



# QPASTT

Queensland program of assistance  
to survivors of torture and trauma



*The Hope to Heal*

## AGM REPORT 2016 - 2017



# QPASTT IS COMMITTED TO SPEAKING OUT AGAINST TORTURE

*“Even before interrogation, I was brutally beaten. Afterwards, each question was systematically accompanied by punches, kicks, cigarette burns. Each of my replies provoked new blows. After the interrogation they hung me up, my body was suspended like a sandbag, defenceless against the kicks and punches of my interrogators. They entertained themselves by putting out their cigarettes on my body, which they used like an ashtray. They scored my back all over with the point of a knife”*

East Timorese survivor, quoted in *“I am Timorese”*

## The Facts

Three decades after the U.N. Convention Against Torture imposed measures to eradicate the practice, torture still happens in 141 countries. Torture brings suffering - not just to the immediate victims, but it also damages and destroys families and communities. Whole societies can be impacted by the corrosive effects of torture, especially where it goes unpunished. Abuses generate fear and hatred and trigger cycles of revenge and violence.

Between June and September 2016, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) surveyed more than 17,000 people across 16 countries on their perceptions of war and International Humanitarian Law. Results of this survey include:

- **46% of Americans believed it was acceptable to torture enemy combatants, with just 30% opposed to the practice and another 24% unsure or unwilling to answer;**
- **Only Nigeria and Israel recorded higher rates of support for torturing captured enemy fighters, with 70% and 50% endorsement, respectively;**
- **21% of Australians think that it is okay to torture captured soldiers (including Australian soldiers) and 23% were undecided;**
- **Australian men are more likely than women to agree that captured soldiers can be tortured to obtain information. Overall, 24% of men think Australian soldiers can be tortured as opposed to 18% of women;**
- **More Australians (23%) believed that torturing a captured soldier is acceptable than people from Syria (20%), Russia (20%), China (15%) and South Sudan (18%); and**
- **People aged under 20 or over 65 are less likely to support torture.**

**“I was so afraid I would never be able to talk to anyone about what had happened. I felt so alone. But then you came and you listened without fear or judgement and you didn’t turn away.” – FASSTT Agency Client**



# DIVERSITY FROM WITHIN QPASTT

QPASTT has a diverse and skilled, multicultural staff base with 70% of staff born overseas and representing more than 35 different ethnic communities. It is this multicultural base that is the essence of QPASTT and adds immense value to the work we do.

Everything is informed by our strong commitment to understanding, supporting and helping our client groups through our wraparound service delivery model: individual and family counselling sessions for adults, young people, families and children; therapeutic group work; capacity building; training and community development





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## GOVERNANCE

On behalf of all QPASTT Staff, we thank the Management Committee for their clear and consistent governance and their ongoing support. The time, energy and care that they dedicate to this organisation is very much appreciated by both clients and workers.



Professor Keithia Wilson  
*President/ Executive Committee Member*



Mr. Luis Melgar  
*Treasurer/ Executive Committee Member*



Dr. Lyndall Kleinschmidt  
*Secretary/ Executive Committee Member*



Mr. Robin Lonergan  
*Executive Committee Member*



Ms. Sharon Orapeleng  
*Committee Member*



Mr. Fraser Power  
*Committee Member*



Dr. Ian Mannion  
*Committee Member*



Dr. Pamela Douglas  
*Committee Member*



Mr Isaac Gong  
*Committee Member (part)*



Mr. Joseph Nyandwi  
*Committee Member*



Mr. Raziq Qasimi  
*Committee Member*



## LEADERSHIP TEAM

The work involved in managing an organisation of QPASTT's size is considerable. Each member of the QPASTT Leadership Team works hard to ensure the quality of the service we deliver remains consistently high.

Tracy Worrall  
*Chief Executive*



Stephanie Long  
*Direct Services Manager*



Amy Burkett  
*Clinical Services Manager (part)*



Lois Whiteman  
*Clinical Services Manager*



Liz Gordon  
*Clinical Services Manager (part)*



Vickie Pastellas  
*Manager, People and Systems*



Megan Leitz  
*Service Development Manager*



Vedrana Jovicic  
*Coordinator, Counselling Services Team*



Fernanda Torresi  
*Manager, Community Relationships  
and Capacity Building*



Farah Suleman  
*Coordinator, Asylum Seeker Support Team*



Naomi Brown  
*Coordinator, Children & Youth Team (part)*



Nilissa Livingstone  
*Coordinator, Regional Services Team*





# From the President QPASTT Management Committee

## *It is with great pleasure that I present the 2016/2017 President's Report on behalf of the Management Committee of QPASTT*

As you would know, QPASTT was established to provide recovery services for people from a refugee background who have experienced oppression, displacement, torture and trauma. Along with our FASSTT sister services in all of the other States, we are funded as part of Australia's commitment to the International Convention against Torture, providing recovery and rehabilitation services to survivors of torture and trauma. We strive to do this within culturally sensitive individual, family and community frameworks. We also strive to advocate against the use of torture, and in response to the outcomes of a recent International survey by the Red Cross, we are increasing our advocacy efforts in this area.

Between June and September 2016, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) surveyed more than 17,000 people across 16 countries on their perceptions of war and International Humanitarian Law. The results of this survey reflect the increasingly complex and difficult times in which we live, with almost half (46%) of Americans believing it is acceptable to torture enemy combatants, and just 30% opposed to the practice, and one in five (21%) Australians believing that it is okay to torture captured soldiers (including Australian soldiers), and 23% undecided.

It continues to be concerning that once again the international statistics show an increase over the last year in the number of people forced to seek protection outside of their own country, with 65.6 million individuals forcibly displaced worldwide. There are now 22.5 million refugees and 10 million stateless people seeking resettlement. In 2016/2017, 55% of all refugees came from only three countries: South Sudan (1.4 million); Afghanistan (2.5 million); and Syria (5.5 million). Importantly, over half of these are under the age of 18.

Only 189,000 of these people were resettled in the last year, with Australia resettling 24,490 refugees (including nearly 12,000 from the Syrian/Iraqi conflict). We welcome an increase to the annual Australian humanitarian intake from 13,750 to 18,750 by 2018/2019, and QPASTT will continue to provide services to those in need.

In 2016 /2017, QPASTT has worked with 1,826 people from 68 different countries, with the top ten being:

Syria  
Afghanistan

Iran  
Iraq

Somalia  
Congo

Burma  
Sri Lanka

Eritrea  
Ethiopia



In this last year QPASTT has provided a wide range of sector enabling services including:

**Services to Refugee Survivors** working with 1826 survivors of torture and other traumatic experiences from over 68 different countries of origin, with 1280 individuals receiving one-on-one support, and 353 group sessions conducted for 4,094 participants;

**Refugee Sector Education and Training** for over 1,600 refugee service providers to build their capacity to work more effectively with people from refugee backgrounds;

**School Consultancy Services** working in partnership with 91 schools from Brisbane South/North, Logan City, City of Ipswich, Toowoomba, Townsville, Cairns and Rockhampton; and

**Education Sector Training and Information Sessions** with in-depth training sessions conducted for over 314 teachers including school administration staff and support workers, and more general information sessions to another 300 teachers and administration staff across the State.

### Queensland-wide

Services have been provided across 14 locations in Queensland including:

- Cairns
- Townsville
- Rockhampton
- Biloela
- Toowoomba
- Gatton
- Gold Coast
- Logan
- Goodna
- Inala
- Ipswich
- Brisbane City and
- Brisbane North (two locations).



**Core Purpose** QPASTT continues to remain focused on its core purpose: supporting individuals, families and communities whose experiences have profound and long-term impact on their health and wellbeing. The resilience of individuals and families in surviving and making it to Australia demonstrates their strength and capacity to overcome the negative impact of such experiences. The provision of appropriate and timely support and recovery-focused services enables survivors to positively contribute not just to the Australian community, but also to Australian workplaces and the economy.

**Staff** First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge and thank our staff for making QPASTT such a dynamic and responsive organisation. The policy environment in which the organisation operates continues to be complex and difficult. The dedication and expertise of the people within the organisation cannot be understated and are greatly appreciated. QPASTT has a diverse and skilled, multicultural staff base with 70% of staff born overseas, and representing more than 35 different ethnic communities. The Committee appreciates the extraordinary efforts of all staff in contributing to the work of the organisation. We appreciate the contributions of staff who have moved on during the year, and wish you the best in your new endeavours. To staff who have joined the organisation in the last year, I welcome you and hope you enjoy your time at QPASTT – I hope that you will find the organisation to be welcoming and supportive.

**Management Team** I would particularly like to thank the management team including the Director, Tracy Worrall, the Senior Managers, Stephanie Long, Megan Leitz, Lois Whiteman, Amy Burkett, Fernanda Torresi



and Vickie Pastellas; and the Team Co-ordinators, Nilissa Livingstone, Farah Suleman, Vedrana Jovicic, and Naomi Brown. They have all worked extremely hard under challenging circumstances and continue to provide strong, inspirational leadership and support.

**Management Committee** As I reflect on the years that I have been involved with QPASTT, I am inspired by the commitment and energy of those around me - clients, staff and other Management Committee members. I would like to acknowledge the support and dedication of all of the Management Committee members as we have moved through the year: Luis Melgar, Lyndall Kleinschmidt, Robin Lonergan, Ian Mannion, Fraser Power, Pam Douglas, Raziq Qasimi, Joseph Nyandwi and Sharon Orapeleng. Together you form a committed group of people with a diverse range of backgrounds, skills and experience, and you have been a pleasure to work with. I would particularly like to acknowledge and thank the community members on the Management Committee – you keep us connected to the issues of refugee families and play a vital role in ensuring that QPASTT remains responsive and relevant to our refugee families, individuals and communities. I would also like to acknowledge Sharon who is leaving us at this AGM and thank her for her contribution to the organisation and the Committee.

**Refugee Communities** Lastly, and most importantly, on behalf of QPASTT I would also like to thank members of the refugee communities with whom we work in partnership. We appreciate the involvement of community members and leaders in our service, and without your participation in the design and implementation of our services, we would not be as effective. We look forward to continuing to work with you in the coming year.

As always, it is a privilege to be part of the wonderful organisation that is QPASTT and to witness the positive contribution this service makes to the lives of people who have fled persecution and war to seek safety in Australia every year. We look forward to another challenging and productive year working together.

***Professor Keithia Wilson***  
***President***











# From the Treasurer

## *I am pleased to present the Treasurer's Report for 2016/17.*

In the 2016/17 year, QPASTT received just over \$6 million dollars in funding and the organisation has remained in a solid financial position. The agency is able to meet all of its financial obligations and commitments.

QPASTT received funding from a range of different sources during the year with the majority coming from Commonwealth Government agencies, followed by the Queensland Government. Our core funding for the work that we undertake with refugee survivors continues to come from the Australian Department of Health and the Queensland Health Department.

QPASTT ended the financial year in a sound financial position with sufficient reserves to cover all outstanding liabilities. The breakdown of expenses is in line with previous years, with employee expenses representing the majority of expenditure and other major outlays, including interpreters and costs associated

with maintaining a regional presence across Queensland.

I would like to acknowledge the expertise and skills of Mal Bowatta and the Administration Team in managing the financial affairs of QPASTT. Without their assistance and dedication, my job would be much harder. I would also like to thank the members of the Management Committee, the Chief Executive and all the staff for their support throughout the year. The efforts of all staff in ensuring that quality services are able to be delivered within budget is appreciated.

I would like to draw your attention to the 2016/17 Audited Financial Statements prepared by our Auditors, Haywards Chartered Accountants. The Financial Statements have been prepared in accordance with applicable accounting standards and reflect the financial position of the Organisation for the year ended 30 June 2017.

The report is unqualified and I recommend it to you for your approval.

In closing, I would like to propose to keep Haywards Chartered Accountants as external Auditors for the forthcoming financial year and would like to move a motion to nominate them for 2017/2018.

Thank you  
Luis Melgar  
Treasurer



**Mal Bowatta**  
*Business & Finance Officer*



# From the Chief Executive

*I feel immensely privileged to be the Chief Executive of QPASTT and to work with the communities, clients, staff and management committee members that make QPASTT such a remarkable service.*

As I noted in the last annual report, change seems constant in our environment and once again this year has been marked by changes in funding, changes in policy and changes in the political environment in which we operate. As always these changes bring both positive outcomes and challenges and it is up to us to make the most of the possibilities that these changes bring for both the organisation and our clients.

QPASTT remains committed to working within a human rights framework in order to deliver services which enable recovery from state sanctioned violence and conflict. Our work with survivors strongly reinforces why all forms of torture and other cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment is unacceptable and needs to be prohibited. We remain dedicated to the provision of recovery services for refugee survivors of torture and trauma and will continue to advocate for access to appropriate services for our client group.

In December 2016, I had the opportunity to attend the international assembly and symposium of our international peak body, the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims in Mexico. The opportunity to attend meetings like this reminds us how lucky we are to have the resources, expertise and capacity to undertake the work that we do. Many of our sister services internationally are struggling with extremely limited resources, unstable political environments and work in constant danger.

The work we do and the context in which we operate is one that continues to challenge us all. The fine line between being an advocate for our clients, in particular those seeking asylum and protection, and becoming an activist continues to challenge us. It is often difficult to bear witness to people's pain and not take public action to condemn this. We do, however, take up opportunities to influence public discourse around these issues whenever we can.

As an organisation that works with clients across a spectrum of life experiences, it is a privilege to be part of people's lives through these stages of their settlement and recovery. The experiences, resilience and stories of so many of our clients continue to inspire and motivate me. The last few years have seen an increase in the number of children and young people attending the service. Children and



young people under the age of 25 now make up just under 50% of QPASTT clients. This reflects the increasing number of children and young people being displaced across the world. We also continue to see an increase in the severity of client presentations with anxiety, traumatic grief, traumatic stress, family and interpersonal difficulties rating highly in the severe and moderate range. This is likely to be an outcome of the high numbers of clients now presenting from the Syrian/Iraqi intake along with clients coming out of long-term asylum seeking processes.



The complexity of the environment in which we work drives us to find innovative and flexible solutions, something, which QPASTT does well and will hopefully continue to do well into the future. It is this that makes us a relevant and important organisation both for clients and for staff but also to the broader Australian community. One of the strengths of QPASTT is that it has been able to remain focused on its core work rather than broaden its focus in order to grow for the sake of growth. This has enabled us to concentrate on developing the skills that we need and foster links with the communities that we work with.

In doing this, however, I am aware of the challenges and stresses staff face in working in this area and I thank you for your dedication and commitment. I am proud of the professionalism, commitment and flexibility shown by all staff in the organisation as they maintain a high level of professional services to clients. I am continually impressed with the staff at QPASTT – their commitment and dedication to service delivery, creating innovative ways to meet needs and obtain positive outcomes for clients. I thank them for their willingness to undertake increasingly complex and challenging work and their patience and commitment to the organisation as we face constant change.

The Senior Management Team at QPASTT are fabulous, dedicated and hardworking. Lois, Steph, Megan, Vickie, Fernanda, Amy and Liz, you all provide a high level of leadership, stability, direction and support to the organisation and without you, the organisation would not be able to maintain the depth and professionalism of its service delivery to clients. I thank you for your knowledge, support and care, not only of the organisation but also for me personally.

The management team at QPASTT is comprised of senior managers and team co-ordinators – all hard working and committed leaders. This team tackles issues facing QPASTT with robust debate, humour and patience. While this may not always be comfortable, it is always appreciated. I would like to thank

you all; without your support and input, this position would be much more difficult. Again, this year we have continued to support the National FASSTT Co-ordinator and it is a pleasure to have Paula Peterson in this role. QPASTT is actively involved in the National FASSTT Network and I have found Paula's support invaluable.

Finally, I would also like to thank the members of the Management Committee. It is easy to undervalue the contribution provided by Management Committee members to organisations, but the willingness of QPASTT's Management Committee members to contribute of their time and skills is very much appreciated. They are a wonderful group of committed, hardworking and caring people who have supported me and the organisation throughout the year. Their role in ensuring the organisation is well governed cannot be underestimated.

As a service primarily concerned with supporting people and communities to recover from their experiences and to be active and contributing members of their communities and society, I would like to thank our clients and the communities we work with for their ongoing support. This is a vital, vibrant and compelling area of work and your contribution to it is as important as it is appreciated.







# Direct Services



*QPASTT has had a very busy and productive year. We have continued our very well established client service delivery model and we have added new*

Our staffing has expanded across all teams as a result of increased arrivals from the Syrian Iraqi conflict as well as other humanitarian entrants. We now have children, youth and family counsellors in Logan and Woolloongabba and have really benefitted from the additional Group Worker and bi-cultural support from the Community Relationships and Capacity Building Team. Across the 2016/2017 year, management turned its attention to the recruitment, induction and capacity building of new staff, as well as the coordination of increased teams. *The result of this work has been fruitful for clients as well as for QPASTT, as we have found that having a diverse staff enriches the resources and skills of the organisation as a whole.* We have also very successfully introduced a new point of contact and engagement for newly arrived humanitarian entrants with our *Brief Intake and Assessment Practitioner*, Ana Pocrnjic stepped into this role after a number of years as a Counsellor/Advocate at QPASTT.

As the BIA Practitioner, Ana has contacted a vast number of new arrivals within the first 3 or 4 months of their arrival to introduce QPASTT and offer to complete a brief assessment of the individual's and family's needs. We have been doing this work in collaboration with MDA and it is proving to be a useful early introduction to our specialist support. Additionally, and in response to a request for assistance from Loganlea TAFE, Ana has joined members of the Community Relationships and Capacity Building Team to deliver introductory sessions and a drop-in clinic to large numbers of AMEP students enrolled at this TAFE campus. This has proven to be a really useful means of providing some additional support to a large cohort of students that was struggling with the stressors of settlement as well as managing

trauma symptoms from their pre-arrival experiences. The continuing conflict accompanied by periods of escalation in the Syrian Iraqi region has been particularly distressing for many of the newly arriving

communities. We have seen a slow and steady increase in TPV and SHEV visa grants to some of our long term asylum seeker clients and we are extremely pleased that we can provide continuing support for these clients in a period where they become ineligible for most other social support services. We have explored ways of increasing our contact with TPV and SHEV holders as this protection application process continues and we are preparing for this work to expand over the coming year. Notwithstanding the numerous challenges of providing trauma recovery support to people seeking asylum in the current political and legal climate, seeing people that have been forced to experience prolonged detention and delays in visa processing finally being awarded protection visas has been very positive. Imminent funding changes have been part of our forward planning with the end of the 2016/2017 financial year seeing the cessation of our current funds for the Youth Voice project and our Nexus Suicide



**Prevention Program.** QPASTT has a commitment to continue both of these programs of work as they are extremely valuable to young people from refugee backgrounds and are an integral part of our wrap around youth engagement and trauma recovery model. Identification and securing of ongoing funds for both programs remains a priority for the Senior Management Team. We are pleased to work with MDA on the Migrant Youth (MY) Vision collaboration, which will see a conclusion to this pilot funding from the Department of Social Services in just 12 months' time. The MY Vision collaboration has enabled QPASTT to expand Homework Club to Inala PCYC, and it has also allowed us to deliver our Ucan2 program to a second TAFE campus and high school in the Brisbane region. QPASTT has continued to host social work students completing industry placements in both the Children and Youth and Community Relationships and Capacity Building teams. While we only have the capacity to support a limited number of placements, we frequently find this to be a rewarding experience for both the students, staff and clients. We have also just commenced a creative industry project with the Griffith University Film School and will be working with film students to create a short promotional film about QPASTT activities. We look forward to the outcomes of this project next year.

Additionally, we have been approached by a number of researchers from universities across Australia to participate in various research projects. After reviewing the ethics, methodology, objectives and benefits of each project, we have encouraged staff to participate in those, which are appropriate to our work and experience. The experiences, the mental health and the wellbeing of refugee and asylum seekers will long attract the attention of the research community. As such, we have refined our policy and engagement around research to ensure the benefit to our clients as well as the wider refugee community. Finally, QPASTT had a number of staff presenting at the inaugural Australian and New Zealand Refugee Trauma Recovery in Resettlement Conference in Sydney in March 2017. This was a great opportunity for us to showcase our skills and expertise. We are excitedly preparing to host the second Refugee Trauma Recovery in Resettlement Conference in 2019.







# Community Relationships and Capacity Building

*This has been another interesting and challenging year, full of learning opportunities and positive experiences for the Community Relationships and Capacity Building Team.*

We have had some changes to the team: we welcomed Zainab for 3 months while she helped out with group work; and when Letitia Casagrande moved into her student placement to finish her Masters in Social Work, we welcomed Jessica Edwards into the team. Throughout this year, we

have continued to strengthen our relationships with established communities and we have built strong and trusting relationships with new and emerging communities.

In partnership with MDA, we continue to run the **Community Leaders Dinner**. This year the topics included: Talking Multiculturalism; Youth Justice and Mental Health in Emerging Communities and our regular End of Year Forum. These forums attracted more than 430 participants overall, and very high level keynote speakers – namely, the Attorney General and Minister for Justice, and the Minister for Training and Skills. Some feedback from the leaders:





*"I like how every community had a purpose to work towards. It spreads a message of unity and togetherness";*

*(There was a) "feeling of hope and abundant support in the room"; I enjoyed networking and having the opportunity to hear presentations from various organisations on diverse issues";*

*"I liked the food, networking and being under one roof with other leaders".*

This year we also had a dinner at Queensland Parliament House. The seats for this dinner were raffled at the End of Year Forum and six leaders (3 men and 3 women) won places. This dinner was hosted by the State Member for Sunnybank, Peter Russo MP and included a tour of Parliament and the opportunity to be part of the Parliament proceedings. In addition, it has been very positive working alongside the **Somali Community**. Overall, around sixty community members took part in the Women's Sewing group, Building Stronger Families group and the Family in Cultural Transition (FICT) group. Throughout the year, they shared their stories and skills, they learned new skills, and they talked about the challenges they faced and ways to deal with some of those challenges.

The women from the sewing group were very happy to be able to sew some useful items such as aprons and padded pots holders. During these workshops the women also spent time talking about the challenges that the settlement journey had brought them and some experiences from their past. The conversations, reflections and psycho-education that take place during groups has the effect of supporting the wellbeing of each participant as well as their families.

To run these groups, we work in collaboration with Richlands East State School and South West TAFE, Inala.

In response to a request from South West TAFE Inala, QPASTT coordinated and facilitated a series of workshops for new arrivals. The aim of these workshops was to increase the students' knowledge and understanding of Australian systems, culture and way of life to enable better settlement outcomes and to support mental wellbeing. The topics in each workshop were actually generated by the students themselves. The Representatives from various government departments and local service providers presented to the group about relevant topics such as healthy eating practices, Centrelink, public housing, and primary and tertiary public systems. This series of workshops was attended by 20 students from **Somali, Iranian, Iraqi, Eritrean and South Sudanese backgrounds**.



TAFE staff reported that they received very positive feedback from students regarding the program, and they observed that the program improved student attendance markedly. Another positive impact of the sessions was that they increased the capacity of the presenters to understand the challenges that newly arrived people encounter and reflect on things that they can do to improve their services. We would like to thank all the service providers that were part of the presentations in each session of this program.

We also ran a group for the parents of newly arrived Syrian and Iraqi students attending St Paul's Catholic School in Woodridge. QPASTT was asked to deliver some workshops around the expectations of the Australian school system. Sessions provided space for parenting conversations and discussions around the impact of settlement. This then had the effect of generating a better understanding of some of the behaviours that their children were presenting with at school. The sessions were also aimed at empowering the parents to communicate their worries to the school, thereby improving communication. A total of 24 parents attended these workshops which were facilitated by QPASTT staff. A representative of the school was present during the sessions to respond to issues that were directly related to the school and to listen to the parents' concerns.

In response to regional needs, the team supported the delivery of a Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) program for the Burmese Community in Cairns and an Afghan Women's group in Toowoomba (more information about these groups in the regional report).

The *Support, Skill and Connect* program supports social inclusion, reflects on economic participation, increases connection and supports wellbeing in general. This program runs in collaboration with South Bank TAFE. In the first official program, there were a total of 19 students and 18 volunteers. The students were from Congolese, Iraqi, Bhutanese, Tibetan, Iranian, Somalian, Afghani, Ethiopian and Eritrean backgrounds. According to the students, the most useful aspect of the program was receiving valuable information about life in Australia and Australian culture, meeting new people, improving English language proficiency, and learning skills to enhance mental health and well-being. The support provided by QPASTT staff and the volunteers was valued by all. As stated by one of the students, *"the program was good for my brain and my heart"* Feedback from volunteers was that they found the program useful, that it had increased their knowledge of the refugee experience and it allowed them to better connect with people from refugee backgrounds. They reported that they had learnt as much from the participants as they were able to give in exchange.

The teacher reported that it was very positive listening to the students sharing their experiences and that she was grateful for having the opportunity to learn some appropriate techniques to support students during class, especially those who had been triggered by past experiences.

The following is some further feedback given by the participants: *"It was good to get to know more about the other students"; "I enjoy talking about my culture and let the others know about it"; "Here we could talk about some things that we never talk about like mental problems. It was good"*.

By the end of the program, fourteen students felt more connected and reported an increase in the number of people in Australia who were important to them and who were from a cultural/ethnic background other than





their own. It was believed that connecting with people outside regular networks would increase connectedness and also have the effect of increasing the possibility of finding work.

This program has been evaluated by Associate Professor Ignacio Correa-Velez from the School of Public Health and Social Work, QUT.

The team has also supported the 2016 National African Australian Awards, Africa Day, Multicultural Youth Day, Harmony Day; International Women's Day (AAWA), participated in the White Ribbon Breakfast, UN Women's International Women's Day Breakfast and Annual QP Multi-faith Dinner. We have continued to acknowledge the dates and participate in the events that are important for the numerous communities that we work alongside such as AGMs, festivals, funerals, fundraisers, football tournaments, etc.

This year we ran three Family Fun Days. We had over 206 participants including children, carers and parents originally from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Burma, Sri Lanka, Liberia, Burundi, Sudan and South Sudan. QPASTT Family Fun Days are an important opportunity for families to come together, have fun, relax, play, have delicious food and become familiar with facilities in the area. We would like to thank Ginger Sport and Brisbane City Council for partnering with us to deliver these activities.

QPASTT has offered assistance and support to 91 schools across Queensland. Fourteen of these schools received staff training in response to their requests; 7 have had information sessions delivered about the [QPASTT School Support Program](#) and 59 have completed the audit to assess their level of support for students and families of refugee background. The training sessions were attended by 314 participants including teachers, administration staff and other school support workers, and the information sessions were attended by over 300 participants.

*QPASTT delivers training with the aim of building the capacity of other service providers to support people from a refugee background in the best way possible.* In this financial year, QPASTT delivered over 60 training sessions across Queensland. Through these sessions we have been able to reach more than 1,500 participants.

QPASTT has continued to support a project led by the Youth Advocacy Centre (YAC), which builds the capacity of young lawyers from a refugee background to support their community members to understand the court system and its challenges. The Queensland African Community Council (QACC) is also a partner in this project and has connected the young lawyers with YAC.

QPASTT staff have also run several information sessions and presented at conferences. We collect evaluations and feedback from participants attending training and use this to improve the quality of our training delivery.

This year a large number of staff attended and about 10 presented at the 1st Australia and New Zealand Refugee Trauma Recovery in Resettlement Conference held in Sydney in March. This involved 3 days of workshops, plenaries, panel discussions and networking.

We continue to attend and participate in several network meetings to build the capacity of other service providers in relation to our services and our clients' needs. We also build the capacity of our internal staff in relation to referral



pathways and other relevant and culturally appropriate services for our client group. We participated in consultations and submitted a number of papers advocating for the needs of the community that we work alongside and supported community representatives to do this for themselves.



All the work described in this report is only possible with the strong collaboration of the communities that we work alongside and the stakeholders that we partner with.

*As the African proverb says "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."*

The funding bodies for these activities and programs are PASTT, CAMS and Queensland Health.







# Clinical Support at QPASTT

*The past year has been one of significant change in the Clinical Services management of QPASTT.*

## Clinical Supervision

In early 2017, Liz Gordon stepped away from her position as Clinical Services Manager in order to focus on clinical supervision and working with children. She continues to bring her vast amount of experience and skills to therapeutic work here in the role of Clinical Supervisor. Lois Whiteman, who has been with QPASTT for many years, is also making changes to her work with a view to retirement in the next few years. With this in mind, QPASTT took the decision to employ Amy Burkett as the new full time Clinical Services Manager, to work with Lois. This has allowed the body of experience and knowledge Lois and Liz have developed through their work together at QPASTT to be handed over, as well as providing the opportunity for fresh energy and ideas to be brought to the position.

With the increase in QPASTT's size over the past year, it became necessary to create a new team called the 'Professional Supervision Team'. In this team, Lois and Amy are joined by Liz Gordon and Tanya Van Bael, the two part time clinical supervisors, and Erica Fernandez and Kathleen McBride, the two part time Advanced Practitioners (professional Supervision). Important jobs undertaken recently by this team were structuring policies, communication pathways and support to ensure that clinical supervision and governance remains a priority and of a high standard.

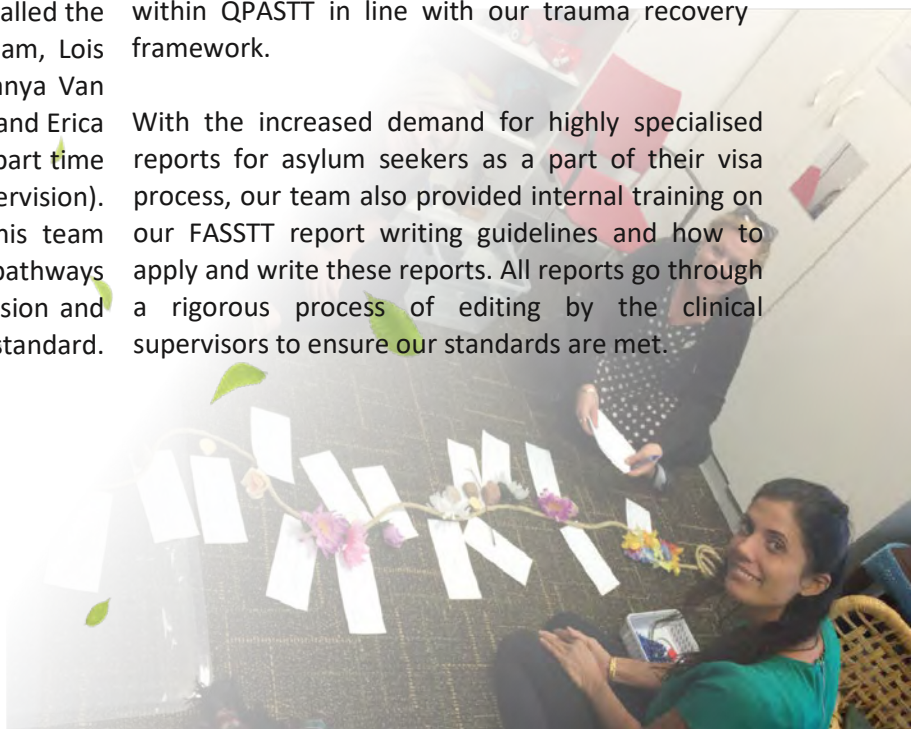
QPASTT also continues to provide a balance of individual and group supervision. Group supervision and learning circles have a specific focus, involving external supervisors with specialist knowledge: Paul Gibney covers the areas of family and adults,

Ulrike Kraus covers children and youth, Liz Gordon covers regional work and Lois Whiteman covers asylum seeker work. We have seen an increase in the need for internal case conferences due to the increase in complex presentations of individuals and families we are working with.

## Internal Clinical Training of Staff

The last year has seen a focus on team training to provide clear processes and guidelines for review and closure of clients. These have been developed within QPASTT in line with our trauma recovery framework.

With the increased demand for highly specialised reports for asylum seekers as a part of their visa process, our team also provided internal training on our FASSTT report writing guidelines and how to apply and write these reports. All reports go through a rigorous process of editing by the clinical supervisors to ensure our standards are met.



**Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET)** is a culturally sensitive, evidence based therapy specifically developed to promote healing and recovery from refugee related torture and trauma. This training was delivered in collaboration with Queensland Transcultural Mental Health. It was co-facilitated by Kathleen McBride (QPASTT) and Andres Otero- Forero (QTCMH) to 20 QPASTT counselling staff in the first part of this year. Staff were from across all teams within the agency. The aim will be for this training to be delivered to the remaining counselling staff in the next year. Internal group supervision has been offered to those counsellors who undertook the training in order to consolidate learning and experiential practice.

### External Training

Throughout this year, QPASTT has seen an increase in requests for external trainings that have been in addition to what is offered via our external training calendar. The requests are mainly from external service providers requesting specialised assistance in understanding the impact of trauma on refugee clients that they work with as well as strategies for working from a trauma recovery framework. As such, Amy has been involved in delivering a variety of trainings in the final half of this year: several presentations to postgraduate psychology students at Brisbane Psychology and Counselling Clinic; presenting on working with children and young people from a refugee background as part of the Children's Health Qld seminar series; presenting to nursing staff at Mater Refugee Complex Care Clinic about trauma-informed work with refugees and co- presenting a dinner series with Brisbane South PHN on working cross-culturally.

It has been positive that as settlement of refugees and asylum seekers expands and more service providers are working with this population, there is recognition amongst the wider community of QPASTT's

specialised experience in this field. QPASTT was pleased to have assisted with increasing their capacity for service delivery.

Liz was involved in co-facilitating a full day workshop on Vicarious Trauma, Burnout and Self-Care as part of the QPASTT external training calendar. Tanya has been involved in presenting to volunteers on the impact of trauma when working with people seeking asylum. She also presented to MDA and HSS subcontracted staff on responding to wellbeing concerns.

### IRCT Conference Mexico December 2016

This conference, entitled Reclaiming the Right to Learn and Play, was attended by several QPASTT staff including Erica Fernandez who is both a Clinical Supervisor and a member of the Children and Youth Team. Erica presented a practice model for working with traumatised children from refugee backgrounds who are aged between four and 12. Feedback praised the way Erica gave prominence to the voices of the children she works with. There was a great deal of interest in her work from attendees.

### FASSTT Conference

The FASSTT Conference, convened by our sister organisation STARTTS in Sydney, was held in March 2017. Many QPASTT staff presented papers and workshops. From the Professional Supervision Team, Lois ran a half-day workshop entitled: The Internal Experience of Trauma: How Trauma Manifests and is Worked Through Symbolically in the Psyche. Seventy participants attended and the evaluations show it was well received.

Additionally, Tanya presented on 'Attachment-based group work for asylum seeker parents: the role of Torture and Trauma Services' based on group work that she had co-facilitated for women who had experienced held detention on Nauru.



### Trends/Themes in Counselling Work:

As in recent years, the complexity of working with asylum seekers in the current socio political arena has been a significant focus of Clinical Supervisors in two main areas: ensuring that these very unwell and at-risk clients' safety needs and support are attended to appropriately, and in debriefing and supporting staff who are at high risk of burnout and vicarious trauma from this work. It is well documented that in trauma work a great degree of empathy is needed in the counselling process, however in trauma work, there is because of this a high risk of empathic strain (Wilson and Lindy). The Professional Supervision Team has a key role in addressing this in the organisation.

### Clinical Governance

A focus of this year has been to review and update relevant QPASTT clinical policies, with particular focus on suicide prevention management, case conferencing, client review, goal setting and closure. This year has also seen a review of the Children and Youth Assessment processes which is due to be completed within the next few months. Clinical governance work will continue to provide a focus for the coming year as we work towards reviewing and updating all policies and procedures to clinical service delivery.

### FASSTT Involvement

This year has seen Amy Burkett taking over Liz Gordon's role as member of the Senior Clinicians FASSTT Working Group. Work continues in progressing the FASSTT Minimum Data Set into stage three, with the focus on defining torture experiences. The aim will be for national compliance with implementation of stage three into all FASSTT agency databases by the end of the coming year.

### Collaborations

During the second part of this year, QPASTT was invited to be involved in a pilot program led by Mater Complex Care Clinic (MRCCC) and Brisbane South PHN to have a psychiatric assessment service available for refugees.

This program has been based out of

MRCCC and is conducted one day per week. QPASTT has also been fortunate as part of this pilot program to have Psychiatrist, Dr Nga Tran's involvement in case consultations where QPASTT staff are able to present and discuss complex cases in depth. QPASTT has referred several clients to this pilot program and clients have reported positive experiences in engaging with the psychiatric review process.





# Operational Matters

The responsibilities attached to the role of Manager of People and Systems are many and varied. This can have the effect of pulling me in different directions most days, but it also makes the job more enjoyable, rewarding and interesting. For example, my morning can move from discussing car maintenance and air conditioning to writing policy documents and managing organisational insurance!

The pressure attached to making sure the different roles within my portfolio are covered, is lessened by the support I receive from the wonderful Administration team. They are a group of multicultural women who work hard and enjoy a challenge. This year, we have enjoyed the addition of two new members to the team. Meron, who replaces Rhonda while she is on maternity leave, and Maelee who has provided additional support for the events we are planning in the coming months and years. As always, it has been an absolute pleasure working with these amazing women, and I hope to continue to do so well into the future.



This past year has brought some interesting operational opportunities and challenges for QPASTT and the Administration team. In around September last year, QPASTT received funding from Brisbane City Council, under the Lord Mayor's Cultivating Community Garden Grants Scheme to establish and maintain an edible community garden. [You can read more later in this report.](#) As a person who has very little experience with gardening and has trouble telling one end of a tool from another, it has been a steep learning curve. However, I have been ably assisted by the combined knowledge of the Gardening Committee which is comprised of Maelee from the Admin Team, and Taryn and Erica from the Children and Youth Team. Together, we have managed to organise working bees and weeding mornings. We have also managed to include clients, QPASTT workers and members of the general community in the project. We have recently submitted an application for further funding to put in some basic plumbing which will allow us to attach a hose so we can water the garden more easily. Our future plans are to put in a bench seat to provide a space for gentle contemplation. We plan to surround the bench with aromatic herbs and flowers, and to lay pavers to make the garden more accessible and attractive. The main aim of the garden is its therapeutic potential for clients.



Earlier this year, we sent thirty QPASTT workers to the inaugural **Australia and New Zealand Refugee Trauma Recovery in Resettlement Conference** in Sydney. It was held between 29 and 31 March. This was a large undertaking for the organisation in terms of expenditure but also quite complex operationally, as we needed to maintain a skeleton staff in the Brisbane office which remained open. STARTTS, the FASSTT organization which organized the conference this year is passing the baton to QPASTT, and we are currently in the process of planning the 2nd Australia and New Zealand Refugee Trauma Recovery in Resettlement Conference which will be held in Brisbane in March 2019. Planning is already underway for the conference as well as two further events:

**Parliamentary Lunch in October 2017.** This event will be hosted by the Honourable Cameron Dick, MP, Minister for Health, Minister for Ambulance Services, and State Member for Woodridge. The lunch will address the work of QPASTT and the growing global phenomenon of the acceptance of torture. This will be an opportunity for Queensland Members of Parliament to engage with Refugee Community Leaders, Youth Leaders, the QPASTT Management Committee and also QPASTT staff to address this concerning global trend, explore the reasons behind this shift and discuss initiatives to provide recovery and stem the tide of acceptance.

**QPASTT Symposium in March 2018** Healing in Exile – the Challenges in Context is the theme for the Symposium being organised by QPASTT and to be held at QUT. The program is structured around starting a conversation amongst delegates on the many challenges encountered by people from refugee backgrounds as they recover from trauma. For more information on these events, please refer to the flyers in this AGM Report, as well as on the QPASTT website. Cath Proberts came on board in April as the Events Manager for these three important events in QPASTT's calendar. She has abundant experience with events planning and we would be lost without her expertise, her patience and her quiet and confident efficiency. Cath is receiving excellent administrative support from Maelee in the Admin Team, who is learning the 'events planning ropes'.

QPASTT's previous data system was becoming outdated and unreliable, so after many years of service, it has been shelved and replaced by our new data system called NERO. Brian McKillop, who is the consultant we engaged to build the system, has done an amazing job, as has Laks who has assisted with her technical and IT knowledge, her large knowledge of QPASTT and her calm, efficient personality.

To assist Brian and Laks with this huge job, we convened the NERO Heroes – Megan Leitz, Marcela Barra, Laks, and myself. The Nero Heroes meet regularly to plan, discuss and trouble shoot our way through each phase of this project. When phase 1 of NERO went live in October 2016, there were no glitches and a peaceful transition was observed by all. I suspect that this was a huge relief to Brian but no surprise to me because I have a lot of faith in Brian's capacity. Add Laks to the equation, and they are a Dynamic Duo who can cope with anything. We are currently in Phase 3 of NERO, and we are adding capabilities, which did not form part of the previous data system. Nero has surpassed expectations!





# Children and Youth Team Report



*Since becoming the Coordinator of the Children and Youth Team in January 2017, I have been impressed by the exceptional commitment that team members have shown towards the holistic recovery of children and young people. Team members work together to support each other and integrate skills and experience. They use a variety of interventions, including individual counselling and advocacy combined with working with families, carers, schools and other key services. Programs such as the Peer Mentoring Program, Homework Clubs, School Outreach, School Holiday Activities, Children's groups and Ucan2 programs in Youth TAFE classes, all contribute richly to the recovery and wellbeing of children and young people from refugee backgrounds.*

This year, we welcomed three additional workers to the team. This increase in size has brought greater output. The six Counsellor/Advocates in the team who see children between the ages of 4 and 24, have seen 113 young people and children over the past year, and provided 1,152 individual counselling sessions. Additionally the Counsellor/Advocates work together to support social and therapeutic opportunities for young people in various programs. Counsellors travel within a wide radius of Brisbane, utilising the four QPASTT outreach offices and 26 school sites. They regularly share their specialised knowledge at various trainings throughout the year. One member presented a paper at the International Rehabilitation Council

for Torture Victims (IRTC) 10th International Scientific Symposium – Delivering on the Promise of the Right to Rehabilitation, in Mexico in

December 2016, and two members presented at the inaugural Australia and New Zealand Refugee Trauma Recovery in Resettlement Conference, in Sydney in April.

## School Outreach Program

The School Outreach Program aims to support young people from refugee backgrounds at high school who are at risk of disengaging from school or employment pathways. Recently, schools, together with QPASTT Youth Workers, have identified a number of issues such as students having difficulties in friendship building and managing behaviours and emotions in the playground. This need was addressed in the context of the impact of trauma on individuals and families. A Somali soccer group was created where the sport was used as a platform to discuss working together as a team, resolving disputes in a non-violent manner with psycho-education around trauma. This group was run with Somali students in partnership with Somali youth leaders and community police.







## Homework Club Woolloongabba

**96 Sessions**  
**Total Attendance**

**975**

Inala

**18 Sessions**  
**Total Attendance**  
**74**

The school outreach program is regularly reviewed in order to streamline the program and ensure consistent and effective service delivery.

Over the past year, this program has increased in capacity, with five school outreach workers now delivering school outreach to seven high schools across Brisbane.

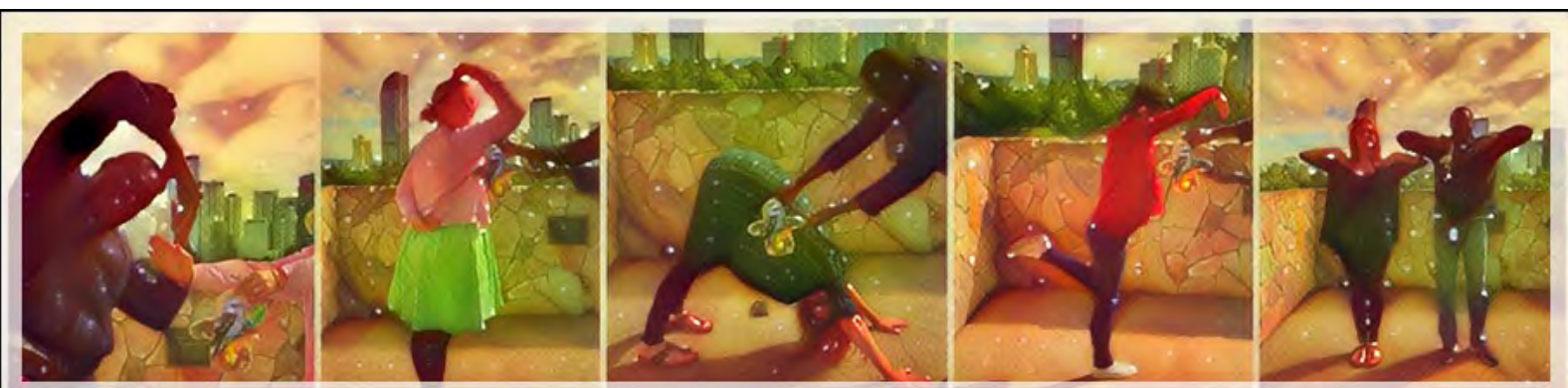
### Homework Club

Homework Club is offered three afternoons a week in school term at Woolloongabba and one afternoon a week at Inala. It is a highly utilised program and valued by students. Students attend repeatedly over the week, travel up to an hour to access the program and invite their friends. On average 15 to 20 students meet with 15-20 tutors on each of the afternoons the program runs. Numbers of participants and the frequency of support have increased threefold over the past year.

Fifty-three volunteer tutors have been sourced through Volunteering Queensland and local university campuses - many volunteers have worked with the program for multiple years, while others offer their services while their capacity allows. Tutoring occurs in all subject areas with a majority of students requesting support in English, and Business and Mathematics assignments.

The program offers direct support with assignments which increases students understanding, academic success and engagement at school. Many young people also report the value of Homework Club in supporting their mental health through increasing their confidence and their sense of belonging in their new culture. In this way, Homework Club also acts as a preventative program supporting students' connectedness, wellbeing and access to other QPASTT services such as counselling.

A past student recently reported to the staff that the QPASTT Homework Club had been critical to his success at gaining employment after school as an interpreter, as well as his enrolment in nursing.



# UCAN2

Loganlea  
Tafe

**27 Sessions**

Total Attendance  
**463**

Southbank  
Tafe

**28 Sessions**

Total Attendance  
**559**

Yeronga  
SHS

**5 Sessions**

Total Attendance  
**74**

## UCan2

The QPASTT Youth Team works within the youth AMEP English classes at TAFE. UCan2 offers an integrated approach to enhancing the education, settlement and broader integration processes for young people who are from refugee backgrounds and aged between 16 and 25.

The activities in Ucan2 are designed to draw on young people's experiences to provide activities focused on work skills, psychosocial support and the development of social connections. Mock interviews are conducted with industry representatives, which has led to an increase in confidence in young people. Some participants have reported these mock interviews assisted in finding paid work. Ten volunteers assist with delivering this program. Class excursions to Griffith University, QUT, Suited to Success, The Conservatorium of Music, She-works Wood workshop and The Edge at the State Library - have proven to be popular as well as useful.

QPASTT has now been running this program for approximately 5 years. This financial year, eight programs have been run in a variety of loca-

tions, including Southbank TAFE, Loganlea TAFE, Brackenridge TAFE, and a pilot at Yeronga State High school.

## Peer Mentoring Program

The Peer Mentoring Program aims to work with young people between the ages of 12 and 18 who are from single parent families. Mentors are matched with their mentees and together, they attend monthly group social gatherings as well as fortnightly individual 'meet-ups'. During these meet-ups, mentees are able to engage with their mentor to help increase maturity and independence, increase their acceptance in the broader community and improve skills in communicating.

Both mentors and mentees report positive outcomes around the program. For example, one young woman mentee stated to her counsellor, "This is the most helpful type of mentoring I have ever experienced". Mentors have enthusiastically reported their appreciation of the opportunity to "give back" in such a meaningful way.

## Peer Mentoring Groups

**7 Sessions**

**Total Attendance**

**29**







## Children's Groups

Various groups for children have been run over the year. During the September 2016 School holidays, a group of 10 girls aged between 8 and 12 years participated in a full day of Equine Therapy (experiential activities with horses) held at McIntyre Centre and was facilitated by a team of trained professionals. This activity was aimed at promoting self-confidence and self-esteem as well as assisting with emotional regulation. The day was highly successful with the majority of the group requesting to participate in the same activity in the future.

This year we continued with our regular therapeutic group for boys aged between 8 and 12 years of age who are predominantly from single parent families. This group provided the nine boys with an opportunity to form positive attachments with male role models. In July we ran a Drum Beat workshop and in January we had a rock climbing day.

## Youth Activities

Young women fitness group was held in term time - eight to ten young women explored karate, yoga and fitness with a qualified personal trainer.

QPASTT offers activities for young people during school holiday period - this includes various recreational, social and fun activities for young people aged between 12 and 24. School holiday activities are aimed at assisting young people to

engage with QPASTT, with each other and with the wider community. Feedback is collected at each of the activities and used as a guide in the organisation of future activities.

Some school holiday activities offered over the

**School Therapeutic  
Group at Richlands East  
State School**  
**7 Sessions**  
**Total Attendance**  
**34**

# School Holiday Activities

## Big Day Out

3 Sessions

Total Attendance

112

## Boys Group

2 Sessions

Total Attendance

19

## Girls Group

2 Sessions

Total Attendance

29

## Young Women's Group

2 Sessions

Total Attendance

32

## Young Men's Group

1 Session

Total Attendance

6

**What have you enjoyed about the program?**

*"Building connections, relationships and friendship with mentee and his family has been the key joy of my time as a mentor. To support them in any means and seeing the smile on their face takes you over the moon."*

past year include a visit to “Inflatable World”, a BBQ and Fun Day at Goodna, a Fun Day at Zillmere PCYC, young women’s movie days and a young men’s social day at Chermside swimming pools.

## Youth Voice Project

The Youth Voice project aims to involve young people from diverse backgrounds in promoting human rights and influencing change within their communities. In the past year, they have been active in holding many forums and events. Here is a description of just a few of those events!

The Walk in Our Shoes Festival, held on 29th June 2017, was held at Yeronga Memorial Park. Around 150 young people registered for the “walk” and approximately 250 attended this event across the day. Targeted at young people aged between the ages of 12 and 25, this public festival aims to provide an opportunity for social inclusion and engagement, celebrate the diversity and talents of young people, and start conversations about tolerance and acceptance.



As the centre-piece of the day, the “walk” saw registered participants randomly matched with a partner and



encouraged to share their story as they walked the one kilometre long path around the park.

In September 2016, fifty student leaders from various schools around Greater Brisbane were invited to attend a Young Leaders Forum. The topic was Youth Inclusion. The aim of this forum was to promote active youth participation and youth community engagement.

In October, Youth Voice Brisbane held their annual Total Wellbeing Dinner, which coincided with Mental Health Week. The aim of the dinner is to promote positive mental health and wellbeing and to collaboratively challenge stigmas associated with mental health. Approximately 80 young people and families attended the dinner. As well as engaging in interactive group activities to promote personal wellbeing, the participants were motivated and inspired by the speech given by keynote speaker, Matthew Johnstone, who spoke about his lived experience with mental health. This was followed by a lively panel discussion.

In February Youth Voice hosted the Domestic Violence Forum from Yeronga, Kedron and Redbank Plains State High Schools. Feedback from participants was positive with the majority stating they gained a new understanding of



domestic and family violence, and had greater confidence in their knowledge of what to do in situations of family violence.

Youth Voice participated in a range of public events throughout the year including hosting an interactive Stall at Youth Week Launch in King George Square on the 1st April 2017, and at Inala Multicultural Youth Festival on 27th June 2017. The Youth Voice Committee had a joint meeting with the Lord Mayor Youth Advisory Committee on the 17th May 2017 to share their experience with other young people and the Lord Mayor.

**Comments from the Lord Mayor, Cr Graham Quirk, “Youth Voice delivered a great presentation. We love your work and enjoy working with you. You’re amazing and an absolute inspiration”.**











*The Regional Services Team covers a large geographical region within Queensland. QPASTT currently has offices in Townsville, Rockhampton, Toowoomba and Logan. Outreach is also provided to the Gold Coast, Inala, Ipswich, Goodna and Gatton. This*

We welcomed back Anna Perry who took up the vacancy of Counsellor/Advocate at the Gold Coast – Anna's regular presence on the Gold Coast has resulted in an increase in referrals to our service.

Magdalena Kuyang moved from our Woolloongabba office to take on the new role as Family Counsellor/Advocate in the Logan office. The addition of Magdalena to the Regional Team expands the breadth of service options for clients in Logan. After three years, Nilissa decided to move on as the Regional Coordinator at QPASTT and we wish her very well in her future work.

#### **News from Logan**

From the success of the previous Women's Yoga Group in early 2016, QPASTT formed a partnership with Centre Against Sexual Violence (CASV) in Logan to run an 8 week women's only trauma group from October to November 2016. The aim of the group was to provide basic yoga, relaxation techniques and increase awareness about QPASTT. The group was well attended and positive feedback was given by participants.

QPASTT continues to partner with RAILS lawyers to provide a clinic at our Logan office for clients requiring legal advice. This clinic is currently run on a fortnightly basis and has been well attended by clients. Additionally, RAILS lawyers have been able to provide general information and support to QPASTT counsellors about refugee-related legal issues when they are present in the QPASTT office.

QPASTT was approached by a local catholic primary school, St Pauls, in Woodridge to support them with a large number of newly arrived children from Syria and Iraq who were presenting with highly symptomatic presentations at school. Additional support from QPASTT was requested for teachers and other school staff who were experiencing vicarious trauma. QPASTT worked closely with the school to provide support to parents, children and school staff. A parents group, children's group and a vicarious trauma professional development training session for staff occurred throughout March to May 2017. The feedback from the school was that the children's trauma symptoms significantly improved following the group, as well as the children's ability to self-regulate. The parents group was psycho-educational and allowed the parents an opportunity to understand the concerns the school had about their children's presentations at school and how this impacted their ability to socialise with others and also their capacity to focus on their learning.

### News from the Regions: Cairns, Townsville, Toowoomba and Rockhampton

In Toowoomba, QPASTT staff arranged a swimming group for Afghan women as this was identified as a priority by the women. The group ran for 8 sessions which included swimming lessons, psycho-education discussion and a shared lunch. Learning to swim is a common aspiration of newly arrived refugee women and the women of this group also reported that the swimming helped reduce their back and knee pain. We look forward to continuing our engagement with the Afghani community in Toowoomba.



In late May 2017, the Toowoomba region received a large cohort of newly arrived refugees from Syria and Iraq who represent the Yazidi minority cohort who have been persecuted by ISIS. QPASTT is continuing to work closely with the local settlement service MDA and other services including TRAMS (Catholicare) in the region to support this highly traumatised group of people. In September 2017, a QPASTT community development worker will conduct a needs analysis with Yazidi community leaders and local services to see how best QPASTT can respond to the needs of the community as a whole.

In June 2017, our Counsellor in Rockhampton provided a workshop and screening of the film, 'Constance on the Edge' to local services in order to provide greater awareness and understanding of the complex needs of the refugee settlement experience. QPASTT received positive feedback from local services following the event and a request to run further workshops in the region in the future. Our work in Townsville continues to respond to the needs of newly arriving refugee communities as well as needs within more established communities.

We continue to liaise with local schools and services such as Townsville Migrant Support Group (TMSG) and are looking forward to delivering group work and training in the next year. Due to low referral numbers in Far North Queensland, QPASTT took a decision to temporarily close the counselling service in Cairns. QPASTT undertook work to clarify why referral numbers were low and in the main believe that this is primarily linked to the settlement of predominately Bhutanese people in this region and this group has vocalised a preference for group work rather than individual counselling. QPASTT therefore is continuing to provide Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) groups in partnership with Centacare Migrant Support (CMS) and will re-examine the need for individual services in the future. QPASTT has also provided training to the refugee sector services in Cairns at the request of CMS and hosted a screening and discussion of the film '**Constance on the Edge**'





# Asylum Seeker Support Team Report

*In the Asylum Seeker Support Team, we remain aware of the impact that politics and the media have on the mental health and sense of well-being of our clients*

In the past year, there have been a few changes in staffing of the team, with Jim Schirmer, Elham Rezae, Taryn McBurney, Hadas Lev-Tov, Immaculate Murekatete and Helen McDonald leaving the team. I would like to acknowledge their contribution and hard work whilst working at QPASTT. We welcomed some new members: Michelle Wylie, Anna Perry, Andrew Bell, Nickole Webb, Michael Ahern and Melissa Glasscock.

There has been a shift in the number of QPASTT asylum seeker clients who are living in the community on bridging visas, and this is now a greater proportion of our caseload in the team. There is also a growing number of 'unfunded' clients who have not been successful in their first protection application assessment and have subsequently been cut off from government funded service support.

## Key dates that have impacted our clients:

May 2017: The Honourable Peter Dutton MP, Minister for Immigration and Border Protection announced an October 1st 2017 deadline to lodge protection claims.

- June 2017: The Australian Government agreed to pay \$70m in compensation to around 1900 men detained on Manus Island.
- Australia announced a resettlement deal with the USA for refugees from offshore centres. The change of government in the USA created much uncertainty around the future of this deal. As of June 2017, no refugee has been resettled in the USA.
- The UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, François Crépeau, visited Australia in November 2016 and in his end of mission statement noted that while Australia's migration policies 'present many positive examples' it is a concern that some policies 'have increasingly eroded the human rights of migrants in contravention for its international human rights and humanitarian obligations'.
- As at the end of December 2016, we saw the lowest number of people in held detention in almost four years. QPASTT has considered and regularly reviewed throughout the year the merits and value of our support to these highly vulnerable individuals within this system of detention. Overall, we believe that our independent support is an important opportunity for people to be heard and offered specialised assistance.



However these clients received negative outcomes on their initial protection claims, and subsequently had, their visa removed in order to push them to return to their country. In real terms, the loss of their visas meant the loss of their right to work, their right to social security benefits and their right to access health care.

As a result, the men experienced a rapid decline in mental health, both through the stress of having no means to meet their basic needs of food, housing and healthcare, but also due to the pressure that was being put on them to return to a country that they maintained was not safe for them to return to.

QPASTT ran weekly sessions with these men (8 on average) at the local community centre (Thelly's Place), which had coordinated the response to this group's needs. To our knowledge, this is one of the first times therapeutic group work has been tried with a group of clients who are considered 'Finally Determined' which is the Australian government's classification of asylum seekers whose initial protection claim has been rejected. Through this process, we have learnt an important matrix of elements in supporting clients in this situation, including advocacy to access services to meet basic needs, teaching skills to tolerate distress and maximize wellbeing, and structuring conversations that enable people to have their experiences heard in a supportive environment. However, possibly the most therapeutic element of the group emerged from the initiative of the participants.







In Bangladeshi culture, group meetings such as this inevitably involve shared food, and therefore the participants insisted on sharing a traditional meal at each session. While the group had limited resources, this act of preparing and giving food enabled the men to maintain a number of precious parts of their identity such as their culture, their relationships and their dignity of positively contributing to the lives of others. The maintenance of their identity and dignity in the face of their loss of rights greatly improved the mental health of the group. Finally, the success of the group is an excellent example of the power of a partnership approach to offering services. To deliver this group, QPASTT closely partnered with Thelly's Place Community Centre, Red Cross Emergency Relief, Refugee and Immigration Legal Service (RAILS), Queensland Health, Mater Refugee Health Service, the Muslim Charitable Foundation, MDA and Communify. The group could not have achieved its aims without these partnerships.

*The work we do and the context in which we operate is challenge us all and I would like to thank the staff for their dedication and buoyancy during a time of much change. Lastly I would like to acknowledge the clients that we work with - I am always humbled by their strength, wisdom and resilience*





# Counselling Services Team Report



**Like many other teams in QPASTT, the Counselling Services Team has had a big year.**

Early on in the year, the team welcomed back Vedrana Jovic from maternity leave. Vedrana brought back her own unique blend of energy and vibrancy to the team. This also meant that the team had to say goodbye to Kathleen McBride who had been acting in the role of Coordinator. We would like to thank Kathleen for the dedication and enthusiasm she brought to the role. Fortunately, for the team she remains in her original role of Family Counsellor and has also moved into an Advanced Practitioner Role at QPASTT, adding staff supervision to her list of duties. We congratulate Kathleen and recognise that she has a myriad of skills to contribute organisation-wide.

Another key piece of work led by Kathleen McBride and supported by a number of staff in the agency has been upskilling and training QPASTT staff in NET (Narrative Exposure Therapy).

After attending an intensive training program with the founders of NET in Italy, Kathleen kindly offered to share this knowledge with the wider QPASTT staff group. NET is emerging as one of the key treatments of symptoms of PTSD. With the guidance of the therapist, a patient establishes a chronological narrative of his or her life, concentrating mainly on their traumatic experiences, but also incorporating some positive events. It is believed that this contextualizes the network of cognitive, affective and sensory memories of a patient's trauma.

By expressing the narrative, the patient fills in details of fragmentary memories and develops a coherent autobiographical story. In so doing, the memory of a traumatic episode is refined and understood. In addition to presenting training, Kathleen now facilitates regular Learning Circles enabling staff to reflect, learn and share their experiences in using treatment.





## Reaching Clients

The Counselling Services Team has ceased providing sessions in the MDA Lifeskills program. The Lifeskills program is currently under review as changes are being made in delivering the information to newly arrived clients in a more efficient manner. One such change has allowed the Counselling Services Team to become involved in filming a short video about QPASTT and what a session with a QPASTT worker might be like. The hope is that this video may offer more flexibility around delivery of information - it can be shown to clients in the convenience of their homes or at central hubs and translated through interpreters.

Another reason that we have stopped attending the Lifeskills program is that MDA and QPASTT have agreed that QPASTT will receive all referrals for new arrivals. The Intake Practitioner will then contact the families and talk to them directly about QPASTT programs and engagement. It has been our practice to allow at least three months before contacting individuals to enable families to undertake their practical, settlement-related processes, thus having more capacity to reflect on their emotional state.

The processes for waitlist management continue to change as new client groups emerge, and this has been the case with the clients who are receiving the TPV and SHEV visas. Due to contractual obligations, clients are required to be contacted within a two-week timeframe. Thus far, we have been successful in meeting these requirements, although this has impacted other high needs clients who are awaiting services from the Counselling Services Team for extended periods.

### **BIA – Brief Intake and Assessment Practitioner**

The BIA Practitioner role has now been in operation for nearly a year and this continues to be successful in establishing meaningful connections with newly arrived cohorts, predominantly from Syria and Iraq, as well as others who have been flagged as urgent. The BIA role is a growing and evolving role that has the flexibility to adjust methods of engagement to the presenting client needs as well as organisational

requirements. The BIA role continues to offer three main components:

- A comprehensive information component which familiarises clients with QPASTT services and services offered by other relevant agencies,
- A psychosocial component, which provides clients with clear, educational and accessible information about the potential impacts of trauma. Clients are given the opportunity to discuss and consult with the BIA Practitioner around whether their current presentations may be trauma related. Some clients decline counselling or involvement in other QPASTT services. This occurs for an array of reasons such as strong current focus on settlement, lack of readiness to engage, personal perception that counselling or other interventions are not necessary/useful at this time. These clients are offered information that aims to educate, normalise, destigmatise and reduce stress about potential symptoms they may face later on in their settlement process. This has proven to be a successful early intervention and prevention strategy as a number of clients have accessed QPASTT at a later stage with the capacity to recognise their emerging symptoms and ask for assistance before their presentations develop in severity.
- A therapeutic component where needed. Although the BIA process is designed to be a short-term intervention (usually 1-2 sessions), clients presenting with severe symptoms are offered counselling support and can be seen for a number of sessions. This is usually to prevent a gap in services, so the BIA worker continues to support the client until they are allocated to a long-term counsellor. There are also clients that present with acute mental health symptoms who are referred on to relevant services, and the BIA worker continues to follow up until the client is successfully linked and receiving appropriate support. This allows the BIA role to also act as a “buffer” and offer support whilst clients are either in between services, or require additional support.

The BIA role has also assisted with QPASTT's waitlist management by responding to urgent referrals outside of the Syrian and Iraqi cohort.

We have also implemented the BIA process in our work in Toowoomba recently and are hopeful that the same beneficial outcomes will be evident in the months to come.

even though the year has included a number of changes both challenging and exciting for the Counselling Services Team, but there is one constant that remains the same: 'team culture'. The team enjoys a culture of support, collaboration and learning. When reflecting on the past year together, and discussing upcoming changes, it became evident

that all members felt strongly about maintaining our 'culture'. Together we explored the meaning of this and realised that what we did not want to lose despite external influences was our ability to share our skills, openly discuss challenges, be flexible, offer support to one another, share what we've learned in external trainings, present case conferences, have a good debate and most importantly enjoy a laugh together. More often than not, the allocated meeting time is not long enough; finishing early does not often happen for the Counselling Services Team. We have structured our team meetings to enhance our ability to discuss all aspects of our work and essentially enable us to enrich the level of support we offer our clients.





## UNITED NATIONS DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE



On 26th June, QPASTT hosted its annual morning tea, which commemorates the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. This year, we honoured the day with speeches by:

- Luis Melgar, Treasurer of the QPASTT Management Committee
- Steve Minnikin, MP, Member for Chatsworth and Shadow Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Multicultural Affairs
- Senator Zed Seselja, Assistant Minister for Social Services and Multicultural Affairs (via video)

We observed 1 minute's silence and listened to moving musical performances by Aleathea Monsour and Guy Drory, and we listened to a beautiful poetry reading by Erica Fernandez who works as a Counsellor in the Children and Youth Team.

One of QPASTT's main goals is to speak out against torture. We do this in conjunction with our international peak body, the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT). QPASTT remains steadfast in its opposition to the use of torture across the world and our commitment to the provision of culturally appropriate and relevant recovery programs. Torture is never legitimate or justified and has devastating consequences for its victims, their families and the whole community. Torture is a cruel violation of human rights.

On this day in recent years, more than a hundred organisations from every region of the world have organised a string of events and activities including conferences, workshops, theatre and dance performances, football matches and marches in the street.

*"The act of torture supports and encourages a system of impunity. It can take years before the perpetrator is brought to justice, but rehabilitation gives victims the necessary strength to wait for this justice."* Olga Sadovskaya, Deputy Chair of the Committee Against Torture



**Every year, to commemorate 26th June, the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims produces a Global Reading, which is reproduced below:**

Today we commemorate the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. We do so in challenging times: three decades after the UN Convention against Torture came into force; the majority of people live in places where torture is still real and present. Across the world, leaders with little respect for democracy and human rights threaten to bring it back as state policy, and they do so with the support of some parts of society.

As a result, the political and financial support for the fight against torture is weaker than it has ever been within our lifetime.

IRCT founder, Dr Inge Genefke, once called torture “the most effective weapon against democracy”. She explained that torture breaks down the victim’s personality, identity, and ability to live a fuller life later, with and among other human beings. In addition, she further explained how torture infects and breaks up families and societies until it finally erodes the very fabric of our democratic societies: solidarity and the rule of law.



In the words of Inge, “We must all support torture survivors because they need it. Because their body and mind have suffered atrociously, unbearably, unspeakably. Because torture is the worst, and it is difficult to imagine unless you have suffered it.

It is hanging for many, many hours by the arms or by the legs, it is phalanges, it is to have electrodes placed on different parts on the body. It is being burnt with cigarettes or with iron bars, being hit and kicked all over, or tormented until being unconscious.

It is being forced to witness the pain inflicted on a child or a spouse, on a sister or brother, father or mother, to have to watch helplessly and to have to listen to their screams and crying, and their appeals – and being able to do nothing. It is the deprivation of all our senses – of our ability to see, hear, smell, distinguish day from night, and love.

It is the nightmare about the night they took your son away, the flashback of a soldier raping you, the fright every time there are fireworks, your inability to tell anyone what happened to you, the realisation that you can no longer feed your children or be a loving spouse, and your fear that your children will suffer like you suffered.

It is the systematic destruction of everything that makes us identify as human”.

As everyone from the global torture rehabilitation movement come together on this day of solidarity with victims, there is no doubt that we can make a difference. Thanks to the work already done, thanks to our research, thanks to our courageous colleagues all around the world; we know how to help survivors of torture rebuild their lives. When we do this, we defy the primary purpose of torture and we take away the weapon from the torturers’ hands. With this understanding about what torture does to people, generated through decades of dedicated work, we call on everyone to join us and help us to support life after torture. Let us disarm those that seek to hurt our brothers and sisters, our families, our communities, and our aspiration for a world without torture.



# QPASTT GARDEN PROJECT



In early 2017, QPASTT received funding from Brisbane City Council, under the Lord Mayor's Cultivating Community Garden Grants Scheme to establish and maintain an edible community garden.

Our aim is to create a therapeutic space for refugee clients who are living within the broader Brisbane community, to work in and enjoy.

Establishing the garden, which is situated in Dibley Street just outside Homework Club, has been a work in progress. Before doing anything, we first had to clear out a lot of dry, out of control foliage. To assist us with this big job, we were lucky to have volunteers from the "Mormon Helping Hands" (an initiative of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). A group of young church members came and rapidly and efficiently cleared out the space in one morning. I'd like to take this opportunity to formally thank them again for their hard work.

Once the space was cleared, we established a Gardening Committee and started planning (and planting). The knowledge, advice and tips that have kindly been offered by clients, staff and community members were put to good use. We plan to organise regular working bees with clients and QPASTT workers where we will be weeding, mulching and planting.

Future plans for the space include planting herbs and vegetables, laying decorative pavers, adding signage to describe the space, and putting in a bench seat so clients and staff can sit and enjoy the pleasant aromas wafting from the scented herbs.

A client recently described their experience of participating in the project:

*"The gardening program at QPASTT is a good hobby for me, and is good for my mind. It helps me to pass time, learn new things about plants and vegetables, and helps me to feel connected to a project. I like being able to grow organic produce, and to be part of the whole process."*

If you would like to contribute or be a part of the QPASTT Community Garden or would like more information about the QPASTT Community Garden, please contact [volunteer@qpastt.org.au](mailto:volunteer@qpastt.org.au) or call QPASTT on **07-3391 6677**









# MR RAFAEL PACHECO

## QUEENSLAND MULTICULTURAL AWARDS 2017 NOMINEE

Rafael has had a long connection with QPASTT. As a political refugee, he was forced to leave his native country, El Salvador, in the early 80's, in the middle of a bloody civil war. He escaped to neighbouring Costa Rica in 1981 arriving in Melbourne with his wife and three young children in 1984 and settling in Brisbane in 1985. Rafael suffered persecution in El Salvador because of his commitment to resisting oppression. As a result of his own experiences as a refugee, he has been actively involved in supporting human rights in Australia, particularly for those escaping persecution. Soon after his arrival in Australia, Rafael began volunteering to support refugees at the Wacol Migrant Hostel. Since then, he has founded, co-founded, volunteered for and participated in a range of associations, which enabled individuals, groups, associations and communities to engage with activities and gain knowledge of available services. Rafael initiated and led a number of festivals and commemorative ceremonies to celebrate diverse issues and cultural contributions, as well as connections between mainstream and culturally diverse communities.

He has been actively involved in and a founding member of a number of community organisations that support vulnerable groups. Rafael was a founding member of QPASTT and served as its Treasurer and Financial Advisor for 17 years.

Rafael was made a life member of QPASTT in 2012. Rafael is a symbol of success in this country as he was able to re-establish his profession as an accountant after overcoming the many barriers experienced by refugees in Australia



*In early 2017, Rafael Pacheco was nominated for a Queensland Multicultural Award*



Paula Petereson, Rafael Pacheco  
2016 QPASTT AGM



Rafael Pacheco, Saira Buksh, Laks Jambulingam, Mal Bowatta  
20th Anniversary Celebration



# QPASTT IS NOW IN INALA

For many years, QPASTT has been providing services to clients in the Inala area. We are very happy to report that in September 2016, QPASTT signed an agreement with PCYC at Inala to lease space in their large multi-functional facility. We are sharing this space with MDA.

Our counsellors and clients are enjoying the freedom of accessing comfortable counselling rooms, and a larger meeting room. Counselling occurs via appointment, and Homework Club is in the larger meeting room every Thursday afternoon between 3.00pm and 5.00pm. The Homework Club supports high school students and some tertiary students aged between 12 and 24 years old.

Counsellors are happy working from this new space, which is located close to clients' homes and close to the many different support services in the area.





# PARTNERSHIPS AND FUNDING

*QPASTT works in close partnership with many community organisations:*

FASSTT	Child & Youth Mental Health Service
Refugee communities	Townsville Multicultural Support Group
Brisbane City Council	Queensland African Communities Council (QACC)
Logan City Council	The Queensland University of Technology (QUT)
Ipswich City Council	NSW University Centre for Refugee Research
Multicultural Development Australia (MDA)	Mater Centre for Innovation
Centacare Rockhampton; Centacare Cairns	Refugee and Immigrant Legal Service (RAILS)
Qld Transcultural Mental Health Centre	ACCESS
Australian Red Cross	Salvos Legal Services
Communityfy	The Romero Centre
Amparo Advocacy	International Health and Medical Services (IHMS)
The Hub Neighbourhood Centre, Inala	St Vincent de Paul
Mercy Family Services	Inala Community House
Schools	Inala PCYC
Loganlea TAFE	Multilink
Southbank TAFE	Salvation Army Goodna
Inala TAFE	Youth Advocacy Centre (YAC)
Community Plus	Townsville Women's Centre
Refugee Health Clinic Townsville Intercultural Centre	Youth Family Services (YFS)
Catholic Care	ECCQ

*QPASTT receives funding from both Commonwealth and State Government Departments:*

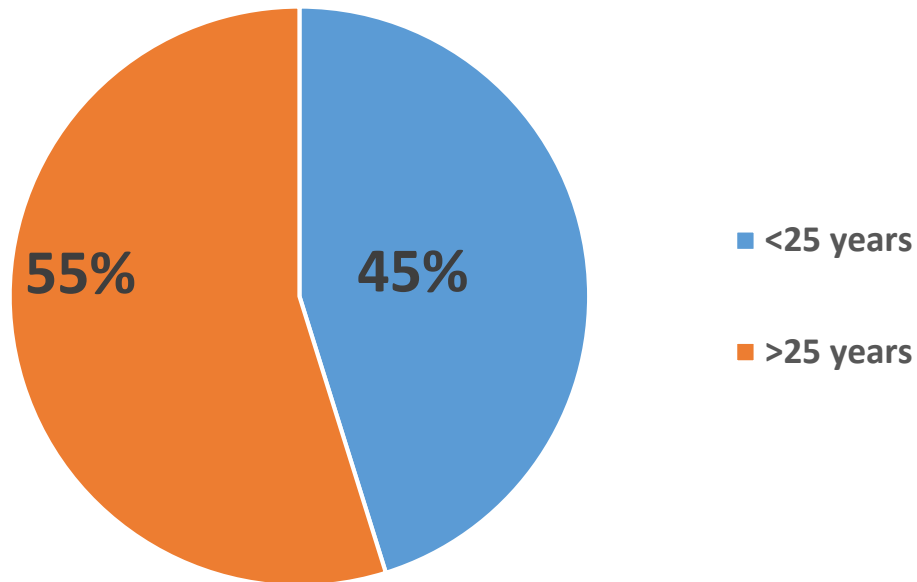
Dep't of Health (C'w)	Queensland Health (QLD)
Dep't of Immigration and Border Protection (C'w)	Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability (QLD)
Department of Social Services (C'w)	

*We would like to thank and acknowledge the support we receive from our partners and from funding bodies*

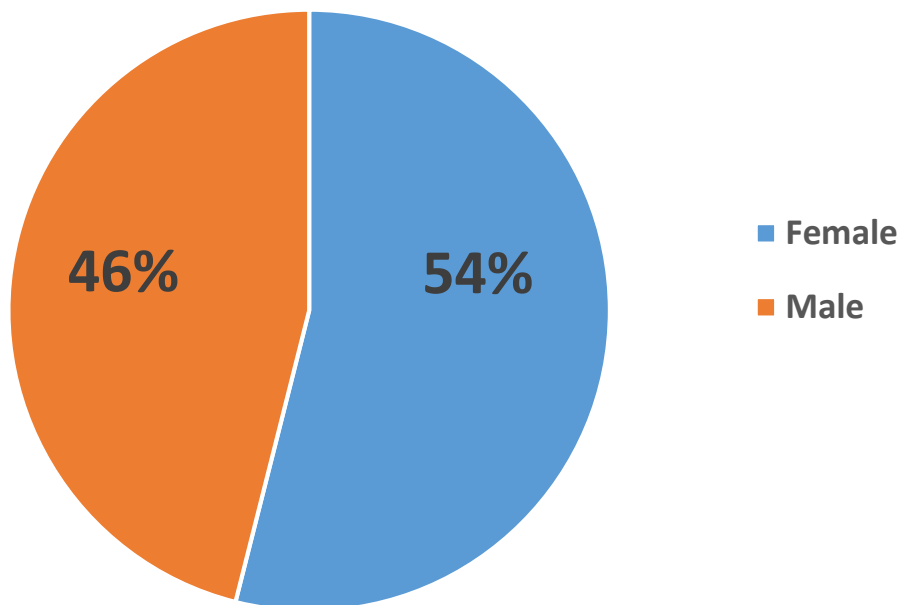


## Service Data Profile

### All clients by age

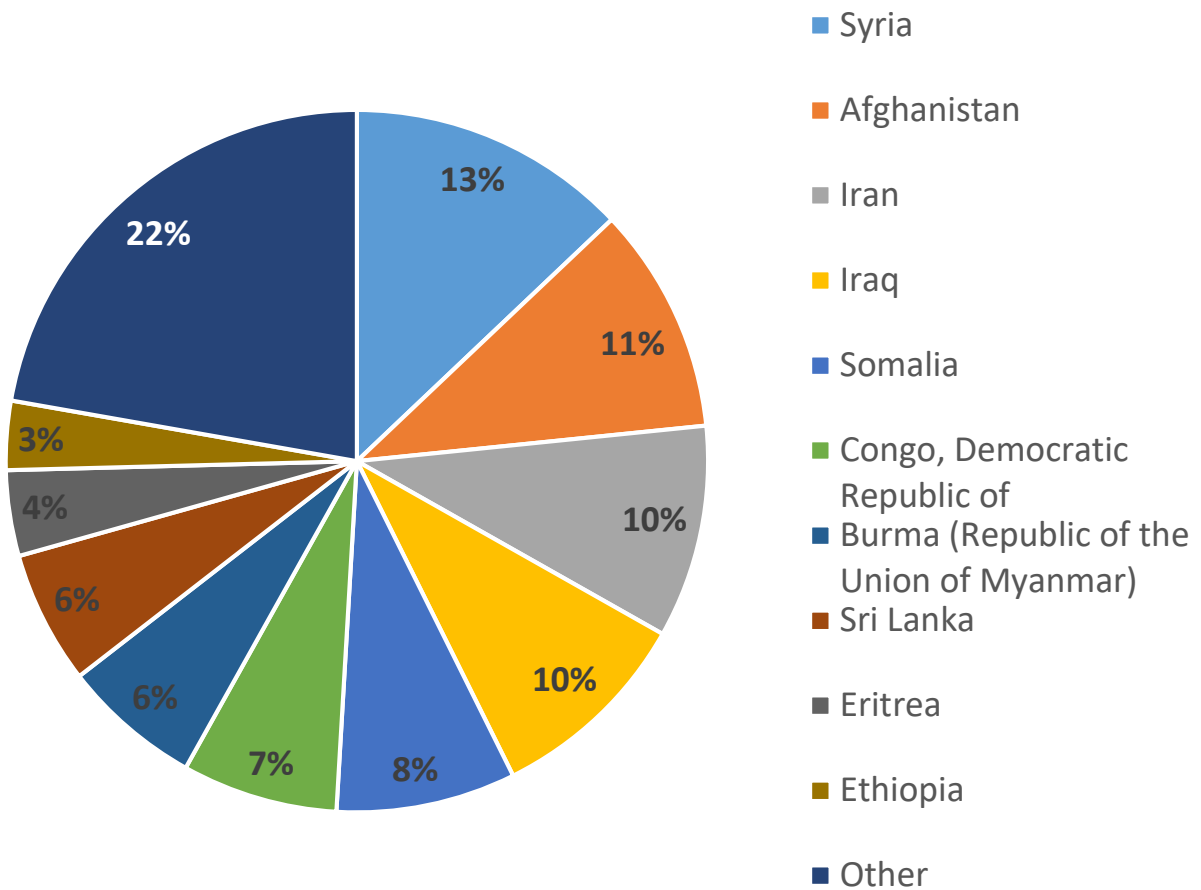


### All clients by Gender



## Service Data Profile

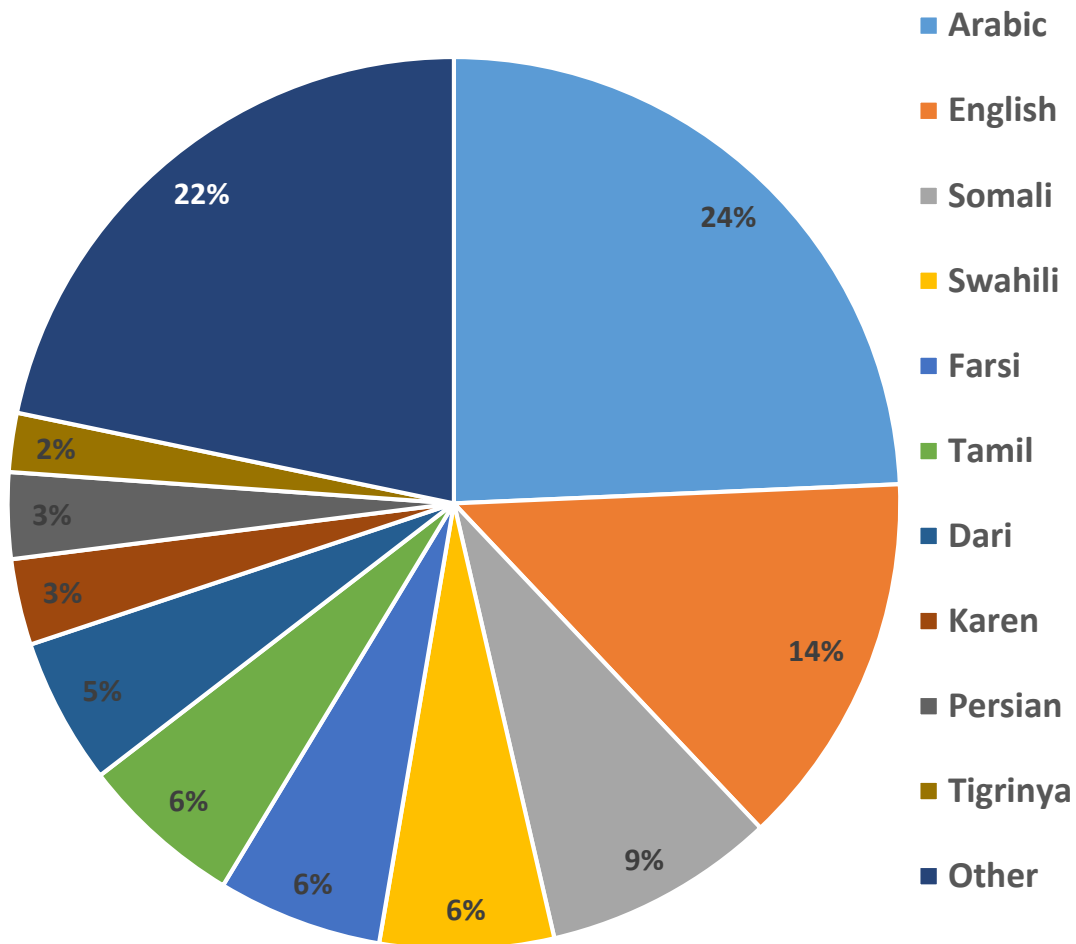
### Top 10 Countries





## Service Data Profile

### Top 10 Languages

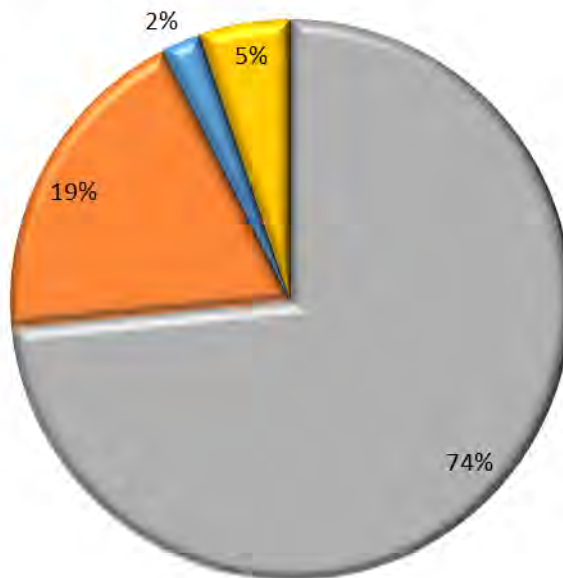


## Service Data Profile

# of intervention sessions during this FY	Long term T & T (incl family work)	Asylum Seeker Program	Suicide Prevention	School Outreach
0-10 Sessions	741	144	16	53
10-20 Sessions	148	62	6	11
20-30 Sessions	54	24	5	4
30-40 Sessions	12	12		1
40-50 Sessions	12	6	2	
50-60 Sessions	2	3	1	
60-70 Sessions	1	1		
70-80 Sessions				
80-90 Sessions				
90-100 Sessions	1			
<b>Total# of distinct clients</b>	<b>971</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>69</b>

**Clients By Program**

- Long term T & T (incl family work)
- Asylum Seeker Program
- Suicide Prevention
- School Outreach





## Service Data Profile

Group Related Activity 2016-2017			
Activity Type	Total Number of Attendances	Total Number of Sessions	Average Attendance
Big Day Out	112	3	37
Boys Group	19	2	10
Girls Group	29	2	15
Young Women's Group	32	2	16
Young Men's Group	6	1	6
Family Fun Day	206	3	69
Men's Group @ Kilcoy	79	11	7
FICT Somali Community	150	15	10
TAFE Group @ Inala	204	11	19
Adult Sewing Group @ Inala	42	6	7
Parenting Group @ St Pauls SS	64	6	11
Support Skill Connect	342	22	16
Wangarra X-Men Group	189	24	8
FICT @ Cairns	100	9	11
Yoga Group @ Logan	34	7	5
School Therapeutic Group @ St Pauls SS	46	8	6
Womens Group @ Toowoomba	56	2	28
Parenting Group	58	5	12
Homework Club @ Woolloongabba	975	96	10
Homework Club @ Inala	74	18	4
Peer Mentoring Social Group	29	7	4
School Therapeutic Group @ Richlands East SS	34	7	5
UCan2 @ Bracken Ridge TAFE	2	1	2
UCan2 @ Loganlea TAFE	463	27	17
UCan2 @ Southbank TAFE	559	28	20
UCan2 @ Yeronga SHS	74	5	15
Womens Fitness Group	116	25	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>4094</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>12</b>



*The hope  
to heal.*



# QPASTT

Queensland program of assistance  
to survivors of torture and trauma

## BRISBANE

28 Dibley Street,  
Woolloongabba  
QLD 4102

## LOGAN

390 Kingston Road,  
Slacks Creek  
QLD 4127

## ROCKHAMPTON

10 Bolsover Street,  
Rockhampton  
QLD 4700

## TOOWOOMBA

Park View Chambers,  
123 Margaret Street  
Toowoomba  
QLD 4350

## TOWNSVILLE

410 Ross River Road,  
Cranbrook  
QLD 4814

## HEAD OFFICE

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