

*Australian Refugee Volunteers*  
**Annual Report**  
**2014-2015**



**A R V**

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## **Committee members for the Australian Refugee Volunteers**

The Committee members for the Australian Refugee Volunteers (ARV) at any time since the end of the preceding financial year are:

Presidents: Kieran Brown and Tessa Matthews

Vice Presidents: Lauren Frost and Cassandra Braslin

Secretary: Nandita Kataria

Treasurer: Milena Arsenijevic

Kids Program In-Charge: Jamie Lee, Christine Ma, Terrina Fernando and Nina Lay

Teens Program In-Charge: Sarah Waters, Claudia Cummins, Ellis Cowan and Tessa Flaherty

Charity Program In-Charge: Branka Repaja, Amy Kleindenst and Isabelle King

Graduation Program In-Charge: Terrina Fernando

Media: Jessica Brennan and Louisa Tiley

Recruitment and Training: Angela Mifusd, Adam Keane and Sean Nunan

Grants: Kiri Libbesson

## **Principal Activities**

The principal activities of the Association during the course of the financial year were centered in providing social services to those kids and families from asylum seeker backgrounds who need support integrating into the Australian community. There were no other significant changes in the nature of the activities of the Association during the year.

## **Presidents' Report**

It has been a fantastic year for the Australian Refugee Volunteers (ARV), with an increase in both the number of children and volunteers in our programs. This year we have continued to explore how ARV can best serve the needs of our clients.

The most notable expansion of ARV's efforts has been the formation of a 'Graduation' program. This program will help our most developed and well-adjusted clients move on to the next stage of their lives. The Graduation program will involve one-on-one mentoring sessions, as well as career and future planning, with the assistance of some of our most dedicated volunteers.

Our school holiday camps were a great success. A number of new clients and volunteers attended, with many of the children being drawn out of their shells more effectively than ever before in this safe, home-away-from-home environment. Our regular 'Kids' and 'Teens' programs have enabled our younger clients to flourish and bloom over the past 12 months, and we have seen clear improvements in their confidence and mental wellbeing. The clients involved in our 'Charity' program have spent the year setting a great example for our younger children, spending their days giving back to the community in a variety of ways.

Finally, the biggest achievement of the year has been the growth in our program management and administrative teams, and the sheer quality and degree of hard work put in by the volunteers involved. Both our 'Treasury' and 'Grants' teams have had a number of new members come on-board, who have made invaluable contributions to the administration workload associated with monitoring our assets, and improved our ability to reach out to other organizations to obtain financial grants. The dedication of the volunteers coordinating our programs, and their ability to maintain the engagement of our wider volunteer body, has unquestionably contributed to ARV's growth this year.

With such a strong team behind ARV, we have even higher hopes for 2015-2016, and are confident in our ability to strive for increased engagement with both our families and our volunteers.

Kieran Brown and Tessa Matthews  
Co-Presidents

## **Vice-Presidents' Report**

2015 was a fantastic year for ARV, and a very fulfilling one as Co-VP's.

The Vice-President position at ARV is divided into overseeing of programs (Lauren), and community liaison/policies and procedures (Cassandra).

### **Program Oversight - Lauren**

In terms of overseeing our Programs, the job was made relatively easier due to the caliber of our program In-Charge volunteers. We hit some unexpected hurdles due to last-minute drop and substitutions within our administrative teams due to familial commitments and health reasons. However, the strength and dedication of the volunteers in our administrative teams made navigating these hurdles as straightforward as possible, and we are incredibly proud of our committee members.

Overseeing programs also involved putting together our school holiday camp in April, which was hands-down one of the most successful events of our calendar year. The smiles we were privy to, the blooming confidence and the genuine happiness evident in our clients during this three-day program really emphasized to us the importance of what we do at ARV.

### **Community Liaison - Cassandra**

This year, community engagement was focused on building our relationship with the community organisation, Rotaract, (Sydney City branch). This wonderful group organised and funded a mid-year program for our younger children, treating them to an amazingly fun and educational day at Featherdale Wildlife Park. They have also committed to funding and coordinating yearly programs for ARV, for which we are incredibly grateful. Rotaract have a fantastic pool of talented and passionate volunteers who are a great resource for us - taking part in our monthly programs, helping to promote our organisation, and keeping an eye out for grant and fundraising opportunities etc. We were very pleased to be invited to speak at one of their monthly meetings, and to put faces to the names that do so much for us. Next year we aim to reach out to more community organisations to form valuable partnerships.

### **Policy and Procedures - Cassandra**

This year we chose to overhaul our current administrative systems, as we felt they were not accurately representing all that ARV has grown to offer. We started with new role guides for all ARV administrative volunteers, in order to clearly define the various roles & responsibilities. Cassandra then moved onto policies covering more technologically based areas such as emails, mobile phone usage and social media, as these are constantly evolving. Our first aid policies became much more involved with the benefit of medical knowledge from our committee members, and an environmental policy was created to reflect ARV's environmental awareness. Next year ARV will continue to expand and refine its policies to ensure they are in line with who we are as an organisation, and how we can best achieve our goals.

Here's to another amazing year of ARV!

Lauren Frost and Cassandra Braslin  
Co-Vice Presidents

### **Kids Program Report**

2015 was yet another fantastic year of exciting progress for the Kids Program. Our major focus for the year was to strengthen the educational and developmental aspects of the program. It was our absolute privilege to watch our clients grow throughout the year as they developed their self-identity, self-esteem and emotional maturity.

Another equally important goal for us was to ensure our clients understood that this program was theirs and that they had a say in it. Lastly, one of our biggest privileges was in witnessing the bonds between our volunteers and clients and the resulting positive outcomes. And, as an additional bonus, we were able to welcome two new clients, and graduate four existing clients to Teens!

Over the past year, we strengthened the educational and developmental aspects of the program through delivering a calendar of activities which reflected this aim. We witnessed our clients' creativity, problem-solving ability and persistence as they worked hard to overcome challenges during a kite-making workshop. We viewed acts of compassion as one of our younger clients handed his goggles to one of his peers during our swimming program when he realised that the other needed them more. Our clients and volunteers enjoyed trying new things, such as experiencing their first visit to the Maritime Museum, a new and

innovative martial arts workshop, and trying on and playing with the lion costumes and instruments during a Chinese New Year cultural workshop. On numerous occasions they worked together towards a common goal, such as when sharing ingredients during our cooking program, or materials during our foam painting activity. As a result, we witnessed personal development in our clients over the year - greater confidence, social maturity and a greater willingness to embrace new ideas.

We kick-started the 2015 calendar year with a Rules Workshop and asked our clients to brainstorm rules for the program. Amongst suggestions such as 'being respectful' and 'taking turns', we saw even bolder ideas emerge. One of our clients stood up in front of her peers and stated that at the Kids Program, everyone should have the confidence to express their ideas – even when they could be wrong. This was exceptionally powerful and courageous coming from an eleven-year-old who, barely a year ago, was consistently expressing self-doubt in herself.

Throughout the year, we also invited our clients to suggest ideas for program activities. One particularly memorable suggestion was to use program days to create and sell items, with a view to fundraising for ARV, or donate to other charities. It seems clear that, although they are young, our clients are already developing strong social consciences, and are eager to give back to their community.

Volunteers are the bread and butter of ARV, and we are fortunate to have a band of passionate, dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers, who have played instrumental roles in our clients' progress. This has been particularly evident in one of our younger boys who had typically been particularly difficult to handle. However, we were excited and touched to watch this young man develop a relationship centered in trust with one of our volunteers, leading him to becoming more respectful, polite and appreciative. And we have certainly witnessed similar changes in a number of our other clients, largely in part due to the relationship they have built with their buddies. Most notably, however, the benefits to our client-volunteer relationships are not a one-way stream – one of the highlights of the year was one of our young clients determinedly teaching one of our volunteers how to swim!

2015 has been an amazing year of progress, new experiences and strengthened relationships. The essence of the Kids Program is one of embracing new learnings, moments of gratitude, and feelings of inclusiveness and belonging, both for volunteers and clients alike. As one year ends, another begins, and we look forward to taking the Kids Program to the next level in the coming year.

Terrina Fernando, Jamie Lee, Christine Ma and Nina Lay  
Kids Program In-Charge

## **Teens Program Report**

2015 has been a big year for the ARV Teens Program, with new faces, new friendships and plenty of exciting and challenging programs for our teens to get involved in.

This year the Teens Program has welcomed a number of teenagers who have recently been referred to ARV. We've also been lucky enough to be joined by a few familiar faces who have graduated from the Kids Program. Sadly, we've also had to say goodbye to a couple of

our longstanding Teens group members who have moved onto the Charity Program, but are proud of their remarkable maturity and enthusiasm to give back to the community!

The last 12 months have seen a wide range of exciting activities take place, from go-karting and mosaic making, to bushwalking and set design, and everything in between. We try to offer a variety of active or creative programs to suit all our teens' tastes and to provide opportunity for the development of new skills and interests. For example, in our May program we undertook an archery lesson at Liverpool City Archers, assisted by a few girls who were the state youth champions in the sport. It was great for our teens to be taught by these young female experts in the field, and it encouraged a number of the girls in particular to consider taking up the sport.

In the warmer months we've enjoyed making the most of the great outdoors. Bushwalking and kayaking in the National Park was a hit amongst teens and volunteers alike, and the teens had a blast learning to surf at Maroubra Beach. These experiences are also a fun way for the teens to gain a greater appreciation and understanding of the Australian environment. As the majority of our teens live in the far western suburbs of Sydney, having a day at the beach is an exhilarating, rare occurrence for many of them, and also provides a safe and supervised opportunity to learn more about the hazards of the surf.

This year we have built on our 2013-2014 initiative, and now include group discussion and peer support activities in all of our monthly programs. These developmental activities provide a supportive environment in which teens can consider and find solutions for difficult issues, with volunteer buddies acting as mentors when needed. This year we have run a range of activities that have focused on tough topics such as bullying, anger management and discrimination. We've worked through these issues by using hypothetical scenarios and brainstorming sessions, to great effect! All of us have been impressed by the teens' thoughtful contributions and willingness to assist others in the group.

Sadly this year we've lost a few of our committed admin team members to overseas adventures. Despite this, we've been lucky enough to have enthusiastic, hard-working volunteers on hand, willing to hone their organizational and leadership skills by stepping up into the admin team positions. As preparation for the 2015-2016 program begins, we can't wait to continue this year's great work and plan new and exciting experiences for our teens to enjoy next year!

Claudia Cummins  
Teens Program In-Charge

## **Charity Program Report**

The Charity program had a great year in 2015, allowing the clients to learn about, and volunteer with, a plethora of different organisations, for different causes. The program's primary focus is to allow our clients to increase their skill set and engage with the community. Each event is designed to foster our clients' sense of awareness regarding social issues that affect the broader community, whilst empowering them through providing opportunities for them to make a valuable contribution to the community. This year's engagement ranged from providing companionship in nursing homes, learning about animal welfare and fundraising for the RSPCA, engaging in environmental sustainability, and cooking food for vulnerable members within our community. The charitable work undertaken

by our clients enabled personal growth, whilst allowing them to make a positive contribution within both their local and broader communities.

A memorable program was our 'Clean Up Australia Day' program, in which clients collected rubbish near the Parramatta River in Silverwater. With the aim of creating a stimulating and enjoyable day for our clients, the clean-up was transformed into a scavenger hunt, and we were impressed by the enthusiastic manner in which our clients engaged in the competition. Prior to the scavenger hunt we had a game of trivia, focusing on the concept of 'sustainability', in order to enhance knowledge of the importance of recycling, environmental awareness and the overall importance of correct disposal of waste. The result was an interactive and fun event that enhanced our clients' understanding of environmental sustainability, whilst creating a tangible benefit to the local community. The success of the event can be attributed to a well organised and balanced program, which fostered both the personal growth and social awareness of our clients.

Our program has welcomed the addition of two new clients from the Teens program, and one from the Kids program. All three have settled in well to the program and show great enthusiasm for the charity work. Two of our clients will be entering the Graduation program in 2016, having matured through the Charity program.

The Charity program's various events have allowed the clients to showcase and build on their separate interests and talents, and 2014-2015 was a great year for learning more about our clients and catering events towards their interests. It has been wonderful to watch how each client has their own method of engaging in the activities at hand – taking initiative and using their skills to ensure the charity work turns out as a success. Whatever the activity at hand our clients put in 110%.

It isn't all charity work though! Our clients unwind after the charity work and have fun with their friends and mentors. Bubble soccer, trampolining, basketball coaching, movies and rock climbing were just some of the activities partaken in. Whilst these activities catered towards encouraging physical activity and teamwork amongst our clients, cognitive activities including trivia and brainteasers, allowed for intellectual growth. Our clients enjoy engaging in craft activities, and use regular opportunities to practice and enhance their creativity through balloon tying and face painting.

We have worked to create a strong and dedicated admin team who has worked hard with the level of commitment required to ensure that we create the best programs possible for our clients. After such a fantastic year and with a strong team, we hope to create even better programs for 2015-2016.

Isabelle King  
Charity Program In-Charge

## **Grants Team Report**

2014-15 saw the commencement of ARV's new Grants Team, which grew from zero to eight members over the course of eight months. The Team is led by Kiri Libbesson, the Grants Manager, and is overseen by Vice President Lauren Frost.



The Grants Team is responsible for applying for corporate, philanthropic and government grant schemes, in order to obtain the money necessary to run each of the programs with children. The process involves a number of steps, including scouting for available and appropriate grants, assigning grants to individual team members to prepare applications, and reviewing and submitting completed applications.

Administrative preparation was necessary in establishing the Grants Team, such as collating and developing or revising various resources to be used in assisting the new team members to learn about grant applications. Each member of the Grants Team has developed their skills in writing applications.

Between February to June 2015, the Grants Team submitted 15 grant applications, to corporate and philanthropic grant schemes.

No grants were received by ARV in the 2014-2015 financial year (although some of the applications submitted during that period were ultimately successful later).

Kiri Libbesson  
Grants Manager

## **Media Team Report**

The past year has been an exciting year for ARV's media and communications. In April 2015 we were recruited as ARV's first ever media team in order to streamline our digital media communications. This included developing a social media plan, managing the website, helping to formulate the crowdfunding campaign and drafting various other written documents.

In terms of social media, a planning calendar is now created a month in advance. This helps to ensure consistency and quality of posting. Followers of the Facebook page have grown by 135% since the implementation of this system. Additionally, the ARV website ([www.arvolunteers.org](http://www.arvolunteers.org)) is now regularly updated with recent news and events, ensuring that our volunteers and other stakeholders can easily keep track of our schedule.

A major element of ARV's recent media has revolved around our crowdfunding campaign, which will be launched in the 2015-2016 financial year, to raise funds for the ARV Camps Programs. The welcoming, safe environment of these camps encourages every child involved to develop self-confidence and make long lasting friendships. The campaign has taken much background research, and recruitment of talent (to produce a short film about our clients) prior to launch, and the Media team has played an integral part in the planning of this initiative, drafting all written communications associated with the campaign. We are incredibly excited to see where this initiative goes!

Finally, ARV has received some great media attention this year. In June 2015 The Daily Telegraph wrote an article titled 'Grant helps Australian Refugee Volunteers to take kids in community detention on excursions' which detailed the positive role of ARV in the lives of refugee and asylum seeker children. We hope to see many such articles in the near future.

Growing our social media presence and updating the website regularly are vital for recruiting new volunteers and ensuring we receive positive media coverage. With the addition of two new team members to handle our media, we have been able to improve and refine ARV's media and communications. We are both looking forward to further developing the quality and reach of our public communication over the next year.

Louisa Tiley and Jessica Brennan  
Media and Communications Managers

## **Graduation Program Report**

Over this past year we have been in the process of putting together a brand new program – the Graduation Program. The need for the Graduation Program arose when our older teens and young adults expressed their difficulties moving forward into their adulthood, when having to transition out of ARV in an abrupt manner.

The Graduation Program aims to provide increased career opportunities for our older teen/young adult clients. It is a goal-oriented, mentoring service, which works to recognise the short-term and longer-term goals of the clients, and provide practical assistance to better meet those goals in the future. Our clients are supported through a strengths-based approach, which aims to recognize and build on their existing strengths and support them on their self-directed personal journeys.

We will offer a case-management service that aims to provide increased opportunities for the development of independence and self-autonomy, increasing connections to the community, development of interpersonal skills, and vocational and career development. We are offering a six month program of 12 sessions which will look at several aspects of wellbeing and balanced living including self-esteem, personal and social developments, communication, money management and getting work ready. Part of this program also includes work placement opportunities for our client also.

We are due to launch this program mid-November 2015. It is anticipated that we will have three clients initially, with plans to expand the program in the near future. We have currently secured partnerships with two organizations who are offering work placements for our clients.

Terrina Fernando  
Graduation Program In-Charge

## **Recruitment and Training Report**

Training and Recruitment had another successful year. Our goals were two fold - firstly to promote ARV and increase the number of volunteers aligned to ARV's mission, and secondly to train and prepare new recruits for their volunteer role.

We welcomed 177 new volunteers to ARV in 2014-2015, all undergoing training and being interviewed. The majority of new volunteers joined ARV as a result of positive experiences from friends, which is a testament to the impact ARV has on both the Clients and Volunteers. Promoting ARV on University websites has also proven to be a successful strategy to recruiting new volunteers. New volunteers steadily increased throughout the year, which may be as a result of the increased media attention on refugees.

To ensure our training and recruitment remained relevant and appropriate to meet the needs of our volunteers and also adhered to compliance, the Training content was updated as well as including more interactive elements to the training session.

Angela Mifsud  
Training Program In-Charge

## Treasury Report

This year, Treasury collaborated with ARV's Executive, Program and Administrative teams to build a financially sustainable and secure organization for the future, so that ARV can continue to do what it does best. Through decisive management and accountability procedures, refinement of program costs and increased donations, we achieved an operational surplus of \$8,172. This surplus will be reinvested back into ARV, so that we may continue to serve the community and expand the impact of the organisation.

Over the course of the year, Treasury had two key priorities: increasing efficiency and increasing accountability. We focused our efforts on establishing streamlined processes for budgeting and recordkeeping and made changes to improve time and cost efficiency such as moving from cheque to EFT reimbursements, increasing authorization for purchases and refining program budget tracking. We also developed a suite of policies and procedure manuals to standardize treasury processes now and into the future.

Other key changes between the 2013-2014 financial year (FY 13-14) and the 2014-2015 financial year (FY 14-15) as reflected our financial statement include:

- An increase in administrative costs due to the structural and administrative changes attributed to the rebranding of ALIV as ARV.
- Tax returned was exceptional due to becoming up to date with Business Activity Statements (BAS) lodgments.
- Program costs were lower in this period due to the closing of the Behavioral Development and Homework programs, as well as revision of program budget structure.
- Phone costs were diminished as inefficient supplier contracts were ceased.
- Funds were transferred from inactive accounts and credit cards that were no longer in use, in preparation for their closure in FY 15-16.

We are grateful for the continuing support of our philanthropic donor base, with special mention to the Lowenden Foundation for making a significant charitable donation to ARV, as well as the contributions made by our volunteers and general public. The financial support received has strengthened the capacity and capability of ARV to deliver high quality programs and camps, and contributed towards volunteer development and back-office capacity-building.

Treasury will explore further opportunities to expand the organization's operations for the year 2015-16, including establishing a new accounting systems, creating appropriate financial models to better track expenditure and further advise ARV's internal teams on best practice financial and governance procedures to achieve wider organization goals for FY 15 -16.

## Financial Statement

### Annual Summary: Operating Costs

<b><u>Revenues</u></b>	<b><u>2014-15</u></b>	<b><u>2013-2014</u></b>
<b>Grant</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Donation</b>	\$5,940	\$0
<b>Membership</b>	\$4,779	\$4,060
<b>Fundraising</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Returned Cheque</b>	\$2,558	\$0
<b>Other Deposit</b>	\$5,140	\$7,371
<b>Interest</b>	\$84	\$243
<b>Tax Returned</b>	\$20,370	\$0
<b>Total Revenue</b>	\$38,871	\$11,675
<b><u>Expenses</u></b>		
<b>Kids / Parents</b>	\$12,824	\$25,993
<b>Volunteer</b>	\$2,681	\$3,802
<b>Equipment</b>	\$764	\$714
<b>Administration</b>	\$10,721	\$7,561
<b>Transport</b>	\$207	\$83
<b>Food</b>	\$2,714	\$1,881
<b>Capital Purchases</b>	\$0	\$0
<b>Phone</b>	\$555	\$6,016
<b>Bank Fees</b>	\$209	\$274
<b>Australia Post Load and Go Card Fees</b>	\$13	\$0
<b>Other</b>	\$11	\$12,237
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$30,699	\$58,560

Annual Summary: Operating Statement:

<b>Operating Statement</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>Balance Sheet</b>	<b>2014-2015</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>
<b>Cont.</b>					
<b>Results from Operating Activities</b>	\$8,172	\$-46,975	<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Profit/Loss for the period</b>	\$8,172	-\$46,975	Cash and Cash equivalents	\$39,807.97	\$31,707.51
<b>Retained earnings at beginning of the year</b>	\$31,707.51	\$70,356.53	Total current assets	\$39,807.97	\$31,707.51
<b>Retained earnings at End of the year</b>	\$39,807.97	\$31,707.51	GST Receivables	\$0	\$20,370
			Other non-current assets	\$0	\$0
			Total non-current assets	\$0	\$0
			Total Assets	\$39,807.97	\$31,707.51
			<b>Liabilities</b>		
			Total Current Liabilities	\$0	\$0
			Total Non-Current Liabilities	\$0	\$0
			Total Liabilities	\$0	\$0
			Net Assets	\$39,807.97	\$31,707.51
			<b>Equity</b>		
			Retained Earnings	\$39,807.97	\$31,707.51
			Total Equity	\$39,807.97	\$31,707.51

Milena Arsenijevic  
Treasurer

-End Report-