



Changemakers Australia

NEWS

Spring 2008 Edition

Annual General Meeting

The Chair of Changemakers Australia, Mary Crooks, invites you to the AGM on Wednesday 26th November.

We are very pleased to announce that Heather Gray (Partner, Holding Redlich) has agreed to address the audience and further elaborate on the Women Lawyers' case which she briefly spoke on at the Advocacy workshop. After the resoundingly positive feedback from the workshop we look forward to enjoying a definitive analysis of the case, and the opportunity to understand the implications for our own work.

Where: Foyer of 201 Spring Street, Melbourne
When: 4:30pm, Wednesday 26/11/08
RSVP: Wednesday 12/11/08
Email: info@changemakers.org.au

New Changemakers Australia **brochures** are now available. Please contact Nina at info@changemakers.org.au if you would like some sent out to you.



Welcome to this CMA Newsletter. After a slow year things are gaining momentum once again, with the upcoming AGM, strategic planning day, new brochures and an updated website.

Nina Collins

Advocacy Workshop report

Seventy people attended the very successful CMA Advocacy workshop in July. The workshop centred around the central role advocacy plays in achieving change and discussing what philanthropy can and can't do in relation to advocacy.

Speakers were:

Mark Dreyfus QC MP, Chair, House of Representatives Standing Committee for Legal & Constitutional Affairs

Heather Gray, Partner, Holding Redlich

Gina Anderson, CEO Philanthropy Australia

Christine Edwards, CEO, The Myer Foundation;

Cath Smith, CEO, Victorian Council Of Social Services;

Teresa Zolnierkiewicz, Head of Philanthropy Partners, ANZ Trustees;

Annette McKail, Research & Policy Officer, Refugee Council of Australia;

David Craig, CEO, Action for Community Living.

Advocacy by the charitable sector is important to the democratic process. It allows for the representation and empowerment of those who might otherwise be excluded.

Mark Dreyfus QC MP

The CMA Committee of Management are meeting on November 25th for a **Strategic Planning Day** to ensure a bumper year ahead. Your comments and ideas for future workshops and other events are warmly welcomed.

Refugee Policy and Advocacy Project

From 2002 - 2005, the Reichstein Foundation, in collaboration with private donors, contributed \$55,000.00 to the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) for their - *Refugee Policy and Advocacy Project*. This project was funded to combat the following social and structural issues faced by asylum seekers and refugees in Victoria.

The main aim of the project was to appoint a Victorian based Research and Policy Officer, whose role was to act as a focal point for the Council in Victoria and to meet the following objectives:

- Resource Victorian-based agencies working with refugees and asylum seekers
- Ensure that Victorian refugee issues were identified and taken to appropriate state or national fora
- Empower Victorian-based organisations to advocate on issues of concern to them
- Support development of refugee communities in Victoria
- Develop capacity of refugee organisations and communities to build partnerships and improve communication across the sector
- Strengthen RCOA's role as the peak national refugee organisation



Project Outcomes Included:

- Increased community education and consciousness raising
- Established stakeholder alliances and networks
- Assistance for asylum seekers denied the right to work
- Systematic changes in access to health services for asylum seekers
- All activities involved with resourcing the sector are continuing

- National policy teleconferences have continued to be held monthly involving agencies from across Australia
- RCA is now looking more closely at how they can involve the municipalities around Victoria who signed up to their 'Refugee Welcome Zone' initiative more effectively
- Regular newsletters and email updates are sent out to members of RCOA who are also encouraged to be more active

Navigating Social Change Project reaches trial stage

The *Navigating Social Change* project has been one of the key Changemakers initiatives being developed over 2008. It is based on the premise that evaluating social change projects can be challenging, but that it is vital to do so – in order to improve them, to learn from them and to demonstrate their value. Once completed, it will provide a framework for grantmakers and their grantee partners to measure the social impact of their projects and their philanthropic partnerships. Importantly, it will assist them to explore how the partnership can develop to achieve the long-term change that is sought.

A guide and workbook which use the metaphor of navigating a journey are currently being trialled by several organisations involved in a variety of social and environmental change projects. The workbook takes the organisations through a structured process of planning, monitoring and evaluating their project and is built around four key questions: Should we make this Journey? What is our plan? Are we there yet? What's beyond Journeys end?

The trial phase will be completed by the end of the year, and a series of workshops held over 2009 to introduce grantmakers and grantees to the evaluation tools and how to use them.

By providing the tools to assist funded organisations to assess and document where they got to and what needs to happen next, and to be clear and explicit about what they did and what was achieved on the issues that both they and their funders believe passionately needs to change, Changemakers aims to attract more dollars into social change philanthropy.

Human Rights Review

Even after Cornelia Rau was discovered in Baxter Detention Centre, the Howard government declined to launch an inquiry into immigration detention. In the face of widespread calls for urgent examination of the circumstances under which Australia locks up its most vulnerable, the government's refusal was adamant. So, the Australian Council for Heads of Social Work – headed up by Linda Briskman, Susie Latham and Chris Goddard - launched its own inquiry. They started off small, but word spread quickly, and they gathered many hundreds of submissions from detainees, detention officers, doctors, social workers, psychiatrists, visitors and friends. The People's Inquiry into Detention was born.

This month, the People's Inquiry into Detention launched its report, in the form of a thick, glossy tome entitled *Human Rights Overboard: Seeking Asylum in Australia*. This is it: a book that shines a harsh, white light into the darkest shadows of Australia's system of mandatory detention, from the brazen, sweeping policy assaults to the smallest, most mundane little humiliations.

I have visited people in immigration detention for about six and a half years. I have spent countless hours in these metal and concrete cages, and many more hours consumed with worry for their human contents. How could such horror drift past, unnoticed by everyone except those subjected to it?

The Minister for Immigration, Senator Chris Evans, made a speech on 29 July announcing fundamental changes in detention policy, so welcome that it sent my phone buzzing wildly, and my Facebook wall straining under the weight of exuberant celebratory messages.

However, all is not well. Three months after that speech, and the people I visit are still in detention (except for the one who was deported last month with a bill for \$512,000, including GST, for his detention costs). Another - 2 years in - has taken to what he called "diversion

therapy"; that is, self-harming to take his mind elsewhere. Many have fallen into a hole of disappointment that is much deeper than it was before they were given false hope.

I think we feel suspicious of this announcement, because its consequences are virtually unimaginable. We suspect that Evans is having us on. We are wary of weasel words, and we are not cracking the champagne, lest the devil turn up in the detail. We've seen promises before. We've endured the footnotes, loopholes, qualifications, conditions, exceptions, excuses and manipulations, and we've ended up

back at square one. Now, we're praying for a real change.

It's been a couple of years since we have witnessed publicly the very worst excesses of immigration detention. In recent weeks, we have seen a couple of boats of asylum seekers arrive off the north coast of Australia. They are in an \$800-million detention centre on Christmas Island. Waiting. Who knows how long? The frightening fact is that - despite a moving speech made by the Minister in July - the legislative framework still exists that allowed the High Court in 2004 to find that an innocent man could be kept in administrative detention for the term of his natural life. That law needs to change, and it needs to change yesterday.

This is an edited version of an article by Jessie Taylor soon to be published in Dissent magazine.



Everyday people, Everyday rights Human Rights Conference 09

16 & 17 March 2009, The Melbourne Park Function Centre, Batman Avenue, Melbourne

The call for abstracts for the Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission's Human Rights Conference is open until 3rd of November 2008.

The conference is for people working in public policy and service delivery, human rights advocacy & education, the legal profession and business with a commitment to corporate social responsibility.

The conference will provide a forum for discussion, debate and increased understanding of human rights, with a focus on youth and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities.

Abstract Categories:

- The Achievement of Human Rights: A review of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities and what it has achieved considering Victoria's current state of affairs
- The Experience of Human Rights: Sharing the knowledge and insight of everyday people and their advocates. How do we progress a human rights culture?
- The Business of Human Rights: Practical examples of how incorporating human rights gives companies the competitive edge. An opportunity to showcase the big wins for both business and community when human rights are considered.

For more information, go to www.humanrightsconference.com.au

Join Us

If you are passionate about achieving a more just and equitable society, there are several ways you can join us in determining how social change philanthropy can make a difference:

Become an affiliate member

There is currently no cost to become an affiliate. You will receive our quarterly bulletin, advance details of events and other planned activities, and you can nominate to participate on relevant sub-committees or working groups. Most importantly, you will be showing your support for the principles CMA stands for.

To become an affiliate please visit our website to download the application forms.

Co-fund a project

There are educational/research projects CMA is involved in at present, and more planned for the future. These will provide ideas and tools to assist in exploring social change philanthropy in action. If you would like more information about financially supporting a project connected to CMA, you can contact any member of the Management Committee.

Make a financial donation

Everything we do, and plan to do, requires substantial resourcing. Private donations have enabled us to come this far. Further private donations will enable us to do more into the future. If you share our interest and commitment, and would like to help with a financial donation, you can contact any member of the Management Committee or simply complete the donation form and return it to us. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Donation Forms are available on the website.