

# Mercy Foundation Forum Connecting & Collaborating



28 August 2014

# What we'll cover

- ❖ ASC Vision, the people we serve and what we do
- ❖ Three collaboration projects:
  - Health Service collaborations
  - ASC & RACS partnership
  - Advocacy collaborations



# Asylum Seekers Centre

## Our Vision

*“Asylum seekers are welcomed and allowed to heal in safety and freedom while they rebuild their lives as valuable members of our community.”*

## Key Objectives

*The Asylum Seekers Centre provides practical and personal support for asylum seekers living in the community.*

- ❖ Meet human rights needs
- ❖ Secure justice
- ❖ Assist in rebuilding lives
- ❖ Provide a community



# Asylum Seekers Centre

## The people we serve:

- ❖ > 1,400 asylum seekers assisted in 2013 / 2014
- ❖ 50% have no work right
- ❖ 70% are denied Government support
- ❖ 35% have no Medicare





# HEALTH SERVICE COLLABORATIONS

# Health Service Collaborations

## CHALLENGE:

- ❖ 85% have chronic physical health issues
- ❖ 98% require mental health support
- ❖ 60% have language barriers to treatment
- ❖ 35% have no Medicare



# Health Service Collaborations

**SOLUTION:** Innovative partnerships and collaborations:

- ❖ **Onsite clinics:** Engaged pro bono health providers to provide 3500 health consultations in 2013/14
- ❖ **Specialists:** Advocated for fee waivers with 28 specialist referrals
- ❖ **Pathology:** Negotiated fee waivers with a private company
- ❖ **Xrays & Scans:** Negotiated fee waivers with St Vincents Private
- ❖ **Pharmaceuticals:** Negotiated with St Vincents and Royal Prince Alfred to get at cost pharmaceuticals



# Asylum Seekers Centre & Refugee Advice & Casework Service Partnership



# Asylum Seekers Centre & Refugee Advice & Casework Service

## CHALLENGE:

- ❖ In March 2014 the Government withdrew funding
- ❖ At ASC 46% of clients were likely to lose Legal support
- ❖ Migration Agents such as RACS would lose IAAAS funding
- ❖ 90% of clients were unable to prepare applications as illiterate in English



# Asylum Seekers Centre + Refugee Advice & Casework Service

## **SOLUTION:**

- ❖ ASC received a grant from Thomas Foundation to fund a lawyer
- ❖ ASC and RACS negotiated a secondment of 2 lawyers part time to ASC
- ❖ Benefits to ASC=
  - Access to free legal assistance & referral pathways for all clients
  - ASC Legal Service staffed by highly skilled migration lawyers
  - RACS policies and processes were transferred to ASC
  - Volunteers are trained by RACS

# Asylum Seekers Centre + Refugee Advice & Casework Service

## **SOLUTION:**

### Benefits to RACS:

- ❖ Salaries of solicitors are covered by ASC
- ❖ The burden of funding cuts and policy changes shared with the ASC Legal Service
- ❖ Referrals to RACS are made with a high quality brief and supporting documents





# ADVOCACY COLLABORATIONS

# Advocacy Collaborations

## CHALLENGE:

How can we put a human face to asylum seekers living in the community to show our common humanity in a way that transcends politics.



# Advocacy Collaborations

## SOLUTIONS:

### Wendy Sharpe “*Portraits of Humanity*”

- ❖ Archibald prize winner Wendy Sharpe is drawing 39 asylum seekers and refugees for a major exhibition in February/March 2015
- ❖ The Muse Gallery at TAFE Sydney has partnered with us to provide an exhibition space at no charge
- ❖ Art suppliers have provided donated materials



# Advocacy Collaborations

## SOLUTIONS:

### Short documentary

- ❖ A group of volunteer documentary and film makers agreed to make a short documentary
- ❖ Their aim was to tell the stories of:
  - Why people are forced to flee their countries of origin
  - Their experience since arriving in Australia
- ❖ They have completed the first stage of this project.



**THANK YOU**

[www.asylumseekerscentre.org.au](http://www.asylumseekerscentre.org.au)

02 9078 1900