



STARTTS

ANNUAL REPORT

2018/2019

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land over which sovereignty was never ceded. We acknowledge their elders, past, present and emerging. We acknowledge the ongoing trauma of colonisation and dispossession. We support social justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Cover: Dilnigar Alim, Uyghur Traditional Dance Performance, STARTTS 30th Anniversary Celebration



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About STARTTS

NSW SERVICE FOR THE TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION OF TORTURE AND TRAUMA SURVIVORS

STARTTS, the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors, helps people from refugee backgrounds deal with the scars of torture and other traumatic experiences related to organised violence, and rebuild their life in Australia.

STARTTS provides expert services to assist people to recover from torture and refugee trauma, including counselling, physiotherapy, groups, programs for children and young people, and community development activities.

In 2018-2019 STARTTS provided clinical and community development interventions to almost 7,500 individuals and families, and also worked with refugee communities to enhance their capacity to develop support structures and access external resources.

STARTTS' clients are people living in NSW who came to Australia as refugees or asylum seekers, or who have a refugee-like background.

We also work with other organisations and individuals to help them work more effectively with people from refugee backgrounds. Opened in 1988, STARTTS is one of Australia's leading organisations for the treatment of torture and refugee trauma survivors.

Our Mission

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.



Since 1988
STARTTS has
assisted 70,975
people from 169
countries heal the
scars of torture
and refugee
trauma



Chairman's Report

A/PROF. ROGER GURR



This year represents an important milestone in the history of STARTTS as we celebrate our 30th Anniversary and look forward to another 30 years of success in supporting our clients as they rebuild their lives following experiences of torture and trauma.

The need for STARTTS' services is now more present than ever given the increasing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers around the world and the Australian Government's extended commitment to resettling people as part of the Humanitarian Program.

We have worked with more than 70,000 clients to support them on the pathway to recovery, through an ever widening array of interventions. It is of great satisfaction to us that so many clients have gone on to build fulfilling and productive lives in Australia, after living through such significant traumatic events.

Since its inception, STARTTS has dedicated itself to providing high quality clinical and community development interventions to clients and to the communities that rely on our support, to overcome their experiences of trauma. STARTTS has also long relied on the progress of science in understanding and restoring brain function after trauma, increasingly providing useful frameworks to inform our interventions.

Application of Neurofeedback techniques to trauma recovery has provided an effective new tool to treat the disordered brain activity, causing high distress and poor functioning, experienced by some of our most severely affected clients. The establishment of STARTTS Australian Neurofeedback Institute this year, is a pivotal point in our efforts to improve the life of torture and trauma survivors. It will not only further our work in the use of EEG assessments and neurofeedback treatment, in addressing the impact of trauma, but also provide a vehicle to train others in this field. Considering the very high levels of developmental trauma in the general community, and the step wise correlation of trauma with the severity of mental and physical health conditions, the focused investment in STARTTS and its research is providing real dividends to the wider communities in Australia and the world.

Together with the rest of the STARTTS Board I am immensely proud of the work that STARTTS has done, the way the organisation continues to progress, and the differences we have made in the lives of refugees and asylum seekers, not just in this last year, but over the last 30 years. We look forward to it continuing in the years to come.



2019 Humanitarian Award Winners: Zoe Hogan, Refugee Health Service Disability Project, Kaye Harrison, Nohara Odicho, Dr Shanti Roman, Susan Pancaldi, Jane Wallace, Tamana Mirzada and Hedayat Osyan

Chief Executive Officer

MR JORGE AROCHE



2018-2019 joins what has become a long sequence of very successful and eventful years in the rich tapestry of STARTTS 30 year history. In the context of what continues to be a very challenging and increasingly difficult situation for refugees worldwide, STARTTS has managed to develop new programs, enhance its coverage of rural and regional New South Wales and begin to tackle in earnest the job of ensuring that its growing expertise in the area of trauma treatment is shared with other organisations and professionals in Australia and worldwide.

The highlights of this year's progress include the development of STARTTS Australian Neuro-Feedback Institute (ANFI) designed to enable STARTTS to share its growing expertise in this area, and the establishment of the promising Community Living Support for Refugees program (CLS-R) in partnership with New Horizons. This is a new program funded by NSW Health focused on the needs of those clients most affected by the impact of torture and other traumatic events associated with the refugee experience. These clients, whose mental health condition interferes with their capacity to access STARTTS services on a regular basis and thus benefit from the array of treatment approaches available today, have been an ongoing concern for the service. The intensive support made possible by this program will enable them to more readily access and benefit from services available from STARTTS and the health system as a whole.

The expanded Families in Cultural Transitions (FICT) program, and STARTTS School Liaison Program (SLP) came of age in 2018-2019, producing impressive results measured in enhanced readiness to receive refugees by many state and independent schools across New South Wales, and in more clients of school-age referred to STARTTS for individual attention. In addition to supporting systemic change, training teachers and school counsellors and coordinating referrals for more specialised attention, the program also helped to coordinate a vast array of individual and group interventions provided by STARTTS' Youth and Child and Adolescent Teams, often as joint projects with school staff.

Meanwhile, 2018-2019 also witnessed an increased focus on services provided to our youngest group of clients; toddlers and pre-school aged children whose attachment and development have been affected, primarily by the impact of trauma on their parents.

I couldn't be prouder of the efforts and achievements of STARTTS' staff during this year, and as always it is the inspiration we get from our incredible clients and the support from our funding bodies, our partners and our board that makes it all possible and worth worthwhile. Thank you for your support!



Joseph Tawadros, Oud Player, STARTTS Refugee Ball

Board of Directors

STARTTS BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2018/2019

A/Prof. Roger Gurr
(Chair)

Ms Ezel Jupiter
(Deputy Chair)

Mr Colin Hickling
(Treasurer)

Mr Jorge Aroche
(CEO and Secretary)

**Prof. Abd-Elmasih
Malak**

Ms Annie Harvey

Prof. Derrick Silove

Mr George Lombard

Mr John Richardson

Mr Michael Kakakios

Ms Karen Burns
since May 2019

Dates of STARTTS Board of Director Meetings 2018-2019

Executive of the Board of Directors

4 February 2019
25 March 2019

Full Meeting of the Board of Directors

10 September 2018
10 December 2018
11 March 2019
20 May 2019
24 June 2019

Locations

LOCATIONS OF STARTTS OFFICES

STARTTS Head office

152-168 The Horsley Drive
Carramar NSW 2163

Phone: (02) 9646 6700

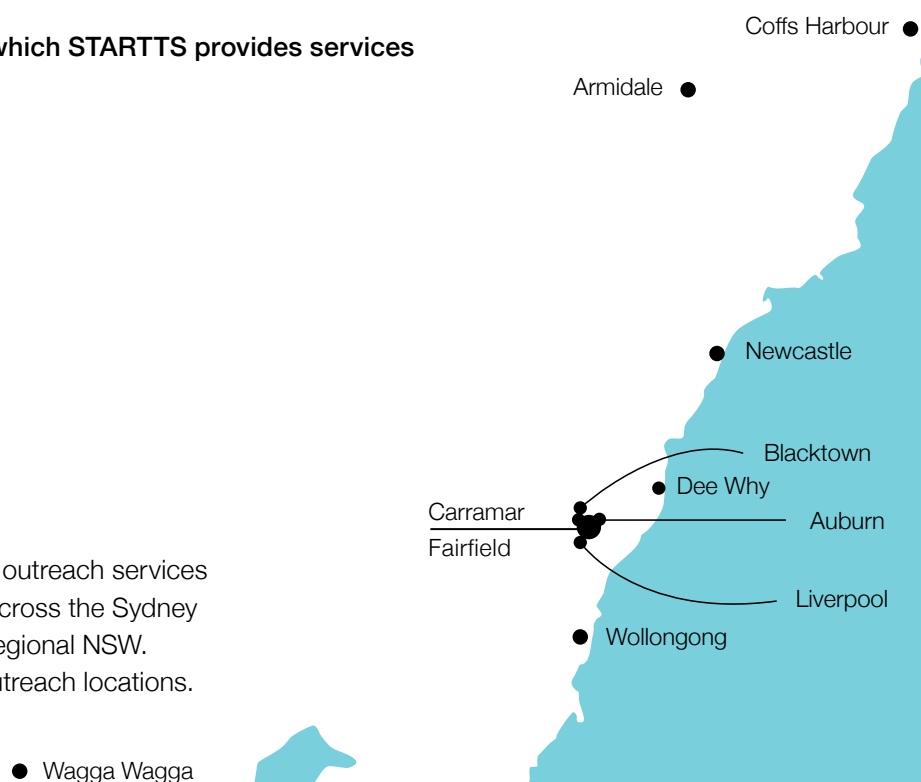
Email: stts-startts@health.nsw.gov.au

Web: startts.org.au

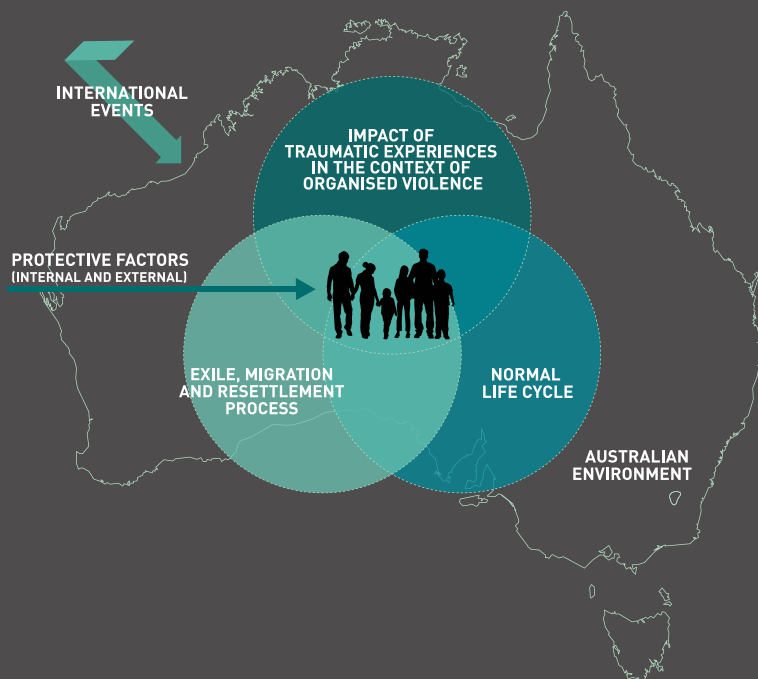
Major locations from which STARTTS provides services

Armidale
Auburn
Blacktown
Carramar (main office)
Coffs Harbour
Dee Why
Fairfield
Liverpool
Newcastle
Wagga Wagga
Wollongong

STARTTS also provides outreach services
in a range of locations across the Sydney
metropolitan area and regional NSW.
Please contact us for outreach locations.

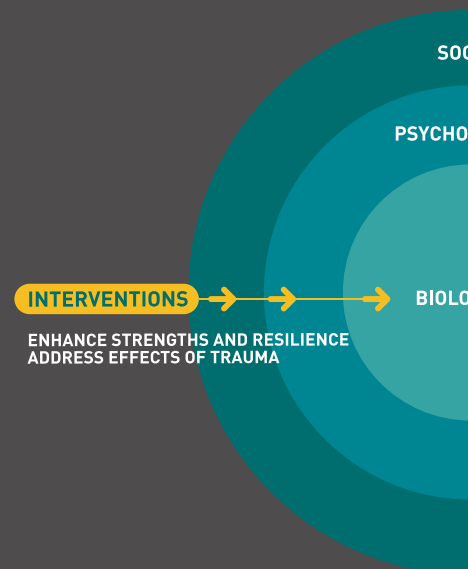


STARTTS Service Provision Model



FRAMEWORK 1: THE COMPLEX INTERACTION

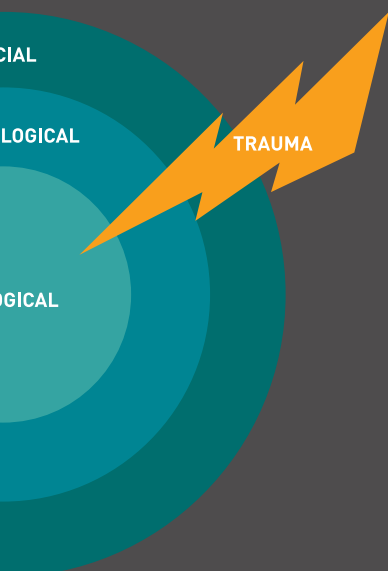
STARTTS provides services to torture and trauma survivors using a model that recognises the socio-political, cultural and human rights context of the traumatic events that people have experienced. The model also acknowledges the complex interaction between the effects of these traumatic experiences and subsequent stresses associated with the migration and settlement processes.



FRAMEWORK 2: BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL

The model recognises the complex interaction between biological, psychological and social levels, and the impact of these interactions on the development of trauma and the growth of resilience. It also acknowledges the impact of interventions and trauma on stress related problems.

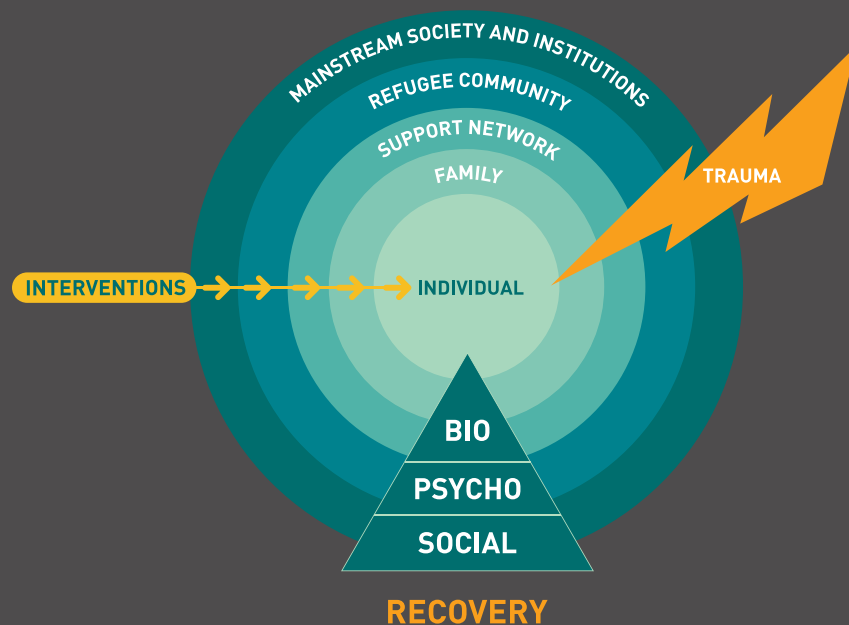
Based on the above philosophy, STARTTS services are broad, and include psychiatric assessment and intervention, support groups, yoga and various strategies to increase resilience and refugee outcomes.



WORK 2: SOCIAL MODEL

...s the impact of trauma
...logical and interpersonal
...s informed by scientific
...ne neuroscience of
...ing body of evidence
...treatments for traumatic
...ems and disorders.

...why, the services provided by
...ude assessment, counselling,
...interventions, family therapy, group
...outh programs, child counselling,
...the capacity of support networks
...communities.

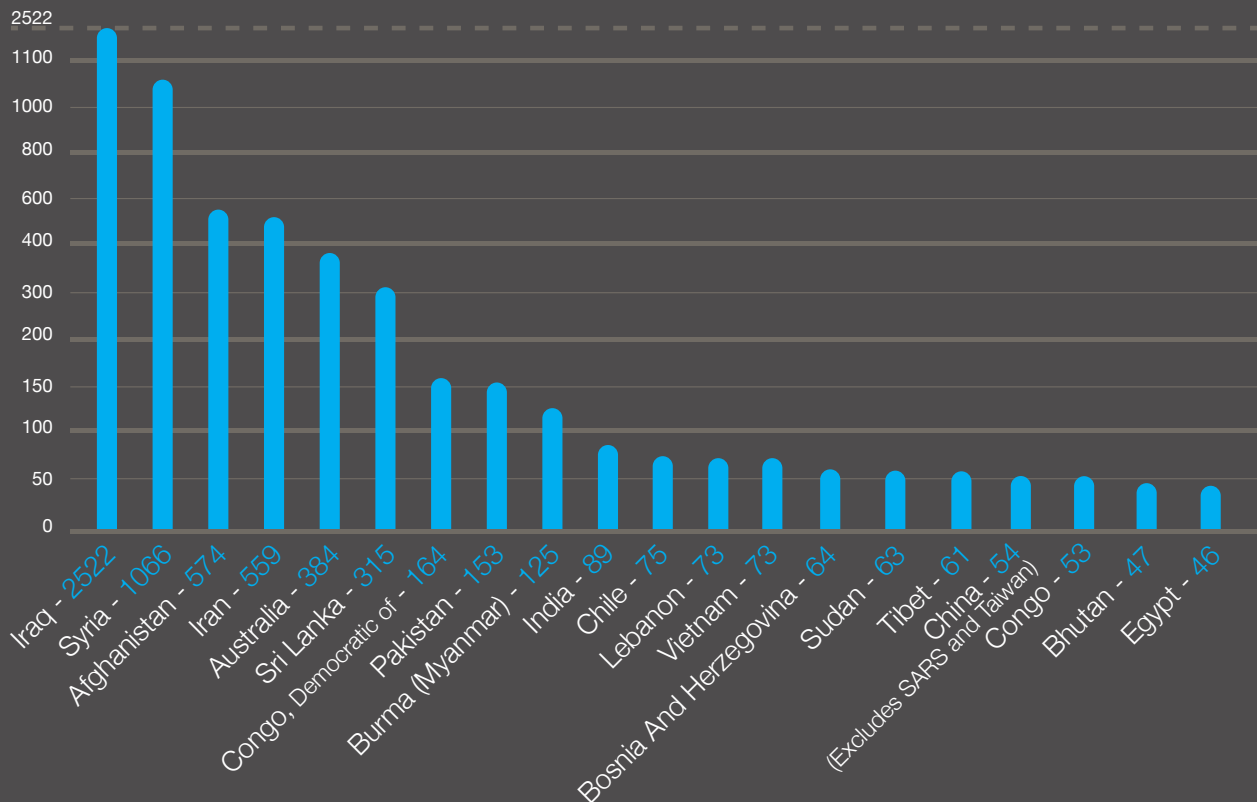


FRAMEWORK 3: SYSTEMIC APPROACH

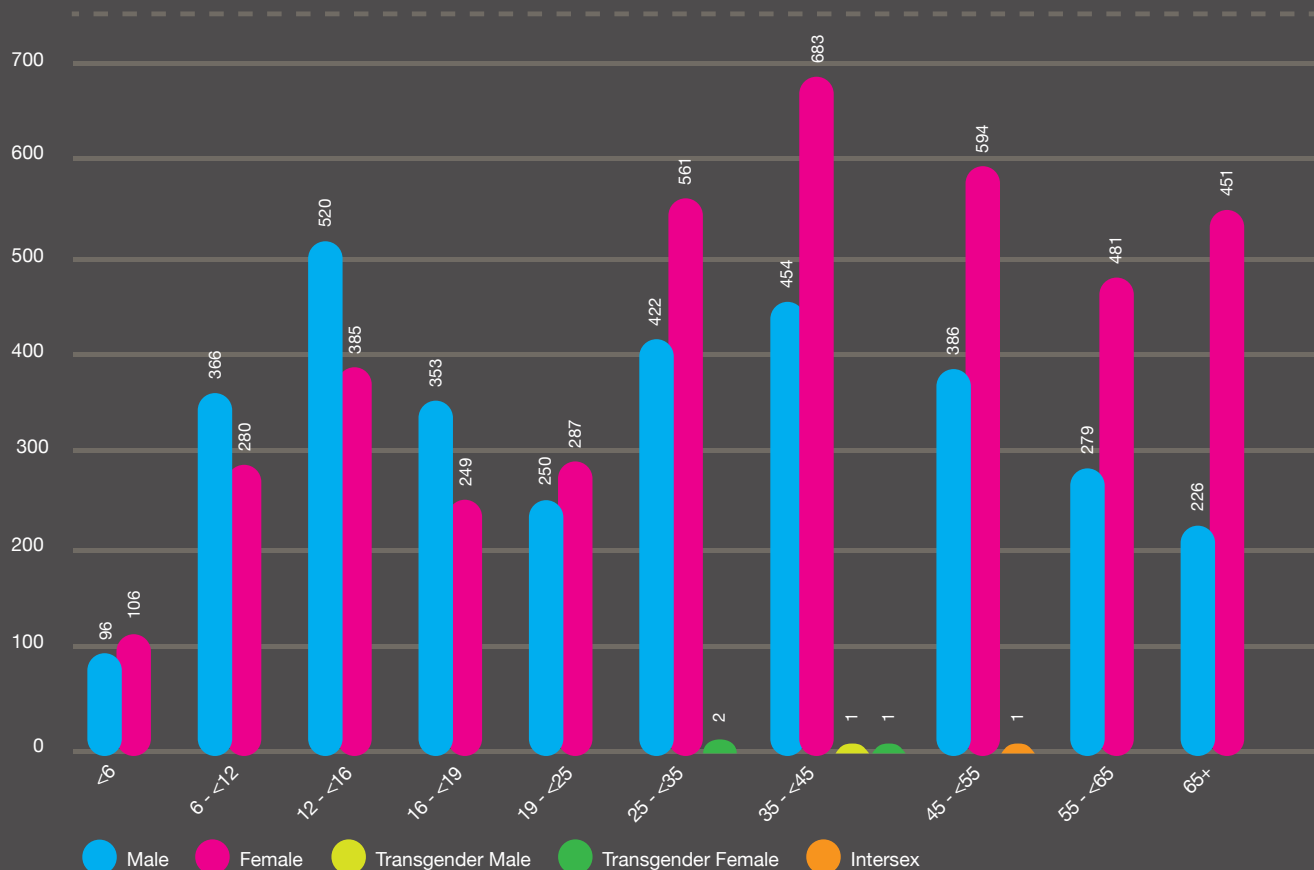
This translates into a Systemic Bio-Pscho-Social approach to service provision that uses early intervention, secondary prevention and capacity building strategies alongside clinical interventions at individual, family and group levels. STARTTS emphasises a client centred approach that recognises the importance of language, cultural, religious and socio-political issues to overcome access barriers and increase the effectiveness of both community development and clinical interventions.

STARTTS' Clients

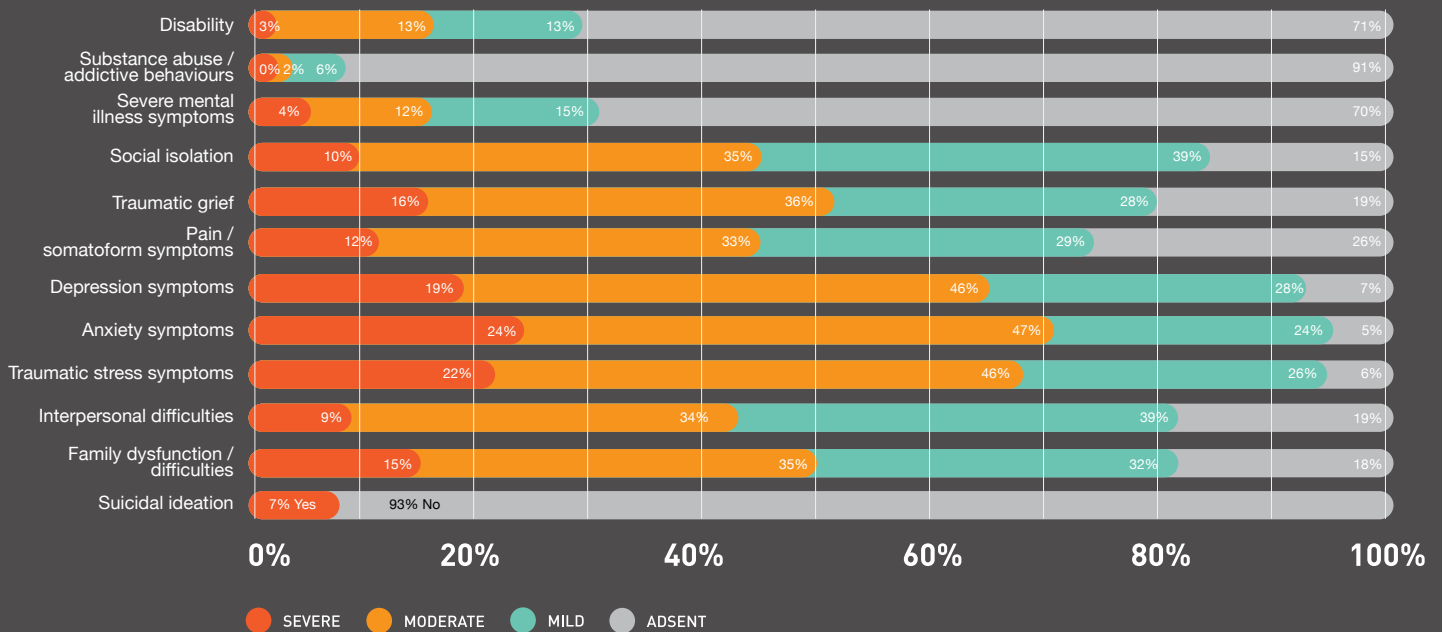
STARTTS ASSISTED 7434 CLIENTS IN 2018-2019



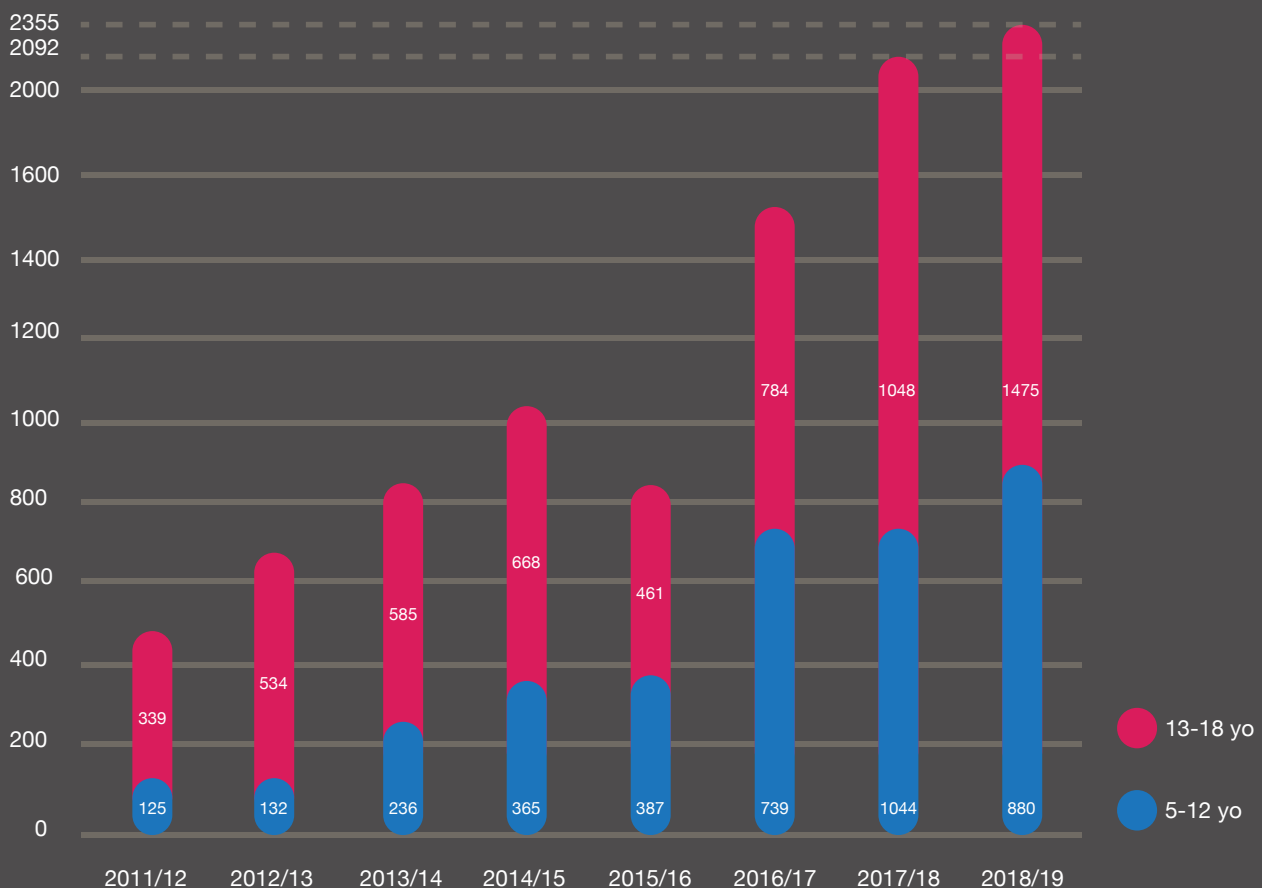
CLIENTS BY AGE AND GENDER



SYMPTOM CATEGORIES FOR ADULT CLIENTS



INCREASING NUMBERS OF SCHOOL AGED CHILD AND ADOLESCENT CLIENTS: 2011-2019



What We Do

CLINICAL SUPPORT AND INTERVENTIONS

During the last year, over two thirds of STARTTS' clients presented with severe or moderate symptoms of traumatic stress, depression or anxiety. Around half presented with severe or moderate traumatic grief or family difficulties. This underscores the vital role that STARTTS, the only specialised torture and trauma rehabilitation service in NSW, plays in the Australian government's strategy to successfully resettle humanitarian entrants. Over the past year, STARTTS provided 24,751 sessions of individual counselling to help people from refugee backgrounds, including those seeking asylum, cope with the consequences of their traumatic experience and the stressors of life in Australia, build on their strengths and resilience, and rebuild their lives in their new country or cope with the prolonged uncertainty of their protection claims. To complement this, STARTTS also ran 193 clinical groups amounting to a total of over 3000 hours of sessions. A few of those innovative groups are highlighted below.



We come here and we meet in a peaceful environment. Firstly, it enriches the human experience. Secondly, after you experience all of this, you go into the water and it enhances the relief of tension and pressure from your system

– Aqua group

Highlights of 2018/2019

Several **Tango in Therapy groups**, run with clients from the Spanish speaking, Assyrian and Arabic speaking communities, complemented STARTTS' existing therapeutic approaches and aimed to bring a deeper awareness of the present moment along the lines of mindfulness based approaches. As the dance involves both partners interpreting cues from the other to dance a song together, it encourages clients to listen to each other, to communicate, and to be patient with one another. It also helps to develop more control over psychomotor responses, enhanced balance and posture and increases physical activity.

In **Paws4Trauma**, 33 young children from refugee backgrounds interacted and learned about farm and native Australian animals at Calmsley Hills City Farm. In conjunction with group based reflective activities they were assisted to explore and learn more about the human-animal bond, emotional expression and regulation. The animal stories of adaptation, and courage, notwithstanding the love and acceptance inherent in animal encounters, helped the group to contextualise and process some of their challenging life experiences. This resulted in improved social relationships, feelings of wellbeing and hope. Supported by a grant from Auburn Tennis Club.



STARTTS Aqua Group

A **Child Minding Program to improve access to counselling** for parents was implemented at STARTTS' Auburn, Fairfield and Liverpool metro offices in 2019. STARTTS held many parenting talks in communities during the year, including newly arrived Iraqi and Syrian communities, and identified parents in need of additional support. However, many parents with very young children under the age of five identified access to childcare during appointments as a key barrier to seeking treatment for torture and refugee trauma. The STARTTS child minding program has been a success and has allowed many parents to get the support they need to manage their trauma symptoms.

Weekly Aqua Groups were successfully used as an adjunct to individual counselling for clients who would otherwise find exercise difficult due to weight, joint and muscular issues. Each week clients would do a routine of low impact and gentle exercises in the swimming pool with a certified instructor and a STARTTS lifestyle enhancement program worker. Many clients referred from STARTTS counsellors were previously socially isolated and the groups helped foster social connections in addition to addressing physical and chronic pain challenges. Others self-referred to the groups directly through word of mouth and were able to be introduced to STARTTS and counselling in a non-threatening way. Clients reported a reduction in symptoms following participation in these groups.

What We Do

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The support STARTTS provides to children and young people through various programs such as individual counselling, groups, and youth camps, is crucial in assisting children and youth from refugee backgrounds address issues resulting from the impact of trauma, feel more settled and happy at school, and at home with their families. The number of school aged children to whom STARTTS provided services increased for the second year running to 2355 children seen in 2018-2019; up from 2092 children in 2017-2018, and 613 children in 2016-2017. The number of clients seen as part of the STARTTS Early Childhood Program also increased to around 400.

STARTTS' School Liaison Program continued to provide important strategic and responsive support to Government and Non-Government schools. A core component of this support is via professional learning for teachers and other school staff to better understand the trauma impacts on learning, behaviour and school participation. In 2018-2019, over 100 training sessions were provided to over 3000 school staff, with feedback indicating that school staff felt better equipped to assist students from refugee backgrounds thrive in the school environment

“

It's been amazing, sometimes as an ELD teacher, you are the only one in the whole school and it's hard to be able to bounce ideas off each other when you are the only person. So having a network of people and you can say I have this sort of child what are you doing, or do you think this is the best way of doing it, first of all helps with confidence and gives me extra ideas

– STARTTS client

Highlights of 2018/2019

The STARTTS Early Childhood Counsellors

use activities and approaches that will help 0-6 year olds not yet at school, to recover from the signs and symptoms of trauma, catch up in their development and become ready for child care, preschool, and school. The sessions can also help the parent to strengthen their attachment with their child, understand the child's behaviour and learn some activities they can do at home to help with these goals. The Early Childhood programme provided individual/family sessions, and groups, in collaboration with other relevant providers to around 400 clients.

The **Fairfield @ the Centre** project is a weekly after school program where young people, mostly from Iraq and Syria, take part in activities such as homework assistance, job club, psychosocial support including exercise, art, and mental health literacy. The program is run by successful young role model volunteers from the Iraqi and Syrian communities, who are graduates of STARTTS' mentoring and leadership programs, and is funded by Sydney Community Foundation. Participants reported being more willing to seek help from others, and an increased understanding of different cultures and faiths, and the value of the diversity within society. They also reported that they made new friends outside their community.



STARTTS Fairfield Youth and Community Centre Project

The **Community of Refugee Educators (CORE) North-West Sydney**, established in 2018 and coordinated by STARTTS together with the Department of Education, is a network of educators and school wellbeing staff from 30 Government, Catholic and Independent schools in the North-West Sydney region. The network, one of six that STARTTS is supporting, meets once a month and includes practical professional learning activities, coupled with rich discussion and new strategies to incorporate into their professional practice and support for students and families from refugee backgrounds.

What We Do

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Highlights of 2018/2019

The **1st Australian Uyghur Cultural Day** was held on 31st March 2019 at the King George V Recreation Centre in The Rocks Sydney. The event was coordinated and hosted by the Sydney Uyghur community with the support of STARTTS, and welcomed people from all communities across Sydney to come together to celebrate Uyghur hospitality, Muqam music, dance, view cultural art and artefacts, learn about the history and current socio-political situation for Uyghur people. There was also opportunity to learn about the community in Australia, including language schools, computer coding workshops, small businesses, sport and recreation.

Highlights continue

The Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) and Older Persons in Cultural Transition (OPICT) programs have supported around 1030 individuals to develop a better conceptual framework to make sense of the reality of their new life in Australia, which contributes to their positive adjustment. FICT and OPICT groups have created a safe and non-judgemental space to reflect on the changes, challenges and questions they are facing, drawing on their personal strengths and experience while also learning from the wisdom and strategies shared in the group by their peers. In doing so, they have renewed connection with members of their ethnic community whilst increasing their sense of belonging within the broader Australian society, frequently taking from the experience an increased sense of hope for the future.

Assyrian Mental Health Conversations project was driven by young people from the Chaldean/Assyrian community with the aim of decreasing stigma and increasing awareness of mental health issues in a culturally adapted way. It was a phased intervention that included running groups with parents over five evenings, followed by five weekend sessions with young people. Sessions were held on church grounds, a space identified as safe by the community. Additionally, community youth leaders were trained in 'accidental counselling' and mental health. The project was followed up by a weekly outreach service at the church to make it easier for people needing further assistance to refer themselves to STARTTS for counselling. The project is part of a suite of initiatives developed to enhance wellbeing and prevent suicide. It also resulted in increased family connectedness.



Zulfia Erk, Community Leader, Uyghur Women's Group and Sajeda Ba, Community Leader, Rohingya Community and STARTTS FICT Facilitator at the Uyghur Cultural Day event

The Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Project

was borne out of a necessity to address the growing number of suicides in the Afghan Hazara and Sri Lankan Tamil communities, and was expanded to include Arabic speaking and South Sudanese communities. STARTTS and leaders in these community worked together during critical moments to build the capacity of community leaders to be able to identify people who may be at risk of having mental health problems, via training in accidental counselling and other activities such as the Hazara Mental Health Roundtable with community leaders and service providers. In addition, a range of social support, lifestyle and wellbeing groups were run with the communities such as: Hazara Citizenship and Social Support Group; Tamil Seniors Groups; Arabic and South Sudanese Youth Psychoeducational Groups; Arabic and Tamil Women's

Yoga Groups; Tamil English Conversational Group; Tamil Youth Soccer and Psychoeducational Group; and Tamil Women's Swimming Group. This project was funded by Western Sydney Primary Health Network (WentWest).

What We Do

RURAL AND REGIONAL

During the past year, we experienced strong demand on our counselling and community development services in regional New South Wales. In Armidale, Coffs Harbour and Wagga, Yazidi/Ezidi refugees from Northern Iraq and Syria continued to be settled in large numbers and much of our work in those areas was focused on that community. The FICT program was extended to Armidale in the past year. Group work has become established in Wollongong, as has body-focused therapy in Coffs Harbour and Wagga Wagga. Various training sessions were held for service providers across all areas. Successful youth camps were conducted in Coffs Harbour, Newcastle-Hunter and Riverina regions.

Highlights of 2018/2019

In **Wollongong**, we continued to play an important role in supporting the refugee trauma related needs of people from refugee backgrounds resettling from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Congo, Burma, Ethiopia and Eritrea. From our new premises established in 2017, we provided counselling, FICT groups, body-focussed therapy, and commenced a Karenni women's weaving group in addition to an African women's group. Outreach has been provided to several Illawarra schools, and in Nowra.

In **Coffs Harbour**, Yazidi/Ezidi refugees were the largest group to whom we provided services, though we also continued to support people from Afghanistan, Burma and Central and Eastern Africa.

The weekly multicultural youth group continues to have high numbers of young people attending. The demand for our recently established bodywork therapy grew quickly during the year. Counselling outreach activity extended to Armidale, Lismore and Port Macquarie.

Our counselling services became well established in **Armidale**, with increasing demand leading to the recruitment of a second full-time counsellor. Due to the nature of refugee settlement in the region, service provision was exclusively focussed on the Yazidis/Ezidis. New programs in the recently opened office in Armidale included: FICT, a sewing and social support group for Yazidi/Ezidi women, and the formation of a men's soccer team.



STARTTS Youth Camp

From our base in **Wagga Wagga**, we provided outreach counselling services to the major centres of Albury-Wodonga and Griffith, and to the smaller centres of Leeton and Narrandera, each with their unique refugee and asylum seeker community profiles. A Congolese women's social support group was conducted in Albury-Wodonga, as was a multicultural refugee women's sewing and social support group in Wagga. Body-focussed therapy was established in Wagga and is in great demand.

Our **Newcastle** team continued to support refugee communities with a range of programs and activities – counselling, FICT groups, Capoeira, youth groups, enterprise facilitation and organising multicultural festivals. Counselling outreach services continued in the Upper Hunter, Tamworth and Central Coast. STARTTS commenced the establishment of the Mental Health - Community Living Supports for Refugees (MH-CLSR) program for clients and families with complex needs from the Newcastle office.

What We Do

NEW INITIATIVES

STARTTS undertook a number of exciting new projects this year, including the Witness to War project, the Mental Health – Community Living Supports for Refugees program and the LGBTQI+ Refugees – Service Sector and Development Project, each of which are highlighted below.



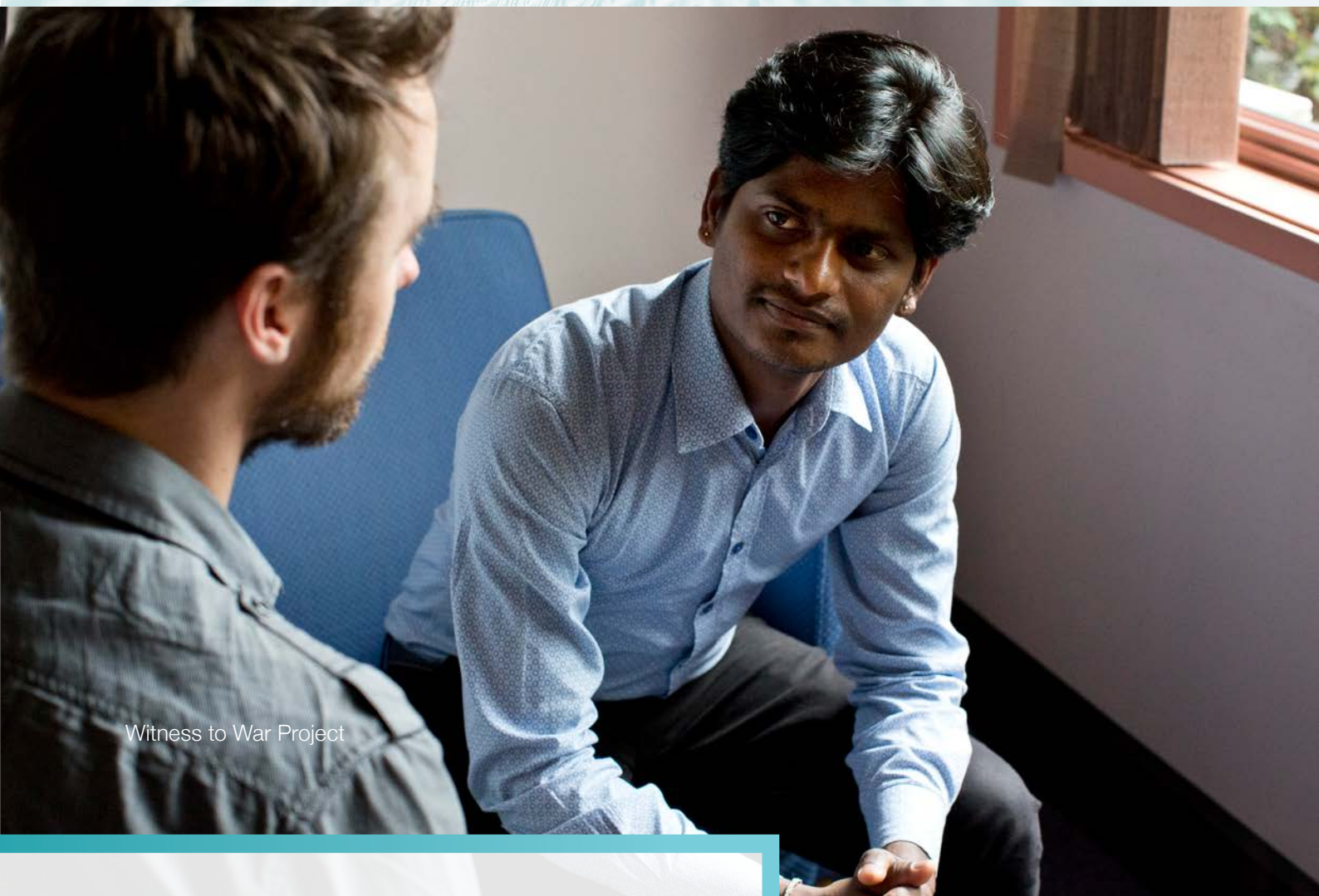
I was able to start life again and go for the activities. I'm more engaged in the community. It's more than my character to be better than how I was and the attitude I had towards life has changed

– Witness to War client

Highlights of 2018/2019

The one-year **Witness to War project**, funded by Multicultural NSW, assisted 48 individuals and families living in NSW who were not eligible for refugee and humanitarian settlement support, and who were experiencing negative consequences such as stress, anxiety or fear, as a result of being exposed to overseas conflict. Information and referral support services were provided to help people navigate the existing service system, to better harness their own resources and address the challenges they face and improve their daily functioning. In addition the program raised awareness via presentations to 138 people from different services and community groups about how people residing in NSW could be affected by conflicts overseas.

Mental Health – Community Living Supports Refugee (MH-CLSR) is a unique program that aims to provide trauma-informed, recovery focused and culturally appropriate psychosocial supports to people from refugee backgrounds and people seeking asylum who are experiencing psychological distress, mental ill health and impaired functioning. It is funded by NSW Health. STARTTS is in partnership with New Horizons to deliver the MH-CLSR program in the following Local Health Districts: South West Sydney, Sydney, Hunter New England and Mid-North Coast over four years starting in 2019. In the first half of 2019 the contracts were negotiated and signed; budgets were developed and approved; key protocols around intake, assessment and individual support plans were finalised; and meetings were held with the Local Health Districts. The program Team Leader and a Client Support Worker for Newcastle were recruited to be ready to see clients in mid-2019.



Witness to War Project

The **LGBTQI+ Refugees – Service Sector and Development Project**, funded by WentWest, was an eight month project implemented in 2018 in recognition that people from refugee backgrounds who identify as LGBTQI+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex) face challenges related to their sexual identity, gender identity and/or body diversity in addition to the complexity of resettlement after being forcibly displaced from their homeland. This project developed an in-depth pilot tested training package and a group work manual for service providers as part of a co-design process with a number of organisations and individuals working in the LGBTQI+ space, those with lived experience, and an internal STARTTS working group. Two groups of LGBTQI+ participants of refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds were successfully conducted, with group members reporting that the goals they set were achieved. In addition the project produced a set of recommendations for STARTTS to improve/enhance the safety and inclusiveness of its services for this client group.

What We Do

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

STARTTS is committed to exploring innovative interventions with potential to enhance the effectiveness of our work, and ensuring an evidence base for the treatment of torture and refugee trauma. This year STARTTS continued to lead or participated in joint research projects with a number of universities and other organisations nationally and globally, such as: University of New South Wales, University of Sydney, University of Western Sydney, University of New England, Auckland University of Technology, Seoul University South Korea, Lund University Sweden, Competence Centre for Transcultural Psychiatry Denmark, Mensia Technologies France, Institute of the Human Brain of Russian Academy of Sciences, Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors, Refugees As Survivors New Zealand, Phoenix Australia, St John of God Hospital, Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, Sydney Children's Hospital Network, South Western Sydney Local Health District, Transcultural Mental Health, Settlement Services International, Black Dog Institute, SDN Children's Services, and UNISSON Disability.

A research paper was published in the Journal of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Conflict Affected Areas about resilience building through STARTTS' 'Project Bantu Capoeira Angola'.



I am not the same angry person I was before...I actually listen to people and want to communicate

– Project Bantu Capoeira Angola

Highlights of 2018/2019

Initial data from the first phase of the research study, **'The Experience of Pain among Asylum Seekers and Temporary Visa Holders Attending STARTTS'**, suggested that participants with clinical levels of PTSD symptoms experienced more intense physical pain in more body regions. This provides preliminary support for a link between PTSD and somatic symptoms in this group, which may indicate the need for healthcare providers to recognise this link and encourage those with pain to seek psychological intervention. This study is a collaboration between STARTTS and Western Sydney University. Four medical students participated in the study as a part of their degree under the supervision of the research team.

The data collection phase of the **Disability in South Western Sydney: Experiences of the Iraqi and Syrian Refugee Communities Study** was completed during this period. The study aims to estimate the needs of refugees with disability from Syria. It involves collation of refugee health screening statistical data; and consultations with South West Sydney key professionals, community representatives, people with disability, and their families/carers. This is a collaboration between STARTTS and UNSW, NSW Refugee Health Service, Community Paediatrics, South Western Sydney Local Health District, Settlement Services International (SSI), The Child and Parenting Support (CAPS) Program, and the Sydney Children's Hospital Network.



Project Bantu Capoeira Angola

The **Screening of Refugees Self-Report assessment tool (ScoRe-SR)** is a simple computer-based measurement tool specifically targeting mental health, general wellbeing and psychosocial problems. It has been designed for screening new refugee clients presenting to specialist torture and refugee trauma rehabilitation services, as well as measuring the effects of interventions delivered. It has been professionally translated to Farsi, Dari, Arabic and Tamil, and is currently being piloted. The development of this ground breaking tool is a collaboration between STARTTS; University of New South Wales; Competence Centre for Transcultural Psychiatry (CTP), Denmark; and Centre for Research on Consciousness and Anomalous Psychology (CERCAP), Sweden.

What We Do

NEUROFEEDBACK PROGRAM

Neurofeedback trains the brain to function more efficiently. In simplistic terms, it exercises and helps “strengthen” the brain, calms it, and improves its stability. This is crucial for people from refugee backgrounds whose brains often become dysregulated as a result of torture and other types of traumatic experiences in the context of organised violence. STARTTS began treating child and adult clients using Neurofeedback in 2003, and after initial successes treating cases of complex and chronic refugee trauma, the STARTTS Neurofeedback Clinic, the first of its kind globally, was formally opened in 2007.

The Neurofeedback team is an interdisciplinary team of clinicians, researchers and neuroscientists that provides psychotherapy, Neurofeedback and Heart Rate Variability (HRV) Biofeedback, combined in a culturally sensitive way that facilitates positive changes in the cognition, emotions and functioning of clients. The aim of the Neurofeedback program is to ensure that people who have survived torture and refugee trauma have access to treatment that uses new neuroscientific discoveries to support healing and recovery.



Neurofeedback helped me feel calm and sleep better. I no longer have nightmares and flashbacks. I can focus now on my future, rather than looking into my past

– STARTTS client

Highlights of 2018/2019

Following the positive results of a pilot study, the Trauma Treatment Trial, or Triple T Study (TTT) was initiated in collaboration with the University of Sydney. The TTT study will be the first controlled trial to examine the efficacy of Neurofeedback training for alleviating chronic post-traumatic stress symptoms in adult refugees. A lifestyle enhancement intervention will be used as a comparison, and it is hypothesised that Neurofeedback treatment will be associated with greater positive changes in brain functioning, a reduction in symptoms, and improved cognitive control and emotion regulation.

The Australian Neurofeedback Institute (ANFI) was initiated by STARTTS in early 2019 as a social enterprise, established to ensure developments at STARTTS can inform the use of Neurofeedback and train professionals working in other trauma related areas. ANFI services provided by the STARTTS Neurofeedback Team include: specialised training, mentoring and consultancy to clinicians in the field of Neurofeedback; as well as mental health services, including EEG assessments to the wide Australian community. The fees generated by ANFI services support the continuation of providing Neurofeedback treatments to STARTTS’ clients from refugee backgrounds to assist them on their journey to recovery and rebuilding their lives in Australia.



EEG Assessment

STARTTS gave the opening keynote addresses about its Neurofeedback Program at the US National Consortium of Torture Treatment Programs (NCTPP) at Washington University in March 2019; and the Neurofeedback Interchange Conference in Atlanta, USA in April 2019. This international recognition is also reflected by STARTTS' work collaborating with world renowned clinicians and researchers such as Professor Bessel van der Kolk, Sebern Fisher and Professor Juri Kropotov, to promote Neurofeedback as a valuable tool in the treatment of clients with chronic and complex symptoms globally.

What We Do

TRAINING, EDUCATION AND INFLUENCE

Overall STARTTS organised the delivery of almost 200 training sessions that were delivered via workplace requests and the public calendar training program, amounting to almost 900 hours of training for over 5000 participants. This included seminars on Dissociation; Compassion Focused Therapy; and the Treatment of Trauma, Anxiety and Depression; by Psychiatrist Dr Joan Haliburn; Professor Paul Gilbert from the UK; and Dr John Arden from the USA, respectively. Additionally STARTTS contributed to keeping its staff and the sector up-to-date with its annual research symposium, with presentations and a panel discussion by Professor David Isaacs from Westmead Hospital, Professor Richard Bryant and Associate Professor Susan Rees from the University of New South Wales. The Clinical Master Classes delved into important topics such as suicide, LGBTQI+ people and refugee trauma, disability, offshore detention, and borderline personality traits.

Again a record number of 52 students (up from the record of 39 last year) successfully completed a placement at STARTTS for the final year of their degree. Students were enrolled mostly in Master degree programs in clinical psychology, forensic psychology, social work, counselling, mental health, occupational therapy, international relations and human rights. Participating universities include: Australian Catholic University, Western Sydney University, Charles Sturt University, Macquarie University, Newcastle University, University of Sydney, University of New South Wales, and the University of Melbourne. Several placements were for Psychology registration. This important program contributes to skilling up the mainstream services and private providers, and the sector as a whole, in working with torture and refugee trauma.



This has been one of the most inspiring and enjoyable learning experiences I have ever been involved in

– STARTTS workshop participant

Highlights of 2018/2019

The 2nd Australia and New Zealand Refugee Trauma Recovery in Resettlement Conference

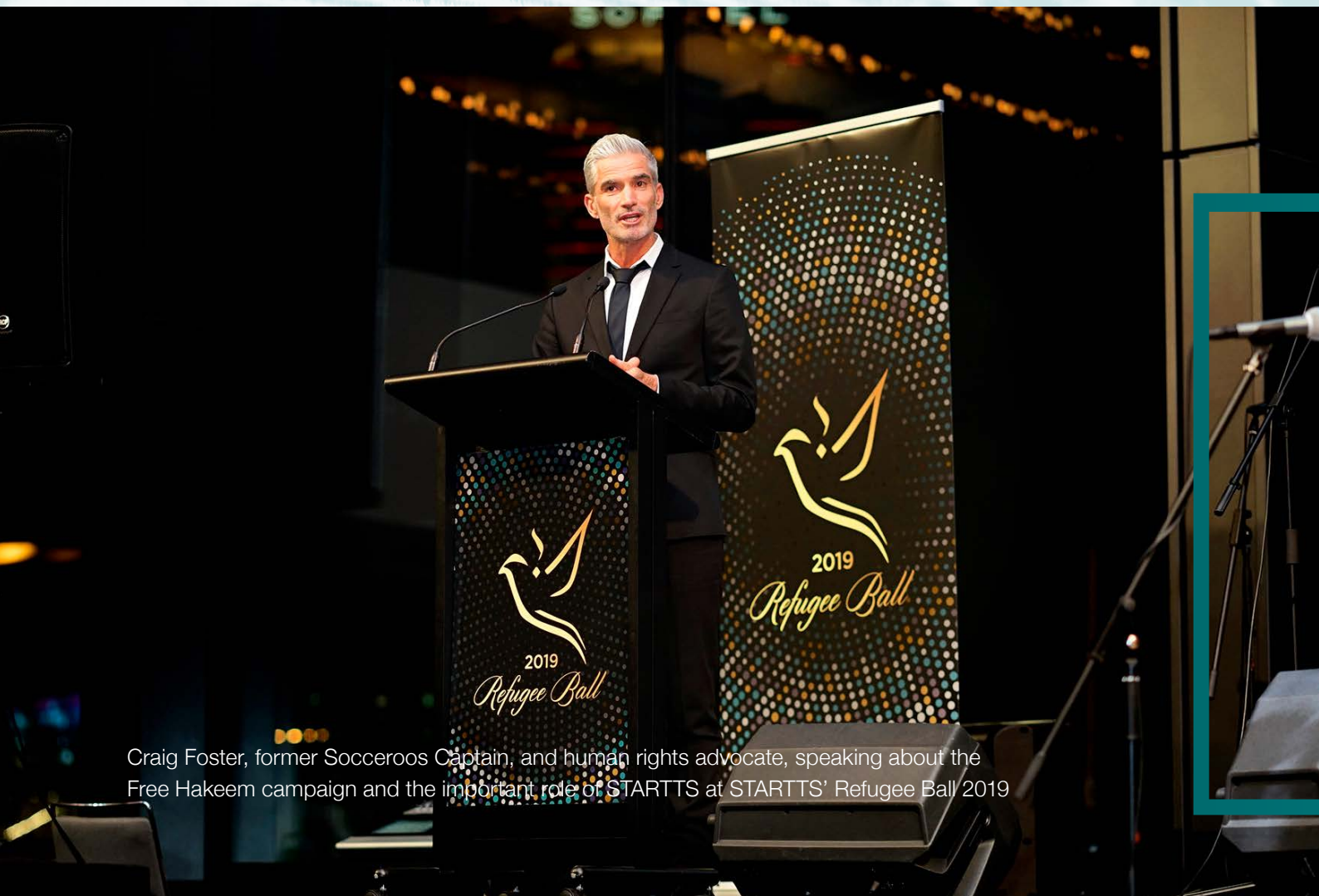
held in March 2019 in Brisbane, Queensland, was organised by our sister service, QPASTT and followed on the first conference initiated and organised by STARTTS in 2017. STARTTS had a significant presence at the conference with 30 delegates, one keynote presentation, 2 workshops, 17 oral presentations and 5 poster presentations. It was not only an opportunity to showcase STARTTS' work, but to network with colleagues nationally and internationally, and to hear from inspirational speakers such as Geoffrey Robertson about the global situation with torture.



STARTTS' CEO, Jorge Aroche, giving a keynote address at the 2nd Australia and New Zealand Refugee Trauma Recovery in Resettlement Conference, March 2019

A one-day training package on working with LGBTQI+ people from refugee backgrounds was co-designed with a reference group of organisations working in the LGBTQI+ space, and drew upon the Rainbow tick standards and STARTTS' expertise in torture and refugee trauma. This project, funded by WentWest, aimed to enhance the understanding of migrant and refugee settlement service providers about the specific issues facing LGBTQI+ people from refugee backgrounds, including those seeking asylum, in order to improve services to this diverse cohort. It was successfully piloted with a number of services by invitation and via STARTTS' public calendar workshop program. STARTTS will continue to deliver this incredibly important workshop upon request to organisations in their workplace.

STARTTS provided training to 20 youth peer researchers volunteering for the research project, *'The Refugee Youth Voice: Postcards to the Premier Project'*. The youth peer researchers, who were also from refugee backgrounds like the research participants, were trained to ask the research questions in a sensitive way, how to respond to trauma reactions and in self-care. The research project will help inform policy around improving services in NSW for refugee youth. It is part of a collaboration with the NSW Joint Party Working Group Youth Initiative, including the Coordinator General Refugee Resettlement, Multicultural NSW, Western Sydney University and over 30 service providers.



Craig Foster, former Socceroos Captain, and human rights advocate, speaking about the Free Hakeem campaign and the important role of STARTTS at STARTTS' Refugee Ball 2019

Highlights continue

STARTTS was interviewed on ABC Radio National's *All in the Mind* program in August 2018 for an episode called 'The Mental Health of Refugees'. The joint interview included the UNSW Refugee Trauma and Recovery Program who spoke about the impact that the severity and amount of traumatic experiences, and the post migration environment has on posttraumatic stress symptoms and recovery. STARTTS emphasised the importance of holistic biopsychosocial interventions to assist refugees recover from their experiences. Specifically highlighted were STARTTS' Neurofeedback interventions to improve brain functioning, and the broad range of STARTTS' community based programs as essential for fostering strong communities which are so valuable for healing from refugee trauma.

An article in the Illawarra Mercury highlighted the 'Outstanding Partnership Award' by Youth Action awarded to STARTTS, the Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra, Wollongong City Council and the NSW Department of Education, for a collaborative swim program for young people from refugee backgrounds. The prestigious award recognised the outstanding partnership that saw 80 young people taught to swim, which not only improved water safety, but also contributed to social inclusion which has a positive impact on mental health. The project was funded by the NSW Office of Emergency Management.

Media and public relations

Highlights of 2018/2019

STARTTS joined **the global campaign to free Hakeem Al-Araibi**, an Australian resident and professional footballer, after he was detained in a Thai jail and threatened with extradition to Bahrain. STARTTS used its expertise to publicly highlight the torture Hakeem had previously experienced and might suffer again if forcibly returned to Bahrain. STARTTS also highlighted the record of torture practised by the Bahraini government via a formal statement, social media posts and an interview with STARTTS' CEO on ABC The World. STARTTS expressed concern about the impact this could have on Hakeem's health and wellbeing, and joined the calls for the Australian government to intervene to secure Hakeem's release which was secured after 76 days.

SBS World News interviewed STARTTS' Youth Team Leader in a story that featured STARTTS' weekly Friday night program in Fairfield for young people from refugee backgrounds from Syria and Iraq. The popular program sees about 50 young people turn up regularly and includes help with job seeking and homework, as well as activities such as boxing, capoeira and football. Paul Wade, former Socceroos Captain, who takes part in the program, explained in the interview how he shares his expert knowledge of what it takes to be a champion, and how he inspires the young people with stories of his own recovery from a brain injury associated with epilepsy.

“

They inspire me to do this because some of the stuff they do just blows me away from where they've come

– Paul Wade, Former Socceroos Captain, SBS World News 2018



Ethiopian Dance Group: Samrawit and Selam Fikir, STARTTS Refugee Ball 2018

“

It's been an absolutely fantastic night here at STARTTS' Ball. There's lots of dancing, lots of fun...

– STARTTS Guest

Highlights of 2018/2019

The **10th STARTTS Refugee Ball** was a beautiful and inspiring event full of joy, connection, sharing, music and dance. 500 guests were spellbound by the powerful life stories of both Nyadol Nyuon, Australian lawyer and human rights advocate born in a refugee camp in Ethiopia, and a STARTTS client, tortured twice in Iraq before fleeing to Australia. Joseph Tawadros, Oud virtuoso, played a couple of his exquisite compositions, and the guests grooved to the global sounds of the musical band Monsieur Camembert. The money raised was divided between the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT) global campaign, Support Life After Torture, which raises funds for torture and refugee trauma rehabilitation agencies globally; and the M-Series Soccer program.

Events and celebrations

This year, for STARTTS, it was 30 years since it opened its doors with a couple of staff and a small office in Fairfield in the South West of Sydney. Over the intervening years STARTTS has grown to eleven offices across NSW, around 200 staff, and provides assistance to many thousands of clients every year to heal from refugee trauma and rebuild their lives in Australia. To celebrate STARTTS' incredible achievements, around a thousand former and current clients, community members, services providers, politicians and other key stakeholders joined STARTTS at a joyful event in Fairfield, the place where it began all those years ago.

The annual Humanitarian Awards were presented at this event and the winners in each category were:

- Best Project – Zoe Hogan, Connected – Sydney Theatre Company
- Government and Legal – Refugee Health Service Disability Project, NSW Refugee Health Service
- Media – Kaye Harrison, Bunya Treehouse Productions
- Refugee Community Worker – Nohara Odicho, Legal Aid NSW Refugee Service
- Refugee Supporter – Dr Shanti Raman, Local Area Health District, Director of Community Paediatrics
- Rural and Regional – Susan Pancaldi, Gowrie NSW
- Education – Jane Wallace, NSW Department of Education
- Youth – Tamana Mirzada, Lebanese Muslim Association
- Business – Hedayat Osyen, Nick's Tiling Services

Highly commended awards:

- Supporter of Refugees – Adrian Mees, Music for Refugees
- Best Project – Shaun Haldan, Cars for Refugees

The Sounds of Cumberland project grew out of the long-standing collaboration between Bashar Hanna, community artist and Community Cultural Development practitioner, the Peacemakers Ensemble and STARTTS. The Cumberland Council funded project welcomed and brought together the voices, traditions and unique art forms of dancers, musicians, instrumentalists and vocalists of residents and visiting artists of the Cumberland area in Western Sydney and beyond. The multicultural ensemble showcased in front of 300 audience members in June 2019, brought alive the breadth and diversity of Cumberland's culture-rich repertoire

The annual **Communities in Cultural Transition Forum** was held in August 2018 and centred on two major themes: Acceptance and Belonging; and Media and Advocating for Refugee Communities. It included presentations, panels and group discussions, including keynote presentations by Dr Munjed Al-Muderis, since named NSW Australian of the Year 2020; and Professor Jim Ife. The 266 people who attended, were mostly from refugee communities, but also included STARTTS staff and people from the wider Australian community. Feedback indicated that the forum was an outstanding success with lots of opportunities for learning and networking.

OCTOBER 2018

REFUGEE TRANSITIONS

A Publication of the *Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors*

Issue **33**

The Yazidi Homeland Lost to War

Dangerous Times
Jorge Aroche

A Bridge to Justice
Anne Mainsbridge

**New arrivals:
How do we
protect the children?**



Resources

STARTTS creates a number of resources and publications each year. Some resources are focused on supporting the delivery of STARTTS' services to our client group as highlighted below with the Sporting Linx manual. Other resources and publications help promote STARTTS' services such that clients and stakeholders remain engaged with STARTTS, to ensure a continual referral of clients and stakeholder participation in STARTTS' many activities such as trainings, as well as applying for jobs at STARTTS.

Highlights of 2018/2019

Issue 33 of Refugee Transitions magazine was published by STARTTS in October 2018. The magazine reports on a wide range of refugee and human rights issues relevant to STARTTS' work. The main story in this issue was 'Yazidis: A Homeland Lost to War'. It covers the killing and abduction of 10,000 people when Islamic State stormed the Yazidi/Ezidi heartland in northern Iraq in the summer of 2014. Four years later IS has been forced out, but thousands of Yazidi/Ezidi women and children are still missing and refugees cannot go home.

Tamil and Tibetan language versions of STARTT's client information brochure about its services were developed meaning this brochure is now available in eight languages. The Tamil brochure became particularly important after the terrorist attacks in Sri Lanka which had a traumatic impact on the Tamil community. International events such as this, the terrorist attacks in Christchurch, and the many ongoing and emerging conflicts globally, impact on all communities from refugee backgrounds who are living in Australia, and it is vital that information about STARTTS' services and referral pathways are available in the various languages.

The **Sporting Linx Manual** is an incredible resource guide for service providers and community groups seeking to implement sports-based psychosocial interventions and can be easily adapted to different contexts. It contains a wealth of knowledge about engaging young people and is based on eight years of STARTTS experience successfully implementing this program in high schools in Sydney. The program aims to promote youth leadership potential, social connection, teamwork, healthy lifestyle choices, and self-esteem, using sport as a foundation and entry point to connect with young people from refugee backgrounds and disadvantaged youth.



Environmental Responsibility

Global heating, and the associated increased frequency of severe weather events such as droughts, floods, and hurricanes, and rising sea levels, could result in increased political conflict, organised violence and forced displacement as resources become increasingly scarce. In recognition of this, STARTTS has been committed to reducing its carbon emissions through more efficient energy usage and a reduction in the consumption of resources for well over a decade. This focus on Environmental Responsibility was stepped up with the collaboration of the Green Steps programme from Monash University, which audited STARTTS' main office in Carramar for energy consumption and waste generation in 2012. This provided the impetus for the formation of an Environmental Responsibility Committee made up of interested staff. This issue was also incorporated into the work plans of all staff, and dedicated time was allocated within the administration team to action key tasks. These combined initiatives were crucial to successfully reducing STARTTS' energy consumption, decreasing waste, increasing recycling and purchasing more planet friendly office products. Importantly, in addition to this STARTTS gives presentations to clients upon request about how they can reduce their environmental impact in their daily lives.

Highlights of 2018/2019

STARTTS' energy consumption has been reduced across all offices quite significantly in the last few years primarily as a result of the retrofit all of metropolitan offices with LED lighting, installing sensor lights in the bathrooms at STARTTS' Carramar head office, and by staff being more conscious in switching off lights, air conditioning units and computers. In addition STARTTS switched to 100% Green Power in recent years to support the transition towards the use of renewable energy sources for electricity generation.

Improved recycling and waste management have been key achievements at STARTTS. Over the last couple of years STARTTS has established a recycling program across all offices with paper recycling baskets available close to all staff desks and comingled recycling for plastic, glass, aluminium and paper available in all staff kitchens and group areas. Over the last year 22.32 cubic metres of waste was diverted from landfill to recycling, including 40kg of printer cartridges and other copier parts recycled. STARTTS also participates in a secure computer equipment recycling program, and all training events use reusable plates, mugs and cutlery for catering.

STARTTS' supplier of office products reported that 40% STARTTS' purchases are of **planet friendly office products**, which is high compared to their other customers. For example, STARTTS' offices only use recycled paper for photocopying and printing, and environmental friendly dishwashing products.

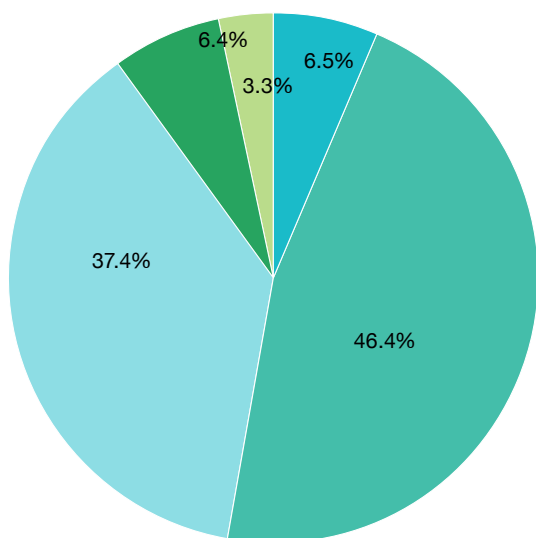
Financial Reports

STATEMENT OF INCOME & EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE 2019

Revenue	2019 \$	2018 \$
Fee for service	1,435,282	1,790,904
Commonwealth grants	10,225,900	11,368,802
State grants	8,236,641	8,515,799
Operating grants	1,450,640	505,788
Other income	731,469	624,742
TOTAL REVENUE	22,079,931	22,806,035
Expenditure		
Employment cost	17,910,247	19,285,532
Other programme costs	3,601,525	4,766,016
Other administration costs	1,984,303	1,844,165
Depreciation and amortisation	392,991	386,448
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	23,889,066	26,282,161
NET OPERATING RESULT	-1,809,135*	-3,476,126*

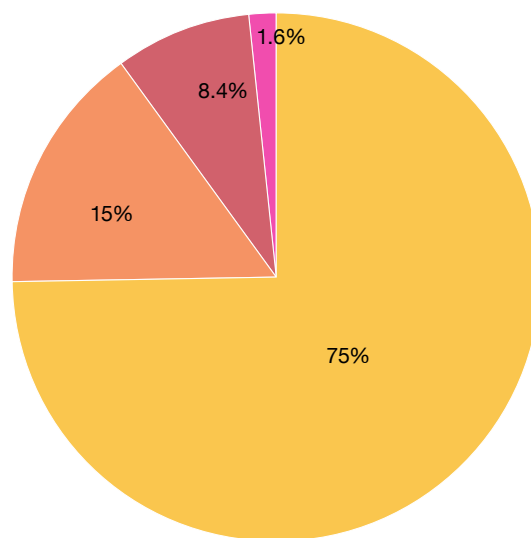
* The STARTTS Board made a deliberate decision to utilize reserves to address the extraordinary level of demand during this period.

Revenue



- Fee for service
- Commonwealth grants
- State grants
- Operating grants
- Other income

Expenditure



- Employment cost
- Other programme costs
- Other administration costs
- Depreciation and amortisation

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30TH JUNE 2019

Assets	2019 \$	2018 \$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	7,228,567	8,878,386
Trade and other receivables	1,502,745	417,252
Other assets	316,060	307,689
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	9,047,372	9,603,327
NON CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	2,550,827	2,820,128
Intangible assets	273,449	337,868
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	2,824,276	3,157,996
TOTAL ASSETS	11,871,648	12,761,323
Liabilities		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other payables	2,323,614	1,706,202
Employee benefits	4,449,432	4,017,046
Other financial liabilities	1,940,918	1,450,401
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	8,713,964	7,173,649
NON CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Employee benefits	245,012	865,867
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	245,012	865,867
TOTAL LIABILITIES	8,958,976	8,039,516
NET ASSETS	2,912,672	4,721,807
Equity		
Balance At 1st July 2018	4,721,807	8,197,933
(Deficit)/Surplus for year	-1,809,135	-3,476,126
TOTAL EQUITY	2,912,672	4,721,807



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