



Good Shepherd Victoria and commenced as a No Interest Loan (NILS) provider on the 1st of July. The program will aim to provide loans of up to \$1200 for low income clients accessing ACRO services for essential household items or health and education needs. In the first year we aim to provide fifteen (15) loans. Two loans have been provided to clients in the first three months for white goods.

Staff and volunteers

The success for any organisation is vested with the competence and dedication of its Staff. ACRO is no different. I thank all our Staff for ensuring that the high standards set by the organisation are met in a compassionate and fair manner. Particular thanks go to our Programs Manager (Fiona Begg; Accounts Manager (Cora Mijares); HAS/HACC Administrative Support (Jennifer Abdur-Raham and Nancy Pitinga); Carpenter (Ben Green); Plumber (David Licht); HAS/HACC Support (Harry

McKinnon, Graham Kervsnoske, Ed Wilson, Paul Green); Housing Support (Nelly Niotakis); Ming, Ly, Megan, Sophie, Aedan (Olga's at Shorncliffe).

Other Acknowledgements

ACRO would like to acknowledge with gratitude the following for their assistance during the year:

- Rotary Club of Toowong who provide free movie tickets annually for families in our crisis housing;
- Emily at St John's ambulance – free transport to Daytripper Christmas High Tea and taxi vouchers for HACC clients during the year;
- Australian Unity Foundation – sponsorship of the day tripper program for the year;
- Brisbane City Council Community Grants Program;
- Begg's Corner Pty Ltd for

commercial rent relief. Our Volunteers particularly Fay, Christina, Del and Frank.

Staff from the Outlook at Boonah particularly Aisha and Rob;

Housing Organisations that we work in partnership with to assist clients in particular 4 Walls especially Zuleiga, staff at MDA, the Department of Housing area office staff particularly the Inala office, the members of the Stafford Community Development Group, Kylie and staff from the Community Place, St Vincent De Paul Settlement Services staff (Goodna) staff from the Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service (TAAS) particularly Anzo, Sarah, Michelle, Kevin and Lloyd whom we have worked with for many years and whose services will be greatly

missed in the housing sector.

We also acknowledge the various State and Federal Government departments that fund work undertaken by ACRO, including:

- Department of Communities (Disability Services)
- Department of Housing & Public Works
- Department of Health & Ageing
- Department of Families, Housing, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs (FAHCSIA)

As always I thank our unsung and unpaid heroes Ian Stewart, Chris Stewart and Stephanie Whelan. The continuing support of our Executive Members does not go unnoticed and the gratitude of a humbled Staff is acknowledged.

Dr Clive Begg.



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ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT 2012



Highlights for 2012

Public Housing Placement Successes

Opening of Fundraising Catering Venture:

No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS)

Home Assist Secure / HACC Expansion

Youth Camp Progress

The change in methodology by governments throughout Australia to require self-sufficiency by our sector in a culture of non-engagement by those that might otherwise support our work may prove to be flawed. We have to do it ourselves

There would appear to be difficult times ahead for all Queenslanders. When it came into power, the Newman government alluded to financial shortfalls that would directly impact on all sectors of the community including the nongovernmental sector. Already, ACRO has been advised of the loss of our Community Development funds (affecting one full-time position) and a percentage reduction in allocated funds across all State government funded projects. ACRO anticipated reductions in government funding to the charitable sector several years ago. The commitment by Australian governments to Free Trade Agreements (which exclude government engagement in enterprises that otherwise could be undertaken by private enterprise) will find these reductions increasing rather than decreasing over time. The impediment for our sector is that unlike our American counterparts, Australian charities are not significantly supported by the general public and Public Companies. The changes to methodology by governments throughout Australia to require self-sufficiency by our sector in a culture of non-engagement by those that might otherwise support our work may prove to be flawed. The potential for the dismantling of an important augmentation vehicle for government policy becomes, therefore, problematic to the health and well-being of the community.

Our choice-points, as a Charity, are extremely limited because of this lack of history for benevolence by corporations and individuals. With this mind, and following considerable discussion by the Executive Committee in 2004, ACRO embarked upon a strategy to find replacement funds via for-profit enterprise. In that year a maintenance Company was incorporated under the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) as a construction Company to earn profit that would then be applied to charitable purpose. Whilst the

Company has had its moments (both positive and negative), its successor continues to operate and, over time, will increase its fund raising activity. More recently ACRO created an Art Gallery and has invested in a catering enterprise on the north side of Brisbane. The creation of these enterprises has been achieved by careful planning utilising consolidated funds without interfering with our direct service delivery model. The success of these activities will become evident over the next few years. Without additional public funds or creative fund-raising, as I have suggested at AGMs previously, there is little hope of survival for the charitable sector in Australia, other than church based operations. Without non-sectarian organisations such as ACRO the social issues that affect many people in Australia - including rising poverty - will exacerbate and lead to consequences that are untenable (increased crime, more violence, greater substance abuse, community breakdown, increased levels of depression and so forth). I, for one, choose to fight for organisations that offer some form of social justice and attempt to address social disparity, which are either economically or politically determined.

The need for the State government to curtail public expenditure and be selective about its policy implementation is understood during difficult times. We are not alone when it comes to funding cuts with the public service itself under considerable strain. We choose not to argue the merits of this decision-making process by government but rather to be proactive and seek out new, more innovative solutions that will hopefully ensure our future and thereby enhance oppor-

With the support of a private benefactor and funds from consolidated revenue, ACRO has been able to establish a High Tea Emporium and Function Room at Shorncliffe on Brisbane's northside. The availability of a venue rent-free has enabled the organization to considerably reduce its overheads thereby giving it time to establish the business and move to a profitable situation hopefully over a shorter timeframe. Profits achieved will be fully acquitted to program development and implementation of charitable work undertaken by ACRO. Operating since March 2012, Olga's at Shorncliffe is already creating a good reputation for fine food and quality service. Its High Teas are highly praised and its movement into the functions market (with the convening of a Tibetan Themed Dinner night) and weekend Breakfasts and Lunches are proving to be popular in a competitive marketplace. Olga's website is www.olgas.net.au and its Facebook page is <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Olgas-at-Shorncliffe/212730128826570>

The Restaurant can be contacted on 32691203.



ACRO Programs Manager
Fiona Begg.

Executive Director's Annual Report 2012

"I, for one, choose to fight for organisations that offer some form of social justice and attempt to address social disparity which is either economically or politically determined"

tunity for many disadvantaged Australian citizens. This is not to say that we endorse the abrogation of responsibility by government for the disadvantaged. Far from it. It behoves us to be vigilant on behalf of powerless constituencies and, at times, this will necessitate critiques of government decision-making – both positive and negative.

On that note, I am pleased to advise that interventions in Housing since the Newman government has been installed have created greater opportunity for homeless people. When previously we would be lucky to find government housing within a year for any of our clients in short term emergency housing, the number of clients that we have been able to successfully transition into long term public housing rental properties has been at an all time high with a complete turnover of tenants in all ACRO crisis housing over the past six months. This is a remarkable turnaround and I congratulate the Minister for Housing, Department of Housing staff, particularly at the area office level, and the government for their rapid response to housing need.

The over-governing of our sector is however becoming problematic. We are audited annually and we have had performance acquittal forms to complete quarterly. The Departments are now requiring the implementation of multiple data bases that have to be updated, sometimes daily. This is

placing an enormous strain on our human resources. It sometimes appears as if this additional workload is designed to substantiate the largesse of staff within the public service rather than create greater efficiencies and transparencies. We have always been highly accountable and transparent. The pulling of resource away from front line service delivery is neither in the best interest of the organisation nor the government. This is particularly true at a time when administrative functions for ACRO have never been discretely funded and have been an add-on to other functions by existing staff funded for other purposes. Our Staff has always been multi-tasked as there was no other choice. The new impositions on the organisation are severely testing the limits for our workers who now have additional administrative roles placed upon them on top of their funded responsibilities. Historically, ACRO has provided services as required under contract and value-added with new programs. As the public service increases its demands upon us (as suggested, to bolster their own existence), our reducing Staff base is struggling to deliver the services required, new program development and maintain the organisation administratively. It is time that government recognised that organisations like ACRO do not maintain themselves in a vacuum and fund an administrative arm to meet the demands placed upon it. The funding lost to ACRO was



Dr Clive Begg, Executive Director

that of its Executive Director. Whilst the organisation may be in a position to self-fund this position it is still our contention, given the requirements by government that were met by this position, that funding for the purpose should not be considered unreasonable.

On a happier note, I am pleased to present my Report on the activities for ACRO this past financial year.

PROGRAMS

Housing

The Housing program for ACRO has been particularly busy this year with a record number of families receiving support. Over 16 000 bed nights were provided during the year either through our short term crisis housing or short term head lease properties. The numbers supported continued to grow despite the fact that one short term head lease property was required to be returned to the department for redevelopment as units. Over the past twelve months 90 people have had a support period with ACRO (41 adults and 79 children). The majority of those accommodated were born overseas with our highest number of families originating from Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia. We have also assisted clients from Vietnam, Afghanistan, Burundi, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Chile, Burma and Liberia. Clients speak a range of languages including Dinka, Arabic, Somali, Vietnamese and Burmese to name a few. 58 of these persons accommodated were successfully transitioned to longer term housing with 12 families receiving properties through the De-



ACRO Home Assist Secure/HACC Staff members (L to R)

Ed Wilson, Ben Green, Nancy Pitinga, Paul Green, Harry McKinnon, Graham Kersnovske. Below: Jennifer Abdur-Rahman

partment of Housing and three moving into the private rental market.

As well as providing case management support during their housing stay with us, ACRO also provide assistance to clients in moving in and out of properties and sourcing furniture and fittings given that many of our clients have very little when they come to us. We would like to acknowledge the considerable support provided by the following organizations and friends who have assisted in helping families with much needed items to start their new homes:

Hart 4000 (Furniture and Beds), Ally and Stu Wakefield (use of Ute), Amelinda (Washing Machine), Jane Jennison (house full of furniture), Sofia Woods and Devo Sock (Fridge), Ding Boar (Fridge), Jaxxon Chilli (Kitchenware), The Blue House (Kitchenware), BJ Couriers (Removals), Tammy Laws (Television and DVD player), St Vincent De Pauls (Housing Support), 139 Club (bedding), Rachael Butler (Financial Assistance to pay for Removals), Fasa (Heavy Lifting), Lenine Bourke (Beds and Brainstorming), Debbie Niotakis (Television and Bedding), Chris Van Eyk (bedding and children's clothing) Jack Stoll (fridge) Christina Williams (crockery and household items).

Rehousing a family in crisis can be very difficult for us to plan for. Sometimes families come equipped with the furniture and whitegoods required to start their new house after they move out from us. At other times, for one reason or another, our clients come to us with nothing but their clothes and a few personal items. For these

people we try to source the items they need to start their new homes through charities and networks for resettlement. However we have very little room to store items so this can become quite an urgent task! Thank you to all those who have assisted us particularly at the last minute.

In recent weeks we have had particular success in assisting clients to obtain department of housing rental properties with all but one property being turned over in the past couple of months. This has meant a very busy time for housing staff (Melly and Fiona) but with great outcomes for clients. Unfortunately there are still families due to lack of vacancies and there were 441 persons who sought accommodation for themselves and or families whom we were unable to assist this year.

Welfare

ACRO has received funding from both the state and federal governments for emergency relief. This has enabled us to assist 357 people this year. The majority of this assistance is provided through food assistance to families, particularly through our annual Christmas project which includes families of prisoners as a particular group in need. However a growing level of assistance has also been requested and provided in relation to rent arrears, utilities (gas and electricity) and moving costs. Recently the State government has announced the cessation of state based emergency relief and therefore it is likely that ACRO will be able to assist fewer clients in the future or have to reduce the level of assistance available to individual clients.

DAYTRIPPER Program

The Daytripper program was able to provide activities to an increased number of older people (814) this year thanks to the sponsorship provided by Australian Unity Foundation. The funding also allowed us to employ a part time coordinator, Lora, for part of the year. We thank Lora for her efforts and acknowledge the work of our social work placement student Julie currently helping out with the program for the remainder of this year.

HAS/HACC

The program has registered over 11 000 clients since its inception and currently has over 8000 active clients. 3305 jobs were completed during the year through the state funded Home Assist secure program and 4805 jobs completed for HACC eligible clients. From the first of July there has been a change to our HACC funding with the state government taking responsibility for HACC eligible client funding for those under 65 (people with a disability or a carer) and the federal government taking responsibility for those HACC eligible clients over 65. ACRO currently has funding agreements in place until 2015 for HACC minor maintenance and modifications. The state based Home Assist secure funding over the last couple of years has only been funded on an annual basis and this arrangement remains with the state government announcing continuation of funding for the program until 30th June 2013. The significant outcomes that this program provides to older people and people of any age with a disability wanting to remain living independently in their own homes should not be



under estimated. By ensuring qualified, reliable tradespeople, assisting with the cost of labour for essential home maintenance and modifications and providing invaluable information to clients about a range of health, safety and security issues this program value adds significantly to the lives of older people and people with a disability.

ACRO Youth Camps

25 Young people took part in the camps this year with camps undertaken in school holidays at Stradbroke Island, Harry's Hut near Noosa and the Outlook at Boonah.

NILS (No Interest Loan Scheme) Program

ACRO has completed the registration process with



ACRO Accounts Manager
Cora Mijares.