



Executive Director's Annual Report 2005

ACRO Australian Community Safety & Research Organisation Incorporated ABN 21 066 875 107
incorporating
ACRO Maintenance Pty Ltd ABN 15 107 348 701
QBSA Number: 1055499

"ACHIEVING SOCIAL JUSTICE"

"All Our Profits Go to Charity"

ACRO

- A Public Benevolent Institution
- Incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act (#10000)
- Sole Shareholder of ACRO Maintenance Pty Ltd ABN 15 107 348 701
- Registered as a Charity under the Collections Act # 472
- Registered with the Australian Securities Commission ARBN 066 875 107 ABN 21 066 875 107
- www.acro.com.au
- 07 32210088
- acro@acro.com.au

Executive Members and Key Staff 2005

Ian Stewart
Chairman

Stephanie Whelan
Secretary

Chris Stewart
Treasurer

John Phillips
Committee Member

Clive Begg
Executive Director

Ashley Reid
Program Administrator

Fiona Begg
Program Coordinator

Once again I am happy to report another successful year for ACRO with growth, although controlled, across the range of services provided that have been historically funded by public funds. For some time, the Executive Committee and Staff have been concerned about the constriction of funding from government sources in the delivery of its various programs. With the privatisation of government services and with little likelihood of a reversal in this trend, the need for ACRO to generate new funding sources forced a significant strategic rethink on the organisation. Closure and redundancy were not an option. The competitiveness of tendering processes which could have seen ACRO move into new areas

proved also not to be an option.

The creation of ACRO Maintenance Pty Ltd as a fundraiser for the charitable work of the Association, has, however, proved to be successful with significant growth in this arm of organisational operation already achieved and being anticipated over the coming years. Fully owned by ACRO, Australian Community Safety & Research Organisation (as sole shareholder), this Company has extended its client base under the axiom "All our Profits go to Charity". By word of mouth and minimal advertising, the Company has gone from strength to strength. Indeed, during the first half of the 2005/2006 Financial Year, the Company will under-

take its first major renovation at Wavell Heights necessitating the employment of a second builder. Our initial builder, Dale Lazarides who was appointed in January of 2005, and plumber, Matthew Swain, who has been with us for over a year now, are assisting in the creation of a reputation for quality service - a valuable commodity in the building field. Both Matt and Dale are accredited with the Queensland Building Services Authority (as is ACRO Maintenance) and both undertook additional QBSA training during the year. Whilst considerable costs have been incurred in order that the Company could establish its own identity (uniforms, signage, business cards and stationary, Yellow Page listing, vehicles, tools,

trailer and promotional flyers), the Company was still able to donate around \$30,000.00 back to charitable purpose. This is a



Dr Clive Begg ACRO Executive Director

good result and all responsible are to be congratulated.

The success of the Company in no way underscores the achievements of other operational areas. We are, as usual, indebted to the various Government Departments who have contracted with ACRO in the provision of services including the State Department of Housing (Home Assist

Secure Program, CAP), Queensland Health (Home and Community Care services and Emergency Relief funding); Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, Department of Corrective Services (Bus Service at Wacol and Offender Services to Woodford and Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centres); and, the State Department of Communities (Supported Accommoda-



tion Assistance Program, Community and Individual Support Program, Camp Program and Emergency Relief funding).

Home Assist Secure (HAS) / Home and Community Care (HACC) Programs

The work of the ACRO Home Assist Secure Project and the ACRO HACC Program, located in the Stafford / Wavell Heights region of North Brisbane, continues to provide much needed assistance to the frail elderly and disabled. The project increased its client base by 700 during this past year adding to the 7,000 existing persons al-

ready assisted. In total, some 8,000 jobs were completed under the Program – an outstanding achievement. During the year a Newsletter was distributed to some 1,000 clients and relevant stakeholders. The co-ordinators of the Project which operates in various locations across the State held a major Conference on the Sunshine Coast in May of 2005. ACRO Staffer Fiona Begg was one of the organisers of this very successful event. This year also saw the appointment of Ed Wilson as our Home Assist Secure Field Worker. Ed's popularity with the clients is becoming

legendary with his happy disposition, trade background and willing attitude. Consistent with requirements for the Program, Ed completed Security Training with the Queensland Police Service. He has also undertaken both introductory and advanced Falls Prevention training programs with the Department of Housing. During the year the Department elected to implement a new computer software package (HASLINK) to replace HASIM. The upgrade of equipment to accommodate this changeover was partially funded by the Department. The other "sleeper" to occur during the year was a pro-

gram change which will see client eligibility extended to include Department of Housing clients in their housing for maintenance issues that are not the responsibility of the landlord (e.g. white goods). I refer to this as a "sleeper" because there is no way to gauge the impact of this change on the Program.

Emergency Housing

The replacement of our Supported Accommodation facility at Ashgrove during the year with two new properties at Darra has increased our housing ability. We now have available four (4) three bedroom facilities for families in crisis. Our new Housing Worker, Sarah Shortt, com-

menced employment with ACRO in January and all facilities have been fully tenanted during the year with a high level of compliance with rental payments by tenants. Funds made available from the Gaming Fund (\$12,000) provided much needed new white goods and furniture. In all, our supported accommodation provided 4,308 bed nights for eligible clients during the past year.

Welfare / Transport / Offender Support

Whilst remaining a generalist service in the provision of emergency services for eligible clients, ACRO retains its concern for prisoners and the families of

prisoners. ACRO successfully negotiated a two (2) year contract (to June 2006) with the Department of Corrective Services to provide transport services (only on weekends) for families to visit the various Correctional Centres in the Wacol precinct. This contract saw an additional 20% in funding for bus and offender services for the year but failed to recognise the need for families to visit during the week. This lack of progress, and the discontinuance of the Thursday and Friday transport services has significantly impacted on the numbers using the service. Nonetheless, some 6000 people were transported (in previous

years this has been in excess of 20,000) and an equal number were assisted at our Family Centre at Wacol. The Family Centre is funded by the State Department of Communities and provides an essential interface between families and the prison system. With the financial support of the Small Equipment Grant, the Family Centre finally got an air conditioner this year – which, for those who know the area, is an essential capital item. In terms of other welfare

"numbers" ACRO assisted some 330 families during the year through emergency relief payments; 211 released prisoners sought assistance (25% for accommodation; 26% for emergency relief; 10% for identification assistance; and, 12% requiring other services including advocacy). It is noteworthy that the highest percentage of inmates overall (27%) requested services which are no longer funded by the Department of Corrective Services. In addition,

the Family Centre received over 100 calls for assistance during the year and, during the same period, the ACRO Head Office received some 1,500 calls – 12% of which were for financial assistance that we were unable to provide. Of those others who contacted the Head Office, 22% were assisted financially; 25% were given information about corrections, visits or transport; 22% were accommodation enquiries; with the balance of 16% related to other matters includ-

ing information about ACRO Programs, Advocacy and Legal issues.

ACRO School Holiday Camps

On a lighter note, ACRO continue to provide its School Holiday Camps funded by the Department of Communities. Due to increasing costs, particularly in relation to insurances, and an inability by the Department to increase funding in this area, the number of Programs had to be reduced to three (3) school holiday period rather than four (4). In spite of this, some 40 young people aged between 12 and 15

have benefited from this program – which provides outstanding value for money costing the public purse about \$20,000 in total. It is pleasing to note that the Camp Program has been contracted to continue on the existing basis until June of 2008. The year saw our long standing Camp Facilitator, Aisha, leave us to take up a position with the Department of Communities. Aisha has been with us for a long time and her contribution has been extraordinary. She will be missed by all. Her position will be continued through the work of facilitators Shannon Huber and Gillian Mar-

shall and I have no doubt that these young women will provide a high quality service for the young people.

Sponsorship and Support

As noted at the beginning, the search for additional funds have become extremely problematic as more new players from the corporate “for-profit” sector and the main-stream larger church organisations successfully outbid us in competitive tendering. Nonetheless, we have enjoyed patronage this past year. Acknowledgement of the Gaming Fund for their monies towards

furniture and white goods at our Supported Accommodation has already been noted with gratitude. I would also like to thank the Brisbane City Council for their contribution of \$1,800 towards Rates relief on properties managed by ACRO. In addition I acknowledge with appreciation the many who donated to ACRO during the year. You can be assured that your money is applied well. The decline in available funds from government has not seen a corresponding decline in expectation for ACRO Staff to participate in government and community based working parties, reviews and forums. During this past year ACRO Staff

(particularly Fiona) have been required to attend many such events. Over the past year ACRO has regularly attended Legislative Reviews for the Department of Corrective Services in spite of these being fundamentally bureaucratic and beyond the scope of the organisation; been part of the Community Consultative Committee for the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre; participated regularly in the “In Corrections” Report Reference Group; attended and participated in quarterly Home Assist Secure network meetings; attended and participated in quarterly Home Assist Secure Occupational Therapist Forums;

attended and participated in quarterly Home and Community Care Forums and Annual Planning Meetings; Home Assist Secure State-wide Conference Planning Committee; and, quarterly stakeholder meetings for the Department of Corrective Services. In addition to these requirements ACRO Staff have also been engaged in a number of internal procedures including regular meetings of Volunteers at Wacol, monthly Staff meetings and Annual Staff/Volunteer training (most recently held in June 2005). In terms of its own performance measures, ACRO continues to strive to meet its Service Delivery targets. It

seeks to do so with a less than one (1) percent complaint record from total clients and with a response to all client enquiries within 24 hours of receipt. ACRO’s performance in this regard is impressive – one that we can be proud of.

ACRO is also required to meet government standards with respect to program and funding accountability. Beyond financial acquittals and independent Audit (which have always been undertaken regularly by the organisa-

tion), ACRO programs have also been audited by funding authorities. These are time consuming and arduous tasks. During the financial year program audits were conducted by the Department of Health for the Home and Community Care Program (with a “High Standard” achievement outcome); Department of Transport (with a “no issues” outcome); and, the Department of Communities (ongoing review). Internally, a Program / Staff Audit and Review is undertaken annually in August.

All our achievements have happened because of the people involved with ACRO. Its Executive Committee, under the ongoing leadership and guidance of Ian Stewart has consistently provided sound and productive advice to drive ACRO’s policy and direction. New Executive Members, Chris Stewart (Treasurer) and Stephanie Whelan (Secretary) have had a “baptism of fire” during a year of great change but not only have performed credibly but have constructively contributed to policy



ACRO Australian Community Safety & Research Organisation Incorporated ABN 21 066 875 107
incorporating ACRO Maintenance Pty Ltd ABN 15 107 348 701



Assoc. Professor
Don Robertson
 Committee
 Member
 (resigned)

debate and creation. We did lose Don Robertson during the year with his decision to rationalise his commitments. We thank Don publicly and thank him for his support over the years. John Phillips once again proved to be a man of great conviction and staying power. He has become a great friend to this organisation and I thank him once again for his efforts on behalf of Staff and clients.

The Staff of ACRO have had a bit of a hard time this year with illness and absences taking a toll. Fiona Begg and Ashley Reid remain the rock upon which much of the work of ACRO is built. They have continued to provide quality services across their portfolios and have earned the respect of all members for their ongoing support for our work. They have been more than ably supported by ACRO Home Assist Secure Staff Jennifer Abdur-Rahman, Geraldine "Dena" Maddick (a new appointee this year), Ed Wilson and Graham Kersnovske; ACRO Supported Accommodation Staff Member Sarah Shortt (also new to the team); the Camp Leaders, Shannon Huber and Gillian Marshall, our Financial guru Neil Joseph and all ACRO Volunteers. The membership should be proud of these people who daily meet the demands of those in need providing options that otherwise may not be available to them.

Work to be done

There will always be a need as long as there are unequal relations in our society – so I don't anticipate that ACRO will be finished its work any time soon. As our population ages, the need to provide research and advocacy for older

people presents as a real challenge for organisations such as ours – a challenge to which we must respond. ACRO has not undertaken any research for some time. We keep getting distracted by the bureaucracy that governments thrust upon us. Recent work by Older Persons Speaking Out (OPSO) on community attitudes and mentoring (younger with older) which mirrors work done by ACRO in the late 1990s, suggest a revisit by this organisation and some resolve to construct workable projects that will benefit our ageing population. New coalitions of interest between like-minded organisations will be a goal for the coming year – as will be the targeting of action research on a range of issues. We need to continue to promote a media presence on issues of social justice. In short, we continue to strive to achieve social justice.

Clive Begg
 Executive Director

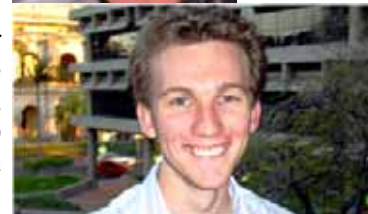
Jennifer Abdur-Rahman, Ashley Reid, Graham Kersnovske, Ed Wilson and Fiona Begg
 [inset: Dena Maddick & Sarah Shortt]: ACRO Staff (below)



Ian Stewart, Chairperson (right)
Stephanie Whelan, Secretary (below)



John Phillips, Committee Member (left)



Chris Stewart, Treasurer (left)

Dale Lazarides & Matt Swain (below)
 ACRO Maintenance Builder & Plumber

