



Welcome to this issue of Refugee Transitions. STARTTS' first year as an NGO and Affiliated Health Organization has been as productive, rewarding and exciting as we hoped, but also as challenging as we feared, and all in all absolutely hectic. Hence the lateness of this issue of RT, for which I offer our sincere apologies.

STARTTS change in governance and the separation from South Sydney West Area Health Service, which had provided administrative and corporate support to STARTTS since its inception meant that STARTTS had to develop the capacity to perform in-house the full suite of administrative, financial, audit and human resource services necessary for an organization with over 100 staff. Meanwhile, we also had one of our most challenging and eventful years from both service provision and service development perspectives.

We almost doubled the number of clients seen by the Early Intervention Program, through an expanded team, in order to deal with increased demand and a growing waiting list, we continued to refine and expand aspects of our bio-psycho-social integrated approach, attracting the interest and praise of eminent visitors such as Professor Van der Kolk and Dr Norman Doidge, and we expanded our training and staff development programs to include two public seminars and up to six live, streamed evening public lectures attended by colleagues from most torture and trauma services in Australia and New Zealand.

While it would be fair to say that all this activity has delayed this issue of Refugee Transitions, it certainly has not detracted from the quality of the content.

One of the themes that has characterised the stories we have written since launching Transitions 11 years ago has been 'forgotten conflicts'. In this issue we have featured the Philippines, a country that confronts one of the most protracted conflicts in Southeast Asia.

In addition, commencing with this issue, we have decided to begin to identify and feature successes in the area of post-conflict transition, reconstruction and nation building. Certainly a much more difficult, albeit very exciting and rewarding research task for our editor. This time we have included an article on Uruguay. This is a country that experienced a dictatorship and more than a decade of political repression but managed to rebuild its democracy and move on. Its current president was a political prisoner who survived many long years of abysmal conditions and torture in clandestine military jails, but is now leading the country into a promising future. A message of hope and vindication for torture and trauma survivors around the world!

We have also featured an interview with Brita Sydhoff, director of the International Rehabilitation Council, located in Copenhagen, an umbrella organisation for 143 torture and trauma centres in 73 countries around the world.

Our clinical coverage highlights the evolving nature of torture treatments. In this issue, the article New Frontiers in Trauma Treatment provides Dr Bessel van der Kolk's insights into the treatment implications from the evolving understanding of the neurophysiology of trauma.

Moving on to a different subject Dr John Casey from the City University of New York discusses his views on police practices around the world. This is a fascinating subject taking into consideration the way international crime is increasingly growing with globalisation, challenging police to work more cooperatively and effectively within a legal and humane framework.

Refugee Transitions exists to raise issues but also to share knowledge and expertise. We are always looking for new writers that will provide new insights into existing or new themes. We are also interested in maintaining communication and dialogue with international centres that provide similar services to those of STARTTS.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

**Jorge Aroche**  
Chief Executive Officer  
STARTTS



Two hundred years ago a political exile from Ireland, a bloke called Michael Dwyer, became the first settler to the Liverpool area, one of a 'bunch of rebels' no longer welcome in their homeland.

It was with this tale that state member for Liverpool, the Hon Paul Lynch, reminded the audience of the true history of both the Liverpool area and the Australian nation.

Minister Lynch was speaking at the official opening of STARTTS expanded Liverpool office in late April. The larger space will allow STARTTS to significantly increase our client capacity. New facilities in the office include three new counselling rooms, an arts and craft room, a room for physiotherapy and other bodywork, space for 14 extra staff and capabilities for neurofeedback, a specialised form of therapy involving the use of a computer game. Particularly useful is the addition of a group room which is already in high demand.

As noted by the Minister responsible for mental health, the Hon Barbara Perry, who also spoke at the launch, the celebration was the culmination of a great deal of hard work and a period of growth for STARTTS.

Minister Perry went on to acknowledge how difficult it was for refugees to overcome their difficult backgrounds and how resilient refugees are in facing the challenges of a new country.

These words were borne out by the two clients who spoke at the launch. Gheed Al-damook reflected on the trauma her Mandaean family had suffered in Iraq "I went through so many things, with being attacked, mistreated,

which made us suffer a great deal and lose confidence in the world around us. So I had to protect my kids, by not allowing them to play with other kids and to teach them how to defend themselves in order to not get hurt.

"With STARTTS we found all the help that we needed and be able to take our children out of the dark tunnel that they were in. Those people embraced our pains and sorrows and helped us to regain the trust we had missed in our country. The program was so effective, with our kids and with us."

Her words were echoed by another Mandaean client, Akhlas Al Kilani who lost her husband to violence in Iraq. "I found everything in Australia. Now it's my country. It's given me and my son a new future. Gamal [her counsellor] is like a best friend for me. Thank you community of STARTTS."

Being able to help more people like Gheed and Akhlas is well worth the investment.