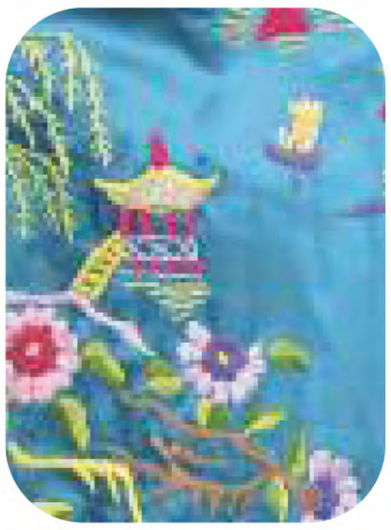
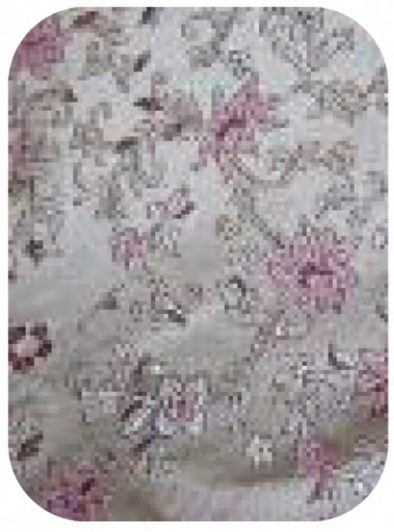
30 YEARS ON AND GOING STRONG

VICSEG Annual Report 2011





Introduction

For a small organization to achieve the milestone of 30 years is certainly an achievement worth celebrating, given the uncertainties of funding and the preference of government for dealing with larger agencies. But VICSEG New Futures has more than survived – it has grown and flourished. This achievement has come with commitment and vision over many years. So when on behalf of the Board, I extend my appreciation to the management and staff for the great work done this year, I am well aware that recognition needs also to be given to those who have been part of the VICSEG story in the past.

The VICSEG New Futures approach has always been very innovative, identifying often unmet needs in communities, while building the cultural competence of mainstream partner organizations. The continuing commitment to employment of bi-cultural staff and the training of volunteers has also contributed to the building of capacity in ethnic communities and their organizations.

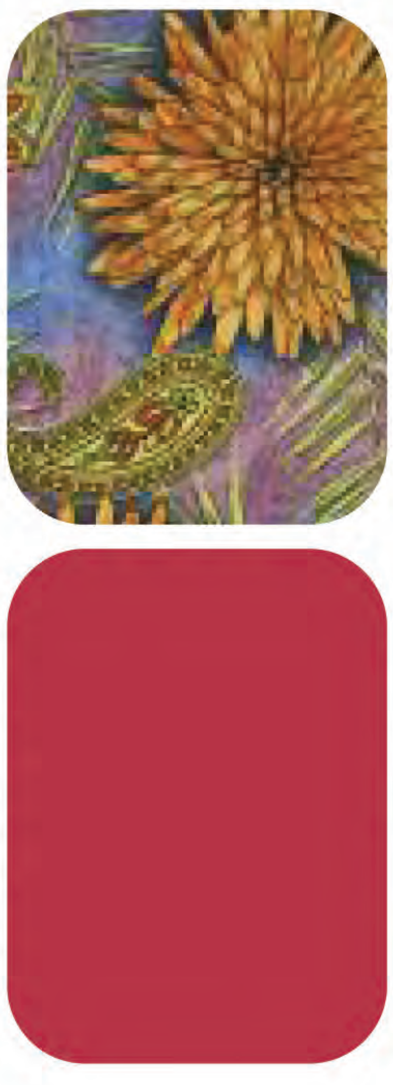
The most spectacular achievement, however, during my association with VICSEG New Futures has been the growth and consolidation of New Futures Training. It is of immense credit to the leadership of the organization that when the opportunity to establish a registered training organization presented itself, it was taken up with such enthusiasm and commitment. Ten years on there are now hundreds of women from refugee backgrounds who are successfully working as child care educators, some as owners of their own businesses. There are also hundreds of overseas students who have been able to achieve their goals, due in no small part to the regular work they found in the aged care field. These are the things that should make us proud of and committed to the work we do.

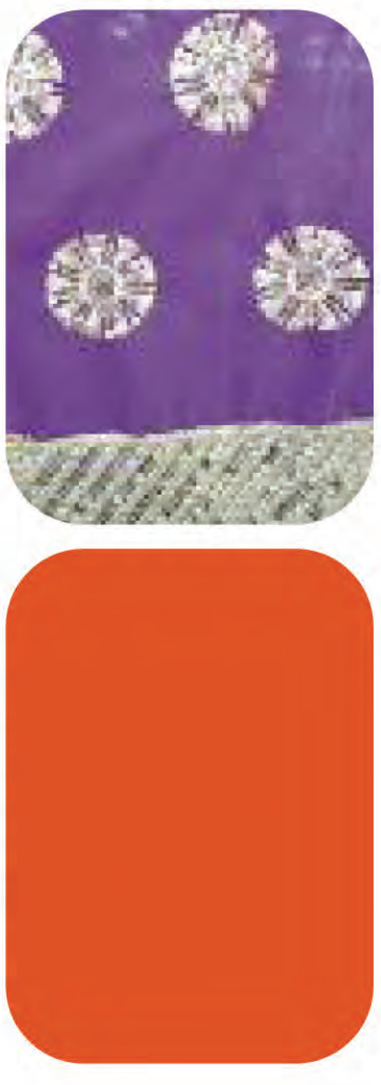
Elias Tsigaras
Chairperson

This milestone year gives us an opportunity to both look back to where VICSEG has come from and compare that with where we are now. The publication of *A better future for our children – the story of VICSEG 1981-2011* lets us do this with some objectivity. In her preface Janet Elefsiniotis, the founding chairperson, characterizes the beginnings in this way: *"I and a group of dedicated and passionate child care activists formed this important organisation to develop quality child care for families from culturally diverse communities."* While we have become much bigger and have greater resources and capacity, we still need to ask ourselves all the way across the organization whether we continue to be motivated by the values, drive and commitment that were there in the beginning.

There is a lot of evidence in this report that the work of VICSEG New Futures over 2011 continues to reflect the aspirations of its founders. Our training organization stands out not only because over this year we have dealt with close to 2000 students, but also because more and more of these have been long term refugees from countries like Burma and Sudan with little or no opportunities for formal education. A lot of effort, thought and creativity has gone into designing teaching and assessment approaches that build on their strengths and not their deficits.

The publication of the evaluation report for the three year *Myer Foundation* funded Refugee Family Resource and Mentoring Program has confirmed the effectiveness of this form of settlement support for families with small children, particularly when they face critical or challenging situations. We now have a powerful resource with which to promote the mentoring rather than the management of refugee families. The enthusiastic participation of community representatives from Wyndham in a Youth Justice familiarization course over eight weeknights in Werribee once again demonstrated the value of building capacity in communities to support their





New Futures Training

The training organisation continues to build on the successes of past years with increasing numbers of students, additional facilities and the development of innovative teaching and assessment methods. When the registered training organisation was established in late 2002 it was seen as a means of providing accredited training for refugees and migrants, particularly women, so that they could work in the childcare sector. Little did we know that by 2011 we would have grown to the size and complexity of what we are now. Over the years training has been offered in a variety of forms from courses with language support, courses with pathways to higher education, courses offered by flexible delivery, on the job training through the ATTP (Apprenticeship and Traineeship Program) and so on. In recent years particularly, New Futures Training has expanded and developed its training models so as to better support and enable migrants from around the world to reskill themselves and enter the work force.

Important improvements in 2011

Increasing numbers of students have continued to enrol in childcare (Certificate III and Diploma) as well as in Aged Care, Health Services Assistance, Business (Certificate IV and Diploma of Management) and Home and Community Care.

The development of specialised curriculum to meet the needs of those with low literacy along with practical skills rooms and additional ESL teaching has meant that numbers of women who previously would not have had access to vocational training because of their low literacy have been able to succeed in their studies and enter the workforce.

The decision made to deliver Intensive High Care Training to all aged care students. This involves students, in groups of 5, working alongside their teacher/assessor in an aged care facility to actually undertake the care of elderly residents.

New Futures Training's commitment to traineeships and job-based learning has continued and diversified in 2011. The uptake of traineeships by childcare centres, aged care facilities and businesses demonstrates a continuing need for this type of delivery. The ATTP program also offers a flexible option for learners wishing to upgrade their qualifications while working.

Key initiatives in 2011

New venues have been established in Sunshine, Epping and Oakleigh to meet the needs of students living in those areas. In These venues include a mock childcare area These enable us to give students clear practical demonstrations of what they are learning and also opportunities to be assessed, in their own language if necessary, in a simulated workplace environment.

The creation of a Business Centre in the new building at 13 Munro Street is being undertaken. This is in response to the increasing interest by students in studying business courses to enhance their job opportunities or to provide them with the necessary administrative skills to start their own small businesses.

The relationship with Family Day Care Schemes throughout Melbourne in providing accredited training to Family Day Care Educators is ongoing and strengthening. A number of past students have returned to complete the Diploma of Children's Services in order to position themselves for Field Officer roles or to open their own Family Day Care Services.

We have introduced the Certificate IV in Children's Services (Outside School Hours Care) as a stepping stone from Certificate III to Diploma. It was felt that this offered some learners greater preparation for the demands of the Diploma course.

New Futures Training acknowledges the generosity of the many childcare centres and aged care facilities that have accepted our students on placement during 2011. They have made a critical contribution to the success of our training programs.

New Futures Training acknowledges the availability of funding to students made by the State Government's *Skills for Victoria* initiative as well as by the former Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development for the *Parents Returning To Earning /Community Access Program.*

Support for Families and Children

Refugee Family Mentoring and Resource Program
The Refugee Family Resource and Mentoring Program (RFRMP) has been funded for the past three years by the Myer Foundation to assist recently settled refugee groups in the northern and western suburbs of Melbourne with their access to early childhood services, including maternal and child health, kindergartens, early intervention and family welfare services. This has been the final year of funding.

Over 100 families have been supported in the last 12 months by the three bicultural family mentors who operate the program in three separate municipalities in the north and west of Melbourne. The program has also strengthened service providers' cultural competency in meeting the needs of the targeted refugee families. This has been achieved through team meetings, service providers working alongside the mentors and information sessions on the child rearing practices of specific cultures.

To demonstrate the effectiveness of the family mentor role, here is brief sketch of what each one does.

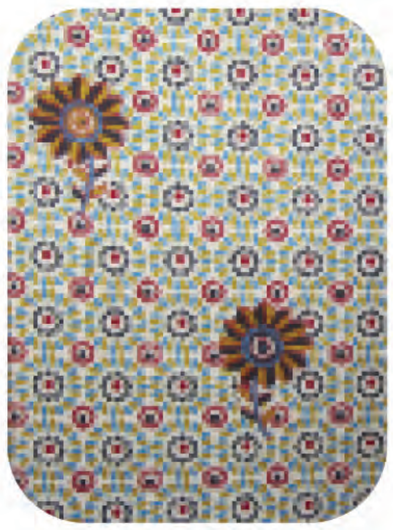
Waan Tardif is located at New Hope Foundation's offices in Werribee so that she is easily accessible to the Karen/ Burmese community in Wyndham. She is also well known to service providers in the area and sees her role as building their cross-cultural understanding and acting as a liaison between them and the Karen community. There is a strong community participation in the program, which Waan says is derived from the two playgroups that were established as part of the program and have proved to be extremely popular.

Over the last 12 months Waan has received increased referrals to support families with children with additional needs. Diagnosed disabilities have included Downs Syndrome, Autism and developmental delay. These referrals have also expanded the range of organisations which Waan supports to include: Special Children's Services Intake, Noahs Ark Inc., Yooralla and the Preschool Field Officers.

Another family mentor, Hakima Deng has been based at the Migrant Resource Centre North West (MRC/NW) in St Albans, which is a focus for the large South Sudanese community living in the City of Brimbank. Early on in the program Hakima established strong links with Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services. In partnership they built up a well attended women and children's group. Although the group had to close recently due to funding restraints, it gave Hakima the confidence and experience to try again. Using the connections she has with the Catholic schools in the area, which many South Sudanese children attend, Hakima has started a new playgroup at St Peter Chanel Primary School in Deer Park.

To be well placed to support the many women in her community who are having babies, Hakima established a close working relationship with maternal and child health nurses from ISIS Primary Care and midwives from Western Health. She has also continued the partnership she established in 2010 with Noah's Ark to ensure that children diagnosed with developmental delay would have the benefit of early intervention services.

The third family mentor was Ban Pitros, who was based at the MRC/NW outpost in Broadmeadows to support families from Iraq of Assyrian and Chaldean backgrounds. Refugee families from these Christian communities have been a key target group for resettlement in Australia in recent years and the City of Hume in Melbourne's outer north has been their major area of settlement. Ban was in a unique position to combine her part time role of VICSEG family mentor with that of the integrated humanitarian settlement service worker to support these communities.



Cultural Competence

VICSEG New Futures runs many programs in the Brimbank Municipality but for Cultural Competence, the focus is on playgroups that are ethnic specific and are led by women who speak both English and the group's language. Currently there is an African playgroup in West Sunshine and Deer Park as well as an Indian playgroup in Sydenham, Sunshine and St Albans and a Filipino playgroup in Deer Park. Having so many playgroups that share the same ethos allows for the leaders to meet and share ideas as well as reflect on difficulties they may be having. These meetings are also vital in helping playgroup leaders and the Cultural Competency worker plan together for future opportunities.

Through the work of the Cross Cultural Skills Coordinator and the skilled assistance of the bilingual worker who facilitates the playgroups, VICSEG New Futures has built partnerships with local schools, maternal child health and other allied health services as part of the long term goal for the continuation of these groups after funding.

The playgroups are all heading towards self-sustainability, particularly the Filipino playgroup which should be self-sustaining by the end of the year. This has been through the participation in the leadership course by the playgroup leaders as well as their efforts to educate the families on the notion of playgroups and why it is important for children and their development to play. The future for these playgroups is to continue to meet the need of families and offer guest speakers that help educate them to help them and make them feel less excluded. The Filipino group is now parent led and the Indian in Sydenham is slowly working towards this.
Seeing children learn and come to an environment where they can feel safe and supported and are given new opportunities to try different and challenging things is a rewarding thing that VICSEG is proud to be part of.

Active Young Africans and more

A key feature of the youth program last year was a project that encouraged inter-generational communication and understanding between young, recently settled Sudanese and West African women and their mothers. This year, as part of the decision to include newly arrived young people from other cultural backgrounds in our program, the inter-generational project was delivered to young women of Burmese background and their mothers. It was focussed on supporting the young women's transition into secondary school and covered topics such as health and wellbeing, body image and self-esteem, personal safety and positive relationships.

The young women gained confidence in their communication and ability to express themselves to peers, community and family, which in turn helped build positive communication and negotiation skills between daughters and mothers. The program also enhanced their knowledge about local support services and workers who they can utilise when needed. VICSEG is looking forward to expanding on its Intergenerational program and including fathers and sons as well as mothers and daughters.

The soccer for social inclusion component of Active Young Africans has continued this year with some significant new developments. The program is built on the notion of using soccer as a way of making connections with young people, their community and local sporting groups. Early in the year VICSEG was approached by the Western English Language School (WELS) about forming a partnership to assist in the support for 45 unaccompanied minors who were attending the school. VICSEG has provided school holiday activities for these young people and has developed a support program for them as they transition into mainstream secondary schools that the risk of them dropping out of school is reduced.

The program acknowledges funding from the Department of Human Services / Office for Youth, Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship and the Department of Planning and Community Development.

Department for Families, Housing, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs, delivered through *Communities for Children* facilitating partners Broadmeadows Uniting Care and The Smith Family; through Playgroups Australia and through the Professional Support Coordinator, Community Child Care.

Department of Education & Early Childhood Development, delivered through the Supported Playgroups & Parenting Groups Initiative in the cities of Brimbank, Darebin, Hume, Whittlesea and Wyndham. The Myer Foundation – Sidney Myer Fund.

BOARD AND MANAGEMENT

Mr Elias Tsigaras	Chairperson	Deputy Director New Hope Foundation
Mr Hasan Acar	Director/Treasurer	Financial Manager Merri Community Health Services
Sister Sayde Bayssari	Director	Director Antonine Sisters Childcare Centre
Ms Ivana Csar	Director	Principal Officer Lalor Living and Learning Centre
Ms Sahra Haji	Director	West Star Family Day Care Scheme
Mr Phileas Lee	Director	Director, Wonderland and Wonderworld Childcare and Kindergarten
Ms Eva Wakim	Company Secretary	Mediator Department of Justice

STAFF

Management

John Zika	Executive Director
Maree Raftis	Manager New Futures Training

Finances and Personnel

Connie Whelan	Financial Controller
Harinder Kaur Mann	Financial Controller Assistant
Chanaka Rupasinghe	Finances Assistant

Communications, Partnerships and Human Resources

Stacey Lynn	Strategic Planning and Partnerships Officer
Kate Sandford	Communications Officer
Warren Brewer	Human Resources Officer

VICSEG

Family & Children's Programs

Karen Thomson	Refugee Family Mentor Program Team Leader
Jeanette Hourani	Playgroups Program Coordinator
Libby Mein	Cross Cultural Skills Facilitator (maternity leave)
Dominique Smith	Cross Cultural Skills Facilitator
Karen Diacono	Kindermoves Facilitator
Preety Dhiman	Playgroups Support Worker
Salwa Salem	Playgroups Support Worker
Junthip (Waan) Tardif	Karen/Burmese Family Mentor
Ban Pitros	Assyrian/Chaldean Family Mentor (> April 2011)
Mimi Kasho	Assyrian/Chaldean Family Mentor
Hakima Majok Deng	South Sudanese Family Mentor
Uzay Ceylan	Bilingual Facilitators in Kindergartens Coordinator

Youth Programs

Sue Paten African	Youth Programs Team Leader
Yousif Mohamed	Youth Justice Case Worker
Lanre Bolarinwa	African Youth Development Coordinator

NEW FUTURES TRAINING

Program Coordination

Michelle Lynn	Child Studies Coordinator
Surajika De Silva	Aged Care Studies Coordinator
Nagam Abas	Administrative Services Coordinator
Christy Guo	ATTP Coordinator
Trudi Morris	SFV Compliance Officer
Ebony Simon	Student Services Coordinator

TEACHING STAFF

Child Studies

Bella Furnari	Workplace Assessor
Monica Barron	Early Childhood Educator/Workplace Assessor
Elham Jahanshiri	Early Childhood Educator/Workplace Assessor
Nike Bolarinwa	Early Childhood Educator/Workplace Assessor
Pola Nadas	Early Childhood Educator/Workplace Assessor
Lara Nabbout	Early Childhood Educator/Workplace Assessor
Debby Roberts	Early Childhood Educator/Workplace Assessor
Peta Nock	Early Childhood Educator/Workplace Assessor
Hanadi Ahmed	Early Childhood Educator
Trin Cooke	Early Childhood Educator
Asma Mohamed	Early Childhood Educator
Asra Shahkhan	Early Childhood Educator
Winnie Zhi	Early Childhood Educator

Aged Care Studies

Doreen Achieng	Health and Aged Care Educator/Workplace Assessor
Andrea Brooks	Health and Aged Care Educator/Workplace Assessor
Janine Ianello	Health and Aged Care Educator//Workplace Assessor
Fritzie Marmita-Vina	Health and Aged Care Educator/Workplace Assessor

Business Studies

Mehdi Salaran	Business Educator/ Workplace Assessor

First Aid

Caspar Zika	First Aid/Food Safety/Anaphylaxis/Asthma Trainer
Justin Trounson	First Aid/Food Safety Trainer
Milos Zika	First Aid/Manual Handling/Anaphylaxis/ AsthmaTrainer

ESL

Megan Miller	ESL Teacher

Student Welfare and Operations

Simran Udas	Student Welfare Officer
Harinder Kaur	Student Welfare Officer
Angelina Caruso	Operations Officer

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Front of House

Nattalee Ayres	Student Administration
Fartun Muse	Student Administration
Bandana Thapa	Student Administration
Anne Whelan	Student Administration

Flexible Delivery Program

Andrew Slape	Enrolment Officer
Andrea Del Rosario	Placement Officer

Student Attendance, Assessment & Professional Development

Wendy Hickling	Assessment Appointments Officer
Melissa Taranto	Professional Development Administrator
Parveen Usmani	Student Attendance Officer

Student Records

Gyanendra Thapa	Records Officer

IT and Student Data Base

Naima Hussein	I.T and VetTRAK Support
Sara Jahanshiri	I.T and VetTRAK Support

Occasional Childcare Centre Staff

Shiralee Ayres	Coordinator
Nagwa Boles	Qualified Staff Member
Aditi Ghosh	Qualified Staff Member
Ahlam Saad	Qualified Staff Member

Facilities and Maintenance

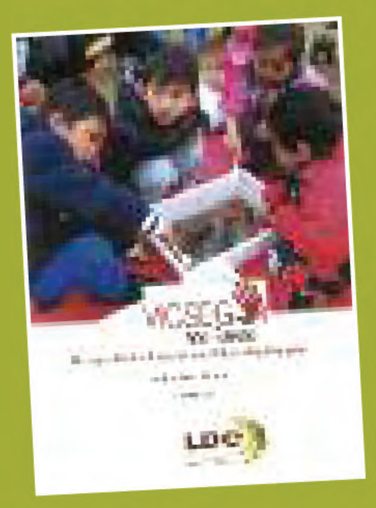
Bhupinder Singh
Ghopal Kumar Shah

I and a group of dedicated and passionate child care activists formed this important organisation to develop quality child care for families from culturally diverse communities.

Janet Elefsiniotis, VICSEG Founding Chair

A collection of original and traditional songs in English, Dinka and Arabic. A wonderful inter-cultural resource for schools, kinders and playgroups. Lyrics booklet included.

Copies are available for $20 each (inc. GST, postage and handling).



A comprehensive report including the best-practice bi-cultural program model, literature review and evaluation. An invaluable guide for the service providers and planners who want to deliver cross-cultural programs.

Copies available on request.

This special commemoration of VICSEG's 30 year anniversary sets the organisation's story against the background of the migrant rights movement and multicultural service provision in Victoria.

Copies are available for $25 each (inc. GST, postage and handling).

VICSEG new futures

We are delighted to regognise the achievements of these three students who have showen exceptional commitment to their studies in 2011. Congratulations.

CECELLIA YAN ZHANG
2011 New Futures Award for Excellence
Diploma of Children's Services

RESHMI RAMACHANDRAN
2011 Pauline Bryan Award for Excellence in Aged Care

LAWRENCE FREEMAN
2011 New Futures Award for Excellence
Certificate III in Health Services Assistance