

WHY DOES

STARTTS EXIST?

AS part of its international humanitarian commitment and as a co-signatory to the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Australia has provided asylum to refugees from a wide range of national, cultural, religious and language groups since the end of World War II. That commitment is currently 13,000 people a year, over 40% of whom settle in NSW, and over 60% of whom are estimated to be torture survivors.

The physical consequences of torture can include chronic pain; broken bones; injuries to eyes, teeth, ears, genitals, rectum and reproductive organs; cardio-pulmonary disorders; brain damage and diseases resulting from conditions of incarceration.

But the psychological effects are often the most distressing and debilitating. They can include depression, severe anxiety, sleep disorders (particularly nightmares), survivor guilt, loss of self esteem, memory and concentration problems, intrusive thoughts and flashbacks, difficulties in social functioning and family conflict.

In addition, refugees face the many losses and demands associated with exile and the process of migration and settlement in a new country with a strange language and culture, and different social norms and socio-political systems.

Specialised assistance and early intervention is crucial to counteract the effect of these experiences and to assist many torture and trauma survivors regain their ability to live fruitful and fulfilling lives.

Since its establishment in late 1988 STARTTS has been at the forefront of providing that assistance, and of developing innovative responses to the needs of refugees living in NSW.

ABOUT STARTTS

During the 1980's there was increasing recognition by refugee communities and some staff within the Health Service that the mainstream health system was unable to deal adequately with the needs of refugee torture and trauma survivors. Lobbying by these groups for a specialist service resulted in the establishment of STARTTS in late 1988.

Since the early years STARTTS has grown considerably, and the range of services has developed and expanded in response to client needs.

STARTTS employs a multidisciplinary staff from a wide range of cultural backgrounds reflecting our client group and covering a range of languages.

The service is managed by a Management Committee appointed by the NSW Minister for Health, which includes representatives of human rights organisations, professionals in the field such as psychiatrists, and community positions.

STARTTS main funding source is the NSW Department of Health with additional funding from other federal and state government departments. STARTTS also relies on individuals and corporations to finance our work.

STARTTS' mission is to develop and implement ways to facilitate the healing process of survivors of torture and refugee trauma, and to assist and resource individuals and organisations who work with them to provide appropriate, effective and culturally sensitive services.

Our clients: Individuals and communities from refugee and refugee-like situations, now living in NSW, who have survived torture and other traumatic experiences in the context of organised violence.

Service providers in NSW, to whom STARTTS provides training, research, advocacy and consultancy services.

OUR SERVICES

STARTTS provides an holistic range of services which have evolved in response to client needs, and include:

- culturally appropriate counselling and therapy (for individuals, families and groups);
- physiotherapy and bodywork, including individual sessions, pain management groups and hydrotherapy programs;
- group work, including self-support groups, English and craft classes;
- activities for young people, including camps, excursions and groups;
- referral and case management;
- community liaison and consultation;
- community development projects;
- training of mainstream service-providers in awareness of refugee issues and strategies to work with this client group;
- lobbying and advocacy on refugee issues; and
- research.

From the outset STARTTS has employed bicultural staff with strong community links, and has been committed to providing services appropriate to the many different cultures which comprise its client group. It also consults regularly with refugee communities about needs and the development of appropriate services.

STARTTS provides a very client focussed service which is constantly changing to meet client needs, and recognises the need for different approaches and services for different individuals and communities.

STARTTS also works closely with other service-providers to develop partnerships to meet the needs of refugees.



Banner-painting at Multicultural Youth Camp

STATEWIDE SERVICE

STARTTS is a statewide service and is committed to extending access to specialised torture and trauma rehabilitation services. This is achieved through an outreach strategy which combines direct services on a sessional basis with training, support and consultancy to mainstream health services in other areas of metropolitan Sydney and regional NSW.

LIBRARY

STARTTS also has a library containing books and articles on torture and trauma, human rights issues and relevant State and Federal government policy issues, which is available for use by appointment.



Middle Eastern men's group outing



Spanish-speaking women's hydrotherapy group

All photographs are used with permission of the participants.

PROGRAMS FOR NEW ARRIVALS

STARTTS is also funded by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs to provide early intervention services as part of their Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy. The Early Intervention Program (EIP) assists newly arrived humanitarian entrants with their practical, social and emotional needs in the first year after arrival. Please see the EIP pamphlet for details.

REFERRAL

We accept referrals from any source, including self-referral. To refer individuals or families who are experiencing problems related to their traumatic experiences please ring the Intake Officer on (02) 9794 1900. STARTTS has a managed waiting list with priority based on assessment of need.

OUR SERVICE OPERATES ON THE BASIS OF STRICTEST CONFIDENTIALITY AND IMPARTIALITY.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Whatever clients tell us will not be told to anyone else unless the client wants it to be. Any interpreter who works with clients at STARTTS is also bound by confidentiality.

IMPARTIALITY: We believe that all people have a right to treatment and care when their human rights have been violated, no matter who they are. At STARTTS we work with individuals and groups requiring assistance regardless of their country of origin, political or religious beliefs.

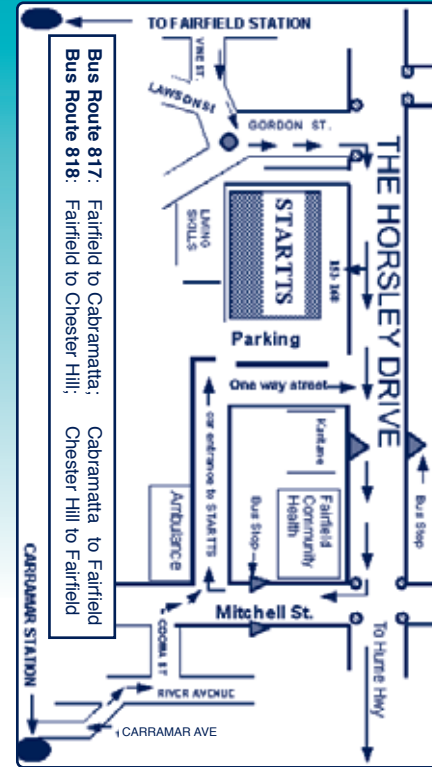
WHAT IF A CLIENT SPEAKS LITTLE OR NO ENGLISH?

We currently have counsellors who speak the following languages: Arabic, Bosnian, Croatian, Dari, Farsi, French, Khmer, Kihunde, Kinande, Lingala, Luganda, Lulubo, Pashtu, Portuguese, Serbian, Spanish, Swahili and Vietnamese.

If a client speaks any other language we can arrange for a professional interpreter.

ALL STARTTS' CLIENT SERVICES ARE FREE

HOW TO FIND STARTTS



For more information about STARTTS please contact us on

[02] 9794 1900

[02] 9794 1910

The office hours are 8.30 am - 5.00 pm Monday to Friday

STARTTS has branch offices in AUBURN & LIVERPOOL

AUBURN OFFICE

[02] 9646 6666

[02] 9646 6610

PO Box 258,
Auburn NSW 2144

1st Floor, 44 - 50
Auburn Road, Auburn
NSW 2144

LIVERPOOL OFFICE

[02] 8778 2000

[02] 8778 2020

PO Box 203,
Fairfield NSW 2165

3rd Floor,
157 - 161 George Street,
Liverpool NSW 2170

STARTTS

Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation
of Torture and Trauma Survivors (NSW)

"Three or four minutes are not enough to describe how much STARTTS has helped me and how much this organisation means to me, my family and all the people with similar experiences, regardless of their nation, religion or race."

Words of a STARTTS client
speaking at the opening
of the new STARTTS building in 1996.

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