

refugee council of australia
annual report
2008-2009



Refugee Council
of Australia

www.refugeecouncil.org.au

acknowledgements

The Refugee Council of Australia would like to acknowledge the generous support of the following organisations and individuals for the work of the Council during 2008-09:

Funding support:

- Sidney Myer Fund
- Australian Refugee Foundation
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship
- NSW Sport and Recreation
- Reichstein Foundation
- Victorian Multicultural Commission
- AMES Victoria
- Caritas Australia
- NSW Community Relations Commission
- City of Sydney
- AMES NSW
- ACL
- Leichhardt Council
- Hon. Graham West MP
- Australian Agency for International Development
- Foundation for Young Australians
- Australian Cultural Orientation Program, IOM
- Equal Rights Trust

In-kind support:

- Australian Football League Multicultural Program
- Australian National Maritime Museum
- Penny Biggins
- Brett Enman Webdesign
- Centre for Multicultural Youth
- Centrelink
- Chalk and Cheese Design
- City of Sydney
- Host 1 Pty Ltd
- Linda Muir Graphic Design
- Myer Foundation
- Safeway South Melbourne and Carlton
- Sarjoh Bah
- Timothy Seeto
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees - Regional Office, Canberra
- University of Sydney
- University of NSW
- Webcity
- Yasmeen Fatimah

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Cover photograph: An Afghan man and his son rebuild their home in the village of Istalif, on the Shomali Plain, after returning from Pakistan. Photo: UNHCR/IN.Behring

In 2008, according to UNHCR statistics, 536,000 people were recognised as refugees, 604,000 voluntarily returned to their country of origin and, at the end of the year, 827,000 were still seeking asylum.

president's report

A series of positive changes in Australian refugee policy and continued growth in support for the work of the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) were among the highlights for our organisation in 2008-09. However, the year also provided many challenges, not least of which was the return to some of the divisive political debates of the past about how Australia should respond to asylum seekers. We finished the year with a strong sense of the support of our membership but also with a heightened awareness that promoting understanding of, and humane attitudes towards, refugees and asylum seekers is a long-term task. The year provided many reminders of the importance of this work as, across the globe, countless people put themselves in great danger – some tragically losing their lives – in their search for freedom from persecution.

While many nations placed further restrictions on people seeking asylum during 2008-09, we were heartened by the continuing process of refugee policy reform in Australia. Building on the reforms which started under the previous administration in 2005, the Rudd Government introduced some significant changes, including an end to the Temporary Protection Visa system, the introduction of a merit-based appointment process for the Refugee Review Tribunal, the abolition of the “45-day rule” bar on asylum seekers’ access to work rights and basic health care, further reform of the immigration detention system and the replacement of the Community Care Pilot with an ongoing program to support asylum seekers living in the community. Throughout the year, RCOA was very actively engaged in dialogue with the government on these changes and other policy options, engaging our membership in providing feedback and putting forward proposals for consideration.

For RCOA, 2008-09 was busy not only for the many policy changes under consideration but also for the organisation’s hectic research agenda. During the year, RCOA was involved in five significant funded research projects – on employment issues, the role of sport in refugee settlement, the concerns of young people of refugee background, the social and economic contributions of refugees to Australian society and refugees’ experiences of seeking protection in Asia and the Middle East. We are grateful to the organisations which funded this research – the Sidney Myer Fund, NSW Sport and Recreation, Foundation for Young Australians, Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and Caritas Australia. In addition, RCOA was involved in a highly successful pilot program to build more effective links between settlement service specialists in Australia and the DIAC-funded Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) Program, a pre-departure program for refugees preparing for resettlement in Australia.



Our success in attracting funding for research and projects helped RCOA to produce its healthiest balance sheet in more than a decade. After years of relying on funding from the Australian Refugee Foundation (ARF) to meet annual shortfalls in funding, in 2008-09 RCOA was able to produce a modest surplus, with ARF’s contribution restricted to a partial subsidy of the rent for the Sydney office. The ARF was formed in 1997 to support RCOA’s work in the absence of viable core funding. However, in 2008-09, like all foundations, it suffered a decline in investments as a result of the global financial crisis, making RCOA’s improved financial situation both welcome and timely.

Young refugees from Burma in the Umpium Refugee Camp in western Thailand.

Photo: UNHCR/R. Arnold

Surviving largely on project funding presents real challenges for an

RCOA's objectives and priorities

organisation with such a busy agenda of core representational work. In 2008-09, only 22% of our income was not tied to a specific project. The RCOA Board is conscious of how much pressure this puts on RCOA's small and hard-working staff team and is determined to explore all avenues for increasing the organisation's untied income. We are very grateful to our CEO, Paul Power, and the efforts of his team, especially Tamara Domicelj, Rebecca Eckard, Natalie Gooch, Louise Olliff, Martyn Green, Lydia Ho and Zhi Yan. We were fortunate during 2008-09 also to engage the services of Chris Nash, who during his six-month stint in Australia brought valuable experience from the refugee sector in Europe.

The success of our staff team can be seen by the way in which the work of RCOA is being received. During the year, individual donations nearly doubled and our membership grew by 17%, bettering the previous year's all-time high for membership subscriptions. More people than ever turned to the RCOA website for information and interest continued to grow in our monthly email bulletin, a vital source of information for our membership and sector. Refugee Week was even more successful in 2009 than in previous years, with more local events held and more requests for information and promotional material.

As president, I am greatly indebted to my colleagues on the Board for their commitment and dedication to RCOA's work and the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. My colleagues represent six states and territories and many different parts of our membership. The board includes people who have been refugees themselves and people who have dedicated their lives to serving the needs of refugees. The organisation could not attempt, with such limited resources, to represent a broad membership and speak simultaneously on so many complex issues without the very active involvement of such a wise, experienced and diverse board.

At our 2008 Annual General Meeting, we were delighted to honour one of our Board's stalwarts, Barbara Young. Barbara stepped down from the board after 16 years of service, half of that time as Board Chair. The conferral of life membership was a fitting honour for someone who has given such dedicated service to RCOA and its cause.

As president, I am pleased to be able to reflect on the vitality of RCOA and the support it enjoys from its membership and the sector it represents. But, given the desperate need to expand avenues for protection from persecution, an organisation with RCOA's mandate can never be self-satisfied. I look forward to RCOA continuing to work constructively with like-minded people across Australia and internationally to continue to press the case of people whose lives have been turned upside down by brutality and conflict.

John Gibson
President

The Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) is a national, not-for-profit organisation with more than 370 organisational and individual members. Formed in November 1981, RCOA's aim is to promote the adoption of flexible, humane and constructive policies towards refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons by the Australian and other Governments and their communities.

To achieve this aim, the RCOA has a number of key objectives which are to:

- act as a unifying organisation and general representative for its members;
- present the case on matters relating to refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons as strongly as possible, wherever appropriate;
- increase public awareness and media sensitivity towards refugee needs;
- build the capacity of the refugee sector; and
- build an effective and respected national organisation.

The priority activities for RCOA are set by its members, as represented by an elected Board. They centre on conducting research, policy analysis, representation, training and community education. We are funded through membership fees, by project grants, by trusts and foundations, by undertaking consultancies and through donations.

RCOA works to further the interests of members who themselves are involved in the full spectrum of work with refugees, from assisting refugees in countries of first asylum and when they repatriate to their homelands, to providing settlement support to refugees in Australia and offering protection and legal advice to refugees and asylum seekers.

RCOA maintains close ties to many international organisations, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) and refugee councils in other countries. The Council is also engaged in regular dialogue with Federal and state government departments, in particular the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), and with bodies such as the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT), the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and the Australian Human Rights Commission. RCOA is a member of ICVA and ACFID.



RCOA's people

Life membership for long-serving Chairperson

After 16 years of service on the RCOA Board, Barbara Young was awarded life membership of RCOA at the 2008 Annual General Meeting at Parramatta (NSW) in November. Chairperson for a total of eight years (including the previous five), Ms Young was praised for her record of service by RCOA president John Gibson and was presented with her life membership award by Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans. Ms Young said she felt comfortable stepping down from the RCOA board knowing that the organisation was in such good shape and so well supported by its membership. The new RCOA chairperson is Esta Paschalidis-Chilas, who has served on the board since 2002. At the AGM, two new board members were elected – Bobby Whitfield, president of Queensland African Communities Council, and Sonia Caton, Director of Refugee and Immigration Legal Service in Brisbane. They replaced two board members who did not seek re-election, Grant Mitchell and Monsignor John Murphy.

Executive Committee 2008-09

President

John Gibson
Barrister-at-Law
Principal, International Refugee
Consulting

Vice President

Professor William Maley AM
Barrister-at-Law
Director, Asia Pacific College of
Diplomacy, Australian National University

Chairperson (appointed November 2008)

Esta Paschalidis-Chilas
Consultant

Immediate Past President

David Bitel
Secretary General, International
Commission of Jurists (Australian
Division)

Hon. Secretary (appointed November 2008)

Sky de Jersey
Program Manager, ChildFund Australia

Hon. Treasurer

Lionel Conyer
Member of Institute of Chartered
Accountants in Australia

Executive Committee members

Maureen Adamson
Individual RCOA member, Hobart

Paris Aristotle AM
Director, Victorian Foundation for
Survivors of Torture

Dr Elizabeth Biok
Solicitor, Legal Aid Commission of NSW
Member, International Commission of
Jurists

Sonia Caton (from November 2008)
Director, Refugee and Immigration Legal
Service

Kevin Liston
Refugee Services Coordinator, South
Australian Department for Families and
Communities

Dr Melika Sheikh-Eldin
Manager, Settlement Partnerships, AMES
Victoria

Jenny Semple
Director, South Eastern Region Migrant
Resource Centre

Bobby Whitfield (from November 2008)
President, Queensland African
Communities Council

Grant Mitchell (until November 2008)
Coordinator, International Detention
Coalition

Monsignor John Murphy OAM (until
November 2008)
Director, Australian Catholic Migrant and
Refugee Office

Barbara Young AO (Chairperson until
November 2008)
Board member, ActionAid Australia
(formerly Austcare)

Staff 2008-09

As at 30 June 2009, RCOA had three
full-time and three part-time staff (5.0
full-time equivalent), based at its Sydney
and Melbourne offices:

Chief Executive Officer (Sydney)
Paul Power

National Policy Director (Sydney)
Tamara Domicelj

Research Coordinator (Melbourne)
Rebecca Eckard

Settlement Policy Officer (Melbourne)
Louise Olliff

*Information and Membership Officer
(Sydney)*
Natalie Gooch

Accounting Officer (Sydney)
Martyn Green

Other staff who worked for RCOA during
2008-09, in either short-term or ongoing
roles, were:

Lydia Ho (Information Officer, July to
December)

Annette McKail (Research and Policy
Officer, until August)

Chris Nash (National Policy Director,
September to March)

Anna Samson (National Policy Director,
until September)

Jacki Whitwell (Research and Policy
Officer, until October)

Zhi Yan (Information Officer, December to
May)

Volunteers and interns 2008-09

Brigitte Carcenac
de Torne

Tim Clarke

Michael Edwards

Brett Enman

Terry Fitzgerald

Jan Ho

Kylie Holmes

Nahrain John

Pinthinee

Khluiprasert

Matt Kranke

Alice Lai

Petrana Lorenz

Melanie Montalban

Lucy Morgan

Emma Norrie

Katrien Pickles

Claudia Pizarro

Zahra Shafigh

Sarah Spieth

Claire Taylor

Georgina Villaggi

Victoria Vu

Eileen Wahab

Tony Yan

Assistance with Refugee Week events:
Alex Prado, Lucas Maddock, Kia
Maddock, Jim Green, Hser Pweh Moo,
Zar Dar Aye Runno, Vanbawi Hetacia,
Kaw Peng Sathing, Ngun Nawn, Sandi
Soe, San Ni, Naomi Naomi, Thang Thang
Bohyng, Fatuma Osman, Ahmad Raza,
Aaron Wilson, Kim Fairbrother, Phylis
Lore, Sue Briggs, Brent Plowright, Masters
students from Sydney University's Centre
for Peace and Conflict Studies

research and representation

The core work of RCOA is its national research, policy development and representation of its members on refugee issues. In 2008-09, research projects were an even greater focus than in previous years, with the majority of the organisation's funding being received for work on five significant research projects and RCOA's main annual community consultations. Our research focused on refugee protection concerns, employment options for refugees, youth issues, the role of sport in refugee settlement and the social and economic contributions of refugees.

Throughout the year, RCOA was actively involved in discussions with government about potential changes to policies relating to asylum seekers, the settlement of refugee and humanitarian entrants and Australia's engagement in international refugee issues. As an umbrella body focused on the representation of the views of its membership, RCOA remained in constant contact with its members, through direct consultations, regular teleconferences on policy issues, participation in interagency meetings, canvassing of views from specialist agencies and direct contact with members.

Australia's Refugee and Humanitarian Program, 2008-09

- Offshore refugee visas: 6499
- Offshore Special Humanitarian visas: 4511
- Onshore protection and humanitarian visas: 2497
- Total refugee and humanitarian visas: 13,507
- Primary countries of origin for offshore refugees and humanitarian visas were Iraq 2874, Burma 2412, Afghanistan 847, Sudan 631, Bhutan 616, Ethiopia 478, Democratic Republic of Congo 463, Somalia 456, Liberia 387, Sierra Leone 363.
- Primary countries of origin for onshore protection visas were China 426, Sri Lanka 364, Afghanistan 223, Zimbabwe 215, Iraq 169, Pakistan 158, Iran 146, Burma 78, Bangladesh 49, Egypt 45.

Refugee arrivals in Australia's migration intake, 1948-2008

	<i>Total settler intake</i>	<i>Refugee and humanitarian arrivals</i>	
July 1948 to June 1953	679,349	186,798	27.5%
July 1953 to June 1958	571,855	26,105	4.6%
July 1958 to June 1963	518,571	15,597	3.0%
July 1963 to June 1968	682,726	12,252	1.8%
July 1968 to June 1973	770,887	47,049	6.1%
July 1973 to June 1978	398,694	24,061	6.0%
July 1978 to June 1983	469,670	94,222	20.1%
July 1983 to June 1988	495,539	63,636	12.8%
July 1988 to June 1993	571,952	48,676	8.5%
July 1993 to June 1998	419,414	57,471	13.7%
July 1998 to June 2003	466,595	39,998	8.6%
July 2003 to June 2008	656,120	57,437	8.8%
Total	6,701,372	673,303	10.0%

Australia's refugee and humanitarian arrivals since Federation

Refugee arrivals 1901 to 1947 (estimate)	20,000
Refugee and humanitarian arrivals 1948 to 2008	673,303
Asylum seekers recognised as refugees before 1996 (estimate)	15,000
Onshore protection visas issued 1996-2008	25,400
Refugee and humanitarian visa grants 2008-09	13,507
Total	747,210

Major policy changes in 2008-09

The Australian Government's Budget announcements in May 2009 included a series of changes to refugee policy. These changes built on a series of reforms which began in 2005. RCOA and its member agencies have been active throughout this period, promoting the case for change and putting forward policy alternatives. Among the changes announced with the Budget by Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, were:

- the replacement of the Community Care Pilot for asylum seekers living in the community with a national Community Status Resolution Service and Assisted Voluntary Return Service;
- abolishing the arbitrary "45-day rule" approach to the granting of work rights and health care access to asylum seekers;
- foreshadowing the introduction for a "complementary protection" system for people to whom Australia has protection obligations under human rights treaties other than the Refugee Convention;
- a small increase in the Refugee and Humanitarian Program, from 13,500 to 13,750 places;
- an increase in the Woman at Risk Program quota from 10.5% to 12% of Refugee Program (720 places);
- the commencement of multi-year planning of refugee resettlement, allowing Australia to make commitments over several years to resettle refugees from protracted refugee situations.

Among other changes announced during 2008-09 by Senator Evans were merits-based appointments to the Refugee Review Tribunal and changes to the citizenship test to assist people disadvantaged by the new arrangements introduced in 2007.

Immigration detention issues

Immigration detention was again a major theme in Australia's refugee policy debates and RCOA's discussions with government throughout 2008-09. On 29 July 2008, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, announced a series of policy changes for the conduct of Australia's immigration detention centres. While the policies of mandatory detention and the excision of offshore islands from the migration zone remained, the Minister outlined a set of values to be applied to the conduct of detention centres. These changes are aimed at ending indefinite and non-reviewable detention and at limiting immigration detention to a measure of last resort. RCOA welcomed the changes, as a practical step towards ensuring respect for the rights of vulnerable people.

In August, RCOA CEO Paul Power was one of 43 NGO and government representatives to participate in a tour of immigration detention facilities on Christmas Island. It provided the first opportunity for many to see the new \$400 million immigration detention centre built at Christmas Island's North West Cape. The visit was organised at the request of Minister Evans, who had expressed his wish to see immigration detention facilities more open for public scrutiny. While those taking part in the visit expected to see a new prison-like detention centre, the visitors were shocked by the scale of the security measures, with wire, caging, security grilles and surveillance equipment throughout the complex. Following the visit, RCOA and eight other NGOs wrote to Minister Evans to express concerns about the new centre.

Also in August, RCOA issued a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration Inquiry into Immigration Detention in Australia. The submission welcomed the Australian Government's new approach to immigration detention and made recommendations for further reforms to the detention system, advocating the processing of all asylum claims on the Australian mainland, the introduction of time limitations for immigration detention, the protection of the rights of asylum seekers to judicial review and legal representation, the strengthening of review mechanisms for the immigration detention system, the exploration of alternatives to detention for vulnerable groups and the expansion of the Community Care Pilot as the preferred model for supporting vulnerable people during the visa determination process.

In February, Paul Power and RCOA National Policy Director, Chris Nash, provided further evidence to the Inquiry at a public hearing in Canberra. RCOA emphasised the need for effective and well-resourced alternative community measures to detention, providing evidence about alternatives used in Australia and overseas which are not only more cost-effective than detention, but are also successful in ensuring compliance with the asylum process. In addition, RCOA stressed the need to protect the right of all detainees to automatic and independent review against the decision to detain, with enforceable remedies, so as to ensure adequate oversight and

to guard against arbitrary detention.

Following the inquiry, the Joint Standing Committee on Migration published three reports covering criteria for release from detention, alternatives to detention, conditions in detention and oversight of detention arrangements. The first of these reports, tabled in December 2008, included a recommendation that the Australian Government end the policy of charging former detainees for their time in immigration detention centres, a reform for which RCOA had long advocated. In response, the Australian Government in March introduced the *Migration Amendment (Abolishing Detention Debt) Bill* to abolish the detention debt regime. RCOA welcomed the passing of the Bill in September 2009.

Immigration Minister at RCOA AGM

Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, was guest speaker at the RCOA's Annual General Meeting at Parramatta Town Hall in Western Sydney on November 17, 2008. Invited to speak on Australian refugee policy one year after the election of the Rudd Government, Senator Evans outlined both the changes which had occurred in 12 months (such as offshore detention, temporary protection and approaches to detention) and the growing list of policies potentially up for review (including work rights for asylum seekers, complementary protection and detention debt). Senator Evans also affirmed the commitment of the Rudd Government to bringing "humanity, fairness, integrity and public confidence" to Australia's refugee policy. "We firmly believe that we can have strong and effective border security while also treat people seeking our protection with fairness and humanity," he said. In his speech, the Minister announced a five-year commitment to the resettlement of Bhutanese refugees, plans to resolve the issue of detention debts, the establishment of an Onshore Protection Consultative Group to have input into asylum policy reforms and government plans to review the link between the offshore and onshore aspects of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program.



Dialogue with government

RCOA was very actively involved in discussions with government on many issues during 2008-09. These discussions included:

- Participating in the DIAC-NGO Dialogue on Humanitarian Issues held in Sydney in August and Melbourne in March, each a day-long discussion of a wide variety of issues affecting refugee policy.
- DIAC's dialogue on international protection issues in August, held as part of the planning for the Australian delegation's participation in UNHCR's Executive Committee meeting in Geneva.
- Participating, with other organisations, in extended discussions with the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship on the ministerial intervention process (July) and the planning for the refugee and humanitarian program (January).
- Providing feedback to DIAC from RCOA's membership on new policies being considered or implemented, including the development of the Complex Case Support Network, work rights for asylum seekers and the development of a system of complementary protection for people whose protection needs are covered by human rights treaties other than the Refugee Convention.
- Participating in meetings of DIAC's new Onshore Protection Consultative Group, formed to enable more detailed NGO input into government policy on asylum seeker issues.
- Providing input for the Australian National Audit Office's report (released in June 2009) on the Settlement Grants Program.

- Participating, with representatives of A Just Australia, Amnesty International, Multicultural Development Association, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre and Hotham Mission, in March in meetings with 17 Federal MPs and Senators from different parties, briefing them on current refugee settlement and asylum issues.

Throughout the year, RCOA's CEO participated in four meetings of the Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council (RRAC), a government-appointed committee which advises on refugee settlement issues. RRAC's discussions included meetings with several Federal Government ministers and numerous senior officials of government departments. Chaired by former MP Bruce Baird, the 10-member Council includes three RCOA board members, Paris Aristotle, Kevin Liston and Jenny Semple.

Submission on 2009-10 refugee intake

During October and November, RCOA conducted 35 consultations across Australia, seeking views on issues to be considered by the Australian Government in the development of the 2009-10 Refugee and Humanitarian Program. More than 500 people participated, representing more than 200 organisations from 30 cities and towns in eight states and territories. The 120-page submission, completed in January, explored a number of themes, including: Australia's resettlement program in the context of global refugee needs and past national intakes; considerations for future planning of the Refugee and Humanitarian Program; family reunion and the Special Humanitarian Program; funding and planning of settlement services; housing; education and English language training; employment and income support; health; cultural orientation; rural and regional settlement; and asylum policy issues. The submission also included a summary of conditions in some of the major source countries for refugees, as well as resettlement needs for people from those countries. The submission was presented to Senator Chris Evans at the annual peak bodies meeting with the Minister on January 23. It formed the basis of RCOA's discussions with the Government during 2009.

'Search for Protection' report

With the support of Caritas Australia and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), RCOA conducted research into the experiences of resettled refugees in countries of first asylum. Based on interviews and focus groups with 50 recently arrived Iraqi, Karen and Chin refugees about life in Jordan, Syria, India, Thailand and Malaysia, this report outlined the challenges that refugees face, including their experiences of being treated as "illegal immigrants" while seeking asylum and even after UNHCR registration; the constant pressure to pay bribes to avoid arrest or expulsion; fear of rape and sexual harassment; being forced to work illegally to survive; being exploited by employers because of their lack of status; and living with little or no access to medical services or basic education for refugee children. The report, *The Search for Protection: Resettled refugees reflect on seeking asylum in Asia and the Middle East*, was released in June, at the Sydney and Melbourne launches of Refugee Week.

What our members say about RCOA

Amnesty International Australia

Amnesty International Australia (AIA) and RCOA have a very close and collaborative working relationship. This has included working together at UNHCR Consultations in Geneva, visiting politicians in Canberra and ongoing meetings with DIAC around the country. Highlights this year have included attending the UNHCR Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement together and jointly hosting a Fringe Event at the ALP's National Conference. For a number of years AIA and RCOA have joined forces to call on the Australian Government to introduce complementary protection provisions and, with legislation currently before the Parliament, it clearly demonstrates what can be achieved through positive collaboration.

~ Dr Graham Thom, Refugee Coordinator, Amnesty International Australia

Research on employment support

Finding sustainable and suitable employment and navigating through the employment support system are issues consistently raised at RCOA's annual community consultations. Research in this area largely focuses on the barriers that refugees face in finding employment but does not focus on possible solutions. To address this gap in research and supported by the Sidney Myer Fund, RCOA undertook a project to analyse and model employment pathway programs for refugees. A comprehensive national and international literature review was completed, and a broad spectrum of services, refugee communities and employers were interviewed to generate in-depth qualitative data on successful employment initiatives past and present. Services across all states and territories participated, providing an Australia-wide perspective that highlighted common themes and experiences. At the same time, the broad scope of interviews ensured that extremely successful and diverse models in local areas were documented with a view to communicating these learning across other states and territories. Key themes of innovative practice have been identified through this research. RCOA's research report will be finalised and released during 2009-10.

Literature review on the contributions of refugees

Commissioned by DIAC, RCOA conducted a literature review on the economic, social and civic contributions of refugees in Australia. The work examined relevant national and international sources while also seeking to identify information gaps and recommend future avenues of research. RCOA's research found that the 730,000 refugees and humanitarian migrants settled by Australia since Federation have had a profound impact in enhancing the nation's social, cultural and economic life. The report found that refugees make substantial contributions to their new country – expanding consumer markets for local goods, opening new markets, bringing in new skills, creating employment and filling empty employment niches. The RCOA research also revealed that Australia's refugees and humanitarian entrants have found success in every field of endeavour, including the arts, sports, media, science, research, business and civic and community life. The work captures commonly cited "ingredients for success" required for people to be able to contribute to their community and country, concluding that more empirical research is required into the factors which contribute to success in the resettlement of refugees and their participation in economic, social and cultural life in Australia. The research also identified the need for longitudinal data collection and studies into the economic progress made by refugees, and made recommendations for the direction of this research into the future. The literature review was released in November 2009.



The Australian Football League Multicultural Program was among the initiatives examined as part of RCOA's research into sport's role in refugee settlement. Photo: AFL

The role of sport in refugee settlement

In June 2008, RCOA received funding from the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation to undertake a research and awareness-raising project with the aim of promoting the participation of refugees in sport in NSW. Throughout 2008-09, RCOA investigated initiatives from around Australia which aim to increase the participation of refugees in sport, with a view to developing recommendations for sporting clubs who wish to promote refugee participation. The research report, released in November 2009, documents the benefits of sport to refugees and the barriers they may face to becoming involved in sport, as well as outlining practical guidelines for designing sport programs which cater for the needs of refugee participants. In conjunction with the release of the research report, RCOA will be administering a grants program in 2009-10 for projects which aim to involve people from refugee backgrounds in sport.

Issues for refugee young people

Young people, those under 30 upon arrival, now comprise the significant majority and a growing proportion of new arrivals to Australia under the Refugee and Humanitarian Program. In recognition of these trends, RCOA, with funding from the Foundation for Young Australians, undertook a literature review and series of youth consultations across three Australian states and the Australian Capital Territory. The aim of this research was to develop a targeted and informed strategy for the ongoing engagement of refugee young people in advocating to have their needs and concerns addressed and their ideas recognised at a national level. The resulting *Amplifying the Voices of Young Refugees* report includes a series of recommendations that will inform the future work of the Council.

Access and Equity report

As part of DIAC's consultations for its 2006-08 *Access and Equity in Government Services* report, RCOA was contracted to provide advice on the responsiveness of government services to the needs of humanitarian entrants. Drawing on feedback from



Visiting Settlement Advisor, Annerose Reiner (right), with Australian Cultural Orientation program participants and staff at a course graduation in Ghana.

our regular consultations with settlement agencies and refugee communities, as well as interviews conducted specifically for the submission, RCOA identified numerous access and equity issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers in a wide range of areas, including settlement services, migration advice, physical and mental health services, housing, English language training, employment and work rights and interpreting and translating services. The submission also highlighted examples of effective culturally responsive government services and made recommendations for improving service provision to humanitarian entrants.

Australian Cultural Orientation Program

During 2008-09, RCOA was involved in providing support to the Australian Cultural Orientation (AUSCO) program, the five-day pre-departure program offered to refugees and humanitarian entrants preparing for resettlement in Australia. Through an agreement with DIAC (which funds the AUSCO

program) and the International Organization for Migration (which delivers the program in 16 countries around the world), RCOA developed a program to build links between AUSCO trainers overseas and settlement services in Australia. Between June 2008 and June 2009, RCOA recruited and deployed eight settlement services staff to work for periods of between two and four weeks with AUSCO trainers in Asia, the Middle East and Africa, assisting them to refine the course content and delivery to focus on the most critical on-arrival settlement needs of refugees. The first two settlement workers to be deployed were Kathy Ragless (Companion House, Canberra) and Victor Saw (a Karen community worker from Sydney), sent to Malaysia and Thailand in June-July 2008. In November, Kamalle Daboussy (Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre, NSW) and Anne Hamilton (Migrant Resource Centre of Southern Tasmania) were deployed to Jordan. After a further national recruitment process, four Visiting Settlement Advisors were chosen for deployment to Africa in 2009. Joseph Bol (an African community worker from Wollongong) and Rosemary Kariuki (NSW Police Ethnic Community Liaison Officer) went to Kenya in April, while Annerose Reiner (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture) and Bobby Whitfield (Multicultural Development Association, Brisbane) were sent to Ghana in June 2009.

RCOA CEO Paul Power was appointed in April to DIAC's Evaluation Committee for the AUSCO Program as the sole non-government representative. Following recommendations made by this committee and recommendations proposed by IOM, RCOA and the Visiting Settlement Advisors deployed during 2008-09, a modified AUSCO Exchange Program will be implemented in 2010, involving both the short-term deployment of Australian settlement services staff overseas and the hosting of AUSCO trainers by Australian settlement services.

What our members say about RCOA

Multicultural Services Centre of Western Australia

In the context of increasing numbers of refugees and displaced people globally, in many ways RCOA has been the conscience of Australia in reminding its citizens, politicians and other stakeholders of our international obligations to address the concerns of these people, domestically and internationally. It is absolutely critical that governments, the corporate and the community sectors ensure that RCOA has a viable presence in all states and territories and that its impressive and effective systemic advocacy work is adequately funded. The Ethnic Communities Council of WA and the Multicultural Services Centre appreciate the support that RCOA has provided and looks forward to the continuation of our collaborative work and extends our appreciation to the board and staff of RCOA for a job very well done.

~ Ramdas Sankaran, President Ethnic Communities Council of WA and the Executive Director of the Multicultural Services Centre of WA.

international links

As the national umbrella body for NGOs working with refugees, RCOA is very actively involved in promoting dialogue between Australian organisations and NGOs, inter-governmental agencies and government bodies around the world. This role involves representing RCOA's membership at a variety of international meetings, fostering opportunities for Australian organisations to participate in international dialogue and acting as a primary contact for international organisations seeking to understand refugee issues and services in Australia.

One of RCOA's closest working relationships is with UNHCR. During 2008-09, RCOA participated in three major international UNHCR meetings in Geneva and also maintained a close working relationship with UNHCR's Regional Office in Canberra, supporting the hosting of UNHCR's national NGO consultations in October.

RCOA is an active member of both the Australian Council for International Development, the umbrella body for Australian NGOs working globally in humanitarian aid and development, and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, a Geneva-based global network of NGOs focused on humanitarian and refugee issues. As outlined below, in 2008 RCOA became a founding member of the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network.

UNHCR global refugee statistics, 2008

Refugees under UNHCR mandate	9.1 million
People in refugee-like situations	1.4 million
Refugees under UNRWA mandate (Palestinians)	4.7 million
Total	15.2 million
Internally displaced persons	26 million
Stateless persons	6.6 million

Top host countries for refugees, 31 Dec 2009

1. Pakistan	1,780,935	6. Chad	330,510
2. Syria	1,105,698	7. Tanzania	321,909
3. Iran	980,109	8. Kenya	320,605
4. Germany	582,735	9. China	300,967
5. Jordan	500,413	51. Australia	20,919

(Includes refugees under UNHCR mandate and people in refugee-like situations. For industrialised countries, includes 10 years of refugee recognition.)

Asylum seekers recognised as refugees, 2008

1. Syria	76,791	6. India	26,922
2. Kenya	68,037	7. Cameroon	26,813
3. Uganda	57,940	8. Chad	17,874
4. Yemen	31,853	9. Ethiopia	16,935
5. Sudan	28,691	34. Australia	1,845

Refugees resettled, 2008

1. United States	60,192	6. New Zealand	741
2. Australia	11,006	7. Norway	741
3. Canada	10,804	8. United Kingdom	722
4. Sweden	2,209	9. Netherlands	693
5. Finland	749	Others (7 countries)	943

Australia's role in refugee protection, 2008

	Global total	Australia	
Refugees being hosted	10,478,621	20,919	(0.2%)
Asylum seekers recognised	535,950	1,845	(0.3%)
Asylum seekers – cases pending	827,323	2,159	(0.3%)
Refugees resettled	88,800	11,006	(12.4%)

Source: UNHCR's "2008 Global Trends"

ECOSOC recognition for RCOA

In 2009, RCOA's role in international dialogue on refugee issues was recognised by the United Nations with the granting of Special Consultative Status by the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). In January, ECOSOC's Committee on NGOs recommended that RCOA be granted Special Consultative Status and this recommendation was formally ratified by the ECOSOC council in July. Consultative status with ECOSOC will enable RCOA to participate in a wide variety of UN conferences and meetings (including UNHCR meetings) in our own right, not as a member of other organisations.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees visits Australia

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, paid his first visit to Australia in February. His three-day visit included meetings with Parliamentarians, Australian Government officials, non-government organisations and refugee community representatives, as well as site visits to services involved in assisting recently arrived refugees in Melbourne and Sydney. Mr Guterres was impressed by what he saw, praising Australia's settlement services and the national approach to refugee resettlement as probably the best in the world. However, he criticised Australia's decision to continue offshore processing and detention on Christmas Island. Mr Guterres predicted that the number of global refugees would rise dramatically in 2009 as a result of economic instability, accelerating triggers such as war and political unrest, and warned against a corresponding increase in xenophobia and the blaming of migrants.



UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres (third left) in Melbourne with current and former RCOA board members, (from left) Jenny Semple, John Gibson, Paris Aristotle, Melika Sheikh-Eldin and David Manne.

RCOA participated in two meetings with Mr Guterres and NGO groups, and also jointly hosted a community reception for Mr Guterres with Foundation House in Melbourne.

During Mr Guterres' visit, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, announced an increase in core funding for UNHCR by \$4.4 million to \$14.3 million in 2009-10. This substantial increase restores Australia's core funding of UNHCR to the level (in dollar terms but not in real terms) of 2001-02. In the 2002-03 Budget, the then Government cut UNHCR's core funding by nearly 50%, following UNHCR criticism of changes to Australian policy in 2001. Since then, RCOA has been advocating for a restoration of UNHCR's core funding, to support the organisation's efforts in responding to pressing global refugee needs.

2008 UNHCR Executive Committee meeting

In October 2008, RCOA's CEO Paul Power was one of three non-government observers in the Australian Government delegation which participated in UNHCR's Executive Committee (ExCom) meeting in Geneva. The five-day ExCom meeting brought together the senior leadership of UNHCR and representatives of 132 governments, 18 UN and intergovernmental organisations and 26 NGOs. The Australian delegation was led by DIAC Deputy Secretary Peter Hughes and included David Manne (Refugee and Immigration Legal Centre) and Sarah Elliott (ActionAid-Austcare). Challenges discussed at ExCom included:

- the continued increase in forced displacement, particularly the growth in numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs);

- the reintegration of refugees who are returning voluntarily to their countries of origin after conflict, ensuring they can earn a living and have access to basic health care;
- the impact on refugee and IDP populations of the increasing costs of food and fuel;
- how the global economic crisis (which gathered pace as ExCom progressed) would affect refugee and IDP populations and humanitarian operations; and
- the anticipated impact of forced migration resulting from climate change.

Among the positive trends discussed were Tanzania's granting of citizenship to 170,000 Burundian refugees displaced since 1972, improvements in UNHCR's approach to resettlement and successes in voluntary returns in Latin America, West Africa and elsewhere. In 2007, more than 70,000 refugees and 2 million IDPs returned voluntarily to their places of origin. High Commissioner Antonio Guterres praised the "very good news from Australia" about policy changes which, he observed, resulted in a "strengthening of asylum". Later, in welcoming Australian Ambassador Caroline Millar's appointment as Vice Chair of ExCom, Mr Guterres said: "Australia today is a very important example of best practice in asylum policy."

2009 UNHCR NGO Consultations

Concerns about forgotten groups of refugees in Africa, refugees in precarious situations in Asia, the protection of women and girls at risk and alternatives to detention were among the issues raised by Australian NGO delegates who attended UNHCR's 2009 Annual Consultations with NGOs in Geneva in June. RCOA president John Gibson was one of 20 Australians to take part, including 11 NGO representatives and nine interns from the University of NSW Centre for Refugee Research (CRR) who were involved in documenting the proceedings. The delegates included three refugee community representatives (Liliane Lukoki and Fatima Elzibar of the African Women's Advocacy Unit and Dr Kamal Hussein of the Burmese Rohingya Community in Australia) and representatives of CRR, Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, Settlement Council of Australia, act for peace (National Council of Churches), ACCES Services Inc, ActionAid Australia (Austcare) and International Detention Coalition. Dr Hussein's participation was arranged by RCOA with sponsorship from Caritas Australia, to assist the Rohingya diaspora to raise issues of concern about the human rights situation for their people still within Burma and for Rohingya refugees in South and South-East Asia. The Australian NGO group worked together very effectively, based on months of planning coordinated by RCOA and CRR. Delegates worked on raising issues through formal proceedings, planning common questions, developing a series of short papers on issues of concern and working together to plan meetings with UNHCR representatives. The refugee community representatives were involved in numerous meetings with UNHCR representatives and states present for the UNHCR Standing Committee prior to the NGO Consultations, as well as presenting information in various

formal and informal meetings held during their time in Geneva.

2009 Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement

From 30 June to 2 July 2009, RCOA CEO Paul Power joined four Australian NGO delegates in participating in UNHCR's Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) in Geneva. At the ATCR, UNHCR draws together governments and NGOs from countries involved in the resettlement of refugees. The 2009 meeting was attended by 182 delegates from 30 countries, including 61 government representatives, 56 from NGOs and 53 from UNHCR. Other Australian NGO delegates participating were Ricci Bartels (Settlement Council of Australia), Dr Melika Sheikh-Eldin (AMES Victoria), Paris Aristotle (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture) and Dr Graham Thom (Amnesty International). The meeting included updates on refugee situations in different regions, discussion of resettlement priorities and dialogue about policies and programs in resettlement states. Also on the agenda were the challenges of managing expectations of refugees, the use of integration criteria by some resettlement states and the role of government-NGO dialogue in the development of refugee policy.

During the meeting, Dr Sheikh-Eldin (also a member of RCOA's Board) reported on her participation in a multi-disciplinary UNHCR mission to eastern Sudan in October 2008. The 10-member team was led by Vincent Cochetel (Head of UNHCR Resettlement Service) and visited five refugee camps, including one in which Dr Sheikh-Eldin had lived after fleeing Eritrea as a refugee. Dr Sheikh-Eldin's report highlighted issues of concern to refugees in the camps, including poor security in the camp, food shortages, poor water quality, restrictions on refugees' movement, inadequate health facilities, a lack of school clothes and equipment (resulting in large numbers of children not attending school) and the absence of services for disabled children. The report nominated the resettlement of disabled children as a particular priority.

Formation of Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network

In November, RCOA president John Gibson attended the first Asia Pacific Consultation on Refugee Rights in Kuala Lumpur, which resulted in the formation of the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN). The network, comprising civil society organisations and individuals committed to advancing the rights of refugees in the region, aims to accomplish its goals through information sharing, mutual capacity building and joint advocacy among members. The network is divided into four sub-regional networks, with RCOA elected to chair the Australia and Pacific Network. APRRN has issued a number of joint statements on issues of common concern, including the mistreatment of Rohingyas in South East Asia and the plight of Tamils in Sri Lanka. RCOA sees APRRN, as the first network to bring together NGOs from across the Asia-Pacific region to work together on issues of refugee protection, as strategically important to the long-term development of genuine solutions

What our members say about RCOA

Companion House (ACT)

Companion House has been a member of RCOA since 2008. We certainly appreciate RCOA's vital advocacy and policy work. We use RCOA's organisational resources to inform ourselves and keep abreast of the many changes and debates within policy in the refugee field. We also value the great effort RCOA has put into consultation across the country and the opportunity to feed into this process.

~ Kathy Ragless, Director, Companion House

for asylum seekers and refugees in the region.

NGOs mission to Syria-Iraq border

In November, Dr Graham Thom, Refugee Coordinator of Amnesty International Australia, represented RCOA in an international mission to the Syria-Iraq border, to observe conditions for Palestinian refugees who had left Iraq as a result of the continuing conflict. The one-week visit included 13 NGOs from Europe, North America and Australia. The team found that about 3000 Palestinian refugees from Iraq were living in appalling conditions in three camps along the border, having fled killings, kidnappings, torture and death threats in Iraq. The NGO team produced a joint statement of its findings and, since the visit, has worked with UNHCR to lobby successfully for resettlement states to begin the resettlement of refugees from the border camps. Australia is among the countries which have agreed to assist with resettlement.

RCOA discusses settlement at forum in Japan

In June 2009, RCOA National Policy Director Tamara Domicelj participated in a regional symposium in Tokyo, hosted by the Japan Association for Refugees. Titled "Refugee Protection in the New Era and Civil Society", the symposium brought together delegates from six Asia-Pacific countries and the USA to discuss effective models for refugee resettlement, as well as challenges and opportunities relating to refugee protection in Asia. Ms Domicelj provided a briefing on the Australian experience of resettlement to a workshop of government, UNHCR and non-government delegates, and participated as a panellist in an open symposium. The event was convened in the context of Japan's decision to undertake a three-year refugee resettlement pilot, commencing in 2010. Ninety refugees from Burma will be settled in Japan over three years.

information and community education

Refugee Week 2009

Refugee Week 2009 was held across Australia from June 14 to 20, coinciding with the international celebration of World Refugee Day on June 20. The theme of Refugee Week 2009 was Freedom From Fear, highlighting the quest at the heart of every refugees' flight from danger and the relief experienced by people given the opportunity to rebuild their lives.

Major launches were held in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane and more than 160 local events took place, including community celebrations, arts events, seminars, information expos, sporting events, film screenings and competitions.

Refugee Week 2009 in Victoria was officially launched at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) in Federation Square. RCOA president John Gibson opened the evening, followed by the screening of two short films. Alex Prado of the Centre for Multicultural Youth presented *Stories from Near and Far*, and Ahmad Raza and Aaron Wilson introduced their film, *Ahmad's Garden*. The West African percussion and dance ensemble Muhanamwe performed and catering was provided by Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Catering. The Multicultural Unit from the Australian Football League (AFL) provided free merchandise for the launch and for distribution among young refugees and asylum seekers. Over 250 people attended the launch.

In Sydney, more than 100 people attended the Refugee Week launch at Customs House, Circular Quay. RCOA President John Gibson formally launched the event and Yasmeen Fatimah, a member of Australia's Burmese Rohingya community, spoke movingly of her escape from persecution in Burma to find freedom from fear in Australia. Guests also enjoyed an exhibition of refugee photography coordinated by NSW AMES and a lively musical performance of Assyrian and international music from the group Azadoota.

During preparations for Refugee Week, RCOA acted as a conduit for organisations and individuals wanting information on refugees, refugee speakers or musicians for their events, and suggested activities and agencies for donations/fundraising activities. Media releases were sent out to print, radio and television media. RCOA staff and board members conducted more than 30 interviews for radio, print and television broadcast.

This year, the Refugee Week Resource Kit, which includes information about refugees, suggestions for involvement in Refugee Week, a website directory and a list of refugee related movies and documentaries, was updated, restyled and made available on the RCOA website.

Major sponsors for Refugee Week 2009 were Victorian Multicultural Commission and AMES Victoria. RCOA is also indebted to the NSW sponsors of Refugee Week offering financial and in-kind support, including City of Sydney, NSW Community Relations Commission, ACL (Australian Centre for Languages), NSW AMES and Leichhardt Council.



Yasmeen Fatimah recounts her experience as a Rohingya refugee from Burma at the NSW launch of Refugee Week 2009.

Monthly e-bulletin

RCOA's monthly email bulletin continued to grow as an important source of information on matters of national and international refugee policy. Each bulletin includes information from RCOA about the latest news and research on refugee policy matters, a rundown of coming events, new publications and a synopsis of Australian media coverage of refugee issues. During 2008-09, the email bulletin list increased to more than 2900. The bulletin is also forwarded to thousands of other contacts and each bulletin is published on the RCOA website.

Website

RCOA's website is a vital source of public information on refugee issues. During 2008-09, the website received more than 104,000 visits, a 25% increase on 2007-08 and a 60% increase on the year prior to that. The site includes information on RCOA's research and publications, information on Australian refugee policy and current issues of concern, employment and volunteering opportunities, coming events and links to the websites of RCOA members. During the year, work continued on the development of a new website format, with pro-bono assistance from Brett Enman Webdesign and financial support from AMES Victoria.

Refugee Welcome Zones

For the past seven years, RCOA has been encouraging local government authorities to declare their districts Refugee Welcome Zones, to foster understanding of Australia's positive role in refugee protection. During 2008-09, this initiative continued to grow with four councils signing the pledge to become Refugee Welcome Zones – Horsham Rural City Council in western Victoria,

Burwood Council in Sydney's inner west, Gosford City Council on the NSW Central Coast and the north Queensland city of Townsville. This takes the number of local councils around Australia which have made this declaration to 72.

Public comment

As the national umbrella body for organisations working with refugees, RCOA is regularly called on by the media to respond to refugee issues being discussed publicly and to provide background information to journalists researching information on refugee policy matters. RCOA's CEO, president and other board members and staff responded to more than 400 approaches from the media during the year, participating in many press, radio and TV interviews. Many of the requests related to the two matters which have dominated Australian media coverage for years – immigration detention policy and asylum seekers arriving by boat. During the year, RCOA issued 18 statements to the media on current political debates about refugee issues, changes to government policy, international refugee protection issues and Refugee Week's celebration of the contributions to Australia of former refugees. Among RCOA's public statements was its summary, in May, of the 2009-10 Federal Budget, detailing spending and policy changes affecting Australia's involvement in the receiving, settlement and support of refugees and asylum seekers.

What our members say about RCOA

ACCES Services Inc (Qld)

ACCES Services Inc. values its strong and productive relationship with RCOA and is pleased to be a member of such a well respected and highly credible organisation. In our role as a settlement agency in South East Queensland providing a range of settlement services and other complementary programs for refugees, we have engaged with RCOA in a number of ways and on varying levels, including the Annual Community Consultations for Logan City, participation in regular teleconferences and more recently through my Executive role with the Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA) as colleagues and collaborators at the national peak sector level. In my role with SCoA, I was honoured to be invited by RCOA to be part of the Australian contingent who attended this year's Annual UNHCR NGO Dialogue and ATCR meetings in Geneva, Switzerland. This was a truly amazing experience and one that highlighted for me the immense regard and respect which is afforded to RCOA within the International context.

As members, we have benefited immensely from the visionary leadership and forward thinking directions undertaken by RCOA and commend them for consistently providing NGOs such as ours and indeed the sector and Government with relevant and vitally important consultations, dialogue, information, research, resources, best practice models and reports which support our valuable work with refugees and asylum seekers, not only at the national level but more broadly within the international arena.

It is inspiring to work with Paul Power and his dedicated team. Paul works tirelessly and with an unquestionable sense of integrity, compassion and a genuine commitment to improve the resettlement experiences of some of the most vulnerable people from around the globe. This leadership is supported by a diverse composition of highly skilled Board members who give their time, energy and expertise to ensure that RCOA can operate and be an effective sector leader and advocate for refugees and asylum seekers.

~ Gail Ker, CEO, ACCES Services Inc

RCOA members

Membership of the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) grew by 17% in 2008-09 to 374, an all-time high for the organisation. Our membership is made of 130 organisational members, four honorary life members and 240 individual members. Over the past three years, RCOA's membership has grown by 158%, individual membership trebling and organisational membership growing by 83%.

RCOA's organisational members include community-based organisations formed by refugees and humanitarian migrants and agencies involved in providing settlement services to recently-arrived refugees, legal assistance and practical support to asylum seekers, torture and trauma services, international development and humanitarian programs and public education and advocacy on refugee issues and social policy.

The organisation is governed and driven by its members. Members elect RCOA's Executive Committee and have direct input into the organisation's priorities, through regular policy network teleconferences, consultations and direct contact with staff and board members.

Honorary Life Members

H.E. Professor Marie Bashir

Harold Grant

Tuong Quang Luu

Barbara Young

Organisational Members

A Just Australia, Surry Hills NSW

ACCES Services Inc, Woodridge Qld

ActionAid Australia (Austcare), Camperdown NSW

Afghan Refugee Womens Network, Chadstone Vic

Ahmadiyya Muslim Association of Australia Inc,
Marsden Park NSW

AMES Victoria, Melbourne Vic

*Amnesty International Australia, Broadway NSW

Anglicare North Coast, Grafton NSW

Anglicare Sydney, Parramatta NSW

Armidale Sanctuary Humanitarian Settlement, Armidale NSW

Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors
(ASeTTS), Perth WA

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, West Melbourne Vic

Asylum Seeker Welcome Centre, Brunswick Vic

Asylum Seekers Centre, Surry Hills NSW

Auburn Diversity Services Inc, Auburn NSW

Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office, Canberra ACT

Australian Council for International Development, Deakin ACT

Australian Council of Trade Unions, Melbourne Vic

Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, Alexandria NSW

*Australian Karen Foundation, Upper Ferntree Gully Vic

*Australian Karen Organisation NSW, Guilford NSW

Australian Lutheran World Service, Albury NSW

Australian National Committee on Refugee Women, Sydney NSW

Australian Refugee Association, Underdale SA

*Balmain for Refugees, Balmain NSW

Benarrawa Community Development Association, Graceville Qld

Burmese Rohingya Community In Australia, Lakemba NSW

Canberra Refugee Support Inc, Weston Creek ACT

Caritas Australia, Sydney NSW

CatholicCare (Centacare Sydney), Fairfield NSW

Catholic Immigration Office, Sydney NSW

Catholic Religious Australia, Annandale NSW

Centacare Tasmania, Moonah Tas

Centre for Multicultural Pastoral Care, Paddington Qld

Centre for Multicultural Youth, Carlton Vic

Centre for Refugee Research - University of NSW, Kensington NSW

Centrecare Incorporated, Perth WA

Coalition for Asylum Seekers Refugees and Detainees, Perth WA

Communify Qld Ltd, Bardon Qld

Community Relations Commission of NSW, Sydney South NSW

Companion House, O'Connor ACT

Diversitat, Geelong Vic

Ecumenical Migration Centre, Fitzroy Vic

Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education,
Homebush West NSW

Edmund Rice Centre, Mirrabooka, Mirrabooka WA

Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre, Cabramatta NSW

Fremantle Multicultural Centre, Fremantle WA

Friends of the Earth Australia, Fitzroy Vic

Gowrie Community Services (WA) Inc, Cloverdale WA

Horn of Africa Relief and Development Agency, Homebush West
NSW

Hotham Mission Asylum Seeker Project, North Melbourne Vic

Illawarra Multicultural Services, Wollongong NSW

Immigrant Women's Speakout, Harris Park NSW

Immigration Advice and Rights Centre, Sydney NSW

International Commission of Jurists, Australian Section, Sydney NSW

International Society for Human Rights Australia Inc, Thomastown Vic

Jesuit Refugee Service Australia, Kings Cross NSW

Justice and Freedom for Ceylon Tamils, Dandenong Vic

Lao Community Advancement Cooperative, Cabramatta NSW

Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre, Liverpool NSW

Macarthur Diversity Services, Campbelltown NSW

*Melaleuca Refugee Centre, Nightcliff NT

Melbourne Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office, East Melbourne Vic

Mercy Works Inc, Lewisham NSW

Metro Migrant Resource Centre (Canterbury-Bankstown MRC), Campsie NSW

Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre, Mirrabooka WA

Migrant Resource Centre North West Region, St Albans Vic

Migrant Resource Centre Northern Tasmania, Launceston Tas

Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia, Adelaide SA

Migrant Resource Centre of Southern Tasmania, Hobart Tas

Mission Australia Newly Arrived Youth Support Service, Cabramatta NSW

*Missionaries of the Sacred Heart Justice and Peace Centre, Erskineville NSW

Multicultural Development Association Inc, South Brisbane Qld

Multicultural Information Network Service, Gympie Qld

Multicultural Services Centre of WA, North Perth WA

National Council of Churches - act for peace (Christian World Service), Sydney NSW

New Hope Foundation, Prahran Vic

Northern Settlement Services, Hamilton NSW

NSW Refugee Health Service, Liverpool NSW

NSW Teachers Federation, Surry Hills NSW

Oromia Support Group in Australia, Noble Park Vic

*Oromo Relief Association Australia, Noble Park Vic

Oxfam Australia, Carlton Vic

*Pax Christi Australia (NSW) Inc, South Sydney NSW

Pratt Family Foundation, Southbank Vic

Public Interest Law Clearing House (Vic), Melbourne Vic

Queanbeyan Multilingual Centre, Queanbeyan NSW

*Queensland African Communities Council, Brisbane Qld

Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT), Fairfield Qld

Red Cross Australia, North Melbourne Vic

Refugee Advice and Casework Service, Sydney NSW

Refugee and Immigration Legal Centre, Fitzroy Vic

Refugee and Immigration Legal Service, West End Qld

Refugee Claimants Support Centre, Windsor Qld

*Refugee Health Queensland, Woolloongabba Qld

Romero Centre, Buranda Qld

St Bede's Social Justice Group, Braidwood NSW

St George Migrant Resource Centre, Rockdale NSW

St George Youth Services, Rockdale NSW

St Vincent de Paul Society, Deakin West ACT

Salvation Army, Sydney NSW

Sanctuary Refugee Foundation, Coffs Harbour NSW

Save The Children Australia, Fitzroy Vic

*SCALES Community Legal Centre, Rockingham WA

Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS), Fairfield NSW

*Sisters of Charity, Bondi Junction NSW

*Somali Australian Development Organisation Ltd, Moorooka Qld

South Australian Refugee Health Network, Adelaide SA

South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre, Dandenong Vic

Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, Preston Vic

Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau, Springvale Vic

Strategic Community Assistance to Refugee Families, Corrimall NSW

Sudanese Online Research Association and SAIL Program, Melbourne Vic

Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service (STTARS), Bowden SA

Sydney Multicultural Community Services, Daceyville NSW

SydWest Multicultural Services Inc (Blacktown MRC), Blacktown NSW

The Hills Holroyd Parramatta Migrant Resource Centre, Parramatta NSW

The Smith Family Community Settlement Services, Burwood NSW

Toowoomba Refugee and Migrant Support Service, Toowoomba Qld

Townsville Multicultural Support Group, Aitkenvale Qld

Uniting Care Cutting Edge, Shepparton Vic

*Uniting Church in Australia - Queensland Synod, Brisbane Qld

Uniting Church National Assembly, Sydney NSW

Uniting Justice Australia, Sydney South NSW

Victorian Arabic Social Services, Broadmeadows Vic

Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, Brunswick Vic

Victorian Multi Ethnic Slavic Welfare Association, Melbourne Vic

Victorian Multicultural Commission, Melbourne Vic

Western Sydney Community Forum, Parramatta NSW

YWCA of Australia, Dickson ACT

* *New member in 2008-09*

RCOA members

Individual Members

Maureen Adamson	*John Clark	Andrea Goldsmith
Joan Addison	*Sandy Clark	*Sue Golightly
*Susan Allender	*Dean Clift	*Joan Good
*Dennis Altman	*June Close	*Ray Goodlass
James Altman	*Ian Cohen	Diane Gosden
*Brigid Anderson	Bernard Collaery	*Natalie Gould
Ian Anderson	Cath Connor	Keren Gould
Robyn Andrew	Lionel Conyer	Valerie Grogan
Chris Ansted	Bernard Cooney	*Kerrie Haines
*Glen Barclay	Rosemary Cork	Andrew Harrison
Rebecca-Lea Barnett	Peter and Linda Crawford	Wendy Harte
Petrina Barson	Mary Crock	Selva Hassan
Andrew Bartlett	Aileen Crowe	*Margaret Healy
Ross Betts	Ann Curthoys	*John Highfield
Susie Biljuh	Hilary Da Costa	Jan Ho
Gray Birch	Heather Dawson	Lydia Ho
Wendy Birman	*Carol De Berry	*Patrick Hollingsworth
David Bitel	Sky de Jersey	Katie Holmes
Robert Blackburn	Mary Justine de Merindol	Richard Home
Sarah Blegg	Jillian Dellit	Julia Horne
Philip Bliss	*Natalia D'Morias	Matthew Howard
John Blount	*John Dowd	*Rosemary Hudson Miller
Julie Bogotto	*Virginia Duigan	Andrew Hugh
*Jennifer Bowen	Patricia Dunn	Geraldine Hughes
Kim Boyer	*John and Robyn Durack	Peter and Julia Hutten
Linda Brightford	Marie Emerson-Gill	*Kate Jeffrey
*Claire Brolan	Ruth Farmer	*Kailash Chander Jhinga
Bernard Broughton	Helen Fenbury	Heather Johnson
Jennifer Bryce	Barbara Ferguson	*Robin Jones
*Jean Burke	*Melissa Fitzgibbon	Ann-Mari Jordens
*Vanessa Burns	Claire Foley	*Lee Joyce
Robin Burns	*Christopher Fraser	*Dau Jurkuch
Michaela Byers	*Malcolm Fraser	Ulrike Kalthaus
Alison Caddick	*Ron Fraser	*Adama Kamara
Rosemary Campbell	Penny Fry	Antigone Kefala
Carolyn Carter	Michael Gale	*Edwina Kempe
Chris Cartledge	*Phillip Gallo	Andrew Kenyon
Michael Cashman	Cindy Gallois	*Gaik Khong
Mary Chan	*Marcela Garrett	*Denis Klein
*I-Hao Cheng	*David Garrioch	Susan Kneebone
*Neha Chhatbar	Cath Garvan	Graham Knell
*Carmel Clark	Katy Gerner	*Tenneh Kpaka
	John Gibson	*Eh Soe Kyat Oo
	Helen Glass	*Mark Lack

*Beryl Langer
Natasha Layton
Marion Le
*Amy Lees
Richard Lefroy
Pamela Lemoine
Helen Light
*Kevin Liston
Penelope Little
David Lloyd
*Ann Marie Lochery
*Nance Loney
Jacqueline Lorber-Kasunic
Kathleen Luchetti
*Kirsty Magarey
William Maley
George Mansaray
Julie Marcus
Sarah Mares
*Ariel Marguin
John Marlton
Thomas Mautner
Elaine Mayer
Gay McAuley
Sandra McCullough
John McLean
Scott McQuire
Susan Metcalfe
Grant Mitchell
Peter Morgan
Sharyn Munro
John Murphy
Kerry Murphy
*Emma-Kate Nicholson
Carmel O'Dwyer
*Akram Omeri
*Mahn Orlando
Ali Elawad Osman
Fortunee Ovadia
Michael Pearce
Jennifer Perry
*Mairi Petersen
Melissa Phillips
*Janice Pinder

Cathy Preston-Thomas
Peta Price
*Philippa Price
Susanne Provis
*Malcolm Ramage
*Shanti Raman
Nola Randall-Mohk
Mark Raper
*Geraldine Read
Sheridan Roberts
*Louise Rockne
Gillian Rubinstein
Joanne Russell
Nati Sangiau
Ramdas Sankaran
Marian Sawyer
Sonya Schmidt
*Dorothy Scott
Elizabeth Scott
*John and Rae Sheridan
Susan Sheridan
Nizza Siano
Jeff Siegel
Fran Smullen
Virginia Spate
*Elektra Spathopoulos
Val Stafford
Gary Steadman
Harvey Stern
*Robyn Sterrett
*Jenny Stewart
*Jenny Stonier
Jennifer Strauss
Keith Suter
*Maurice Taylor
*Samuel Taylor
*Savitri Taylor
Colin Telfer
*Michele Thistlewaite-Di Lauro
*Clare Thompson
Janet Thompson
Sally Trevena
*Jeffrey Turnbull
*Helen Urut

*Ruja Varon
Lina Varon
*Ramona Vlaar
*Rohan Vora
Eileen Wahab
Virginia Walker
Elizabeth Walpole
Renate Watkinson
Cameron White
*Vicki Wighton
*Catherine Williams
Aija Wilson
Stephen Winter
Sylvia Winton
Peter Yeldham
*Anne Zevis
*Daniel Zu
*Roxana Zulfacar
** New member in 2008-09*



support for our work

As a small not-for-profit organisation with no source of core funding, RCOA has to rely on support from a diverse range of sources to maintain its work. In 2008-09, our income came from:

Grants from non-government sources	\$152,273	33%
Federal Government contracts	\$96,431	21%
State Government grants	\$85,000	18%
Public donations	\$43,952	9%
Training and consultancies	\$31,771	7%
Membership fees	\$31,591	7%
Australian Refugee Foundation	\$16,943	4%
Interest and other income	\$10,315	2%
TOTAL	\$468,276	

Of the income received, 78% was for specific projects or contracts and 22% was untied income available to be allocated as required to the core work of the organisation.

The Australian Refugee Foundation

The Australian Refugee Foundation was established in 1997 to support the work of the Refugee Council and to build the organisation's capacity to act as an independent voice for refugees.

The Foundation's aim is to secure and manage funds so as to maximise the long-term benefits to RCOA and is accomplished under the supervision of its Board of Trustees. Over the past four years, the Foundation has been RCOA's single largest source of income, contributing \$425,261 between July 2005 and June 2009.

The Australian Refugee Foundation is registered with the Australian Taxation Office as a charitable organisation and gifts of \$2 and over are tax deductible. Members and friends of the Council are encouraged to remember the Foundation when considering donations and when making plans for wills and bequests. Further information about the Australian Refugee Foundation can be obtained from the Refugee Council.

Patrons:

Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO
Rt Hon Sir Zelman Cowan AK GCMG GCVO
Rt Hon Malcolm Fraser AC CH

Trustees during 2008-09

John Gibson (Convenor)
Maureen Adamson (from November 2008)
James Altman (until June 2009)
David Bitel (until April 2009)
Lionel Conyer
Tuong Quang Luu AO
Elektra Spathopoulos (from March 2009)
Barbara Young AO (until November 2008)

Grants, contracts and consultancies

The main grants, contracts and consultancies received by RCOA during 2008-09 were from:

- Sidney Myer Fund (\$106,128) for research on employment issues for refugees;
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship (\$72,431) for the community consultation and submission on Australia's 2009-10 Refugee and Humanitarian Intake;
- NSW Sport and Recreation (\$60,000) for research on the role of sport in assisting the settlement of refugees;
- International Organization for Migration (\$28,135) for the Australian Cultural Orientation Program's exchange with settlement service providers;
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship (\$24,000) to compile a review of literature on the economic, social and civic contributions of refugees;
- Reichstein Foundation (\$21,000) for RCOA's Victorian based research and representation on asylum seeker issues;
- Victorian Multicultural Commission (\$20,000) for coordination and promotion of Refugee Week in Victoria.

Other organisations which contributed grants during 2008-09 were AMES Victoria (\$9545), Caritas Australia (\$5000), NSW Community Relations Commission (\$5000), City of Sydney (\$3000), NSW AMES (\$2500), ACL (\$2500), Equal Rights Trust (\$1600) and Leichhardt Council (\$1000). Of these grants, \$19,000 was received for coordination of Refugee Week activities, with the remainder being for other small projects. DIAC also paid \$3636 for research on access and equity issues for humanitarian entrants.

Donations and memberships

Donations and memberships provided \$75,543 in income for RCOA in 2008-09. Continued public financial support is vital to the organisation maintaining its role and independence. Tax-deductible donations to the Council, or through the Australian Refugee Foundation, are always gratefully received. For more information about donations, contact our Sydney or Melbourne offices or visit our website - www.refugeecouncil.org.au

financial report

Refugee Council of Australia Inc – ABN 87 956 673 083

Profit and Loss Account – For the Year Ended 30 June 2009

	2009 \$	2008 \$
Income		
DIAC contracts	96,431	65,123
Donations from Australian Refugee Foundation	16,943	123,100
Interest income	9,505	1,309
Member subscriptions	31,591	29,290
Grants	269,044	107,565
Donations	43,952	24,105
Other income	810	23
Total income	468,276	350,515
Less: Expenses		
Auditors remuneration	2,000	2,000
Bank charges	1,156	825
Board expenses	7,467	12,724
Computer expenses	7,555	736
Consultancy and grant direct expenses	18,336	4,429
Depreciation	3,279	4,243
Electricity and water	2,400	2,312
Insurance	1,825	2,624
Office rent	27,682	24,977
Leave pay	5,203	2,972
Other employee costs	2,298	824
Postage	1,709	2,173
Printing and stationery	10,415	6,680
Refugee week expenses	15,813	14,728
Seminar and conference fees	1,380	1,226
Repairs and maintenance	1,832	406
Salaries	288,186	234,553
Subscriptions	966	2,182
Sundry expenses	2,885	1,756
Superannuation contributions	25,614	20,679
Telephone and fax	9,283	9,666
Travel – domestic	11,096	7,864
Workers compensation insurance	2,004	2,141
Total Expenses	450,384	362,720
Profit before income tax	17,892	(12,205)

Balance Sheet – 30 June 2009

	2009 \$	2008 \$
ASSETS		
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	100,964	107,166
Trade and other receivables	5,506	30,590
Total current assets	106,470	137,756
Non-current assets		
Property, plant and equipment	9,351	8,662
Total non-current assets	9,351	8,662
Total Assets	115,821	146,418
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	24,647	22,210
Short-term provisions	17,757	12,554
Other current liabilities	50,000	106,128
Total current liabilities	92,404	140,892
Total Liabilities	92,404	140,892
Net Assets	23,417	5,526
EQUITY		
Retained earnings	23,417	5,526
Total Equity	23,417	5,526

Audited financial statements

The Refugee Council of Australia accounts for 2008-09 were audited by DFK Laurence Varnay, Chartered Accountants, Sydney. The audited financial statements are available from the Refugee Council's Sydney office or online at www.refugeecouncil.org.au





Refugee Council
of Australia

How to contact the Refugee Council

Refugee Council of Australia

National Office:

Suite 4A6, 410 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010

Ph: (02) 9211 9333

Fax: (02) 9211 9288

Email: info@refugeecouncil.org.au

www.refugeecouncil.org.au

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Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

