

Emergency Relief

85 people were assisted with emergency relief by way of food assistance or payment to creditors

Home Assist Secure (HAS):

2304 Clients received a service
158 First Interviews were conducted

Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP):

3111 Home Maintenance Services were provided
698 clients received Home Modification Services
259 Occupational Therapist Referrals received
218 My Aged Care (MAC) modification new referrals via the Portal
240 My Aged Care (MAC) maintenance new referrals via the Portal

Donations

Rivers Insurance \$1000.00

The Face of ACRO, 2025



(Left to Right) Accounts Manager Neil Joseph; Programs Manager Fiona Begg; ACRO Builder Alan Elliott; Field Officer Paul Green; Aged Care Services Coordinator Lauren McNamara



Executive Committee Members Ian Stewart, Chairperson; Stephanie Whelan, Secretary; Chris Stewart, Treasurer.



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Registered as a Charity under the Collections Act (#472)

In the spirit of reconciliation ACRO Australian Community Safety & Research Organisation Incorporated acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.



“... we in our sector continue to fight the good fight even though we know that the outcomes of privatization and reducing tax revenue to sustain our ageing population loom heavily over us.”

At a time in history of great turmoil and divisiveness throughout the world, it would seem appropriate that we pause to take stock of how lucky we are in Australia. We don't have war, we don't suffer foolish and uninformed governance, and although many in our community are struggling, generally most of us have enough to eat and have access to opportunity and our community isn't severely fractured by extreme differences of opinion. Our democracy and sense of decency remain fundamentally unscathed whilst others are scorched by the fires of hatred fueled by intolerance, bigotry and fear. We have flaws - chinks in our economic armor so to speak - but these are repairable. At least I am hopeful they are.

I speak here of the crises of homelessness, escalating poverty, aged care dysfunction, childcare dysfunction, gender and race inequity. These are serious issues and demand our full attention, but they are not life and death defining and they are not impinging on the social contract that we as individuals have to the collective community.

Nobody could have foreseen the upending of communal solidarity that our friends in the United States are experiencing. The world order is changing and with it one would expect convulsions as that new order births itself. Symptomatic of these convulsions are the emergence of proxy wars between nation states aided by world powers. Definitionally, a proxy war is one where a dispute between major powers is fought in another territory without any of the major players being directly involved other than through the provisioning of weaponry. The Russian/Ukrainian war is a proxy war. The proxy war concept is a truly disturbing trend that will inevitably end poorly. Most wars in the past were fought over the dominance of resources but newer warfare is hallmarked by its quest for power and control. Again, how fortunate are we here to be on that isolated island we call Australia. That is not to say that

we won't be obliged to pick a side, but which schoolyard bully is the more palatable? Neither I would argue, but it is not in the nature of human beings to be neutral. So, we too can expect significant changes over time as demands are placed upon us to feed the coming frenzy of war. The battlelines will be ideological. What a choice for the oldest democracy on earth to have to deal with.

And so, we in our sector continue to fight the good fight even though we know that the outcomes of privatization and reducing tax revenue to sustain our ageing population loom heavily over us. The changes to aged care under new legislation create new industries which may not necessarily benefit those for whom the legislation was written. The inability to keep pace with housing needs and the competitiveness for housing generally will undoubtedly exacerbate crises for our urban and rural poor.

For ACRO this has been another challenging year with shrinking resources and increasing demand – be it for housing, home maintenance and modifications or general emergency support for those in need. There are great changes ahead as the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) Home Assist Secure and Specialist Homelessness Services funding progress towards the end of our current contract cycle and, with it, an uncertain future. The fifth estate of non-governmental Organisations is ageing with our population. With that come questions as to the viability of the sector with the cessation of services and, importantly, that sectors role in advocacy. This year has been, nonetheless, productive for the team here at ACRO.

I greatly appreciate the work of my co-workers as

Executive Director's Annual Report 2025

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they learn new skills whilst continuing to provide valuable services. Let's now review that year.

Since its inception during the early 1960s, ACRO has continually innovated and evolved from a Prisoner Aid organisation to a modern community safety advocate and program facilitator for government projects. The outcomes we deliver - and will continue to deliver - provide much-needed support for our most vulnerable citizens.

Our Housing programs, which have historical roots tracing from the 1970s, have met emergency housing needs for a range of client groups across the decades. Our current priority is housing for families from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds, many of whom have experienced family violence and trauma. Our staff provide case management support based on negotiated goals determined by our clients, seeking to provide the tools for these clients to eventually move into their own longer-term stable affordable housing. One of the greatest challenges we face is the diminishing level of government housing available and the movement of more families into the private rental market, where their weekly rent is far in excess of the recommended 30% of household income.

Many of our families are now staying in ACRO housing for much longer periods as a consequence. The inability of families in crisis housing to access social housing as an exit point is causing significant blockages in the housing sector. The decision by all levels of government to champion Community Housing and “affordable housing” as a substitute for government built and managed housing is an abrogation of social responsibility which is not in the best interests of a significant proportion of the families we support. Affordable housing is, by definition, at least 75% of current market rent. This is simply not affordable for many people on a fixed income. There are also large numbers of individuals and families accommodated in State-subsidized motels across Queensland who are homeless, yet not visible. This accommodation is highly questionable as a solution to homelessness with families inadequately housed, required to move from room to



Dr Clive Begg Executive Director

room and hotel to hotel for extended periods of time. It is not acceptable that solutions to our growing homelessness crisis is not the number one issue for all levels of government. At a time when our city is focused on building expensive high-rise apartments and future Olympic venues, a growing number of people don't have a place to call home. This is a shameful situation for a country rich in resources where there are no caps on the money that can be spent on sporting events or venues.

Our home maintenance and home modification programs for the elderly – subsidized by government funding - have, however, enabled large numbers of ageing clients to remain living independently in their own homes. The new Aged Care Act and introduction of the Support at Home program were introduced because of the Aged Care Royal Commission. From these Commission findings, the government intend phasing out the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP), which currently provides services to over 800,000 clients across Australia transitioning them to home care packages. Currently CHSP is funded until 30 June 2027. It is unclear how 800,000 people can transition particularly in light of significant challenges with the new Support at Home program, including reported significant delays with client assessments, reported issues with the new assessment tool and the need for clients to sign lengthy service agreements. It is worth noting that, of the programs that ACRO has operated over the years, our CHSP and Home Assist Home Maintenance and Modifications programs attract significantly more compliments than any others. This may be, in part, due to the generation of clients we serve but it is remarkable nonetheless to receive such regular positive feedback for the work of our staff and our trade contractors. This past financial year we received 17 pages of positive feedback from our older clients or their families.

Our emergency relief program continues to provide material aid for a range of clients including food cards and financial assistance for essentials including rent, electricity and other utility accounts for those suffering a financial crisis.

Although the organisation has significantly downsized, as reported in previous Annual Reports, we believe we continue to “punch above our weight”. In addition to our contracted programs we also continue to search for additional grants to value-add to the work of the organisation.

During the year we successfully applied for a partnership grant with the Sisters of Mercy in NSW who provided a grant to enable the women and children from CALD backgrounds situated in our crisis housing to access a number of client-identified opportunities which they otherwise could not afford. We were pleased that the grant acknowledged some of economic challenges faced by families by agreeing to fund specific requests from our clients. These have included Driving lessons, swimming lessons and a range of support around education and training.

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In time, it seems inevitable that our historical service delivery for older people will disappear as block funding is replaced by payment in arrears with small Organisations forced to withdraw from service delivery and only larger Organisations and private enterprise companies being large enough to participate in service delivery—with profit being the prime motivator. We have seen this occur across the Child Care sector, which is now an industry and Aged Care is progressing down the same path.

It seems likely that the user-pay approach for the elderly moving forward may exacerbate poverty amongst older people. Certainly, it is likely to reduce the number of services that can be accessed by a group of citizens who previously were given considerable priority in terms of their health and well-being. The government appears to be prioritizing payment for clinical services however this decision leaves many older people (after November 1 2025 when the new Aged Care Act commenced) having to pay considerable costs for services including basics like showering and domestic assistance, which are not clinical care but still essential services for many older people

wanting to remain living at home.

As for ACRO's future funding, we have contracts in place that will enable continuity of servicing until 30 June 2027 for our CHSP services and 30 June 2028 for our housing and home assist services with the future beyond this time unclear.

New funding opportunities are limited, but we will continue to explore all opportunities. Our management committee continue to guide us and strategically plan for both our current delivery service and our future goals.

What can be said for ACRO this past year is that it has continued to serve its constituents in a professional and caring manner and we have exceeded all our required program outputs with client feedback indicating a high level of satisfaction with our services and the manner they have been treated by our Staff and contractors.

I would like to acknowledge our strong team: Fiona, Neil, Lauren, Emily, Alan and Paul for their empathy and skill in dealing with our clients.

I also acknowledge our Contractors whose professionalism and trade skills have value-added to the lives of all with whom they have met.

I also thank my Executive colleagues Ian, Chris and Stephanie for their diligence this past year.

Program Outputs for the 2024/25 financial period:

Homelessness Facilities encompassing ACRO's own housing and Government provided housing:

- Fully occupied;
- Clients receiving regular contact and case management
- Repairs and Replacements have been undertaken as required
- There has been some limited exits for clients into more longer term housing
- Mercy Partnership one year grant funding has enabled targeted self identified learning opportunities such as swimming lessons and driving instruction for CALD families
- 6545 bed nights of accommodation were provided under the Specialist Homelessness Program (SHS) with 322 clients unable to be accommodated;
- 2589 bed nights of accommodation were provided directly by ACRO into its own accommodation, under the Safe Places Program.