuances that accompany them. At the request of counsellors, interpreters may also provide valuable insights into cultural, social and historical contexts that are essential to understanding what clients are saying. The resulting collaboration contributes significantly to our counsellors' knowledge base and capacity to respond to their clients in a culturally sensitive way.

Many interpreters belong to the same communities as the people they assist while at STTARS, and we appreciate the careful ways that they uphold the privacy and confidentiality that is essential to clients feeling safe. STTARS is aware that interpreters, like ourselves, are often moved (and sometimes distressed) by the stories of injustice and suffering that we hear in our work. STTARS therefore offers the opportunity for debriefing with interpreters following counselling sessions, as needed, and facilitates quarterly evening interpreter 'forums', where knowledge is exchanged and relationships strengthened. In these small ways, we strive to honour the important contributions made by interpreters at STTARS.

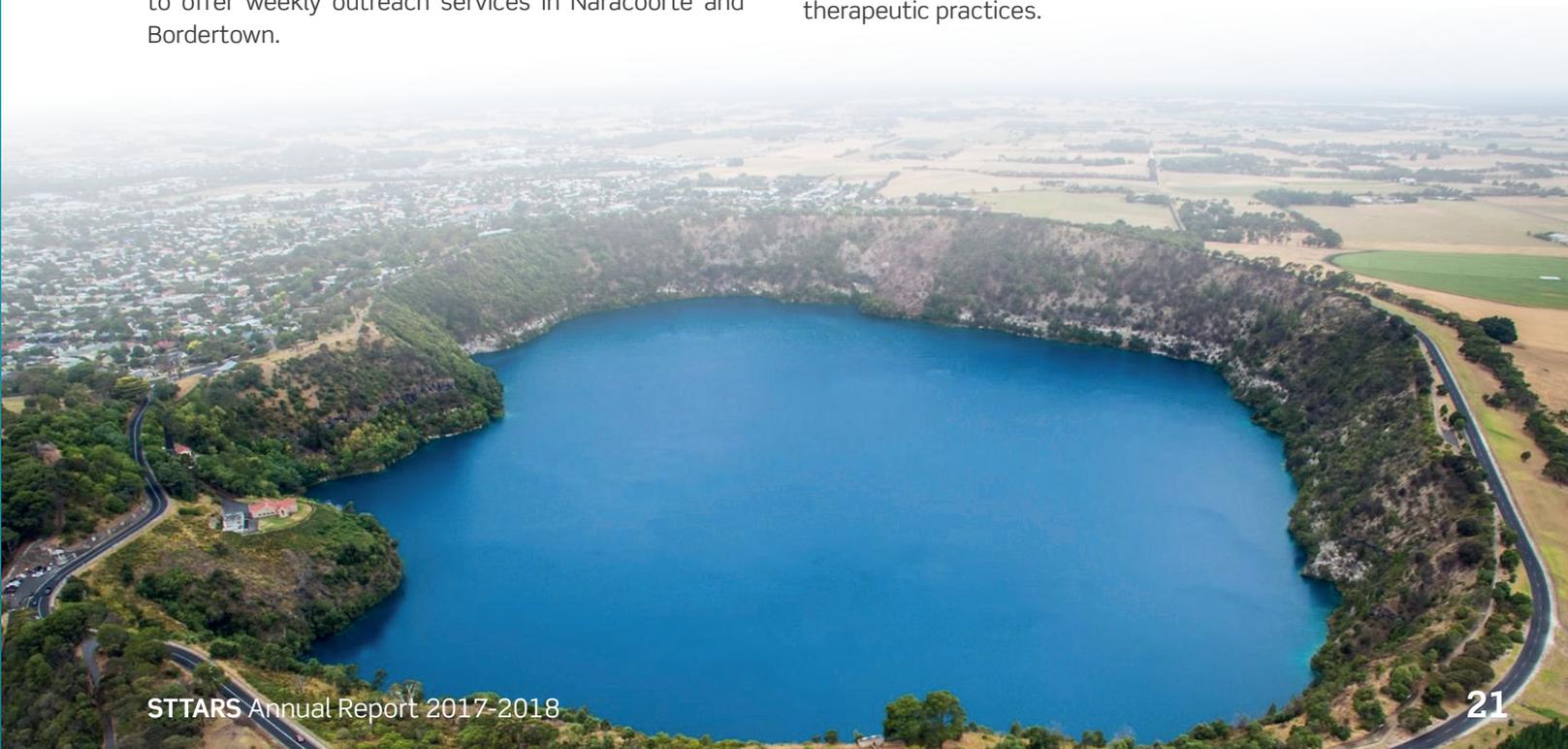
Regional Work – South East

Over the past 12 months our locally-based STTARS team has maintained a strong presence in Mount Gambier and the South East region, and has continued to offer weekly outreach services in Naracoorte and Bordertown.

Relationships and connections to community are essential in regional areas for achieving positive outcomes for clients as well as supporting those who support our clients. This involves working in close collaboration with other organisations and community groups, and providing education about torture and trauma and the refugee experience while creating a safe space to think creatively together for the optimum care for clients living within the region.

Our South East STTARS team works tirelessly to build and maintain these community relationships and connections. Team members work in close association with many pertinent organisations, agencies and community groups across the region including: Dr Try Medical Clinic, Naracoorte South Primary School, Naracoorte Lucindale Council, Naracoorte Hospital, Mount Gambier Hospital, UnitingSA, Centacare, Hawkins Medical Clinic, headspace, Carers SA, Australian Migrant Resource Centre, Australian Red Cross, SAPOL, Department of Child Protection, Limestone Coast Domestic Violence Service, Country Health SA, Country SA Primary Health Network, Whitelion, The South East Junction, Mount Gambier North Primary School, Mount Gambier High School, Tenison Woods College and Saint Martin's Lutheran College. We thank them all for their ongoing support.

STTARS' South East team counsellors feel fortunate to be situated in such a beautiful natural landscape and take full advantage of the majestic surrounds in their therapeutic practices.





The Australian Refugee and New Arrival Program (ARANAP)

Overcoming barriers to assist people from refugee backgrounds to access primary health care services in a timely manner.

People from other countries with refugee experiences may have very different understanding and experiences of health – what services are available and how to find help or treatment. The fact is, small issues can become big issues if not dealt with in a timely manner.

Adelaide PHN CEO, Deb Lee

The Australian Refugee and New Arrival Program (ARANAP) is an innovative new program, funded by the Adelaide Primary Health Network (Adelaide PHN,) which has been developed specifically to address the barriers that people from refugee backgrounds face in accessing primary health care services. The program is open to refugees living within the broad Adelaide region who have been in Australia for less than five years. The aim of ARANAP is not only to help individuals overcome barriers but also for us to work with primary health care providers to increase their capacity to support people from refugee backgrounds.

The ARANAP program has allowed STTARS to employ two Refugee Health Nurses. STTARS' Refugee Health Nurses work in partnership with ARA Bi-Cultural Support Workers who are similarly funded through the program, with the Migrant Health Service also closely involved. Despite the program being in its early stages, we have already provided support to over 70 clients.

It has long been apparent to us that people from refugee backgrounds face many health-related challenges. These include serious, chronic and/or complex physical health conditions, language barriers and short GP appointments - often without interpreters - which can lead to miscommunication and confusion regarding



medication compliance for example, and ultimately to other dangerous outcomes. With limited health literacy, a client can easily misunderstand a doctor's instructions, or important details about a diagnosis or prognosis. They will also struggle to navigate an unfamiliar and overwhelming health system.

The primary role of our Refugee Health Nurses is to help bridge these gaps. As soon as a client has been allocated to them, they undertake a comprehensive initial assessment to determine the extent of the client's needs and capabilities. They then provide the client with relevant information and treatment options, contact appropriate health services to book appointments (and interpreters if necessary), instruct the client on how to access the service, and follow up afterwards to ensure that the client has received the information they need to understand their health issue/s. In cases where a client is particularly vulnerable and unable to navigate the health system independently, the nurse will advocate on their behalf. This may include accompanying them to initial appointments to assist with establishing new relationships, helping them to ask questions about their health, and making sure they understand the information provided by the health professional. With time and support, clients are empowered to engage effectively with primary health care services themselves.

Accompanying clients to appointments also provides an opportunity for our Refugee Health Nurses to form collaborative relationships and open doors to capacity-building with health care providers including GPs, GP clinics and Practice Nurses. This work is supported by resources such as the booklet “Australian Refugee Health Practice Guide: Primary care for people from refugee backgrounds” and the refugeehealthguide.org.au website. The South Australian page on the website is maintained by STTARS’ Refugee Health Nurses.

As the program progresses our Refugee Health Nurses are continually on the lookout for further capacity-building opportunities including:

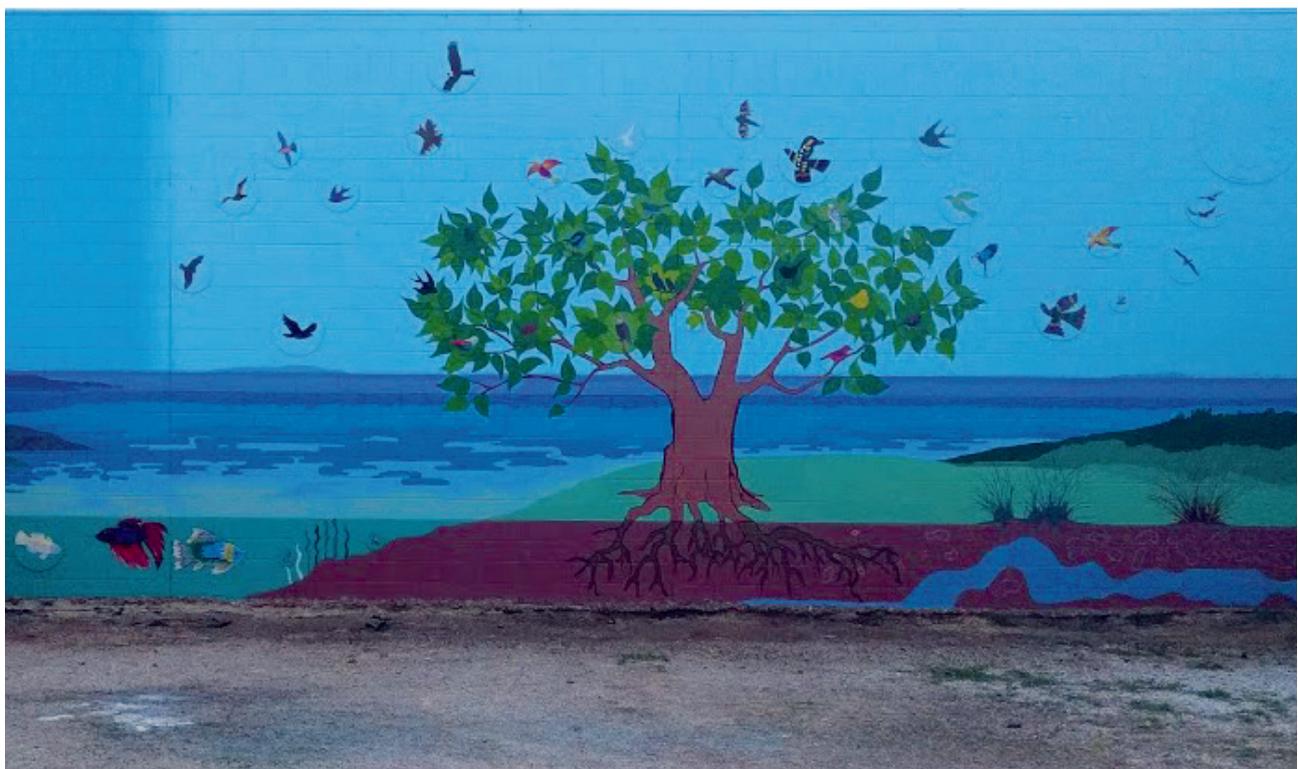
- ▶ promoting and contributing to the delivery of training and professional development activities for primary health care providers
- ▶ identifying primary health care services willing to become examples of Refugee Ready Practices of Excellence
- ▶ working with those services to understand the challenges faced by their staff, and developing a plan to increase capacity

- ▶ supporting the practice to develop culturally responsive and high quality ‘refugee health and wellbeing assessment and service provision’ practices

Since the program’s inception, we have observed significant improvements in outcomes for our ARANAP clients.

As one participant said,

“We are really happy with the support you guys have provided. It’s really difficult [for us] to make appointments and we never get priority. This is all happening so well. We are so happy!”





Group Work

Syrian Welcoming Groups

In response to needs expressed by the Syrian community and our partner agency the Migrant Health Service, 'welcoming groups' were established for recently arrived members of the Syrian community. At the community's request, separate group programs were run simultaneously for men and for women. The groups provided opportunities for establishing social networks, sharing experiences, and developing strategies to cope with the stress of resettlement, mental health concerns, isolation, grief and loss. Opportunities were also provided for other services to meet with the groups and share information. Creating a sense of safety in Australia was a key focus and one which involved working closely with the South Australian Police when group members were facing substantial race-based harassment.

Sing and Grow

The 'Sing and Grow' program provided additional support for families with children under five years of age using music as an expressive therapy to enhance child development, build social support networks and increase parents' confidence to use music and play at home. There is significant evidence that music therapy promotes both a reduction in parents' mental health symptoms and an increase in children's communication and social play skills. It can provide a structured approach that helps foster an internal sense of safety,



personal agency and choice for child participants, and this in turn cultivates and/or improves the capacity for a healthy parent-child attachment.

Sing and Grow groups were offered on weekly basis for an 8-week block during terms 3 and 4 in 2017. The program was run in partnership between a STTARS counsellor/advocate and a music therapist from the Queensland Playgroup Association. It incorporated the following themes:

- › Bonding
- › Sleep routines
- › Communication
- › Community involvement and social interactions
- › The role of play in development and relationships

The 'Sing and Grow' groups were especially targeted to families with young children who had recently arrived from Syria.

DRUMBEAT Groups

DRUMBEAT is an acronym for a program developed by Holyoake: 'Discovering Relationships Using Music, Beliefs, Emotions, Attitude and Thoughts'. STTARS counsellors ran DRUMBEAT programs over ten weeks for both primary and secondary school-aged students from a refugee background.

The DRUMBEAT program uses music, psychology and neurobiology to improve social skills and provide a



space for young people to express themselves. STTARS counsellor/advocates integrate their knowledge of trauma and recovery into the program. DRUMBEAT facilitates learning around responsibility, identity, teamwork and communication. It allows group members to develop the ability to use hand and body movements and rhythm to cope with symptoms whilst being in a fun, comfortable and relaxed environment. Metaphors from drumming help the young participants express themselves. In the past year, STTARS counsellor/advocates ran this drumming program at Clovelly Park Primary School, Ingle Farm Primary School, Mt Carmel College, St Columba College and twice at the Adelaide Secondary School of English.

Team of Life

At the request of a primary school with a New Arrivals program, STTARS ran a 'Team of Life' group for children who had recently arrived from Syria and who were dealing with significant and multiple stressors. The 'Team of Life' program aims to strengthen peer relationships, develop peer and community networks, identify and build on strengths, and develop a sense of identity separate from one's problem/s. Teenage clients who had participated in STTARS-run groups at the Adelaide Secondary School of English were invited to join the group as co-leaders and mentors.

Family Fun Day

While STTARS provides counselling and support for individuals and families we recognise that broader social connection is also important in the recovery process. School holidays have been identified as particularly difficult times for recently arrived families due to a lack of resources and knowledge about what they can do during these periods. Many parents report that they notice a rise in sibling conflict at home during school holidays. This is because the children become bored but the parents have limited free or affordable activity options for the family to engage in together. Family fun days and school holiday activities not only provide an opportunity for families to relax and have fun together but also to make new connections and expand the range of activity options they can enjoy together at other times.

The April STTARS Family Fun Day at Morialta Adventure Park was attended by approximately 90 people. Participants provided very positive feedback including:

- ▶ Appreciating the opportunity to just have fun together instead of focusing on problems
- ▶ Clients who rarely leave their house enjoyed being out in nature in a social setting for the day
- ▶ Female clients who suffer with pain and have limited mobility were able to participate in the walk to the waterfall and came back with big smiles and a renewed sense of possibility





- A father said that he had often wanted to take his family into the hills for outings but his wife was too scared. Now they knew that Morialta was somewhere that the family felt safe they would definitely visit again
- One man enjoyed it so much he is planning to invite other families from his community to have their own picnic there

School Holiday Activities

The STTARS Child and Youth Team also provided small, targeted school holiday activities in response to needs identified by young people and their counsellors. These activities included ice skating, craft, drumming, kite-making and soccer, with special games organised for toddlers. The activities aimed to provide opportunities to build connections and friendships as well as a safe place for young people to join in, have fun, create happy memories and try new things.

During the past year, we have observed consistent improvement in terms of participation rates in such activities. Both the second and third term school holidays saw an impressive number of junior young people (up to 13 years of age) and their family members take part. Many parents also stayed and joined in the activities with their children. Feedback from both parents and children was extremely positive.

Wise Women’s Groups

There are a number of women - often widows with significant trauma stories - who have been accessing STTARS services for a number of years but who have remained socially isolated. STTARS recognises the importance of reconnecting with others as a part of the recovery journey. In response to this, the ‘Wise Women’s Groups’ were established to provide an opportunity for these women to come together. Separate groups were organised for women with a shared language to better facilitate connection and communication.

Client Advisory Group

The establishment and ongoing functioning of the Client Advisory Group adheres to STTARS’ philosophical approach which places the people with whom we work at the centre of everything we do. Feedback provided by the Client Advisory Group is therefore vitally important to informing the future development of STTARS’ services.

Participation in the group offers clients – former and current – the opportunity to draw on their lived experience and community perspectives to help improve STTARS’ services. The group offers the following benefits:

- STTARS clients feel they have the support of STTARS and can thereby establish meaningful links to staff and management





- Group participants can share their expertise and opinions on matters concerning client welfare and the development of services to assist clients
- A space in which skills training can be embedded e.g. public speaking, and capacity building
- Community links which can be enhanced and extended from this point of contact

As part of the 'International Day in Support of Victims of Torture' (June 26th), John Khateb from the Client Advisory Group delivered a powerful and emotive speech at a Refugee Week event held at the Northern Sound System in Playford. The event was well attended, with approximately 500 people of all ages turning out.

Youth Reference Council

The Youth Reference Council (YRC) was re-established in July 2017 as a mechanism for young people who are being supported by STTARS to express themselves - their voices, knowledge and stories. A focus group and brainstorming day was facilitated during the July 2017 school holidays. Participants at the session said they had ideas insights and information that they wished to share in order to inform service delivery by STTARS and educate the wider community.

Since its first meeting, the Youth Reference Council has remained flexible and has continued to welcome new participants aged between 15 and 25. Group members have diverse backgrounds and life experiences, having

arrived in Australia via a range of locations such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Liberia, Nepal, Sudan and Burundi.

One clear message we hear again and again from these young people is that the opportunity to develop social connections and engage in new experiences is extremely important to them. We offer such opportunities every school holidays, and in the last 12 months, members of the YRC have taken part in adventures at Glenelg, Victor Harbor, Morialta Conservation Park and the Ice Arena. These experiences are considered vital, as part of the healing journey from surviving trauma involves creating memories in a new country.

But the Youth Reference Council has not just been socialising! Members of the group have participated in numerous interviews for a range of research projects. In October 2017, some of them were also involved in creating a training video for students studying to become teachers at the University of South Australia. Participating students answered questions such as: 'What qualities and knowledge do you think are important for teachers to have?' The students were given the opportunity to provide feedback to the YRC members in terms of what they had learnt from the video.

The insights, stories and voices that Youth Reference Council members continue to share are always an inspiration to counsellors in the Child and Youth Team. That's why the opportunity to engage with these resilient and energetic young people remains a highlight for us.





Organic gardening for trauma recovery

Evidence from previous work has indicated that gardening is a successful therapeutic intervention for trauma recovery. Gardening provides a safe place for clients to reconnect with positive memories of the past and form meaningful new ones.

The therapist can use the concept of 'growth of a seedling' as a metaphor for a person's own journey of recovery from trauma symptoms.

Key factors associated with trauma recovery include restoring safety, trust, meaning and value in life, dignity, a sense of hope, and social connections.

Over the past five years, a number of STTARS clients have had the opportunity to participate in a 'Seeds for Health' group run by the Cancer Care Centre at the Fern Avenue Community Gardens in Fullarton. This six-week organic gardening course was offered to STTARS clients from diverse cultural groups (e.g. Africa, the



Middle East and South Asia). Those joining the group reported suffering previous traumatic experiences as well as current symptoms associated with depression, traumatic stress, loss of hope and meaning in life, social isolation and suicidal ideation.

During the program, participants learnt about sowing seeds, creative garden design, permaculture and management, composting, water systems and mulching. Each day's program concluded with a shared lunch and social interaction.

Participants also received the necessary tools and training to start their own gardening plots at home.

At the program's conclusion, those who had taken part reported that the experience of learning and sharing knowledge had helped them to feel empowered, and that the opportunity to reconnect to fond memories of the past had given them a renewed sense of meaning and hope in their lives. Group dynamics within and outside the group enabled participants



to feel more socially connected and alive. There was also general agreement that the gardening group's activities complemented the individual counselling they were receiving.

Thanks to a generous donation from the Unley Plant Rescue Group this year, we have been able to establish a special community garden for all STTARS' clients. Volunteers Jill and Richard Wilson along with participants from previous gardening groups have helped us to establish a number of self-wicking garden beds at the rear of our Hawker St site. Seedlings to kickstart the garden were donated by Diana Bickford from Bickleigh Vale Farm.

The new community garden provides a wonderful resource for clients to share knowledge and experience with each other and for ongoing social connections. We would like to thank all those who have helped to make this garden possible.





Working with BHUMMATTS

Community Development, bonding together:

When the community is the core, the community works with its heart.



As Lilla Watson (Indigenous Australian or Murri visual artist, activist and academic) said, “If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together”.

This is one of the aims that underpins our work with communities and aligns with STTARS’ values: diversity, hope, social justice, humanity and an overall embedded ethical practice.

The Bhutanese Martyrs Memorial and Torture Survivors’ Society (BHUMMATSS) was established by members of the Bhutanese community to recognise and support survivors within their community.

A series of consultations between STTARS and survivors from BHUMMATSS were held to determine how we could best support them. The aim was to work together to develop culturally responsive, appropriate and safe therapeutic support that could be sustained into the future by the community itself.

BHUMMATSS members identified yoga as a practice that was culturally familiar, and one which they could incorporate into their daily life to improve their health

and better manage the pain resulting from their torture and trauma experiences. STTARS is fortunate to have on staff a counsellor who is also a qualified yoga instructor, and some members of the group had expertise in yoga as well. Together they developed a holistic intervention program that included trauma-informed therapeutic yoga, mindfulness practices, psychoeducation, Bhutanese folk music and dance. Approximately 34 community members attended the program on a weekly basis.

Throughout the program, members continued to identify pain as the biggest issue affecting them.

Pain management techniques and traditional methods of healing were explored. At the group’s request a physiotherapist was brought in to provide additional information about posture and movement patterns to reduce pain, especially during gardening activities. Some participants also accessed massage and self-help strategies through STTARS’ Complementary Therapies program.

Participants also reported that they found it difficult within the usual structure of short GP appointments



to fully explain, explore and understand the causes of their pain. With the support of Dr Jill Benson and Dr Jane Asteriadis, STTARS established a GP Pain Clinic especially for this group. By offering extended 1 ½ hour consultations with an interpreter present, Dr Asteriadis provided a valuable additional service to address this need.

It was heartening to observe that participation was consistent throughout the duration of the program and that those involved felt comfortable enough to start sharing details of their achievements with each other.

Group members provided psychological data (via verbal and written questionnaires), with the majority reporting a significant decrease in physical pain as well as an increased sense of body relaxation and calmness of mind as the program progressed. Dancing to folk music was also identified as helping them reconnect to positive memories of their country and culture.

BHUMMATSS members were proactive in organising and managing the logistics of the group and supported the program through all its stages.

This community development process is not only an example of an evidence-based approach but it is also



a reciprocal one that informs our practice: it keeps us thinking, creating and suggesting, and hence growing together with the community. Our successful work with BHUMMATSS shows the effectiveness of community engagement which embraces a 'bottom-up' participatory approach to the development of a recovery program. BHUMMATSS members appeared particularly to thrive on the spirit of solidarity and collective responsibility to 'shoulder [each other] up' during group sessions. STTARS has thoroughly enjoyed working in partnership with BHUMMATSS over the past year and commend them on their work to support the survivors of torture and trauma within their community.





Our Strategic Directions



Providing High Quality Services

To provide trauma-informed, culturally responsive services that recognise the values, needs and aspirations of survivors of torture and trauma and their families

Working with Communities

To work with communities to foster opportunities for enhancing the wellbeing and resilience of survivors of torture and trauma

Increasing Understanding and Expertise

To raise the awareness, understanding and expertise of others who work with survivors of torture and trauma

Strengthening Sustainability through Quality and Culture

To build and maintain a vibrant, robust, inclusive and sustainable organisation

Promoting Human Rights

To work towards a world where human rights are respected and violations are never tolerated



Our Values

Humanity

We keep the people that we work with at the centre of everything we do

Diversity

We recognise and celebrate our unique stories, culture and strengths. From this foundation we grow and learn from each other

Hope

We believe in the innate human capacity to strive, against the odds, for a better life for oneself and one another

Social Justice

Our hearts are challenged by experiences of oppression and together we work to improve human lives

Ethical Practice

We strive to act with integrity, care and compassion. We reflect on the ways that our actions affect the lives of people with whom we work



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 2018

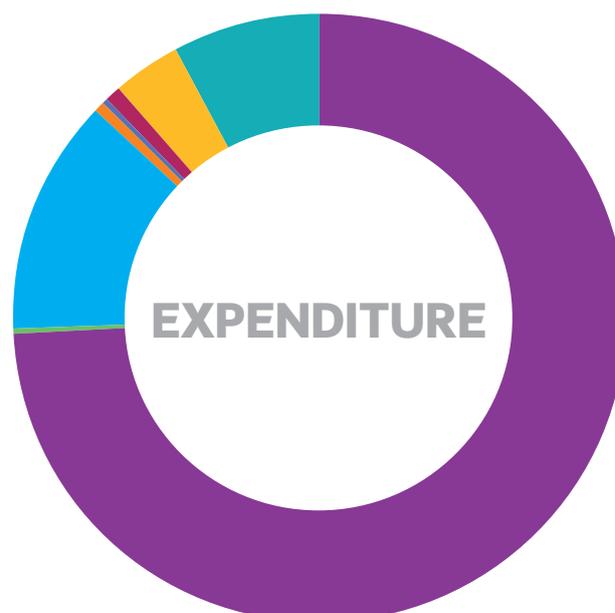
Income

Grant Income	\$3,976,309
SRSS Services	\$99,882
Interest	\$56,724
Other Income	\$36,698
TOTAL INCOME	\$4,169,613



Expenditure

Salaries, Wages & Employee Expenses	\$3,100,116
Audit & Accounting Fees	\$10,150
Client Expenses	\$519,267
Depreciation	\$28,430
Insurance	\$4,423
Occupancy Expenses	\$38,904
Rent	\$148,346
Other Operating Expenses	\$320,880
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$4,170,516
OPERATING SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(\$903)



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 2018

Current Assets

Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$2,221,526
Trade & Other Receivables	\$134,016
Prepayments	\$34,274
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	\$2,389,816

Non Current Assets

Property Plant & Equipment	\$83,282
TOTAL NON CURRENT ASSETS	\$83,282

TOTAL ASSETS \$2,473,098

Current Liabilities

Trade & Other Payables	\$353,911
Grants Received in Advance	\$282,068
Income Received in Advance	\$18,433
Employee Provisions	\$255,885
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$910,297

Non Current Liabilities

Employee Provisions	\$31,464
TOTAL NON CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$31,464

TOTAL LIABILITIES \$941,761

NET ASSETS \$1,531,337

TOTAL EQUITY \$1,531,337

THE THERAPEUTIC YOGA

INTRODUCED 2017/18

