



# Executive Director's Annual Report 2013

*"We will persist...."*

Dr Clive Begg, Executive Director



2013 was a very sad year with the loss of one of our longest supporters, Julie Stewart. As the wife of our chairperson Ian and mother of ACRO treasurer Chris, Julie had provided an incalculable degree of support to ACRO both directly and indirectly. Julie was a regular attendee at many an AGM and ACRO function over the years. It was a considerable shock to learn of her unexpected death in May of this year and she will be greatly missed by us all. Julie personified in her life the word "giving" and always did so in a spirit of generosity and optimism. Her most memorable time with ACRO was accompanying the Australian Teens Advocating Change (ATAC) tour of north Queensland where Julie acting as chaperon, and at times referee, travelled with Clive and ten teenagers in the ACRO Hiace mini bus from Brisbane to Cairns and back. For this alone Julie deserved a medal but she contributed so much more in her career as a teacher, as a member of her local community and as part of a family who have given so much back to the community. We are grateful that she was part of ACRO for so long and we celebrate her effect on all our lives whilst at the same time being greatly saddened at her passing.

families who completed a support period secured private rental housing with support by our housing staff.

As well as providing case management support during their housing stay ACRO also provide assistance to clients in moving in and out of properties and sourcing furniture and fittings—as many of our clients have very little when they come to us. To this end we would like to acknowledge the considerable support provided by a number of organizations and individuals who have assisted in helping families with much needed items to start their new homes. Donations through the Givit Website have been much appreciated as well as the following people who responded when the call went out : Ana Oertel, Jen Dainer, Amanda Karo, Scout, Melly, Celia, the Munro Family and Mary. Thank you to all those who have assisted us particularly at the last minute.

Unfortunately there are still families that we are unable to assist due to lack of vacancies and there were 350 persons who sought accommodation for themselves and or families whom we were unable to assist this year.

**Welfare** ACRO has received funding from both the state and federal governments for emergency relief. This has enabled us to assist 410 people this year. The majority of this assistance is provided through food assistance to families, particularly through our annual Christmas project—which includes families of prisoners as a particular group in need. However a growing level of assistance has also been requested and provided in relation to rent arrears, utilities (gas and electricity) and moving costs.

**Other acknowledgements :** We are extremely indebted to many supporters including the Rotary Club of Toowong (who provide free movie tickets annually for families in our crisis accommodation; the Brisbane City

Council Community Grants Program; our volunteers, particularly Fay, Christina, Del and Frank; Staff from the Outlook at Boonah particularly Aisha and Rob; Other Community Organisations and public servants with whom we work in partnership to assist clients in particular staff from Multicultural Development Association (MDA) especially Zuleiga, Julie Anne and Lailah; the Department of Housing area office staff particularly the Inala office; the members of the Stafford Community Development Group; Kylie and staff from the Community Place; St Vincent De Paul Settlement Services staff (Goodna) in particular Simon, Judit and Brenda; Yen from the Vietnamese Community Centre at Darra and Lawrence from the Portfolio Management area of the Department of Housing and Public Works. As you can see, ACRO has forged important partnerships in order to achieve positive outcomes for our clients.

100 % of clients in ACRO supported accommodation crisis housing program received offers of public rental housing within a three – six month period from the department of housing. This is an outstanding achievement and we acknowledge the Department of Housing.

**Day Tripper Program** – This program continues to grow in



DayTripper Lone Pine Cruise



DayTripper Albert River Winery



DayTripper Old Government House



DayTripper Mystery Tour 2012

popularity with 350 people participating in bus trips throughout South-East Queensland this past year. Thanks to Nancy for her continuing coordination of the program amongst her range of other duties. We also thank our great volunteers.



ACRO Staff members (L to R) Ed Wilson, Ben Green, Nancy Pitinga, Paul Green, Harry McKinnon, Graham Kersnovske. Insert: Jennifer Abdur-Rahman (far right); Cora Mijares (far left)

## HAS/HACC

This program celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> year of operation within ACRO this year with our 12000th client registered. The program currently has over 9000 active clients. With just over 3000 jobs completed through the state funded Home Assist Secure (HAS) program and over 5000 maintenance jobs completed for Home and Community Care (HACC) eligible clients and an additional 1700 modifications for HACC clients being completed. This year HACC funding changed for clients who are under 65 with a disability. The State government department of Community Care assumed responsibility for HACC eligible client funding for those under 65 (people with a disability or a carer) whilst the federal government takes responsibility for those HACC eligible clients over 65. ACRO currently has funding agreements in place until 2015 for HACC minor maintenance and modifications. The state based Home Assist Secure funding (over the last couple of years) has only been on an annual basis and this situation remains with the state government announcing continuation of funding for the program until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014. The significant outcomes that this program provides to older people and people of any age with a disability wanting to remain living independently in their own homes should not be underestimated. By ensuring qualified, reliable tradespeople, assisting with the cost of labour for essential home maintenance and modifications and providing invaluable information to clients about a range of health, safety and security issues, this program value adds significantly to the lives of older people and people with a

disability.

**Youth Camps** 25 Young people took part in the camps this year with camps undertaken during school holidays at Stradbroke Island, Harrys Hut near Noosa and the Outlook at Boonah.

**No Interest Loan Scheme (Nils) Program :** ACRO commenced this program this year. In the first nine months of operation we have written six (6) loans for low income clients for a range of household items. Three of these loans have been repaid already and one client has commenced a second loan. The program provides loans of up to \$1200 for low income clients accessing ACRO services for essential household items or health and education needs. We hope to increase our number of loans in the coming year but are looking for volunteers to assist in the program. Fiona attended the Australia wide NILS conference in Melbourne in June and found it a very valuable networking experience.

**Student Accommodation** As a result of government funding reductions to the organisation a decision was reached by the Executive Committee to refurbish one of its properties as a student accommodation service. It was decided that the accommodation would be set up as a rooming facility for international students. Accordingly, some internal renovations took place to create four bedrooms, two discrete kitchens two bathrooms and three living areas. The facility was furnished to a basic level. The first student was accommodated in December 2012 with three others coming to us in January 2013.

**Olgas at Shorncliffe** The opening and operation of Olga's at Shorncliffe has impacted positively on the pub-

lic profile for ACRO.

The commencement of Olga's at Shorncliffe was made as investment in future income and profitability to replace projected losses of grant income and profits. It was also established as a social enterprise. As such, ACRO has applied commercial strategies to maximize improvements in human and environmental well-being, rather than maximising profits for external shareholders. This objective retains a consistent approach with charitable objective.

Whereas many commercial enterprises would consider themselves to have social objectives (but commitment to these objectives is motivated by the perception that such commitment will ultimately make the enterprise more financially valuable) social enterprises differ in that, inversely, they do not aim to offer any benefit to their investors, except where they believe that doing so will ultimately further their capacity to realize their social and environmental goals. Social



High Tea at Olga's at Shorncliffe

enterprises are differentiated through transparent evidence



ACRO Programs Manager Fiona Begg

that their social aims are primary, and that profits are secondary. Olga's is moving towards profitability; the work of the organisation is better understood and more directly supported by customers, and local citizens are engaging either by direct support of the business or by way of donations. Olga's website is [www.olgas.net.au](http://www.olgas.net.au). We thank Olga's clients for their ongoing support and for their many financial donations. We also acknowledge the work of our Staff in maintaining the high standards required in hospitality. I particularly note the efforts of Dominik, Julie, Sophie, Jeremy and our juniors Emily and Tom. We all are working towards a progressive growth in the business as an income replacement project and as a visible social enterprise that enhances the work of the Charity.

**Challenges.** The biggest challenge for staff this past year has continued to be the increasing administrative burden (emanating from public servants) in relation to increasing levels of reporting, particularly through the introduction of multiple databases and "portals" simultaneously.