



ANNUAL REPORT

2024
2025

Supporting Asylum Seekers and Refugees in the
Community and in Detention



Chairperson's report 1 July 2024 - 30 June 2025

COFA has had another constructive and busy year supporting refugees and asylum seekers. Our income, through donations, grants and fund-raising, amounted to approximately \$530,000 and our expenditure was not far below this amount.

On behalf of the management committee of COFA, I would like to thank all the Circle members, existing and new, for their hard work and dedication this year. The aims of each Circle vary and include:

- Providing ongoing friendship, mentoring and support for vulnerable individuals and families
- Responding to requests from other agencies for one-off emergency help. This includes locating and delivering free furniture, paying the initial costs of moving into community housing and other necessary out-of-pocket expenses that are beyond the capacity of an individual to pay
- Financial support for those living with bridging visas who cannot find work, or sufficient work, to pay their rent, utilities and living costs
- Supporting the educational needs of refugees and asylum seekers
- Empowering refugees and asylum seekers to become job-ready and find employment
- Regular fund-raising activities
- Organising activities and events specifically for refugees and asylum seekers
- Supporting families who have been forced to flee from Gaza
- Funding and managing the provision of clandestine education for girls in Afghanistan
- Assisting refugees who now have their permanent visas with family reunion
- Supporting people arriving on Humanitarian Visas and Community Support Program Visas to navigate the maze of Australian life and become self-sufficient.

Due to the combined advocacy efforts of COFA, the Vinnies Refugee and Asylum Seeker Service and Red Cross, from January this year, asylum seekers on bridging visas (including those whose bridging visas have expired) are now eligible for the same State concessions that other people on low incomes are able to access.

The COFA management committee has finalised the following policies, which are not only required by law but essential to ensure that all volunteers perform according to a high standard:

- The Child Safe Environments Policy. Thanks to Janet Giles, our Child Safety Support person. We would also like to thank the AMRC for kindly permitting COFA members to attend their training sessions.
- The Vulnerable Persons Policy
- Updated Code of Conduct

A new volunteer 'induction' pack has also been developed and sent to all Circles. It is hoped that this will ensure best practice is followed in the process of recruiting new members.

Trisha Dundon who has been the convenor of C110 Rapid Response Circle for many years is stepping down as convenor. She has been a tireless supporter of refugees and asylum seekers and we would like to thank her for her enormous contribution and commitment. Since deciding to step down, she has also received many messages thanking her for her efforts from the agencies that refer people to C110.

C110 is to be re-named the 'Emergency Circle' and will be managed by several teams of two volunteers on a rotational schedule. These changes will be in place by the next financial year.

COFA newsletters are now being sent not only to members but also to donors in order to keep them informed of everything that is going on within COFA.

COFA has continued to advocate on behalf of the asylum seekers on bridging visas who arrived prior to the start of 2014 and those who are now living in Australia after being in detention on Nauru and Manus Island.

Finally, thank you to the members of the COFA management committee and all the members who make up the many and varied Circles within COFA. All of your commitment and hard work has contributed to another very successful year. COFA is also extremely grateful to our donors and for some very generous grants, without which we would not be able to do all the important things we do.

Henrietta Wighton

Circle 07, Blackwood Hills Circle of Friends or Refugees

Purpose: Blackwood Hills Circle is a Foundation Circle, formed more than 23 years ago to support refugees. It has operated continuously since that time, and enjoys broad support in the Blackwood Community.

Total Income: \$33,237 and \$5,750 in grants. Of this income, \$20,196 is donations from 24 donors. We also received a grant of \$5,000 from Mitcham Council for the running of the event, a Taste of Other Cultures. We would also like to thank the Louise Da Costa Foundation for their grant of \$750.

Revenue from Fundraising: \$11490; from events including Capri Film Evening, St Jude and Blackwood Players theatre nights, and Lions Shed volunteering. A highlight was the event A Taste of Other Cultures, which was attended by Catherine Hutchesson Member for Waite, and compered by the Mayor of Mitcham, Heather Holmes Ross, and raised almost \$7,000.

Expenditure for the Year: around \$42,000, this included:

- Monthly allowances of between \$160 and \$600 to 4 individuals or families; provision of food vouchers to 2 families, and \$200 for living allowances for two students from our Ian Penny Memorial Bequest.
- Payment of energy bills, car registration, one off payments toward rent, driving lessons, living expenses, visa medical checks, metro cards;
- Regular payments to Circle 129 and 113, and support for Circle 110 when we can. We also reimburse Lesley for fuel expenses for her visits to refugees.

Circle Membership is currently 17 members. Concerned that our membership has been declining as many of our committed members age, we met in May to review our purpose, goals, structure and processes. Trish Rushton, former chair of our group led us through this process. We have been trialling some of the ideas suggested. In addition to our members, we have a much larger group of interested people on our mailing list who donate, volunteer or support our fundraisers.

Appreciation: We would like to thank all donors, our hard-working members, those who help with fundraising, and all who support our events. I would like to make special mention of Carys Penny, Robyn Venus, Annabel Dayal and Lyn Stansall, office bearers who take on a great deal of work. We congratulate Lesley Walker who this year was awarded the Citizen of the Year Award by Adelaide Hills Council, for her longstanding work supporting refugees.

Jenny Lewis, Chairperson 2025

Circle 9 Nathan's Events

Purpose

To provide support to refugees in South Australia via various initiatives and to support other circles via fundraising.

Total income

Around \$39,249.66 – fundraising, donations and grants.

Circle members

A few core people assist in approving finances and grants and assist with activities, as well as others who volunteer their own time when they can assist at fundraising events and other activities when put on.

Activities

- Fundraising: An Afghan Feast (2024), Palestine on a Plate (2025), a first time online fundraiser/raffle (2024/2025), SALA (2024), a clothes swap (2024), Ukrainian Feast (2025) and a cooking class and food walking tour (2025), plus a youth film festival (2025) – as some examples.
- Sponsoring refugees: For events such as Ukrainian and Afghan food events for 2024/2025 it was
- wonderful to see refugee families attend both events - all sponsored by others.
- Wellness Day Out for Refugee Women: Held at Stangate House and Garden (2024) and Fabrik Arts and Heritage Lobethal (2025). It was wonderful to see COFA members and others bring refugee women they are supporting. The wellness days out have been very popular in terms of women attending and appealing in terms of volunteers. We also have a grant to buy wellness kits for future wellness days out.
- Cultured. 2024: A multicultural festival held for Circle of Friends Australia Inc. held in November. The aim is to refocus and make the event a free, family friendly event for refugees and the wider community to attend, alongside a fundraiser in selected areas, with the festival coming up again on December 13th 2025.
- Cultural Cook up With Refugees: A wonderful cultural, food program where people were able to see refugees cook a dish and try a meal. Liked by all there in terms of participants and a great way to socialise (plus all free) with ongoing activity in this area from 2024 ongoing into 2025.
- SALA 2024: Featuring artworks of Afghan refugee and artist Zainab Kazemi, alongside traditional Afghan music and food – all popular in terms of those attending.

Grants

Multiple in 2024/2025. Some via local Councils and State Government, alongside Rotary Club support.

Appreciation

Thank you – Sarah Dumuid, Lesley Walker, Bruce Whyatt, COFA Executive Committee, and all volunteers involved in activities, alongside two Rotary clubs in South Australia for their financial assistance.

Circle 11 Willunga Circle of Friends

Purpose

- to fundraise to be able to support refugee and asylum seekers in Australia including with living expenses, education and professional costs, medical and legal fees
- to support individuals and family through friendship, social contact and practical assistance. We have been supporting some people for 20 years.
- to increase understanding about refugees in our local community through events and conversations.

Finances

Total income was \$5,483. Expenses were \$8,730: \$8,603 disbursements to individuals and families with \$127 fees and charges.

We had 2 fundraising events: a music concert raising \$1,215 and a film evening showing *Watander* raising \$451.

Circle members

There are 12 committee members who attend bi monthly meetings to discuss funding requests, share information about people supported and plan events.

There are another 50 people who are supporters who assist particularly when there are events or donate goods.

Activities

We have a number of families that we have supported for many years. Some have finally received permanent residency and one is trying to gain visas for his overseas family.

We work closely with Circle 110 transferring money for emergency expenses and distributing clothes and furniture.

Donors and supporters

We are very fortunate to have a number of donors and supporters as well as a strong committee many of whom have been active for over a decade.

Jayne Jennifer

Circle 13 Family of Four

Purpose

To socially & financially support a family in the northern suburbs whose income was very low. They were not eligible for Centrelink since they were in offshore detention in 2013 and the Australian government insists they will never be allowed to settle in Australia. Their Bridging Visas are very temporary, renewed every 6 months so far since September 2020. They were not eligible for concessions. Anxiety and health issues were constant.

Total Income and Expenditure to 10/04/2025

Opening Balance \$ 5,445.53

Income	\$ 2,269.05*
	<u>\$11,150.00</u> **family's contributions towards rent, paid into C13.
Total Income	\$13,419.05
Expenditure	\$18,864.58 includes \$2,223.78 transferred to C113 10/04/2025.
Closing Balance	\$ 0.00

*includes \$469.05, donations/funds raised by members of the Semaphore Uniting Church

Particular Challenges

Rent: Across July 2024 – April 2025 the rent was \$860 per fortnight.

**The family contributed as best they could each fortnight, about 80% in summer and 30% in winter when there were fewer rostered shifts at the vegetable farm. The balance was drawn predominantly from C13, with C7 and C113 contributing on seven occasions.

Pharmacy: The monthly account averaged \$150. The family is not eligible for concessions.

Other Expenses: Car registration; school photos; SA Ambulance: water; dental treatment; DHA Citizenship Certificate for 10 yr old child [\$219].

Activities

I visited each week to provide social support and assist with: bills & correspondence; school card applications; school photo orders; dental appointments. The children chat happily about school activities and friendships. I took puzzles and books to encourage conversations and interests. Each week they provided boxes of food for me to take home.

Circle Members

Lesley Walker as Convenor, and Rosemary Herd who scrutinised all financial expenditure. Many thanks to Rosemary for this support through her prompt & diligent attention to my emails.

Appreciation

The family is very appreciative of the support and advice from all Circles. Thank you to Refugee Advice & Casework Service (RACS) in Sydney for managing visa renewals every 6 months and the applications for both Citizenship and the Citizenship Certificate for the 10 year old child. Thank you to Vinnies Refugee & Asylum Seeker Service (VRASS). We particularly thank Des Moriarty who has negotiated the renewal of the Medicare card every 6 months and assisted at many appointments with Centrelink.

Circle 92 Jobs Café

In January Jobs Café joined with MCCSA (Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia) to take advantage of the administrative support and activity space on offer.

The “Second/ Third Tuesday of the Month” events were then started again after an eighteen month hiatus.

MCCSA Jobs Café aims to help job seekers better prepare themselves in applying for positions and navigating subsequent interviews.

The project began as a stand-alone exercise in late August 2019.

Across this financial year the following increases are noted:

- 1102 - 1268 (166) job-seeking registrants (people from diverse cultures, refugees, migrants, homeless persons, those differently-abled, men and women, old and young...).
- 424 - 495 (71) have secured positions.
- plus a cohort of 686 - 768 (82) supporters all contributing at various levels.
-

Financial status: Income: \$1500.00 Expenditure: \$1155.43 Balance: \$1492.05

Support provided by HITsa Charitable Fund.

For those seeking to participate and tap into what is being offered there is only one simple requisite:

“Just walk through the virtual door of Jobs Café”!

Peter Habel
Founder/ Coordinator

Circle 108

The focus of Circle 108 is the continuing support of a single mother and her five children who arrived in Adelaide in January last year. Members of our core group – only four at the moment - live within the inner city. A number of former members are still connected and offer practical help whenever we need it.

The family received Centrelink payments for the first time in January 2025, following a period of 12 months in which our circle was wholly responsible for their financial and other needs. To mark the one year anniversary of their arrival, we held a celebration on that date in Whitmore Square. Many people attended, there was an abundance of food, laughter and good will, and the soft drinks flowed. The mum made a speech, thanking all her supporters for their generosity.

Expenses

Food and rent \$1200 X 34	total \$40,800
Driving lessons and associated costs	total \$2,520
Sundries	total \$1,344
Settlement Service International	total \$2,750
Plus bank fees and charges	
TOTAL INCOME	\$52,405.64
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	\$49,018.61
ENING BALANCE	\$11,095.99

Major sources of income:

A transfer of \$5,000 in our account from COFA general funds; Blackwood Lions \$1,000; A number of 1-off large donations from individuals, plus five continuing monthly deposits in our account

Fundraising

Quiz Night - July 2024; Not the Bastille Day - August 2024; A Rose is a Rose - August 2024; Wine Sale - November 2024; Poets in the Pottery - January 2025; Charlee Watt concert at the Wheaty - February 2025

Family activities

Camping in a group on two separate occasions at Wirrina Cove; Five days in a house at American River on Kangaroo Island – a total of 5 adults, five kids, and a dog; More birthday parties than you can poke a stick at; A visit to Monarto Zoo; A 12-month scholarship with Cirkids for one of the children; Piano lessons for another two of the children; A number of outings organised by Sister Meredith Evans.

To sum up, it has been a delight and a privilege getting to know this beautiful family, seeing them all do so well at school, and Tafe. We love spending time with them, sometimes problem-solving, sometimes celebrating birthdays and other special occasions, sometimes just hanging out. We consider ourselves very lucky. We are all part of an amazing network, supporting and creating viable lives for others. And so to all who have donated financially or in kind, who have turned up at our fundraisers and celebrations: Our profound thanks

Circle 110 Rapid Response

Operating state-wide, circle 110 covers costs for which payment cannot be found elsewhere.

In April 2025 a new model was established to continue COFA's emergency response function. Experienced Convenors rotate to monitor emergency@cofa.org.au. The Assessment Form introduced mid 2024 is mandatory although if money is needed urgently, for example a same day Bond and Rent, the Convenor may allow completion after the payment.

Total income for the year was \$55,403.38 and total expenditure \$49,941.09. Twenty regular, individual donors contribute about 26% of the Circle's income - \$14,400. All donations are valued because together they provide the basics of survival to recipients.

Other Circles gave generously – around \$20,000 - especially Blackwood/Hills (Circle 7) and Willunga (Circle 11) who also collected bedding and clothes to pass on. St Ignatius Refugee Education Circle continued to accept relevant referrals as did Circles 115 (Family Reunion) and Afghan Arrivals (127).

Circles 110 and 121 again joined Nathan's Circle (Circle 9) for a fund- raising dinner at Rumi Restaurant which yielded \$900. Thanks to all who supported it.

In February 2025 Circle 110 was allocated a further \$15,000 from the Suzanne Elliot Trust Fund and in April a top up of \$5,000. A carryover of \$2,240 from this money remained in the Circle Budget at the end of June.

Including the convenor, there were 4 registered volunteers dealing with referrals. All made home visits. Another managed Foodbank and procurement of whitegoods while a further 4 helped gather and deliver bedding, microwaves, fans, portable air conditioners, small furniture and toys. Two others provide advice to the Management Committee as requested. Assistance from Circle of Hope (114) with delivering larger items of furniture and from Circle 121 was vital.

Activities included food shopping, purchasing primary school uniforms for primary students, links to social opportunities and ongoing encouragement by text and email. Calls for help with utilities, food purchase, rent and bonds, health related needs and medications increased. Car repairs were funded twice, once as a part loan. Thirty- one individuals and nine families were assisted.

Without positive, trusting relationships with Providers, help and empowerment to those referred and the ongoing practical and financial help of Circle members, none of this activity would be possible. It is a work of collaboration, and I truly thank you all for your contributions.

Tricia Dundon

Circle 111 Wayville Circle

Our Circle has existed since 2014, initially supporting refugees who had been detained in Inverbrackie in the Adelaide Hills. The individual and family needs around settling into mainstream Australian community life are the main foci of our work. We currently have 15 active members who support nearly 50 families.

Support for individuals and families:

Provide rental assistance and medicinal and utility bills for those who are on Centrelink or are in low-paying employment or are on Bridging Visas

Assist in finding rental accommodation

Advocate for young people to access local schools

Assist people gaining their driving licenses

Lobby for pathways to permanency for those subjected to the former flawed Fast Track process.

Events for families:

A day at the Zoo in October 2024; Family Christmas picnic in December 2024; Swim Days in July 2024 January 2025; Mothers' Day in May 2025

Social events for families are popular and are an important way of extending friendships and making new connections. These events are actively planned and supported by a number of young people who are a part of Young Mercy Links, an initiative supported by the Institute of Sisters of Mercy.

We also have members whose links to national advocacy groups enable us to keep up to date with information about government policies.

Fundraising events we organised:

Fundraising in the last financial year was a Quiz and Fizz afternoon in July 2024, hosted at Mercedes College.

Financial report for Circle 111:

General Account: Bank Balance at 1st July 2024 (as per General Ledger) \$6458.18

Income (individual donations) (1/7/24-30/6/25) \$30,848.56

Expenditure (1/7/24 – 30/06/25) \$29,773.39

Balance of General Funds as at 30th June 2025 (as per General Ledger) \$7533.35

Expenditure consisted of transfer of \$28,900 to C111 and admin fees (\$373.39).

Business and Community Account: Bank balance at 1st July 2024 \$988.09

Income \$34,351.40

Expenditure \$34,964.14

Business and Community account balance at 30th June 2025 \$375.35

Income included \$310 in donations, \$200 in loan repayments, \$4341.00 from events, and a transfer of \$28,900 from the General Account.

Expenditure included rent assistance for 5 families (\$14,995.20), ambulance cover for 5 families (\$795.76), utility bills for 6 families (\$3228.49), dental expenses (\$3688.61), tools for a plumbing apprentice (\$1200) and legal expenses (\$2000). In addition, Admin fees \$373.39 and cost for a reflection day \$1,175.19.

We sincerely thank our generous financial supporters, the Young Mercy Links who actively contribute to our family and fundraising events, and Mercedes College who provided hands-on support and the venue for our fundraising.

Circle of Hope 114

Circle of Hope is managed by an enthusiastic steering group that operates within a broad network of supporters, community workers, dedicated volunteers, lawyers, many social service agencies, migration agents and the broader COFA family. Initially established around Hopes Café in the Eastern Suburbs we have funded: migration agents to represent people for Humanitarian Protection; TAFE and other qualifications; emergency medical and dental treatment; driver training; rental assistance; food and utility bills; cars and household goods; created opportunities for social enterprises and employment and provided side-by-side support in tough times. When possible and needed, we assist asylum seekers, struggling refugees and other Circles with one-off grants and short-term loans. Over the past year we have focussed on providing rental assistance, living expenses, emergency funds, referrals, opportunities for appropriate work and employment and mental health and personal support to mainly asylum seekers who have limited-time bridging visas and who have been restricted to these for 12-13 years.

2024-2025 financial report

Opening Balance: \$ 7 988.38
 Income: \$10 770.00
 Expenditure: \$12 968.70
 Closing Balance: + \$ 5 789.68

Donors & sponsors: There are 7 regular individual donors. Others donate in lieu of tickets to our events and Chef John at Hopes Café gave much thought, time and effort to the success of the 2024 Spring Dinner. Sponsors over the past year include Uniting Communities, Never Never Distillery, Kangarilla Rd, Berg Herring and Chapel Hill Wineries, Cressida O'Hanlon MP and Claire Clutterham MP.

Supporters

Our email list includes approximately 48 individuals some of whom have their own small network.

Circle 114 is actively supported in its work by a number of other COFA Convenors, its Treasurer and Chairwomen who have generously shared their time, information and advice.

Activities

At the end of 2024 a number of steering group members retired - Audrey Swanbury, Paul Turley, Heather Walraven and Chris Carter. We thank them endlessly for their years of care, compassion and time, striving for justice for asylum seekers and refugees in need.

We were able to maintain and expand a small, core steering group that now holds monthly meetings via ZOOM as members are often physically distant. Between meetings members often contact each other in relation to changing circumstances and the particular needs and concerns of our friends.

2024-2025 Fundraisers: A Spring Dinner and 2 Arts Events at Hopes Café; Sales of donated items via Facebook Marketplace; The winter Quiz Night was unfortunately postponed but held recently on September 12th 2025.

Our sincere thanks goes to everyone who has contributed to the lives of Circle 114s' friends.

Circle 115 Family Reunion

Purpose

Circle of Friends 115 Afghan Emergency raises money to assist asylum seekers and refugees with the cost of protection visas and family reunion

Finances for financial year

Total Income - \$43,946.97

Total Expenditure - \$43,164.01

End of financial year balance June 30th 2025 balance - \$12,527.46cr in COFA's Bendigo Bank Acct

\$6728 in Circle 115's own account at People's Choice Credit Union

Grants – We have gratefully received a grant from Susan McKinnon Foundation. Thank you very much.

Donors

2 regular donors who we greatly appreciate for their generosity.

This year we did a special email appeal for assistance to find \$18,000 for airfares and exit visas for a family stuck in Pakistan after being granted Australia Humanitarian visas but with out sufficient funds to pay the \$40,000 to get the family here. Fifty friends and family and their friends and family together donated \$18,000 in September 2024 and the family at last arrived in June 2025, almost a year after gaining their visas.

Circle Activities

We also supported 7 other requests. Three were to help people from Afghanistan who had been here for 11 or 12 years to bring their families to join them after too long apart. Three people from South America needed help with legal processes to bring their children here to join them. And one was for a woman who needed help getting back home to Australia after caring for her mother in Africa. Circle 115 Family reunions contributions this financial year varied between \$18,000 and \$500.

Fundraising activities

In this past year we have raised funds with a dinner at Rumi Palace Restaurant in conjunction with Circle 127 and another dinner there organised by Nathan of Circle 9. We also held a wine sale which was well supported. Thank you all

Circle members

Over the past year we have had a change in our group. A member died, others have had to leave due to their health, and now we have 3 new members. One helps with the wine sale and two are learning the processors in our work. Thank you to both new and old members for your contributions to our work.

Appreciation

Thank you to all our donors and fundraisers and everybody who attended our dinners and bought wine in our sale. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Monica O'Wheel
August 2025

Circle 121 SOS for Refugees

Purpose/aims

Circle 121 supports refugees and people seeking asylum in SA who are struggling to make ends meet, due to having no access to any form of social security and no employment or insufficient employment to make ends meet.

Having had their applications for protection rejected under the flawed 'fast-track' system, they are all either on temporary short-term bridging visas or have had their visas cancelled and no longer have work rights.

Circle 121 has had some additional people in these circumstances added for ongoing support this financial year. These people were previously supported by C110 but, after a decision by the COFA Management Committee, have been transferred to Circle 121.

Total income and expenditure for the financial year:

The total income for Circle 121: \$139,631.83

The total expenditure for Circle 121: \$137,635.61

At the end of the financial year C121 was \$15,037.80 in credit.

Number of people assisted

Circle 121 assisted 14 individuals and 6 families.

Donors

C121 received a total of \$43,932.68 from 34 individual donors, some of whom donated on a regular basis; The Suzanne Elliot Trust provided C121 with grants amounting to \$95,000;

C121 also received \$699.15 from UC Invest

Circle members

Convenor of Circle 121: Henrietta Wighton; Members: Charlie Simpson (assists with checking withdrawal requests), Kevin Comber (non-active) and Julian Pfitzner (non-active).

Activities undertaken by your Circle

C121 assists people with rent, bonds, utilities, medical and pharmacy costs and other living expenses. We receive referrals from other Circles, VRASS, AMES, STARS and LWB.

In addition, C121 advocates on behalf of individuals, negotiating with government agencies/ service providers to sort out problems where necessary. We also refer people, where appropriate, to other Circles and agencies to find appropriate counselling, legal advice, training, employment, and affordable accommodation.

Appreciation

We would like to express our gratitude to all our generous individual donors, some regular and some one-off. We would also like to thank UC Invest for their ongoing support.

It goes without saying that Circle 121 could not continue to exist without the extremely generous support of the Suzanne Elliot Trust. Their kindness and generosity, along with C121's individual donors and UC Invest, has prevented the people we support from becoming destitute and living on the streets. It has given them a modicum of security and dignity.

Circle 121 also thanks Monica, Bruce, and all the other Committee members for their dedication and hard work.

Circle 127 Afghan Arrivals

Purpose

Circle 127 Afghan Arrivals gives family and individual support to newly arrived refugees on Humanitarian and Family Reunion visas and help in their settlement process both by personal support and financial assistance.

Finances for Financial Year 2024 – 2025

Total Income - \$13,410

Total Expenditure - \$13,954

End of Year balance - \$5,694

Donors – We are very grateful to our regular donor, and to all the donors who respond to our appeals for particular families. Also UC Invest from Uniting Church.

Fundraising activities – In this past year we have raised funds with a second hand goods sale, we hosted a dinner at Rumi Palace with Circle 115 to help a woman pay for orphan visa applications for her nieces and nephew. For another man sent out an email appeal to bring his family to Australia.

Payments

Most of our payments this year have been for family reunion as family's here are desperate to bring their families here to join them.

\$8,900 towards air fares for a family

\$3,890 for orphan visa applications

\$1,800 as part payment of a migration agent invoice

\$1,500 to 3 different families for supplementary cost of living in regular small amounts

\$1500 for Afghan women's volley ball team annual Afghan Games in Melbourne

\$500 for driving lessons

Circle members also paid for many costs out of their own pockets without asking for reimbursement. Thank for giving that support.

Circle Activities

We changed our name from Afghan Emergency which continues to Afghan Arrivals as it is now 4 years since the Taliban took over Afghanistan's government.

Members of our Circle visited many families over the year assisting with furniture, shopping, school work and laptops for school, social support, transport to medical appointments, job hunting, driving lessons, support with bureaucracy.

Circle members

We started the year with 8 active circle members, we gained one during the year, and over time we lost 5 members whose lives went in different directions so they needed to resign. Thank you all for all the work you have done supporting 14 families and individuals. Your work has made a difference in people's lives and their journey to full settlement in Australia.

Thank you

Monica O'Wheel

August 2025

Circle 131 Mellita

Circle 131 is a group of eight friends who partnered through the CRISP program <https://refugeesponsorship.org.au/what-we-do/crisp/> to support a refugee family of four as they began a new life in Australia. The shared goal: to help the family achieve independence within one year.

Finances

Income: \$7,444.26

Raised through two sold-out fundraising events and a regular donor

Expenditure: \$11,280.16

Deficit: Covered by funds from previous fundraising

Key Achievements

- **Housing & Services:** gained access to long term private rental. Guided the family through Centrelink, health, and school and TAFE enrolments.
- **Dental Care:** Supported extensive treatment until the family felt confident to manage independently.
- **Transport:** Helped the family learn public transport; fundraising also funded driving lessons.
- **First Car:** Assisted in securing a NILS loan to purchase their first vehicle.
- **Community & Education:** Family have connected well with their community, found familiar grocery locations, and remain highly committed to education.

Gratitude

We sincerely thank:

- Attendees and performers who made our fundraising events possible.
- Our hardworking team members who dedicated countless hours to Centrelink, health, and settlement needs.

Reflection

Supporting this resilient and determined family has been a humbling privilege. Their courage, hope, and commitment to building a new life in Australia have inspired us all. Helping them take confident steps toward independence has truly been an honour.

Circle 136 Louie

Circle 136 supports a Syrian Refugee family which is experiencing severe hardship in Türkiye. Some of the Circle's funds have been diverted at the family's wish to relatives in Lebanon where their young children were wounded in bombing raids. Like so many, these two families are also experiencing severe hardship.

We have successfully submitted an application for humanitarian visas each of the families.

The Circle has only one regular donor with five others contributing. It conducted a fundraiser with St Barnabus (Barnies) at Croydon with the Adelaide West Men's Choir.

The Circle raised \$2,652.95 through the year.

The Circle's two members welcome support from others. We are most grateful for the generosity shown by Barnies and the Adelaide West Men's Choir.

Annual Financial Statement, 1 July 2024 - 30 June 2025

	<u>2024-2025</u>	<u>2023-2024</u>
Receipts:		
Donations	\$ 0.00	\$ 119.35
Operational Income	\$5,775.89	\$5,638.11
Bank Interest	\$ 2.89	\$ 8.41
Investment Income	\$1,231.08	\$ 838.59
Unallocated Grants	\$ 0.00	\$34,000.00
Total	<u>\$7,009.86</u>	<u>\$40,604.46</u>
Expenses:		
Advertising & Marketing	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Bank Fees	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
TYRO Merchant Charges	\$ 193.50	\$ 183.48
GiveNow Merchant Charges	\$1,796.89	\$2,016.40
Computer Expenses	\$ 160.06	\$ 716.18
Insurance	\$2,253.06	\$2,069.22
Printing & Stationery	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
Website	\$ 249.00	\$ 247.00
Total	<u>\$4,652.51</u>	<u>\$5,232.28</u>
Net Profit	<u>\$2,357.35</u>	<u>\$35,372.18</u>

Reconciliation:

Bank Accounts Balances at 1/7/24	
General Account	\$ 24,528.78
Investment Acct	\$171,685.21
<u>GiveNow Clearing</u>	<u>\$ 11,286.35</u>
Total	\$207,500.34
Add Receipts	\$ 7,009.86
<u>Less Expenses</u>	<u>\$ 4,652.51</u>
Balance	\$209,857.69
Funds Held in Trust for Circles	
Add Balance 30/6/25	\$198,422.21
Less Balance 30/6/24	\$205,651.06
Less Equity transferred to Circle 138	\$ 2,000.00
Total	\$200,628.84
Bank Accounts Balances at 30/6/25	
General Account	\$ 31,335.38

Investment Acct	\$162,016.29
<u>GiveNow Clearing</u>	<u>\$ 7,277.17</u>
Total	\$200,628.84

Equity:

Retained Earnings	\$ -150.72
<u>Current Year Suplus/Deficit</u>	<u>\$ 2,357.35</u>
Total Equity	\$ 2,206.63

Treasurers Report

Notes

1. The Admin Fee charged to each Circle on the banked donations has remained at 1%. This fee, when added to the GiveNow Fee amounts to the Operational Income in the above figures, (\$5,775.89). This income to COFA, covers the cost of the Expenses above, (\$4,652.51).
2. The GiveNow Fee COFA charges, was increased to 3.0% this year. The fee that GiveNow charges is presently 3.64%
3. This has been another remarkable year for COFA. We have received \$530,000 in donations and grants and spent almost \$524,000 in payments for refugees and asylum seekers. We have sent 1913 receipts to 657 donors in the last year. There are still some donors who have not received receipts because we do not know their details to be able to forward a tax deductible receipt to them. It is so important that when Circles have fundraising events, that donors are supplied with Donation Forms, and it is stressed that donors complete the form and return them to the Treasurer.
4. \$1,322.25, the sum of donations this year, for which a Circle was not nominated and from donors who could not be contacted, was transferred to Circle 138.

The Circles could never hope to attempt what they do unless they have the wonderfully generous support of our donors. We are so grateful to all our donors.

Also we must thank the volunteers in the Circles who undertake the constant tasks of fund raising and meeting with refugees, learning of their difficulties and offering assistance, friendship and hope.

Circle of Friends is a wonderful organisation to be involved in and we trust that everyone will feel the satisfaction, and perhaps a little pride in what we together can do, to make Australia a welcoming, friendly community for refugees and asylum seekers to find a new life.

Bruce Whyatt,
Treasurer

Committee Members

Henrietta Wighton (Chair)
 Bruce Whyatt (Treasurer)
 Monica O'Wheel
 Lesley Walker
 Trisha Dundon
 Janet Giles (Child Safety Support officer)
 Lyn Kerkham
 Rachel Lafain (Minutes)

Circle Convenors

CIRCLE	CONVENOR
C7 Blackwood Hills	Jenny Lewis
C9 Nathan's Events	Nathan Rogers
C11 Willunga	Carol Collin
C17 Family Nonaz	Jenny Lewis
C27 Pilgrim	Libby Hogarth
C75 Kensington	Monica O'Wheel
C92 Job's Cafe	Peter Habel
C93 Ballarat RAR	
C98 VEP	
C106 St Ignatius RSG	Bernie Burke
C108	Mij Tanith
C110 Rapid response to Refugees	Trish Dundon
C111 Effective Living Centre Wayville	Meredith Edwards
C112 Karibu	
C113 Lesley's Circle	Lesley Walker
C114 Circle of Hope	Merri Scottney Turbill
C115 Family Reunion	Monica O'Wheel
C119 Unknown donations acct	Bruce Whyatt
C121 SOS for Refugees	Henrietta Wighton
C127 Afghan Emergency	Monica O'Wheel
C129 Family MF	Lesley Walker
C130 Fleurieu Refugee Support Group	refugeefleurieu@gmail.com
C131 Mellita	Elisabeth Fagan-Schmidt
C132 Empowerment Network	Erfan Abidi
C133 Palestine in Magill	Mohammed Sulaiman and/or Laila Sulaiman
C134 Zafar Ali	Emma Yengi
C135 Gaza Support	Laila Sulaiman
C136 Louie's Circle.	Des Moriarty
C137 Polly's Circle	Richard Miller