



**STARTTS**

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**CONSULTATION**  
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**TAMIL  
COMMUNITY  
CONSULTATION  
REPORT**



**Written and Published by the NSW Service for  
the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and  
Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)**

The Tamil community consultation report is one of many reports produced by STARTTS, for other reports visit [www.startts.org.au](http://www.startts.org.au)

Information included in this report is gathered from many sources and the best effort has been made to record the source. Effort has also been made to update and revise the report to ensure that information is accurate at time of printing.

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  - » **Viji Dhayanandhan** - Member of Tamil Women's Development Group
  - » **Kalyani Inpakumar** - Volunteer Tamil community worker
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The report has been revised and edited a number of times by the above members from the community and has already begun to be implemented by STARTTS in its delivery of services to the Tamil community. Without the ongoing effort of all these people, the consultations and implementation would not be possible.

## FOREWORD

STARTTS is pleased to present the first Tamil community consultation report. It is a culmination of several smaller consultations with a variety of Sri Lankan Tamil community groups in Sydney. Community consultations are an essential tool to enhance STARTTS service delivery and facilitate our relationship with the community. Much sensitivity has to be taken into account when consulting with refugee communities and I am pleased to say that STARTTS staff have risen to the challenge.

Tamils, like many others, have survived horrific traumas in the context of organized violence. The human rights violations perpetrated against Tamils in Sri Lanka are significant. The effects of war, disasters, state terrorism and organised violence target the very essence of a community, impacting on the relationships between individuals, families and other social groups. However, seeking help from a service such as STARTTS comes with barriers including the stigma associated with psychological health problems and lack of understanding of the Western concepts of trauma and recovery.

The Tamils in NSW have established a long-standing relationship with STARTTS and have participated in all aspects of STARTTS' activities. The community consultation aimed to increase cooperation between Tamils and STARTTS and improve Tamil clients' access to STARTTS' services.

We feel that these consultations have gone some way towards building bridges between STARTTS and the Tamil community and have resulted in an increase in mutual understanding.

The community is changing and we hope that STARTTS will continue to change and grow to ensure our services are relevant and culturally appropriate.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Sri Lankan Tamil community groups for supporting this process particularly the Tamil Community Consultation Committee members. Last but not least, a big thank you to STARTTS staff who were actively involved in this project – Jasmina Bajraktarevic-Hayward, Pamela Hartgerink, Jiva Parthipan, Sivaharani Mayuran, Neeraja Sanmuanathan, Shobana Suresh and Froid Xavier.

**Jorge Aroche**

STARTTS Chief Executive Officer

# BACKGROUND TO THE SRI LANKAN TAMIL COMMUNITY

Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) is an island about the size of Tasmania in the Indian Ocean, lying east of the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent. Sri Lanka's official languages are Sinhala, Tamil and English. Sri Lanka's total population is approximately 20.2 million as of the 2012 census. The major ethnic groups are the Sinhalese (15,250,081), Sri Lankan Tamils (2,269,266), the Sri Lankan Moors (1,892,638), and Sri Lankan Indian Tamils (839,504). There are also smaller ethnic groups such as Burgher, Malay and Sri Lanka Chetty (Census of Population and Housing, 2012). More than 14 million Sri Lankans identified themselves as Buddhists in the 2012 census, with approximately 2.5 million Hindus, 1.9 million Muslims, 1.2 million Roman Catholics and other smaller Christian and other religion identification groups (Census of Population and Housing, 2012). Most Tamils will have identified as Hindu, with a few also identifying with Islam and Christianity. Muslims, particularly the Malay and Moor communities, belonging primarily to the Shafi'i school within Sunni Islam.



Image: United Nations

Tamils have inhabited the Island of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) for over 2,500 years. Before European colonisation, the island was shared by two different peoples – distinguished by religion, language and culture. Sinhalese inhabited the south, the west and central uplands; Tamils inhabited the north and the east. When the Portuguese occupied the Island in 1505, there were separate kingdoms for the Tamils and the Sinhalese. Later the Dutch (1658 - 1796) maintained this status quo. Having occupied the island from 1796, the British merged the Tamil and Sinhala nations into one unit for administrative purposes in 1833.

## PERSECUTION OF THE MINORITIES – TAMILS

### British Colonial Rule

The roots of the conflict date back to British colonial rule when the country was known as Ceylon. Under British rule, the Tamil minority received a disproportionate share of university and government positions. Sri Lankan Tamils generated higher earnings which in turn resulted in greater economic prosperity in the Tamil regions. Sri Lankan Tamils valued education, and had more educational and economic opportunities available to them than the Sinhalese while Sri Lanka was under the British colonial rule (Tambiah, 1992). Independence in 1948 changed the balance of power. Overnight, there was a power shift from the privileged Sri Lankan Tamil minority to the Sinhalese Buddhist majority, who had been marginalized under colonial rule (Bandarage, 2008).

During the period of British rule, the British also brought Tamils from India into the country as a labour force to work on tea plantations in the 19th century, especially in the up-country areas (Tambiah, 1992).

### Post Independence

Within months of independence, the Government passed the Citizenship Act, which overnight meant that more than a million Tamils of Indian origin were stateless. In 1956 the Sinhala Only Act was passed, with thousands of Tamil civil servants forced to resign due to lack of fluency in Sinhala. This language policy attacked Tamils' livelihoods and achievement because English education had been the passport for social mobility into the professions and administrative services. Then in 1971 the university system abandoned admission based on merit and substituted 'standardisation' through examination results – with lower marks required for Sinhalese than for Tamil students

(Tambiah, 1992).

In 1972 Ceylon was renamed Sri Lanka. All ties to Britain were severed and Sri Lanka was declared a Republic. Buddhism was given foremost recognition. In 1976, all Tamil parties joined together to form the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF), proposing an independent state for Tamils in the homelands of the earlier Tamil Kingdoms. Frustrated by the lack of progress through politics, diplomacy and nonviolent protest, Tamil youths started to form militant groups that resulted in the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). This was established in 1976 with a number of other smaller groups at the time. The LTTE later went on to develop an efficient civil administration for the de facto State – including a judiciary, police force, central bank, and research and development units in agriculture, industrial expansion and infrastructure development (CAMPACC, 2010). The de facto state, in the Northern and Eastern parts of Sri Lanka where the LTTE maintained control, was formed shortly after the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement. This peace agreement provided a context where the LTTE were able to train more fighters, bring resources into the country and engage in a process of state building within their areas of control.

Yet they also faced accusations of forced conscriptions, abductions and killings in order to gain greater power and influence over other paramilitary groups as well as the country's military (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2006). Tamils faced brutality not only under the Sri Lankan military, but also at the hands of the LTTE (HRW, 2006).

### **1983 Riots and Aftermath**

In July 1983, up to 4000 Tamils were killed in a riot that took place in Colombo, capital of Sri Lanka. This brutal event turned the moderate Tamils towards armed struggle in order to restore their community (Jeyaraj, 2010). This was the first time that foreign media recorded and publicised an incident where Tamils were the targets.

The country has been under emergency rule for most of the time since the early 1980s, and the security forces have been effectively authorised to terrorise and discriminate against Tamils, and other dissident groups. As the Tamil people's suffering increased, they gave greater support to the liberation movement and its armed struggle. The LTTE became the main armed group fighting for an independent state in the north and east of the island. The LTTE became the sole representative of the Tamils at the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) with the Government of Sri Lanka, as facilitated by the Norwegian government. In February 2006 the Sri Lankan government and LTTE renewed their commitment to the peace agreement at talks in Geneva. However, within a year of commencing his presidency in 2006, President Rajapaksa abandoned talks and staked everything on military force. By calling this a 'war on terror', the government sought to cover up its own brutality and to gain support from Western governments, according to a report by Human Rights Watch (2007).

### **End of the 30 year civil war**

In January 2008 the government announced that it was unilaterally withdrawing from the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement and launched an offensive against the LTTE. By February 2009, thousands of civilians were trapped between government military forces and LTTE forces, prompting calls for a temporary cease-fire. This was rejected by the Sri Lankan government, saying it was on the verge of destroying the LTTE. Fighting became confined to a small area near Mullaitivu with a lagoon on one side and the Indian Ocean on the other. Hundreds of thousands of civilians were cornered into a government designated no fire zone. Indiscriminate shelling and bombs continued over weeks and months. On May 19, the government declared victory over the LTTE as they reported the capture of remaining rebel-held territory and the death of LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran.

The military conflict resulted in thousands of deaths, large-scale violations of international humanitarian law, war crimes in the final stages by both sides of the war, and over 300,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) (UNHCR, 2015). Post-war conditions have not been much improvement for Tamils in Sri Lanka. The Government continues to block international monitors, journalists and NGOs. There has been no political response to the Tamils' grievances that led to the conflict in the first place (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2010). In March 2013, the United Nations Human Rights Council voted to launch a war crimes investigation into alleged violations committed by Government forces as well as the LTTE in 2009 towards the end of the war. Sri Lanka announced that it would not cooperate with a UN investigation into alleged war crimes committed during the country's civil war.



## CURRENT PERSECUTION

### **Militarisation of the north**

Since the end of the civil war, the north and east of Sri Lanka have been heavily militarised. The government has argued that this is necessary in order to maintain peace and security. Rights groups, locals and the international Diaspora have highlighted a number of problems that have arisen as a result of militarisation. Militarisation has had effects on an already vulnerable population, including gender based violence. According to the International Crisis Group's report in December 2011, many Tamil women in the north and east of the country are facing increasing lack of security following the civil war. These women are increasingly reliant on the military to meet their everyday needs. This results in long term reduction of personal and community capacity as well increased vulnerability to exploitation. The Oakland Institute's report (Mittal, 2015) has found that tens of thousands of government troops have continued to occupy the north and east with the army expanding its property developments on land belonging to displaced Tamils. It also states that the recent land grabs fall into an old and familiar pattern that has resulted in the marginalisation of Sri Lanka's Tamil population through means of violence, pogroms, repressive laws and a government-orchestrated colonisation of the northern and eastern parts of the island. The report further found that in 2014 there were at least 160,000 almost entirely Sinhalese soldiers stationed in the north. With the area's population being about 1 million, this means that there is one soldier for every six civilians.

### **Sexual Violence and women's lack of safety**

The end of the almost 30 year civil war saw many Tamil women in the North widowed, unemployed, traumatised and desperate. Many families had been separated during the final stages of the war with members still in military camps and some either missing or assumed dead (ICG, 2011). This creates a sub-class within the population where they are vulnerable to authority and systems. Almost all widows are left with permanent mental scars either by sexual abuse or witnessing the death of loved ones. They continue to suffer due to lack of mental health support services. Most believe there is no future for them - they will not have a career, a marriage, or live very long. International groups including Human Rights Watch have stated that between 1990 and 2013 there were rapes of Tamil women by the security forces, primarily in the north and east (HRW, 2013). Furthermore, the rape of Tamil women by Sri Lankan military personnel was raised by the UN special rapporteur on violence against women as early as 1997. In 2013, The Social Architect's field mission (The Social Architects, 2013) found that public health workers had administered the sub-dermal contraceptive implant using coercive tactics. These women were advised to not bring their husbands to the clinic, information was not provided in Tamil, and the consequences of the implant were not adequately explained. Under international law, coerced medical procedures constitute cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment.

### **Freedom of expression**

In Sri Lanka a culture of impunity exists whereby people who criticise the government may be punished. Arbitrary arrests of Tamils still occur throughout the country. Freedom of expression is severely limited. Journalists who endeavour to report fairly on the conflict or even who visit the north of the country are often detained without trial. Some have "disappeared" (Reporters Without Borders, 2015).

## BARRIERS TO GAINING SAFETY FROM PERSECUTION

### **Fear of Sri Lankan security forces**

Many in the Tamil community identify police raids, harassment, arbitrary detentions and even abductions that have become routine in recent years as reasons for not trusting anyone who is part of the security forces. "No one suggests for the moment that there should not be security measures and precautions," said Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, executive director of the Center for Policy Alternatives. "At the same time, we need to be a lot more serious in finding the balance between democratic rights and human rights and the right security measures. We can't alienate an entire community, an entire section of the citizenry", (Nessman, 2008).



## Claiming asylum from India

India is Sri Lanka's closest neighbour and Tamils have previously sought refuge in India from Sri Lanka's 1983-2009 brutal civil war. However, India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, and refugees have no right to freedom of movement. India's Foreigners Act 1946 and Citizenship Act 1955 define all non-citizens who enter without visas to be illegal migrants, with no exception for refugees or asylum seekers. Possession of a UNHCR refugee certificate does not protect refugees from detention. Refugees in Indian refugee camps have no social or political rights (Flynn, 2005), and living conditions in the camps are often very basic. The rationale for the Indian government to refuse any rights is its expectation that the Sri Lankan Tamil refugees will return to Sri Lanka once the political situation has improved. The assassination of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 by a suicide bomber belonging to the LTTE changed the Indian public's opinion against the Tamil refugees.

## NEW PRESIDENT ELECTED IN JANUARY 2015

Maithripala Sirisena was elected on 8th January 2015 following an unexpected defeat of the previous president Mahinda Rajapaksa. Sirisena promised to bring in a new era of morality, compassion, freedom, democracy and good governance. His Election Manifesto promised to address urgent issues during the first 100 days of his regime, notably the abolition of the Executive Presidency and the 18th Amendment to the Constitution that Rajapaksa introduced to remove term limits to the Executive Presidency. President Sirisena and Prime Minister Wickramasinghe will be aware that their ability to deliver on much of their other proposed reforms will only be achieved by committing to a genuine approach to reconciliation and accountability. Reversing Rajapaksa's earlier rejection of international involvement in the civil war-era investigations can be more easily achieved now that his support has diminished and the mandate for change is present (Iyer, 2015). The new government has shown better engagement with the international community and some Tamils are hopeful this may bring about positive change. For many Tamils, the trauma of the civil war is still fresh in their mind and they are waiting for more action rather than words. The international Tamil Diaspora is also aware that the new administration cannot afford to pass on this opportunity, as it runs the risk of losing much of its credibility internationally.

## MIGRATION HISTORY OF SRI LANKAN TAMILS TO AUSTRALIA

In the late nineteenth century, the first Sri Lankan immigrants came to Australia to work on the sugar cane plantations of northern Queensland. Historical reports also show that Sri Lankans were working in goldfields in New South Wales and Victoria, and as pearl divers in Broome, north-western Australia. By 1901, there were 609 Sri Lanka-born people recorded in Australia (Department of Immigration & Citizenship, 2014).

Following Sri Lanka's independence in 1948 and the introduction of the Sinhala Only Act in 1956, Sri Lankans migrated to Australia and other countries. During the 1960s, Burghers comprised the largest proportion of Sri Lankan migrants to Australia (Department of Immigration & Citizenship, 2014). In the late 1960s and early 1970s following the easing of Australia's migration policies, Asian migrants, including Sri Lankans, were increasingly arriving in Australia. Sri Lankan migrants at this time included Tamils, Sinhalese, as well as Burghers. This exodus of Tamils was triggered by changes to the constitution that left many Tamils feeling like they were second class citizens. Many left on migrant and skilled visas, travelling by plane to Europe, Canada, USA, Australia, and other places. Many others, particularly from the mid-1980s onwards, left by boat as asylum seekers. Many thousands of Tamils have fled by boat to India where some live in the community, and some in refugee camps (Feith, 2014).

Sri Lankans arrived as Humanitarian entrants under the Special Assistance Category introduced by the Australian Government in 1995. By 2001, there were 53,610 Sri Lankan-born people in Australia. In the last five years, the majority, or more than 70 per cent, of migrants from Sri Lanka arrived under the skilled component of the Migration Program.

The latest Census in 2011 recorded 86,413 Sri Lanka-born people in Australia, Victoria had the largest number with 43,991 followed by New South Wales (23,704), Queensland (7,696) and Western

Australia (5,339). Those of Tamil ancestry were estimated to number around 27,000 (Department of Immigration & Citizenship, 2014).

## DIFFICULTIES FOR TAMILS SEEKING ASYLUM IN AUSTRALIA

There was an increase in the number of Sri Lankan Tamil asylum seekers to Australian shores following the end of the civil war in May 2009. Those who arrived prior to March 2012 were screened and allowed a protection obligation determination (POD) or a refugee status assessment (RSA). Individuals with determinations that they were not owed protection obligations had the right to seek review with an independent protection assessment (IPA) or independent merits review (IMR). A person could then seek judicial review of the independent reviewer's decision in the Federal Circuit Court of Australia (RACS, 2014).

In response to a significant rise in the number of unauthorised boat arrivals in 2012, the Gillard Government commissioned an Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers to report back on policy options available to reduce the number of asylum seekers risking their lives coming to Australia by sea. The Government announced that some, but not all, of the recommendations made by the Panel would be implemented, including the reinstatement of offshore processing for selected asylum seekers and the introduction of a 'no advantage' principle which would apply to all asylum seekers who had arrived by boat, although it was not clear what the 'no advantage' principle would mean in practice (Karlson, Phillips & Spinks 2014).

However, boats continued to arrive and the number of 'no advantage' asylum seekers waiting for their claims to be processed began to rise, increasing pressure on the capacities of both the onshore detention centres and offshore processing centres. In November 2012 the government stated it would not be possible to transfer all asylum seekers who had arrived to Nauru or Manus Island in the immediate future. Instead, under the 'no advantage' principle, they were released from detention into the community on bridging visas without work rights (BVEs) while they awaited an outcome on their asylum applications. Those found to be refugees would not be issued with permanent protection visas 'until such time that they would have been resettled in Australia after being processed in our region' (Karlson, Phillips & Spinks 2014, p.3).

By January 2013, a total of 935 Sri Lankan refugees had returned to Sri Lanka, voluntarily or involuntarily. It has been reported that the majority of those returned were Sinhalese. By July 2013, this number had risen to 1,285 (Blue Mountains Support Group, 2013). On 19 July 2013, after Kevin Rudd became the Prime Minister again, it was announced that BVEs would no longer be issued and all asylum seekers arriving by boat after that date would be transferred to offshore processing centres for processing as well as resettlement. Within weeks of this decision a Federal election was called and Parliament prorogued.

The new Coalition government determined that those who arrive by boat will never be settled in Australia, and in 2014 introduced legislation, the *Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment (Resolving the Asylum Legacy Caseload) Bill 2014*, to deal with the so-called 'asylum legacy caseload' of approximately 30,000 asylum seekers. As at 31 August 2013, this caseload was comprised of approximately 21,364 people in the community on BVEs, approximately 8,732 people in onshore immigration detention facilities and approximately 2,739 being held in community detention (Karlson, Phillips & Spinks 2014). It is estimated by community groups that up to 10% of these asylum seekers may be Sri Lankan Tamils who are waiting to begin their asylum applications.

This Bill, which passed the Australian Parliament in December 2014, states that asylum seekers who arrived by boat between August 2012 and December 2013 may not make an application for any kind of a visa, including a protection visa, without the Minister for Immigration's personal invitation, and introduced Temporary Protection Visas (TPV) and Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEV) (Karlson, Phillips & Spinks 2014). Under the temporary protection arrangement, visa holders will have access to some government services and benefits. This includes social security and health (Medicare, Centrelink, and counselling), work rights that include access to job matching services, as well as access to English language programs (RACS, 2014). School aged children will be able to attend school but the requirement to pay fees has not been made clear, and arrangements would need to be discussed with individual educational institutions (RACS, 2014). A number of restrictions also

impact the long term plans of asylum seekers. Temporary protection visa holders are not permitted to apply for family reunion through the Special Humanitarian Program or the General Migration Program, which means those on TPVs or SHEVs will not be able to sponsor their immediate families. They also cannot leave Australia and return unless they have been given permission at the Immigration Minister's discretion. Asylum seekers also face a number of conditions on their temporary protection visas that must be abided by in order to remain lawfully in the country, such as not engaging in criminal conduct and reporting changes of address to the Immigration department within 14 days (RACS, 2014).

Temporary protection visa grants will also be re-assessed every 3 years (TPV) or every 5 years (SHEV), and those for whom it is deemed safe to return following the initial grant of a protection visa will be expected to return to their respective countries. Tamil asylum seekers in the community in Australia constantly fear being returned to Sri Lanka. They fear torture, interrogations, indefinite detention and disappearances on their return. Temporary protection visas do not provide a long term permanent resettlement option. As a result, many in the community continue to feel anxious about being returned when policy changes are made. Many Tamil asylum seekers are currently waiting to renew their bridging visas. They are faced with uncertainty daily whether this will be renewed or how a new policy may impact upon their bridging visa itself. Some, who may have a valid visa to be in the country, believe their visa has expired as a result of changes in policy, incorrect information received from friends, and inability to read documents in English.

Some asylum seekers have been invited by the Minister to apply for a temporary protection visa. However, most Tamil asylum seekers in the community are currently unemployed and struggling to meet their day to day expenses as a result of not being given work rights. Some STARTTS clients have requested monthly counselling appointments as they cannot afford a weekly train ticket to the STARTTS office. They also lack study rights unless they are under the age of eighteen. Most even lack the right to volunteer. This has resulted in boredom, increased depression symptoms, restlessness and reduced motivation to complete day to day tasks. This has created a sub-class of people who cannot afford basic necessities of day to day life. This increases asylum seekers' anxiety, worry, fear as well as disrupting their sleep. Recently, the current Australian government has started issuing work permits and this has assisted some asylum seekers secure employment, although those given work permits with duration of three months are still finding it difficult to find employment. In June of this year, NSW Premier Mike Baird approved concession travel cards for asylum seekers, starting in January 2016, which will allow them to have greater access to services.

A number of STARTTS clients have stated that they are not able to attend a GP clinic as a result of their Medicare eligibility having expired. Medicare eligibility may expire with bridging visa eligibility. For some asylum seekers, they continue to have Medicare access although their bridging visas have expired, but it is a requirement to have a current bridging visa when re-applying for a Medicare card. Those without a Medicare card are expected to pay the full fee of \$74. As a result, most asylum seekers are choosing not to attend a GP clinic for minor ailments, and alternatively seek help at their local pharmacy.

As a result of large numbers of asylum seekers waiting to begin their asylum applications, it is expected that the process may take some time. Many asylum seekers perceive the temporary protection visa to be a restrictive visa that only allows them to live in Australian society with a set of conditions. Although they have been deemed genuine refugees who are owed protection by the Australian government, they are not able to exercise their needs to live with their families, travel overseas and plan for a permanent future. This can also create a deep uncertainty and anxiety about their future and exacerbate existing mental health problems from their time in detention and their past history of persecution. Human right organisations have also argued that individuals face greater challenges to integrating into a new culture and environment whilst on a temporary protection visa.



## SRI LANKAN TAMILS - RELIGION AND CULTURE

Although the island of Sri Lanka is far better known for its Buddhist heritage, the Tamils of Sri Lanka adhere primarily to Hinduism or Roman Catholicism. The former has its roots in antiquity and in the successive waves of immigration and invasion from India. The latter arrived more recently on the island during the period of Portuguese colonialism. Islam is also prevalent on the island, albeit not among the Tamils. There is a high degree of syncretism among these faiths in Sri Lanka, which has helped the various peoples there to live in relative religious harmony. For example, it is quite common to find a shrine with a Hindu deity, a Buddhist priest, and worshippers that include Muslims and Christians (Defence Language Institute Foreign Language Center, 2011).



Isuru Senevi / Flickr

### OVERVIEW OF THE MAJOR RELIGIONS OF TAMIL SRI LANKANS

#### Hinduism

The core of Hinduism is in the Vedas, ancient texts describing the beliefs and practices of the Vedic civilization, which developed in north western India during the second millennium B.C.E (Zaehner, 1962, pp.36-38). The Upanishads serve as a continuation of the Vedas and focus on religious knowledge. The great epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, expound upon issues of duty, destiny, and virtue (Heckman, 2008, pp.168-169).

Hindus believe in the reincarnation (samsara) of the soul (atman) and that the quality of a person's next life is determined by one's actions in previous ones (karma). The caste system, in which people are born into different social strata, is tied to this concept. To improve their position, Hindus must remain spiritually devout and follow the social and moral guidelines according to their station in life (dharma) (Zaehner, 1962). One can only overcome the cycle of rebirth through eradication of desire and ignorance. Achieved through monastic or devotional paths, this liberation from rebirth (moksha) is, in some conceptions, a union or reunion with Brahman, the eternal and infinite force from which everything else derives (Milner, 1994, p.42-45).



Shamli071 / Wikimedia Commons

The pantheon of Hindu gods and goddesses - hundreds of millions in Hindu scripture - are all expressions of Brahman, so worshippers may venerate any of these deities (Smith, 2003, p.34). The major sects of Hinduism are Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Shaktism, which take, respectively, Vishnu, Shiva, and Shakti (the goddess) as their primary deities (Kakar, 2009). Hindus often worship these and other deities according to caste, locality, or personal choice (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011).

The most recent census data in 2012 indicates Tamils make up roughly 11.1% of the Sri Lankan population. An estimated 80% to 90% of Tamils are Hindu ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics\\_of\\_Sri\\_Lanka](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Sri_Lanka)).

The main form of Hinduism practiced among the Tamils is Shaivism. In fact, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Christians and others flock to the pilgrimage site of Kataragama in Sri Lanka, which is dedicated to one of the sons of Shiva, Kataragama (also known as Murugan or Skanda) (Pfaffenberger, 1979). Even the indigenous Veddahs hold this deity and the site as sacred because legend holds that the god married a goddess of the Veddahs' traditional faith (Mills, Claus & Diamond, 2003, pp.330-331).

For most Hindus, religion is interwoven into daily life, and distinctions between the sacred and the secular are less defined than in many Western cultures. Prayer and performing religious rituals are important parts of the daily life of most pious Hindus. Daily worship (puja) is performed in the morning after bathing but prior to eating or drinking anything. It is usually done in home shrines (Michaels, 2004).

The Ethnic Minorities Action Group (1996) found that religious life was an important part of the settlement process for Tamil Sri Lankans in Sydney, providing a system of security and support. However, members of the Tamil Sri Lankan community were concerned that although the Hindu temples in Sydney were found to offer a service for worship and to fulfil essential ritual aspects for Hindus, they had "limited impact on the spiritual life of the followers and in the intellectual expression of their religion." Although this report was published some time ago, unfortunately for many Tamils this is still the case.

## Hindu Temples



കരോലി / Wikimedia Commons

The Hindu temple is known as a mandir or kovil. Within, one will find images of the primary and subordinate Hindu deities to whom the temple is dedicated. One will also find the priests, ritual specialists, and attendants who serve the temple. The temple is frequently used for communal worship and ritual performance, whereas daily prayers are typically done at small shrines in one's home (Defence Language Institute, 2011).

Shoes should always be removed before entering a temple. Dress should be conservative. In some temples, men may be required to remove their shirt and wear a sarong. Once inside, keep your voice low, show respect, and do not touch the images. Women are not permitted inside the temple during the time of menstruation (Defence Language Institute, 2011).

## Roman Catholicism



McKay Savage / Flickr

Those Tamils who do not subscribe to Hinduism are primarily Roman Catholic Christians. This stems from the impact of Portuguese colonialism from 1505 to 1656 (Peebles, 2006, pp.41-43).

The first Catholic missionaries arrived in Sri Lanka from Portugal in 1546. In addition to caring for the Portuguese garrison, they ministered to the local population. But it was the conversion of Dharmapala, heir to the Kotte Kingdom, which served as a watershed event. An estimated 3,000 Sri Lankans followed suit and embraced the faith. The king of Jaffna sent troops to slaughter several thousand Tamil converts on Mannar Island. In response, the Portuguese fortified the island and used it as a base to conquer the Kingdom of Jaffna. It was among those Tamil converts on



Mannar Island that the Catholic faith took the strongest root in Sri Lanka, with an estimated 100,000 or more converts by the end of the Portuguese presence in 1658 (Rasiah, 2011).

Although a small minority, these Christian Tamils have played a significant role in Sri Lankan history. The late leader of the LTTE, Velupillai Prabhakaran, was Catholic, which repudiates the misplaced notion among many international journalists, scholars, and policymakers that the group was a Hindu organisation. Catholic clergy were among the more vocal supporters of the organisation (Badarage, 2009).

The Catholic Church has a tense history of relations with the Buddhist community, largely because of its institutional ties in the Portuguese colonization of the island as well as anti-Buddhist activities during the British colonial period (Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, 2013). It is important to note that Catholics come from both the Tamil and Sinhalese communities and have tended to side with their ethno-linguistic compatriots in the island's civil war (Berkley Center, 2013). The National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL) represents a number of the other Christian denominations on the island, and has been an active presence in peace building efforts. Christians of all denominations have suffered occasional attacks at the hands of both Tamil militants and Sinhalese-Buddhist mobs (Berkley Center, 2013).

The Catholic Church in Australia supports the Sri Lankan Tamils regardless of their religion, by providing before and after care for the new arrivals with basic necessities such as food, household utensils, finding accommodation, etc and some of the priests have also helped asylum seekers to find appropriate legal support for their protection visa applications. Father Maurizio Pettena, Director of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office, in Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Media Blog said that "The Catholic Church has always been advocating in favour of onshore processing." He also mentioned that the "Catholic Church offers pastoral care to asylum seekers both during the time their visas are being processed and after, and has always offered to work with the Government in the pursuit of more humane ways to respond to the cry of asylum seekers." (Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 2011).

## Islam



Kanatonian / Wikimedia Commons



Islam is a monotheistic religion, meaning that its followers believe in a single deity. The Muslim community, or umma, calls this deity Allah. The Arabic term islam means “to submit” or “to surrender.” So a Muslim is one who submits to the will of Allah (Denny, 1994). The essential beliefs and rites of the Muslim faith are encapsulated in the Five Pillars of Islam. The first and central pillar is the faithful recitation of the shahada, or Islamic creed: “There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.” The remaining pillars include performing ritual prayers five times per day; giving alms to the poor and needy; fasting during the holy month of Ramadan; and undertaking a pilgrimage to the Islamic holy city of Mecca. Muslims believe that Allah revealed his message to the Prophet Muhammad, a merchant who lived in Arabia from 570 to 632 C.E. They consider Muhammad as the last in a long line of prophets including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Allah’s message, as relayed by Muhammad, is delivered in the Quran, the sacred text of Islam. Additional sacred guidelines include the hadith, a collection of the sayings of Muhammad, and the sunna, which describes the practices of Islam by way of Muhammad’s example (Denny, 1994).

Although there are few Tamil Muslims, the Moors of Sri Lanka adhere to the faith and frequently live in areas heavily populated with Tamils. Furthermore, many Moors speak Tamil. During the civil war, the LTTE frequently targeted Muslim communities, driving the Moors to the safety of government-held territory and the east coast, where Muslims are the plurality (Department of Census and Statistics, Government of Sri Lanka, 2001).

### **Honour and values practiced by Tamil Sri Lankans**

Hindu religious values, such as a belief that the cause and effect chain of karma shapes destinies, unite the majority of Tamil people in Sri Lanka. Because 90% of the Tamil population adheres to Hinduism, they accept their place within the caste system. The caste into which they are born determines their aspirations and relationships throughout life. Though the caste system in Sri Lanka is much less rigid than that in India, it continues to exist, exerting conscious and unconscious influence over people. So deeply engrained is this tradition that it is often not publicly questioned (Ross & Sevada, 2002). In urban settings, caste plays a role primarily in terms of marriage arrangements; otherwise, the various castes interact amiably in most other matters. But in rural areas, where most Tamils live, it remains a severe restraint on social mobility (Philips, 2003). Familial bonds are strong in the Tamil community. The elderly often live with their adult children, and the family reveres them. Extended families are common, although not as prevalent as they once were. Traditionally, Tamil families are patriarchal and the husband is the head of the household. Though many women work outside of the home today, they are still expected to perform the traditional work of a dutiful mother and wife. Children are considered a blessing, and the many milestones of their lives are celebrated and frequently ritualized. Unlike some South Asian groups, Tamils show little preference for a particular gender, embracing the birth of a daughter as warmly as that of a son (Defence Language Institute, 2011, p.34).

### **Greetings, body language and behaviour of Tamil Sri Lankans**

The most common Tamil greeting is “Vanakkam,” which is typically rendered with hands pressed together in the namaskaram gesture typically associated with South Asia (Ellis, 2005). Greetings are somewhat gender specific. When meeting for business, men typically give one another a light handshake after first offering the prescribed welcome. Women typically do the same with one another. When greeting members of the opposite sex, shaking hands is less common, and it is wise for a man to follow the woman’s lead in such situations, because some women will avoid any physical contact with unrelated men (Kwintessential, n.d.). It also is quite common for women to avoid direct eye contact with men (Culture Crossing, n.d.). Customs associated with politeness dictate that one should avoid confrontation. This frequently leads to people saying what they think you want to hear rather than the truth.

The head wobble, common in most South Asian cultures, appears to the Western eye as something between a nod for affirmation and a shake of the head for negation. The ambiguity is intentional, since it is used for both meanings. One must learn to gauge the position of the head and the speed of the gesture to determine the intended meaning, and even that is an inexact science. To beckon, one should extend the arm with palm down and simulate a scratching motion with the fingers (Culture Crossing, n.d.).

Some Tamils are good at smiling when talking about their deepest fears and traumatic memory, a reflection of their own fear of entering sadness and not knowing how to gain relief from it (Thillainathan, August 2010).

The Tamil concept of timeliness runs counter to that found in Western countries, including Australia, and Tamils may not always arrive at appointments at the designated time (Culture Crossing, n.d.).

### **Dress and appearance of Tamil Sri Lankans**

Dress is typically quite conservative for both men and women. The traditional salwar kameez and sari are common wear for women and they generally avoid tight fitting and short clothes (Culture Crossing, n.d.). Married women may wear a thali, a necklace of special design that traditionally symbolises marriage. The wearing of red powder in the parting in the hair also symbolises marriage. Married women may also wear a Potu (a red dot between and just above the eyebrows) on the forehead.

Footwear used outside is not generally worn inside Hindu homes; removal of footwear before entering a Hindu home is therefore customary.

### **Hospitality and gift-giving**

When visiting a Sri Lankan home, one should wear clean and conservative clothing and remove shoes before entering. It is generally appropriate but not expected to bring a gift. Sweets, fruit, and flowers are common presents. Avoid the colours black and white because they are associated with death. If the family has small children, a toy is an appropriate gift (Editors of Hinduism Today, 2007).



Image: Flickr

### **Food, drink and fasting**

Many Sri Lankan Tamils are vegetarian, particularly those from the Brahmin caste, as they believe in the interdependence of life and will not eat any food that has involved the taking of life. In the coastal region of Northern Sri Lanka, however, fish and seafood is part of the staple diet, and in other areas non-vegetarians eat chicken, egg, lamb and goat. However, Hindus do not eat beef or beef products, as the cow is considered to be sacred. Vegetarians would prefer to use separate dishes and utensils for vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods. As with most South Asian cuisine, Tamil food tends to be quite spicy by Western standards. Occasional fasting may be common among elderly Hindus. Orthodox Hindus and most vegetarians are unlikely to consume alcoholic drinks.

Because Tamils typically eat meals with fingers rather than cutlery, guests should wash their hands thoroughly before sitting down for the meal. The left hand is reserved for dealing with sanitary issues in the restroom. Refrain from using it when eating or interacting with others.

### **Non-religious celebrations**

In April (the date varies based on the lunar calendar), Tamils and Sinhalese both celebrate their New Year, which has some religious overtones followed by both Hindu and Christian Tamils. Among the Tamils there is another significant day that is neither sanctioned by the state nor observed among any other ethnic groups of the island. It was a day observed by Tamils living in the North and East of Sri Lanka, but mainly those who lived in LTTE controlled areas. It is Heroes' Day (27 November). It was an important for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), commemorating those who died as cadres of the insurgent organisation in its struggle against the government. It is unclear just how many Tamils continue to honour this day in Sri Lanka. Following the end of the civil war in May 2009, the Sri Lankan government and its security forces have clamped down on any attempt at commemorating Heroes day. It still remains popular among some communities of the Tamil diaspora

in the West (Brun & Van Hear, 2011), including in Australia.

### **Health beliefs and practices**

Many Sri Lankan Australians value and use Australian medicine in conjunction with traditional remedies including traditional medicines and spiritual practices such as Ayurveda. Ayurveda places emphasis on herbal medicines, aromatherapy, nutrition, massage and meditation to create a balance between the mind and body (AllRefer, n.d.; Migrant Information Centre, 2004).

In Sri Lanka, mental illness has strong negative connotations and stigma. Shame and denial may be the normal response to any suggestion of mental illness (Ahmed & Lemkau, 2000). Stigma by association linked to mental illnesses is likely to be more prominent in Asian countries, Sri Lanka included, where communities are family-orientated (Ng, 1997). When it comes to seeking counselling it is important to note that the popularity of counselling amongst Tamil Sri Lankans grew rapidly after the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami. However, this was limited to the specific geographic locations that were affected. It is important to appreciate that Tamils (like many other Eastern cultures) derive from a collective culture, where seeking 'advice' for difficulties is usually confined to elderly members of their family. This is often the case, as many extended Tamil families live together in Sri Lanka. The problems are kept within the family and rarely discussed with others to prevent any shame to the family. Second, in the Tamil community, sometimes there is no alternative language for the symptomatology and concept of PTSD other than that you are 'mad'. Survivors' fears of going mad may prevent them from talking and they may retreat into a fearful silence (Thillainathan, August 2010). Many Sri Lankan families hide mental illness from society to avoid discrimination in terms of marriage engagements (Larson & Corrigan, 2008; Lauber & Rösser, 2007; Ng 1997).

### **Death and related issues**

Death and the grieving process are particularly significant for all religious communities. Hindus worship one God in the form of many idols or manifestations. The soul shall never die — Hinduism preaches the concept of reincarnation. The soul will come back in another form based on the Karma a person performed during life on earth. Traditionally elderly Sri Lankan people have been supported by their extended families during the grieving process; however this support has reduced in recent times in Australia. It is likely that senior Sri Lankans will prefer to die at home. Family is very important, especially at this time. Traditionally it is the youngest son's responsibility to care for his parents (Migrant Information Centre and Eastern Palliative Care, 2009).

Some sensitivities relating to the Hindu faith include the following (Government of Western Australia, Dept of Local Government & Office of Multicultural Interests, 2012):

- » Hindus consider the funeral as the final ritual of life and cremation is generally mandatory for all Hindus, except for children under three, who are buried. In this way the five elements of fire, water, earth, air and space are satisfied and returned to the elements by being poured into the sea. Funerals are deemed most sacred.
- » Ideally, the cremation should be within 24 hours of death. Keeping the body for longer than 24 hours is considered to lead to impurity and hinder passage into the afterlife.
- » Traditionally a Hindu family will usually want the body to be taken home at some stage before cremation, usually between the funeral parlour and the crematorium. Corpses are bathed and dressed only by persons of the same sex. It is absolutely essential to handle the dead with dignity and modesty. After death the body of the deceased is placed on the ground with the head pointing south. The body is anointed with sacred items such as sandalwood paste and holy ashes, basil leaves and water from the river Ganges. Chapters from the holy Bhagavad Gita or Siva Puranas are recited. A priest is called to lead the formal religious rituals then the body is taken to the cremation ground. The eldest son normally lights the funeral pyre — this is the most important duty of a son which leads his parents from this world into the afterlife. In Australia it is not possible to take the body home or follow all these rituals, so the family will conduct rituals with the help of the priest at home before and after the cremation.
- » Autopsies are considered objectionable and deeply disrespectful to the dead and his/her family. The preference is not to have autopsies unless required by law.

- » Acceptance of death does not abrogate the sense of personal loss. Visible expressions of grief are common and are deemed helpful to cope with the sense of personal loss. Modesty remains important even after death.

### **Mourning Rituals in Sri Lanka**

Cultures and villages in Sri Lanka have their own rituals and traditional functions to deal with trauma. Funeral rites like eddu chelavu, antharayetty, and uthuvasam, thuvasam and similar anniversary observance are powerful social mechanisms to deal with grief and loss (Somasundaram, 2003).

Sri Lankan cultures from all religious backgrounds have several psychologically useful forms of mourning rituals. It is common to keep the dead body at home during the period between the death and the funeral when the home is then called the “funeral house.” The house is open to visitation by everyone, even at night, when relatives, friends, and neighbours offer condolences to the grieving family and pay their last respects to the deceased. For community members, visiting the funeral house is one of the most important social obligations. Although it is not possible to have the body at home in Australia, it is still important to visit the home and family of the deceased.

Somasundaram describes the Sri Lankan village in this way:

*In the various rural communities, the village and its people provided organic roots, a sustaining support system, nourishing environment and network of relationships. The village traditions, structures and institutions were the foundations and framework for their daily life . . . . In war, when due to the disturbed situation, rituals are not possible or improperly performed; the trauma of war is never fully accepted or put to rest . . . (Somasundaram, 2003, Community section, para. 3)*

Regardless of the ethnic group, whether it is from the perspective of Tamil villages or traditional rural Sinhalese areas, all these villages have very clear funeral rites and rituals. Rituals start immediately after the news of death and give clear roles and duties to relatives and neighbours for the few days before and after the funeral (Preitler, 2012).

After the funeral it is common to perform further rituals (dhanæ). The dhanæ are performed after seven days, again after three months, and then every year on the anniversary of the death. These important acts are believed to free the dead spirit from this world. If the ritual is not performed the “spirit” (ghost) will hover around the earth without opportunity for liberation. These rituals allow the bereaving family to fulfil its obligation to the dead by releasing the dead from the bonds of this earth (Preitler, 2012).

Alms giving (thanam) are another important ritual for the dead. Social activities are organized in the name of the deceased for this purpose. Alms giving are a crucial psychosocial event. They bring the entire community together and create a time when differences and conflicts are forgotten, at least for the duration of the alms giving. This might be an invitation for meals in the name of the deceased, while other items like household goods and school materials will be given to those who need them. Everyone contributes and participates in the event (even small children), which includes the giving of dry rations for cooking, cookware, distribution of alms, vigil and preaching by the clergy of the various religions, and so on. This social activity allows participants to remember the dead and is a means to provide assistance to those in need (Preitler, 2012).

### **Complications Relating to the Efficacy and Performance of Mourning Rituals in Wartime**

Perera and Thiruchandran (1999) interviewed women in southern Sri Lanka who were widows or the wives of “disappeared” men. According to Perera, while religion and rituals represented a coping strategy that women utilized immediately after the loss, they were not necessarily sufficient, nor did they represent an uncomplicated solution. Problems ensued due to the high cost of some religious ceremonies and rituals. “When loneliness and emotional distress remained unchanged, the added financial strain of having to perform various rituals increased their worries” and they abandoned them. The abandonment however, also left them bereft (Perera and Thiruchandran, 1999).



Further complicating their financial worries, wives of disappeared men could not perform the rituals in their communities due to fear of political retaliation, which transformed religious traditions into a stressor instead of a release mechanism (Thiruchandran, 1999).

From a psychosocial perspective, this made it clear that the actual importance of the rituals, beyond the economic and spiritual aspects, lay in the way that they provided a resource for a grieving person to be supported. The rituals in and of themselves were not the salient feature. It was the community mourning and solidarity that accompanied them that gave the rituals their power and effect (Perera & Thiruchandran, 1999).

### **Traditional coping strategies of Tamil Sri Lankans**

When it comes to traditional coping strategies, Tamil Sri Lankans follow culturally mediated protective factors like rituals and ceremonies which need to be encouraged and arranged appropriately, because funerals and anniversaries are very powerful ways to help in grieving and finding comfort. They are a source of strength, support and meaning.

In the research study conducted by D.J. Somasundaram (2007), he found that Sri Lankan Tamil people naturally turned to traditional practices when under stress and found relief in them. For example, in Sri Lanka religious practices such as Kootu prathanai (group praying), repetition of meaningful phrases such as om nama shivaya, mindfulness, and meditation; rosary or telling prayer beads and contemplation among Catholic Christians; thikir among Muslims; and Japa mala, repetition of a mantra such as om, shanthi asanam, yoga, pranayamam and meditation among Hindus were powerful traditional coping strategies that have been followed by the Tamil people and priests in Sri Lanka. Therefore, teaching culturally appropriate relaxation exercises to large groups in the community need to be carried out as both preventive and promotive coping strategies. When methods are culturally familiar, they tap into past childhood, community and religious roots and thus release a rich source of associations that can be helpful in the healing process. It also becomes clear that traditional relaxation methods exemplify a holistic approach working at the physical, mental, social and spiritual levels, maintaining and promoting wellbeing as well as being therapeutic when needed (Somasundaram, 2002).

Furthermore, psychologist Narmatha Thillainathan suggests that when working with Hindu clients who might be suffering from an anxiety disorder, utilisation of chanting mantras, "OM" or "Shanti" (peace) is highly effective (Thillainathan, May 2010). From a therapeutic perspective, chanting also gives voice to those who have not been able to articulate feelings for various reasons, empowers people who have been silenced, and offers expression for those who cannot find words. Furthermore, she also suggests that it creates positive thoughts that relieve one from distorted and catastrophic thinking, allowing one to experience a profound connection to one's Divinity, which also psychologically empowers Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus. Finally, she also mentioned that the sound and vibrations created through the use of specific tones and frequencies in chanting (such as ringing of bells in many religions) is also recognised for its capacity to encourage peacefulness, and inspire an atmosphere of reflection (Thillainathan, May 2010).

# TAMIL COMMUNITY IN AUSTRALIA

In the late nineteenth century, the first Sri Lankan immigrants to Australia were recruited to work on the cane plantations of northern Queensland. There are also reports of Sri Lankans working in goldfields in New South Wales and Victoria, and as pearlers in Broome, north-western Australia. By 1901, there were 609 Sri Lanka-born people recorded in Australia.

Following Sri Lanka's independence in 1948 and the introduction of the Sinhala Only Act (*Official Language Act No.33 of 1956*), which mandated Sinhalese as the only official language replacing English, many Tamils and Burghers (of mixed European descent) felt disenfranchised. This resulted in significant numbers migrating to other countries including Australia. During the 1960s, Burghers comprised the largest proportion of Sri Lankan migrants to Australia.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s following the easing of Australia's migration policies, Asian migrants, including Sri Lankans, were admitted to Australia. Sri Lankan migrants at this time included Tamils, Sinhalese, as well as Burghers. In the following decade, the number of Sri Lankans entering Australia increased. Many were fleeing the conflict in Sri Lanka. Most of them arrived as Humanitarian entrants under the Special Assistance Category introduced by the Australian Government in 1995. By 2001, there were 53,610 Sri Lanka-born people in Australia.

Reliable information about numbers of Tamils cannot be easily obtained. However, some relevant statistics are provided below.

## AUSTRALIA - 2011 CENSUS

**Birthplace by year of arrival** (Department of Immigration and Border Protection (2014). *The People of Australia, Statistics from the 2011 Census*, Table 6, p.17)

Birthplace	Before 1981	1981-1990	1991-2000	2001-2005	2006-2010	2011	Not stated	Total
Sri Lanka	11,160	16,447	18,568	11,020	23,895	2,325	2,975	86,420

**Birthplaces. Australia 2011 and 2006 Census** (DIBP, *The People of Australia* Table 3, p.7)

Birthplace	2011 Census	2006 Census	Change 2006-2011	% change 2006 – 2011
Sri Lanka	86,413	62,257	24,156	38.8

**Languages spoken at home** (DIBP, *The People of Australia*, Table 7, p.33)

Language	2011 Census	2006 Census	Change 2006-2011	% change 2006 – 2011
Tamil	50,152	32,703	17,449	53.4

There are no exact figures for the number of Tamil Australians but according to the 2011 census there were 50,151 Australians, 0.23% of the population, who spoke Tamil at home. However, the number of Australians who identified their ancestry, either first or second, as Tamil was only 19,434. Most Tamil speaking Australians identified their ancestry as Indian or Sri Lankan.

As per **2011 census, over 39.59% of Tamil speaking Australians were born in Sri Lanka**, 34.89% in India and 13.05% in Australia.

## NSW – 2011 CENSUS

### Language Spoken at Home – NSW

Language	2001 Census	2006 Census	2011 Census
Tamil	12,807	15,718	21,500
Male Tamil speakers	6,142	7,906	10,876
Female Tamil speakers	5,945	7,812	10,624

As above, according to the 2011 Census, over 39.59% of Tamil speaking Australians were born in Sri Lanka. If NSW follows that trend, then **8,512 Tamils in NSW** would be born in Sri Lanka.

They live concentrated in Wentworthville, Pendle Hill, Girraween, Toongabbie and Strathfield in Sydney.

Suburb	State	Tamils	% of suburb	% of Tamils
Wentworthville	NSW	1,073	10.13%	2.14%
Westmead	NSW	908	6.41%	1.81%
Toongabbie	NSW	853	6.56%	1.70%
Pendle Hill	NSW	849	12.74%	1.69%
Strathfield	NSW	815	3.45%	1.63%
Girraween	NSW	760	16.19%	1.52%
Auburn	NSW	659	1.99%	1.31%
<b>Total = 5,917</b>				

### References for tables

Department of Immigration and Border Protection (2014). *The People of Australia, Statistics from the 2011 Census*. Canberra: Australian Government.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil\\_Australian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamil_Australian) using figures compiled from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011 Census

<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/data?opendocument&navpos=200> using Quick Stats and TableBuilder

## TAMIL COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Tamil community has a long history of establishing community organisations and networks. Below is a table outlining Tamil organisations as of 2014:

- » Tamil Associations in NSW
- » Auburn Tamil Society
- » Australasian Federation of Tamil Associations (AFTA)
- » Australian Council for Tamil Refugees Inc. Vic
- » Australian Medical Aid Foundation
- » Australian Society of Graduate Tamils (ASoGT)
- » Australian Tamil Broadcasting Corporation (ATBC)
- » Australian Tamil Congress (ATC)
- » Australian Tamil Electoral Lobby
- » Australian Tamil Seniors' Association
- » Catholic Association of Sydney Tamils



- » Christian Congregation, Australia
- » Consortium of Tamil Associations, NSW
- » Eastwood Tamil Study Centre
- » Eelam Tamil Association (ETA)
- » Federation of Tamil Study Centres
- » Homebush Tamil Study Centre
- » Manitha Neyam Trust
- » Mt Druitt Tamil Study Centre
- » Newcastle Tamil Sangam Inc.
- » Palmera Youth Project
- » Patchwork
- » Sai Centre
- » Saiva Manram Inc.
- » Sri DurgaDevi Devasthanam
- » Sydney Sri Ayyappa Swami Centre
- » Sydney Tamil Christian Fellowship
- » Sydney Tamil Kural Organisation
- » Sydney Tamil Performing Arts and Literary
- » Sydney Tamil Resource Centre
- » Sydney University Tamil Society (SUTS)
- » Tamil Aalayam, Auburn
- » Tamil Church of NSW
- » Tamil Community Media Australia Pty Ltd (Inpaththamil Oli)
- » Sydney Tamil Women's Welfare Group
- » Tamil Co-ordinating Committee (TCC)
- » Tamil Refugee Assistance Network (TRAN)
- » Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation (TRO)
- » Tamil Senior Citizens' Association, NSW
- » Tamil Women's Development Group
- » Tamil Youth Organisation (TYO)
- » Thamil Mulakkam
- » Thenmaradchi Development Foundation
- » Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam ( TGTE)
- » Uniting Church in Australia( Parish of Dulwich Hill)
- » UNSW Tamil Society
- » UTS Tamil Society
- » Valvai Welfare Association
- » Wentworthville Tamil Study Centre
- » Youth Circle, Sydney Murugan
- » Voice of Tamils

Most of the organisations are run by volunteers. Thus, no contact numbers were included in this report to ensure long-term usability of the report.

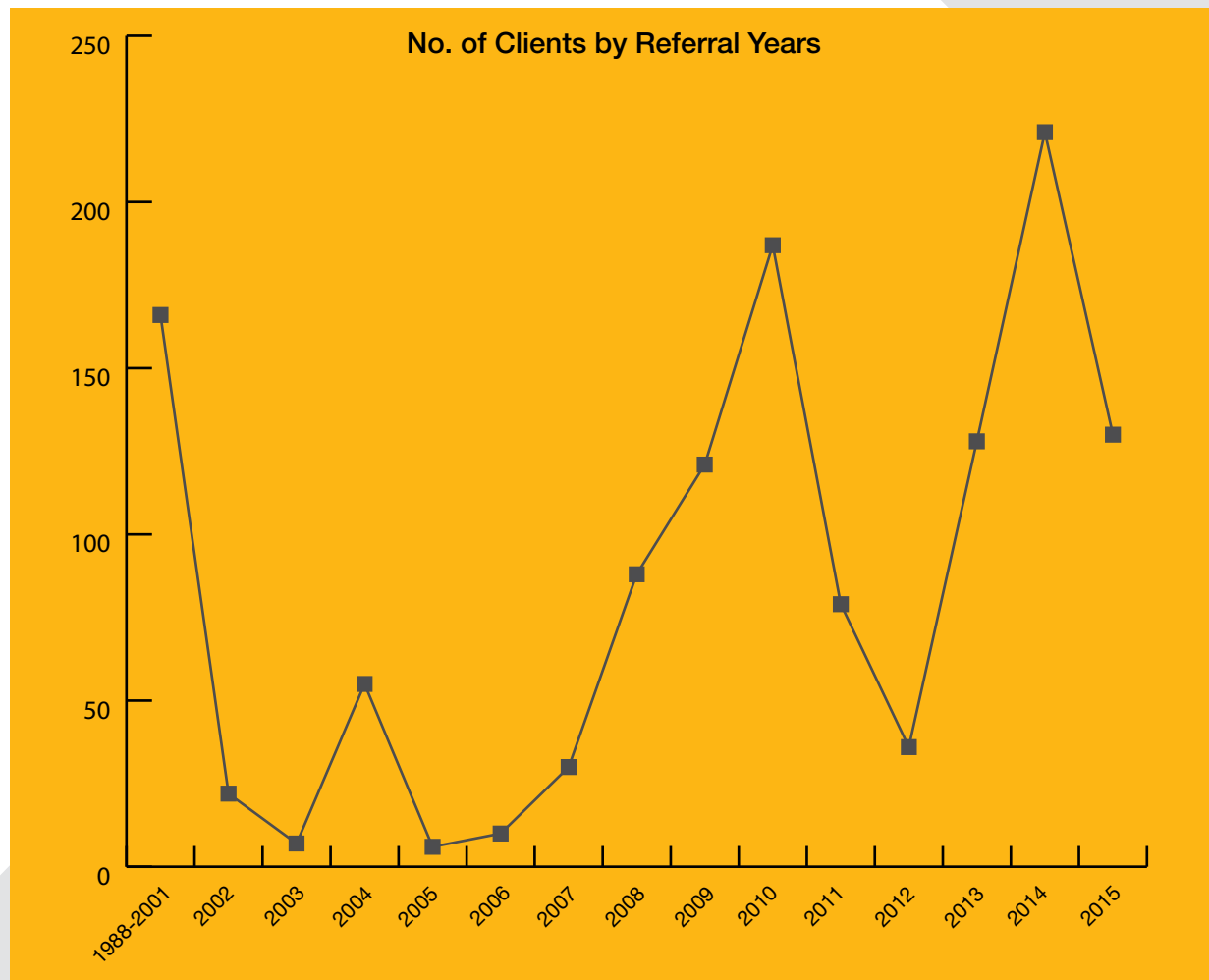
# STARTTS SERVICES TO THE TAMIL COMMUNITY

STARTTS is an Affiliated Health Organisation and a state-wide service. It was established in 1988 and at present, employs 150 staff. STARTTS has offices in Carramar, Liverpool, Auburn, Blacktown, Coffs Harbour, Wagga Wagga, Newcastle and Wollongong with significant clinical outreach component. STARTTS staff speak over 25 languages and STARTTS clients come from over 60 refugee communities with highest numbers from Afghanistan, Iraq, Burma and various African countries at present. STARTTS subscribes to bio-psycho-social systemic approach where trauma impacts on all levels of social system thus requiring interventions on corresponding levels. STARTTS services include counselling and psychotherapy, psychiatric assessment and treatment, physiotherapy, youth program, Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) programs, legal service, variety of health promotion and community development programs, excellent training and clinical consultancy services for service providers working with our client group and wider policy and research work.

## Counselling

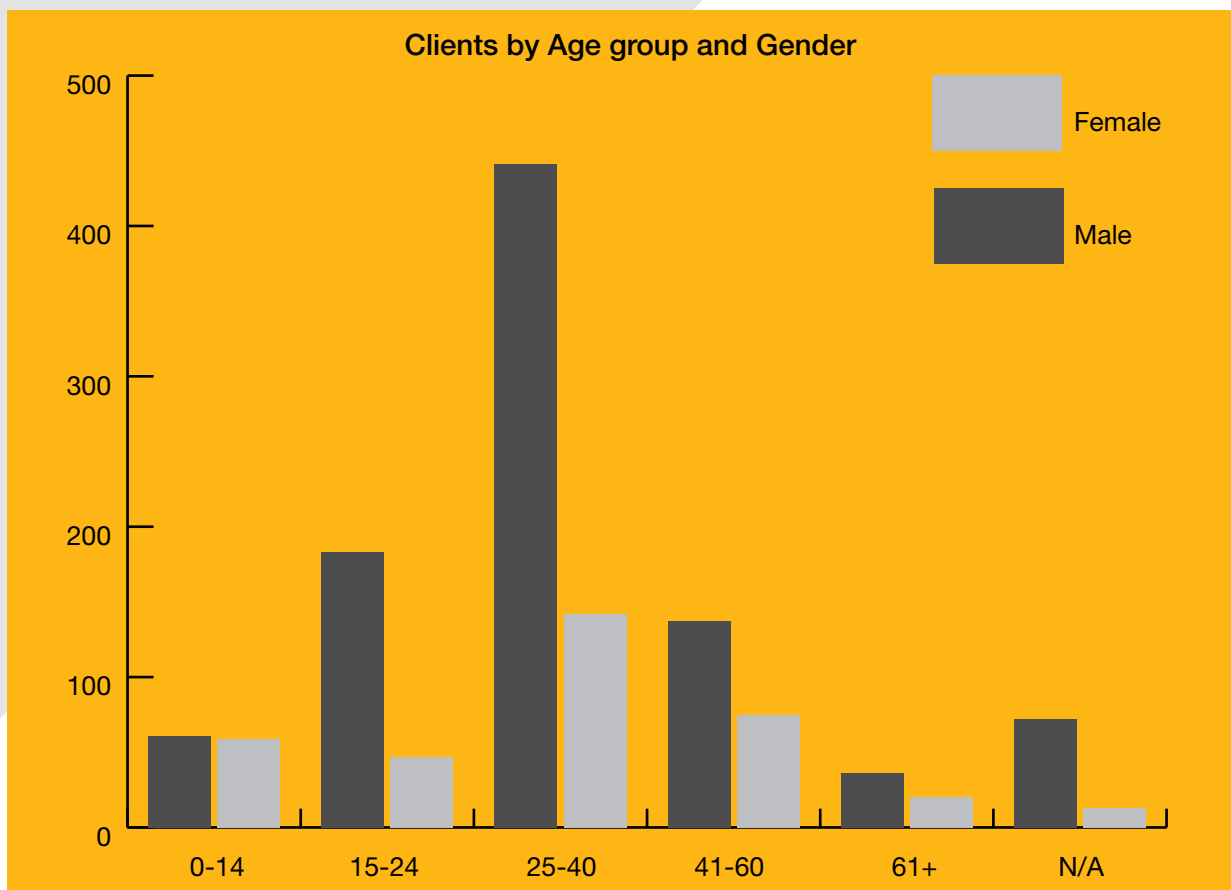
STARTTS offers short and long term-term trauma counselling. Depending on the clients' needs, the exact length of counselling and the time it takes varies. Clients can be referred at any time following arrival in Australia. There are no restrictions related to Visa class in terms of accessing counselling. STARTTS is a specialist service for refugee and humanitarian entrants, and is sensitive to individual and cultural expressions of psychological distress. Furthermore, the counselling is confidential and can be conducted by either a bi-cultural or generalist therapist, with many therapists having a refugee background themselves. At present, STARTTS employs 3 Tamil speaking counsellors.

Below are a graph and a table representing numbers of Tamil referrals to STARTTS.



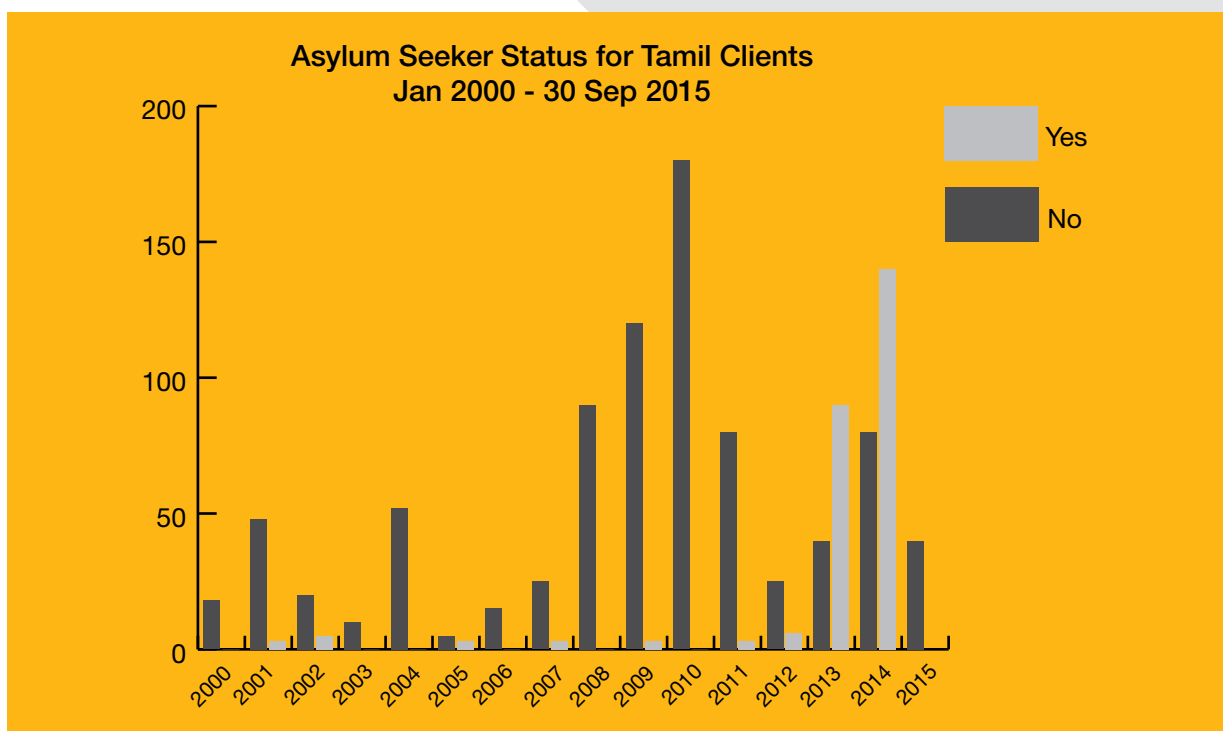
Referral Year	Number of clients	Percentage
1988-2001	166	13%
2002	22	2%
2003	7	1%
2004	55	4%
2005	6	0%
2006	10	1%
2007	30	2%
2008	88	7%
2009	121	9%
2010	187	15%
2011	79	6%
2012	36	3%
2013	128	10%
2014	221	17%
2015	130	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1286</b>	<b>100%</b>

The next graph and table represent gender and age of Tamil clients referred to STARTTS. Clearly men appear to be overrepresented, which is different from the majority of other groups referred to STARTTS. However, it is likely that this is due to the higher number of male asylum seekers. In terms of the age of Tamil clients referred to STARTTS - 25-40 is the largest group, followed by the 15-24 age group.



Age Group	Male	Female	Total
0-14	61	59	120
15-24	183	47	230
25-40	441	142	583
41-60	137	75	212
61 and Above	36	20	56
Not Available	72	13	85
<b>Total</b>	<b>930</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>1286</b>

The final graph outlines the proportion of Tamil asylum seeker and non-asylum seeker clients. A major shift towards the asylum seeker clients can be observed in 2013 and 2014 reflecting the numbers of boat arrivals.



### Families in Cultural Transition

Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) is a group-based psychosocial education program that aims to assist refugees and people from refugee-like backgrounds to anticipate and manage their settlement and changing family dynamics during the period of cultural transition. It is one of STARTTS' foundation programs that have assisted groups over many years to increase their social connections and understand Australian systems and way of life.

FICT is run by two trained bi-cultural facilitators in the community language of the participants. The bi-cultural facilitators bring participants from their community together to take part in the FICT sessions in community locations. Each module is three hours long and is delivered at a time and place to suit participants. The ten modules cover practical, conceptual and emotional issues that refugees are likely to face as they make the cultural transition to life in Australia. The modules are: Introduction and Settlement, Support Services, Money, Trauma and Healing, Families, Children, Gender, Youth, Employment and Enjoying the New Environment.

Recently the FICT team has become aware of the needs of Tamil asylum seekers living in the community and has adapted the FICT program to meet the needs of these groups. The modules generally cover the same topics but have an emphasis on meeting the practical needs of asylum seekers.

STARTTS FICT team has trained 9 Tamil bi-cultural facilitators and has supported 10 Tamil FICT groups since 2011. These have been both single gender and mixed groups, depending on the preference of the participants. Of the ten, four groups have been run for asylum seekers. The groups have been run in the following locations: Pendle Hill, Toongabbie, Auburn, Homebush and Wentworthville.

Each program is evaluated using a qualitative methodology called Most Significant Change (MSC). Participants are asked about changes that have occurred for them as a result of their participation in FICT, and Tamil participants mentioned a number of positive changes. Their comments included practical aspects such as having increased understanding of where to go for services, and increased confidence to find their way around using public transport. They also spoke of how being in the group helped them to overcome their sense of isolation, and the power of being with others who have been through similar experiences. As one participant said: “what’s happening in our hearts, we can share”.

### Groupwork

STARTTS facilitates a wide variety of groups for refugee clients, including therapy groups, social support groups, psycho-educational group programs, educational groups, groups based on expressive techniques, and clinical assessment groups. STARTTS facilitates group programs for children, young people and adults. Groupwork has been one of the major interventions supporting the Tamil community and further information is provided in the table below.

NAME OF THE ACTIVITY	INFORMATION ABOUT THE ACTIVITY	EXTERNAL OR INTERNAL	WHEN, WHERE AND HOW LONG
1. Sri Lankan Tamil Asylum Seekers Women’s Art Support Group	Clinical and art /skill based women’s support group. This group assists women by providing skills training such as cake making, flower arrangement, hair & beauty training which helps them to improve their self-esteem They are also provided with clinical activities such as psycho-education, art therapy, CBT based group activities, as well as relaxation techniques such as yoga classes, and meditation as self-help techniques to promote self-care strategies, independence and improve general well-being. They have also been provided with external workshops such as womens’ health information by the Refugee Health Service and mindfulness and yoga classes by a volunteer yoga teacher.	STARTTS Community Development Group	Current group started from 24/10/2013, every Thursday from 10am to 2pm at Toongabbie Community Centre. Voluntary support is provided by Blue Mountains Refugee Support Group ladies who also organised a Tamil Cricket Group (Ocean 12).
2. Tamil Men’s Therapeutic Group	The therapeutic strategies include : psycho education, progressive muscle relaxation, mindfulness, activity scheduling, and use of various emotion cards to develop emotional language, narrative therapy, and art in therapy. The program includes a visit from the STARTTS’ nutritionist. In this session the clients are provided with information regarding healthy eating that promotes well-being.	STARTTS Clinical Group	3 groups have run in Auburn STARTTS in 2013- 2014, mostly 10-12 weeks each
3. Blacktown Tamil Men’s Stress Management Group	Clinical and art-based support	STARTTS Clinical Group	Group started on 8/8/2014. This group meets on a fortnightly basis at Blacktown STARTTS

4. Tamil seniors dance/exercise project	Dance-research of Tamil dance and development of a appropriate choreography.	STARTTS Community Cultural Development Project Officer.	Took place on 10/6/14 Funded by Parramatta City Council and supported by Boronia Multicultural Service. 22 Tamil seniors participated
5. Tamil film making community project	Connecting second generation established Tamil and refugee community stories and workshops. Mentoring three refugee film makers The final film is called <i>For the Love of Rice</i>	STARTTS Community Cultural Development Project Officer.	This project started in 2014. Funded by Parramatta City Council in association with Palmera Projects and the Tamil Resource Centre. Participated in by 40 Tamil people from various age groups
6. MANTRA – Man Trauma & Rape	MANTRA is a pilot clinical project designed for men survivors of torture and rape. The therapeutic approach in Mantra integrates multiple culturally appropriate strategies, including: narrative exposure therapy, psycho-education, and mindfulness exercises within a supportive framework in both a group and individual setting.	STARTTS Clinical Group	Ongoing sets of 10 sessions. MANTRA groups started from 1 July 2014. So far, 4 groups were run with 23 participants.
7. Families in Cultural Transition (FICT) groups	FICT is a group-based psychosocial education program that aims to assist the participants to anticipate and manage their settlement and changing family dynamics during the period of cultural transition.	STARTTS Community Development Groups	Each FICT program has 10 sessions. Since 2011, STARTTS has run 12 Tamil FICT groups.
8. Tamil Men's Cricket / Football Team	Practice Cricket and Football	Community Development Group	STARTTS commenced provision of support in 2014. Activity is held at Girraween Park on Sundays at 2pm.
9. Tamil Men's Cricket group – Ocean 12	Ocean 12 are a group of Tamil asylum seekers who formed a cricket team organised the Blue Mountain Refugee Support Group	Community Development Group	STARTTS provides support for this group.

## Youth Program

Tamil young people continue to access STARTTS' Youth Program, including residential programs. Residential programs are designed to enhance the coping skills of refugee children and young people in a residential context, reduce social isolation, and provide a respite from family if needed. Residential programs also enable STARTTS staff to interact with children and young people in a non-threatening environment and ensure appropriate follow-up is conducted post-program. There are at least 6 residential programs per year.

Tamil young people have also participated in STARTTS' school-based group interventions such as Sporting Linx and Capoeira Angola. Additionally, during the consultation Tamil young people requested that STARTTS run a youth camp specifically for Tamil asylum seeker young people. This occurred in October 2014. The camp included outdoor education and activities, swimming at the beach, a visit to Flipout and camp fire. The focus of the camp was on building positive relationship with Tamil youth and increasing interpersonal skills and self-esteem.

## **Community development and community cultural development**

STARTTS subscribes to a systemic approach to recovery from torture and trauma. This includes recognition of the impact of trauma on various levels of the social system and corresponding interventions. Since the consultation, STARTTS has run:

- » 2 suicide prevention sessions with Tamil Asylum seekers
- » 1 Accidental Counsellor Training for asylum seeker leaders (in Tamil)
- » 1 Accidental Counsellor Training for Tamil community and church leaders (in English)
- » Tamil elders' arts project funded by the Parramatta Council

STARTTS also continued to provide support to Tamil artists and other individuals interested in initiatives to benefit their community.



# THE CONSULTATION

For STARTTS purposes, a community consultation is a range of processes in which STARTTS seeks the views, opinions and input of a refugee community on torture and trauma related health and settlement issues, as well as on STARTTS services and programs and how STARTTS can continue to provide relevant and appropriate services to the refugee community consulted.

As practiced at STARTTS, community consultations are an ongoing process, rather than a series of isolated events. Consequently, STARTTS utilises a number of formal and informal community consultation and participation strategies. Formal community consultations involve organising a gathering of key community leaders, STARTTS clients and former clients, and community members from a particular community. During a formal consultation, STARTTS staff present an overview of the service and facilitate discussions with the community focusing on their experiences of trauma, their understanding of counselling, their needs and strengths, and how STARTTS services can be made as appropriate as possible. Finally, a plan of action is decided, which will be implemented by STARTTS and/or other relevant stakeholders. The plan of action is usually disseminated to all participants, thus ensuring transparency and accountability to the service users.

## Purpose of Consultation

The purpose of the consultation is to ensure that STARTTS' services are accessible and equitably provided to communities through:

- » STARTTS developing a relationship and building trust with the community
- » STARTTS developing a knowledge base of the community, including needs, priorities, issues, strengths, resources, culture, structure, understanding of counselling and mental health
- » Increasing the community's awareness of STARTTS and other relevant services
- » identifying potential training needs for STARTTS staff
- » identifying potential STARTTS staff recruitment needs
- » identifying barriers of access to STARTTS services
- » identifying future directions for engagement with the community – for example, further consultations, projects, strategies- and development of an action plan.

## Goals of the consultation

The goals of the consultation were to:

- » provide information on STARTTS' services and how they have worked with Tamil individuals, families and communities
- » formally document feedback about STARTTS and channel that into future planning
- » explore the Tamil community's perceptions about trauma, its consequences and appropriate treatment and rehabilitation strategies
- » explore and document any other issues significant to the Tamil community.

## Planning Methodology

The consultation process began in late 2013 with the establishment of a group of Tamil community leaders representing a broad cross-section of the Tamil community working with STARTTS staff. At this meeting the STARTTS process of consulting with communities was discussed and a plan to implement a consultation with the Tamil community was developed. Participation in the consultation planning process was high and a majority of the working group attended planning meetings regularly.

The community representatives were included in all the decision-making which occurred during the planning, including the choice of venue, date and time, program, question design and promotional strategies. The process also enabled STARTTS to enhance its understanding of the Tamil community needs, issues and dynamics. Additionally, the community representatives were involved in conducting the consultation as facilitators, interpreters and providing overall support. The consultation would have been impossible without such an active community leader group.

## The Consultation

The Consultation was held on 11th May, 2014 at Homebush Boys High School. It was attended by over 150 people. The first section of the Consultation included presentations by STARTTS staff as follows:

- » **Jorge Aroche** – general information about STARTTS services for the Tamil community
- » **Lina Ishu** – STARTTS Youth Program
- » **Sivaharini Mayuran** – STARTTS Group Program for the Tamil community
- » **Neeraja Sanmuhathan** – meaning and use of counselling in the STARTTS context
- » **Yashotha Pathmanathan** – FICT program

The second section of the Consultation involved breaking up the large participant group into smaller groups including: community leaders' group (in English), youth group (in English), men's and women's groups (in Tamil). The groups discussed the questions listed in Appendix 3. Small group discussion was followed by large group feedback, and then dinner.

## The Themes

The majority of the participants were either asylum seekers or focused on asylum seeker issues. The themes were somewhat focused around the questions asked but were also expanded further. They include the following:

## STARTTS

### 1. Insufficient awareness of STARTTS services among Tamil community members

Seven specific comments were recorded related to lack of awareness of STARTTS services. This was particularly an issue identified by asylum seekers and groups that had discussion in Tamil. All participants reported a significant interest in learning more about and accessing STARTTS services. This has resulted in some participants requesting to be referred to STARTTS as soon as possible, and an increase in Tamil referrals post-consultations. Some of the comments are listed below:

*We are very interested to know about STARTTS services and would like to be contacted.*

*We know about STARTTS only today*

*How can we access more services from this organisation?*

### 2. Suggestions for activities STARTTS could run with the Tamil community

All groups had ideas about the types of activities and services STARTTS could provide for the Tamil community. Twenty five suggestions were recorded. There were 4 types of suggestions:

- a. practical group based activities that enhance coping strategies
  - b. community building activities
  - c. further relationship building with the Tamil community
  - d. further employment of Tamil staff.
- a. The **practical group based interventions** included the following activities: sewing, cooking, yoga, sport, employment assistance, financial management information, information about services, small business information, art, music, after school activities for children, dance, English classes, computer classes, learning to drive, learning about Australian culture and groups for mothers. The participants identified such activities as crucial to their emotional wellbeing and useful for coping with the challenges of living as asylum seekers in the community. They also suggested that STARTTS may not necessarily provide all the suggested activities, but could propose those to other services and/or partner with those to deliver the activities.

Some examples of comments:

*Programs – arts, dance/yoga, English classes, mothers groups for Tamils, stitching class, cooking class, computer class, driver licence classes.*

*We need help with financial management where to shop / budgets.*

*Want to learn more about the Australian culture.*

*STARTTS may not have to do everything – can work with SSI on their project / create pathways from classes to STARTTS.*

*Build coping strategies to enhance mental wellbeing – art, music, yoga, work with community to build coping strategies – also great for advertising*

- b. The second and much less frequent type of suggestions focused on **community building**. The participants spoke of the lack of overall coordination of support/assistance for asylum seekers by the Tamil community and organisations. It was felt that STARTTS could help with bringing various groups together and coordination of support/assistance for newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers. This theme resonated with discussions amongst the community leaders who were on the Consultation organising committee.

*The Tamil community does not have good relationship with each other, therefore it will be good if STARTTS could do something to build the Tamil community together.*

*How would you identify whether your community is running smoothly?*

- c. The consultations were perceived by the participants as a step in **building a better relationship between STARTTS and the Tamil community**. Some of the suggestions by the participants involved more frequent and geographically based consultations, meetings with individual Tamil organisations, and raising awareness of STARTTS services.
- d. The last set of suggestions was about increasing the number of Tamil speaking staff at STARTTS. The participants felt that counselling and other services are difficult to provide through interpreters and there were specific issues identified around interpreter use (covered below).

Due to interpreting issues we would prefer a counsellor who could speak our own language. Therefore, STARTTS would need more Tamil speaking counsellors

### **3. Ideas for promotion of STARTTS services to the Tamil community**

There were 24 suggestions recorded that could help STARTTS increase awareness about its services among Tamil community members. The suggestions could roughly be divided into 4 types including: using existing Tamil community structures, using Tamil media, collaboration and referrals from service providers, and production of Tamil language materials.

The most common suggestions were those about engaging existing Tamil community structures. The participants felt that Tamil pastors and other clergy may play an important role in educating the Tamil community about STARTTS.

*Approach religious organisation like church, Hindu temple.*

*Speak to the pastor – don't just leave the pamphlets.*

*Father John to convene a meeting of pastors.*

The second occupational group that was identified as a good channel to provide information about STARTTS were Tamil doctors. The participants felt that STARTTS should identify the individual GPs, Tamil doctors' networks, as well as wider GP networks and information channels.

*STARTTS needs to advertise about their services to GPs and other Tamil organisations so they can refer the clients to STARTTS.*

*Meeting of Tamil doctors – STARTTS to be present.*

*Non Tamil GPs – RACGP – use newsletters/ emails – AMA. |*

The participants also felt that STARTTS should attend community activities and meetings to promote services. It was suggested that Tamil functions and English classes may be good opportunities to promote STARTTS services.

*English classes run by volunteers – someone can come and speak.*

*Network with Tamil organisations.*

*Attend networks – use prominent people in different areas- Homebush, Auburn, Strathfield, Pendle Hill, Toongabie, Mt Druitt.*

*Ceremonies / functions – STARTTS come and present – these are monthly events.*

*Use Tamil events calendar.*

*Use smaller, geographically based gatherings – in Tamil, very simple, community / interactive gathering.*

*Regular appearance on Tamil media – 3 radio programs and 1 magazine, plus Tamil TV channel and Cable TV.*

In addition to avenues for information dissemination, the participants discussed the ways STARTTS services should be promoted to the Tamil community in order to reduce stigma associated with accessing mental health services. A number of participants suggested that STARTTS should engage former Tamil clients who could share their experience of STARTTS services with other Tamil community members. Others felt that information about symptoms and the benefits of counselling could be disseminated using a creative medium of theatre/radio-drama through Tamil media. The participants highlighted that STARTTS approaches should not increase stigma – for example the use of the word “mental” (as in mental health) suggests that a person accessing the service may be considered “mad”.

Other services considered useful for promotion of STARTTS services included the Settlement Services International (SSI), Migrant Resource Centres, Jesuit Refugee Service, Red Cross and Intensive English Centres. SSI and Red Cross were identified as particularly important in disseminating STARTTS information to asylum seekers while IECs were seen as an avenue to engage children and families.

***Involve SSI, Red Cross, Vinnies, JRS to come to those meetings – demonstrate our cooperation.***

A smaller number of participants spoke about using Tamil media and production of Tamil language materials. It was suggested that STARTTS materials in Tamil could be distributed through Tamil shops and other community networks and institutions.

#### **4. What STARTTS activities are helpful to the Tamil community and why?**

STARTTS was identified as helping people develop coping strategies; reduce anxiety, depression and stress; decrease social isolation; solve family problems and access STARTTS reports for refugee status determination purposes. Both group and individual services were considered useful. The participant comments were illustrative of the benefits of STARTTS services. Some of the quotes are listed below:

*People who have experienced trauma are able to recover from their trauma symptoms.*

*STARTTS helps with our depression and anxiety and family problems. We are able to cope with our depression.*

*They deal with us carefully and provide appropriate treatment to our problems and worries.*

*By talking to the counsellors gives us lot of comfort and peaceful mind.*

*Participating in group activities makes us very comfortable talking with our group of friends and makes us more confident.*

*We are able to talk freely and openly from our heart when we have a counsellor who speaks our same language.*

*Talking and seeing a counsellor and participating in groups and talking with the group members makes us very happy and reduces our depression and isolation.*

*People who got into STARTTS – very happy with the services. Importance of a good psychological report helps with their cases.*

Some of the above quotes and perceptions of usefulness of STARTTS services could provide a guide for design of promotional materials and strategies for the Tamil community.

## **5. Understanding of counselling**

The discussion about an understanding of counselling was related to understanding the benefits of accessing STARTTS counselling. However, the participants explained that counselling services did not exist in the home country and that people approached doctors, friends and family members. Doctors were the only people outside of the family and friendship networks who were accessed for assistance with stress and other emotional health issues. The participants felt that it was useful to share one's problems with someone else, and that a supportive listener can reduce sadness.

In this section, it was also suggested that there are a number of male survivors of sexual assault in the Tamil community and that culturally it may not be appropriate for them to be seen by female counsellors and/or interpreters.

## **6. Referrals to STARTTS**

A number of participants argued that all refugees and asylum seekers should be referred to STARTTS for assessment as many may have difficulties coping, but not realise that their difficulties are associated with past trauma. It was suggested by participants that case managers in different organisations often do not know how to explain STARTTS services to clients and do not refer enough. Some participants felt that case managers were overly "interrogative" when trying to assess a need for referral to STARTTS. Others felt that case managers had too much focus on practical issues in the early stages of settlement resulting in their clients feeling overwhelmed and "re-traumatised". It was argued that early intervention is crucial to good mental health outcomes. An example given of a failure to refer to STARTTS resulting in a negative outcome was a Tamil young man who attempted suicide by self-immolation.

*SSI – Needs to identify trauma and refer. Trauma keeps coming up - caseworkers have to encourage people to see counsellor – not send to all very practical things.*

*SSI should be referring. If not happening it's an issue.*

*Caseworkers know about STARTTS but they don't refer.*

*Everyone is affected by trauma. Counselling has to happen first. Referrals everywhere frightens people / unsettles them and is retraumatizing.*

*SSI, Red Cross and others should promote STARTTS better.*

*Case managers (SSI) have not told us about STARTTS.*

This clearly indicates that STARTTS should be working with SSI to enhance their case workers' ability to identify the impact of trauma and make appropriate and timely referrals.



## SRI LANKA

All participants expressed fears of return to Sri Lanka and spoke about various reasons behind those fears. The reasons are further explored below. The participants depicted a divided society where being of Tamil ethnicity leads to daily harassment at best, to kidnapping, torture and murder at worst.

### 1. Generalised fear of return

Generalised fears were expressed with the focus on lack of safety, security, peace and freedom.

*No peaceful life in SL, we constantly live in a fear of being arrested or being kidnapped by white van.*

*We cannot live alive in Sri Lanka – it would make us distressed & unsafe situation.*

### 2. Torture

The participants spoke about the torture Tamil people experienced in the past, as well as their concerns about the current situation in Sri Lanka. Many felt that by returning to Sri Lanka they would face torture. Some described specific torture methods.

*Killing or murdering people by making them naked, tying their eyes and tying their hands behind and shooting in the head either in kneeling position or asking them to run and shoot.*

*We will be put in the detention center indefinitely and will be tortured for our lives.*

*We will be discriminated and tortured again much worse than before.*

*My name is JV. I have experienced severe trauma and torture back in my country. I came to Australia for safety of my life.*

### 3. Disappearances/kidnapping

In addition to torture, many feared “disappearances”. There was a frequent mention of a “white van” which was associated with such disappearances. Others spoke about the “human dead body sinkhole” where bodies are taken without an opportunity to have them identified.

*As soon as we get deported down in Sri Lankan airport we will be taken by the Sri Lankan authorities and then will be taken to the Sri Lankan detention center by tying our eyes.*

*My name is ST. I have experienced severe trauma, witnessed murders and threatened to be kidnapped by phone and I unable to tell everything by writing and I would like to see a counsellor at STARTTS .*

*There were cases of unknown disappearances or deaths of Tamil community leaders who spoke against the Sri Lankan government.*

*There is no peaceful life in Sri Lanka, we constantly live in a fear of being arrested or being kidnapped by white van.*

### 4. Sexual violence

The participants highlighted that sexual violence against Tamil men and women was, and continues to be, a common method of inflicting suffering.

*There is sexual violence and sexual harassment in Sri Lanka for both Tamil men and women.*

### 5. Discrimination

The participants spoke about different forms of discrimination Tamils experience in Sri Lanka. They highlighted the ongoing existence and application of the “Emergency Law”, which they argued focuses on Tamils. According to the participants, the discrimination was evident in employment,

education, property ownership, low-level daily harassment, racially motivated murders and ethnic-focused family planning programs.

*Tamil people are being checked in public by the name of weapon checking, including checking by undressing and touching the private parts of the body.*

*The Emergency Law against the Tamils is still present. Current practice of emergency law is still in Sri Lanka.*

*There are instances of planned discrimination - forced ethnic family planning program for Tamils. In terms of work rights and education – Tamils are discriminated and their rights ignored.*

## **6. Appropriation of Tamil assets by the Sri Lankan Government**

The participants spoke about the government practice of appropriation and exploitation of Tamil lands and property by the Sri Lankan Government. They feared that they would have nothing to go back to if they were forced to return.

*Expropriation of assets is happening in Sri Lanka.*

*Tamil people's land and wealth been taken without their will.*

*Sri Lankan government is taking our lands and properties.*

## **7. Lack of free speech**

The participants discussed the lack of free speech in Sri Lanka – in public or in media. They also suggested that the Sri Lankan Government has made a statement that those who provide evidence to the UN regarding war crimes will be arrested under “the terrorist law.”

## **8. Military operations**

The participants expressed fear over the ongoing Sri Lankan Government military presence in Tamil areas. They also suggested that the Sri Lankan Government was moving Sinhalese military families into Tamil areas. Others worried about the “forced” recruitment of Tamil young people into the Sri Lankan Army and military activities.

*Military family members are being resettled in the Tamil areas.*

*There is planned migration of military / Sinhalese people into the Tamil areas.*

## **9. Suppression of Tamil culture**

The participants were concerned about what they perceived as a planned attempt to suppress or even erase Tamil culture. Some suggested that young people are being alienated from their parents and pushed towards drugs and alcohol to disrupt the transgenerational transmission of cultural values and practices.

## **10. False accusations and arrests**

The participants felt that if they were to return to Sri Lanka they could be exposed to false accusations of involvement with LTTE and arrests. According to one group, Tamils are sometimes forced to sign fake confessions about alleged terrorist activity under LTTE.

*We will be forced to sign the false paper which would state that we have done several criminal activities and that we are connected with LTTE.*



## SETTLEMENT AND OTHER CHALLENGES IN AUSTRALIA

The participants spoke about various challenges they faced in their lives in Australia. By far the biggest challenge identified was the visa issue. ie long-term asylum seeker status without resolution, and fear of forced return to Sri Lanka.

### 1. Visa issues

Many participants spoke about feeling dehumanised by the process of asylum seeking. Others worried about the lack of information, changing political situation in Australia and long delays in processing of their protection applications. “Living in limbo” was described as particularly distressing.

*We are the people who have experienced severe trauma back in our country and travelled across by boat under severe distress [sic] journey... we expect to be treated as humans by Australian Government according to the human rights law.*

*Food, clothes and shelter are not the only important things for us. We wanted to be treated like humans and not as illegal arrivals.*

*People in the community are telling that they are trying to find the solution but no action was taken only there is lot of talking.*

*We are not getting enough and proper answers from your people (Australians) and Tamil community.*

Concerns were expressed about confidentiality and leaking of names on DIBP website as well as concerns that their phone conversations may be tagged by either Australian or Sri Lankan Governments.

### 2. Employment rights

Lack of employment rights was considered demeaning and highly distressing by the participants, who felt they were able and willing to work to ensure their family’s financial wellbeing in Australia and Sri Lanka.

*No work rights is a problem – I feel depressed due to no working.*

*I have no work rights and I am feeling stressed and confused.*

### 3. Social Isolation

Many participants spoke about the negative impact of social isolation in general while others were focussed on family separation and fear for family members still in Sri Lanka. Some expressed distress about what they perceived to be discrimination by their own community and lack of support.

*We are separated from our family members and we have experienced severe trauma and torture therefore when we are isolated and separated it affects our mental health a lot.*

*Apart from church most of us don't go anywhere.*

*We are discriminated by our own community and labelled as “Boat People” – discrimination and racism again!*

*Being ignored and discriminated by our own community people who came before us as “Boat People” is painful.*

### 4. Lack of knowledge and engagement with services

Social isolation appeared to extend to lack of connections with relevant service providers and lack of awareness of what services exist and might be helpful.

## 5. Stress, fear and uncertainty

The majority of participants spoke about feeling stressed and fearful about the uncertainty associated with their refugee status determination. Depression was mentioned as the most common reaction to stress and fear.

*I am unable to sleep, highly depressed, fearful, isolated, living in fearful situation about the government changing visa conditions, extremely stressed, feels like someone has tied our eyes and left us alone in a forest.*

*I have informed about my depression and worries to STARTTS and other mental health organisations. I would really appreciate if you could please support my refugee application by explaining my situation to the DIBP. Also I would like to seek individual counselling from STARTTS as soon as possible.*

Participants with families were concerned about their children's future.

## 6. Interpreter issues

The participants outlined that Tamil language had a number of dialects and suggested that cultural knowledge was as important as the language, particularly in legal cases. Of a particular concern was the alleged practice of TIS to engage South Indian Tamil speakers. These interpreters were identified as not speaking the relevant dialect and not having the required cultural knowledge. Some participants cited examples of negative refugee status determination results influenced by the interpreter selection.

*There are different dialects of Tamil language and this is a problem within legal context. Unfortunately, TIS doesn't take this into account.*

*We need to keep in mind importance of both language and culture (South Indian vs Sri Lankan Tamil) – this is very serious with legal work- there were people losing legal cases because of wrong interpreters.*

*TIS needs more spoken Tamil interpreting – not Tamil speaking south Indian people.*

## 7. Medicare

Some participants reported being confused about their access to Medicare and stated that there were families who had their Medicare Cards cancelled or had very short expiry dates.

## 8. Financial problems

The majority of participants felt that financial support for asylum seekers is inadequate, particularly due to the high cost of living in Sydney. Of a particular concern was the high cost of public transport and lack of access to State based travel concessions. The cost of public transport was identified as contributing to high levels of social isolation, depression and distress.

## WAYS OF COPING

Not many ways of coping were identified, with activities delivered by service providers being identified as the most useful.

### **1. Church and other religious institutions**

Some participants felt that their faith, access to churches and temples and support by religious communities/organisations, were useful coping strategies. Religious institutions provided a sense of belonging, practical and emotional support.

### **2. Service providers who help**

A number of service providers and/or groups were considered helpful including STARTTS, SSI, Auburn Diversity Services, Community Migrant Resource Centre and the Tamil Women's Association. Other Tamil organisations were mentioned as providing Tamil literature, music, yoga and meditation classes, while St. Vincent de Paul, Salvation Army and Red Cross were perceived as sources of financial support. Useful services also included cooking, computer and English classes. Some participants spoke of their GPs as providing useful support.

*We talk about our worries and problems and stress with our GP and it will be good if they can refer us to STARTTS.*

*We are getting help and support from CMRC and Tamil Women's organisation. We are able to share these support with our family members and friends.*

*Other Tamil organisation are providing classes regarding Tamil literature, arts, yoga, meditation, Salvation Army, Vinnies and Red Cross are some organisation we seek for help with finance or other things.*

### **3. Other ways**

The only two additional ways of coping identified by participants included crying and keeping to oneself.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STARTTS TAMIL COMMUNITY CONSULTATION REPORT

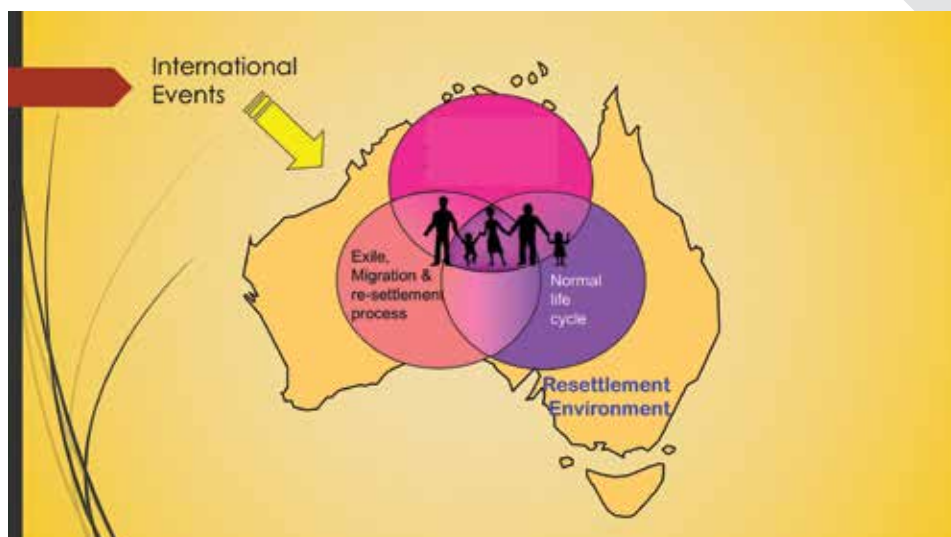
Issues raised by focus group	Intervention	Responsibility	Status
<p><b>Insufficient awareness of STARTTS services among Tamil community members</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. STARTTS to continue providing training to SSI and other agencies working with newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers.</li> <li>2. STARTTS to develop formal relationships with the above agencies to ensure effective and efficient referral pathways.</li> <li>3. STARTTS to develop a radio play about the impact of trauma and benefits of counselling, to be broadcasted on Tamil radio.</li> <li>4. Publish STARTTS information in Tamil magazines and university Tamil magazines. Also use Tamil TV.</li> <li>5. STARTTS to provide information to GPs using GP magazines and meetings</li> <li>6. STARTTS to conduct smaller consultation meeting groups in different areas where Tamil clients live.</li> <li>7. STARTTS to organise social events where potential Tamil clients can be invited and given information about STARTTS in a non-threatening environment.</li> <li>8. STARTTS to reach out to schools where Tamil children attend.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. STARTTS Training Coordinator</li> <li>2. STARTTS CEO</li> <li>3. STARTTS Clinical Services and Research Coordinator and Tamil speaking staff.</li> <li>4. STARTTS Public Affairs Coordinator, Clinical Services and Research Coordinator, and Tamil speaking staff.</li> <li>5. STARTTS Training Coordinator, Clinical Services and Research Coordinator, Public Affairs Coordinator, and Tamil speaking staff.</li> <li>6. STARTTS Community Services Coordinator and Tamil speaking staff.</li> <li>7. STARTTS Community Development Project Officer and Tamil speaking staff.</li> <li>8. STARTTS School Liaison Officer and Child and Adolescent Counsellors.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. STARTTS is already providing training to SSI and other relevant agencies.</li> <li>2. STARTTS is in the process of developing a formal MOU with SSI.</li> <li>3. STARTTS has already reached out to those schools and has received a number of Tamil referrals for the Youth Program.</li> </ol>

Issues raised by focus group	Intervention	Responsibility	Status
<p><b>Suggestions for activities STARTTS could run with the Tamil community</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts and skills development classes</li> <li>• Dance / music</li> <li>• Yoga / physical exercise classes</li> <li>• English classes</li> <li>• Mothers' group for Tamils</li> <li>• Stitching classes</li> <li>• Computer classes</li> <li>• After school activities for Tamil school children</li> <li>• Culturally appropriate parenting classes</li> <li>• Youth camps</li> <li>• Clinical psycho-education groups</li> <li>• Budget and financial management</li> <li>• Information about Australian culture and system</li> <li>• Sports group for men</li> </ul> <p>While STARTTS acknowledges the importance of the above activities, some of them would be better run by Tamil community organisations with STARTTS providing guidance and support. Thus, the recommendations can be summarised as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. STARTTS to continue running FICT groups with the Tamil community.</li> <li>2. Incorporate some of the above activities in the existing psychosocial support groups STARTTS is running with Tamil clients.</li> <li>3. Continue running clinical groups</li> <li>4. STARTTS to ensure Tamil young people attend STARTTS camps, and organise youth activities specific to Tamil young people.</li> <li>5. STARTTS to support Tamil community organisations and volunteers wishing to provide the above activities. The support would take the form of guidance, training and facilitation of access to resources.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Senior FICT Project Officer and FICT Team.</li> <li>2. STARTTS Tamil staff.</li> <li>3. STARTTS Tamil and other staff skilled in clinical group work.</li> <li>4. Senior Youth Project Officer and Tamil speaking staff.</li> <li>5. Community Services Team and Tamil speaking staff.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Since the consultation, 9 Tamil FICT groups have been run. Currently one FICT group is facilitated by 2 STARTTS asylum seeker clients who have been trained by STARTTS.</li> <li>2. Tamil Asylum Seeker Women's art/skills development &amp; clinical support group – began on 24th October 2013 still current; supported by Blue Mountain Refugee support group ladies who also organised Tamil Cricket Group (Ocean 12).</li> <li>3. Clinical groups have been run since the consultation including the ongoing MANTRA groups. MANTRA groups started on 1 July 2014. So far 4 groups were run with 23 participants.</li> <li>4. Tamil youth camp held 10th to 12th October 2014. Day out for Tamil girls held in January 2015. Tamil young people involved in STARTTS youth program.</li> <li>5. Some examples of the work STARTTS has undertaken included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Men's Cricket Group – started from October 2014.</li> <li>- Healthy relationship workshop for Tamil parents with teenage children, and Healthy Relationship Day Camp for Teenage Girls – 3rd May and 14th May 2015.</li> <li>- Tamil Film making community project.</li> </ul> </li> <li>6. Tamil seniors dance/ exercise project</li> </ol>

Issues raised by focus group	Intervention	Responsibility	Status
<p>STARTTS to contribute to policy development and awareness raising on the issues facing the Tamil community, from the expert clinical perspective.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Launch the Tamil Community consultation report</li> <li>2. Invite relevant politicians and senior bureaucrats to the launch of the Tamil community consultation report and to other relevant events organised by STARTTS for the Tamil community.</li> <li>3. Develop a Tamil case study for STARTTS training programs.</li> <li>4. Include information on the Tamil community at STARTTS training.</li> <li>5. Include content relevant to Tamil community issues in Refugee Transitions.</li> <li>6. Contribute to government calls for policy submissions relevant to the Tamil community.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. &amp; 2. Organising Committee and Tamil speaking staff at STARTTS.</li> <li>3. &amp; 4. STARTTS Training Coordinator</li> <li>5. STARTTS Public Affairs Coordinator guided by Tamil speaking staff.</li> <li>6. STARTTS Policy Officer and Senior Management.</li> </ol>	<p>STARTTS has provided a policy submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs on the Migration and Maritime Powers Legislation Amendment (Resolving the Asylum Legacy Caseload) Bill 2014</p> <p>STARTTS has also provided written input to the Refugee Council of Australia (RCA) Annual Submission.</p>
<p>STARTTS to work with Tamil community leaders and voluntary/ community support workers to increase their effectiveness in their roles and provide them with much needed support.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accidental Counsellor Training for peer leaders</li> <li>2. Accidental Counsellor Training for church &amp; community leaders and support workers.</li> <li>3. Inform community leaders and volunteers of STARTTS Community Services Team and how they can be supported in their leadership roles.</li> <li>4. Re-invigorate Tamil Workers' Interagency that used to operate from STARTTS in the past</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. &amp; 2. STARTTS Training Team and Tamil speaking staff. Other clinical staff as required.</li> <li>3. Community Development Project Officer and Tamil speaking staff.</li> <li>4. Tamil speaking staff supported by the Community Services Coordinator.</li> </ol>	<p>1. &amp; 2. In August 2014, training was provided for both groups.</p>

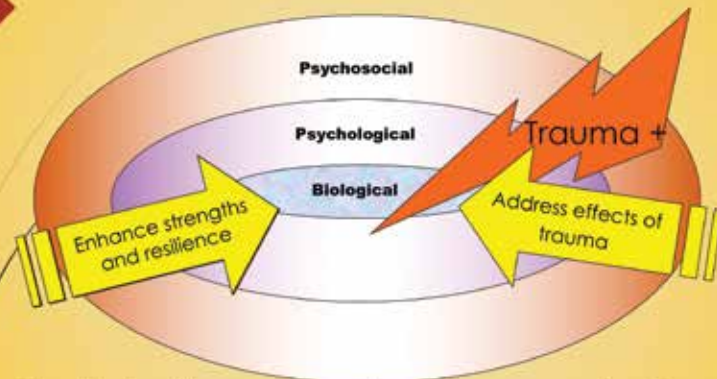
## APPENDIX ONE:

The following presentation was made at the beginning of the community consultation by STARTTS CEO Jorge Aroche:



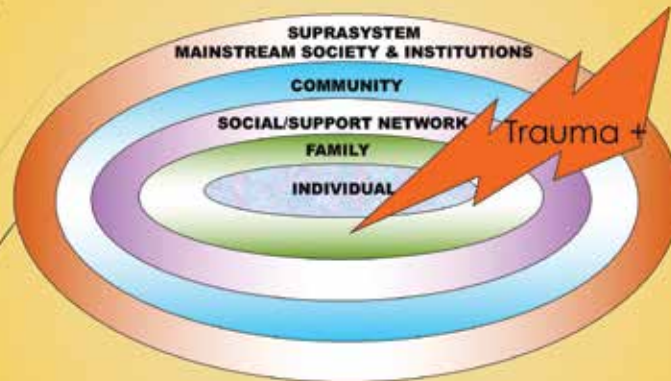


## A bio-psycho-social systemic approach

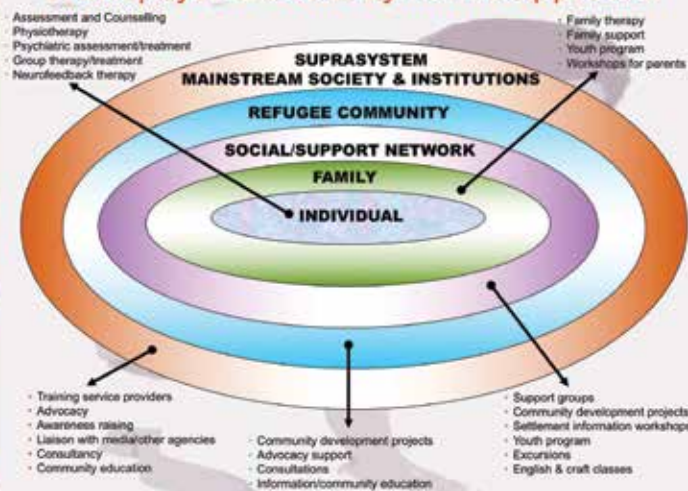


The effects of trauma can make survivors more vulnerable to the stresses associated with resettlement and life in general & undermine resilience to further stresses. Interventions are more effective (and more cost effective) if targeted to address effects of trauma & enhance strengths at the right level.

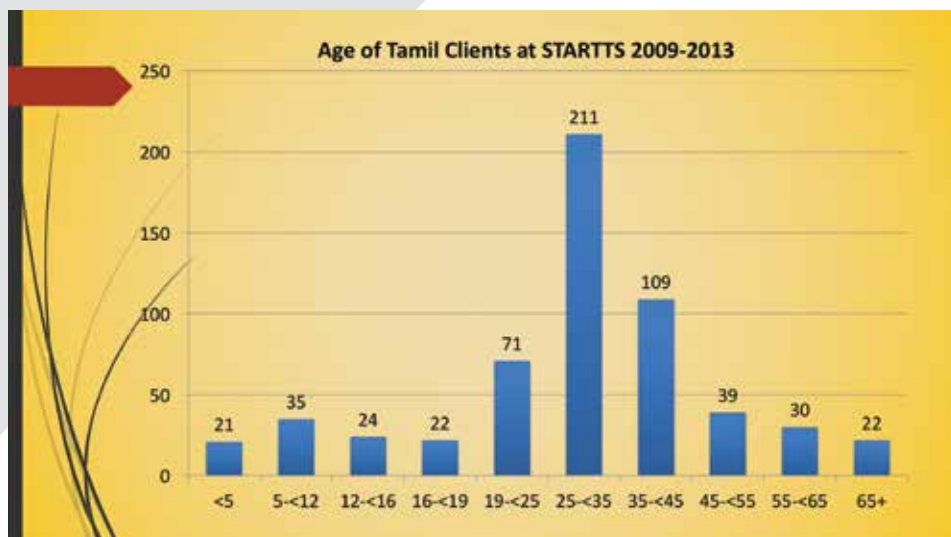
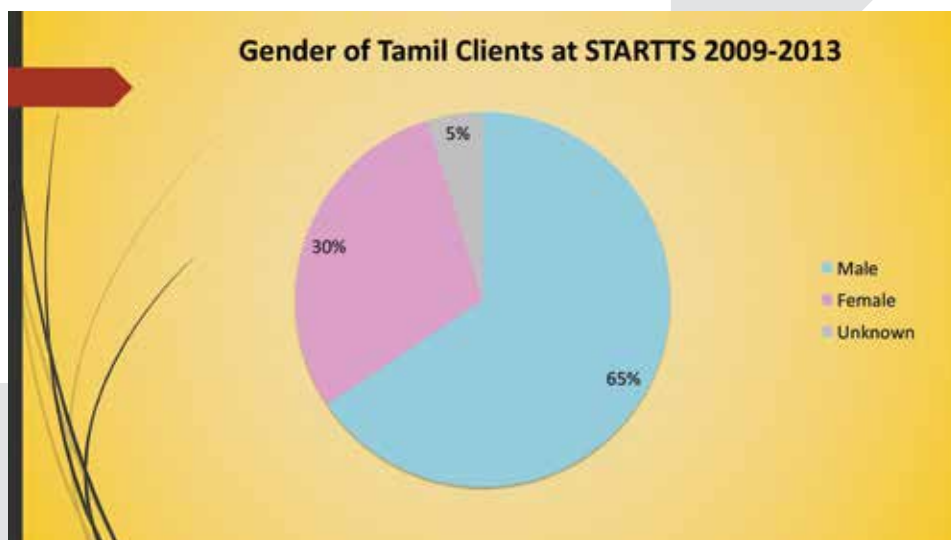
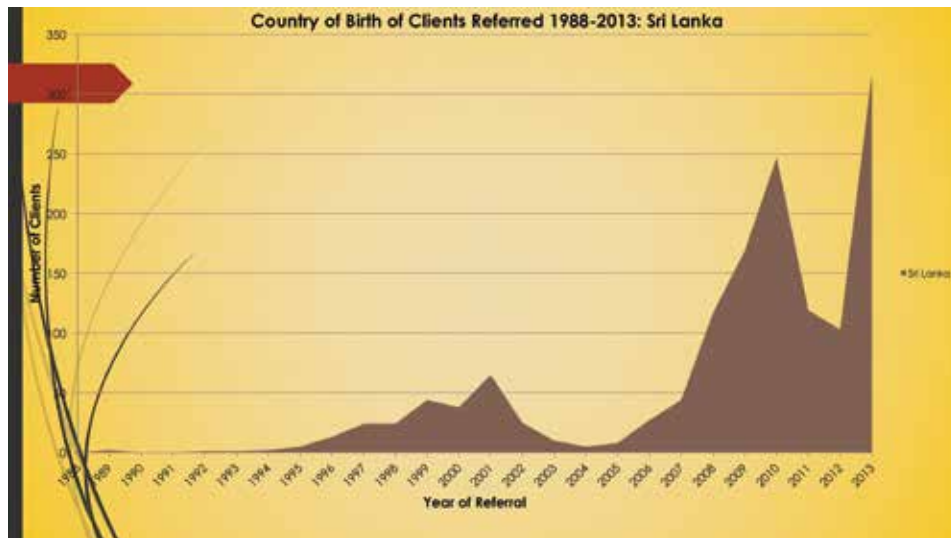
## A systemic perspective

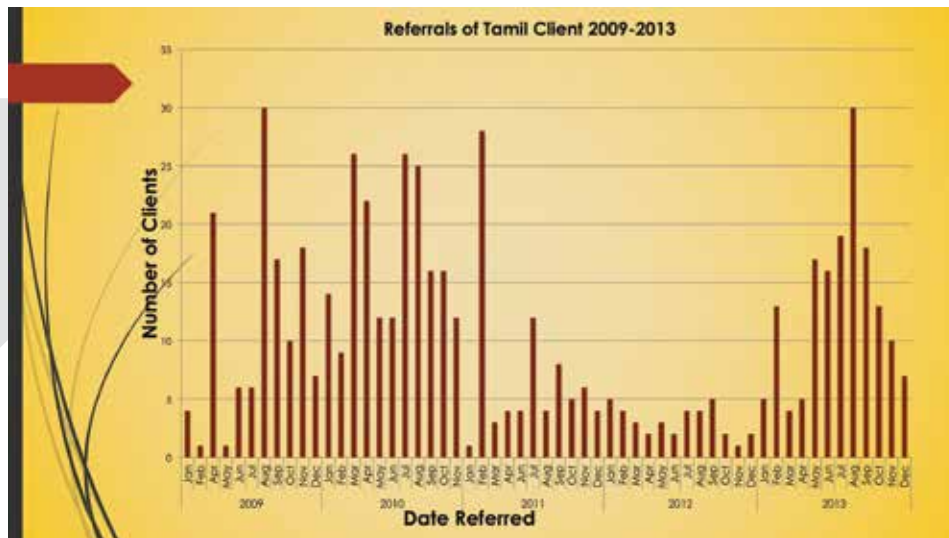


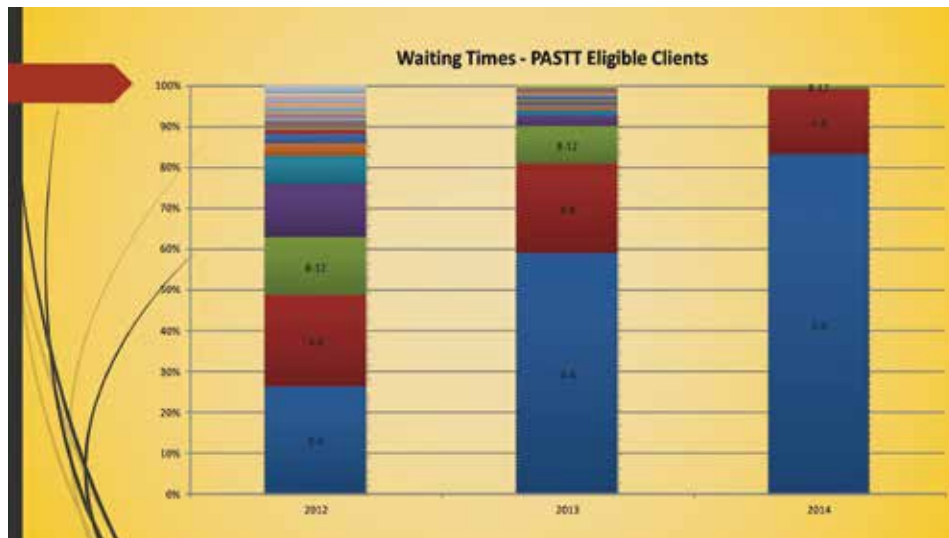
## A bio-psycho-social systemic approach











Thank You,



I look forward to your feedback and suggestions to work together to provide better service to the Tamil Community

**Jorge Aroche**  
**CEO**  
**STARTTS**



## APPENDIX TWO:

### STARTTS Tamil Community Consultation Flyer

**STARTTS**  
The NSW Service for the Treatment And Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors

சித்திரவதை, உணர்வுதீர்ச்சி சிகிச்சைகளை வழங்கும் மறுவாழ்வுக்குமான நியு சவுத் வேல்ஸ் சேவை மையம்




**25 YEARS**  
1989 - 2014



**STARTTS**  
**Tamil Community Consultation**  
“ஸ்டாட்ஸ்”  
தமிழ் சமூகத்துடன் இணைந்து நடாத்தும்  
ஒன்று கூடலும் கலந்துரையாடலும்




**25 YEARS**  
1989 - 2014



அவுஸ்ரேலியா வாழ் தமிழ் சமூகமும் புதிதாக வந்த தமிழ் மக்களையும் ஒருங்கிணைத்து, ஸ்டாட்ஸ் அமைப்பின் அனுசரணையுடன் நடாத்தும் கலந்துரையாடலின் உங்கள் தேவைகளை அறிவதற்கும், அதன் சேவைகளை பெறுவதற்கும், உங்கள் கருத்துக்களை பகிர்ந்து கொள்ள அனைவரையும் அன்புடன் வரவேற்கின்றோம்.

**திகதி 11/05/2014**  
நேரம் பி.ப 3.00 - 7.00 மணிவரை  
இடம் ஹோம்புஸ் ஆண்ட்ஸ் உயர் பாடசாலை பிளிட்ஜ் வீதி, ஹோம்புஸ்

குறிப்பு - இரவு உணவு பரிமாறப்படுவதுடன் குழந்தை பராமரிப்பு வசதிகளும் உண்டு.

போக்குவரத்து வசதிகள் போக்குவரத்து மற்றும் செல்டர் மற்றும் மவுண்ட் ட்ரூயிட் மெக்கா மலைவந்திமீட்டும் தூங்காபுரில் நினைவத்திமீட்டும் பேருந்து புறப்படும்.

மேலதிக விபரங்களுக்கும் போக்குவரத்து மற்றும் குழந்தை பராமரிப்பு இட ஒதுக்கீடுகளுக்கும் தயவுசெய்து தொடர்பு கொள்ளுங்கள்.

சிவஹரணி 97941925 / 0435 871 793



An opportunity for the Tamil community and STARTTS to discuss the needs of refugees and asylum seekers in Australia. Your input and ideas will help us to provide the right programs and services for your community.

**Date 11/05/2014**  
**Time 3.00pm - 7.00pm**  
**Place Homebush Boy's High School**  
**Bridge St Homebush**

**Note - Dinner will be provided and**  
**Childcare is available**

**Transport Facility - Bus will be leaving from**  
**Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre,**  
**Mount Druitt MECCA and**  
**Toongabie Railway Station**

**For further information**  
**and transport**  
**and childcare booking please contact**  
**Sivaharani 97941925 / 0435 871 793**

## APPENDIX THREE:

### Tamil Community Consultation Questions

\_\_\_\_\_ Community Consultations

Small groups – divide people in two or three groups including: (a) community leaders/workers; (b) clients/community members - male (c) clients/community members (female – if required)

Community Leaders/Workers group will be conducted in English and Clients/Community Members in \_\_\_\_\_.

Facilitators and scribes:

- (a) \_\_\_\_\_  
(b) \_\_\_\_\_  
(c) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ will ensure all groups run on time and other logistical requirements are met during the small group discussion. This can be rearranged as required.

Questions (these are just suggestions, but please explore each theme)

#### 1. STARTTS Services

What does \_\_\_\_\_ community think about STARTTS?

When do people get referred to STARTTS and why?

What happens after people are referred?

What aspects of STARTTS work is your community satisfied and why?

Where can we improve and how?

What additional services should we provide to cater for the \_\_\_\_\_ community needs?

#### 2. Counselling

In your community, who helps people when they experience sadness or when they do not feel well emotionally?

உங்கள் சமூகத்தில் யாராவது கவலையில் இருந்தால் அல்லது உணர்வுரீதியாக சிரமப்பட்டால் யார் அவர்களுக்கு உதவி செய்கிறார்கள்

How can we explain counseling?

உளவளத்துறையினை எப்படி விளங்கிக் கொள்கின்றீர்கள்

How can we change what we do so that it is more appropriate for the community?

தமிழ் சமூகத்தின் தேவைகளை திருத்திப்படுத்துவதற்கு மேலதிகமாக எத்தகைய சேவைகளை வழங்கலாம்

What is health?

உடல் நலம் என்றால் என்ன?

What is mental health?

உள நலம் என்றால் என்ன?

### 3. Community issues relevant to STARTTS (கவனத்தில் கொள்ளவேண்டிய சமூகபிரச்சனைகள்)

What do you perceive are the greatest strengths within \_\_\_\_\_ community?

தமிழ் சமூகத்தில் உள்ள சிறந்த பலங்கள் எவை என நீங்கள் நினைக்கின்றீர்கள்?

What are some of the difficulties torture and trauma survivors in \_\_\_\_\_ community is experiencing at the moment?

சமூகத்தில் உள்ள சித்திரைவதை மற்றும் மன அழுத்தத்திற்கு உள்ளாகியவர்கள் இப்போது எதிர் கொள்ளும் சிரமங்கள் என்ன?

How did the community try to address those difficulties in the past?

இவ்வாறான சிரமங்களை தீர்ப்பதற்கு நீங்கள் சார்ந்த சமூகம் எடுத்துக்கொண்டுள்ள முயற்ச்சி என்ன?

How did other agencies try to address those?

மற்றய சமூகம் சார்ந்த அமைப்புகள் எவ்வகையில் எவ்விதமான முயற்ச்சிகளை எடுத்துள்ளார்கள்?

What worked and what did not?

முன்னய முயற்ச்சிகள் பயன் அளித்துள்ளதா? ஆவை எவை?

How did your specific community's strengths help with those difficulties?

உங்கள் சமூகத்தின் குறிப்பான பலங்கள் எவ்விதத்தில் அந்த சிரமங்களை நிவர்த்திக்க பயன்பட்டிருக்கிறது?

What can STARTTS do to help with the community's initiatives?

உங்கள் சமூகத்தின் முன் எடுப்புக்களுக்கு **STARTTS** எவ்விதத்தில் உதவ முடியும்?

If everything was well with your community how would you know? What would you see?

உங்கள் சமூகத்தில் எல்லா நன்றாக இருக்கின்றது என்பதனை எப்படி உணர்ந்து கொள்கின்றீர்கள்?

How would people interact?

மக்கள் தங்களுக்குள் எப்படி உறவாடுகின்றார்கள் / வினாவுகின்றார்கள்?

What resources would there be within the community?

இதனை வசதிப்படுத்த சமூகத்தினுள் எவ்விதமான வளங்கள் காணப்படுகின்றன?



## APPENDIX FOUR

### Tamil Consultation meeting agenda

சித்திரவதை, உணர்வதிர்சிக் கோளாறு என்பனவற்றில் உயிர்பிழிதொற்கான சிகிச்சகைகும் மறுவாழ்வாக்குமான சவேலை

### AGENDA

#### STARTTS Tamil Community Consultation Meeting

ஸ்டார்ட்ஸ் தமிழ் சமூதாயத்துடான் இணைந்து நடாத்தும் ஒன்று கூடலும் கலந்துரையாடாலும்

3.30 – 3.35pm	Introduction – Jasmina Bajraktarevic
3.35 – 3.50pm	Presentation about STARTTS - Jorge Aroche
3.55 – 4.05pm	Presentation about Counselling – Neeraja Sanmuhathan
4.05 – 4.15pm	Presentation about Group work– Sivaharani Mayuran
4.15 – 4.25pm	Client speech – Risana Junaithi
4.30 – 4.40pm	Presentation about FICT – Yasotha Pathmanathan
4.40 – 4.50pm	Presentation about Youth Group – Lina Ishu
4.55 – 6.00pm	Small Group discussion
6.00 – 6.30pm	Small Group reporting session
6.35 – 6.50pm	Final discussion – Jasmina Bajraktarevic
6.50 – 7.00pm	Vote of Thanks - Sivaharani Mayuran

Dinner will be provided afterwards

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