



Australian Community Safety & Research Organisation Incorporated

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S

ANNUAL REPORT 1998/1999



We as a community have grown accustomed to the proposition of privatised services such as correctional services, hospitals, tertiary educational services and employment services being managed away from the government sector. In more recent times we have seen State Governments move towards the privatisation of secondary schooling. Whilst this style of innovation causes considerable angst for some members of our community, it is unlikely that the open gates to "for-profit" or corporate engagement in a range of previously government operated or not-for-profit services will be reversed in the foreseeable future.

Indeed, should developments in the United States of America prove to be a signpost for Australia's future, we can expect a rapid and exponential growth in the trend. The shockwave that ensued from the awarding of \$563 million worth of management contracts in welfare contracts in Texas to Lockheed Martin IMS – a subsidiary of the defence company Lockheed Martin – Electronic Data Systems, in 1992 has become somewhat of a "ho-hum" event in the context of contract awards since this time in the USA.

True, the purists will argue that "poverty profiteering" is not reasonable (yes, undoubtedly the not-for-profit sector will lead the charge). The re-invention of corporate entities as providers of social services, demonstrates at least two things – firstly, there are profits (substantial profits) to be derived from the provision of such services, and secondly, that the economic rationalists in politics are seeking new avenues to meet the performance demands being placed upon them by a resource-diminished community that grows impatient with financial inefficiencies and political posturing. Irrespective of the arguments either for or against privatisation, the ultimate and undeniable reality is that the totality of the environment has profoundly changed – from government agency approach to the awarding of contracts, the political imperative in which such agencies operate and the preferences of clients. In addition to such changes we (that would be us in the not-for-profit sector), need to understand that the "for-profit" engagement by corporations will reframe the debate about the appropriate roles of not-for-profits and "for profits" – but without an enlightened approach on the pressing social issues inherent to the debate on social service provision, we (yes, still us in the not-for-profit sector), face the possibility of extinction. Fundamentally can we be effective in our service delivery methodology to compete with the "for-profits"? It seems to me that we are past the point of *whether* it is desirable to privatise such services, and are pressed to the point of how we can successfully compete in the marketplace whilst still retaining traditional goals of social advocacy and community development. The logical danger in such a rationalisation is that the struggle to compete may lead to an unacceptable compromise of the very assets that set the sector apart and make our work so vital to the overall health and development of the community.

At our AGM you will hear from ACRO's Chairperson on the issue of "strategic alliances" – deliberately constructed arrangements between partners who may be from divergent positions (not-for-profit, for-profit, charitable, foundation) but who must, nonetheless, conduct business together, to bring to the table matters of mutual benefit (advocacy, profit, viability and sustainability from a stable and economically engaged community). Recently the Australian General Manager of IBM publicly stated that it was not in the interest of corporations **not** to engage in the poverty debate as to do so would deny entry to the marketplace of large numbers of consumers (the "bread and butter" of successful businesses).

We are in a period of transition. The demands on bureaucrats to "reinvent government" and engage "substantial" players in the process of re-invention will provide both opportunities for "for-profit" organisations and create hazards for the not-for-profit sector. The opportunities for the former group are established, the matter of how not-for-profits steer themselves through the hazards upon them is the "business" of our (the not-for-profits) future. ACRO has been cognisant of this transition for a number of years and has been, and will continue to, navigate the path that best serves the interest of the community. This will undoubtedly involve strategic alliances between ourselves and the "for-profit" sector and others in a revolution of thought and action, the like of which we have not seen in this country before.

In the context of our work this past year, I offer the following Report:

Over the past twelve months ACRO has approached **training and development** through two distinct processes. Firstly to develop, design and implement improved strategies and associated Policies and Procedures throughout its programs in order to streamline service delivery processes thus enhancing service delivery to the various client groups. Secondly to streamline and improve work practices and communication processes for organisational staff, particularly those involved in the day to day hands on delivery of such programs. The ACRO Policy and Procedures has yet again continued to be a dynamic and ever evolving document over the past year. Improved systems have been implemented in the HASP/HACC programs, as well as a major overhaul of the Halfway House Program Policy and Procedures to reflect the changing nature of contracts with the Department of Corrective Services. The enhanced services at the Wacol Family Centre have also required a major upgrade of the Policy and Procedures for this program.

A team approach to program management was implemented within the Brisbane office early in 1999, with the Education Officer, Housing/Program Administrator and the Training and Development Officer working through organisational business in a complementary manner with the intent of optimising outcomes and outputs for both ACRO Programs and ACRO personnel. During the past twelve months ACRO has taken up membership with the Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI) in order to enhance existing links with the private sector, to have prompt access to information on Human Resource Management, Workplace Health and Safety Issues, Superannuation and Insurance advice and access to the lobbying arm of the Chamber. The membership to QCCI whilst only relatively new, has been accessed regularly by the Program Management Team in order to secure sound advice and information. Team meetings have been introduced and are being held on a regular basis in order to further enhance communication processes and the team approach throughout the organisation.

Program Overview:

Transport Services for families visiting correctional centres are provided by ACRO in both Central Queensland (Rockhampton) and the Wacol region in South East Queensland. The number of families accessing the service in Rockhampton remained fairly consistent this year with approximately 750 families utilising the service. However an increasing demand for services in the Wacol region has occurred in line with the expansion of correctional centres in the area. Due to successful negotiations with the Department of Corrective Services the ACRO **Shuttle Bus Service** has increased its focus and presence within the Wacol region. The service expansion encompasses an increased number of vehicles servicing clients as well as additional days on which the service operates. In order to achieve effective service delivery the Policy and Procedures were updated, additional staff were recruited, selected and trained and a time table system was implemented to ensure an effective transport system complementing the visits available at the Centres for our clients. Some 19 000 passengers were transported by the service throughout the last financial year with a similar number accessing the family centre.

The **Family Centre** facilities were upgraded due to the efforts of ACRO Volunteer Jack Pollentine and his efforts staffing the annual RNA Car Park project. Items brought included new curtains, chairs, electric kettle and toys and activities for the children.

Welfare Services provided support to over 500 families during the year who accessed direct assistance through the organisation's emergency relief funds providing food voucher and financial assistance. The annual **Christmas Appeal** also provided direct support to a significant number of families through voucher distribution to families with a loved one in a correctional centre.

There were no major changes to the **Supported Accommodation Assistance Program** (SAAP) during the year with numbers accommodated in the family facilities remaining consistent with previous years. 3249 resident nights were recorded at the facilities. The number of residents at the singles facility, Charley's Place, fluctuated throughout the year with most approved applicants from the Correctional Centre failing to take up the accommodation. To overcome this situation, the target group and associated eligibility criteria has been expanded and diversified in order to realise the potential of this accommodation facility. Funds were granted this year through the Department of Families, Community Care and Youth to upgrade furnishing throughout the various properties. This input will provide much needed replacements for the tired furnishings within the properties.

Both of ACRO's **Halfway House facilities** have recorded a significant increase in resident nights during the past year. **Halcyon House** has continued to maintain a high standard of program delivery for its residents in the Central Queensland regional. Both Dave Curran (Regional Co-ordinator) and Bernie Loth (Caretaker) have continued achieving high rates of resident job placement, assisting (60%) of the residents to secure work while providing another resident support in order to successfully complete a Commercial Cookery course. 1195 resident nights were recorded at the facility which accommodates five residents at one time.

The average stay for residents at Halcyon House is 3 months during which time residents are assisted with their reintegration back into the community. During the year no complaints were raised by residents to the official visitor relating to the management of the facility by ACRO.

Rose Blank House (FNQ), during the last twelve months, has undergone a major program review conducted by Management Team staff from Brisbane in conjunction with a Consultant. This, in addition to regular audits conducted by the Department of Corrective Services has resulted in a series of recommendations for program development and improvement which have been forwarded to both the State Executive Committee and the Department of Corrective Services for consideration. These recommendations have been determined based upon the need to upgrade both the physical and human resources associated with the Halfway House Program in Far North Queensland. Negotiations have commenced with the Department of Corrective Services regarding contractual matters while the Management Team in Brisbane have also undertaken considerable consultations with staff, ACRO members and various other stakeholders in the region in order to design and implement an upgraded operational structure for the Far North Queensland Program. The core of these structural changes are to provide a cost effective program for the Community and to implement a structured resettlement program with the residents at the facility. The intention is to provide significant assistance and support to the residents encompassing areas of resettlement in order to assist them with their reintegration back into the community. In order to achieve the abovementioned goals the Halfway House Policy and Procedures have been

upgraded, a user friendly Handbook for staff has been designed and the Resident Handbook amended. 2156 resident nights of accommodation were provided through the facility in the past year of operation.

The **Home Assist/Secure** (HASP/HACC) program has undergone major changes over the past twelve months. The administration core of this program has been relocated to the Head Office in the city and all existing administration processes were overhauled in order to implement a significantly more streamlined approach to all administrative tasks relating to the program. This process has been undertaken successfully with a positive impact upon service delivery with over 4000 jobs undertaken for clients, and in addition the Program staff have been able to allocate time to develop ideas encompassing a Community focus. One such example of this Community focus has been the joint venture with the Burnie Brae Home Secure Project hosting our first combined morning tea and information session on 18 August 1999. ACRO transport was provided for those requiring this assistance and both Programs provided guest speakers. The information covered a cross section of topics including physical security and welfare issues for the older members of the community. An apt initiative for this year being the Year of the Older Person and considerable positive feedback has been received from clients. Whilst these changes have occurred, to the credit of the staff, service delivery statistics have remained consistently high over this transitional period.

During the year ACRO staff successfully applied for funding through the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care to undertake **school holiday camps for young people aged 13-15 years**. ACRO staff have recruited participants through a network of community organisations and through clients accessing the Family Centre. Our first activities are scheduled to commence in September 1999 and ACRO have been advised that the funding will continue for three years. We also welcome two additional staff members who will facilitate the program.

In October 1998, ACRO finalised their involvement with the **Crime Prevention Partnerships** (CPP) program which was a twelve month pilot program designed by ACRO in consultation the State Government of the day. The main concept of the design was to facilitate and stimulate community participation through the design and implementation of locally based crime prevention and social justice strategies.

In April 1999, the Criminal Justice Commission delivered an evaluation report on the pilot program. The conclusion of this report stated:

“As our evaluation found, the community partnership concept was enthusiastically embraced by all participants, who continued to see this as a worthwhile endeavour even in the face of some serious setbacks and difficulties. We hope that this report and the suggestions for improvement to the program that we have made will help ensure that the community partnerships become a useful component of the statewide approach to crime prevention.”

ANTI RACISM TOUR

During the past few years ACRO has set a standard in the development, production and distribution of **Community Service Announcements** (CSAs). The series which commenced in 1997 has highlighted issues in relation to young people, community safety and racism. “Loaded Gun” and “The Race Is On” were two highly successful CSAs devised by the organisation. The airplay for both of these commercials was highly significant across Australia.

But the success of both of these CSAs pales into insignificance next to “**Defending Principles**”, a hard hitting Community Service Announcement striking at the heart of racist commentary being published against Asian and Indigenous Australians in the leadup to the Federal election of 1998. This latest advertisement is based upon the ANZAC tradition of support and mateship and the importance of tolerance and standing up for what we believe in. The CSA enjoyed considerable airplay across Australia and feedback received was favourable. ACRO is indebted to a large number of people who made the production possible: John Stanton, GoodAudioSense, the National Museum and of course the young people who were instrumental in its production – Chris, Danielle, Seung, Nick, Adrian, Becky and Stephen. A special thanks goes to Adrian for creating a website for the production at:

<http://www.acro.com.au/GOODCITIZENS.HTM>

As part of the promotion for the CSA, and at the request of the young people themselves, ACRO launched a National Media Tour featuring three of the young people involved with the project from the outset (Chris Stewart, Danielle Begg and Seung Yi Lee) who shared their views of a positive Australia based upon the principles of tolerance, understanding and acceptance. Through their work with ACRO, these three young people were able to interact with a wide range of people across Australia and participated in a unique opportunity to both listen and be heard by people from all walks of life. During their Tour they held workshops, conducted radio, television and newspaper interviews and spoke directly with politicians (including the Federal Opposition Leader, Kim Beasley, on the night of the federal election in Perth).

ACRO salutes the achievements of these outstanding representatives of Australian Young People and is proud to have been associated with such an innovative Project.

Recently, these young people, together with others who have joined their group (ATAC – Australian Youths Advocating Change) launched the second of their CSAs, an anti-drugs commercial, titled **NOT ONE MORE**, in Sydney at the Wayside Chapel in Kings Cross. We are proud to welcome these young Australians home and to hear their address as Guest Speakers at this AGM tonight. For the information of members this Group has already achieved recognition with their efforts being acknowledged by **the Queens Trust for Young Australians as “Young Achievers 1999”**. Other

CSAs (anti-homophobia and anti-stereotyping) will follow. Expect to hear a great deal more about the work of these younger ACRO achievers.

ATAC was formed in February 1999 and developed, as indicated, as a consequence of the Good Citizens anti-racism Tour conducted in October 1998 and the determination of those who participated in this Tour to have an ongoing commitment to the public debate on youth issues. The group meet weekly and has done so for the past six months to discuss the issues of concern to them. Such matters as racism, drug abuse, negative stereotyping, youth suicide, gang violence and homophobia has been a few of the matters raised for discussion and action by the ATAC Team. The primary goal of producing CSAs (in particular "Not One More") is to create a **mentoring** network across Australia. This network is to be created in recognition of the fact that many young people are fundamentally unsupported in Australia and therefore vulnerable to depression and social disconnection – and are, as a result, open to exploitation, drug and alcohol dependency and self-destruction. ATAC has already established linkages with groups in other parts of the country, in particular New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania. The group has established a 1800 number (**1 800 2 TEENS**) and has a website (designed and maintained by Adrian Begg) at: <http://www.acro.com.au/teens>. We are, needless to say, extremely proud of the accomplishments of the ATAC Group and congratulate them for their commitment to their peers and to the community in general.

South African Crime Prevention Conference: The inspiration for the Johannesburg Conference came in 1996 from the Vancouver Conference ("Towards World Change") on crime prevention for practitioners. It was realised that South Africa had an important role to play in the international crime prevention debate, both as an example of successful initiatives and as a learning opportunity for South Africans to become better informed about developments in crime prevention internationally. The result was the second international conference for crime prevention practitioners, **Urban Safety, Safety for All**, convened in Johannesburg South Africa 26-30 October 1998. As ACRO had been involved in the Vancouver Conference, the organisation was invited to attend and address this important international Conference. A Paper on the Fundamentals of Partnership Development was presented by ACRO's Executive Director with the support of the organisation's Education Officer.

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♻ Torque Ford Redcliffe	♻ John Stanton	♻ The Whitlams
♻ Quality Unlimited Training Services	♻ GoodAudioSense	♻ Absolute Audio
♻ Black Yak/Phantom Records	♻ Switch FM	♻ Queens Trust

ACRO is also grateful for the ongoing Funding Support provided by various government departments who enable the work of the organisation to continue:

♻ Department of Corrective Services: Transport Services for families of inmates in the Wacol & Rockhampton regions, Halfway House Program - Central Qld & FNQ.

♻ Department of Families, Youth and Community Care: CISP - Community and Individual Support Program; SAAP - Supported Accommodation Assistance Program; ER - Emergency Relief; OSHCA - Outside of School Hours Care Activities; Parent Education and Support Initiative.

♻ Housing Queensland: Stafford/Wavell Heights Home Assist/Secure Program

♻ Department of Family and Community Services: Commonwealth Emergency Relief Program

♻ Queensland Health: HACC - Home & Community Care

Special Mention:

ACRO staff, members & volunteers are commended for their ongoing work throughout the year. In particular:

♻ **Mr Brian Richards** who has served as Honorary Treasurer as part of the ACRO Executive Committee for over ten years and is formerly recognised this year through his nomination as a **Life Member** of the organisation.

♻ **Mary Orr** who has volunteered her services to ACRO for over five years tirelessly providing support to families at the Wacol Family Centre and is formerly recognised this year through the presentation of a **Certificate of Appreciation**.

Members are also advised of the sad passing during the year of Sister Ursula O'Loughlin a long term ACRO member.

Australian Community Safety & Research Organisation Incorporated

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