



# Annual Report 2019-2020

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*ASeTTS acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to elders past, present and emerging.*

# About Us

**Founded in 1992, ASeTTS has a proud history of serving humanitarian entrants and refugees settling in Western Australia.**

We provide flexible, therapeutic, mental health and rehabilitation services to people who are humanitarian entrants, asylum seekers or are from a refugee background, and who have experienced torture or trauma in their country of origin, during their journey to Australia, or while in detention. We believe all people who have experienced trauma have a fundamental right to access supports that facilitate their healing, rehabilitation, recovery, and help them reconnect with their innate strengths.

Our staff work with clients from a broad range of countries and ethnic and cultural backgrounds, through individual, family, group, and community interventions. We recognise each client's needs are different, and work with our clients to tailor services to meet these unique circumstances.

ASeTTS is a member of the Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT), and is one of over 150 accredited torture rehabilitation centres located in 75 countries worldwide which assist the survivors of torture and trauma. We have no political affiliation and provide support to survivors of torture and trauma across the lifespan, without distinction of any kind, such as race, gender, language, religion, age, sexuality, or political or other opinion.

## Our Vision

Our vision is to help create a more peaceful and just world where human rights are recognised, violations of human rights are challenged, and torture and trauma survivors are supported to rebuild their lives.

## Our Purpose

We aspire to provide holistic services that assist refugee survivors of torture and trauma to rebuild their lives.



## Our Values

We place importance on:

- Respect
- Client focus
- Teamwork
- Inclusion
- Accountability
- Ethics



# Board Chairperson's Report

**For a range of reasons, recent years have been particularly challenging for ASeTTS and 2020 produced its own set of challenges as we were all confronted with the COVID-19 pandemic. I am very pleased to report that, on all fronts, the challenges were met with collective effort and success, and the year ended positively.**

The Annual General Meeting held in December 2019 saw significant changes to the composition of the Board with four members not seeking re-election and five new people being appointed. Organisations such as ASeTTS depend on people volunteering their time and expertise and those who retired and those who joined the Board are thanked for their efforts and service.

From its first meeting in January 2020, the newly constituted Board has focused on appointing a new chief executive officer, developing a Board Charter to ensure that the governance of the organisation is appropriate, formulating a strategic direction document to guide the organisation over the next three to five years and revising the Constitution to ensure that it is more suitable for the organisation and acceptable to members.

It is anticipated that the Board Charter and Strategic Direction will be sent to members for consideration before the 2020 AGM is held. Work on the constitution will continue into 2021.

The Board places high importance on engaging with the people and families we serve and this has been assisted significantly by United Voices representation on the Board. It is an important connection and the Board is anxious to ensure a new nominee takes up the Board position at the 2020 AGM.

ASeTTS' connection with the Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT), funding bodies and stakeholders has also been a priority in this year of 're-sets'. I am very pleased to report that once again WA is held in high regard and is part of a national effort.

Following a very thorough and detailed selection process, Merissa Van Der Linden commenced as CEO in July 2020 and has quickly come to terms with her role and the need to rebuild strong and effective working relationships with all of our people and networks. The Board is very pleased with Merissa's capacity and willingness to dive into the deep end of some of our complex reform tasks.

It is also a pleasure to record the Board's deep appreciation for the work done by Vanja Tandaric, our Corporate Services Manager, who joined ASeTTS in 2019 and found herself holding the leadership role while the

Board was reformed and recruitment of a new CEO undertaken while also steering us through the COVID-19 lock-down. We are indebted to Vanja for her commitment, leadership and work ethic: thank you Vanja!

The immediate financial position of the organisation is strong, as evidenced by the balance sheet within the audited financial statements. Even so, the Board has identified a number of challenges that will require careful attention and stewardship as we respond and proceed over the next few years.

On behalf of the organisation, I acknowledge and thank our funders and partners as listed under 'Our Supporters' elsewhere in this document. Their on-going support, be it funding or contributions-in-kind, make it possible for ASeTTS to exist and deliver the services so valued by our clients and the wider community.

The Board thanks our staff for their continued dedication to the organisation and for their sustained commitment to delivering high quality services to the people and families and communities we serve, particularly during a period of some adversity.

Finally, and importantly, we thank our members who provide the foundation for the organisation. ASeTTS is a community-based organisation that delivers on its charter and purpose because people in our society continue to care for the well-being of others.

As to the future, we will look afresh at the nature and quality of the programs and services that we deliver. There is a strong and justifiable pride in the work that we do. Just as the world in which we operate has changed over the past three decades, particularly in recent years, we must ensure that our work continues to be relevant and our approaches are current. Standards, quality assurance and accountability must be at the centre of our thinking and endeavours.

I am confident that, by drawing on the knowledge and dedication of our members and staff and by working as collaborative members of the FASSTT network, ASeTTS will thrive and continue to make a difference to the lives of the people we serve.

**Peter Walton OAM CF  
Board Chairperson**

# CEO's Report

**In 2020 ASeTTS celebrates 28 years of serving and supporting humanitarian entrants, asylum seekers, refugees who have settled in WA and who have experienced torture or trauma. A significant achievement.**

The establishment of ASeTTS took place in a time where Australian public opinion on the rights and needs of refugees and asylum seekers, were divided. While there was growing recognition of the long-term impacts of unmet mental health issues as a result of trauma experienced as a refugee; there was within government a sense of panic as an increased number of asylum seekers arrived by boat to Australia. 1992 marked a turning point in Australia's mandatory detention policy.

Since this time community perceptions of asylum seekers and refugees have been changeable, as have government policies – sometimes to the benefit of asylum seekers and refugees, and sometimes not. Regardless of change and continued movement ASeTTS has steadfastly stood alongside, and advocated on behalf of our clients. Our unwavering priority has been to help heal and rebuild the lives of refugees who have experienced torture and trauma. This statement remains true for 2019/20; despite this being a challenging year for the association and its staff.

2019/20 saw turmoil in ASeTTS' leadership and governance. This impacted staff sense of safety and organisational culture, and resulted in turnover within the Board of Directors and a change in leadership.

With overwhelming support from ASeTTS' members, the FASSTT Network, partner organisations, and funders, ASeTTS' Interim CEO, Vanja Tandaric, and our Board invested significant time and energy in listening to, supporting and re-building relationships with our staff and key stakeholders.

On behalf of ASeTTS staff I thank Vanja, our Corporate Services Manager, and our Board for their incredible achievements this year. Through their efforts they have stabilised ASeTTS' staff and helped them once again feel valued and heard. As a result of their efforts ASeTTS experienced minimal staff turnover, continued delivery of established programs and services across the year, weathered the challenges of COVID-19, and introduced new programs and ways of working to benefit our clients.

It is likely that ASeTTS will experience further challenges in the current year and years to come, as our community, country and the world manages COVID-19, and the economic impact of the pandemic. We will, as we have before, weather these challenges and support our clients through change – holding true to our vision, purpose, and values.

**Merissa Van Der Linden  
Chief Executive Officer**



**"The rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened"**

*- John F Kennedy*





# Board of Directors

**The primary role of the ASeTTS Board is to set the strategic direction for the organisation, to ensure that it is properly governed and managed and to nurture its well-being and success in pursuing its purpose, which is to assist people who are survivors of torture and trauma to heal and rebuild their lives as members of Australian society.**

ASeTTS' is governed by an experienced Board of Directors who volunteer their time and expertise to ensure the effective leadership of the association. We thank our Board Directors for their ongoing support and commitment to ASeTTS and the people we serve.

**Chair:** **Mr Peter Walton**  
(Appointed 18 December 2019;  
joined the Board in October 2019)

**Deputy Chair:** **Mr Tony McCrae**  
(Appointed 18 December 2019)

**Treasurer:** **Mr Vince Ianni**  
(Appointed 18 December 2019;  
joined the Board in October 2019)

**Secretary:** **Ms Pratthana (Tana) Hunt**  
(Appointed 3 December 2018)

**Director:** **Ms Gail Green**  
(Elected 18 December 2019)

**Ms Raissa Kundwa**  
(Elected 18 December 2019)

**Mr Tim Blackburn**  
(Elected 15 October 2014)

**Ms Louise Ford**  
(Elected 18 December 2019;  
interim Board Director since  
23 September 2019)

It is acknowledged that this year saw significant turnover in Board representation following the 2019 Annual General Meeting. We acknowledge the following former Board Directors for their contributions to ASeTTS:

**Mr Antonio Giometti**  
(Served from 25 October 2010 to 18 December 2019  
and at the 2019 AGM was the outgoing Board  
Chairperson)

**Dr. Bernadette Wright**  
(Served from 23 October 2013 to 18 December 2019 and  
at the 2019 AGM was the outgoing Deputy Chairperson)

**Ms Lynda Folan**  
(Joined the Board in October 2019 and served to 18  
December 2019)

**Hossein Nezhad Amerei,  
United Voices Representative**  
(Served from 14 March 2019 to February 2020 as the  
United Voices nominee)

**Yousef Parsapour**  
(Served from 18 January 2018 to 29 July 2019)

During the 2019/20 year, the Board met on 13 occasions and the attendance of Board members relative to the number of meetings during their time on the Board is as follows:

Hossein Nazhad Amerei	<i>7 of 9 meetings</i>
Tim Blackburn	<i>11 of 13 meetings</i>
Lynda Folan	<i>1 of 2 meetings</i>
Louise Ford	<i>8 of 9 meetings</i>
Antonio Giometti	<i>6 of 6 meetings</i>
Gail Green	<i>7 of 7 meetings</i>
Pratthana Hunt	<i>11 of 13 meetings</i>
Vince Ianni	<i>9 of 9 meetings</i>
Raissa Kundwa	<i>10 of 12 meetings</i>
Tony McRae	<i>7 of 7 meetings</i>
Yousef Parsapour	<i>1 of 1 meeting</i>
Peter Walton	<i>9 of 9 meetings</i>
Dr Bernadette Wright	<i>4 of 6 meetings</i>

## Our 2019/20 Board Members

### **Mr. Hossein Nezhad Amerei**

Mr Nezhad Amerei served as the nominee of United Voices to the Board of ASeTTS. Hossein is a passionate human rights activist and is originally from Iran. He has been a member of Untied Voices since 2016 and a volunteer for Ruah for over four years.

### **Mr. Tim Blackburn**

Mr. Tim Blackburn has been a member of ASeTTS since October 2014 and has a wealth of experience in taxation, financial accounting and business management spanning 20 years. As the previous ASeTTS Treasurer, Tim generated good relationships with ASeTTS stakeholders, in particular the national FASSTT network. He has held leadership roles within CPA Australia, including as President of the WA Division of CPA Australia and as a Councillor of the WA Division for five years.

### **Dr. Lynda Folan**

Dr. Lynda Folan is a psychologist registered with the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency and has an extensive experience in strategically developing and managing human resource teams and delivering organisational change and development. Lynda has worked as a consultant in public and private sector and has experience as a board director. She is the managing director of Inspired Development Solutions.

### **Ms. Louise Ford**

Ms. Louise Ford was employed by ASeTTS between 2007 and 2011 as a Settlement Grants Program case worker and later became the ASeTTS Coordinator of Training and Education Program. Louise has Board experience, a long history of supporting refugees and migrants in a voluntary capacity, a strong network in the service provision sector, a passion for the work ASeTTS undertakes and experience in governance, policies, procedures and compliance.

### **Mr. Antonio Giometti**

Mr. Giometti has extensive senior executive experience in leadership, stakeholder engagement, project and change management and business re-engineering within government, commercial and corporate environments. As a Board member for ASeTTS for nine years, Antonio has provided strategic guidance in his capacity as the organisation's Board Secretary, acting Treasurer, Deputy Chairperson and Chairperson.

### **Ms. Gail Green**

Ms. Gail Green is a Social Worker with over 40 years of experience. She has specialised in trauma informed practice for 20 years and has published in the Australian Social Work Journal and in several other magazines. Gail has a good understanding of governance issues, seeking grant funding and operating funding budgets. Her work as a counsellor, therapist and supervisor of staff has provided her with a good working knowledge of ethical and moral challenges in the field.

### **Ms. Pratthana Hunt**

Ms. Pratthana Hunt has held the position of Secretary since November 2018, during which she has been involved in the establishment of a Governance and Risk Committee to bring greater strategic governance to ASeTTS. Pratthana's background within policy and audit, coupled with her history and experience in supporting those from a refugee background as a volunteer, provides relevant skills and commitment to the role.



### **Mr. Vince Ianni**

Mr. Vince Ianni is a Chief Financial Officer and Director of Corporate Services with over 30 years of experience in finance and the corporate sector. He holds a Bachelor of Commerce degree and is an associate member of the Society of Certified Practicing Accountants (CPA) in Australia. Vince's financial and corporate knowledge and experience is of benefit to the ASeTTS Board as it strives to improve governance, financial management and the delivery of patient care to its clients.

### **Ms. Raissa Kundwa**

Ms. Raissa Kundwa first joined ASeTTS in 2011 as a client in the Youth Program and had the pleasure of working at ASeTTS as a Youth Support Worker in 2014. Raissa has been involved with United Voices and is passionate about the work ASeTTS does and has seen first-hand, the difference it makes in a client's life. Raissa came to Australia with her family on a humanitarian visa from Rwanda in 2006. She has a strong interest in working with children and young people from migrant backgrounds.

### **Mr. Tony McRae**

Mr. Tony McRae has had more than 30 years of experience in public policy and community development. His leadership roles have included being a state Member of Parliament, CEO, Company Secretary and Board Member of non-profit companies and community organisations and a consultant and business adviser to the for-profit sector. He has been a member and/or supporter of ASeTTS for many years and is committed to its continuing development as a member-based service organisation.

### **Mr. Yousef Parsapour**

Mr. Yousef Parsapour, a refugee from Iran, speaks Kurdish, Persian and English. He was a member of United Voices from 2013 to 2019. As the chair of United Voices, he served on the ASeTTS Board for a year and subsequently for a further six months. Yousef holds a Diploma of Nursing, has completed the Leadership and Governance Program conducted by Office of Multicultural Interest and has participated in a Better Boards Conference representing the ASeTTS Board.

### **Mr. Peter Walton OAM CF**

Mr. Peter Walton was appointed as the Chairperson of the ASeTTS Board at the 2019 AGM. He has extensive executive management experience in government at local, state and federal levels and higher education and as a volunteer and a board chairperson in the not-for-profit sector. Peter is a fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and was made a Fellow of Curtin University in 2006 and awarded the Order of Australia medal in 2016 for services to youth and education.

### **Dr Bernadette Wright**

Dr Wright has extensive experience as a clinical psychologist in transcultural mental health (including community development, stakeholder engagement and research) and in working with migrants, refugees and ethnic communities. She is a strong proponent for the education of service providers on the impact of torture and trauma on survivors. Bernadette's board experience includes being a long-standing Board member and Deputy Chair of the Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre.



**"Unless someone like you cares  
a whole awful lot, nothing is  
going to get better. It's not."**

*- Dr Seuss, The Lorax*



# Our Supporters

**ASeTTS provides a suite of services thanks to the generous support of our funders, donators, and key partners. We would like to thank them for their support, and ongoing commitment to our clients.**

## **Our funders:**

Department of Health (Cth)  
Department of Home Affairs (Cth)  
Department of Justice (WA)  
Department of Social Services (Cth)  
Mental Health Commission (WA)  
Office of Multicultural Interests (WA)  
Krishna Somers Charitable Trust  
managed by Hall Chadwick  
Benchmark Fund

## **Our FASSTT Network:**

Companion House – Australian Capital Territory  
Foundation House – Victoria  
Melaleuca Refugee Centre – Northern Territory  
Phoenix Centre – Tasmania  
Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT) – Queensland  
Service for the Treatment & Rehabilitation of Torture & Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) – New South Wales  
Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service (STTARS) – South Australia

## **Our partners:**

- Accelerate Group
- Aranmore Catholic College
- Australian Red Cross
- Camp Kulin
- Centre for Asylum Seekers and Refugee (CARAD)
- Child and Adolescent Health Service (CAHS)
- City of Canning
- City of Gosnells
- City of Perth
- City of Stirling
- City of Swan
- City of Wanneroo
- Commission for Children and Young People
- Communicare
- Community Employers WA (CEWA)
- Curtin University, Centre for Human Rights Education
- Department of Communities
- Diversity Focus

- East Metro Multicultural Network
- Edith Cowan University
- Edmund Rice Centre WA
- Ethnic Communities Council of WA
- Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre (EDAC)
- Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia
- Harmony Alliance
- Headspace Armadale
- Health Consumers' Council WA
- Humanitarian Entrant Health Service
- International Health and Medical Services
- International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT)
- Isha Sharvani – Dance and Yoga Therapist
- Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Services (Inc.)
- Mercy Care
- Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (Inc.)
- Migration Council of Australia
- Multicultural Advisory Forum
- Multicultural Futures
- Multicultural Services Centre of WA
- Murdoch University
- Narelle Little – Nutritionist
- Neami National
- Northern Suburbs Community Legal Centre Inc
- NOUS Group
- Refugee Council of Australia (RCoA)
- Save the Children
- SecondBite
- Settlement Council of Australia
- St Vincent de Paul Society
- Sue Mader – Art Therapist
- The Humanitarian Group
- UnitingCare West
- University of WA
- WA Interpreters
- West Australian Ballet
- Western Australian Association for Mental Health
- Western Australian Council of Social Services
- Women's Health and Family Services
- Women's Health Network
- Youth Futures (Inc.)

*"To work in ASeTTS is for me an honour. Working with clients from Refugee and Asylum Seeker background give me the opportunity to support them in a critical moment in their lives. As a counsellor, I have the opportunity to help clients in their recovery and be part of their amazing cultures. I love my work." Maria*



*"ASeTTS is made up of the people who have created a safe space for clients, interpreters, volunteers and others who are involved in this work. Our clients bring their world to us and I have learnt so much from them. I feel grateful to have the opportunity to work with them and to be part of something so beautiful and enriching." Bonnie*



*"Working at ASeTTS has given me the opportunity to be part of a team that makes a direct difference to the lives of people who have endured torture and trauma. It has helped me to connect with my own story and allows me to give back to others and the community through the services provided." Karla*



*"To me, working here means to be privileged and have responsibility of helping those who need it the most. Seeing clients improving and flourish, brings mutual joy. Those moments compensate for rough oceans of pain that we needed to address and swim over, ending being stronger than ever before." Jovan*



*"ASeTTS is my home away from home, where I explore my strengths and weakness, grow my connection, relate my experiences to others and establish my identity. ASeTTS is a support for me on my journey in Australia it also allows me to be a support to others on their journey in Australia." Anubha*



# Our People

**Our greatest asset is our people.**

**Our staff and volunteers are compassionate, resilient, and thoughtful; they believe in our purpose and are passionate about supporting the healing and recovery of people who have experienced torture and trauma.**

We are privileged to have a workforce that represents a range of perspectives, experiences, cultures, languages, ages and genders. Many of our people have themselves come from refugee and migrant backgrounds, they understand first-hand the trials and difficulties our clients face and work from a place of understanding to support our clients.

Our staff speak a range of languages other than English; this includes:

Akwapim	Akyem	Arabic
Asante	Assyrian	Azerbaijani
Bosnian	Cantonese	Chewa
Croatian	Dari	Fante
Farsi	French	German
Greek	Hazaragi	Hindi
Italian	Malay	Ndebele
Nepali	Russian	Serbian
Shona	Sinhalese	Spanish
Urdu	Xhosa	Zulu

## Staff Service

Congratulations to the following staff on their long service to ASeTTS.

**18 years**  
Assaad Salame  
Gertrud Millidge

**9 years**  
Anubha Adhikari-Parajuli  
Larina Bromley

**8 years**  
Lucy McEvoy  
Megan Levy  
Maria Nazar  
Bonnie (Ka Wah) Beazley

**7 years**  
Tharanga De Silva  
Ainna Fazillah  
Nafisa Mohideen

### **Ehsan's Story**

"I am originally from Afghanistan, but have spent most of my life as an asylum seeker or refugee. I was only six years old when a brutal conflict broke out in my country and, as a result, tyrants and heartless people took power and turned the country into a living hell. From this young age, I saw fighting and aggression everywhere and could see innocent people being tortured and killed on the streets. To stay alive, my parents, siblings and I wandered from one place to another, but there was nowhere safe. We lost everything and my father, as the family's only breadwinner, could not afford to take us all out of the country to safety. However, he was able to send part of the family, including myself, to relative safety in Iran.

Although Iran was safer than our homeland, it was still dangerous because we were living there illegally without any documents, and we always feared that we would be arrested by Iranian police, tortured and deported back to Afghanistan. We lived in this difficult situation for four years until the government in Afghanistan changed and we were able to return. Shortly after we returned, the civil war started and the Taliban took control of most of Afghanistan. This was a dark time in my life and it was difficult to see a better future.

Despite living in such chaos and experiencing a lot of difficulties, I have tried hard not to see myself as a victim of the actions of others, as I believe that if I do, then the problems and difficulties I face would become worse. By doing this, I have found the strength and determination to finish my university studies. I have also done volunteer work and have worked for different charity organisations including the Afghan Red Cross.

As circumstances became worse, I again had to leave Afghanistan and seek asylum in Iran, even though Iran was a place of torment for me. The experience of seeking asylum in Iran and returning to Afghanistan happened to me several times, but neither place was a home, and I was unable to feel settled in either country. I was wandering and hopeless until March 2011 when my wife, my eight-year-old son and I were given the opportunity to move to Australia as refugees.

Living in Australia is a great privilege, but it was a cultural shock for me to live in such an unfamiliar place. I could not speak the language; my work experience and qualifications were not recognised here, and I had to build my life anew.

Despite the difficulties and my state of confusion, I was determined to be an active member of this community – I spent two years at TAFE learning English, before studying then took different courses to improve my



knowledge of working in culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

At the same time, I engaged with community development programs and volunteered with the Australian Red Cross, ASeTTS and the Farsi/Dari and Hazaragi communities. Working as a volunteer was rewarding and helped me to build relationships with different service providers.

As a volunteer, the support ASeTTS gave me helped me to further develop my skills and knowledge and work more effectively with survivors of torture and Trauma. In 2014, I was given the opportunity to work for ASeTTS, which I consider to be a great privilege. It has not only provided me with opportunities to help people, but has also helped me to heal.

Now, after such a long and challenging journey I have a happy life, I live with my beautiful wife and my two wonderful sons. I work for ASeTTS and the Centre for Asylum Seekers and Refugees. These amazing organisations both provide support for people who have lived through difficult situations and have had similar experiences. I am grateful and feel blessed with all my accomplishments and the opportunities that I have been given.

A special thank you to everyone who has helped me throughout this difficult journey – in particular, I am grateful to my mother and her genuine support. Thanks Mum." **Ehsan Nazamyar.**



# Our Clients

In 2019/20 ASeTTS provided a range of services to 864 individual clients, from a wide range of countries and ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Our client demographics vary with changing international contexts and conflicts.

Individual clients generally accessed more than one service from ASeTTS.

## Country of origin

This year clients from 67 countries of origin were supported. The largest proportion of clients originally came from Iraq, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Syria, and Iran.

## Languages spoken

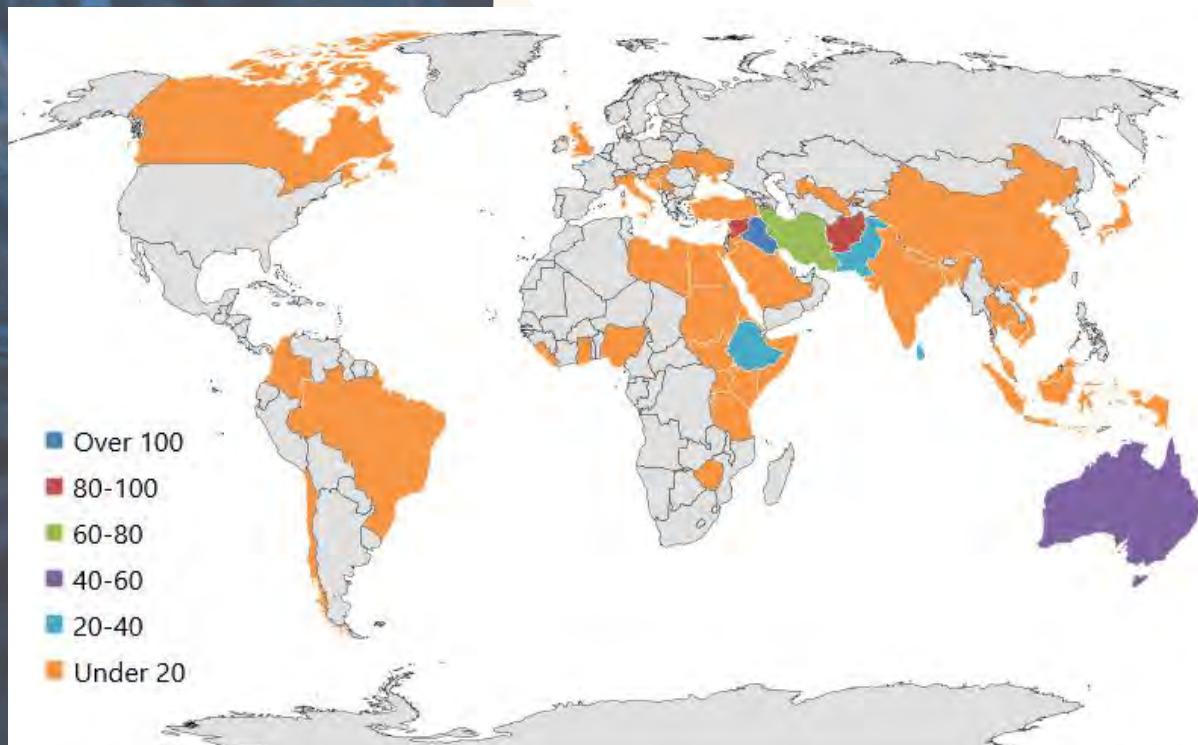
This year ASeTTS clients spoke 58 different languages. The majority (28%) spoke Arabic; this was followed by English (15%), Karen (9%), and Tamil and Hazaragi (6% each).

## Gender

Female	55%
Male	43%
Not Recorded	2%

## Age

While services were provided to clients across the life span, our focus on delivering services to youth continued this year with close to one-quarter of clients being under the age of 18.





## United Voices

The United Voices Client Reference Group is recognised as a crucial forum through which current and former clients of ASeTTS can have direct input to the Board and Management of ASeTTS on the development, evaluation, and improvement of ASeTTS services.

**8 United Voices meetings were held with  
7 members in attendance on average**

*In December 2019 the group organized a Human Rights Day event held on 10 December at the ASeTTS Community Centre. This event was attended by the United Voices chair, who delivered the welcome speech.*



2019 Human Rights Day



**"After seven years  
of counselling, I  
can only say that  
ASeTTS is the  
walking stick that  
helped me to start  
walking again in  
this new life"**

- ASeTTS Client

## Our Services

### Counselling

ASeTTS provides specialised trauma counselling services to refugees and asylum seekers who have experienced torture and trauma. Counselling services are available to individuals, couples or families and children. Services may be short or long-term, depending on the nature of the issues. Counsellors assist clients to manage their symptoms, to overcome their grief and losses, and/or to address the impacts caused by the changes of their social environment and community support networks. The therapeutic relationship between client and Counsellor is critical to building a safe and trustful therapeutic counselling space, and facilitating healing.

Through the continued partnership with Dr Sue Lutton, ASeTTS also provides Psychiatric Services.

Specialised counselling services are also provided to asylum seekers who are detained in Immigration Detention Centres, and in community detention and alternative places of detention (APOD).

Many ASeTTS clients have this year been able to accomplish long awaited goals and have experienced significant improvements in their recovery journey by working in partnership with their counsellors, bi-cultural workers and psychiatrist.

## Client accounts

This account was provided by a client who came to Australia by boat in 2011 from Iraq. After a short period in Christmas Island Detention Centre he was transferred to Perth and referred to ASeTTS for counselling services.

*"I was referred to ASeTTS because I was in a terrible state, close to suicide. I was spending day after day in the sofa in the living room of my unit. My room was dark as my mind was. My heart was freeze as my life. I was stuck in the pain and loss that only war can immersed you.*

*Running away from my country did not stop, in my mind, here in Australia, all the horrific images of seeing my youngest brother being killed, during changing of guards, only 18 years old, seeing my parents suffering in life, my best friend dying in my arms, when we were crossing the road and leaving my youngest wife and my baby child behind in search for a country, for a land for us, to live in peace, to give my child safety and security.*

*Arriving in Australia was not easy, the trip was a nightmare. Without any food and sleep we, all onboard, were hanging in this little boat only waiting to be swallowed by the sea. It looked like the end, the sea was not a friend, it was a monster.*

*When I came to ASeTTS, I was some kind of man, but not myself. It took me months to look at my counsellor into her eyes I did not have words what to say. My counsellor gave me all the space that I needed it, she tried to encourage me to express myself using painting, sand trays, music, breathing, you name it.*

*Not sleeping made me crazy, I started to see shadows, hearing voices, telling me different ways to give up. One day, my counsellor took me to Reflection place in Kings Park. I saw many manifestations of art in relation to people like me. This experience made me realise that I am not alone.*

*After seven years of counselling, I can only say that ASeTTS is the walking stick that helped me to start walking again into this new life.*

*My family is here with me today, and after years of pain and loneliness. One day, finally I went to the airport to pick them up, there are no words to express my happiness. Now, I am a husband and a father again, my children are safe and I feel alive again.*

*All what I can say is thank you to my counsellor for the care and infinite patience as well to Dr Lutton, who help me too, to stand up again. This place, ASeTTS was holding me on days of loneliness and bitterness."*

**ASeTTS client**



*Image by Munib Fetahovic*

*"I feel so much trust at ASeTTS and more trust and positivity have come out from every session. The skills that I learnt are excellent and I am learning to help myself. The support I received has been the best I have ever had in a long time. I am back to the positive side of the light and is getting a lot more than I expected."*

**Munib Fetahovic**

*"On 7 August 2016, my life turned upside down. The shadow of hopelessness filled inside me following a brief altercation with a stranger... This incident involved police and later proceeded to court. I was convicted for assaults and the Judge ordered me to attend some programs. This was how I became involved with ASeTTS. My counsellor was able to quickly build a solid safe and supportive relationship with me. Initially, I was defensive, because it was difficult to take responsibility for my actions and the profound impact they have had on my personal image, career, and family. With more sessions, I began to explore all this, got to know and understand myself deeper, and became reflective upon my behaviour.*

*At one point, I told my counsellor that I needed to change to avoid compromising the court order. So, I came up with three goals: stop drinking; enrol in a Graduate Diploma of Community Development at Murdoch University; and continue looking for work. This was the moment of truth.*

*So far, I have achieved all the goals and benefited from ASeTTS' counselling because it enabled me to turn the tables around. Gracias ASeTTS." **Langoya***



## Therapeutic Community Groups

Social and community-based groups are facilitated with the aim of breaking social isolation and increasing participation of torture and trauma survivors in broader society. The Multicultural Men's Group and Multicultural Women's Group (Women Together) met on a weekly basis throughout most of the year.

The Women Together Group was re-established in 2019/20 after being ceased in the previous year. The group provides women from refugee backgrounds who have experienced torture and trauma with opportunities to socialise, seek support and guidance and interact with other women from different communities in a positive, and safe environment. This is particularly important for women who may not have family supports on hand, and who may experience social isolation and difficulties engaging with mainstream community services.

Since its re-establishment group attendance has gradually increased, with on average 20 women participating in weekly sessions.

## Community Development

ASeTTS acknowledges that trauma impacts not only on the ability of individuals to participate in their community, but that collective trauma can also affect the community's ability to support its members.

We view community development programs are a critical component of working holistically with survivors of torture and trauma. Through this program we collaborate with refugee communities in the ongoing process of healing from collective trauma in the community setting, and strengthening communities by building cohesion and connectedness.

Community capacity building projects that took place this year include:

### **Community Innovators, Volunteers and Leaders (CIVAL)**

The CIVAL Program is an interactive community leadership program for existing and emerging leaders of community groups. The program provides specialist training to participants to enhance their leadership skills and create networks.

In 2019/20 ASeTTS implemented and delivered the CIVAL Program with support from the City of Stirling and five other city councils. CIVAL participants included emerging and existing community leaders from seven different countries of origin.

The program provided training and opportunities for participants to explore how they can support their communities to remain connected and become more independent.





## **Community partnerships and association Development**

ASeTTS community development program assist refugee community groups to register their associations and assist them with project designing to mobilise resources.

This year ASeTTS, the Karen Welfare Association (KWA), and newly arrived Karen community members collaborated to design and implement the 'Social connection and healing project'. The program was jointly implemented by ASeTTS and KWA in early 2020.

The project aimed to provide a safe therapeutic space for newly arrived community members to address their trauma in a group setting, activities to enhance social connections and connections with health service providers, and opportunities for KWA leaders to improve their knowledge of trauma informed approaches to support newly arrived community members.

The project was implemented through two groups, one each in the Southern and Northern suburbs.

Workshops included a range of therapeutic sessions, art therapy, dance and yoga, drumming, and healthy eating sessions – delivered by ASeTTS staff and external partners.

### **Community Consultations**

Each year we facilitate community consultations with the goal of assisting refugee community groups to understand their community needs and design projects to address those needs to empower them.

A number of community consultation sessions and forums were delivered in 2019/20 this included:

- CaLD Community of Practice on Family and Domestic Violence**

ASeTTS facilitated the establishment of this Community of Practice, which brought together



representatives of Government and non-Government organisations, who provide support services to victims of family and domestic violence, and representatives from various CaLD communities.

- Young Women's Sexual Health Peer Education Group**

ASeTTS in partnership with Sexual Health Quarters Consultation conducted consultation and online group bonding sessions with young women from refugee and CaLD communities to explore the development of a new program of support.

### **SAFE**

2019/20 saw the scoping and development of the SAFE project – a specialised program aimed at promoting family and community safety, and reducing family and domestic violence (FDV), sexual and gender-based crimes in at-risk CaLD and refugee communities.

During this year ASeTTS recruited and provided training to bi-cultural workers, protection volunteers and community facilitators from Arabic, Somali, Karen, Hazaragi and Somali communities. The new team have been provided training on working with members of their communities to educate them about various aspects of FDV and specialist FDV services, and/or working with survivors of FDV.

This project will be implemented in 2020/21.

### **Humanitarian Entrants Interagency Network (HEIN)**

ASeTTS has convened this network since 2011. The network brings organisations working with humanitarian entrants and people from refugee background together to share their challenges and learnings and foster collaboration.



## Youth Services

ASeTTS delivers a range of therapeutic and recreational activities to young people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds (aged between 12 and 21), to assist them in overcoming personal and social barriers, increasing self-confidence and self-esteem, promoting wellbeing, and providing a safe environment within which they can share their experiences and work through trauma.

ASeTTS facilitated:

- Counselling services were delivered to 87 young people
- 14 School Holiday Activity days to 41 young people
- A Family Fun Day – Syrian Families, which was attended by 110 people
- 2 Camps to 29 young people
- Tickets to attend ballet, orchestra and Performing Lines productions, attended by 76 young people and their families
- 8 sessions of support to assist 33 students to adjust to Australian school
- Mentoring programs to 12 young people
- 2 Tree of Life narrative psychological sessions to 19 young people

## Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) Services

ASeTTS in partnership with the City of Stirling, Ishar, Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (MMRC) and Youth Futures works with new and emerging communities to help families and children adjust to their new life in WA.

Through this program ASeTTS delivers case work and advocacy support and with group activities to assist children and families in the process of cultural transition.

## **Professional Development Training**

Each year we deliver a range of high-quality professional development to health, education and human services professionals and others who work with people from refugee or asylum seeker backgrounds.

### **Training**

Our presentation at the October 2019 WA Rural and Remote Mental Health Conference was a particular highlight. Our presentation 'Engaging with CALD clients from Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Background or Trauma and Torture', was in line with the theme of 'Moorditjabiny', Noongar for 'becoming stronger'. It emphasized the importance of understanding in responding to, and facilitating the recovery of people who have experienced trauma.

### **International Society for Psychological and Social Approaches to Psychosis (ISPS) 21st International Congress**

In 2019/20 ASeTTS Counsellor, Megan Levy, facilitated a workshop at the ISPS Congress in the Netherlands. The workshop explored the 'Effects of War Violence and Forced Migration on Psycho-Social Developmental Systems: Regression, Psychosis, and Reconnection'. The Congress was attended by international experts and mental health practitioners alike.

An entire day of the program was dedicated to exploring the growing problem of trauma as a core element in mental health issues and psychotic



presentations in refugees; which is an area of expertise at ASeTTS' area of expertise. The Congress provided an opportunity to showcase ASeTTS' trauma-informed services, research, and our Trauma Recovery Model. Our work was very well received and generated significant interest from attendees.

## **Food Service**

Thanks to SecondBite and our helpful volunteers, ASeTTS has in 2019/20 continued providing Food Bank services to our clients.



# Service Achievements

5,030 counselling sessions were delivered to a total of 722 clients

Psychiatric sessions were delivered to a total of 110 clients

During COVID-19 127 clients accessed remote counselling services; 84 percent by phone – there was increased demand for services

10 professional training programs were delivered to a total of 324 people

We doubled the intake of food from SecondBite during COVID-19  
We delivered 1,000 bags of food to our clients

Our Men's Group delivered 30 face-to-face and 10 online sessions to up to 20 men per/session.

The Women Together Group delivered 28 face-to-face and 10 online sessions to up to 35 women per/session.

We facilitated 4 HEIN meetings to 15 people per/session on average.

We delivered 9 community development consultation forums or workshops to over 100 people

The Karen Community Social Connection Group delivered 36 sessions to 23 participants.

We delivered 13 SAFE Workshops to 30 people

During COVID-19 we delivered online webinars for the first time  
Our online webinars were viewed by 90 people

Our CIVAL Program delivered 13 half-day learning workshops to 20 participants.

# COVID-19 Response

**During COVID-19 direct contact was restricted and ASeTTS staff began working from home; we continued to provide services across the agency with energy and enthusiasm.**

Lockdown proved challenging to our clients who reported:

- job losses and financial insecurity;
- increased anxiety and PTSD symptoms – in some cases re-triggering of PTSD;
- police interference;
- risk of homelessness;
- medical and health concerns; and
- fear for family in other countries.

## Counselling Services

Services were delivered by phone/Tele-Health and video conferencing platforms, with the support of WA Interpreter Services Counsellors to ensure clients had support from their preferred interpreter.

## Counselling to children

Working remotely was challenging for everyone (staff and clients alike), and there were additional complexities in engaging clients who are children. Many children struggled to understand the situation, and were not able to express their emotions. During this period layers of emotional support provided within schools was unavailable, and children became reliant on their parents for support.

This reliance placed additional pressure on families; with parents reporting concerns with their mental and

physical health along with difficulties providing and using digital technology needed by children, and lack of a private place for their children to engage in counselling services.

To better support families a number of Counsellors who work with children attended tailored training, regarding engaging children and parents in online environments.

## Therapeutic Community Groups

During this period ASeTTS staff facilitated online small group counselling sessions to Men's Group participants in multiple languages, with support from interpreters. These groups were very well attended by our clients. The Women Together Group also transitioned to interactions via digital platforms. Staff introduced daily chat groups along with daily yoga sessions. Online services provided clients with a space to share stories, experiences, and information, socialise, and remain connected.

## Visit by the Deputy Premier

In June 2020, Deputy Premier Roger Cook MLA visited ASeTTS to celebrate our work in supporting vulnerable people during the lockdown period. During the visit Mr. Cook announced the State Government's investment of an additional \$56m into mental health services, with \$100,000 provided to ASeTTS. The additional funding providing clients with increased access to interpreting services and much needed laptops and mobile phones – to support their continued connection to services.



# Treasurer's Report

The Association reported a surplus of \$409,972 for the year ended 30 June 2020. This compares to a surplus of \$185,376 in the previous year. The increase in operating surplus is largely the result of one specific grant where the funding received significantly exceeded the cost of services provided by \$497,007. Without this unspent grant funding, it is unlikely that the Association would have achieved such a significant operating surplus. All other grant funds have been fully expended, except for \$207,429 in funding received in advance that will be applied in 2020-21.

The total value of cash and cash equivalents is \$3,534,861 and this represents an increase of \$1,700,425 from the previous year. The increase in cash is largely attributable to a \$1million term deposit that was redeemed in 2019-20. The balance in increased cash holdings is attributable to unspent grant funding and grants received in advance.

Other income has significantly increased from \$84,927 to \$332,405. This is mainly due to one large bequest to the Association and increased miscellaneous income. The advent of COVID-19 has impacted on the service delivery and operations of the Association. Notwithstanding COVID-19, operating costs were contained to \$3,874,429 – an increase of \$57,536 on the previous year. Total equity increased \$509,847 from \$2,549,466 to \$3,059,313 as at 30 June 2020.

Vince Ianni  
Treasurer





## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR SERVICES TO TORTURE AND TRAUMA SURVIVORS INC.

### Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

#### *Opinion*

We have audited the Financial Report of the Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors Inc. ('the Association'), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2020, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, the statement of changes in equity, the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and the Board Members declaration.

In our opinion, the Financial Report of the Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors Inc. has been prepared in accordance with Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC) Act 2012*, and the *Associations Incorporation Act 2015* including:

- (a) giving a true and fair view of the Association's financial position as at 30 June 2020 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- (b) complying with *Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements* and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission Regulation 2013*.

#### *Basis for Opinion*

We conducted our audit in accordance with *Australian Auditing Standards*. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the Association in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of the *ACNC Act 2012* and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the Financial Report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

#### *Responsibilities of the Board for the Financial Report*

The Board of the Association is responsible for:

- I. Preparing the Financial Report that gives a true and fair view Financial Report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards – Reduced Disclosure Requirements and the *ACNC Act 2012*.
- II. Preparing the Financial Report in accordance with Section 15(1) and 15(2) of the Charitable Collections Act 1946 and Regulations 1947 (the Act and Regulation).
- III. Preparing the Financial Report in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Act 2015.
- IV. Implementing necessary internal control to enable the preparation of the Financial Report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.
- V. Assessing the Association's ability to continue as a going concern and whether the use of the going concern basis of accounting is appropriate. This includes disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless they either intend to liquidate the Association or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so

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#### *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report*

Our objective is:

- I. to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the Financial Report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and
- II. to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion.

Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the *Australian Auditing Standards* will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with *Australian Auditing Standards*, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit.

We also:

- i. Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- ii. Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Association's internal control.
- iii. Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Board.
- iv. Conclude on the appropriateness of the Board's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial report. We also conclude, based on the audit evidence obtained whether a material uncertainty exists related to events and conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Association's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report, or if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Association to cease to continue as a going concern.
- v. Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the Board regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

We have not audited on a continuous basis the accounting records relied upon for reporting on fundraising appeal activities. These do not necessarily reflect accounting adjustments after the event or normal year end financial adjustments required for the preparation of Financial Report such as accruals, prepayments, provisioning and valuations.



We also provide the Board with a statement that we have complied with the relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, and to communicate with them all relationships and other matters that may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence, and where applicable, related safeguards.

#### **Report on Other Legal and Regulatory Requirements**

*Opinion pursuant to the Charitable Collections Act (WA) and Charitable Collections Regulations (WA) 1947*

In our opinion, the Association has complied in all material respects, with the requirements of the *Charitable Collections Act (WA) 1946* and *Charitable Collections regulations (WA) 1947* for the year ended 30 June 2020.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Crowe Perth".

**Crowe Perth**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sean McGurk".

**Sean McGurk**

Partner

Signed at Perth, Western Australia

7 October 2020

## Statement of Profit or Loss and other comprehensive income

For the financial year ended 30 June 2020

	2020 \$	2019 \$
<b>INCOME</b>		
Grant and Government Funding	3,908,431	3,844,063
Interest	43,565	73,279
Other Income	332,405	84,927
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>4,284,401</b>	<b>4,002,269</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Employment	2,805,133	2,434,871
Consultants & Contracts	155,264	185,001
Staff Development	40,148	25,104
Programs	358,385	375,583
Administration	231,499	497,784
Premises	60,507	82,769
Insurance	68,770	57,844
Travel	32,838	65,066
Depreciation	92,825	63,753
Depreciation Leases	11,576	-
Interest Lease expense	931	-
Finance Costs	410	676
Other	16,143	28,442
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>3,874,429</b>	<b>3,816,893</b>
<b>NET SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR</b>	<b>409,972</b>	<b>185,376</b>
Other Comprehensive Income	-	-
<b>TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR</b>	<b>409,972</b>	<b>185,376</b>



**Statement of Financial Position**  
For the financial year ended 30 June 2020

	2020 \$	2019 \$
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash & Cash equivalents	3,534,861	1,834,436
Other Financial Assets	-	1,000,000
Trade & Other Receivables	343,942	414,524
Contract Assets	46,305	-
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<hr/> 3,925,108	<hr/> 3,248,960
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Property, Plant & Equipment	136,593	211,667
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<hr/> 4,061,701	<hr/> 3,460,627
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Trade & Other Payables	250,767	443,147
Grant Income in Advance	207,429	124,595
Provisions	392,511	286,363
Lease Liability	22,828	-
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<hr/> 873,535	<hr/> 854,105
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Provisions	108,819	57,056
Lease Liability	20,034	-
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<hr/> 128,853	<hr/> 57,056
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<hr/> 1,002,388	<hr/> 911,161
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<hr/> 3,059,313	<hr/> 2,549,466
<b>EQUITY</b>		
Accumulated Funds	3,059,313	2,352,946
Reserves	-	196,520
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<hr/> 3,059,313	<hr/> 2,549,466

**Statement of Financial Position**  
For the financial year ended 30 June 2020

	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
	\$	\$
<b>CASHFLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Receipts from Operations	4,939,785	4,318,298
Payments to Suppliers and Employees	(4,252,637)	(4,378,960)
<b>NET CASH (USED IN)/PROVIDED BY OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>687,148</b>	<b>(60,662)</b>
<b>CASHFLOW FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Acquisition of Property, Plant & Equipment	(20,339)	(70,210)
Acquisition of Other Financial Assets	-	(1,000,000)
Proceeds from Disposal of Property, Plant & Equipment	1,000,000	-
Interest Received	49,566	73,716
<b>NET CASH FLOWS PROVIDED BY/(USED IN) INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>1,029,227</b>	<b>(996,494)</b>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Lease payments	(15,950)	-
<b>NET CASH FLOWS USED IN FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>(15,950)</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>NET INCREASE/(DECREASE) IN CASH HELD</b>	<b>1,700,425</b>	<b>(1,057,156)</b>
<b>CASH &amp; CASH EQUIVALENTS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>1,834,436</b>	<b>2,891,592</b>
<b>CASH &amp; CASH EQUIVALENTS AT END OF YEAR</b>	<b>3,534,861</b>	<b>1,834,436</b>





## **Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS)**

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