VICSEG
new futures

ANNUAL REPORT

PART 1: IMPACT + OUTCOMES

2020

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Chairperson's Report

2020 marks my 14th year on the board of VICSEG New Futures and my 8th as its chair. In all that time I have seen the organisation face many challenges and have experienced the way it has met and overcome them. I am happy and relieved to report that this COVID-19 year has not been different. Everyone has rallied around the management team with energy and creativity to ensure that the organisation continues its great work. The contents of this Annual Report are testimony to that. Congratulations to you all!

On behalf of the Board I extend my thanks to our Executive Director, Maree Raftis for taking on the role at such short notice and at such a critical time. I know she has played a leadership role in the development of New Futures Training over many years, but it was most generous of her to take on this role and give the organisation the stability it needed. I would also like to put on record our thanks to Elias Tsigaras for his time at the helm and wish him and his family well into the future.

I want to thank the members of the Board for their loyalty and commitment to their role during difficult times. For many of us, having to meet together in lockdown via Zoom has not been easy. In spite of that, I think the support we have given to the Executive Director and her leadership team has been valuable and appreciated. We look forward to a more normal 2021.

Finally many thanks to the communities, organisations, agencies and government departments that have partnered with us or supported our work. We have truly all been in this together! I wish you a happy festive season, which you will enjoy with family and friends and look forward to your support in the coming year.

Eva Wakim
CHAIRPERSON, VICSEG NEW FUTURES

(L-R) Marie Vassallo, Maree Raftis (Exec. Director), Annalivia Carli Hannan, Eva Wakim (Chairperson), Liban Yusuf, Lynne Beaumont, Ivana Csar (Secretary), Himalee Karunasena (Hon. Treasurer), Phileas Lee

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Executive director's report

"WE HAVE ADAPTED CREATIVELY TO THE COVID-19 CHALLENGE AND EMERGED BETTER FOR IT."

The COVID-19 has brought with it a whole new set of challenges and many changes to the way we do things here. No greater change for me was the resignation of Elias Tsigaras in early June due to serious family health issues and my appointment to the position of Executive Director by the Board shortly afterwards.

I feel very honoured and privileged to be in this leadership position in an organisation that has been so much a joyful part of my life for the past 23 years with people that I admire, respect and whose company I enjoy and appreciate.

In spite of COVID-19 this year and all that it entailed, the Annual Report outlines some wonderful highlights of this most challenging of years and we can look back with pride at what has been achieved. We have certainly grown in confidence about communicating and engaging online and some of the highlights have been:

- Classes moving entirely online through Zoom without sacrificing the intensive student support model that is our trademark. Attendance in Zoom classes has been even better than face to face classes and levels of satisfaction has remained high;
- Innovative ideas in sharing playgroup experiences and supporting families – who would have imagined that a Zoom playgroup could be so much fun and such an important activity for children and their parents?
- Improved communication methods for leadership and planning, where daily "huddles" and regular get-togethers have lifted creative decision making to new levels;
- A different way of sharing the celebration of cultural festivals - something that has always such a unique part of VICSEG New Futures!

It is a credit to the courage and resilience of our wonderful staff that this year has been such a success. They have worked energetically and creatively with our vulnerable families, our young people and our students to meet the challenges of the pandemic and have done so without losing their sense of humour. Thank you to every one of you!

I would like to especially thank Eva Wakim, Chairperson and all members of the VICSEG New Futures Board who have given their time this year —more than in any other year—to help us guide the organisation through some difficult decisions. In addition I would like personally extend my thanks to Caspar Zika, the General Manager of New Futures Training; to Heidi Zwick, the Manager of Programs for Families, Children and Young People; Hansni Mann the Finance Manager and Joe Pennisi, the HR Manager for the support they have given me in the transition to my new role.

Through the lock down and its consequences, the year 2020 has created a new way of operating for us all. We are in some ways better for it; it has focussed our energies in new directions that will impact on the years to come. VICSEG New Futures has survived possibly one of the most difficult times in our history and I believe that we have emerged stronger, more confident and more creative than ever.

Maree Raftis
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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NEW FUTURES TRAINING

A year of growth and transformation

In late March, with only two weeks' notice, we moved our entire training delivery program and administrative operation into a remote model with staff and students learning and working from home. Like any big change, there were some initial 'teething' problems as we adapted to new ways of learning, working, communicating and socialising. In retrospect we can see how the whole experience has galvanised us. We are better positioned now as a staff group to achieve our goals, than we were 12 months ago.

Since March we have **delivered over 2,500 classes and support sessions via Zoom.** We have been amazed at our student's ability to respond to this new way of learning and have seen our class attendance rates rise higher than before.

This year we added a new course to our scope of delivery: ***Identifying and Responding to Family Violence Risk*** which is a State Government priority in response to the recent Royal Commission.

Targeted at universal service workers, we have already received substantial interest from various multicultural organisations wishing to have their staff undertake the course.

The one dramatic impact of COVID-19 has been on students' capacity to complete the practical placement component of their training. With aged care facilities, disability agencies and early learning centers unable to accept students on placement during lockdown, a substantial number of students had to be deferred. We used this time to provide additional training in specialized COVID units and /or PPE use.

We were delighted that once again our annual Performance Indicator Report, collated by Skills First on the basis of student interviews during 2020 showed that in all but one category New Futures Training is still performing well above the Victorian average. These are the results:

PERFORMANCE MEASURES EXAMPLES	VICSEG NEW FUTURES	VICTORIAN AVERAGE
Proportion of VET students who would **recommend VICSEG New Futures**	**93.8%**	76.0%
Proportion of VET students who **achieved their main reason for training**	**85.8%**	73.1%
Proportion of VET students with **an improved employment status after training**	**47.4%**	48.5%
Proportion of VET students who were **satisfied with training** provided by VICSEG New Futures	**94.3 %**	77.8%
Proportion of VET students who reported **a positive perception of teaching**	**86.4%**	68.3%
Proportion of VET students who reported **a positive perception of the assessment process**	**91.1%**	69.8%

93.8%

of our students recommended our training

It is no easy feat to achieve such results in a year like 2020! They demonstrate that we are truly delivering high quality training and our students are acknowledging that. The satisfaction levels are also reflected in the high numbers of students who continue to look to us to enable them to start a career in the care sector.

The year's positives are the product of the energy and commitment of our management, training and administrative staff, the patience and resilience of our students, the care and concern of our partner employers and finally the loyalty of our funders – notably Skills First, Victorian Department of Education and Training.

"When the COVID-19 outbreak began, 'flying a plane blind through a storm', was how I first felt. My control towers providing me with endless support: guidance and communication came from a committed, professional team of management, coordinators, colleagues and admin staff who were always there full of encouragement! My engines were the wonderful students powering me on, always wanting to go the distance and fueling my passion for Early Childhood. I feel grateful!"

- Bella Furnari, Trainer & Assessor in Early Childhood Education and Care

Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care class studying sustainability practices

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PROGRAMS FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Connecting families online

Chinese Playgroup in Darebin

18
Multicultural or culturally-specific Playgroups

3
'Learning Together' English literacy programs

8
Women's or Pregnancy Support Groups

2
'Being a Parent' parenting skills program

Despite the restrictions on personal contact under the COVID-19 regulations, we were able to keep the full range of our services operating via online platforms like Zoom or WhatsApp.

With some families having no electronic devices, poor broadband connectivity or limited language and digital literacy skills, this initially was a big challenge. However with patience, perseverance and mutual support we were able to get there.

Our teams of bi-lingual playgroup facilitators and refugee family mentors stayed in touch with families during the pandemic, providing them with assistance, connection and crucial information. In some instances, the assistance extended to arranging emergency relief and food supplies.

A lot of creativity was involved. Playgroups were enriched with a wide range of virtual experiences such as excursions to the zoo, celebrations of Father's Day, simple science experiments and craft activities. While libraries were closed, parents could access story time and digital books. Once people learning English mastered the technology, they could communicate with teachers, interact with each other and complete assignments remotely.

Here are some comments from the people involved in our programs for families and children:

"Thank you for running playgroups! It is nice to see other people again, happy time for children to look at a screen where they can talk, sing, play and do silly things just to show that someone is watching them and they see the other children."

- Parent, Karen/Burmese Playgroup.

"The pandemic posed a lot of challenges for people but in my role as a Playgroup Facilitator, one of the positive outcomes was transitioning my playgroups to online platforms through Zoom. The online sessions provided me with an opportunity to stay connected to the Playgroup families and also monitor the mental health and psychological wellbeing of the parents and children during isolation."

- Amal, Assyrian Playgroup Facilitator

"Once the group was able to become familiar with technology, they were more motivated to join the sessions and the children were excited to sing and learn about new activities. The parents were equally excited to see that the absence of face to face interactions didn't have to stop their progress in learning (English)."

- Manal, 'All Talk' (Literacy) Playgroup Facilitator

"Attending the 'Being a Parent' group gives me the feeling of holding my mother's hand as she shares with me her experiences of bringing up a child. It's teaching me the patience which I lacked before and helping me in my journey of becoming a better mother to my own child."

- Zartasha, participant in the Indian/Pakistani parenting skills group

"The facilitators of the (Moreland Women's) Group have the magical power to create a carefree and full of laughter island refuge for an entire hour of our lives! It has been a shooting star for many women in the dark cloudy night of COVID-19. Thank you, ladies, for your enthusiasm and dedication!"

- Katya, a group participant

"First, I was wondering how I could support clients from a distance, but I needn't have worried. When the pandemic hit, many families reached me by phone with their various needs. Covid 19 positive families needed support with their issues, such as an explanation of quarantine and isolation at home, financial hardship and job keeper payments."

- Za Tuah Nguri, Chin/Burmese Family Mentor

"Above all what this time has highlighted for me is the importance of thinking creatively. Our team has consistently attempted to trial new strategies and practices and integrate technology into our work. No one has backed away from challenges thrown their way. We have all been on a learning journey together. "

- Kirsten, Inner West Programs Coordinator

PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Inclusive Schools Program

Refugee Week Poster

"The program has been a great balance of wellbeing and leadership skills. I particularly loved the tough but necessary conversations surrounding racism… I believe the students have gained the confidence to now speak their minds on matters that mean something to them, namely culture and their experiences."

- Adongwat, Community Liaison Assistant, Melton Secondary College

Because of the very fragmented school year, we had to pare the program down compared to other years. In spite of that our program team has managed to engage with 32 young people from Staughton Secondary College. Melton Secondary College, Tarneit Senior College and Mount Alexander Secondary College.

Connecting together via Zoom, the student group explored key issues such as leadership, cultural awareness and active citizenship. Many of them have subsequently been chosen for leadership roles as cultural ambassadors in their schools for 2021.

During the year we planned and celebrated International Day of Friendship. World Refugee Week and Week of Indigenous Peoples, Cultural Diversity Week along with African Day and Samoan Language Day. We also worked with them on their employability skills. At last check, 10 of our students have secured themselves casual jobs.

When students returned to school in term 4, we focussed our discussions on their well-being using the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) resources 'Standing Up to Racism In Schools'.

The discussion themes were:

- Community, Identity and Values
- Systems, Society and Racism
- Personal Interactions with Racism
- Anti –racism and our school.

The discussions gave us a great insight into the challenges these students face every day and provided an opportunity to explore with them the tools and strategies they need to combat these challenges.

The students need to be commended for their brave and honest contributions to these often sensitive and difficult discussions.

QUOTES FROM PARTICIPANTS:

"We're so happy to have this program continue this year at Tarneit Senior. Through the program, it's been great to see our young people actively improve their sense of connectedness, engagement and academic skills at school."

- Alisa, Youth Counsellor, Tarneit Senior College

"I feel great relief having discussions like this."

– Cherry, Student @ Melton Secondary College

"It has been a pleasure getting to know these young people - even though it's via Zoom. We have managed to make some meaningful connections online. We are looking forward to finally meeting everyone in person next year!"

- Ebony Simon, Program Coordinator

Youth Justice Support

The assistance provided to vulnerable young men from refugee backgrounds in the Youth Justice system by our frontline worker, Yousif Mohamed, has been very much impacted by COVID-19 and the associated lockdown.

As part of his twice weekly visits to the young people in his case load, he has had to ensure they were aware of and following lockdown rules and not breaking curfew. In addition to food vouchers, he has also had to provide them with masks and hand sanitizers.

Another important aspect of his work is motivating young people in youth residential houses to continue their education. During school closures due to the pandemic, this has meant closely monitoring their on line remote learning.

Given the high levels of community anxiety, Yousif has had to focus more attention on liaison with parents, particularly mothers, of young people on parole or in custody with regard to their progress. Rules around home visiting, child protection orders and institutional lockdowns have made things very difficult.

Yousif Mohamed (center) with volunteers at the Flemmington high-rise estate

Yousif also spent evenings and weekends volunteering at the public high-rise estates during the enforced lockdown, delivering food and medical supplies. He also gave reassurance to community members, who were scared and unsure what each new day would bring.

"You're like an older brother to me and you have been a good supporter for me"

– Young person

VICSEG NEW FUTURES' EMPLOYMENT HUB

Employment Support in the time of a pandemic

Jobs Victoria

With almost 90% of students identifying "to get a job" as their main reason for enrolment in 2019-2020 our strategic relationship with Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN) was critical. The people we employed to deliver the program remained employed and our contract was renewed in the interim enabling us to assist another 45 people into employment.

The impact of COVID-19 was dramatic - many of our JVEN participants lost their jobs or had their working hours significantly reduced. Unemployed participants were unable to secure employment. With the additional financial support provided to us, we were able to maintain contact with our participants, offer them additional training while also counselling and mentoring them throughout COVID-19. We were able to offer this kind of ongoing support to participants for many months and now, happily, we have been able to refer unemployed JVEN participants back to our employers as restrictions are easing. We are being overwhelmed with approaches from employers who have job vacancies to fill.

"I have got a job at OmniCare as casual staff. Today and tomorrow, I am having induction. From Monday onwards, they will start giving out shifts. My heartfelt thanks to New Futures Training for its immense support. Despite finishing the course in Jan 2020, you guys are still in touch with me, and that is really amazing. Thank you so much".

- Lalita, JVEN client

"It has been an adjustment working from home, but I have been able to see the positives. Although many of our JVEN participants lost their jobs or had their work hours reduced, we have been able to mentor and support them through this very testing time. Now with the ease of restrictions, we are putting these valued participants back into work"

– Piumi, JVEN administrator

Thank you to the Jobs Victoria Employment Network (Victorian Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions) for continuing to fund us this year so that we could support jobseekers and maintain connections with employers during the pandemic.

SECOND STITCH

A year of surprising growth

Geetha with our first Magpie Goose Facemask Order

Second Stitch launched as a Social Enterprise three years ago. It is now a fully equipped textile studio with industrial and domestic sewing machinery, a cutting room, learning zone, production area and small retail shop where we sell our own line of products and run a clothing alterations service.

"The adaptability from small scale production to large scale production in a very short space of time—in the middle of a pandemic—is a huge achievement"

– Heather, wholesale operation

The nationally accredited Certificate III in Clothing & Textile Production course is delivered in the studio, mainly to women from migrant and refugee/asylum seeker backgrounds. In a topsy-turvy year the delivery of our Certificate III program had to stop and start due to COVID-19 restrictions, but the planned launch of our online shop became a reality – driven by the need for reusable cloth facemasks!

The sudden and growing demand for reusable (and eye-catching) personal protective equipment allowed Second Stitch to employ 13 new course graduates or current participants and give them an income. Many of these were ineligible for *Jobseeker* payments due to their refugee or asylum seeker status.

Mid-year when facemasks became obligatory, revenue from production topped $100K per month. All in all, 7500+ facemasks went out of our online shop into the community. The pandemic certainly took away, but it also gave back!

"As a volunteer I wasn't allowed to come to the studio - I was so sad. The random police checks made me worried. When I started employment with Second Stitch, I could sew masks from home. Then when it was safer, I could come back to the studio using my work permit."

- Mei, seamstress

Rohini, Yusra and Mary with Second Stitch facemasks.

"Socially distancing in a place that celebrates coming together and sharing food and quality time has been a huge battle. But we will get through it and come out stronger. It's the VICSEG New Futures + Second Stitch way!"

- Rachel, team leader

7500+

facemasks went out of our online shop into the community.

" The pace of the studio went from slow and potentially closing for lockdown to completely overwhelmed with orders - we all experienced emotional and mental whiplash."

- Jasper, online operation

14 Key Financial Results

"The major sources of revenue this year were two government programs designed to offset the impact of COVID-19. These were the Victorian Department of Education and Training's Business Continuity Grant and the Federal Government's Jobkeeper subsidy."

Himalee Karunasena
HONORARY TREASURER

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2020

	2020	2019
REVENUE	**$**	**$**
Revenue From (Non-Reciprocal) Government Grants and Other Grants		
Federal government grants	1,189,572	805,702
State government grants	9,429,786	8,545,968
Local Government grants	46,941	34,481
Total Revenue From Government Grants	**10,666,299**	**9,386,151**
Other Income		
Individual Student fees	507,300	875,069
Community & Youth grants	559,618	514,753
Philanthropy	87,500	65,000
Education Grants	-	80,860
Sundry Income	2,151,568	1,011,614
Total other income	**3,305,986**	**2,547,296**
TOTAL REVENUE	**13,972,285**	**11,933,447**
EXPENDITURE		
Staff expenses	8,485,112	7,791,998
Administration expenses	654,591	677,728
Training Costs & Supplies	326,897	264,181
Children & Youth Programs	15,981	19,594
Family Day Care Educators	660,082	463,305
Environmental Expenses	467,604	1,045,351
Other Expenses	138,436	25,747
Depreciation and amortisation expenses	999,365	142,609
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	**11,748,068**	**10,430,513**
Surplus/ (Deficit) before income tax	**2,224,217**	**1,502,934**

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2020

	2020	2019
ASSETS	**$**	**$**
Current Assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	6,997,837	4,686,738
Trade and other receivables	31,648	147,145
Other assets	1,194,567	854,684
Total Current Assets	**8,224,052**	**5,688,567**
Non-Current Assets		
Trade and other receivables	98,789	103,933
Property, plant and equipment	367,133	386,032
Intangible assets	2,644,343	84,408
Total Non-Current Assets	**3,110,265**	**574,373**
TOTAL ASSETS	**11,334,317**	**6,262,940**
LIABILITIES	**3,305,986**	**2,547,296**
Current Liabilities	**13,972,285**	**11,933,447**
Trade and other payables	732,086	668,562
Deferred Income (Grants Received In Advance)	125,428	71,333
Provisions	881,649	715,975
Lease Liability	766,539	-
Total Current Liabilities	2,505,702	1,455,870
Non-Current Liabilities	660,082	463,305
Provisions	93,440	209,304
Lease Liability	1,913,192	-
Total Non-Current Liabilities	**2,006,632**	**209,304**
TOTAL LIABILITIES	**4,512,334**	**1,665,174**
NET ASSETS	**6,821,983**	**4,597,766**
EQUITY		
Retained earnings	6,821,983	4,597,766
TOTAL EQUITY	**6,821,983**	**4,597,766**

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