



Time *Will* Tell

Showcasing stories of good philanthropy

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“For anyone wanting to understand the power of philanthropy, here is a moving collection of stories that demonstrate the enduring legacy of patient and inspired philanthropy – believing in an idea, taking a risk, acting as a catalyst and providing money, support, voice, influence and above all time. It is also a wonderful reminder to those of us working in the field of just why we are involved.”

GINA ANDERSON
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
PHILANTHROPY AUSTRALIA



PHILANTHROPY
Australia

Foreword

Philanthropy can be broadly defined as love of mankind. In practical terms, offering philanthropic support reflects a willingness to promote the welfare of others and an intrinsic interest in improving the wellbeing of humanity. This publication grew from a desire to tell some of the many extraordinary stories of successful philanthropy. It aims to celebrate the achievements of philanthropy and to broaden its reach through a collection of case studies.

The Helen Macpherson Smith Trust provided the initial impetus in bringing this publication to life. From there, a small working group representing other philanthropic foundations, namely The Myer Foundation and the Sidney Myer Fund, The Reichstein Foundation, The Melbourne Community Foundation and Portland House Foundation came together, so that a wide range of stories could be told. Behind each of these stories there is a large number of other generous philanthropic organisations and individuals that also have supported the projects and organisations described. While it is not possible to name them all, it is important to note that these projects would not have been possible without their collective support.

The working group discussed how the notion of successful philanthropy might be defined. They recognised the importance of an enduring legacy, the value of strong leadership, the need to support innovative ideas and individuals with vision and the benefits derived from collaborations. In addition, they looked for projects that began with a simple idea, an idea that flourished and grew once it was offered that initial sustenance that philanthropy can provide. They also wanted to highlight a diverse selection of projects, both small and large, projects that were focused on listening to communities and responding to those communities with respect.

From the many stories of successful philanthropy available to them, the working group chose a small but diverse collection of projects that exemplified some of the features of good philanthropy. They then nominated individuals involved with each of these initiatives to be interviewed. Each of the people interviewed described their particular passions and concerns, while voicing their appreciation for the role that philanthropy had played in building upon their ideas and aspirations. Excerpts from these interviews have been used to add flavour and depth to each of the stories included.

Despite the differences that exist from project to project, and from person to person, there was one common thread spoken about by all: philanthropy's unflinching respect for time. Phrases and references to time peppered many conversations. People suggested that philanthropy understood that good ideas often came to fruition in their own good time. Ideas and individuals were described as being ahead of their time. Many spoke of the willingness of representatives from philanthropic foundations to give of their time to growing ideas and organisations.

It also became clear that the projects chosen covered a significant span of time. The stories commence in 1983 with The Nanjing Project, where philanthropy supported bringing Chinese trainers and acrobats to Australia, a project that ultimately changed the face of circus performance in Australia forever. They end in 2007 with the launch of Australians for Affordable Housing, a project that saw the issue of housing affordability enter the national consciousness. In that quarter of a century of endeavour, incredible things had taken place, because philanthropy saw potential, understood that there could be elements of risk, but nevertheless was willing to invest.

For this reason, time was used to build a framework for this publication. The stories have been assembled in chronological order. Other events or milestones, be they political, social, or cultural, have been used to provide something of a context for the stories. They aim to create a small snapshot of the state, the nation, and the zeitgeist as it was at the time.

Yes, from little things big things do grow. But first they need to be noticed and understood, and then given all the nourishment that they need, in whatever form is necessary, in order that they may flourish. While each story paints its own picture and bears witness to the power of humanity, the collection aims to create a larger narrative focused on the inherent possibilities of what good philanthropy can ultimately achieve.

I hope that you will enjoy sharing these stories and help grow the family of philanthropy both now and into the future.



DARVELL M HUTCHINSON AM
CHAIRMAN
HELEN MACPHERSON SMITH TRUST



1983

Bob Hawke becomes Prime Minister with the campaign slogan Bringing Australia Together.

1983

Zhao Ziyang, the Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China is the first Chinese head of government to visit Australia.



1983

The Nanjing Project begins

In 1983 The Myer Foundation and the Sidney Myer Fund provided grants totalling \$15,000 to Circus Oz to bring a troupe of acrobats and trainers from Nanjing, China to spend three months providing intensive training to Australian circus and physical theatre performers in Albury-Wodonga.

Carrillo Gantner, now president of The Myer Foundation, but then a member and founder of Playbox Theatre Company, had been involved in bringing a Chinese puppet theatre troupe to Australia in the late 70's. This was followed by a tour by the Nanjing Acrobats. It was during that tour that the idea of bringing them back to conduct training was first hatched.

"I remember my oldest son was around back stage with me all the time during that first tour. He was 6 at the time. The performers would say, 'He is exactly the age he needs to be to become an acrobat.' I also remember one Saturday matinee the kids from the Flying Fruit Flies in Albury had come down to Melbourne for the show. I arranged for them to come up on stage and play with the props and meet some of the artists. Those country kids were astounded. Their eyes were like saucers. It was the combination of those two things. I also thought if we could connect Chinese skills with that sense of Australian informality, we could create something very special. People found reasons to think it was a silly idea but I thought it was a good idea. So I hammered away and found some funding."

CARRILLO GANTNER AO,
PRESIDENT OF THE MYER FOUNDATION, CHAIRMAN OF THE SIDNEY MYER FUND,
FORMER MEMBER AND FOUNDER PLAYBOX THEATRE COMPANY

The Myer Foundation supported the participation of Circus Oz whose artists relocated for the duration and camped on the local oval. Trainers and interpreters travelled from China to Albury, where two houses were rented and the local gym was taken over for the three-month period.

"The trainers arrived in Melbourne and I met them and took them on the train to Albury-Wodonga. We would be stopped at a station and perhaps two people would get on the train and three would get off. The Chinese were simply staggered by this. If you stop in any regional station in China literally thousands of people get on and off. The only numbers they were seeing like that were the sheep outside the window. When we arrived in Albury, the Circus Oz band, all dressed up with an oomph pah pah, were there to meet them. The Mayor was there as well. It was fabulous."

CARRILLO GANTNER

"Yes, we arrived in Australia through The Myer Foundation, but we didn't really know what that meant. We didn't understand the concept because in China the government ran everything. We didn't know how the Australian system worked. The only thing we knew about Australia was that they relied very heavily on sheep."

GUANG RONG LU, HEAD OF CIRCUS NICA,
FORMERLY NANJING ACROBAT

The Chinese trainers worked with members of the Flying Fruit Fly Circus, Circus Oz and members of some community theatre troupes. The aim was to introduce Australian performers to classical Chinese acrobatic performance and training techniques to enhance the skills of Australian performers.

"The training was difficult. During the first week people went home hurting. The trainers had everybody putting their legs up on rails and holding positions for 20 minutes. They had them doing stretches like they had never done before. Many of the community performers dropped out. The kids from the Fruit Flies could do it best. They took to it."

CARRILLO GANTNER

"Before we arrived we had a very clear understanding of the training program from the government in China. Regardless of the situation, our job was to produce amazing results. That was the responsibility. For the first few days I remember thinking, what have I got myself into?"

GUANG RONG LU

TIME WILL TELL



"I'll never forget the look on the Chinese acrobats' faces when they asked for a run through of everybody's skills. Almost everyone, apart from some of the Fruit Flies, was hopeless. The Chinese were devastated. But at the end of the process the Chinese were really respectful of what they were able to achieve."

JOHN PAXINOS, DIRECTOR AUSPICIOUS ARTS PROJECTS,
FORMERLY GENERAL MANAGER FLYING FRUIT FLIES

"I was one of the Flying Fruit Fly Circus invited to be part of the project. The demanding nature of it was far greater than we had ever experienced before. But language was never an issue. We seemed to communicate quite happily around the physical. There were some words, like somersault, that even the interpreter didn't know. It didn't matter. Physicality became our language."

MATTHEW HUGHES, PROGRAMMING DIRECTOR CIRCUS OZ,
PARTICIPANT NANJING PROJECT

Albury-Wodonga, home to the Flying Fruit Flies, proved to be an ideal base for the project. Residents embraced the initiative wholeheartedly.

"We decided to do it in Albury-Wodonga because the kids from the Fruit Flies were there and also because we thought in a small place the project would have more focus. It was an inspired choice. The community of Albury-Wodonga loved and respected this project because their kids were doing it. They could see their kids changing, physically and mentally, because they were learning discipline. In the streets, or even in the local milk-bar, the trainers were received as friends because they were working with the local kids. In a small community that sentiment spreads."

CARRILLO GANTNER

"It united the town. I remember taking the Chinese acrobats to the Weir and someone had a boat, so we all got on their boat and took them to see all sorts of things. People were more than happy to give of themselves."

MATTHEW HUGHES

"The people from the town understood what an opportunity it was. We had great support through local media. When tickets went on sale for the final performance everybody went nuts. I've never sold tickets so quickly in my life."

JOHN PAXINOS

The project forged new understandings between trainers and trainees, as both parties rapidly developed ways of being together.

"Back then, there was a big gap between the two countries in terms of our knowledge of each other. All the information you need is easily available now. But then there was a big gap between the two countries in terms of our knowledge of one another and our ideology."

GUANG RONG LU

"I remember going into town with them and realising through an interpreter that they had never seen Coca Cola before. I remember at the time that really struck me."

MATTHEW HUGHES

"In China, we had had an education that suggested a capitalist society was no good. But when we arrived in Australia we saw a different picture altogether. We saw warm, friendly people who were interested in exploring all sorts of things. At the time we didn't know what the impact was to be but we knew we could do amazing things."

GUANG RONG LU

"At the end everyone was in tears, hugging and touching. The Chinese teachers were embracing the children. People knew that something magical had happened. The hugs that people shared were not just based on the milk of human kindness. They were based on an incredible sense of achievement."

CARRILLO GANTNER

The project forged new understandings between trainers and trainees, as both parties rapidly developed ways of being together.

"It caused a fundamental change in Australia's circus performing. It was a changing time and people were willing to say, 'Yes we can do this.' It was the time of the birth of what is now called contemporary circus. We were lucky enough to catch the flow and the flow went with us. It is such a positive memory for me. Without that project I probably would never have come to Australia. It changed things forever."

GUANG RONG LU

"It was the confluence of different energies that were around at the time. Carrillo Gantner sowed the seed. He saw the Fruit Flies and he understood what was happening with Circus Oz. It takes a visionary. It also takes energy to bring hope to that vision. Philanthropy took the risk. The role of philanthropy is to be ahead of that wave. We were so fortunate with the Nanjing Project. The necessary discipline of the trainers provided the perfect foil for the larrikin humour of Circus Oz, and the no-nonsense attitudes of those country kids. It was one of those special moments."

JOHN PAXINOS

"You go to any performance by any circus company in Australia now and you see the tower of chairs, or the hoop diving, so many acts that were originally done by the Chinese. They are now done in our way with an Australian informality and style. It was a small investment in a good idea. I never had a doubt about the idea. But I had no idea of how wide and pervasive and how powerful it would be."

CARRILLO GANTNER

"It is inspiring to look back at some of our projects and think about how decisions were made. Sometimes you can't see impact until a long way down the track."

KIRSTY ALLEN, PROGRAM MANAGER,
THE MYER FOUNDATION AND THE SIDNEY MYER FUND





1985

Palm Sunday peace rallies unite 300 000 people across Australia.

1986

Commonwealth Human Rights and Equal Opportunity is established and has a primary role in implementing Australia's international human rights obligations.



1987

The establishment of The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Foundation House)

The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, also known as Foundation House, was incorporated in 1987 to meet the needs of people in Victoria who were subject to torture or trauma in their country of origin or while fleeing those countries. It is non-denominational, politically neutral and non-aligned. It is constituted as a non-profit organisation and is managed by an elected Committee of Management.

It was originally formed after members of Melbourne's refugee community, together with a small group of medical and legal professionals and human rights organisations, convened a public meeting to discuss health services for survivors of torture.

"It was December 1986 when that first meeting happened. We had doctors, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists and administrators in attendance. After the speakers had done the lead up, describing the need for a service for survivors of torture and trauma, we were asked to indicate our willingness to be involved, as a steering committee. There were about 15 of us there and we all stood up."

JOHN GIBSON, FOUNDING CHAIR COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT,
FOUNDATION HOUSE, CURRENT PRESIDENT REFUGEE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

The Myer Foundation provided the first grant of \$17, 500, enabling the group to employ a community development worker to investigate how to get the Foundation established.

"The group formed and they decided to approach philanthropists for funding. They tried approaching government but a lot of their initial requests for funding were rejected. Government departments were very supportive and were happy to write letters of support to other government departments but no government department was willing to take on something new. The breakthrough came when The Myer Foundation gave us that first bit of money which enabled the group to employ a worker for six months, to investigate how to get things set up. That worker was me. Then the Reichstein Foundation came on board with a commitment for 2 years funding. That gave us credibility. We wouldn't have got to where we are with government funding without that initial investment from Myer and Reichstein. Philanthropy allowed that seed to grow."

PARIS ARISTOTLE AM,
DIRECTOR, VICTORIAN FOUNDATION FOR SURVIVORS OF TORTURE

While many of its innovative programs continue to be funded by charitable trusts and private donations, its core funding is now provided by the Victorian Department of Human Services and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship also make a substantial contribution through the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy.

Foundation House provides direct services to survivors of torture and trauma in the form of counselling, advocacy, family support, group work, psycho- education, information sessions and complementary therapies.

"It was a terrible situation in Iraq and just as terrible outside of Iraq waiting for some place to accept us. When I arrived here I had no family members. No friends. No one. It was just me and my daughters. I had only simple English. But with Foundation House, the doctors and the therapists, I found help. When I first arrived I could see everything was very nice but there was something sad, very deep inside me. Now, with help from Foundation House I have passed through this time. I can look at the sky and look at my children and think it is all very beautiful."

SUNDES, FORMER FOUNDATION HOUSE CLIENT,
CURRENTLY WORKING AS A SETTLEMENT OFFICER



"Most of the innovations we have been able to generate have come from the philanthropic sector. Our natural therapies model was seed funded out of philanthropy. Now, it's at the point where we are able to convince government that it's an important component of our practice. We don't go to philanthropy for recurrent or core funding. We go to philanthropy for our innovations and use that to leverage into government. Portland House Foundation was a strategic investor in our school-based program. They are now a strategic investor in our strengthening families program. The Helen Macpherson Smith Trust has also contributed to our schools programs over the years and at the moment it is funding the development of virtual networks within school regions, so they can continue to share and communicate around the development of services for young refugees. This philanthropic support makes an enormous difference."

PARIS ARISTOTLE

"We all need to remember the lessons from Foundation House. Originally nobody in government would pick up the model. The government would not fund them until The Myer Foundation and the Reichstein Foundation funded that first phase. It is an example of philanthropy helping to create something extraordinary. Philanthropy can be used to fund the first phase in the development of something big. The money may be a small amount but it goes a lot further when it is used in a way that takes the original idea into the mainstream, where people are elbowing each other out of the way to say, now we get it. That - start to finish - is what philanthropy is alive for."

GENEVIEVE TIMMONS,
PHILANTHROPIC EXECUTIVE, PORTLAND HOUSE FOUNDATION

As Foundation House continues to grow and make invaluable contributions to this field of work, the importance of relationships has remained pivotal to its success.

"We have built up strong, solid and very meaningful relationships over the years. We are keen for philanthropic organisations and others who support our work to understand why it is so important. Open communication is vital. If they understand the essence of what we do, they will understand the value of new ideas and the potential in them. It's great when philanthropy recognises that what we really want to do is get on with the work."

SUSANNE WEST, COORDINATOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS, FOUNDATION HOUSE



“Foundation House helped me to see the opposite side of my life. I used to think only in negatives. I used to be able to only look at the bad things that had happened to me. But I am working now. I started as a community guide working with new arrivals to show them the way, how to settle, how to use public transport. Then I trained and now I am working as a settlement officer. When I went to Foundation House they did such a great job. They helped me so much. People who have suffered a lot can become different, more open to the light. My faith and my beliefs have kept me strong and the help of Foundation House, believe me, for three years, they have helped me. I hope their work will continue.”

SUNDES



1990

Release of Midnight Oil's Blue Sky Mine, describing the industrial disaster that was asbestos. The popularity of asbestos products has ensured that Australia has the highest recorded rate of mesothelioma in the world.

1990

Survey reveals Melbourne as the world's most 'liveable' city. In the following year, the Coode Island chemical storage facility explodes and burns for more than two hours, belching a black cloud over the city.

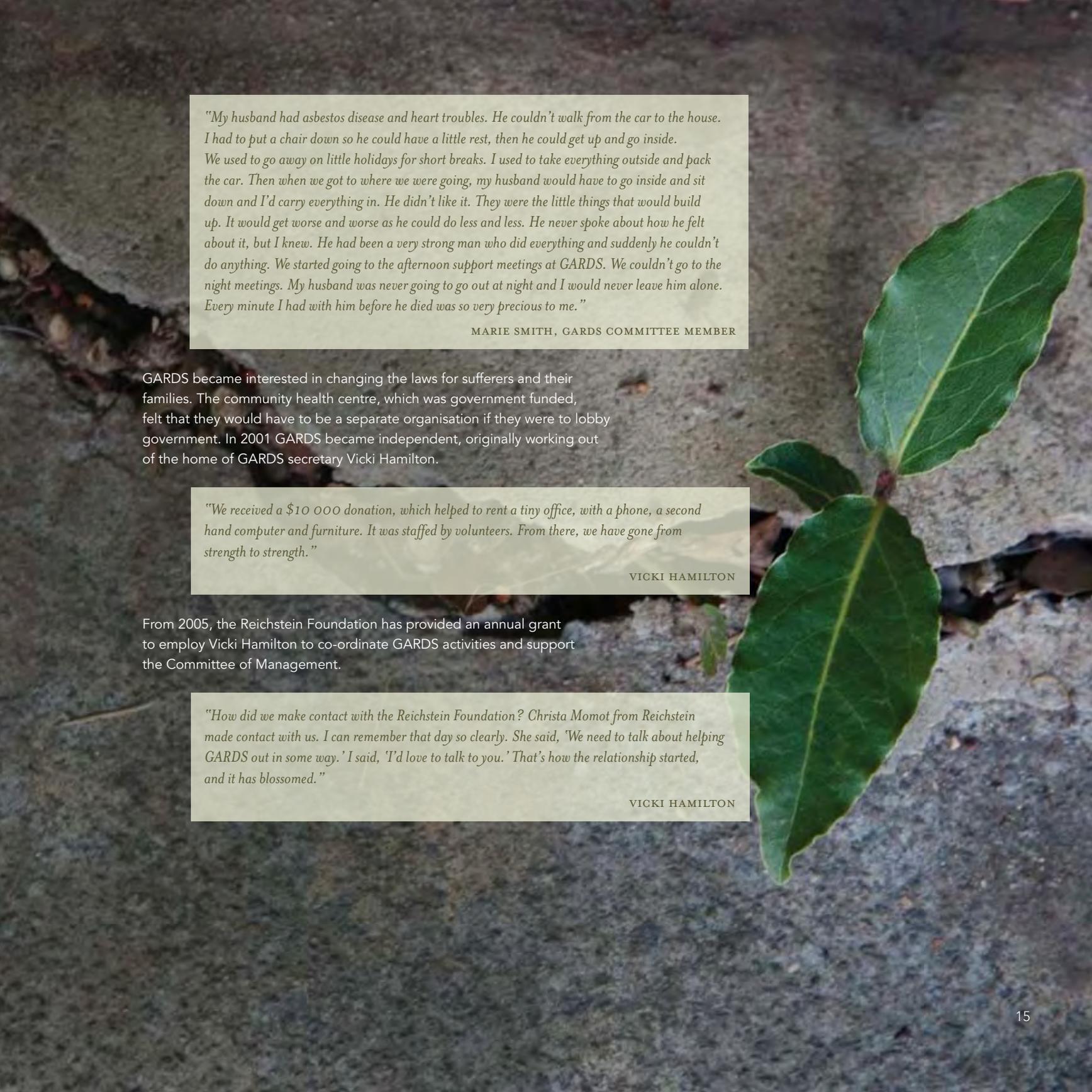
1993

The birth of GARDS, the Gippsland Asbestos Related Disease Support group

From the 1920's to the 1980's asbestos was widely used in the power generation industry. The State Electricity Commission of Victoria, now privatised, was a major employer in the Latrobe Valley. Mesothelioma, whose only cause is asbestos, is seven times more common in the Latrobe Valley than in the rest of Victoria. GARDS began at the Latrobe Community Health Centre as a self-help group, consisting of people who had lost loved ones to asbestos related diseases.

"From when he was 54 years old my Dad's health went downhill. He couldn't walk up or down stairs. He would have to stop and rest. He was put out on disability from the State Electricity Commission of Victoria. They knew he was a liability. I remember he was disgusted that I had to mow his lawns. It was so belittling for him to have his daughter do the things he had traditionally done. He had been the strength of our family."

VICKI HAMILTON, GARDS SECRETARY



"My husband had asbestos disease and heart troubles. He couldn't walk from the car to the house. I had to put a chair down so he could have a little rest, then he could get up and go inside. We used to go away on little holidays for short breaks. I used to take everything outside and pack the car. Then when we got to where we were going, my husband would have to go inside and sit down and I'd carry everything in. He didn't like it. They were the little things that would build up. It would get worse and worse as he could do less and less. He never spoke about how he felt about it, but I knew. He had been a very strong man who did everything and suddenly he couldn't do anything. We started going to the afternoon support meetings at GARDS. We couldn't go to the night meetings. My husband was never going to go out at night and I would never leave him alone. Every minute I had with him before he died was so very precious to me."

MARIE SMITH, GARDS COMMITTEE MEMBER

GARDS became interested in changing the laws for sufferers and their families. The community health centre, which was government funded, felt that they would have to be a separate organisation if they were to lobby government. In 2001 GARDS became independent, originally working out of the home of GARDS secretary Vicki Hamilton.

"We received a \$10 000 donation, which helped to rent a tiny office, with a phone, a second hand computer and furniture. It was staffed by volunteers. From there, we have gone from strength to strength."

VICKI HAMILTON

From 2005, the Reichstein Foundation has provided an annual grant to employ Vicki Hamilton to co-ordinate GARDS activities and support the Committee of Management.

"How did we make contact with the Reichstein Foundation? Christa Momot from Reichstein made contact with us. I can remember that day so clearly. She said, 'We need to talk about helping GARDS out in some way.' I said, 'I'd love to talk to you.' That's how the relationship started, and it has blossomed."

VICKI HAMILTON

"In my opinion, those organisations who are often in most need of philanthropic support, may be the least able to contact us. If our mission is about working with disadvantaged communities and groups, then good philanthropy is about seeking out, making contact with people, as opposed to waiting for them to contact us. Before I do regional visits I often ask various activists if they know of groups doing good work. I was told I should meet with GARDS. I remember my first formal visit. It was pouring rain and freezing cold. GARDS was based in this tiny room in the back of a sporting complex. I remember being greeted by a group of people, the majority of who were men hooked up to oxygen bottles. Vicki Hamilton and her Mum were there and they told me about what they did. I remember feeling both angry at the injustice of the system and enormously impressed by the commitment of this voluntary group, made up of relatives of people who had died or were terminally ill with asbestos related disease."

CHRISTA MOMOT, EXECUTIVE OFFICER, REICHSTEIN FOUNDATION

GARDS activities include offering ongoing support for victims and their families and the free provision of oxygen concentrators and other health related equipment.

"If we get a family referred to us, they can ring us 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and we can answer their calls. A group like GARDS is a banding together of people who understand. We understand what the carers go through and we understand what their children go through. Support for our group is growing all the time because we have so many people affected by this disease. People look for support and for information and we gather them as we go. We now have 150 financial members."

VICKI HAMILTON

"My involvement in this group means I have learnt so much. I've learnt what asbestos diseases do to people. It is not well known or talked about. But I've learnt how this disease affects everybody."

PAM NICHOLSON, TREASURER GARDS

"When my husband died, GARDS gave me such emotional support. But then I continued going along to the meetings because I believe in the idea of doing good works. I felt it was a worthwhile cause. I even went to the night meetings. That was a big thing for me because I had never usually gone out at night. I'm on the committee now and have become quite involved."

MARIE SMITH

"For me that support simply means going along to meetings, making friends with people, having a chat. But being an advocacy group means we do lots of other things as well."

DOROTHY ROBERTS, VICE PRESIDENT GARDS

GARDS was involved in the fight for compensation against asbestos manufacturer James Hardie. They also conduct training for medical and allied health students, undertake speaking engagements to raise consciousness on asbestos issues and have worked on a domestic safe removal kit.

"Our training program started off with just one session at the Clayton campus of Monash University, seven or eight years ago and now it has flourished. We spoke to 360 students in this last year. We work with a range of allied health students. Every year I find a candidate to talk about this disease. It's terrible really because they have such a short span of life left. The time they spend with these students is very precious. I always let the students know they are lucky to have these people sitting in front of them. They do it because they believe in the issue and they want others to understand. Students recognise it is not just a health issue. They get to understand what families go through."

VICKI HAMILTON

In 2008 after numerous calls from GARDS, Premier Brumby apologised to asbestos victims of the power industry in the Latrobe Valley.

"The day GARDS organised in the rose garden for the formal apology from the State Government was fantastic. I'm sure the people from the big smoke were impressed with what we had done. At times I think they have been afraid to confront the people of the Latrobe Valley because they thought we might yell at them. But of course no one did. We had an apology and that's all that mattered."

MARIE SMITH

Each year GARDS conducts a Memorial ceremony and an Asbestos Awareness Event in the rose garden at Morwell. GARDS regularly organise an information stand at the annual OHS representative conference in Worksafe Week, reaching workplace representatives from all over Victoria.

"We channel our anger and our sadness into something positive. The Reichstein Foundation understands that we need to have infrastructure to be able to bring a cause like this to the public's attention. Infrastructure means paying the rent and paying people to work on the issue. The first grant from Reichstein was wonderful. I remember asking, 'What happens if we don't achieve all our goals in twelve months?' They told us that they understood. They know that these things take time. People can now see what we have achieved. If it wasn't for that philanthropic support I don't know where we'd be. It was such a good feeling being able to accomplish those things we set out to do."

VICKI HAMILTON





1997

On any given day, over 900 young people are incarcerated in Australian juvenile correction facilities, according to a report released by the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme.

The young people interviewed for the report describe their problems in managing the transition from custody to community, as acute.

1997

Geoffrey Rush wins an Academy Award for Best Actor in Shine.

1999

Whitelion begins operations

Whitelion was established by Glenn Manton, Carlton footballer and volunteer role model, and Mark Watt, then Unit Manager at Parkville Youth Residential Centre. They both saw that many young people in the Youth Justice System were leaving only to come back again. They understood that many youth leaving Youth Justice had no employment prospects or positive peer group outside the system, and no positive adult role models to help them turn away from crime and destructive behaviour.

“What we needed to do was to create pathways for young people to meet and to connect with people. Relationships are the key. As young people get more connected with individuals, and businesses and the community, they become more supported, they feel better about themselves, they have more income, their life has more meaning and they are getting that day to day support that they really need.”

MARK WATT, CEO, WHITELION

Initially, Whitelion created a Sports Role Model Program for young people in custody and a Mentoring Program supporting young people in relationships with positive adults.

"I found champions. That's how I made it begin. My co-founder, Glen Manton, knew other AFL players who wanted to get involved. Suddenly we had some people interested in what we were doing. Once we had that we had access to resources and access to people. The mentors could walk the road with the young people."

MARK WATT

In 2000, Whitelion established an Employment Program linking young people to supportive corporate employers and work opportunities. Currently, the program is supported by many business partners that are proactive and committed to offering young people a brighter future by way of training and development, and providing them with jobs, earning real wages.

"Once Whitelion started the Employment Program, the employers already knew these kids had been locked up, they knew what the problem was, so they kept them on. Previously, there was always that fear, do I tell someone I have a criminal record or not? Normally, the young person decided not to tell, which was usually the worst thing because they would be found out. But employers were getting involved in this program because they wanted to help a young offender. They were more sympathetic. The young person could be open about their problems."

MARK WATT

The Employment Program works with young people to provide workplace training, resume development, interview skills, short and long term placement and assistance in finding ongoing employment.

"We work at getting young people into real jobs. It's not only placement but also support of the young person, support of their direct line manager, the CEO, and the company as a whole. This might be a young person who has never had a job. Sometimes they have never seen their parents work so they don't have any understanding of that work culture. But with this program we see self-esteem rise. We see positive stuff, and working in a custodial setting you get to see so few positive things."

LUKE MITCHELL, YOUTH WORKER AND TEAM LEADER, WHITELION

"Many of these kids don't know people with a job. It's about introducing them to people who are stable, who have proper jobs. It's a completely different experience and it just opens up their world."

MARK WATT



Whitelion has now developed a number of programs, designed specifically to create positive pathways for the young people they work with. Programs such as ROAR, a community based prevention program, targets at-risk children and young people from communities that statistically generate high numbers in the Youth Justice System. Mentoring Programs, the Young Women' Support Service and Bundji Bundji are tailored to engage and connect young people to others within the broader community, while Young Lions has been designed to develop leadership skills in young people who have been involved in other Whitelion programs.

"It's about spending time with young people, trying to impart wisdom, and helping them through everyday issues. We see young people blossom. Of course there are ups and downs, but the majority get into a normal mainstream life. Whitelion changes people."

LUKE MITCHELL

"You can see the power of the mentoring relationships. You can see kids lives change. You see the power of employment and what that does for kids and the people who want to help. They get so much out of it too."

MARK WATT

A number of philanthropic organisations and individuals have provided ongoing support for the work currently being done by Whitelion with at-risk young people.

"Philanthropy has been invaluable. What we are doing cannot be done without resources and support. The many trusts and foundations, and people like Genevieve Timmons from Portland House Foundation, are people who believe in you and back you, and give you the confidence and the opportunities to do what needs to be done. That's what makes the difference."

MARK WATT

"For this organisation philanthropic support has been the anchor. At Whitelion they work with a very difficult group to reach. Many of these kids get recycled. Members of their family have been in prison and that's what they know. Often that's all they know. Some people say, 'listen if you break the law, go to jail and rot.' But perhaps we need to say, 'these kids are deprived of their freedom for a time so that is their punishment.' What happens for them when they are on remand or when they come out of prison should involve some positive experiences. Whitelion not only reaches this group, they create inspired pathways."

GENEVIEVE TIMMONS, PHILANTHROPIC EXECUTIVE,
PORTLAND HOUSE FOUNDATION

Whitelion has grown substantially during its ten-year history. It now operates throughout regional Victoria, as well as in Tasmania and South Australia.

"In 1999 Whitelion was a bit like a school auxiliary that sells cakes to raise funds. We created this not-for-profit that we thought was going to be small. Obviously the need for our programs grew and the opportunities grew and here we are today. Yes, I've put a lot of energy in but I have seen it working. Whitelion is about promoting the idea of sharing resources and sharing opportunities."

MARK WATT

"Originally this organisation consisted of a couple of sports people doing activities with the kids. We would not have imagined that it would grow to be this large an organisation, with so many different roles. Part of the reason for our growth is our work practices. Here at Whitelion we form real relationships with people. I'm still in contact with a few young people who went through my programs in 2000 and 2001. One young woman, I went to her 21st, her engagement, and her wedding. Now she has one child and one on the way. She's married and is doing very normal things with her life. When I first met her she was involved with drug importation and was addicted to heroin. She's been off heroin and opiate treatment for years now. To see that is great. To think Whitelion played a small part in that is fantastic. The kids need to do the walk. It's their decisions, but you can help guide them along the way."

LUKE MITCHELL





1999

In October the Federal Government introduces the Temporary Protection Visa to deter asylum seekers, limiting their access to many services, while in November the Woomera Detention Centre is opened to accommodate the increasing number of asylum seekers arriving in Australia.

1999 - 2000

People escaping Iraq and Afghanistan account for 85% of asylum seekers arriving by boat.

2001

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre opens its doors

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) works directly with asylum seekers, both living in the community and in detention, to provide direct aid as they seek refuge in Australia. It is a community funded, independent, registered charity, working at the coalface with the most vulnerable and at-risk asylum seekers.

The ASRC commenced operations at a time when there was a hardening of Federal Government policy towards asylum seekers. The original objective centred on the provision of much-needed material aid.

"I was teaching at the time and my students were doing a subject called Community Work. We wanted to do something practical for clients so I had sent them off to find a placement in the community but nobody could find one. For a couple of years prior to this, I had been working with asylum seekers and I was becoming aware that there was nowhere in Melbourne where asylum seekers could get access to food. So I turned to my students and said, 'since you can't find a placement, what do you think about setting up a little food bank for asylum seekers?' I had a friend who had a tiny shop in Footscray that had come as part of the place he was renting. He was happy for us to use it. My students and I spent the first day debating what we could call it. We decided it was asylum seekers that we would be working with and we realised we were supplying a resource, namely food. Eight weeks from the date of that conversation, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre was born."

KON KARAPANAGIOTIDIS, CEO, ASRC

In its first nine months of operations there were no paid staff and the organisation was dependent on community good-will, volunteers and the untiring efforts of the current CEO, Kon Karapanagiotidis. During this time, people opposed to the government's stance on asylum seekers were keen to offer support and willingly volunteered their services to the organisation.

"I was in the first intake of volunteers back in September 2001. I felt there was a job to be done and it wasn't being done. I did filing and cleaning. I ran errands. I did anything I could do to help. In the beginning just a few people came, then word got out. Asylum seekers with needs were coming in droves. Then, people from all walks of life came to volunteer. If you could have seen us in that tiny shop front, we were practically sitting on top of each other. In one corner you'd have a social worker trying to provide links into the community for a family of asylum seekers. Then in another corner there might be a nurse helping a family with a health issue. There were always more and more people who needed our help."

MAREE SHELMEARDINE, ASRC VOLUNTEER,
CONVENOR, EDUCATION COMMITTEE, THE SIDNEY MYER FUND, DIRECTOR,
THE MYER FOUNDATION

As greater numbers of asylum seekers arrived at the ASRC seeking assistance, more diverse needs were identified and services were expanded accordingly.

"Yes, we started off as a little food bank, but then we had people coming with limited English, saying no one would teach them English, so we started English classes. There were hundreds of parents coming to us with sick children because no one would see them. So we started the very first health service for asylum seekers in Victoria. People needed lawyers, so we set up a legal service, and so it continued. We simply kept adding services as they were needed."

KON KARAPANAGIOTIDIS

In 2002, The Myer Foundation provided the ASRC's first grant, which supported the organisation's first funded position, the employment of Kon Karapanagiotidis, as CEO.

"We have been lucky to have had a number of wonderful philanthropic partners over the years but the very first one to support us was The Myer Foundation. That support was critical. It allowed me to keep the organisation afloat. It also sent a message to other philanthropists that said, here is a well-regarded trust that is backing us, so maybe this is an issue we can be looking at. That initial grant opened the gate for us."

KON KARAPANAGIOTIDIS



“That original support was about The Myer Foundation saying here is a person with a vision who is committed to his vision and his work. We wanted to support him, the organisation and that vision.”

KIRSTY ALLEN
PROGRAM MANAGER, THE MYER FOUNDATION
AND THE SIDNEY MYER FUND

Today the ASRC has close to 30 paid staff, is 700 volunteers strong and offers assistance to many thousands of asylum seekers in any given year. It is the largest provider of aid, advocacy and health services for asylum seekers in Australia. The organisation, now based in larger premises in West Melbourne, provides numerous services in support of asylum seekers including welfare and advocacy programs, employment programs, community development and capacity building programs as well as the ongoing distribution of material aid and support.

“Now we have a full time legal service representing 1500 people. We do case work. We have employment programs, English programs, home English tutoring, daily meals, food banks, recreation programs and community development programs. What has kept this Centre alive and growing? Two things - the good will of the community and philanthropy. The role of philanthropy is often to go where everyone else might fear to tread. The role of philanthropy is to be visionary. The role of philanthropy is to allow a grass roots movement to realise social change.”

KON KARAPANAGIOTIDIS

“Thank God there are philanthropic organisations that are prepared to stand up. Without their support the ASRC could not have become the organisation that it is today. Philanthropy means so much to that organisation. It pays for all the co-ordinators’ positions. Without those co-ordinators positions in place, to hold the structure, you cannot function. Philanthropy makes it all possible.”

MAREE SHELMEKDINE



"When I started this organisation it was to be based on some simple principles. It was to be independent. It would be political and it would stand for something. It would never turn people away. It would be based on empowerment. We have never abandoned those principles. I believe that people working together can make a difference. If you focus on what people need, do the best you can to meet that need, believe in people's capacity to contribute, you can do anything. You have to be visionary and you have to be idealistic. You have to think you can change the world."

KON KARAPANAGIOTIDIS

"In the beginning that work gave us all energy. It was difficult for all of us at times. I went home on many nights thinking I can't go back tomorrow. But then I would always realise how could I not go back? That place showed me how much can be done, how you can move from a position of powerlessness to a position of gaining power, slowly but surely, and create something, that in the beginning filled a gap, but now cannot be done without. It is an extraordinary organisation."

MAREE SHELMEKDINE





2002

Sydney woman Valerie Linow becomes the first member of the Stolen Generations to win compensation for her cruel treatment after authorities removed her from her family.

2002

ATSIC identifies more than 50 institutions in 18 countries worldwide, which acknowledge holding aboriginal remains in their collections. Indigenous leaders demand their return. Tradition maintains that until these remains are returned to the earth, with proper ceremony, ancestors cannot pass to the spirit world.

2002

A relationship begins between philanthropy and the Mildura Aboriginal Corporation (MAC)

The Mildura Aboriginal Corporation (MAC) has been operating since 1980. It provides services to Indigenous people across Victoria's northwest. Through consultation the organisation has identified the specific needs of children, families and others in the community and runs a number of successful programs focused on supporting those needs.

Prior to 2002, workers from MAC were not aware of philanthropy and the potential resources they could access. Early in that year, Christa Momot, Executive Officer from the Reichstein Foundation, made contact with the organisation. She knew that philanthropy received few applications from Indigenous communities in regional areas. She was keen to meet people working with their local community, to find out how philanthropy may be able to assist. So, when in Mildura for another site visit, she decided to call into MAC. This first, very informal meeting proved to be a watershed in the establishment of a lasting relationship between MAC, the Reichstein Foundation and eventually other philanthropic organisations.



"I met Christa Momot from the Reichstein Foundation in 2002, when she called in to say hello and find out about what we did here. Before I met Christa, we didn't even know about philanthropic organisations. Christa and I got talking about the issues we were having at the time. The central issue was the importance of being gazetted as an Aboriginal agency. We knew that being gazetted would give us a say as to what happened to our kids when they came under child protection. We wanted that role in our own community rather than it being the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) in Melbourne, who didn't know our community like we did, but under the Act had to be consulted about everything. Christa just arrived and started asking all the right questions. Here was someone who was willing to help us protect our kid's lives. I realised we could do something."

SALLY STEWART, FAMILY SERVICES CO-ORDINATOR, MAC

"I remember that first meeting. We had a cup of tea and sat in the boardroom and Sally told me about some of the issues she and the organisation were coming up against. The key issue centred on a young Indigenous girl from the local community, aged 15, who had recently died from a heroin overdose. The young girl had been a ward of the State. The Department of Human Services (DHS) had approved her to live with a non-Indigenous man in his late twenties, with extensive drug-use history. Sally explained that they had known of the young woman and had real concerns about her welfare. Understandably Sally was outraged. She couldn't accept that child protection services had done everything they could, because they hadn't. Sally recognised that the case reflected a symptom of MAC's other key issue, the importance of self-determination for the organisation."

CHRISTA MOMOT, EXECUTIVE OFFICER, THE REICHSTEIN FOUNDATION

The first stage in this new relationship saw the Reichstein Foundation offer assistance to MAC by arranging pro-bono legal advice, so that MAC might obtain information from DHS through FOI, pertaining to the case. The Reichstein Foundation also provided help in sourcing a donor to go with MAC to meet with DHS and talk through some of the issues. At the time the relationship between DHS and MAC was tense and charged with recrimination.

The Reichstein Foundation recognised the role that philanthropy could play in advocating on behalf of MAC to ensure that they were treated with respect and provided with answers to their many questions. It was a logical step on the path to MAC reaching their goal of self-determination. This was philanthropic assistance, focused on offering time, advice, and a willing ear, while sourcing much-needed information.

"When you get the trust of a community and they are honest with what they need, great things can happen. I think philanthropy needs to be an advocate and a companion. We should seek out. Good philanthropy can walk alongside a community and help to amplify their voice."

CHRISTA MOMOT, MAC



In 2004, the Reichstein Foundation provided the first financial assistance to MAC in support of Child Removal, the Last Resort. With this project, MAC aimed to identify child protection advocacy programs and service delivery models in Loddon Mallee, highlighting what worked well and why it worked. It centred on creating a model of care and protection that would take into account principles of self-determination. Only recently MAC was finally recognised when DHS gazetted them under the Children and Young Person's Act of 1989. Besides the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, MAC is the only other Indigenous organisation in Victoria to have this status.

While the relationship between MAC and the Reichstein Foundation has continued to grow other philanthropic organisations have also become involved and support many of the initiatives and programs MAC run. Recently, the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust funded Strong Kids, Strong Community, which documented the grave concerns MAC had expressed over many years about children and family services in Mildura and Robinvale, concerns that had never been acted upon by government. As well as bringing these concerns to light, the publication of this report clearly demonstrated philanthropy's willingness to stand shoulder to shoulder with MAC and advocate on their behalf.

"Recently I spoke to Chris Wootton from Helen Macpherson Smith Trust and he was more than happy to come up to Mildura to offer help with completing some funding applications. He was so positive and had an open ear throughout. Here at MAC we want to put strategic plans and visions for the future in place. I'm keen to work with people from philanthropy now because they seem willing to support organisations that have proven they can do things."

ADA PETERSON, MANAGER COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, MAC

In 2005, the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, the Reichstein Foundation and the R.E. Ross Trust partnered to fund an Indigenous Community Capacity Building program, involving workers from MAC.

"I attended the Capacity Building Program down in Melbourne. I was young and my manager thought it would be a good opportunity to boost some of my skills. It was once a fortnight for eleven weeks. There were four of us that went down. It was probably an 8-hour drive. Attending the program was hard at first. I was in a big city. I didn't know anyone. But once we got there it was really good. We did all sorts of activities. We did public speaking and learned about writing proposals. I'd never done anything like that before. It opened my eyes to a lot of opportunities that are out there. It made me realise there are people out there who are very willing to give money back to the community."

SIMONE SPENCER, CAPACITY BUILDING PARTICIPANT,
COORDINATOR STEP UP, MAC

This program saw those involved develop a new level of skill and confidence in initiating innovative programs for people in their community. Currently Step-Up, a program designed around the needs of young Indigenous women, is being run through MAC. This initiative is also being resourced and supported by philanthropy.

"During the Capacity Building Program they started hearing some of my ideas about youth work and youth programming. I can be a little shy and sometimes I don't like taking the lead on a lot of things. But the people there helped me out. We did a submission for Reichstein and we got funded for our Step Up program. Step Up is a youth empowerment and leadership program. It started because we realised there are lots of kids out there who want to be leaders. They have the potential but they just don't know how to go about it. I was born in Dareton, a little town just over the river from Mildura. I was very shy at school. I never stepped up or did anything to make myself stand out. I went along with everything. This program is about bringing young girls like me out of their shells. Even if one out of ten finds some success in getting out there, getting a job, putting in a funding submission on their own, doing something that they want to do, well that's where we want to go."

SIMONE SPENCER

Since 2002, philanthropy has aimed to assist MAC in all the work that they do and advocate on their behalf. By carefully nurturing a relationship, based on trust and open communication, positive outcomes have been realised.

"Here at MAC we are all people from the community. We know each other and we trust each other. We have programs to support people of all ages. Whether it's working with kids in the early years, or with the elders, we are all doing the same thing. We have different roles but essentially we all work in support of the community, trying to help everybody."

DONNA HUNT, TEAM LEADER EARLY YEARS PROGRAM, MAC





2002

The Gumbaynggir dictionary is published by the people of the Muurbay Aboriginal Language Centre in the hope of ensuring the language's long-term survival. While groups across NSW use the language, it is believed that only 10 people are fluent.

2003

Dr Bill Jonas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, launches his annual report describing the incarceration rates for Indigenous women a national shame.

2003

The Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership is established

The Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership was formed at a time when many people in the community were striving to achieve positive change for Indigenous people, while aiming to strengthen links between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. The goal of the Fellowship is to support and encourage exceptional people from Indigenous backgrounds to strengthen their communities and work with their young people to build positive futures.

"Paul Briggs is central to how the Fellowship started. Over the years Paul has attracted many people who have bought into the kind of vision that he has. A small group of us would meet informally and talk about how we could support his inspirational work. We were focused on backing innovation and new ways of thinking. We all knew we needed change. We recognised some of the frustrations amongst Indigenous people who were working with their communities. So many of our Indigenous leaders are heading up organisations or working for the public service. After all, they need an income. But their real social change work is happening outside those work hours. As a group, we realised that we could support and accelerate the work by investing in what was already being done. It made sense. We knew it was a good bet."

MAREE DAVIDSON, MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE,
FELLOWSHIP FOR INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP,
DAVIDSON CONSULTING



"A small band of people with a history of working with Indigenous Australians got together and decided that Indigenous leaders needed to be heard and supported. The Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership was designed to provide leaders with a salary, so they could continue the work that they were doing. This seemed to be the most valuable way to put our resources to work."

GENEVIEVE TIMMONS

GRANTS EXECUTIVE, PORTLAND HOUSE FOUNDATION

Since its establishment the Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership has supported Fellows, Paul Briggs AM and Daphne Yarram, and Emerging Leaders, Belinda Jakiel, Trevor Pearce, Lidia Thorpe and Roland Atkinson. The Fellowship provides support to selected Fellows for a period of five years, in order that they may pursue their visionary work. Assistance is provided to Emerging Leaders for a period of twelve months. This support provides an ideal vehicle to develop skills and networking opportunities, while offering practical assistance so that they can continue their work with Victorian communities.

"This Fellowship has allowed me to take steps I never would have taken previously. It allows other people to recognise that within the Aboriginal community there are strong leaders. The people responsible for the Fellowship saw that there was a huge gap in the public profile when it came to Aboriginal leadership in Victoria. They decided to do something about it. My part and my legacy in supporting that is to allow that sense of leadership to happen amongst the young ones I work with, down where I live."

DAPHNE YARRAM, INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP FELLOW

Since its inception funding and support has been received from across government, business and the philanthropic sector, as well as from individual donors. The Melbourne Community Foundation receives donations from committed individuals on the Fellowship's behalf. The Brotherhood of St Laurence offers assistance to the Management Committee and is the financial host of the Fellowship. A voluntary Management Committee provides executive support. This support includes meeting with the Fellows and Emerging Leaders, strengthening networks, advertising for nominations and setting up selection panels, providing in-kind resources and attracting the necessary support to secure the program for the foreseeable future.



Achievements to date have been significant. Paul Briggs AM, the first Fellow supported by the program and well known as the founding president of the Rumbalara Football- Netball Club in Northern Victoria, continues his exemplary work towards a vision for Indigenous Australians and the future of Australian society. Support from the Fellowship has allowed him to pursue his work in developing school retention programs for Indigenous children, develop relationships with mainstream employers to implement employment initiatives, promote Victorian Aboriginal leadership, continue his work with the First Nations Credit Union, as well as promote discussion amongst Indigenous leaders, government, non-government and the corporate sector.

Daphne Yarram, from Sale in Gippsland was awarded her Fellowship in 2006. She has continued her work in developing programs in support of Indigenous children, young people and women, encouraging them to embrace and understand their cultural identity.

"We do camps for our young people. Often for the girls, it's about body image and how we see ourselves. I know once you feel confident in your own skin, it enables you to be more active and participatory in a whole range of things. What we've discovered, especially for our young men, are the problems with how they see themselves, their place in the world and their connection to their community and culture. For a lot of them, they haven't been part of that sense of nurturing around their history and their ancestry. Camps provide them with an opportunity to find out about themselves and where they sit in all that. The Fellowship is critical because obtaining funding for that sort of activity is usually outside the guidelines. But taking kids and elders into the bush, to have a camp, and go on walking trails where someone grew up in the 30's and 40's- the benefit that will be provided to those kids and those elders is immeasurable."

DAPHNE YARRAM

Daphne is also involved in establishing a Victorian Indigenous Leadership Centre and a regional Indigenous Women's network in Gippsland.

"We all have unique gifts to make this world a better place. This Fellowship allows me to work with a range of young people, assist in their education, and support parents in their responsibilities. This Fellowship has allowed me to forge new relationships with a host of agencies, Indigenous and non- Indigenous, in order to reach common outcomes. It's about relationship building. That is a critical element."

DAPHNE YARRAM

Lidia Thorpe, also based in Gippsland, was recently selected as an Emerging Leader. Lidia is currently working in the health sector, assisting with the provision of preventative health services within the region.

"My current work is around preventative health, and how we get our people to have checks and screens for chronic illnesses before they become a problem. People in the community have been receptive. We had a huge walk to Lake Tyers to launch this initiative. It wasn't just about health prevention. It was also about reconciliation. We had close to 500 people there, including the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and some very high profile people. We walked to Lake Tyers because it was recognised by Aboriginal people who have walked there for the last 200 years. We had white T-shirts, printed with red and yellow and black saying, 'I've walked to Lake Tyers'. We timed it so that everyone walked in at the same time. When I saw that sea of T-shirts coming towards me, I just cried. There were so many special stories that came out of that day."

LIDIA THORPE, EMERGING LEADER

Lidia's selection as an Emerging Leader will provide her with opportunities to develop her skills and extend her knowledge and expertise in a range of areas.

"The Fellowship provides you with the opportunity to reflect upon what you want to do and where you want to go. I'm so excited and passionate about bringing my people together. I've seen the positive impact it has on my people. We want to celebrate so much. Yet we have designated workers for this, and this, and the other, but we don't have a designated worker that looks at things we can celebrate, that can run an event with expertise. That's what I want to do. I want to do something positive. The Fellowship has made this possible."

LIDIA THORPE





2003

The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that 3,958,300 people or 20% of the population have some form of disability.

2003

Figures from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare suggest that from 1981 to 2003 the number of disabled students attending school increased by 93%. Yet the same study showed that between 1988 and 2003 there was no significant increase in workforce participation by people with disabilities.

2003

Leadership Plus begins operations

Leadership Plus is a Victorian community organisation that promotes people with disabilities as leaders. Its focus is on their civic participation and inclusion in Australian society. The organisation was established as a result of many months of discussions held prior to its birth. These discussions centred upon creating an agenda for change in the disability sector.

"The history of the development of Leadership Plus is important in itself. The Stegley Foundation was a private family foundation, set up by the Stegley parents, who died before it was fully operational. Their children took it over with a commitment to running it for 25 years until they ran out of money, giving away larger amounts and using up the capital. In the lead up to the foundation's closure, the focus was on helping communities to directly advocate for themselves and supporting projects that would continue well beyond the foundation itself. At the end of the Stegley Foundation period, despite funding disability advocacy projects over a long period, there was a sense in the sector that people were becoming more marginalised and less supported to participate meaningfully in community life. The sector was fragmented, with little co-ordinated leadership to build an effective campaign for change."

TRUDY WYSE, MANAGER COMMUNITY AND DONOR SERVICES,
MELBOURNE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

"There was a round table in Melbourne, involving a number of interested stakeholders, where we talked about how we could progress the disability agenda in partnership with philanthropy and other organisations. We started talking about the prospect of putting strategies in place to develop leadership capacity for people with a disability."

BILL LAWLER, PROJECT OFFICER RURAL ACCESS, LATROBE COUNCIL

"Those involved in the discussions came up with this idea for a project, Getting Heard Getting Changed. It was about lobbying to achieve bi-partisan political recognition of the need for real change in the way disability programs were funded, which put people with disabilities in the lead role. They decided on a project around training people in the disability sector as leaders, so they might then become active lobbyists for the sector and put the case to government."

TRUDY WYSE

"They went looking for someone to head this idea up. They asked me to do it. They needed to do two things. They needed to create an agenda for change in disability and they needed to create a pool of leaders to achieve that agenda. But I recognised a problem. If you are successful in your leadership development work, you may or may not be successful with the agenda. Leaders will only lead on things that are important to them."

STEPHEN GIANNI, DIRECTOR, LEADERSHIP PLUS

"Stephen Gianni suggested that instead of training people with disabilities to be leaders to achieve change specifically within the disability sector, we should aim to create a highly regarded leadership program for people with disabilities, so that they might be leaders in the broader community and grow as leaders in whatever field they were interested in."

TRUDY WYSE

The 12-month leadership program offers participants the opportunity to talk to a cross-section of today's leaders in order that they may learn from their experiences. The program is accredited through RMIT (TAFE) and is delivered jointly with Leadership Plus.

"I was in the first group of students to complete the program. It ended up being one of the best things I have ever done. It made me get out of the back seat of the bus, go down to the front and start participating. Before the course I was chairperson of a couple of disability groups and participated in a couple of other bits and pieces. Now I seem to have taken on the responsibility of trying to advocate for a whole range of different issues in rural Victoria. Yes, I have a disability but I also know I have something to contribute. I can do it in a meaningful way."

GARRY HAMMER, LEADERSHIP PLUS PROGRAM PARTICIPANT



Leadership Plus develops the capacity of leaders with disabilities and promotes their leadership potential in a broad range of sectors.

"We've changed from what we were in the beginning to a point where we have developed ourselves as a learning organisation. We understand that people with disabilities can make better leaders because of their ability to understand vulnerability. In the story around leadership and disability it has usually been told as, 'people with disabilities can be leaders if they overcome their disability'. So in my case, if I can overcome my blindness I will be accepted as a leader. But we've discovered that if I can understand my vulnerabilities and what it is my blindness brings me, then I'll make a better leader."

STEPHEN GIANNI

"It's about leading by example. I try to talk to people and provide solutions. I want to sit with people on Boards that might be making decisions and try to influence the decision-making. After doing Leadership Plus, I applied to sit on the Western Catchment Management Authority as a community representative. I applied a couple of times to be there but it wasn't until I had done Leadership Plus, that I was allowed to join. I have now been there for four years as the deputy chairperson. From there, I've gone on to be the community representative from our region."

GARRY HAMMER

Leadership Plus also aims to continually develop as a leadership development organisation, and recognises the importance of consistent evaluation.

"We've invested in what we call leadership innovations, which is developed from our ongoing evaluation and analysis. This is about keeping our programs on the edge, and helping them to stay fresh and new. This is about encouraging the people involved in the programmatic side of things to think about how they can stay creative."

STEPHEN GIANNI

Leadership Plus is supported by a range of philanthropic foundations and trusts, enabling the organisation to continue their groundbreaking work.

"Philanthropy is absolutely fundamental. Out of that original dialogue between the community sector and philanthropy we had a group of people say that the reason we are being held back is a lack of leadership by people with disabilities. It was radical in its time. Back then, the idea that people with disabilities could play a role in changing Australia through their leadership, or through leadership activity was unheard of. If philanthropy hadn't said, 'this is worth testing, let's have a crack at this,' then no-one would have."

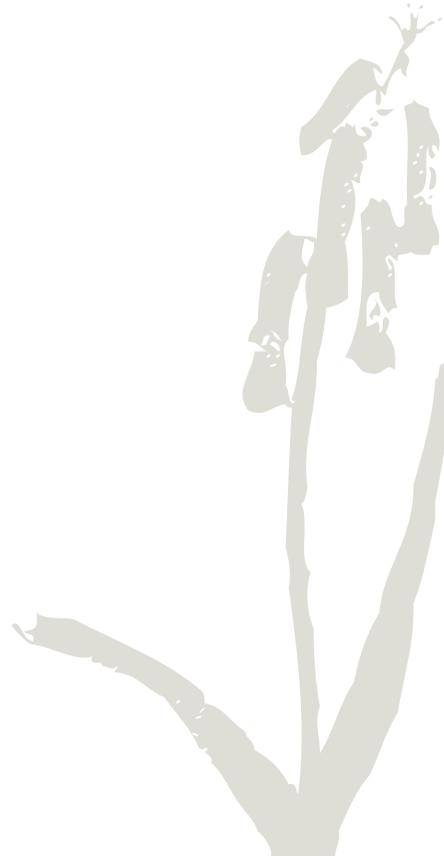
STEPHEN GIANNI

"If you look at me, whatever philanthropic money has been spent, I believe I am giving good value back to the community. I think I have grown as an individual and as a person. I feel more comfortable about having a disability. I guess it's about breaking down barriers and setting standards for those that follow. Philanthropy allows leadership for people with disabilities to become more viable. We need more people with disabilities represented because you can make such a big difference."

GARRY HAMMER

"We think that if philanthropic organisations want to give us money and want to engage with us in the work we do and encourage us to engage in other projects they fund, then our work will be supported, not just through money, but also through the relationships and the ongoing partnerships the work generates into the future."

STEPHEN GIANNI



2004

A survey of over 1600 people conducted in December 2004 found that 80% agreed with the proposition 'most Australians buy and consume far more than they need.'

2005

The year 2005 proved to be the hottest on record, both globally and in Australia.



2005

Victoria Naturally Alliance is established

The Victoria Naturally Alliance was created to work towards restoring the health of Victoria's biodiversity. After years of land clearance and habitat fragmentation, Victoria is the most cleared state in Australia. Nearly a third of its native animals and close to half of the native plants are extinct or threatened with extinction. Many of the valuable ecosystem services we take for granted, including clean water and soils, are also under threat.

"When I looked at the science and what it was telling me. I was horrified. I gathered people together from a range of organisations. We said to these people, this is what the data is showing, Victoria is in a biodiversity crisis. We need to work together. It took 5 minutes. They all said yes."

KAREN ALEXANDER

BIODIVERSITY CAMPAIGNER, VICTORIA NATURALLY ALLIANCE

The Alliance is comprised of nine major environment groups working with government and the community to solve this crisis. It is led by the Victorian National Parks Association (VNPA) and includes the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF), Environment Victoria, Greening Australia (Vic), The Wilderness Society, Trust for Nature, Bush Heritage Australia, Bird Observation and Conservation Australia and the Invasive Species Council.

"What we can achieve is so much bigger because we are many, working together. If you are going to make a partnership work it has to be real. You have to iron out the differences. Our member organisations and individuals have made a big commitment to the Alliance. It is a partnership and the funding organisations are part of that partnership."

CARRIE DEUTSCH
PROJECT LEADER, VICTORIA NATURALLY ALLIANCE

"The Alliance came to philanthropy and said, 'this is a major issue, this is how we want to run this and these are the sorts of funds that we need to make this work.' The project aims to get policy, collaborative programs, community leadership and resources in place to secure a long-term future for Victoria's native flora and fauna. There was a tangible outcome in terms of advocacy and influence. But one of the key things was that it involved a collection of environment groups that got together with a common goal. It represented all those positive elements of collaboration."

CHRIS WOOTTON, GRANTS EXECUTIVE, HELEN MACPHERSON SMITH TRUST

In 2006, the Alliance influenced the Victorian Government to undertake a White Paper on land and biodiversity, which will set the direction for Victorian Government policy and investment priorities for the next 20 to 50 years.

"It was exciting to get the Biodiversity White Paper up. The Alliance has come together to bring the message to decision makers. The planet is a living thing that is beautiful and precious. We have a responsibility to leave it that way. You have to care about the place you live in. You have to have that connection. Our focus is on connecting people and nature. Working together we can make a difference"

CARRIE DEUTSCH

The Alliance has been very effective in raising the profile of biodiversity issues. A website was launched in February 2008 and funding has also supported the development of a monthly e-bulletin for a growing number of subscribers.

"We currently have 1800 people who subscribe to our monthly e-bulletin. It keeps people up to date. We need to provide opportunities for people to be involved in conservation activities and also importantly in decision-making processes. It is about us as a society saying, 'Yes the environment is important. We will invest.'"

CARRIE DEUTSCH



The Victoria Naturally Alliance's program is built around four key themes: large scale nature conservation, solid knowledge and science, the promotion of strong leadership, and building awareness of Victoria's biodiversity crisis across the broader community. The Alliance recognises that in order to reverse the crisis, conservation efforts need to be carried out on a much larger scale, solutions need to be underpinned by the best available science and the Victorian community needs to be fully aware of what they can do to reverse the crisis.

"It's relationship building amongst people. For example, we might work with a local environment network. We help them to set their local issues in a statewide context, encouraging them to think big picture. We ask them to always convey that message when they are talking about their local issues. We've got materials to help people do it. Then a decision maker doesn't just hear about a planning issue here, or a clearing issue there, the decision makers hear it in that statewide context."

KAREN ALEXANDER

The Victoria Naturally Alliance is supporting a range of projects including the Habitat 141 landscape restoration program. Habitat 141, named for the 141st longitude line that parallels the Victoria-South Australia border, aims to restore rivers, wetlands and bushland and reconnect some of Victoria's most ecologically important parks and reserves.

"We also need a social awareness campaign, such as the black balloons campaign or the campaign against drink driving, to help people understand that Victoria's nature is under threat. The Alliance is pulling together what needs to be done. Then, it's about getting the recommendations enacted and getting the resources. I run our local land-care group. The people involved are inspirational. But the burn out rate is high. We cannot exploit the volunteer sector. We cannot expect it to recover 200 years of environmental debt. The government can leverage all sorts of money. If we invest in projects, it creates jobs. It creates intellectual capital. There is also the research component. It also creates a wonderful sense of place for us all."

KAREN ALEXANDER

Initial assistance from the R.E. Ross Trust led to the Alliance getting up and running. Over the years, a number of other philanthropic organisations and Alliance partners have contributed significant financial support to the project, mirroring that positive sense of collaboration and connectedness that motivates and guides the Alliance partners. In 2008, the Alliance received a new grant from the R. E. Ross Trust, bringing it full circle.

"I think it was to the credit of philanthropic organisations who have supported us to see and understand what we wanted to do. We were committed to working together on the problem but we couldn't tell them precisely how we were going to achieve this. It was such a great pleasure for us when they said they would fund it."

KAREN ALEXANDER

"Healthy environments and healthy communities go together. This project is about that very real link between the environment and people making a strategic difference to preserve the natural environment and the biodiversity of Victoria."

CHRIS WOOTTON



2006

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures indicate there are 3.7 million people in Australia aged 12 –24 years.

2006

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare figures suggest 9,276 twelve to seventeen year- olds are on care and protection orders, an increase of almost one-third since 1998.

2006

A partnership is established between the State Government and philanthropy in support of youth mentoring.

The Department of Planning and Community Development (formerly the Department for Victorian Communities) and the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust agreed to work together in support of youth mentoring. Both had a shared commitment to building the capacity of communities. They also understood the need to develop innovative responses in support of young people.

"It's about giving opportunities to our young people. The opportunity to access youth mentoring is really important. Youth mentoring is about providing a positive role model for a young person. Often a young person can be really marginalised in the community, by a whole range of factors. The research shows that they might be disengaged from school, they might be coming out of the Justice System, they might be in need of care, but they can all benefit from mentoring."

SARAH JOHNSON, METROPOLITAN MELBOURNE REGIONAL COORDINATOR
AND VICTORIAN YOUTH MENTORING ALLIANCE

"Youth mentoring means having a positive impact on a young person's life. The whole point of mentoring is that it is not driven by a particular goal. It's not about pushing people to get straight A's in school. It's about a volunteer youth mentor being involved in a young person's life, supporting them, encouraging them and having a positive influence."

FAYE WHITEHEAD,
SENIOR PROJECT OFFICER, OFFICE OF YOUTH

The partnership was born and saw the establishment of a regional co-ordination model across the state, an evaluation of the model, and support for the development and growth of the newly established Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance. The partnership grew out of conversations, representatives from government and philanthropy talking about finding new and positive ways to support young people.

"How did the relationship develop? I think it was a conversation that started the spark. Ms Liz Gillies, former Grants Executive from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust and Ms Gina Fiske, Programs Manager from the Office of Youth got talking about the quality of youth mentoring programs. They were keen to know what was happening out there, how they could support the people delivering the programs and how they could measure the outcomes. At the time there was momentum building around youth mentoring. Helen Macpherson Smith Trust had funded a number of programs over the years and we in the State Government were just getting into it. We were putting together a business case. We had developed what was called the expert's reference group, key players across business, government and youth mentoring, to develop and deliver the strategic framework. This is where the partnership was born. People nutting out what needed to happen."

FAYE WHITEHEAD

The objective of this partnership is to support the delivery of youth mentoring programs, through statewide regional coordination.

"A co-ordinated approach to youth mentoring is very important. Sometimes youth mentoring programs aren't well resourced in an organisation. Workers may feel isolated, particularly if they are in a rural community. They may find it difficult to locate resources or advice. This co-ordination project is about giving all those people a connection to a person who can be a conduit, someone who is able to connect them to other people working in the sector. It's about the simple things, like having one person who can say, 'Why don't you give this person a call? They are offering a youth mentoring program through their organisation and they just might be able to help.'"

FAYE WHITEHEAD

The Department of Planning and Community Development through the Office of Youth provided funding for coordination in three regions, Melbourne, Grampians, and Gippsland. The Helen Macpherson Smith Trust provided funding for the remaining three regions, North-East Victoria, Barwon South-West and Loddon Mallee. This coordinated approach ensures more effective delivery of existing mentoring programs. It also promotes resource and knowledge sharing.

TIME WILL TELL



"In my role as regional coordinator I get calls from people who might be looking at setting up a program, or from people who are running programs. They might be struggling with an issue and they might just want some advice. There are a number of factors to running a successful youth mentoring program, so to have the opportunity to speak to someone who has run programs before, means they can feel a lot better. People can tap into other resources and support one another."

SARAH JOHNSON

The six regional coordinators meet on a regular basis in order to share ideas, knowledge and experiences.

"As a group we agreed to the frequency of meetings and how we could work together. We decided on quarterly meetings and monthly teleconferences. We also set up a buddy system so people in regional areas could feel supported."

FAYE WHITEHEAD

"In the first twelve months, regional coordinators were understandably very focused on their own regions. At that stage their quarterly meetings were simply about describing what was happening in their region. But now we are seeing the six regional coordinators driving the agenda. They are making suggestions such as, 'you seem to be doing some good things around school-based mentoring, maybe you could come across to our region and run some seminars on that.' We are starting to see that kind of cross-pollination and shared learning coming to fruition."

CHRIS WOOTTON

GRANTS EXECUTIVE, HELEN MACPHERSON SMITH TRUST

Another component of the partnership sees the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust supporting Victoria University in undertaking an evaluation of the project.

"The team conducting the evaluation come to the regional coordinators quarterly meetings. We continue to get input as to evaluation design and methodology. We have had input into research questions. It's always been a partnership approach. We've tried to involve everybody."

FAYE WHITEHEAD

"The evaluation of mentoring programs worldwide generally has been quite limited, with most evidence being anecdotal only. Victoria University are doing the evaluation and working with the various coordinators as we are doing the project. It's a vital component so that we can better understand the effectiveness of youth mentoring programs."

CHRIS WOOTTON

The Helen Macpherson Smith Trust is also assisting the Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance (VYMA) to develop as the peak body for youth mentoring in Victoria.

"The Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance was originally set up as a response to people coming together and saying we need to support each other because we are struggling. Five years ago there was nothing like we have now. At the time, we knew what we were doing was quite unique, so that is why the Alliance originally started. From the Alliance came a lot of advocacy to get the regional coordination project happening. Prior to that, it was just lots of informal networking."

SARAH JOHNSON

"The Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance has gone from having a committee with a part time project officer to being a committee with a strategic plan and a full time CEO role. Hopefully, with the support of the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust and the State Government, it will give them enough time to develop as a peak body for youth mentoring with a long-term sustainable funding base."

CHRIS WOOTTON

The project represents a successful example of philanthropy working in partnership with Government to achieve the desired outcome, namely to promote and improve the quality of youth mentoring programs across Victoria.

"It's ideal when you have the State Government saying we want to do this and work with you. It's a real collaboration. We weren't sure what size or shape it was to take. We only knew the scope of it, but not the specific measurables. It's a great example of collaboration between a government and a philanthropic organisation."

CHRIS WOOTTON

"I can't think of any other example of government and philanthropy coming together to do something so positive. This whole initiative was very innovative. Obviously, we have different processes. Working out those different processes took time. It was about learning different ways of working. We accepted that we needed to be flexible and that we needed to adapt and change to suit the needs of the group we were trying to serve. But throughout the process, the relationship has been very positive."

FAYE WHITEHEAD

“Everything we know about mentoring is that if the match between a mentor and a young person goes for at least six months to a year, great outcomes can happen. Relationships take time. It’s about a person from the community putting their hand up and saying, yes I want to be more involved. It’s about friendship. It’s about a young person having someone in their lives who is encouraging them to grow. There is some fantastic stuff going on out there. If we are really serious about providing good mentoring for young people, in all the regions, we need to know what is going on across those regions. We need to know what are the innovations and where are the gaps. Essentially, that’s what this regional coordination project is all about.”

SARAH JOHNSON



2006

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) survey of Income and Housing indicates that 1 in every 2 first home-buyers and 1 in every 3 renters face housing stress. Housing stress, as defined by the ABS, is where a household is contributing 30% or more of gross income to mortgage or rental payments.

2006

ABS census data indicates that home ownership for 25 to 34 year-olds has fallen from 61% in 1981 to less than 48% in 2006



2007

The official launch of Australians for Affordable Housing

Australians for Affordable Housing was an advocacy campaign, which aimed to highlight issues around the lack of affordable housing for many Australians. The campaign's key objective was to achieve real policy solutions, improving outcomes for the most vulnerable members of the community.

While the official launch took place in 2007, its genesis can be traced back to several months earlier. A number of people representing a range of over 20 community organisations including the Brotherhood of St Laurence, the Victorian Council of Social Services, Melbourne Citymission, the Tenants Union Victoria, Hanover Welfare Services and Homeground Services, began working together, concerned at the declining levels of access to affordable housing.

"I had started work at the Tenant's Union in 2004 as a policy worker. It didn't take me long to realise that the concerns we had around low-income renters and their problems were part of a bigger housing crisis. There were always housing stories in the news but they were always written from the perspective of people who had housing: interest rates going up or down, what your suburb is worth. They were all the stories we saw. The dominant message was the house ownership message. That's all that politicians were hearing and that's all that policy makers were hearing. It became apparent that the people we were concerned about were in a progressively worse situation, at a time when the economy was very strong."

DAVID IMBER

AUSTRALIANS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING, OFFICIAL SPOKESPERSON

"I've been working in the area of inner-city homelessness and public housing for about 20 years. I currently head up an organisation focused on homelessness, housing, community development and social change. This organisation is a fairly new entity. I was watching us grow as an organisation, which is good on one hand, but which reflected the fact that we had completely failed to get homelessness and affordable housing on the political agenda."

STEPHEN NASH, CEO, HOMEGROUND SERVICES

The group recognised that without significant action from all levels of government the situation would continue to deteriorate. The housing situation for the homeless, renters or those struggling to buy their first home or manage a mortgage was at crisis point.

"We came to a decision that the only way we would see a difference in housing policy, the big policy changes that were needed, was that if we had politicians on a daily basis reading in their newspapers that ordinary Australians were very concerned about housing affordability. We needed something to happen. We rapidly came to the view that we needed to do something big."

DAVID IMBER

"As service providers we are very good at what we do, but we recognised we needed to get experts to advise us in how to get public awareness on the issue raised. I was hearing from people that unless you get a constant flow of media really exposing the issues, you might just end up reinforcing 'hard-luck' stereotypes around homelessness and renters."

STEPHEN NASH

The group understood that in order to achieve real success and ultimately change, they needed to run an extensive media campaign, which would apply ongoing pressure, forcing politicians and policy makers to act.

"We got some money from one of the big welfare agencies to fund some research. We knew we needed to do some sound research first. We needed to see what people really thought. What were the dominant messages around housing affordability? What were the triggers we could use in our campaign? We also developed a communications plan. We got a brief together. But from there we knew we needed external help from a media company. The problem we had was that despite having good support from the sector we found that most organisations had limited ability to contribute funds. The organisations involved receive money, which is tied to delivering services. We had resources in terms of people, but in terms of getting a budget for media support, we needed to break free."

DAVID IMBER

Philanthropic support provided the essential breakthrough, enabling the campaign to progress towards its goals and take on a national focus.

"We became aware of the project and liked its potential for widespread change. We didn't want to put money into the general research. We felt that was already being looked after by the interested parties. However we did want to do something. What we were concerned about was that there would be good quality research that may not go anywhere. So we talked to David Imber and suggested we would like to provide a grant for what happened after the research was done to ensure that the information was disseminated far and wide. It was about getting the information out to the wider community. I think it is vital for philanthropy to be proactive and to be that encouraging voice behind making change happen."

CLAIRE BRUNNER,
DONKEY WHEEL FOUNDATION

"The philanthropic support was really important. The grant from the Donkey Wheel Foundation enabled us to get more agencies involved and raise the majority of the funds we needed through the community services sector. We also got more philanthropic support after we were profiled in the Macro Melbourne document of the Melbourne Community Foundation. In fact, I think I was in a taxi going to the airport for the launch when I got a phone call from one of the Melbourne Community Foundation donors. We were always living on that precipice."

DAVID IMBER

"Having philanthropy involved was crucial. We could recruit a communications group to design and roll out the campaign. Instead of thinking we had all the answers, they put forward a methodology that made sense, allowing a small group like ours to politicise the issue nationally. It was one of those windows where we could actually get organised and get a strong voice out there amongst it."

STEPHEN NASH

"A very important element we had from philanthropy was trust. We had real trust from Donkey Wheel Foundation and the Melbourne Community Foundation, trust that we wouldn't let them down, trust that we would get an outcome, without numerous reporting expectations and meetings. It was important because it spurred us on to deliver a better campaign. They knew that we needed to get on and do what we were doing."

DAVID IMBER

The Australians for Affordable Housing campaign proved to be a major success with housing affordability becoming one of the central issues in the 2007 Federal election.

"We did an incredible amount. I did hundreds of interviews and spoke to a host of different people. We made a difference. The campaign created a lot of positive energy and got results. Despite the fact that the housing crisis has not disappeared for people, there is now a process with government taking it somewhere. There is a national Rental Affordability Scheme, which is something we argued for. There is now significantly more investment in public and community housing. There is a Housing Minister. There is a national Housing Supply Council. The sorts of things we were seeking are happening or have happened. As a sector, we are going to have to continue to ensure the government delivers in this area but as a campaign we are happy with what was achieved."

DAVID IMBER

"This campaign achieved such positive outcomes for a group in the community who are traditionally disadvantaged. It also led to broader systemic change. Australians for Affordable Housing was a significant part of the heightened consciousness around housing affordability at the time."

TRUDY WYSE, MANAGER COMMUNITY AND DONOR SERVICES
MELBOURNE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

"Funding advocacy can have results. Sometimes, some people in philanthropy can find funding advocacy difficult. In many ways, it might be easier to fund a building or a worker that provides a certain service for a certain number of hours per week. But I really think that if we didn't have the support from philanthropy and we didn't have this campaign then we would not have achieved \$2 billion dollars worth of government commitments. That is such a good return on investment."

DAVID IMBER



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The Nanjing Project

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Paris Aristotle AM, *Director, Foundation House*

Susanne West, *Coordinator Public Affairs, Foundation House*

John Gibson, *Founding Chair, Committee of Management Foundation House, current President Refugee Council of Australia*

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