

Seeking Refuge Project

A Model for Regional/Rural
Refugee Support Groups

Report on the completion of Stage 1

March 2018



Contents

Introduction	2
Overview	2
Project Set-up	3
Auspice Body	3
Project Reference Group	4
The Project Worker	4
Interpreters and Crowdfunding	4
Barwon Community Legal Service contribution	6
Volunteer Recruitment and Training	6
Promoting the Project and Client referrals	9
Resource Development	9
The Seeking Refuge Project operational model	9
Pre-filling the Application	10
Additional Tasks	12
Project Outcomes so far	15
Acknowledgements	18
Appendix 1 – Client Interaction Plan	20
Appendix 2	28

Introduction

In 2015, an urgent situation for asylum seekers arose in Australia when the Department of Immigration and Border Protection announced that those who had arrived by boat between 13 August 2012 and 1 January 2014 would be receiving an invitation to apply for a temporary protection visa. The extensive paperwork, tight timelines and English language competence required by this process were extremely challenging. While assistance for those affected was being arranged in the capital cities by the major Refugee Support Groups, no such support was available to asylum seekers in rural and regional areas. The purpose of the Seeking Refuge Project was to provide free and easily accessible legal support to assist asylum seekers in the Greater Geelong region with the preparation and lodgement of their protection visa applications.

The project was initiated by Bellarine for Refugees in early 2015 and operated by Barwon Community Legal Service under the supervision of Refugee Legal. It was decided that the project would be treated as a pilot, and detailed records would be kept and publicised as a manual for other regional and rural refugee support groups.

The Seeking Refuge Project built community capacity by:

- Including existing community groups in the Project Reference Group
- Recruiting both Migration Agent volunteers and Administrative volunteers, mostly from the local area
- Attracting major funding from a philanthropic trust
- Working with a local University to attract funds via crowdfunding
- Sourcing funding from several local community groups

- Holding a well-attended public information session on the Seeking Refuge Project for the local community, and publicising the project via local press and social media
- Presenting on the project at the 2017 National Conference of Community Legal Centres in Fremantle, Western Australia

Overview

The following preliminary steps were involved in establishing the Seeking Refuge Project:

- Ascertain the local community's need for this service
- Create a community reference group
- Find a suitable auspice body
- Obtain funding for the project worker
- Employ a project worker
- Obtain funding for interpreters
- Recruit Migration Agents and Administrative volunteers
- Train Migration Agents and Administrative Volunteers

The operation of the Seeking Refuge Project involved the following steps:

- The client (asylum seeker) contacted Barwon Community Legal Service
- An initial meeting between the client, a Migration Agent and Administrative Volunteer was arranged. It is important to note that "migration advice" can only legally be provided by a registered Migration Agent
- Freedom of Information requests were lodged and letters were written to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to obtain an extension of time for lodgment of the visa application
- Additional information was obtained from the client

- The application form was pre-filled by the Administrative Volunteer
- The client attended a Clinic day, for up to 10 hours, to complete the application with a Migration Agent and Administrative Volunteer under the supervision of Refugee Legal and with an interpreter in attendance
- The application was lodged
- The client could be asked follow up questions by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, with which the Seeking Refuge Project assisted
- The client attended an interview at the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and could choose to be accompanied by an Administrative Volunteer from the Seeking Refuge Project
- The client is advised by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection of the outcome of their application. (Ongoing at time of writing this document)

The duration of Stage 1 of the Seeking Refuge Project was determined by the announcement from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection that all protection visa applications for the legacy caseload must be received by 1 October 2017.

Project Set-up

Bellarine for Refugees is a community support and advocacy group based on the Bellarine Peninsula in Victoria. Out of shared concerns for the rights and wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers, Bellarine for Refugees decided that the Geelong region required a local service to respond with practical assistance to the plight of this group of people. Importantly, it was emphasised that this project should support community capacity building within the Geelong and Bellarine region.

After looking at existing resources and services available for refugees and asylum seekers in the region, the group met with

Kon Karapanagiotidis, founder & CEO of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, and David Manne, Director of Refugee Legal. They sought advice on how they could best assist asylum seekers and refugees in the region. As a result of these discussions, it was recognised that the area lacked a locally based free legal service assisting asylum seekers with their protection visa applications. It was decided that the aim of the Seeking Refuge Project would be to provide free legal assistance for this application process. It would offer assistance to asylum seekers who were part of the "Fast Track" process established by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, who had arrived by boat between 13 August 2012 and 1 January 2014 and who are referred to as the Legacy Caseload. The visa options available were either a Temporary Protection Visa (Form 866) or a Safe Haven Enterprise Visa (Form 790). This project was too large and expensive to be run solely by volunteers and so a project worker, an auspice body and funding would be needed.

Auspice Body

The project's first auspice agency and project worker came from the Wesley Centre for Life Enrichment, Geelong. This function was then transferred to Barwon Community Legal Service, which enthusiastically took on the role as auspice agency, and employed a new project worker.

Barwon Community Legal Service is an independent, not-for-profit organisation which has been serving the local community since 1986 and receives state and Commonwealth funding across a range of programs as well as other external funding for a number of projects. Barwon Community Legal Service operates a legal practice and delivers a varied and innovative community legal education and development program.

It works closely with a range of other organisations (local, state and national) to share resources, best practice, collaborate on project delivery and further the cause of social justice. Barwon Community Legal Service works with 50 other Victorian community legal centres, including Refugee Legal and Asylum Seeker Resource Centre. It has a long tradition of working with volunteers and has established recruitment and orientation processes with 22 local lawyers and 30 law students currently volunteering with the service. This number increased greatly with the addition of 70 Seeking Refuge Project volunteers.

Project Reference Group

As part of the project development, a Project Reference Group was formed and consisted of:

- Chair: Austin Paterson – (Bellarine for Refugees)
- Deputy Chair: Margaret Griffith (Bellarine for Refugees)
- A member representing each of the following organisations:
 - Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
 - Barwon Community Legal Service
 - Bellarine for Refugees
 - Combined Refugee Action Group, Geelong
 - Diversitat
 - Refugee Legal
 - Wesley Centre for Life Enrichment

The purpose of the Reference Group was to advise and inform the design and development of the project and to support the project to meet its objectives.

Terms of Reference were developed for the Project Reference Group and quarterly meetings were held.

Three Bellarine for Refugees members also met monthly with the Seeking Refuge Project Worker, the Executive Officer and

the Community Education and Development Coordinator from Barwon Community Legal Service to discuss the progress of the project.

The Project Worker

A grant was applied for and successfully received from the R.E. Ross Trust to fund a part time project worker for 1.5 days a week for a two year period.

Funding was initially granted to the Wesley Centre for Life Enrichment as the auspice body and then transferred to Barwon Community Legal Service when they took over this role.

Candidates were interviewed by Nick Hudson (Executive Officer of Barwon Community Legal Service), Austin Paterson (Bellarine for Refugees) and Jillian Chapman (Barwon Community Legal Service) and after consultation with the Reference Group, a worker was employed for one day a week to administer the project. This later increased to two days as the project was being implemented and continued throughout the project to respond to the demand.

Interpreters and Crowdfunding

While funding from the R.E. Ross Trust covered the project worker's wage and some ancillary expenses, extra funding was required for the cost of interpreters.

As part of the project model, which was based on the format used by Refugee Legal, the Seeking Refuge Project would arrange clinic days for asylum seekers to finalise their protection visa applications. Most of the applicants would need to be supported by a professional interpreter to ensure that the information provided by the client and the migration agent was accurate and remained confidential. Consideration was given to using local volunteer interpreters, but consultation

with refugee groups indicated that it was important to have non-local professional interpreters to safeguard the privacy of visa applicants.

It was estimated that each application would take eight to ten hours to complete at a cost of approximately \$465 in interpreter time. The aim was to raise enough funds to cover interpreters for 150 protection visa applications, totaling \$70,000.

In order to raise the funds, discussions were held with two prominent Geelong businessmen (both of whom agreed to make a significant contribution to the campaign) as well as the Vice Chancellor from Deakin University in Geelong who suggested that the funds could be raised via a crowdfunding campaign. Deakin University agreed to assist the Seeking Refuge Project by running the crowdfunding campaign via Pozible, a crowdfunding website. Deakin University filmed a video for the Pozible

website with the project worker and promoted it extensively across its networks. Deakin University provided the Seeking Refuge Project with suggestions on promoting the campaign through its networks. The campaign received good coverage in the local press.

The campaign was “all or nothing” – this meant that if the target amount of \$70,000 was not raised by the campaign’s last date, any money raised would be returned to the respective donors. This saw donations increase in the last few days of the campaign as publicity increased and donors realised how close they were to reaching the target.

Incentives were offered to prospective donors, e.g. a recipe collection from asylum seekers for donations of \$5 or more. The crowdfunding campaign is explained in depth on the Pozible website: <https://pozible.com/project/205505>. The campaign raised \$81,593 in one month.

Morning tea to celebrate successful crowd funding campaign for interpreters to support the project





Barwon Community Legal Service contribution

Barwon Community Legal Service contributed to the Seeking Refuge Project by paying for the telephone interpreters used during initial interviews with the clients, stationery, printing and copying and the provision of physical space and resources for the project to operate. It continues to support clients who have ongoing queries.

Volunteer Recruitment and Training

Recruitment

The Seeking Refuge Project required two categories of volunteers - Administrative Volunteers and Migration Agents.

The Administrative Volunteers' role was to initiate contact with the client, book and attend their initial appointment, complete their Freedom of Information and extension of time request and then pre-fill their visa application form with information obtained from both the client and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection through the Freedom of Information request. The Administrative Volunteer cannot, by law, give any information that is deemed to be migration advice.

The Administrative Volunteers also attends the Department of Immigration and Border Protection interview if requested by the client.

The Migration Agents' role was to provide advice to the client at their initial interview, prepare their protection claim in the form of a Statutory Declaration and finalise their protection visa application for submission.

The position descriptions and registration forms for both roles were adapted for the Seeking Refuge Project from those used by Refugee Legal.

The roles were advertised through the following mediums:

- Volunteering Geelong website
- Barwon Community Legal Service website, Facebook and Twitter pages
- Deakin University Job Shop website
- Seeking Refuge Project email networks
- Barwon Community Legal Service waiting list volunteers
- All legal firms in Geelong
- Word-of-mouth

All applications were reviewed by the project worker and Bellarine for Refugees members and suitable candidates were invited to a group interview.

During the interview process, the respective roles were explained and the candidates were asked to complete a questionnaire.

The candidates were then asked the questions at random. Following the interviews, the candidates' applications and responses were reviewed and reference checks were conducted. Successful candidates were then invited to attend their compulsory training. Completion of training was a condition of becoming a Seeking Refuge Project volunteer.

The Seeking Refuge Project subsequently undertook two further rounds of volunteer recruitment.

Supervision and Insurance

After consultation with Refugee Legal, it was decided that they would provide the initial training for all volunteers.

Seeking Refuge Project Administrative Volunteers were volunteers of both Barwon Community Legal Service and Refugee Legal and therefore covered under their respective professional indemnity insurance.

Refugee Legal supervised the Migration Agents remotely and on-site during their participation in the project. The Migration Agents were

required to name Refugee Legal as their place of voluntary practice on their practising certificates and when registering with the Migration Agents Registration Authority. This would ensure that the volunteers were covered under Refugee Legal's professional indemnity insurance as the principal lawyer. The principal lawyer at Barwon Community Legal Service is not a Migration Agent and is therefore unable to supervise the Migration Agents.

Training

Training for the first group of Administrative Volunteers and Migration Agents was held at Refugee Legal offices. Subsequently, all day training was conducted at Deakin University, Geelong for both Migration Agents and Administrative Volunteers. Deakin University provided a large dividable room which accommodated over 40 volunteers.

Training was delivered by both a Migration Agent and the Volunteer Coordinator from Refugee Legal. Some sessions were conducted with all volunteers and others separately for Migration Agents and Administrative Volunteers.

The Seeking Refuge Project conducted two further rounds of volunteer recruitment with Administrative Volunteer training conducted in Geelong by the project worker for the Seeking Refuge Project and two Bellarine for Refugees members. Migration Agent training was conducted by Refugee Legal in Melbourne.

Additional training was also provided to all volunteers by a representative from Diversitat and two Bellarine for Refugees members on working with clients from diverse backgrounds and interpreters.



*SRP Steering Committee members, L-R Standing: Austin Paterson, Margaret Griffith, Marijana Hawkins, Suresh Ramachandraiah, Linda Budd, Charlie Powles
Seated: Helen Dwyer, Linda Cusworth, Jillian Chapman*

Agreements

Volunteers were required to sign the following documents prior to commencing volunteering:

- Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct
- Barwon Community Legal Service Confidentiality Agreement
- Refugee Legal Confidentiality Agreement
- Relevant Position Description

Administrative Volunteers were also required to undergo a police check paid for by Barwon Community Legal Service.

Lawyers who applied for the Migration Agent role were required to register as Migration Agents. Guidance on the registration process was provided by Refugee Legal and the project worker for the Seeking Refuge Project. The registration process took approximately three months before a lawyer was registered as a Migration Agent.

All volunteers were provided with “shadowing” opportunities at Refugee Legal and the Seeking Refuge Project before they began interviewing clients independently.

Waiting list for volunteers

Volunteers continued to apply for positions after the project was underway. All applicants received a response confirming receipt of their application and were placed on the Seeking Refuge Project waiting list.

Promoting the Project and Client referrals

The Project was promoted throughout the Barwon region by Barwon Community Legal Service, Bellarine for Refugees and Refugee Legal networks.

The main caseworker services for asylum seekers in the region are Red Cross, Diversitat and Life Without Barriers. It was very important to develop and maintain good relationships with these services as they were

the main source of referrals to the Seeking Refuge Project. Representatives from these organisations provided reports or attended project reference group meetings so the Seeking Refuge Project could stay connected with them and try to gauge the number of their clients who had/had not lodged their visa applications.

Client referrals to the Seeking Refuge Project were made via the clients’ caseworkers, clients themselves and referrals from Refugee Legal and Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (when clients were not in the Seeking Refuge Project catchment area). Word of mouth also became a strong promotional tool, as clients regularly referred their friends.

Resource Development

The Seeking Refuge Project used Refugee Legal’s model to administer assistance. Most of the resources for the volunteers were adapted from Refugee Legal’s existing resources and then modified for the Seeking Refuge Project volunteers.

The Seeking Refuge Project operational model

Volunteering opportunities

Seeking Refuge Project volunteering opportunities were provided to all volunteers via email.

Volunteer logins and printing

Volunteers were provided with specific logins at Barwon Community Legal Service to allow them to access only the Seeking Refuge Project resources and no other files of Barwon Community Legal Service. This ensured the security of the service and the confidentiality of all Barwon Community Legal Service clients including Seeking Refuge Project clients.

Volunteers were provided with printing cards that were also their logins for the day.

The logins were linked to the Barwon Community Legal Service printer and ensured that the volunteer only printed their own documents (which also avoided paper waste).

Client Interaction Plan

This document details the Seeking Refuge Project process. This Seeking Refuge Project model was developed for volunteers so all the required steps would be followed when assisting a client with their application.

See Appendix 1 for the Client Interaction Plan.

Booking system

Clients requiring assistance from the Seeking Refuge Project contacted Barwon Community Legal Service reception and were placed on the Seeking Refuge Project waiting list. It listed all clients who contacted the service and was color coded in the following way:

- No highlight with black text – clients who required a pre-clinic appointment;
- No highlight with green text – clients waiting for their Freedom of Information documents;
- Yellow highlighted clients – applications were being pre-filled;
- Green highlighted clients – had attended a clinic appointment and finalised their applications;
- Red highlighted clients – had decided to use a private migration agent or were eligible for Primary Application Information Service funding.

Conflict Checks

New clients were conflict checked by Refugee Legal before they could be seen, as the Seeking Refuge Project clients were not part of the Barwon Community Legal Service database and not supervised by the Barwon Community Legal Service principal lawyer.

The client's name, date of birth and Boat ID were emailed to Refugee Legal each time a new client was placed on the list and Refugee

Legal would advise the Seeking Refuge Project whether there were any conflicts. No conflicts arose and all clients who approached the Seeking Refuge Project were assisted.

Pre-Clinic appointment

Once there were clients on the waiting list, a pre-clinic appointment was arranged. An administrative volunteer and a migration agent were required for the appointment so an email was sent to all volunteers providing them with the appointment time. Once volunteers were engaged, the appointment was confirmed with the client and an email confirmation was sent to the volunteers.

During the appointment the:

- Migration Agent advised the client about the available visas;
- Administrative Volunteer completed the Freedom of Information and extension letter requests and mailed them on the client's behalf to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection;
- The client was provided with "homework sheets" to complete detailing previous addresses, employment (dates and addresses of employers), education and details of family members such as dates of birth and addresses etc. This information was required in English for the application and may cover the last 30 years of the client's life.

The project worker supervised the Administrative Volunteers and coordinated the appointments with remote supervision provided by Refugee Legal for the Migration Agents.

Pre-filling the Application

Volunteer space

Ideally, Administrative Volunteers worked in the project room at the Barwon Community Legal Service office when pre-filling. The benefit of volunteers working together in the same space was that they could assist each other

when required. This provided support and reassurance, particularly for new volunteers.

When the project room was unavailable, the volunteers sat next to each other at the volunteer desks where other Barwon Community Legal Service volunteers were located.

When a client received their Freedom of Information CD, they would bring it into the office and an email was sent to all Administrative Volunteers to determine who was available to pre-fill a visa application. The Administrative Volunteer then pre-filled the client's visa application by using the Freedom of Information documents and later confirmed the contents with the client.

Specific concerns or missing information were highlighted by the Administrative Volunteer in a file note as items to be clarified or followed up by the Migration Agent on the Clinic Day when there was an interpreter present.

Research for information into the country of origin of the client may also need to be undertaken by the Administrative Volunteer.

The project worker coordinated and supervised the Administrative Volunteers during their pre-filling and file work. Refugee Legal was available by phone for migration advice if needed. It is important to note that the Administrative Volunteers are not Migration Agents, however, they were allowed to pre-fill the applications as they were reviewed by a Migration Agent prior to lodgment.

Pre-filling procedure

While this was covered during training, the project worker would briefly go over the points with each administrative volunteer prior to them commencing the pre-filling:

- Demonstrating where electronic resources/files were kept
- Accessing the pre-filling guides

- Following the client interaction steps
- Completing a form 790/866 and attachments
- How to organise a file
- Writing a file note
- The process for confirming the accuracy of the contents of the pre-filled application with the client
- Clarifying information contained in the file notes where possible
- Preparing the client for the clinic.

The volunteers used checklists and relevant resources during the appointment. On completion, the project worker reviewed the pre-filled forms to ensure there were no unanswered questions, reviewed the file to ensure it was in the appropriate order and contained all required file notes (outlining any communication undertaken) and if necessary, a time was organised for the Administrative Volunteer to continue working on the file. If further work was required on the file prior to the clinic, the project worker would inform the Administrative Volunteer to complete this or if no Administrative Volunteers were available, the project worker would action this prior to the clinic.

A Bellarine for Refugees member was always available to volunteers as support during the pre-filling.

Clinic Day

Clinic opportunities were emailed to volunteers as soon as dates were confirmed with Refugee Legal. Migration Agents and Administrative Volunteers confirmed their availability to attend via return email. A draft roster was created and sent to all relevant volunteers via email.

Prior to the clinic day, volunteers were sent numerous emails to assist with the preparation including resources and de-identified client summaries and country information on their client's country/countries of origin.

Onsite interpreters were booked at least two weeks prior to the clinic. Clients were asked for their preferred language and the preferred gender of the interpreter.

Clinics took place on Saturdays at the Barwon Community Legal Service office. The project worker, a member from Bellarine for Refugees and a Refugee Legal supervisor were always present throughout the entire clinic day. Saturdays were preferred to Sundays due to the lower cost of interpreters and availability of volunteers.

Lunch and snacks were provided for clients, volunteers and interpreters.

It was occasionally necessary to provide entertainment for children who had accompanied their parents to the clinic.

Attendance at the clinic for clients and volunteers was from seven to ten hours duration depending on the complexity of the protection claim.

The Migration Agent prepared the client's protection claims in a statutory declaration and confirmed that all the information in the application was correct. The application was then finalised and ready for submission.

Copies of the application were made. One was for the file and one for the client as well as a scanned copy for the client's electronic file.

An Administrative Volunteer provided support to the Migration Agent throughout the day. Refugee Legal provided onsite supervision and carefully oversaw each application

Volunteer Debriefing

Volunteers were provided with the opportunity to attend voluntary group debriefing sessions provided by the previous principal social worker at Barwon Community Legal Service. The social worker has an abundance of experience and knowledge in providing counselling services and has worked at Refugee Legal providing debriefing sessions for case lawyers.

The Seeking Refuge Project also provided volunteers with access to the Employee Assistance Program. This is a remote debriefing service for volunteers.

Providing volunteers with these opportunities was imperative to ensure they were looked after and felt comfortable working in this often stressful environment.

Catchment area

Seeking Refuge Project expanded its catchment area from the Barwon region to the Western Suburbs of Melbourne in early 2017 following the decrease of referrals from the Barwon region. The initial prediction of approximately 300 asylum seekers living in the Barwon region was based on numbers from the casework service providers in late 2015. As asylum seekers move around for employment and education, it was inevitable that the numbers varied. As the project increased in capacity, it opened up the catchment area to the Western Suburbs of Melbourne and accepted referrals from Refugee Legal and Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.

Additional Tasks

Volunteer and Donor newsletters

Newsletters were prepared for Seeking Refuge Project volunteers and donors to keep them updated on the progress and successes of the project.

See Appendix 2 for an example of the newsletter.

Client Queries

Clients who attended the office with questions and letters would be seen by the project worker when a volunteer was not available. It was important to ensure that urgent client enquiries were looked after immediately. If there was not a deadline, the matter would be attended to by a volunteer within a few days.



Duo back migrant fundraiser

BIG GIVERS: Lino Bisinella, Marijana Graljuk of the Barwon Community Legal Service, and Frank Costa are helping fund interpreters for refugees.
Picture: GLENN FERDINON

Speaking up for refugees

GREG DUNDAS

Two of Geelong's most successful and wealthy families have opened their wallets and their hearts to refugees that settle in the region.

Just days after migration Minister Peter Dutton controversially voiced concerns that unskilled and illiterate English-speaking refugees would be "taking Australian jobs", Frank Costa and Lino Bisinella have pledged their support to help asylum seekers in the best possible way. Their families have each donated \$10,000 or more towards funding

a campaign that will provide 150 refugees settling in Geelong with an interpreter to help them complete protection visa applications.

The men, both of Italian extraction, said they wanted to give other migrant families — whatever country they came from — the best chance to succeed in Australia.

"My family has prospered in this country because of the opportunity our forefathers — my grandparents — were given, so therefore it made sense we should try to help other people get a similar opportunity," fruit and footy mogul Mr Costa said.

There were 10 Bisinellas — including nine-year-old Lino — on boats that came to Australia in the early 1950s, not one of them able to speak English.

Despite the difficulties, his parents found work on market gardens west of Melbourne and Lino later graduated from plasterer to influential property developer.

"When you know where you come from and you never forget where you come from you realise these people (today's refugees) are worse off than us when they arrive here," he said. "These people need our support. Who (else) have they got?"

Deakin University is

behind the Seeking Refuge Project along with Bellarine for Refugees, Barwon Community Legal Service, the Wesley Centre for Life Enrichment, Diversitat, the Combined Refugee Action Group Geelong, Refugee Legal and the Asylum Seekers Resource Centre.

The project's aim of raising \$70,000 for interpreter services by the end of May was given a significant boost by the Costa and Bisinella families, with more than \$51,000 now pledged.

Project co-ordinator and lawyer Marijana Graljuk —

herself a refugee to Australia as a child in the early 1990s — said the money was welcome.

She said protection visas were complex documents, and face-to-face contact with an interpreter was often needed to complete them.

"It's incredibly important. Without an interpreter it's very difficult to do. The interpreter provides them with a voice," she said.

Mr Costa described Mr Dutton's comments this week as "foolish", saying it was better to welcome refugees and provide them

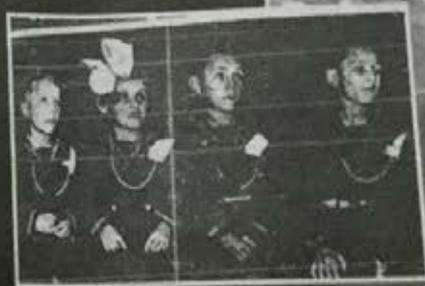
with support than demonise them.

"They've come here under great hardship, had to flee the country of their origin, so they're very insecure people in some cases," he said.

"If they get a bit of warmth in the welcome it would mean enormous things to their feeling of self worth and self confidence to work hard, establish an opportunity for their children.

"It's very important to get this help."

To donate, visit pozible.com/seekingrefuge



It was important to the Seeking Refuge Project that clients felt comfortable making contact with enquires so they were then less anxious during the application process. If the Seeking Refuge Project could make clients feel less stressed about dealing with their legal issues, then engagement and time spent with clients became more productive.

Client files

The client files were kept in red manila folders. Active files were stored in a filing cabinet next to the project workers desk.

Administrative Volunteers who pre-filled the client's application were generally responsible for managing the clients file until it was handed over for the clinic. The project worker supervised the files whilst the administrative volunteer worked on them, and ensured they were stored chronologically and kept secure.

Closed files were stored in other filing cabinets.

The files were composed in the following way, starting from the back of the file (stored in plastic pockets):

- Pre-clinic: includes copies of Freedom of Information and extension of time requests.
- Miscellaneous: copies of letters the client received from Department of Immigration and Border Protection, bridging visas etc.
- FOI: FOI CD and print out of all the clients FOI documents.
- Identity docs: any ID the client provided.
- CLINIC: resources for volunteers for the clinic.
- The rest of the file consisted of loose leaf file notes and all other correspondence (including pre-clinic file notes, checklists, bar lift letter) which were kept in chronological order.

Post – clinic assistance

The aim of the Seeking Refuge Project was to assist clients to complete their protection visa applications, however, as the project progressed many clients required assistance with post-clinic tasks such as:

- Providing responses to further queries from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection; and
- Attending Department of Immigration and Border Protection Interviews.

The Seeking Refuge Project had decided to offer further assistance to clients by providing them with the option of an administrative volunteer who can accompany them to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection interview as a support person. Under no circumstances could the administrative volunteer speak on the client's behalf.

Volunteers were provided with an information sheet called "Department Interview Information sheet" and \$40 from the Seeking Refuge Project to cover the cost of travel and coffee for the client afterwards. Volunteers were also briefed by the project worker and a Bellarine for Refugees member prior to attending the interview.

Project Outcomes so far

Seeking Refuge Project has assisted 76 clients with preparing their protection visa applications.

The outcome of the application is given directly to the client and at the time of finalising this report, the Seeking Refuge Project had received advice from 11 clients that they had been successful in obtaining protection visas. The Department of Immigration and Border Protection is continuing the process of assessing the remaining applications.

The Seeking Refuge Project continues to offer assistance to clients by accompanying them to Department of Immigration and Border Protection interviews and clarifying and addressing issues raised in additional correspondence from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

The project gained interest from the media, including the local paper, the Geelong Advertiser, which published an article during the crowdfunding campaign in April 2016. The project was also presented at the National Association of Community Legal Centres Conference in Fremantle in August 2016. The Law Institute of Victoria also published an online article in the Young Lawyers Journal in February

Stage 1 of the Seeking Refuge Project is coming to an end while the function, form and required outcomes of Stage 2 of the project are still being planned.

For further details, please contact: Barwon Community Legal Service 1300 430 599

Prepared by:

Marijana Graljuk Hawkins, Seeking Refuge Project Worker and Lawyer

Helen Dwyer, Project Reference Group and Bellarine for Refugees member and Seeking Refuge Project Volunteer



Some of our fabulous volunteers at a training workshop



Acknowledgements

This project has succeeded because it has been a true collaboration of many people. We would like to make particular mention of the following:

Lino & Marina Bisinella and Family

Frank & Shirley Costa and Family

Deakin University

Professor Jane den Hollander

The RE Ross Trust

The SRP Steering Committee

Barwon Community Legal Service

Bellarine for Refugees

Combined Refugee Action Group

Diversitat

Refugee Legal

Wesley Centre for Life Enrichment

Project Volunteers (Administrative)

Amy Stagg

Austin Paterson

Babita Chawla

Chloe Taylor

Chris Brydon

Christine Hodgson

Claire Menzel

Colin Bridges

Deanne Woodman

Drita Halimi

Emily Fraser

Emma Cvitak

Gosia Bucki-Smith

Guo Chengo Ho

Helen Brereton

Helen Dwyer

Joan Gill

Jovita Protacio

Julia Lamb

Julia Pritchard

Karen Agudelo

Kath Welch

Liz Flynn

Luke Smith

Lynne Knight

Mandy Bridges

Mandy Kennedy

Margaret Griffith

Marlo Drake-Bemelmans

Miriam Williams

Mitchell Ryan

Rosemary Billings

Sarah Minter

Sascha Davies

Stephen Chen

Suvini Dissanayake

Yaseen Tiry

Project Volunteers (Migration Agents)

Andrew Alexander

Arwinder Singh

Bianca Sealey

Corinne Grant

Deanne Woodman

Ella Vines

Jane Elliot

Joseph Messina

Kate Fitzgerald

Katie Batty

Lee Bolton

Lydia De Raad

Mark Henricks

Mark Sehler

Naomi Kinsella

Oz Ozturk

Sandra Kerr

Victor Galaz

And everyone who generously donated to the Seeking Refuge crowd funding campaign or supported the project in any way.



Output from a single workshop – 1.75 kg of paper, 350 pages, over 500 questions answered, 4 applications submitted, 14 people helped

Appendix 1 – Client Interaction Plan

STEP	FUNCTION	IN ATTENDANCE	RESOURCES	TIME
1	<p>INITIAL ENQUIRY</p> <p>I. Initial call; obtain contact details and client placed on waiting list.</p> <p>II. If the client is a referral from Refugee Legal, please follow this checklist: “instructions for opening a file referred from Refugee Legal” and then skip to Step 6: X:\Seeking Refuge\PRE-FILLING APPLICATIONS.</p>	<p>Barwon Community Legal Service Receptionist</p> <p>No supervision required</p>	<p>Interpreter</p> <p>“New CLINIC Booking” spreadsheet</p>	5min
2	<p>BOOKING PRE-CLINIC APPOINTMENT</p> <p>I. AV goes through file note for pre-clinic appointment X:\Seeking Refuge\PRE-CLINIC APPOINTMENT CALL.</p> <p>II. If client eligible, an appointment is made. Ask Marijana for text message reminder to be sent.</p> <p>III. If client not eligible: can provide client with “referral sheets: X:\Seeking Refuge\PRE-CLINIC APPOINTMENT\Referrals.</p>	<p>Admin Volunteer</p> <p>Supervision: ask Marijana</p>	<p>File note</p> <p>Phone</p> <p>Interpreter</p>	15min

STEP	FUNCTION	IN ATTENDANCE	RESOURCES	TIME
3	<p>PRE-CLINIC SESSIONS</p> <p>Admin Volunteer:</p> <p>I. Use Guide for Admin Volis pre-clinic appointment: X:\Seeking Refugee\PRE- CLINIC APPOINTMENT\Admin docs and tick off as you go and write file note from session if anything else is done that is not specified in the guide.</p> <p>II. Enquire re FOI.</p> <p>a. If FOI hasn't been submitted (Form 424A) is completed and submitted: X:\Seeking Refugee\PRE-CLINIC APPOINTMENT\Admin docs.</p> <p>b. Client is advised to provide FOI to the project worker once they receive it.</p> <p>c. If client brings in an FOI disc – please save the contents in the client's folder, creating a folder called "FOI": X:\Seeking Refugee\CLIENTS.</p> <p>Check the contents of the FOI (refer to document called "tips for assessing FOI documents". If the FOI is incomplete, complete step a (Above).</p> <p>d. Charlie can check the FOI via drop box – please tell me and I can send it to him, but it must be saved in the clients electronic file first.</p> <p>iii. Extension of time request for visa application is made: X:\Seeking Refugee\PRE-CLINIC APPOINTMENT\Admin docs\Extension letters: 'Pro forma client letter to Department of Immigration and Border Protection'</p> <p>e. If more than 2 months has passed since the extension of time request was sent, send another extension request. Precedent in X:\Seeking Refugee\PRE- CLINIC APPOINTMENT\Admin docs\Extension letters\Ext Letter Variations</p>	<p>Admin volunteer</p> <p>Registered Migration Agent</p> <p>Professional and registered interpreter accessed via phone</p> <p>Private interview rooms needed.</p> <p>Refugee Legal supervisor is on call</p>	<p>Photocopier</p> <p>Computer</p> <p>Paper file</p> <p>Access to Refugee Legal supervisor</p>	<p>1-2 hrs</p>

STEP	FUNCTION	IN ATTENDANCE	RESOURCES	TIME
3 contd	<p>III. Attachment form to be provided to client (family, previous travel, work, study): X:\Seeking Refuge\PRE- CLINIC APPOINTMENT\Admin docs\Attachments.</p> <p>IV. Take copies (paper and electronic) of all documents provided, and create electronic client file (client's copy is returned to client). If computer file already created, then skip this step.</p> <p>V. FOI and extension letter copies are to be placed in 'pre-clinic' pocket and the 'Admin Volunteer' and 'Migration Agent' folders removed. Loose paperwork to be placed in reverse chronological order in the file.</p> <p>VI. File to be placed securely back in Seeking Refuge Project file filing cabinet.</p> <p>Migration Agent:</p> <p>IX. Complete MA volunteer checklist X:\Seeking Refuge\PRE-CLINIC APPOINTMENT\Migration Agent docs.</p> <p>X. Advise client regarding information on TPV/SHEV's and provide them with the fact sheets provided in the plastic pocket. X:\Seeking Refuge\PRE-CLINIC APPOINTMENT\Migration Agent docs\Fact Sheets.</p> <p>If no copies are provided in the Client's chosen language, ask the AV to print them. X:\Seeking Refuge\PRE-CLINIC APPOINTMENT\Migration Agent docs\Fact Sheets\Bi-Lingual Fact Sheets.</p> <p>XI. Application process is explained.</p> <p>XII. Provide client with a copy of the 'Identity Documents' Fact Sheet (available in C's chosen language if needed): X:\Seeking Refuge\PRE-CLINIC APPOINTMENT\Migration Agent docs\Identity documents.</p> <p>XIII. Provides client with "translation referral sheet for clients" X:\Seeking Refuge\PRE- CLINIC APPOINTMENT\Migration Agent docs.</p> <p>XIV. Refuge\PRE-CLINIC APPOINTMENT\Referrals.</p> <p>XV. Financial capacity is assessed, if not eligible for this service (there is not a "cut off" point specifically – ask Marijana before referring it) refer out and provide referral lists we have.</p> <p>XVI. Ask client to sign 'Consent to Notify Department of Immigration and Border Protection that Refugee Legal assisting to lodge X:\Seeking Refuge\PRE-CLINIC APPOINTMENT\Migration Agent docs.</p>			

STEP	FUNCTION	IN ATTENDANCE	RESOURCES	TIME
4	<p>WHEN FOI IS RECEIVED</p> <p>I. AV calls Client and confirms whether C has seen a lawyer since FOI lodgement? If yes - we cannot assist.</p> <p>II. File note must be completed.</p> <p>III. If client still wants our assistance, go to step 5.</p> <p>IV. Ask Client to bring in their FOI Disc as soon as possible. They can just drop it off at reception – we save electronic copy and return FOI CD to client.</p>	Admin Volunteer	<p>Paper file</p> <p>Phone</p> <p>Computer</p> <p>File note</p>	15mins
5	<p>CONTACTING Department of Immigration and Border Protection TO CHECK ON FOI</p> <p>I. If it has been more than 30 days since the FOI request has been sent and the client still hasn't received it – advise client to call or email Department of Immigration and Border Protection and ask them to let us know the result. Refer to X:\Seeking Refugee\FOI Help\Contacting FOI Office</p> <p>II. If it has been more than 2 months since we sent an extension letter request, get client's consent to send a further extension letter. You can tweak the precedent depending on what FOI said "Letter to Department of Immigration and Border Protection FOI docs" - X:\Seeking Refugee\PRE-CLINIC APPOINTMENT\Admin docs\Extension letters\Ext Letter Variations.</p>		<p>Paper file</p> <p>Phone</p> <p>Computer</p> <p>File note</p>	20mins

STEP	FUNCTION	IN ATTENDANCE	RESOURCES	TIME
6	<p>PRE-FILLING TPV AND SHEV BY ADMIN VOLUNTEER</p> <p>(Client is not present at this stage)</p> <p>I) If not already completed, save the FOI CD into the clients file and print out a copy of ALL the contents of the FOI CD. Place contents in the plastic pocket labelled "FOI".</p> <p>II) Save a copy of the Form 866 into the clients electronic file and name it: X:\Seeking Refuge\PRE-FILLING APPLICATIONS\Forms.</p> <p>III) Use Form 866 checklist to assist with pre-filling the form and attachments: X:\SeekingRefuge\PRE-FILLING APPLICATIONS\Pre-filing guide.</p> <p>IV) Visa application is pre-filled:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Information is taken from FOI information. b. File note to be completed, noting any inconsistencies between FOI material and information client has provided us and any missing information/queries <p>V) If the client has not returned the 'Attachments" sheet within 3 weeks, please follow up on this and get them to return ASAP. You MUST have the attachments pre-filled before the clinic day. If the Client is struggling to fill it out please advise Marijana.</p>	<p>Admin volunteer</p> <p>Refugee Legal supervisor available if needed(via phone)</p>	<p>Computer access</p> <p>Phone</p> <p>Paper file</p> <p>Photocopier</p> <p>Access to Refugee Legal supervisor</p>	<p>4-8hrs</p>

STEP	FUNCTION	IN ATTENDANCE	RESOURCES	TIME
7	<p>CONFIRMATION OF PRE-FILLED FORM BY ADMIN VOLUNTEER</p> <p>I) Call the client to come into office to confirm pre-filled visa application with them (this is the preferred option). If the client cannot come in, do it over the phone.</p> <p>a. File note to be completed, noting any new information and outcomes of the inconsistencies and queries noted whilst pre- filling, AS WELL AS EVERYTHING YOU DISCUSSED DURING THE APPOINTMENT.</p> <p>b. Remind client to ensure they have relevant NAATI translated identity documents and bring them to the clinic appointment. (Check with Charlie what documents are relevant; particularly where clients have a lot of identity documents) OR copy and ask lawyer to certify ID docs for clinic.</p> <p>II) Appointment is made for clinic attendance with Migration Agent – use file note for clinic appointment: X:\Seeking Refugee\PRE-FILLING APPLICATIONS\File Note for Clinic App call.</p> <p>III) Prepare a de-identified client summary sheet for the Migration Agent using Client summary template: X:\Seeking Refugee\PRE-FILLING APPLICATIONS\Client Summary Template.</p> <p>IV) Send client letter confirming their client appointment: 'Client letter clinic appointment confirmation' X:\Seeking Refugee\PRE-FILLING APPLICATIONS\Confirmation of appointment letter.</p> <p>V) Please provide the de-identified client summary sheet to Marijana so she can pass it onto the Migration Agent in preparation for the clinic. This should be saved in the client's computer file.</p> <p>VI) Prepare the file for the CLINIC appointment using "Instructions on preparing a file for the clinic this guide": X:\Seeking Refugee\PRE-FILLING APPLICATIONS.</p>	<p>Admin volunteer</p> <p>Professional and registered interpreter must be present/ accessed via phone for task IV</p> <p>Refugee Legal supervisor available if needed (via phone)</p>	<p>Computer access</p> <p>Paper file</p> <p>Photocopier</p> <p>Access to Refugee Legal supervisor</p>	<p>2hrs</p>

STEP	FUNCTION	IN ATTENDANCE	RESOURCES	TIME
8	<p>CLINIC DAY</p> <p>I. MA: use migration agent checklist during clinic: X:\Seeking Refugee\CLINIC APPOINTMENT\ Docs for Migration Agent.</p> <p>II. MA: Prepare Statement of Claim. Refer to sample statutory declaration: X:\Seeking Refugee\ CLINIC APPOINTMENT\Docs for Migration Agent; AND Refugee Legal Client Statement guide X:\Seeking Refugee\CLINIC.</p> <p>III. MA: Check inconsistencies of visa application form and refer to file note from admin volunteer to assist.</p> <p>IV. MA: Check accuracy of prefilled application form.</p> <p>V. AV: Client to provide Attachments. (If client hasn't already, then you need to assist the client in completing this ASAP). X:\Seeking Refugee\PRE-CLINIC APPOINTMENT\Migration Agent docs\Attachments.</p> <p>VI. AV: Client to provide NAATI translated identity documents. Confirm with the client what they are and that they are genuine. Please colour copy and get a lawyer to certify them.</p> <p>VII. File note is created from clinic outlining what occurred during clinic.</p>	<p>Migration Agent</p> <p>Professional and registered interpreter must be present for entire interview</p> <p>RILC supervisor must be on site</p> <p>Admin Assistant</p>	<p>Onsite interpreter</p> <p>Paper file</p> <p>Private interview rooms</p> <p>Computer and phone</p>	<p>Up to 8-10 hours)</p>
9	<p>SUBMISSION</p> <p>I. 2 X Copies of Visa application are taken of the original application (1 for file and 1 for client).</p> <p>II. Complete client cover letter and get supervisor to sign it. X:\Seeking Refugee\CLINIC APPOINTMENT.</p> <p>III. Use addressed A3 registered post envelope and place original application in envelope. We can lodge the application, however the client can decide. If client lodging, advise the registered post envelope needs to be submitted over the counter at the post office.</p>	<p>– Migration Agent</p> <p>– Professional and registered interpreter must be present for entire interview</p> <p>– Refugee Legal supervisor must be on site</p> <p>– Admin Assistant</p>	<p>– Onsite interpreter</p> <p>– Paper file</p> <p>– Private interview rooms</p> <p>– Computer and phone</p>	<p>30mins</p>

STEP	FUNCTION	IN ATTENDANCE	RESOURCES	TIME
10	<p>POST CLINIC</p> <p>I) If the Client we assisted at the Clinic receives a request from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection to provide any documents, we can assist them.</p> <p>II) Read the letter to the client (via interpreter) so they understand what the Department of Immigration and Border Protection want.</p> <p>III) Check what documents are required and speak to Marijana or Charlie about whether we need to provide them (i.e. if we have already provided them to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection).</p> <p>IV) Get any documents certified (if needed) & attach a cover letter. (X:\Seeking Refuge\POST-CLINIC)</p> <p>V) You must show Marijana any documents before you send them.</p> <p>VI) Read the cover letter to the client with an interpreter and get client to sign it.</p> <p>VII) Please send this via registered post.</p> <p>REQUEST TO ATTEND INTERVIEW</p> <p>I) If the client is invited to attend an interview, advise the client that we may be able to provide a 'support person' who can attend the interview with them but cannot speak on their behalf. If they want a lawyer to go with them they will need to seek private assistance. Provide them with referral details: X:\Seeking Refuge\POST- CLINIC\Interview\Interview Fact Sheet.</p> <p>a. Please see "Department Interview Information Sheet": X:\Seeking Refuge\POST-CLINIC\Interview</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Admin Volunteer - Client - Interpreter (Via phone) - Refugee Legal supervisor (on –call) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Computer - Paper file 	1hr

Seeking Refuge Project - Volunteer News

Hello to all our amazing Seeking Refuge Project volunteers!

Firstly, we would like to extend a **THANK YOU** for your recent efforts and commitment to the project.

To date, we have finalised 51 protection claims! This could not have been possible without 43 Administrative Assistants and 15 Migration Agents!

We also have 5 clients who have been successfully granted the SHEV 5-year Protection Visa! How wonderful is that?

October 1 Deadline

As many of you may have heard, Immigration Minister Peter Dutton has declared that all Asylum Seekers must apply for their protection visa by **1st October 2017**.

If they fail to do so, they risk not only being cut off from government payments, but also being barred from

applying for protection, deported and banned from re-entering Australia.

This decision comes in the midst of claims that many of the unauthorised maritime arrivals currently living in Australia have not yet proven themselves to be refugees and have, therefore, not demonstrated why they are owed protection by Australia.

What does the October 1 deadline mean for SRP?

This decision does not mean the project will be ending on October 1. We will keep you updated on the project's progress. For now, business as usual!

It does however mean that now, more than ever, we need your assistance! Leading up to the deadline, we will be operating in full force to get as many Visa applications submitted as possible.

Clinic Dates

The following dates are for our upcoming clinics:

- 24 June
- 29 July
- 26 August
- 23 September

Please let Marijana know via email if you are available to assist on any of these dates.

Please also be on the lookout for emails from Marijana with upcoming volunteering opportunities you can get involved in!

Catchment Areas

We have extended our catchment area to include the outer western suburbs of Melbourne that are within relative distance to Geelong such as Hoppers Crossing, Werribee and St Albans. We are also accepting referrals from Refugee Legal from within this catchment area.



DEBRIEFING SESSION

Working with refugees often means you hear stories of people's experience of war, loss, grief, torture and trauma, difficult migration journeys and specific challenges settling in Australia. These stories can negatively impact on your sleeping patterns; emotional wellbeing; family and social relationships and your trust in humanity.

Debriefing provides a safe and confidential space to speak about the different and individual impact/s of the work. Dr Lee Fitzroy Lee, our previous social worker, has an abundance of experience and knowledge in providing counselling services and has worked at Refugee Legal providing debriefing sessions for case lawyers.

Lee will be providing a **FREE optional group debriefing session at our office on 27 September 2017 at 5:30pm**

Please feel free to speak to Marijana in between sessions if you need to.



If you can't attend a debriefing session or would prefer to chat with someone over the phone, please contact the Employee Assistance program **FREE** of charge on **1300 361 008** and say that you are a volunteer of the Barwon Community Legal Service.



When volunteering for SRP remember:

👉 **Project volunteers are ALL equal**

👉 **Work together:** The best part of volunteering for a project like this is the opportunity to work with likeminded people!

👉 **Ask questions:** Don't be afraid to ask Marijana or other volunteers if you're ever unsure of anything.

👉 **Lanyards:** Please remember to wear your lanyards, located in reception.

👉 **Supervisor:** The Refugee Legal supervisor for the project is Charlie Powles from Refugee Legal. Contact Charlie if you have any questions that the project worker can't answer.

👉 **Take breaks:** If you're hungry, thirsty or whenever you need to break up the task you're completing, please do so!

Contacts:

Marijana Graljuk
seekingrefuge@barwoncls.org.au
1300 430 599

Charlie Powles
charlie@refugeelegal.org.au
9413 0105

Refugee Legal:
Defending the rights of refugees.

Feedback

Comments or questions about this report and project are welcome and should be directed to:

Seeking Refuge Project

Marijana Graljuk Hawkins

Barwon Community Legal Service

Level 1, 63 Thomson Street

Belmont VIC 3216

e: seekingrefuge@barwoncls.org.au

p: 03 5221 4744

www.barwoncls.org.au