Refugee Council of Australia

Annual Report 2021/22



Photo: Damon AMB

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Refugee Council of Australia

Our vision

For the voices of refugees to be heard, the rights of refugees to be respected, the humanity of refugees valued and the contribution of refugees celebrated.

Our purpose

To work with our members in promoting the development of humane, lawful and constructive policies towards refugees and people seeking asylum by Australian and other governments and their communities.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country. We pay our respects to their elders past and present and to the unique role that First Nations people play in welcoming refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia. Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

President's Report

It is a privilege for me to be writing my first president's report since taking on the role here as part of the Refugee Council Australia (RCOA). I would not be able to take on this incredible opportunity without the hardworking staff at RCOA including the Policy, Community Engagement and Communications teams – who are working together to promote more fair and humane policies for refugees and people seeking asylum.

It is thanks to our dedicated supporters and members that this work continues to take place on all fronts. The increased awareness and shifting of public opinion are a direct result of our supporters taking a stand and it shows this action is making a real difference. Meanwhile our schools, corporates and general public are hearing the messages about the need for humane treatment of refugees and asylum seekers.

I'd also like to thank RCOA board members for their warm welcome and acknowledge our past president Phil Glendenning for his nine-year tenure. As a person from a refugee background myself, the importance of what RCOA as a national umbrella organisation is doing is something I take with great care and sense of responsibility.

Despite the unprecedented global challenges brought forth by the lockdowns, it has been gratifying to witness RCOA come out on the other side while still maintaining operations through advocacy and campaigning innovatively.

I welcome RCOA's 2022-2024 Strategic Plan which paves the way for key focus areas including Advocacy and Research, Refugee Leadership and Representation, Public Awareness and Support for Refugees and Enablers to support the organisation to deliver its mission.

I reflect on conflicts and other global events that have resulted in considerable movement of people seeking peace and safety - in Afghanistan, Myanmar, Ethiopia and Ukraine, to name a few. There are other parts of the world where conflicts and abuse of human rights continued after many years including South Sudan, Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Syria and Yemen. There are groups that face torture or death due to their gender and sexuality, as well as political opinion and ethnicity. I commend the Australian Government for the support provided to those displaced by those events, yet I know more can and should be done.

RCOA has called for the Australian Government to increase efforts to assist people at risk to get out of Afghanistan. In the past 12 months, the Australian Government has issued around 6,000 humanitarian visas to Afghan nationals, with the largest number being to people who were evacuated out of Afghanistan and neighbouring countries in the weeks after the fall of Kabul. As a nation which, over 20 years, deployed more than 39,000 military personnel to Afghanistan and invested more than $1.5 billion in programs to promote human rights, economic and social development and good governance, Australia has a particular responsibility to stand by the people of Afghanistan who shared Australia's vision for the future of the country.



Since the 2022 federal election, RCOA has been working with a coalition of organisations to encourage the Albanese Government to act promptly on its commitment to grant permanent protection to refugees on Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs). In partnership with refugee-led organisations, legal experts and RCOA members. RCOA is supporting proposals to use existing legislation to implement this promise quickly and efficiently, taking these ideas to our meetings with the Immigration Minister, MPs and advisors. RCOA will continue to push the government to act immediately, to enable the people affected by this policy to gain the security and access to family reunion they have been denied for nine years. I look forward to hearing the good news.

RCOA has also put forward a detailed submission to the Australian Government on this year's Refugee and Humanitarian Program which focuses on rebuilding a principled and strategic program. The submission addresses areas including the major cuts and creation of a ceiling within the humanitarian program, the costly community sponsorship program and other key areas, and provides a new outlook on where Australia can be placed when it comes to global resettlement.

Through initiatives like the Face-to-Face program, we are witnessing people of refugee backgrounds at the centre of narratives and advocacy efforts at this juncture of time. With a new government in Australia, we are on the horizon of new beginnings, not forgetting those whose journeys led to different fates. We are more hopeful and coordinated as a holistic sector and community, and many of the ongoing advocacy efforts are coming to fruition. I am committed to remaining supportive of refugee-led organisations and ensuring lived experience remains at the forefront of our work, for they are the storytellers of our generation, the changemakers and the action takers I hope to encourage.

Jasmina Bajraktarevic-Hayward
President, Refugee Council of Australia

Supporting Refugee-Led Advocacy



Refugee representative Bijan Kardouni speaks on a panel on LGBTQI+ refugee empowerment at the 2022 Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement in Geneva

Refugee Council of Australia continues to actively support refugee-led advocacy, leadership and representation. This commitment was reaffirmed in the development of the 2022-24 Strategic Plan with the adoption of the 'lived experience' guiding principle as one of six principles which direct how decisions are made and inform how the organisation operates. This principle gives priority to the views, concerns and ideas of refugees and people seeking asylum, privileging their views over the views of people with greater power and influence, and emphasising their right to be represented when decisions are being made about their future.

This commitment is reflected in six of 13 board members having lived refugee experience, including the President and the Chair. The proportion of staff with lived experience continues to increase and now represents one third of the staff.

We formalised our practice of renumerating individuals with lived experience who speak at our conferences and webinars with the creation of an internal operational policy and procedure. This policy recognises the unique perspective and value that lived experience contributes to our work.

Throughout the year, we worked with refugee community members and organisations to identify key issues of concern to them and appropriate advocacy responses at state, national and international forums. We continue to encourage other organisations to support refugee-led work and have shared our internal payment policy with other organisations, brokered partnerships and financial resources for refugee-led initiatives.

Refugee Leadership Alliance

RCOA co-chairs the Refugee Leadership Alliance with Najeeba Wazefadost, the Executive Director of the Asia Pacific Network of Refugees. Formed in mid-2021, the Alliance aims to increase influence, funds and networks for refugee leaders in the Asia Pacific. In this brief period, the Alliance has raised over $400,000 for a pooled funding pilot project that will provide united, core funding to refugee-led organisations operating in Asia.

Throughout the year, we worked with refugee community members and organisations to identify key issues of concern to them and appropriate advocacy responses at state, national and international forums.

Advocacy and Campaigns

Despite the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, RCOA's dedication and support from member agencies and individuals with lived experience has generated positive outcomes in several key areas.

Response to crisis in Afghanistan

Following the Taliban's capture of Kabul on 15 August 2021, a key focus of RCOA's work has been the ongoing advocacy to address the Australian Government's response to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Our network of supporters and dedicated team advocated for the special additional intake of 20,000 people and a resolution of the status of Afghan nationals on temporary visas. We:

- Gained the support of 390 organisations to sign a joint letter which was sent to every federal MP and senator on 18 August 2021. Following weak support from the Opposition, we wrote to every Labor MP and senator to generate greater leadership on the issue. We also held meetings with five Labor MPs and senators about this.
- Lobbied the Australian Government and ministers for 20,000 additional resettlement places for Afghan refugees in the Federal Budget, resulting in the announcement in March 2022 of a special intake of 16,500 places for Afghan refugees over four years.
- Highlighted the dire humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and urged the Australian Government to match other nations in its aid through a brief written by Special Advisor Ahmad Shuja Jamal (former Director-General for International Relations and Regional Cooperation at the Afghan National Security Council). In an additional brief, Shuja also addressed the differing treatment of Afghan refugees depending on their date and mode of arrival.
- Presented two comprehensive submissions and gave evidence twice to the Senate Committee Inquiry into Australia's Engagement in Afghanistan. Our submission and evidence were quoted more than 70 times in the Senate Committee's interim and final reports.
- Directly appealed to the former Immigration Minister Alex Hawke to extend three-month Temporary Humanitarian Stay visas (subclass 449) to those who were not able to leave Afghanistan during or following the evacuation phase in August 2021. Following the announcement that these visas would only be extended for select individuals, we subsequently held meetings with four Labor MPs and Senators.
- Continued participation in regular meetings of the Advisory Panel on Australia's Resettlement of Afghan Nationals through our CEO, Paul Power. This included raising concerns about the bitterly disappointing scale of the government's announcement in January 2022 of 10,000 humanitarian and 5,000 family visas over four years.
- Appealed to the public and our supporters on how people can write to MPs and senators about a special intake for refugees from Afghanistan.
- Advised the advocacy efforts of other organisations, including Micah Australia which engaged senior church leaders in lobbying Ministers, MPs and Senators.



Special Advisor to RCOA, Ahmad Shuja Jamal, speaks at a briefing for diplomats in Canberra.

Temporary protection

As of 30 June 2022, 19,455 people were found to be refugees and granted a Temporary Protection Visa or Safe Haven Enterprise Visa. At that time, a further 1,065 were waiting for an initial decision on their application and 950 were seeking a review of a refusal. 9,762 people had been refused a visa under the inherently unfair 'fast-track' process.

During the 2022 election campaign, the Labor Party committed to ending temporary protection and granting people a permanent visa. Upon taking government, Labor reiterated this commitment. RCOA, together with legal experts, our organisational members and refugee community members, prepared

Advocacy and Campaigns

advice to the new Minister for Immigration on how such a commitment could be implemented quickly and without legislative change. We also stressed the urgent need to address other issues affecting this group of people, including travel permissions to visit family overseas and the ongoing anxiety that community members are experiencing because of this policy. The minister welcomed the advice from the sector and has committed to ending the policy in the near future and granting all refugees on temporary visas a permanent visa. We look forward to this announcement.

Refugee and Humanitarian Program

During 2021-22, we continued to advocate for the Australian Government to include refugee and humanitarian visa holders among those given permission to enter Australia during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of refugees given visas but denied entry into Australia grew to more than 11,000, with only several hundred given exemptions to the travel restrictions over the 18 months to December 2021. Our efforts to address this included:

- Meeting regularly with Humanitarian Settlement Program agencies, Canberra-based representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration to share information about what was happening and report on recent advocacy to aid in future planning.
- Writing to former Immigration Minister Alex Hawke about the need to restart the Refugee and Humanitarian Program and meeting with senior Home Affairs officials on four occasions.
- Advocating to the Federal Government alongside several state governments about the impacts of quarantine restrictions in shaping a highly restrictive federal approach to travel exemptions.

Offshore processing

Following the Australian Government's announcement that the offshore processing arrangement with Papua New Guinea would end on 31 December 2021, RCOA took several steps to advocate for those impacted by the concerning situation and share information with agencies and groups in Australia. This included:

- Meeting with officials of the Department of Home Affairs as well as PNG-based community organisations and people who remain there.
- Calling on then-Minister for Home Affairs, Karen Andrews, to release the remaining individuals in immigration detention who have been subject to offshore processing. We have also encouraged PNG to work with resettlement countries to find a durable solution for the remaining men in detention.
- Sharing a list of questions with the PNG Government's Immigration and Citizenship Authority and the Australian Department of Home Affairs from various people and organisations, which resulted in a written response to share with people affected by the policy.
- Continuing to advocate for people still in offshore processing through meetings with UNHCR, the Department of Home Affairs, PNG Catholic Bishops Conference and an Australian-based advisor to the PNG Government.

Operation Not Forgotten

During 2021-22, RCOA continued its partnership with MOSAIC in Vancouver and Ads Up Canada Refugee Network in Toronto to support private sponsorship to Canada of refugees who have been stuck since 2013 in Australia's offshore detention and processing regime. The Operation Not Forgotten partnership was established in 2019 to provide hope and a lifeline for refugees on Manus Island and Nauru who had been excluded from resettlement to the United States. As the sponsorship process requires sponsors to raise funds to cover refugees' living costs for the first year in Canada, RCOA raised $1,290,075 in donations from the Australian public in 2021-22, taking the cumulative amount raised for Operation Not Forgotten over three years to $4,456,614.

The first refugees sponsored under Operation Not Forgotten reached Canada in December 2021, to tears of joy and relief at Vancouver and Toronto airports. The number of refugee arrivals had increased to 11 by the end of April 2022. As of 30 June 2022, MOSAIC had pending sponsorship applications for 303 people – 157 refugees in Nauru, PNG or temporarily in Australia under offshore processing arrangements and 146 spouses and children separated in other countries.

Sector coordination: A coordinated pursuit of policy reform

In July 2021, RCOA held a one-day workshop for several of our key members to review our collective approach to advocacy and campaigns and our collective priorities – including offshore processing, onshore detention, the refugee and humanitarian program and refugee protection in the Asia-Pacific region. As a result of the meeting, RCOA committed to:



The Operation Not Forgotten partnership was established in 2019 to provide hope and a lifeline for refugees on Manus Island and Nauru.

- Working with the National Refugee-led Advocacy Advisory Group (NRAAG) to foster greater coordination and improved communication in advocacy efforts across sector campaigns and the prioritisation of refugee-led advocacy and those with lived experience within these campaigns.
- Designing a strategy to leverage the COVID-19 political and economic climate to reframe refugees in Australia to promote fair, humane and win-win policies.
- Working with Macquarie University and the Behaviour Insight Team to develop research into what value frames RCOA should use with different political voters.
- Highlighting opportunities for the Australian Government to reduce the onerous reporting responsibilities placed on settlement services under current tender arrangements and respond more flexibly. These opportunities were identified through 22 recommendations from NRAAG and RCOA in a joint response to the Department of Home Affairs discussion paper on Next Steps to Improve Australia's Settlement and Integration of Refugees.

Strategy Group 2022

At the start of 2022, RCOA and NRAAG brought together refugee community leaders, member organisations and policy experts to form the Refugee Sector Advocacy and Campaigns Strategy Group.

In the months prior to and following the May 2022 federal election, key members of the Strategy Group and people with lived experience met to discuss our priorities and form an overarching strategy. Additional meetings with experts, advisors and people of lived experience resulted in strategy documents for our four key policy priorities:

- Ending Temporary Protection Visas and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas
- Finding durable solutions for people subject to offshore processing
- Expanding the Refugee and Humanitarian Program
- Extending financial support for people seeking asylum

By bringing people together, the Strategy Group has been developing a coordinated, strategic approach to engage the new government during its first year in leadership. Throughout the process, we have worked closely with NRAAG, the Strategy Group's co-host, and we now look forward to working with a group that is run both by refugee community leaders and member organisations, enabling the amplification of refugee voices in sector-wide strategic decision-making.

Political engagement

RCOA is continually engaging with federal ministers, MPs, senators, advisors and government officials on issues related to refugees and people seeking asylum, offshore processing, immigration detention and refugee resettlement. The change of Federal Government in 2022 has created additional opportunities for engagement and we have held many meetings with relevant ministers as well as new MPs. We continue to be careful to position our organisation as an independent organisation which

speaks frankly about the issues and brings detailed policy recommendations based on consultations with our members and refugee communities as well as our detailed research.

Since the federal election, we have been working with a coalition of organisations to encourage the Albanese Government to act promptly on its commitment to grant permanent protection to refugees on Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs). This has been done in partnership with refugee leaders, legal experts and community organisations. We are supporting proposals to use existing legislation to implement this promise quickly and efficiently, taking these ideas to our meetings with the Immigration Minister, MPs and advisors. As part of this, RCOA wrote a letter to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese shortly after his election to encourage the Labor Party to follow through with their pledges and put forward initial recommendations.

Prior to the election, RCOA held numerous private meetings with former Immigration Minister Alex Hawke, former Home Affairs Minister Karen Andrews and former Shadow Home Affairs Minister Kristina Keneally, raising issues related to immigration detention, temporary protection, offshore processing and refugee resettlement. We also participated in the Immigration Minister's consultation on the Refugee and Humanitarian Program.

RCOA CEO Paul Power's appointment in August 2021 to the Government's Advisory Panel on Australia's Resettlement of Afghan Nationals created additional opportunities for direct dialogue with the minister through Advisory Panel meetings. This appointment also represented a change in government attitude towards RCOA's advocacy, being the first formal appointment of a RCOA representative to a government advisory panel since 2014.

International engagement in refugee policy

As a national peak body, RCOA has an important role in representing Australian civil society concerns on refugee policy to international bodies and governments of other nations. In 2021-22, RCOA maintained dialogue with UNHCR, participating in numerous meetings (virtual and in-person) with UNHCR's office in Canberra, its regional bureau in Bangkok and headquarters in Geneva. In June 2022, RCOA CEO Paul Power coordinated and led meetings in Geneva between Australian refugee community and NGO representatives and senior UNHCR officials, including Assistant High Commissioner Gillian Triggs.

These meetings coincided with the 2022 Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) in Geneva, with RCOA attending along with seven other Australian NGO delegates and seven refugee representatives. Apajok Biar and Joseph Youhana were part of the ATCR Refugee Advisory Group involved in planning the 2022 ATCR and the other five were, with RCOA's encouragement, financially supported by STARTTS, AMES Australia, Settlement Services International, Multicultural Australia, Settlement Council of Australia, Foundation House, Amnesty International and Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network. RCOA's special advisor Ahmad Shuja Jamal chaired the ATCR plenary session on resettlement responses to the crises in Afghanistan and Ukraine and Bijan Kardouni, supported by STARTTS and RCOA, spoke on a panel discussion about the empowerment of LGBTQI refugees. The ATCR gathering highlighted the pressing global need for more resettlement places, with more than 2 million refugees identified as being in urgent need of resettlement but just 57,436 refugees resettled in 2021.

In May 2022, RCOA and the Diplomacy Forum of the Australian National University hosted a post-election briefing for 30 Canberra-based diplomats on challenges in refugee policy for the new Australian Parliament. Chaired by Emeritus Professor William Maley, the gathering was addressed by RCOA CEO Paul Power and special advisor Ahmad Shuja Jamal, who shared observations on the international response to mass displacement from and within Afghanistan.

Research and Policy Analysis

RCOA continued to deliver high-calibre research and policy analysis in 2021-22. These included submissions to Parliamentary Committee inquiries and departmental discussion papers, briefing notes on key issues, and background materials and information in the lead-up to the federal election in May 2022.

Submissions included:

- Submission to the Department of Home Affairs' discussion paper, titled 'Next steps to improve Australia's settlement and integration of refugees'
- National Anti-Racism Framework submission
- Further evidence for inquiry into Australia's engagement in Afghanistan
- Submission on the performance and integrity of Australia's administrative review system
- Submission to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability on people with disability in immigration detention.
- Submission to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee inquiry into Australia's engagement in Afghanistan
- Rebuilding a responsive and strategic refugee program: Response to the Australian Government Discussion Paper on the 2021-22 Humanitarian Program
- Submission to the inquiry into the efficacy, fairness, timeliness and costs of the processing and granting of visa classes which provide for or allow for family and partner reunions
- Submission to the Inquiry on the Ending Indefinite and Arbitrary Immigration Detention Bill 2021
- Submission to the Inquiry on the Migration Amendment (Strengthening the Character Test) Bill 2021

Briefs, Reports and Analysis:

- Analysis of what the Federal Budget means for people from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds
- Brief on how refugees granted visas could apply for travel exemptions
- Brief on facilitating humanitarian arrivals in the context of global vaccine inequities
- Possibilities and impediments to cross-border movement in Afghanistan
- 15,000 places for Afghan nationals over four years: why Australians are disappointed
- Facilitating humanitarian arrivals in the context of global vaccine inequities
- Economic benefits of transitioning refugees from temporary to permanent visas



RCOA continued to deliver high-calibre research and policy analysis in 2021-22.

- Brief on Information for People from Ukraine
- Brief on Refugees in Indonesia
- Brief on transitioning refugees to permanent visas
- Economic benefits of transitioning refugees to a permanent visa
- Finding solutions for refugees on temporary visas

Actions taken in preparation for the federal election in 2022:

- Analysis of refugee policies of Liberal-National Coalition, Labor and the Greens
- Identification of policy priorities for the next term of government to 2025
- Identification of three refugee issues requiring urgent change in 2022
- Development of clear answers to curly questions on refugee policy proposals
- Development of Refugee Policy Advice for the Department of Home Affairs in the lead up to the Federal Election

RCOA wrote to relevant ministers and to all federal parliamentarians – and often to all state and territory parliamentarians – throughout the year to bring to their attention key issues under six key policy areas:

1. Ending temporary protection
2. Establishing financial support for people seeking asylum
3. Rebuilding the Refugee and Humanitarian Program
4. Addressing issues related to immigration detention
5. Finding solutions for people subject to offshore processing
6. Improving engagement in the Asia-Pacific region on refugee protection

By drawing attention to cases such as these, RCOA was able to successfully advocate for refugees who might otherwise have fallen through the gaps created by the massive disruption to previously smooth-running resettlement systems.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, RCOA convened a working group involving key organisations and communities involved in resettlement to share information and collectively advocate to remove barriers for Refugee and Humanitarian visa-holders who were impacted by COVID-related border restrictions. We worked with visa-holders and their families in Australia and overseas to increase understanding and apply for travel exemptions, escalated cases in urgent need and documented systemic challenges such as the difficulties facing refugees who were unable to access vaccines in the context of global vaccine inequities.

Since travel restrictions were lifted in December 2021, RCOA staff have continued to work with visa holders whose resettlement was delayed due to COVID-19 and where backlogs and disruption to resettlement processes continue to be worked through. For example, a family that was granted visas through the Special Humanitarian Program in early 2020 were not able to travel to Australia when borders opened because they had welcomed a baby in late 2021 that had not been included in the original visa grant or travel documents previously issued. By drawing attention to cases such as these, RCOA was able to successfully advocate for refugees who might otherwise have fallen through the gaps created by the massive disruption to previously smooth-running resettlement systems.

Community Education and Awareness-Raising



Face-to-Face speakers Erfanullah Abidi, Rahan Uddin, Maya Cranitch (Chair of the RCOA Board), Abang Anade Othow, Oliver Slewa, Assadullah Khurrami.

Refugee Week

As part of our role as the national umbrella body for refugees, people seeking asylum and those who support them, RCOA coordinates Refugee Week celebrations each year. In 2022, online and in-person celebrations were held from 19-25 June 2022. This year's theme was 'Healing', which highlighted the importance of human connection, drawing upon shared hardship to heal wounds, learn from each other and move forward together.

RCOA focused on producing digital assets and resources that could be used by organisations and individuals. Our partnership with Canva, the widely popular online design tool, resulted in the creation of a range of fantastic editable resources for organisations and individuals to use in the lead-up to and during Refugee Week.

Schools, businesses, community organisations, groups and government agencies hosted events across the country to celebrate and welcome refugees. Agencies also took the opportunity to reflect on how they can improve their practice when working with refugees.

Others marked Refugee Week by using images and templates created by our event partner Canva for their celebrations and sharing the #RefugeeWeekAu hashtag across social media platforms. The templates were downloaded over 5,000 times and reached more than 85,000 people on social media platforms. The Refugee Week website continued to be the main information hub with over 80,000 visits. There was good coverage with over 50 media mentions of Refugee Week.

Through the generous support of our sponsors, refugee communities and supporters we were able to coordinate the largest Refugee Week to date. Thank you to our event partners Canva and Settlement Services International; principal partner SBS Food; major partners City of Sydney, Multicultural Australia and Multicultural NSW; partners Baker McKenzie, Foundation House, Jesuit Social Services, NSW Teachers Federation, Overseas Services to Survivors of Torture and Trauma and the Victorian Government; and supporters Amnesty International, Australian Migrant Resource Centre, Core Community Services, Jesuit Refugee Service, NSW STARTTS, St Vincent de Paul Society, NSW Refugee Health Services and SydWest Multicultural Services.

Thank you to everyone who paused and celebrated refugees and people seeking asylum in Refugee Week, whether by hosting or attending events, using our resources, or anything in between.

> *Schools, businesses, community organisations, groups and government agencies hosted events across the country to celebrate and welcome refugees.*

Community Education and Awareness-Raising



Sarab Shada is an educator and a RCOA National Ambassador.

Refugee Alternatives conference and webinars

As in previous years, the fifth Refugee Alternatives conference aimed at shifting the focus to voices with lived refugee experience. The Conference was co-hosted by the Whitlam Institute within Western Sydney University in July 2021. We were planning a hybrid conference but switched to a fully virtual format when Sydney went back into COVID lockdown two weeks prior to the event. The theme 'Rebuilding: Resilience and Innovation' brought together 335 national and international delegates to share, learn and discuss topics including lived experience leadership, mental health and wellbeing for queer refugees, education, advocacy, collaboration, cultural safety and unity. More than 70% of the speakers were people with lived experience of forced displacement. This participation and contribution reinforced self-representation as fundamental in improving policy and practice, partnerships and public support.

Following a successful virtual conference in 2021, a new online format for Refugee Alternatives was introduced in 2022. Two webinars were held in March and June 2022 exploring important issues in refugee policy and practice.

The first explored the global refugee protection needs in 2022, including a deep dive on mass displacement in Africa (including Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan), Afghanistan and Myanmar. Experts with lived experience explored the situation for people on the ground, shared expert analysis of the international diplomacy underway, the connections to Australia and what Australia can do in relation to these conflicts and the mass displacement.

The second webinar explored the role of community-led organisations in responding to the ever-changing challenges, hopes and aspirations of refugee communities. It also explored how the strengths within community networks can be better acknowledged, supported and amplified.

The new format enabled national and international participation, with over 70% of participants indicating the webinar content would either influence their advocacy work or service delivery.

Launch of National Refugee Ambassadors Program

With the backing of our supporters, we launched an exciting new program under the umbrella of RCOA's Face-to-Face Schools and Community initiative that further amplifies the voices of refugees and opens new avenues for connection in our communities.

The Face-to-Face Schools and Community Program, running since 2014, is a hugely successful initiative that trains and supports refugee speakers to share their personal stories with school and community audiences in the Sydney and Melbourne metropolitan areas.

The program has trained 91 speakers who have given 382 presentations to date. These presentations have helped a wide range of people of all ages in schools, government, non-government and community organisations to get a meaningful, human insight into the experience of refugees. The feedback across the board has been overwhelmingly positive; many people have reported positive change in behaviours and attitudes, including students in schools welcoming new arrivals more warmly into their communities.

The Face-to-Face program provides speakers with detailed training that not only builds their public speaking skills, but also helps them identify the needs of specific audiences. Experienced professionals help

speakers draw aspects of their personal experiences together into a presentation which connects with their audience, helping them to tailor the emphasis of their stories depending on the age and level of understanding of their audience.

Importantly, the training addresses questions of the speakers' trauma associated with recalling painful experiences and provides ongoing training and support as well as advice on self-care and setting boundaries. The aim is to empower speakers and ensure they have agency over their narrative in the public eye.

Now, building on the success of the Face-to-Face Schools and Community Program, we are launching the national Refugee Ambassadors Program. In the coming years, our goal is to train and develop a cohort of speakers – Refugee Ambassadors – who will speak around the nation in a variety of public and professional contexts, including corporate, media and private venues. Launched during Refugee Week 2022, our first 12 Refugee Ambassadors commenced their training in Sydney and Melbourne. Drawing on RCOA's wide network of contacts across Australia, RCOA will connect organisations with Refugee Ambassadors who will share experiences and perspectives relevant to the organisation's work in education, cross-cultural awareness, professional development or public events.

This important new program will aim to address misconceptions and stereotypes and work to promote more open dialogue and compassionate relationships in our country.

Refugee Welcome Zones

We now have 172 Local Government Areas (LGAs) across Australia that have made the commitment, as Refugee Welcome Zones, to:

- Welcome refugees into the community
- Uphold the human rights of refugees
- Demonstrate compassion for refugees and
- Enhance cultural and religious diversity in the community.

This initiative encourages solidarity with refugees and helps build genuine social cohesion, belonging and resilience, with benefits that spread throughout the community, fostering a sense of inclusion for all. As we continue to feel the ongoing effects of the pandemic, it has become evident that local, community, place-based solutions that can be successfully facilitated by LGAs are more important than ever.

The Refugee Welcome Zone Leadership Group has also expanded to include eight local councils:

- City of Sydney
- City of Canterbury Bankstown
- Blacktown City Council
- Liverpool City Council
- City of Greater Dandenong
- City of Darebin
- Hume City Council
- Cumberland City Council

The leadership group meets regularly with RCOA staff and works to strengthen the strategic direction of the initiative. This will enable RCOA to provide greater support for the initiative, ultimately further enhancing social cohesion and inclusion across our communities. A successful Refugee Welcome Zone National Forum was held (virtually due to the pandemic) in July 2021, featuring speakers from refugee communities, local government and specialist service providers, giving opportunity for Councils and community members to learn more about the contribution refugees make and how local government can work in partnership to enhance employment, integration and advocacy outcomes. A project to record the activities of Refugee Welcome Zone councils, including policies, programs and activities to welcome refugees, was completed and this information made available on our website, where each council is able to have a profile, showcasing their work.

Our Organisation

Support for our work

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to provide challenging conditions, including for fundraising, yet we have been able to maximise our donations income and grow our support base. We continue to seek new opportunities to ensure the long-term sustainability of RCOA's work in support of refugees and people who seek asylum.

Our heartfelt thanks to the thousands of people across Australia who supported our work during 2021-22 by responding to appeals, becoming regular monthly donors, supporting our campaigns and volunteering their time. We would also like to thank the organisations who provided significant financial and pro bono support. Your commitment and generosity make what we do possible.

Our special thanks to the Broadley Trust, McKinnon Family Foundation, Colin Biggers and Paisley Foundation, the Sue and Sam Foundation, the Phillips Family Foundation, The Cath Leary Social Justice Foundation, Australian Communities Foundation, Planet Wheeler Foundation and Vivienne Court Trading Pty Ltd, for their ongoing generous support of our work.

RCOA Strategic Plan 2022-24

RCOA finalised its strategic plan for 2022–24. In developing this plan, we engaged with over 730 people informing the development of RCOA priorities for the next 3 years.

RCOA celebrated its 40th year in 2021, a significant milestone and a reflection of the continued need for advocacy on issues experienced by refugees and people seeking asylum. This new plan provides a way forward, consolidates our existing work and recognises new opportunities.

The 2022–2024 Strategic Plan has four focus areas: Advocacy and Research, Refugee Leadership and Representation, Public Awareness and Support for Refugees and Enablers to support the organisation to deliver its mission.

You can read the full 2022-2024 Strategic Plan on our website: https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/who-we-are/

Board members

Jasmina Bajraktarevic-Hayward – President (elected 8 November 2021)

Phil Glendenning AM - Immediate Past President (President until 8 November 2021)

Emeritus Professor William Maley AM – Vice-President

Adrian Graham – Treasurer

Maya Cranitch AM – Chair

Dr Caroline Fleay – Secretary

Dr Melika Sheikh-Eldin

Marc Purcell

John Roc

Ella Dixon

Kwame Selormey

Beata Ostapiej-Piatkowski

Joseph Youhana

Non-voting members of the Board: Agnes Panosian (January-December 2021) and Christina Hey-Nguyen (January-December 2022), participating as part of the Observership Program.

At the 2021 RCOA Annual General Meeting, members voted to confer life membership on Phil Glendenning, in recognition of his nine years as President of RCOA and his national leadership on human rights issues.

Staff

1 July 2021 - 30 June 2022

Paul Power – Chief Executive Officer

Adama Kamara – Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Rebecca Eckard – Director of Policy and Research

Kelly Nicholls – Director of Strategy, Communications and Fundraising

Deena Yako – Director of Community Engagement

Rebecca Langton – Manager

Louise Olliff – Senior Policy Advisor

Asher Hirsch – Senior Policy Officer

Sahar Okhovat – Senior Policy Officer

Ahmad Shuja Jamal – Special Advisor

Georgie McGrillen – Partnership and Relationship Manager

Rnita Dacho – Fundraising Coordinator

Caroline Batchler – Fundraising Coordinator

Afiqah Rozali – Digital Fundraising Officer

Samah Shda – Project Officer

Molly Jureidini – Digital and Campaigns Officer

Paul Lampathakis – Media and Campaigns Officer (to January 2022)

Will Martin – Media and Communications Officer (from April 2022)

Martyn Green – Accounting Officer

Our Volunteers

1 July 2021-30 June 2022

Thanks to all our volunteers and interns in 2021-22. We would be unable to complete all the work we do without the diligent and consistent support of our dedicated volunteers.

Caitlin Bailey

Gabriella Baudille

Philippa Bullock

Belinda Chan

Joyce Chia

Soo Choi

Aníbal González Quinteros

Nicole Juric

Rushdifa Khan

Rei Kori

Min Kumar

Paula Cruz Manrique

Saloni Nirala

Amelie Roediger

Sean Sayer

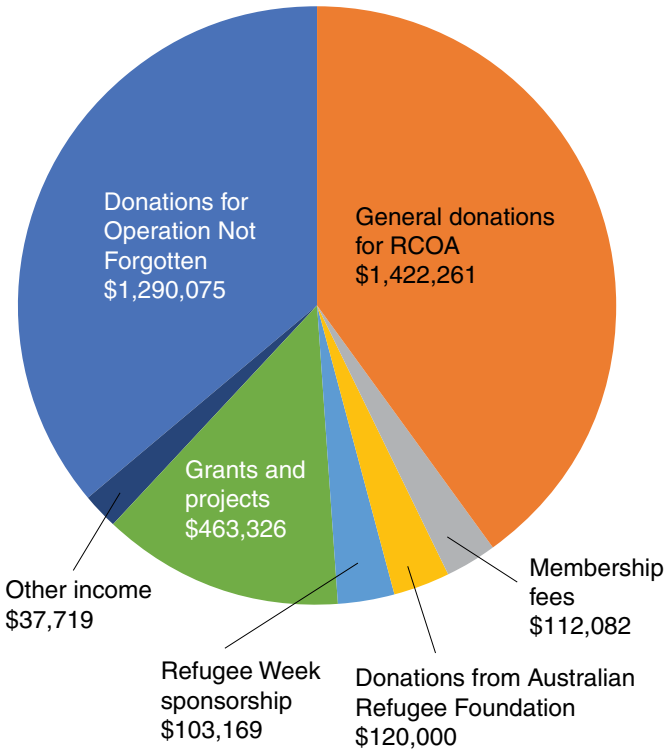
Carol Tudence

Christina Gaertner

Australian Refugee Foundation

Since its establishment in 1997 to ensure independent funding for RCOA's core work, the Australian Refugee Foundation (ARF) has donated more than $1.7 million to support RCOA research and projects. In 2021-22, ARF donated $120,000 to RCOA. As at 30 June 2022, the ARF trustees were Jasmina Bajraktarevic-Hayward, William Maley and Adrian Graham (from RCOA's Board) and Sue Ismiel, Effie Mitchell and Steve Denenberg (independent trustees).

Income Sources



Our Members

Life members

Dame Marie Bashir AD CVO

Tuong Quang Luu AO

Phil Glendenning AM

Organisational Members

2Connect Youth and Community

Access Community Services Limited

Act for Peace

ActionAid Australia

Advance Diversity Services

Ahmadiyya Muslim Association of Australia

AMES Australia

Amnesty International

Armidale Rural Australians for Refugees

Asylum Seekers Centre

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre

Auburn Diversity Services Inc

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Office for Justice, Ecology and Peace

Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office

Australian Council for International Development

Australian Education Union (Federal Office)

Australian Education Union New South Wales

Australian Karen Organisation

Australian Migrant Resource Centre

Australian Red Cross

Australian Refugee Association

Australian Western Sahara Association (NSW)

Baptcare Sanctuary

Bathurst Refugee Support Group

Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group

Brotherhood of St. Laurence

Canberra Refugee Support

CareerSeekers

Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, Justice and Peace Office

Catholic Education Office Wollongong

Catholics in Coalition for Justice and Peace

Centre for Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Detainees (CARAD)

Centre for Human Rights Education, Curtin University

Centrecare Incorporated

Circle Green Community Legal

Cohealth

Community Migrant Resource Centre

Companion House

CORE Community Services

Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia and the Solomon Islands

East Gippsland Asylum Seekers Support Group

Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education

FamilyCare

Forcibly Displaced People Network

Foundation House (Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture)

HOST International

House of Welcome

Humanists Victoria

Immigration Advice and Rights Centre

International Commission of Jurists, Australian Section

Jesuit Refugee Service Australia

Jesuit Social Services

Justice for Refugees SA

Life Without Barriers

Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services

Melaleuca Refugee Centre

Mercy Community Romero Centre

Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services of the ACT (MARSS)

Migrant Resource Centre (Northern Tasmania)

Mount Druitt Ethnic Communities Agency

Multicultural Australia

Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra, SCARF Program

Multicultural Council of Wagga Wagga

Multicultural NSW

Multicultural Services Centre of WA

Murray Valley Sanctuary Refugee Group

National Council of Churches in Australia

National Resource Centre for Migrant Empowerment

North Richmond Community Health

Northern Settlement Services

NSW Council for Civil Liberties

NSW Refugee Health Services

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

Overseas Services to Survivors of Torture and Trauma

Pax Christi Australia (NSW)

QPASTT

Quaker Service Australia

Refugee Advice and Casework Service

Refugee and Immigration Legal Service

Refugee Legal

The Salvation Army

SDN Children's Services

Settlement Services International

Sisters of Charity of Australia

The Sisters of the Good Samaritan NSW

Socio-Cultural Syriac Incorporated

Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre

Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre

St James' Church, Sydney

St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia

Sudanese Online Research Association and Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning Program

Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service (STTARS)

Sydney Multicultural Community Services

SydWest Multicultural Services

The Mercy Foundation

The Tasmania Opportunity

Think+DO Tank Foundation

Townsville Multicultural Support Group

Uniting Church National Assembly

Uniting Vic.Tas

Valerio Daniel de Simoni Association Inc

Warrnambool Rural Australians for Refugees

Welcoming Australia

West Wagga San Isidore Refugee Committee

Western Region Ethnic Communities Council

Western Sydney MRC

Yazda

Our Members

Individual Members

Rebecca Albury
Kim Alden
Dennis Altman
Brett Andrews
Christopher Ansted
Nick Armitage
Bill Armstrong
Brian and Maureen Arnott
Kevin Bain
John Ball
Steven Bateman
Phillipa Bellemore
Emme Binga
Elizabeth Biok
Peter Blunden
Charles Body
Bill Bostle
Jennifer Bowen
Nina Boydell
Kim Boyer
Carol Bristow
Jill Brook
Kate Brooks
Katherine Brown
Peter Browne
Meredith Burgmann AM
Nina Burridge
Stephen Cadusch
Teresa Cannon
Bill Castleden
Philippa Catchpole
Renee Chan
Robin Chapple
Lesley Cioccarelli
John Clark
Carmel Clark
Lesley Clarke
Liz Connor
Judith Copleston
Maya Cranitch AM
Lynne Crilley
Maxine Croft
Aileen Cryle
Ann Curthoys AM
Rnita Dacho
Mary Daley
Samuel Dariol
Peter Dart
Caroline de Costa
Alice de Jonge
Peter Deutschmann
Mary-Louise Deveson
Gillian Dooley
Virginia Duigan
Test Dummy
Jack Durack
Judith Dwyer
Rosemary Elbery
Bruce Errol
Richard Evans
Vicki Fairfax
John Farquharson
Philip Feinstein
Claire Foley
Ron Fraser
David Freesmith
Cindy Gallois
Peter Gerrand
Anne Gibbins
Alexander Gilly
Anya Gipp
Sharon Goldschmidt
Renee Goossens
Keren Gould
Jan Govett
Stephanie Grant
Charles Green
Gabrella Gresz
Janet Grevillea
Margaret Grey
Trudy Hairs
Catherine Halliday
Frances Hanna
Catherine Harboe-Ree
Roy Harvey
Liza Hazelton
Paul Henning
Michael Henry
Marguerite Heppell
Christina Hey-Nguyen
Bruce Hogben
Lauren Honcope
Julia Horne
David Hotchkiss
Matthew Howard
Alison Howell
David Hunter
Elizabeth Jacka
Barbara Jackson
Norman James
Ivan James AO
Alison Jaworski
Kate Jeffery
Ariel Johnson
Kathryn Johnson
Ann-Mari Jordens
Lee Joyce
Jon Jureidini
Hayley Katzen
Carmel Kozolup
Peter Krinks
Rob Lake
Mark Lauer
Amy Lees
Rebecca Lim
Euan Littlejohn
David Lloyd
Maureen Long
Terry Lustig
Andrew Lynch
Sally A Mack
Krista Maier
Krista Maier
William Maley AM
Julie Marcus
John Marlton
Kathryn McArdle
Mary McCallum
Maureen Angela McDonagh
Mary McMahon
Anne Mijch
Rodney Mitchell
Effie Mitchell
Peter Moran
Lucy Morgan
Michael Mullerworth
Dennis Mulvihill
Tanja Muscatello
Amy Nethery
Emma Nicholson
Joanna OBrien
Lesley Osborne
Beata Ostapiej-Piatkowski
Michael Pegg
Peter Penn
Paul Perini
Jennifer Perry
Melanie Petranovic
Melissa Phillips
Carrie Philpott
Margaret Piper
Shane Prince SC
Rae Quigley
Maree Raftis-Zika
Shanti Raman
Nola Randall
Monica Redden
Alex Reilly
Bronia Renison
John Roc
Jennifer Rodgers
Joanne Russell
Dr James Russell
Peter Sainsbury
Marian Sawer
Leo Schultz
Linda Shaw
Natalie Shea
Susan Sheridan
Nizza Siano
Jeff Siegel
Keith Simpson-Lyttle
Clair Smith
Jessica Smith
Richard Stayner
Jean Stewart
Matthew Stokes
Tim Sullivan
Keith Suter
Kevin Sweeney
Robert Taggart
Kapil Talwar
Savitri Taylor
Jane Thomas
Janet Thompson
Barbara Trauer
Janis Trevaskis
Philip Tubb
Margaret Tung
Lesley Walker
Lynn Wallace Clancy
Linda Watson
Angus Wells
Anne Wenham
Fred Westwood
Andrew Whalan
Ilka White
Jane Wilkinson
Deborah Willcocks
Meredith Williams
Jan Williams
Sara Wills
Ron Witton
Anne Yuille

Financial Reports

Refugee Council of Australia Inc - ABN 87 956 673 083

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the Year Ended 30 June 2022

	2022 ($)	2021 ($)
Revenue	3,548,632	3,065,945
Employee benefits expense	(1,550,972)	(1,372,282)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	(3,506)	-
Other expenses	(1,362,387)	(1,667,402)
Surplus for the year	631,767	26,261
Income tax expense	-	-
Surplus for the year	631,767	26,261
Other comprehensive income for the year, net of tax	-	-
Total comprehensive surplus for the year	631,767	26,261

Statement of Financial Position

As At 30 June 2022

	2022 ($)	2021 ($)
ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	1,921,013	1,645,964
Trade and other receivables	266,596	174,977
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	2,187,609	1,820,941
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	-	-
TOTAL ASSETS	**2,187,609**	**1,820,941**
LIABILITIES		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	70,527	107,602
Employee benefits	151,929	142,413
Other liabilities	71,351	321,516
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	**293,807**	**571,531**
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Employee benefits	34,732	22,107
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	34,732	22,107
TOTAL LIABILITIES	328,539	593,638
NET ASSETS	**1,859,070**	**1,227,303**
EQUITY		
Restricted Reserves	413,392	23,785
Retained surplus	1,445,678	1,203,518
TOTAL EQUITY	**1,859,070**	**1,227,303**

Audited financial statements

The Refugee Council of Australia's accounts for 2021-22 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

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www.refugeecouncil.org.au