

# RACS

REFUGEE ADVICE & CASEWORK SERVICE

## ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019

SEEKING  
SAFETY



## OUR MISSION

TO ACHIEVE JUSTICE AND DIGNITY FOR REFUGEES THROUGH THE PROVISION OF EFFECTIVE LEGAL SERVICES AND INFLUENTIAL ADVOCACY.



TO ACHIEVE OUR MISSION, WE ARE GUIDED BY THE FOLLOWING KEY STRATEGIC GOALS:

### ACCESS TO JUSTICE

To ensure all people seeking asylum and refugees can freely access dedicated, reliable and impartial legal assistance.

### EMPOWERMENT

To enable all people in the protection process to have support and access to a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

### STRONG LEADERSHIP

To be a driver of systemic change by leading public discourse on issues affecting people seeking asylum and those recognised as refugees.

### COLLABORATION

To have mutually beneficial partnerships between the corporate and social sector, philanthropic and like-minded organisations and individuals, who all seek to ensure that the right to seek asylum is protected and ensured.



Proudly supported by the University of New South Wales.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners, Custodians and Elders of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, past, present and future, on whose traditional land we work.

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# WHY REFUGEES NEED LEGAL SUPPORT

*As war, conflict and persecution continue around the world, more men, women and children are being forced every day to flee for their lives.*

Some make it to Australia.

Once here, they must prove to the Australian Government that they are a refugee fleeing persecution.

## THE SUPPORT OF A LAWYER IS CRITICAL.

With limited financial resources, language barriers, sometimes insufficient documentation and inadequate proof of persecution, people seeking asylum are incredibly vulnerable. A negative decision on their refugee status could mean they are sent back to danger.

The Australian Government's treatment of refugees over the years has been highly concerning. Thousands of people who arrived by boat and who were recognised as refugees by the Government were tragically only granted temporary three or five year protection visas. They will have to reapply again and again for the rest of their lives for temporary visas. This cruel temporary status prevents their ability to ever be reunited with family members in Australia. Many have wives, husbands and children living in fear, either in their home country or a third country.

Hundreds of other people who arrived by boat have been left to languish in debilitating conditions in offshore detention.

**NOW MORE THAN EVER, IN A PRECARIOUS INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT, REFUGEES WHO FACE THE CHALLENGES OF FINDING PERMANENT SAFETY, NEED OUR HELP.**



**// I AM VERY HAPPY AND VERY GRATEFUL HAVING RACS. VERY GRATEFUL. BECAUSE WHEN YOU ARE IN SUCH A VULNERABLE SPACE, WHEN YOUR MIND IS STRESSED... I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE ANYTHING. //**

— Former RACS Client

# WHAT WE DO

*The Refugee Advice & Casework Service is a strong, compassionate, independent, public voice for the rights of refugees and people seeking asylum.*

## LEGAL REPRESENTATION

RACS provides vital free legal advice and representation to financially disadvantaged and vulnerable refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia.

Our dedicated team ensure that men, women and children who have experienced life-threatening situations, have a human rights lawyer by their side, providing legal support through the complex and uncertain process of seeking asylum in Australia.

RACS assists people of all nationalities, religions, sexual and gender identity.

## ADVOCACY

RACS advocates for systemic law reform and policy that treats refugees with justice, dignity and respect.

We submit official complaints about serious human rights violations to Australian and United Nations complaints bodies. We lobby and make direct representation to the Australian Government and politicians, and we build ongoing and committed support for change within our community.



**“THE LAWYERS LISTENED TO EVERYTHING THAT I HAD TO SAY. AND THEY WERE SO SUPPORTIVE. THEY TREATED ME AS I SHOULD BE TREATED. THEY RESPECTED ME AND THEY MADE SURE THAT I ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD WHAT THE INFORMATION WAS.”**

— Former RACS Client

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In an environment of ongoing great difficulty for people seeking protection from harm, we have continued to be the only dedicated provider of legal support to people seeking asylum in NSW.

Now in our 33rd year of delivering critical services to some of the most disadvantaged members of the Australian community, RACS is working as hard as ever to achieve justice and dignity for refugees. Across the continuum of a highly complex Australian process, the organisation is providing assistance through a range of strategies that are all targeted at maximizing the impact we can have with our clients, who are at the centre of what we do.

In addition, RACS is recognised as a strong national voice for asylum seekers and their families, playing an important role in policy development, campaigning for the rights of our clients and driving systematic change in Australia's protection framework.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank RACS' former Executive Director, Tanya Jackson-Vaughan, who has made an extraordinary contribution to the organisation and its cause and who we farewelled in 2019. Over the past eight years, Tanya has led RACS through a number of difficult periods and always, without exception, ensured that we were able to meet the challenges head on. Tanya has made an incredible impact on the lives of thousands of refugees in Australia and we are proud and thankful for her leadership. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

I am pleased to congratulate Sarah Dale on her new leadership role at RACS as Centre Director and Principal Solicitor. Sarah, who has been with RACS since 2013, is an award-winning lawyer and leading human rights defender. Her work has been recognised through numerous awards, including the 2018 Migration Partner of the Year award, and her strong legal and organisational skills have enabled the legal team to respond adroitly to a shifting policy environment over recent years.

This year we also farewelled James Nguyen from the RACS Board and one of our passionate advocates and Patrons, Gillian Triggs, who was appointed Assistant High Commissioner for Protection with the UNHCR. I would like to thank both James and Gillian for their energy and passion in service of RACS and wish them both the best in their future roles.

Finally, I want to say a huge thank you to our generous community of supporters. We are in an environment of very little available funding, and RACS is only able to continue the vital work we do with the support of our volunteers and donors.

Thank you for your commitment and for standing up for the rights of people seeking asylum in Australia.



**Chris Yoo,**  
RACS President



# CENTRE DIRECTOR & PRINCIPAL SOLICITOR'S MESSAGE

2018/19 saw RACS diversify the way we work and in what capacity we support our community. Whilst continuing to ensure people were assisted in making their applications for protection and the process that follows, RACS recognised that a person's status in Australia is often multi-faceted. Accordingly, we focused on establishing dedicated services to address the various systemic issues we saw in a person's attempt to find safety.

Our Data Breach service helped 500 people make a complaint to the Office of the Information Commission, after their personal details were exposed by the Department of Home Affairs. We also provided much needed assistance to people facing issues around visa refusal, in the General Division of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. This was a big leap for RACS in starting to engage in a more litigious practice outside of the Refugee Review Tribunal or Migration Division.

In May 2019, we saw a huge blow with the election confirming that temporary protection visas were here to stay. Family separation would continue and limbo would ensue. With the first temporary protection visas starting to expire, we commenced our Temporary Protection and Safe Haven Visa Re-application Clinic and Community Legal Education Sessions, to meet the crucial need for support. There is a desperate need in the community for this assistance due to the vulnerability that still exists for people, despite being found to be a refugee.

Our dedicated program supporting people who missed the 1 October 2017 deadline to lodge a visa application continued this year, and we fought to ensure all people could access their

right to make an application for asylum. The legal implications for these people will narrate the issues people on temporary protection visas, who miss their reapplication deadline, will face. We are preparing support for these people in recognition of the future legal needs that may arise.

On the other side of this hopelessness, this year we saw our first clients supported through our Judicial Review program be successful at the Federal Circuit Court, and have a visa granted. We often advise our clients this may be a one in a million chance, and our family was that one. We successfully campaigned for the release of children from offshore detention, as part of the Kids off Nauru campaign, and we saw the Medevac legislation pass. RACS was then able to assist many people through the process of making a request for transfer to Australia, for urgent medical treatment. This followed many years of advising unaccompanied children, now defined as adults and sick and trapped on Nauru, that there seemed to be no legal recourse to their suffering.

As we move into the next year we will continue to witness, listen and lead, to ensure that our team are in the best possible position to continue fighting for the rights of people seeking asylum.



**Sarah Dale,**

RACS Centre Director &  
Principal Solicitor



The RACS Team with Patron The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG

## SARAH'S ACHIEVEMENTS

- 2018 Lawyers Weekly Migration Partner of the Year
- 2018 Senate Appearance into Au Pair Inquiry
- 2017 UN Human Rights Defenders Consultation Participant
- 2017 UNHCR Expert Roundtable Participant in Brussels
- Pro bono legal advisor and Audible contributor for Behrouz Boochani's novel 'No Friend But The Mountains.'

# 2018-2019 AT A GLANCE

## IN 2018-2019 WE HAVE SUPPORTED

PEOPLE ON OVER **6,000** OCCASIONS, INCLUDING PEOPLE HELD IN DETENTION

ALMOST **4,000** PEOPLE IN THE PROCESS OF APPLYING FOR PROTECTION

**500** PEOPLE WHO HAD THEIR PERSONAL DETAILS EXPOSED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF IMMIGRATION'S WEBSITE DATA BREACH

**66** PEOPLE WITH ACCESS TO A BARRISTER, TO GIVE THEM ONE LAST CHANCE FOR THEIR CASE TO BE HEARD

**20** STATELESS REFUGEE CHILDREN WITH THE PROCESS OF APPLYING FOR AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP

### STATELESS CHILDREN PROGRAM

*In 2019, RACS launched its Stateless Children Program.*

Without citizenship, children born in Australia to stateless refugee parents are also considered stateless. As such, they face unlimited barriers and discrimination regarding schooling and education, travel and healthcare, as well as a lifetime of uncertainty to make long term commitments and plans.

People who are stateless are not recognised as a citizen of any country, anywhere in the world. Recognising this humanitarian need to break the endless generational cycle of family statelessness, RACS' legal team provide the necessary legal support so that stateless refugee children can apply for Australian citizenship.







# ADVOCACY FOR CHANGE

*Our advocacy is guided by the people we support and the challenges they continue to face within the Australian immigration system.*

We campaign for policy that treats people seeking asylum with dignity and respect, whilst promoting justice, compassion and fairness.

## QANTAS, STOP DEPORTATIONS TO DANGER

RACS partnered with the Australasian Centre for Corporate Responsibility to lobby Qantas, calling for them to follow the lead of UK company Virgin Atlantic by pledging not to involuntarily deport people back to danger or to indefinite detention. We successfully pressured Qantas to put a resolution to vote at their annual general meeting to insert a 'Human Rights Due Diligence Clause' into their constitution. Whilst the move was defeated, the issue gained vast media attention and an online petition received over 15,000 signatures.

## REFUGEE VICTIMS OF DATA BREACH

On 10 February 2014, the Australian Government published a report on their website containing the personal information of thousands of people seeking asylum, who were held in immigration detention. This had the potential to put their lives in danger, or that of their family members back in their home countries. RACS assisted 500 victims of this data breach to make official complaints to the Office of the Information Commission.

## ADVOCACY FOR PEOPLE IN OFFSHORE DETENTION

RACS started the year successfully campaigning for Kids Off Nauru and saw the Medevac law come into place in early March, enabling sick people, held offshore on Papua New Guinea and Nauru, to apply for vital medical treatment in Australia.

RACS provided people with critical legal support who were going through the Medevac process, helping them get access to vital medical care. We also joined the Medical Evacuation Response Group (MERG), a partnership of doctors and refugee support organisations, who worked together to ensure the application process was met.

## HAZARA, ROHINGYA AND TAMIL COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSIONS

Tens of thousands of people who came to Australia seeking protection by boat have only been given three or five year temporary protection visas, which hold a number of restrictions, rules and deadlines.

In an effort to reach the wider community RACS held information sessions for the Hazara, Tamil and Rohingya communities, providing critical information on obtaining permission to travel, study options and how to reapply for protection to remain safely in Australia.

## LOBBYING POLITICIANS AND RAISING COMMUNITY AWARENESS

RACS continued to lobby politicians and decision makers, highlighting the challenges and barriers affecting the people we support and providing feedback on policy reform.

In late 2018, RACS Principal Solicitor Sarah Dale spoke at the Senate Inquiry into 'Allegations concerning the inappropriate exercise of ministerial powers, with respect to the visa status of au pairs and related matters' and RACS Senior Solicitor Simon Bruck spoke about Ashmore Reef after 1,600 people seeking asylum who arrived there by boat, were told they were excluded from making claims for permanent protection.

RACS has also presented to schools and universities, and spoken at rallies, community meet ups and to the media to maintain and grow public support for people seeking asylum, and raise awareness of Australia's harmful immigration policies.



RACS presenting at a Rohingya Community Legal Education Session.



RACS Fundraising Manager Shauna Wolifson speaking to students at Darlinghurst Public School.



RACS Centre Director and Principal Solicitor Sarah Dale speaking at a Queer Screen Event.



Deputy Labor Leader in the Senate, Shadow Minister for Home Affairs & Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Kristina Keneally talking with staff at the RACS office.

# A MOTHER'S SEARCH FOR SAFETY

*It took Saba's\* family over six years before they were found to be refugees and were granted visas and safety in Australia. This is Saba's story.*

"I'm from Iran, but I had a bad life there. I was very worried about my family. My husband and me, we had a lot of plans in our life, but everything was stopped.

"We came to Australia in 2012 as refugees seeking asylum. When we got here we were very happy because the bad things in our life [from Iran] are gone. But now we have a big problem because we haven't any ID, we haven't any passport. We didn't know English, we talked Persian. That was very hard for us. And we hadn't enough money to give to a lawyer.

"Everyone said 'it will be too hard.' But when I found RACS they told us 'we will help you'. From then, we start our life."

Saba's search for safety for her family had many worrying and painful setbacks. Initially, her family's application was rejected. RACS lawyers persisted and appealed the decision, supporting the family through the stressful process. Eventually there was some good news.

"When Ben (my RACS lawyer) called me and said 'I have good news for you. You got a visa.' I was shocked. I was just crying."

But with the good news came some bad news.

"Then Ben said 'You and your daughter got a visa, but your husband didn't.' I couldn't believe it. [I thought] I need my family! My daughter needs a father.

"My daughter said 'We have a visa, why not my dad?' That was very hard."

Saba and her daughter had received five year protection visas, but her husband's situation shook the family.

The legal team set to work reviewing thousands of pages of evidence and spent countless hours with the family to put forward their case as best as possible. It took another year of advocating with the Department before a decision was made.

After an agonising wait, Saba's husband was also granted a five year temporary visa.

Six and a half years after arriving in Australia, Saba and her family were finally safe.

"We are safe here now [for five years]. My husband found his job. His real job. I can study now, before they said you can't, but now I am studying. It's very, very happy you know for me. It's very happy."

Saba and her husband did not give up on their hopes and dreams of raising their family in safety, and RACS was there for the family throughout the stressful and uncertain process.

"I got my husband, my daughters got their father. I didn't just get visa. I got my family."

When the family's temporary visas expire, RACS will be there for them for the next uncertain chapter in their ongoing search for a safe, stable and secure life.



RACS lawyer Ben, Saba\* and her daughter.



Saba\* and her daughter.

# THE RACS TEAM

*RACS is an ethical, diverse and inclusive workplace.*

Every day our passionate and caring team work tirelessly to ensure that people seeking asylum have a lawyer by their side, to advocate for their needs and prevent them from being sent back to danger.

We've helped sick people held offshore access urgent medical treatment. We've ensured LGBTIQ+ people, persecuted for their identity, receive authentic support when proving their claims. We've fought relentlessly for the rights of people through appeal after appeal, and we've helped thousands of men, women and children finally find their safety.

Our team go above and beyond for their clients and the cause, through their day-to-day work and their additional fundraising efforts.



# THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

RACS RECEIVED OVER **10,300** HOURS OF PRO BONO LEGAL ASSISTANCE THIS FINANCIAL YEAR

## PRO BONO SUPPORT

New South Wales is home to at least 11,000 people who arrived in Australia by boat, as well as thousands of others who arrived by plane. They are all seeking protection and need crucial legal support to ensure they are not returned to danger. The need for our work is much greater than our staff numbers and capacity. We are therefore incredibly grateful to the unwavering and dedicated support from major law firms and their committed lawyers, as well as over 70 barristers and 25 other law firms who support our Judicial Review program.

Under the supervision of the RACS legal team, the pro bono lawyers from the following law firms collectively provide up to 198 hours of legal work to RACS every week:

Allens Linklaters	Baker McKenzie
Gilbert + Tobin	Hall & Wilcox
Herbert Smith Freehills	Hicksons Lawyers
King & Wood Mallesons	Lander & Rogers Lawyers
Norton Rose Fulbright	Wotton & Kearney

“Inspired by the ingenuity, resilience and determination of their own clients, RACS has used limited resources to ensure their clients have a voice to tell their stories. Hall & Wilcox is honoured to assist RACS in this endeavour through the conduct of judicial review proceedings from Immigration Assessment Authority decisions and for those who missed the deadline for lodgement of their protection claims. We are always ready to assist RACS in providing access to justice to their clients.”

— Nathan Kennedy, Hall & Wilcox

“Baker McKenzie is proud to work with RACS on the Women at Risk program. These women and their children have experienced awful violence and abuse. They are incredibly vulnerable and alone. Working with RACS, we are able to provide the women with the expertise, support and assistance they need to seek protection in Australia for a better life. RACS’ commitment and dedication to these clients is outstanding.”

— Kate Gillingham, Baker McKenzie

“Herbert Smith Freehills is delighted to partner with RACS through legal clinics to provide pro bono support to people seeking asylum in NSW who are eligible to apply for visas. We rely upon the expertise and dedication of RACS lawyers and staff to assist these marginalised and vulnerable clients and we could not provide this assistance without RACS.”

— Stephen Somerville, Herbert Smith Freehills



## COLLABORATION IN ACTION

RACS utilises its skills, knowledge and infrastructure to collaborate with our pro bono partners to meet the legal needs of people who have been forced to flee their homes due to persecution.

We dedicate the necessary time and resources to prepare our pro bono lawyers for the complexities of refugee law, supervise the work they do and facilitate opportunities for them to broaden their experiences of supporting some of the most vulnerable people in Australia’s legal system.

Each pro bono lawyer receives training and supervision from RACS to ensure the support they provide, to the people we assist, is carried out in a safe, professional and supportive way, consistent with our values and delivered in response to each client’s needs.

RACS is incredibly proud and honoured to be chosen by some of Australia’s most prestigious law firms to be their not-for-profit of choice to receive pro bono support. On behalf of people seeking asylum in Australia, we are extremely grateful for their commitment and support.

## THE GIFT OF SECONDMENTS

RACS is incredibly grateful to Allens, King & Wood Malesons and Norton Rose Fulbright whose lawyers participate in our Secondee program. This is a vital and extremely generous gift from firms who have a commitment to social justice.

For a number of years, we have been fortunate to have solicitors in the early years of their career join us for mostly 6 months full-time, and almost immediately become invaluable members of our legal team. In financial year 2018 - 2019 the following lawyers worked at RACS:

- Ammy Singh from Allens Linklaters
- Ava Hancock from King & Wood Malesons
- Brodie Purdon from Norton Rose Fulbright
- Bronte Lambourne from King & Wood Malesons
- Patrick McDonnell from King & Wood Malesons
- Tim Sullivan from King & Wood Malesons

## WHAT THE LAW FIRMS SAY

Pro bono secondments enable us to support the work of RACS in an ongoing and meaningful way. Our secondees learn so much from the talented RACS team. As well as developing core legal skills, our RACS secondees have all developed their 'soft skills'. By working through interpreters and with people from different cultural and personal backgrounds, RACS secondees return to NRF more compassionate, motivated and resilient. We highly recommend working with RACS to lawyers interested in a pro bono secondment.

— Gemma Livingston, Norton Rose Fulbright



King & Wood Malesons is deeply proud of, and passionate about, our strategic community partnership with RACS. This highly professional and high calibre community legal centre provides critical legal support to some of the most vulnerable and traumatised people in our community, a service that no other organisation in NSW does. They need every bit of support they can muster. KWM has worked with and alongside RACS for over 10 years to do what we can to help, principally through the provision of pro bono legal advice (case work), in addition to providing a KWM secondee for 6 month stints. We also provide financial and in-kind support. Thank you to the whole RACS team for everything you do.

— Dan Creasey, King & Wood Malesons



Allens is pleased to support RACS' work with people seeking asylum. Legal advice for those seeking safe haven on our golden soil is an essential aspect of a fair justice system and RACS' lawyers play a major role in providing that assistance.

— Nicky Friedman, Allens Linklaters





RACS secondee from King & Wood Mallesons, Bronte Lambourne.



6 X SECONDEES  
WORKED OVER  
**2,330** HOURS,  
PRO BONO

## WHAT THE SECONDEES SAY

A key takeaway from my RACS secondment is the ability I learned to be as resourceful as possible in putting together persuasive legal arguments and corroborating evidence. I was so impressed by how the RACS team never leaves any stone unturned in representing their clients and it is this mentality and skill set that I will take with me in my career.

On a personal level, it was incredibly rewarding and uplifting to see the clients I worked with achieve protection status in Australia after years of uncertainty and insecurity.

— Timothy Sullivan, seconded from King & Wood Mallesons

The opportunity to work during my secondment as a full time migration agent and solicitor for RACS has been one of the best opportunities of my career so far. I believe that learning how to master the challenges of working at RACS has given me enhanced communication, time management and interpersonal skills which I have been able to take back to NRF.

RACS taught me what a privilege it is to work in a commercial firm, with access to resources and facilities that are not always available to lawyers working in community legal centres.

— Brodie Purdon, seconded from Norton Rose Fulbright

The high demand for RACS' services is such that you quickly become adept in handling large volumes of work with competing deadlines, and I know that I am a better lawyer for it.

I will always carry with me the hope, gratitude, and desire for a better future that so many of my clients at RACS imparted to me. They are a constant reminder that it is important to always use my opportunities and privileges as an Australian lawyer to strive for justice.

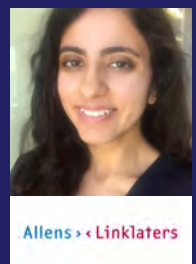
— Ammy Singh, seconded from Allens Linklaters



KING & WOOD  
MALLESONS  
金杜律师事务所



NORTON ROSE  
FULBRIGHT



Allens & Linklaters

# UNIVERSITY COLLABORATIONS

Through partnering with Australian universities, RACS trains and advises the next generation of legal experts, ensuring we pass on the knowledge and skills which will help them shape and grow.

RACS' teaching extended beyond Macquarie University this year with classes held at the University of Technology, University of Sydney and Western Sydney University.

We are incredibly grateful to receive additional support from our major supporter, University of New South Wales who have provided us with almost five years of office space in Randwick and encourage their social justice interns to take placements at RACS.



**UNSW LAW IS PROUD OF ITS PARTNERSHIP WITH RACS. WE RECOGNISE THE ENORMOUS VALUE OF THE WORK RACS DOES FOR THE REFUGEE COMMUNITY, AND THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A BODY LIKE RACS AT THIS TIME.**

— George Williams, UNSW Dean of Law



## LEGAL CLINICS AND WORKSHOPS



### UTS LAW STUDENT LEGAL CLINIC

With support from RACS Solicitors, UTS Law students engage in practice-based learning with a particular focus on the legal needs of refugees and asylum seekers.



### MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY SOCIAL JUSTICE CLINIC

RACS supports Macquarie University Social Justice Clinic to deliver high quality legal education and experience in the area of human rights and Australian refugee law.



### WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY

RACS runs Intensive Weekend Workshops for students of the Graduate Diploma in Australian Migration Law, run by Western Sydney University providing practical skills required for working as a migration agent.

# LEGAL STUDENT VOLUNTEERING

Law students gain invaluable skills and experience at RACS and provide the organisation with much needed extra support, ensuring our services remain consistent and sustainable.

This financial year we accepted:

- **55 Practical Legal Trainees (PLT):** These were law students finishing, or who had just finished, their law degree and needed to gain experience towards admission as a lawyer.
- **Over 150 Legal student volunteers and interns:** These were students seeking industry experience in a professional legal practice as part of their professional development.

## VOLUNTEER HOURS IN 18/19 FY

ALMOST **10,000** HOURS PROVIDING CRITICAL FRONT-END SUPPORT OVER THE PHONES

**4,000** HOURS PROVIDING CRITICAL FRONT-END SUPPORT IN A FACE-TO-FACE OUTREACH ENVIRONMENT

## PLT HOURS

OVER **8,000** HOURS PROVIDING ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT TO THE LAWYERS AT RACS AND THE CLIENTS THAT THEY REPRESENT



Inderpreet K. Singh with RACS Volunteer and Operations Coordinator, Vicky Chen

## WHY I VOLUNTEER AT RACS

**Inderpreet K. Singh, Legal Student Volunteer, UNSW**

“It remains one of the greatest pleasures of my university life so far, to have volunteered at RACS.

Working in an environment like RACS’ has reinforced in me that compassion and sensitivity is central to the provision of good legal advice.

The office was my first introduction to a practical legal environment and I’ve now been with RACS for one and a half years. I have been taught so much and have been treated with kindness and patience at every step.”

# OUR COMMUNITY IN ACTION

In 2018/19 our community of donors and fundraisers put their dedication to the cause to good use. They raised their voices, they raised funds, they ran events, they took action and they made a real difference to thousands of lives.



## DONATIONS BIG OR SMALL MAKE AN IMPACT

MY CONTRIBUTIONS TO YOUR INVALUABLE WORK ARE ONLY SMALL, BUT THEY COME WITH MY HEART FELT GRATITUDE FOR THE INVALUABLE WORK YOU DO. WHATEVER WAY I CAN SUPPORT THOSE AT THE FRONTLINE TRYING TO MAKE OUR POLICIES AND PRACTICES MORE HUMANE, I WILL.

— Jane Purkiss, 82 year old pensioner





Behrouz Boochani, David Marr and Omid Tofighian at a RACS event after the 2019 election, hosted by Baker McKenzie.

## COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING IN ACTION

“RAISING FUNDS FOR RACS ON FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM WAS A WAY TO USE MY PLATFORM TO HELP ADVOCATE FOR THOSE WHO, THROUGH NO WRONG DOING, HAVE LESS SECURITY THAN I DO. I HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO USE MY PRIVILEGE TO HELP EVEN THE SCALES.”

— Bonnie Sveen, Actor and Producer



# THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS & PARTNERS

Without the dedicated support from the following organisations and foundations we could not continue our critical work. It is because of you that we have been able to give over 4,000 people the best chance at remaining safe in Australia over the past year. Thank you for standing alongside us in our vision for justice and compassionate treatment of people seeking asylum in Australia.

## MAJOR SUPPORTER

University of New South Wales

## FUNDING PARTNERS

Australian Ethical	James N. Kirby Foundation
Albert and Barbara Tucker Foundation	Jesuit Refugee Service
Australian Communities Foundation	Legal Aid NSW
City of Parramatta	Neilson Foundation
Cumberland Council	PayPal
Danks Trust	Planet Wheeler
Dooleys	Sidney Myer Fund
House Of Welcome	The Myer Foundation
	The Scully Fund

## LAW FIRM PARTNERS

Allens Linklaters	Baker McKenzie
Gilbert + Tobin	Hall & Wilcox
Herbert Smith Freehills	Hicksons Lawyers
King & Wood Mallesons	Lander & Rogers Lawyers
Norton Rose Fulbright	Wotton & Kearney

## UNIVERSITY PARTNERS

University of New South Wales	Western Sydney University
The University of Sydney	Macquarie University
The University of Technology Sydney	

## SUPPORTERS

NSW Bar Association	PWC
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Landers has enjoyed a close relationship with RACS during 2019, including participating in the Judicial Review program and hosting training sessions in relation to that work. Lander & Rogers lawyers get great satisfaction from their involvement in the critical and compassionate work that RACS does. We look forward to continuing our relationship in 2020.

— Emma Lutwyche, Lander & Rogers Lawyers

We really value our partnership with RACS and the Judicial Review program. In the last 3 years we have been able to assist 13 RACS clients with their judicial review applications. Our lawyers are supported by the RACS team throughout and we also work with experienced Counsel. This collaboration enables us to provide excellent support to our refugee clients and help them through an often emotional legal process.

— Heidi Nash-Smith, Wotton & Kearney

Gilbert + Tobin are proud to continue to work alongside RACS, providing pro bono legal assistance and representation during interviews at the Department of Home Affairs and beyond. It is vital that people seeking asylum have access to legal support, to ensure they are not sent back to harm, and we will continue to work with the RACS team to ensure vulnerable people are receiving the support they need.

— Michelle Hannon, Gilbert + Tobin



# RACS BOARD, PATRON AND AMBASSADORS

## PATRON

“I admire and thank RACS for all the wonderful work it does for refugees, their families and our country. I am just back from Berlin where I saw, once again, how few refugees Australia accepted in the 1930s. We should not stand condemned once again for rejection of the needy – especially now that Australia has ratified the Refugees Convention. I thank RACS for holding our courts, politicians and officials to account. If ever the rule of law needed valiant champions, it is now. My felicitations on the year past and encouragement for the year to come.”

The Hon. Michael Kirby AC CMG, Patron  
Past Justice of the High Court of Australia (1996-2009)



## AMBASSADORS

“Why do I support RACS? The answer is clear: RACS is about fairness and as an Australian, I believe in a fair go for everyone, and in equality of access to our institutions and the law. RACS provides pro bono legal advice to refugees and asylum seekers, who are among the most vulnerable and marginalised people in our community. The work that RACS undertakes is essential in a just society.”

Dorothy Hoddinott, Ambassador,  
Former Principal of Holroyd High School, Officer of the Order of Australia 2008, Australian Human Rights Medallist 2014



“As an asylum seeker, I would like to thank the RACS supporters. Without your encouragement, the job for RACS would be really challenging. I'd also like to give a special thanks to volunteers and staff. We are very grateful for every minute that you spend helping refugees and people seeking asylum. I understand how hard it is to work in an environment with people who are desperate for support, but your smile and hard work gives them hope and strength to fight their hardship. To my fellow refugees and asylum seekers, we are all travelling in the same boat and we are not sure when this darkness will end, but we have to stay strong to give hope to our loved ones, who are still fighting for their lives. Hopefully, soon we will be reunited.”

Zaki Haidari, Ambassador,  
NSW International Student of the Year 2015, Former RACS Client



## RACS MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

“Australia has a moral and legal obligation to provide protection to refugees. Seeking protection is an incredibly difficult, complicated and emotionally distressing process. I support RACS because for some of the most vulnerable members of our community, RACS is one of the only places that they can turn to for help, in a situation that for many can mean life or death for them and their families.”

Chris Yoo, President,  
Partner, Genesis Capital & Managing Director, Purpose Investment Partners



“There is nothing more fundamental in our society than being able to access effective legal representation, particularly for the vulnerable such as those seeking asylum. The RACS team is comprised of highly committed people who need and deserve our support to ensure that their mission is met. RACS makes a difference to people's lives and I am pleased to play a small part in this.”

David Wiggans, Treasurer,  
Chief Financial Officer & Company Secretary, 24-7 Healthcare Pty Ltd



“For a person seeking asylum, legal assistance can be the difference between staying in safety or being sent to danger. RACS has a vital mission and an incredible committed team. I’m proud to serve on the Board of this inspiring organisation that makes such a crucial difference in people’s lives.”

Frances Voon, Committee Member,  
Executive Manager, Andrew and Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law



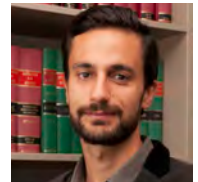
“I support the work of RACS because it makes a huge difference in the lives of people who require protection from persecution and who often have nowhere else to turn. Their work is vital in ensuring that vulnerable people have access to justice and can begin rebuilding their lives in a place of safety.”

Lachlan Murdoch, Committee Member,  
Deputy Chief Executive Officer, STARTTS



“RACS is a beacon of hope for asylum seekers and refugees as they endure through the confusing protection visa process, which sometimes seems like it is deliberately designed to break their spirits. Coming from a refugee background myself, I have first-hand experience of the transformative impact that high quality independent legal advice can provide in these circumstances.”

Daniel Ghezelbash, Committee Member,  
Associate Professor, Macquarie Law School & Founder and Director of Macquarie University Social Justice Clinic



“I am very proud to be a part of the dynamic, dedicated and compassionate team at RACS that supports some of our community’s most vulnerable people - refugees and asylum seekers - with access to the legal assistance they need to navigate Australia’s complex and challenging immigration laws. RACS is now almost entirely funded by private donations and I hope to be able to assist in maintaining and growing support from the Australian community so that RACS can continue its vital work.”

Susan Cowden, Committee Member,  
Major Gifts Relationship Manager, Youth Off The Streets



“I’m passionate about human rights and social justice issues. Reigniting a NSW network of donors some years ago, RACS was part of a conversation in how to collaborate as a sector in a very complex environment. I built a relationship with RACS and realised how outstanding it is in terms of its leadership, expertise and legal support of very vulnerable people. The team go above and beyond in their commitment to their clients.”

Ruth Johnstone, Committee Member,  
Membership Director NSW, Private Wealth Network & Senior Advisor, Wendy Brooks & Partners





# RACS FINANCIALS

## STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019

<b>Revenue</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
Contract revenue		
- Community	-	151,184
Donations & fundraising	1,411,138	1,738,079
Grants		
- Public Purpose Fund	105,278	104,088
- Other grants (including Legal Aid)	212,888	213,387
Interest income	44,970	53,931
Other Income	59,047	113,477
<b>Total revenue</b>	<u>1,833,321</u>	<u>2,374,138</u>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Administration expenses	144,006	128,692
Direct fundraising expenses	35,696	45,414
Casework & taskforce expenses	164,241	225,796
Salary and other employee expenses	2,186,082	2,564,298
Depreciation	21,440	16,174
Onerous Contract utilisation	(833,500)	(853,000)
Sundry expenses	25,621	28,120
<b>Total expenses</b>	<u>1,743,586</u>	<u>2,155,494</u>
<b>Surplus/(Loss) for the year</b>	<u>89,735</u>	<u>218,644</u>
<b>Total comprehensive (loss)/income</b>	<u>89,735</u>	<u>218,644</u>

## STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN MEMBERS' FUNDS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>Members' funds</b>		
Funds available for future use		
Balance at 1 July	1,640,545	1,421,901
Surplus/(Loss) for the year	89,735	218,644
<b>Balance at 30 June</b>	<u>1,730,280</u>	<u>1,640,545</u>

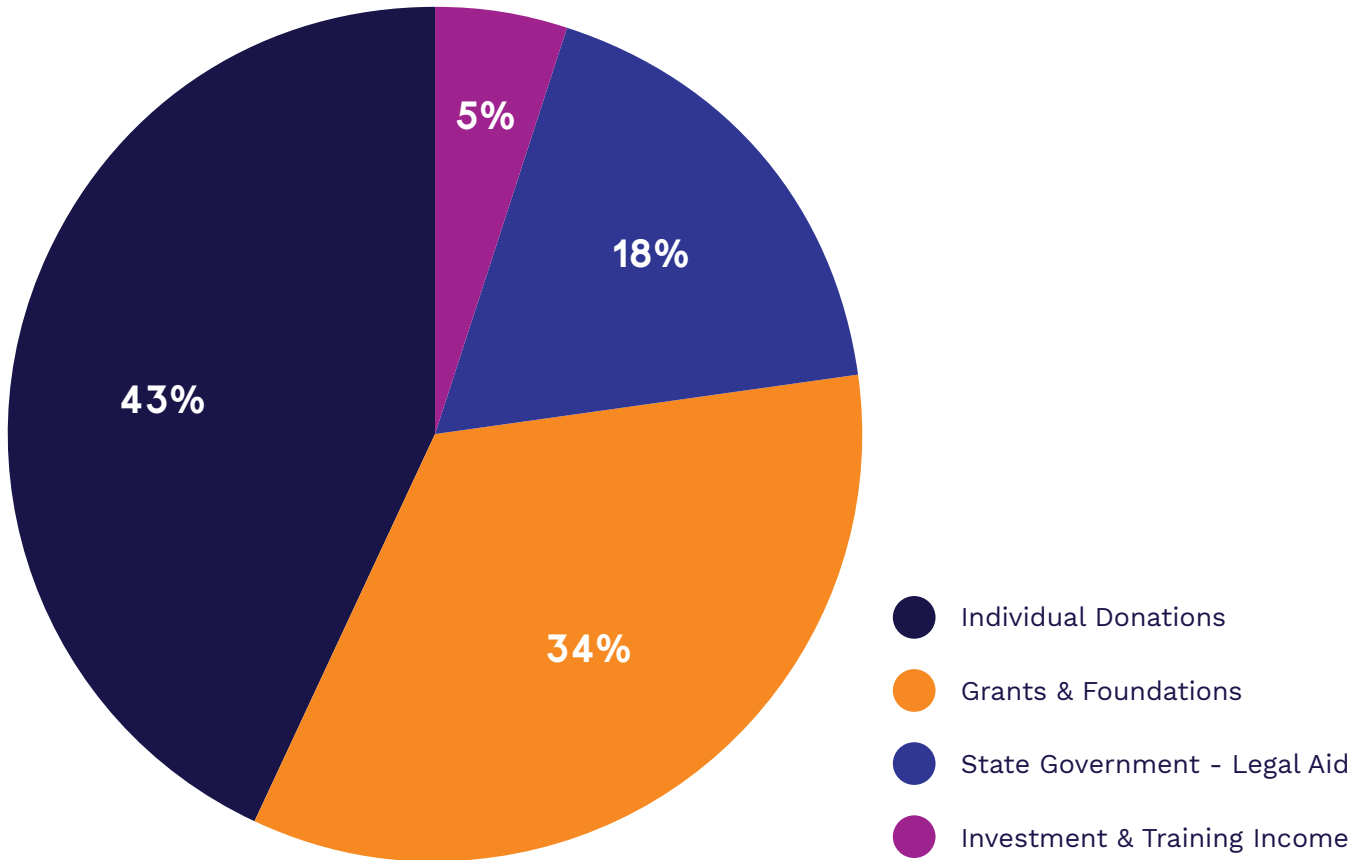
# STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AS AT 30 JUNE 2019

	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>
	\$	\$
<b>Current assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	967,928	1,290,345
Term deposits	1,217,851	1,710,455
Debtors and other receivables	43,999	52,102
Other assets	19,621	20,786
<b>Total current assets</b>	<u>2,249,399</u>	<u>3,073,688</u>
<b>Non-current assets</b>		
Term deposits	31,110	31,110
Property, plant and equipment	30,870	31,593
<b>Total non-current assets</b>	<u>61,980</u>	<u>62,703</u>
<b>Total assets</b>	<u>2,311,379</u>	<u>3,136,391</u>
<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Trade and other payables	334,141	377,002
Provision for onerous contract	117,000	726,811
Provision for employee entitlements	129,958	168,344
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<u>581,099</u>	<u>1,272,157</u>
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>		
Provision for onerous contract	-	223,689
<b>Total non-current liabilities</b>	-	<u>223,689</u>
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<u>581,099</u>	<u>1,495,846</u>
<b>Net assets</b>	<u>1,730,280</u>	<u>1,640,545</u>
<b>Members' funds</b>		
Funds available for future use	1,730,280	1,640,545
<b>Total members' funds</b>	<u>1,730,280</u>	<u>1,640,545</u>

This is an extract of RACS audited financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2019 for a full version visit [www.RACS.org.au](http://www.RACS.org.au) or [www.ACNC.gov.au](http://www.ACNC.gov.au)

## RACS FY19 FUNDING STREAMS



**Refugee Advice & Casework Service (Aust) Inc.**

**Address:** 30 Botany St, Randwick NSW 2031

**Client Line:** (02) 8355 7227

**Reception Line:** (02) 8317 6500

**Fax:** (02) 8004 3348

**Website:** [www.racs.org.au](http://www.racs.org.au)

**IT IS**  
**LEGAL**  
**TO SEEK**  
**ASYLUM**