



Australian Community Safety & Research Organisation Incorporated

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 1999/2000



Clive Begg, Executive Director, ACRO

We hear a great deal these days about Globalisation. Whilst this notion can have many interpretations, one of its fundamental tenets is to enshrine market forces as a dominant ideology – to reconstruct community values to a position where the needs of the marketplace override the needs of the individual or the community – irrespective of National boundaries or considerations. Whether it comes from the “left” or “right” of the political spectrum, the adoption of such a principle moves our concept of collectivism (the vision of the community and its goals) away from social responsiveness and responsibility designed to repair fractured social relations at a local (or National) level, towards economic viability and “sustainability” on a global level. Ultimately this is a position that advantages the rich to the disadvantage of the poor.

I have no doubt that the proponents of such a logic believe they are acting in the best interest of the community, that a healthy economy enhances opportunity and reduces social disconnection, but I cannot help but taste the rancour of economic rationalism and its attendant bias away from social justice. It is true that we should look at life choices that both remunerate hard work and preparation for work as well as meet societal expectations to accommodate those skills required by the community. But it is similarly true that we have an obligation to ensure that those within our society who are incapable of achievement or who lack opportunity are not discriminated against because of their social or economic status and further, that they are extended benefits that ensure their survival and training that extends their potential for employability. This obligation of ours must assume an international perspective and extend to those Southern (or Third World) economies where workers labour is expropriated for wages that can never be matched by workers in Northern (or First World) economies.

In his address to the membership at its Annual Meeting for 2000, ACRO's Chairperson, Ian Stewart, outlined his belief that future planning for the organisation needs to encompass long-term strategic planning that is predictive of National and International trends and which embrace alliances of like-minded organizations working with corporate entities. Of itself, this is an acknowledgement of global impacts that are likely to occur. Already ACRO has taken the initiative and is forging intersectoral and corporate linkages both within Australia and offshore.

At face-value Globalisation as a concept seems reasonable but for those who are unemployable, for supporting parents, for the elderly, for intellectually disabled or permanently infirmed persons does it signal a fast-track to poverty as the safety nets that protect such people are systematically removed?

We, as a Public Benevolent Institution, must remain vigilant; firstly by ensuring our survival as advocates for those threatened (by what could be termed the politics of convenience) in the face of perceived redundancy by those who fear debate in social justice and; secondly, by publicly raising those issues that appear to be harming those without power in our midst. In a society that has no constitutionally based rights and protections for the individual other than those implied under external powers provisions, there now exists in Australia the threat of social stagnation or worse, social dislocation, particularly in the context of assumed “rights and obligations” borne out of economic rhetoric. It behoves Organizations such as ACRO to be prepared to raise the level of debate and actively pursue agendas that are in the public interest but which may, at times, not be politically palpable. The turning of the tide of global influences is beyond the reach of this or any other organisation. As a first step, we need to promote more vigorously a Bill of Rights in Queensland and Australia.

Such matters were canvassed by the not-for-profit sector in Vienna at the Tenth United Nations Congress on Crime and the Prevention of Offenders in Vienna, Austria during April of 2000, which I attended representing ACRO. Clearly the issues confronting our community are not dissimilar to those of other Nations. If solutions are to be found to the conundrum that our collective constituencies face, it requires a global response and the development of a new sensitivity to systems and cultures that have been traditionally ignored by wealthy Northern economies.

Operational Overview:

Numerous components of the organisation have undergone major reviews during 1999/2000 in order to keep the organisation relevant and a significant contributor within the sector and the greater community. These reviews were conducted in several sectors, these being;

- The ACRO Strategic Plan 1996 – 2000, which was reviewed and modified to reflect the key areas in which ACRO currently participate and new areas where ACRO believe it can positively contribute and develop,

- An internal Quality Assurance system being implemented,
- The review and upgrade of the ACRO Policy & Procedures which were completed in order to reflect sectorial and legislative requirements,
- The New Taxation System was implemented within the organisation in order to meet GST requirements. In addition, this process saw ACRO meet the requirements to maintain its PBI status, with ITEC and DGR.
- Business Plans were developed for the core program areas of the organisation,
- In order to meet the organisations philosophy of continuous improvement, staff development staff training was undertaken both formally and informally throughout this period.

The abovementioned required ACRO personnel to contribute in many areas far beyond their daily roles and responsibilities. In saying such I would like to thank them for their effort in ensuring that these strategies and changes were managed in a positive and constructive manner benefiting the internal and external clients of the organisation.

Program Overview:

Throughout the year ACRO staff and volunteers have continued to work with **young people** in the development of projects targeting issues identified by young people. The group Australian Teens Advocating Change that was established under the ACRO banner in early 1999 has gone from strength to strength throughout the year. The young people involved have undertaken several promotional tours throughout Australia, developed a series of Community Service Announcements targeting Drug Abuse, Stereotyping of young people and promoting Mentoring programs as a support network for youth throughout Australia. The group have been recognised in their efforts on a variety of levels including considerable media exposure and public recognition including winning top honours in the National Nescafe Big Break Awards (receiving \$20 000 for the development of further Community Service Announcements). Currently ACRO is seeking **corporate sponsorship** to enable the implementation of **a national youth mentoring** project aimed at enhancing skill development and providing support networks for young people throughout Australia.

In addition to the mentoring project ACRO have also continued to provide direct support to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds by providing **recreational activities during school holidays**. Through funding provided from the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, ACRO has been able to provide recreational activities to over sixty (60) participants aged between 13 -15 years over the past year. The young people have abseiled, canoed, swum and had the opportunity to generally take part in a variety of enjoyable activities in their school holidays. The program is designed to incorporate activities within a residential and non-residential environment and all feedback from young people and their families have been extremely positive with all young people keen to attend further programs. The keys to the success of the program are the fact that ACRO is able to provide the activities free of charge to families with limited resources, activities are designed to be fun and age appropriate and assistance is provided with transport wherever possible. Participants also always praise the effort and commitment of the program facilitators and ACRO acknowledges the role of the staff and volunteer facilitators who deliver this program.

Family Support Services have also continued to grow throughout the year. ACRO provides a number of services to families in need incorporating welfare support, advocacy, transport services and housing support. Over 400 families were assisted directly through **emergency relief payments** during the past year with a considerable number of families receiving assistance through the annual Christmas Project. The **Christmas Project** provides the opportunity for families with a loved one in prison to receive a voucher with which they can purchase food or goods such as toys. The considerable number of thankyou's, which ACRO receives from recipients each year, indicates that this is a much-valued project for families who often enjoy little Christmas cheer.

The ACRO **Family Centre** has provided support to nearly 20 000 persons throughout 99/00. The Centre operates as a drop in centre for families visiting the Correctional Centres in the Wacol region and volunteers staff the centre offering free tea, coffee, information and support. In addition to these services ACRO also operate a free **transport service for families visiting Correctional Centres** in the region. The Department of Corrective Services fund this service which has transported 19 357 people during the 99/00 period. The organisation also facilitates a transport service in Rockhampton for families visiting the Correctional Centre in this region. One thousand passengers have accessed this service during the past year.

Housing Support Services remained a key program area within the organisation. ACRO once again supported numerous individuals and families during times of crisis and trauma providing them with "time out" and support. Time within these short term accommodation facilities allows residents the opportunity to evaluate their current situation, safely explore options and make practical decisions regarding their future before their transition into long term secure housing. Approximately 3000-bed nights were provided within this period in three Brisbane facilities. In addition, ACRO was successful with several small grants and funding submissions that provided the organisation with the opportunity to replace and upgrade some of the furniture and fittings within these facilities.

Since 1989 ACRO has operated a **Halfway House Program** in regions across the State. The program was designed to assist offenders completing their prison sentence through a community resettlement program. Facilities were located in inner Brisbane, Cairns and Rockhampton and over the life of the program provided approximately 25 000 bed nights of accommodation and support. With the many changes that have occurred in the provision of corrective services in this State over recent years, government no longer appears to require the services such programs provide. The past year

saw the closure of Rose Blank House in Cairns. The last remaining Halfway House in Rockhampton has been the subject of negotiations with the Department of Corrective Services for some time but with the introduction of the Corrective Services Act 2000 and the concentration of resources focussed on building and expanding correctional centres, it appears unlikely that community based options will receive the much needed resources and attention they require. ACRO is committed to ongoing lobbying for community-based options.

ACRO programs for the elderly and those with disabilities continued to meet a growing demand throughout the year. The ACRO Home Assist Secure Programs (HASP) provided assistance to approximately 2500 clients through out the year, while the ACRO Home and Community Care (HACC) Program assisted approximately 1000 clients during this period. These programs focus on providing information and practical assistance to eligible clients in the areas of home maintenance specifically in areas that may affect their safety, security and health. This period saw staff promote information and discussion with clients on falls Prevention strategies to further assist clients to remain safe and independent within their homes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACRO would like to acknowledge the significant level of support provided to us by the following organizations and individuals:

- Nescafe
- Torque Ford Redcliffe
- Switch FM
- Bob Aldons
- Mark Nichols

In addition, ACRO would like to also recognise the contributions of various government departments and funding bodies that have continued their support and financial commitment to ACRO over this period;

- Department of Corrective Services - Transport Services for the families of inmates in the Wacol and Rockhampton regions; Halfway House for Currently Serving Prisoners, Rockhampton;
- Families, Youth & Community Care Queensland - Community and Individual Support Program, SAAP Services, Outside School Hours Care Activities and Emergency Relief,
- Housing Queensland - Home Assist Secure Program,
- Gaming Machine Community Benefit Fund
- Department of Family and Community Services - Commonwealth Emergency Relief Program, &
- Queensland Health - Home and Community Care Program.

Last but not least a special mention should be bestowed upon the Executive Committee, Individual and Corporate Members, Organisational Staff and Volunteers for their tireless support and contribution throughout the year.



Australian Community Safety & Research Organisation Incorporated

A Public Benevolent Institution

Registered with the Australian Securities Commission, A.R.B.N.: 066 875 107 ABN: 21 066 875 107

Incorporated in Queensland under the Associations Incorporation Act, Number 10000

Registered as a Charity under the Collections Act, Number 472

Postal Address: PO Box 440, LUTWYCHE Qld 4030

Telephone: (07) 3221 0088 Facsimile: (07) 3221 0878

acro@uq.net.au

E-Mail: acro@acro.com.au Homepage: <http://www.acro.com.au>

ACRO YOUTH IN ACTION 1998-2000



Young guns set out to blast racism



Above Left: National Anti-Racism Tour 1998
Above Right: Queens Trust Winners 1999 with His Excellency Major General Arnison AO, Governor of Queensland
Below Left: Nescafe Big Break Winners 1999, Sydney
Below Right: Anti-Drugs Queensland Tour 2000



Below Left: Anti-Drugs Tour 2000 – Regional Queensland
Below Right: Anti-Racism discussions with Hon. Kim Beasley, Leader of the Opposition, Perth 1998



Teenagers make anti-drugs plea



Above: Anti-Racism Tour, Footscray Victoria 1998

Above: Radio Interview, Hobart Tasmania 1998