

# **Participatory Communication Strategy**

**for  
Life without Barriers**

**Support to Refugees and  
Asylum Seekers Services  
(South Australia)**

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## **1.0 ORGANISATION DESCRIPTION**

### **1.1 Support to Refugees and Asylum Seeker Services (South Australia)**

#### **1.11 Summary description**

From grass roots beginnings in 1995, Life without Barriers (LWB) has undergone phenomenal growth and transformation to become one of Australia's largest, leading not for profit organisations. Today, it operates 80 service centres across the country and provides care and protection, disability, mental health, homelessness, youth justice and immigration services.<sup>1</sup>

The organisation pursues four strategic directions through a raft of programs linked to partnership, reconciliation, systemic disadvantage, and organisational performance objectives.

It variously describes itself as 'innovative, responsive, collaborative, person centred, culturally appropriate, transparent, committed, respectful, equitable, aware, caring, client-centred, best practice,' - and one which 'shares learning, listens to voices, fosters dialogue, provides advocacy, builds relationships, promotes wellbeing, networks, values trust and empowers clients.'<sup>1</sup>

Its programs are funded largely through federal and state government grants, for which LWB competes against other non-government organisations (NGOs). Growing demand for social services and competitive tendering is shaping a more aggressive market, with implications for the direction of LWB's strategic operations.

In 2012-13, LWB's '*financially and socially responsible surplus*' of \$6.07m was achieved largely through its investment in broader strategic partnerships with government and business.<sup>1</sup>

Against this backdrop, LWB works with asylum seekers in South Australia through the Support to Refugees and Asylum Seekers Services (SRASS) business unit.<sup>2</sup>

The team is part of a national and international response to the crisis of human displacement across the globe through war, persecution and economic and environmental pressures.

SRASS (SA) works with Under Aged Minors (UAM) under contracts to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and Australian Red Cross – providing accommodation;

monitoring health and wellbeing; life skills education; access to recreational pursuits, community access and educational resources; and Australian cultural awareness education.

The 46 asylum seekers under its guardianship (three Sri Lankans, 17 Afghans and 29 Vietnamese) are housed in 16 private rental properties in the Prospect area where they are supported by live-in cultural support workers. LWB employs a therapeutic model of care designed to provide youths with a safe and nurturing environment.<sup>1</sup>

In turn, carers are supervised by a management team and colleagues including an area manager, operations manager, two programs managers, a cultural liaison officer, three cultural support coordinators, a translator and about a dozen cultural support workers. Cultural support workers have a parental role, and may be part of asylum seekers' cultural community.<sup>1</sup>

In 2013, the Australian Government introduced tighter restrictions on asylum seekers who enter Australia by boat without valid visas, suspending the granting of new Permanent Protection Visas – and causing flow-on implications for the young people living in community detention under guardianship of LWB.<sup>1</sup>

Negative reporting in the Australian media about boat people has levered a luke-warm to cold response from the Australian public about the plight and arrival of asylum seekers.

Already suffering emotional and psychological distress around leaving families and fleeing their countries of origin, their stability and future certainty have been further eroded, causing further distress.

Throughout this, the SRASS (SA) team is navigating a pathway through shifting policies and bureaucratic red tape to meet the needs of its young charges.

A recent participatory needs and opportunity assessment (PNOA) was undertaken on behalf of SRASS (SA) to consider gaps and opportunities in its services to asylum seekers provides findings and helps inform this communications strategy.

## 1.12 Stakeholder analysis

SRASS (SA) has multiple internal and external stakeholders, including:

- asylum seekers, key stakeholders for whom the project is designed;
- internal stakeholders including members of the SRASS (SA) team, who have direct, day-to-day responsibility for the project,
- LWB's Strategy and Engagement Business Unit, and executive staff and Board members who have a strong, vested interest in the outcome of the project and need to be kept informed of wins, changes and concerns.
- Red Cross (both partner and funder) and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (funder) which both require policy and reporting communications and careful management given their strong potential influence over the program;
- key partners such as Baptist Care, Migrant Resource Centre and CALD with which SRASS (SA) communicates through public relations and advocacy avenues;
- communities such as cultural groups and educational institutions with which SRASS (SA) communicates with which SRASS (SA) communicates through informal networking; and
- the wider Australian community and media, which are largely managed by LWB.<sup>2</sup>

The list below identifies SRASS (SA's) stakeholders and the matrix indicates the level of influence and power exerted over the asylum program by various stakeholders and management approaches.<sup>2</sup>

Key stakeholders:	Asylum seekers
Primary stakeholders:	Area operations manager Program manager Operations manager Program managers Cultural Support coordinators Cultural support officers Cultural Liaison Officers Translator
Partners ( <i>internal</i> )	Department Immigration and Border Security LWB Board LWB CEO LWB Marketing and Communications

(external)

Multicultural Resource Centre

Baptist care

Australian Red Cross

Australian Refugee Association

Anglicare

Culturally And Linguistically Diverse (CALD) group

Schools

Cultural organisations

Community groups

Recreational organisations

External:

Other:

Media

General community

<p><b>KEEP SATISFIED</b></p> <p>LWB Board LWB CEO LWB Marketing and Communications</p>	<p><b>MANAGE CLOSELY</b></p> <p><b>Asylum seekers</b> Australian Red Cross Department Immigration and Border Protection Area operations manager Program manager Operations manager Program managers Cultural Support coordinator</p>
<p><b>MONITOR</b></p> <p>Media</p>	<p><b>KEEP INFORMED</b></p> <p>LWB Cultural Liaison Officers LWB Translator</p> <p>Multicultural Resource Centre Baptist Care Australian Refugee Association Anglicare</p> <p>Schools Cultural organisations Community groups Recreational organisations CALD</p>

POWER vs INTEREST MATRIX 

## **1.2 ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION FUNCTIONS AND MECHANISMS**

### **1.21 Analysis functions and methods by phase**

For a communication strategy to be effective, it needs to begin with research, be linked to organisational goals and be developed logically through a series of step-by-step phases that ensure adequate time and resources will be available to achieve the desired outcomes. These phases include the following:

- Diagnostic phase: asking questions and working with people concerned to identify needs and opportunities to meet them;
- Planning stage: designing strategies and actions to deliver this communication;
- Action phase: implementing strategies;
- Change phase: measuring and evaluating the impact of strategies, and identifying subsequent modifications.<sup>4</sup>

From this perspective, SRASS (SA) team's communication methods tend to be reactive – responding to perceived issues and moving directly into planning and implementation phases, rather than researching links between communication needs, objectives and outcomes.

For example, it is currently pitching for LWB approval to set up a 'SRASS (SA) profile enhancement project' in a bid to upgrade its standing within the sector and improve its funding potential. It is operating on the assumption that it is perceived negatively within the sector, and that a public relations campaign will improve its position. However, research for this paper indicated that SRASS (SA) is generally well regarded by its peers, one of whom commented that its performance is more persuasive than 'any hype'.

SRASS (SA) undertakes some planning in terms of gathering feedback from staff and clients about given issues, and in the preparation of communication tools and processes. In addition, new internal business proposals require statements of project measurables and resource implications. The table below provides a broad indication of SRASS (SA's) communications by functions and phases.

<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	<b>PHASES</b>	Research	Planning	Implementation	Evaluation
Policy				✓	
Public relations			✓	✓	✓
Organisational			✓	✓	✓
Participatory				✓	
Advocacy				✓	

An detailed overview of SRASS (SA's) communications by functions is outlined below:

### Policy communications

SRASS (SA) is governed internally and externally by LWB's communications policies and implicit controls relating to the way it communicates and with whom. Internally, it is bound by protocols relating to processes for developing and seeking approvals for communication materials such as media releases and publications. While these tools may be conceived by the team, responsibility for their development lies with LWB's overarching Strategy and Engagement Business Unit. The use of 'accessible language' in large font and simple terminology that respects indigenous Australians and is sensitive to people with disabilities is also prescribed by internal guidelines. Media commentary is regulated by delegating authority to LWB executives and managers, as is the use of logo under the organisation's corporate identity guidelines. LWB-generated policy information, pertaining to for example, carers and internal education, is provided via the organisation's intranet sites and through formal workshops and publications.

Communications between SRASS (SA), DIBP and Red Cross is governed by contractual arrangements for reporting. SRASS (SA) contracts directly to DIBP and indirectly through Red Cross and feeds up reports relating to Key Performance Indicators that are intended to track the team's performance in terms of how it fulfils its service contract to Under aged Minors. SRASS is also subject to implicit rules relating to public discourse around asylum seekers. LWB is a business which relies on government funding for survival. Speaking about asylum seeker issues is seen by SRASS (SA) staff as an activity that's been placed in the 'too hard' basket.

## Public relations

Public relations is an area of communications designed to build and improve relationships with important (typically) external stakeholders. It involves managing reputation and perceptions by building proactive relationships with funders, communities and partners.

While LWB has a detailed, overarching public relations focus SRASS (SA) approach formal public relations function spontaneously. SRASS (SA) staff members are more likely to participate in the events and activities organised by LWB and external organisations than its own. It produces brochures, runs small events and ad hoc media releases via LWB. Some of these are driven from the bottom up, and managed from the top down. Others are driven from the top down but require bottom up input. For example, SRASS (SA) team members are required to provide regular good news stories to the Strategy and Engagement Business Unit, and to promote events on Face book and Twitter. Similarly, staff participated in the production of LWB's publication, 'I now call Australia home' by organising a story about a South Australian asylum seeker who was under care of SRASS (SA). The book was intended to raise awareness of, and support for, asylum seekers and by default, LWB.

SRASS team members also participate in peer group meetings at operational, middle and upper management levels on individual and group bases with other stakeholder groups.

At all levels, peer communications is conducted via emails, phone calls, group meetings and forums at local, state and national levels. A Technical Reference Group brings together all service providers contracted to DIBP such as Baptistcare, Red Cross, Anglicare, IHMS, government, schools, Centrelink and Centacare and have been described by a staff member as '...positive places to iron out issues between agencies' and to discuss asylum seekers concerns. The Culturally And Linguistically Diverse (CALD) group is also seen by team members as positive vehicle for promoting member organisations while negotiating opportunities to support the mental health of asylum seekers.

Red Cross is both a partner and funder of the asylum seeker program. It bids against SRASS (SA) for the same pool of resources, and a combination of competition, conflicting personalities, systemic issues and the added layer of bureaucracy and associated delays has led to friction between the parties. The problem was up-managed within LWB and reviewed with Red X – leading to more regular meetings and an improved working relationship.

## Organisational communications

In a broad sense, organisational communications occurs within and helps drive the organisation through its myriad exchanges and interchanges on both formal and informal levels. In some definitions, it overlaps with 'internal communications' and 'public relations' but in this report the term emphasises the former.

SRASS (SA's) organisational communication flows through a hierarchical structure of managers who oversee the asylum seeker program, and staff who deliver it at the coal face. This communication includes one-to-one meetings, team meetings, phone calls, emails, and reporting. In general, senior and operational staff work in discrete units brokered by the operations manager who liaises between both, which means there are limited avenues for information to travel between senior management and carers. Upper level meetings between managers have been described by a SRASS (SA) manager as 'opportunities to look at partnerships and discuss opportunities to improve.' Operational communications are designed to ensure the day to day business proceeds in an orderly and efficient manner.

At the coal face however, critical direct communication occurs primarily between carers and asylum seekers, who also liaise personally with the cultural support coordinators, liaison officers and translators. The cultural liaison officer and Vietnamese translator provide important roles in helping communicate on behalf of the young people to SRASS and other agencies. The young clients have access to LWB's service centre in Prospect, and can in theory talk with other staff members as needed. A mix of culturally aligned and Anglo-Australian carers is intended to ensure they have access to people who can understand their own language and culture, and can teach them English if needed. The youths participate in periodic 'house meetings' with their carers and cultural support coordinators to discuss any issues of concern and news of importance. LWB controls the movement of youths in and out of their accommodation each day with log books. Carers do hand-overs with each other and raise issues each month with their coordinators, and there is also a communication book in the house for carers, but sometimes language barriers can confuse these messages. The youths' primary vehicle of expression about their perceptions of LWB's services is via a retrospective exit surveys configured around cognitive reasoning and responses.

### Educational communications

Educational communications is used to help transfer ideas, information and technologies to audiences through various informative tools and processes such as teaching and training materials to persuasion processes such as social marketing.

As a registered training organisation, LWB provides education to staff in their areas of employment. It also delivers in-house training for carers relating to cultural awareness. Several of SRASS (SA's) services to asylum seekers relate to formal and information education. English language education and formal schooling is provided by the Australian Government and facilitated by SRASS (SA) carers who are responsible for overseeing the young asylum seeker's ongoing study and school commitments. SRASS (SA) carers provide informal education about Australian culture and way of life, cooking, transport, ATMs, shopping, budgets and menu planning. LWB has also run evening workshops for young people about Medicare and sexual health which young people attend at their own discretion. Assessment tools are used to determine the asylum seeker's proficiency in these areas. SRASS (SA) works with other agencies on an informal basis to teach the young people learn how to deal with their feelings and manage their emotions.

### Participatory communications

Participatory communications is described by the World Bank as either, 'the mobilisation of people to eliminate unjust hierarchies of knowledge, power and economic distribution ...' or '... the reach and inclusion of inputs by relevant groups in the design and implementation of a development project ... with the involvement of ordinary people in a development process leading to change.'<sup>3</sup>

Quarry and Ramirez variously describe it as, people-centred, grassroots communications contributing to sustainable change. In 'Another development' they call for communicators to listen and learn from local people over the long term - empowering them to find solutions to their own development issues, rather than imposing quick fix solutions through conventional and institutionalised approaches.<sup>5</sup>

SRASS (SA) tackles participation in an ad hoc manner. The young asylum seekers in its care have the opportunity to voice their concerns at weekly house meetings with their carers and cultural support coordinators. Sensitive, personal issues can be discussed privately with SRASS (SA) staff. The young people use technology such as mobile phones and internet,

and social media such as skype and Facebook to communicate with family and friends in Adelaide and where possible, family and friends in their countries of origin. They also network with other members of their ethno-cultural groups. Community connections are recognised by SRASS as important to the ongoing wellbeing of the asylum seekers, and it encourages them to forge connections with for example, their religious groups and sports clubs. They are also encouraged to volunteer with organisations such as Meals on Wheels to help their integration into the wider community. Staff have the opportunity to contribute to staff meetings, and express their concerns at one-on-one meetings with their managers.

### Advocacy

UNICEF describes advocacy as 'linking the perspectives, concerns and voices of children, women and men from marginalized groups to upstream policy dialogue ... to create an enabling policy and legislative environment and allocate resources equitably in order to create and sustain social transformation.'<sup>6</sup>

LWB has started a process of actively lobbying decision makers through public discourse and input to policy issues about issues relating to in-home care and disability through position papers, presentations and research. It is however, less forthcoming on the subject of asylum seekers. SRASS (SA) has expressed their reticence to speak publicly about asylum seeker issues, given the inflammatory nature of the refugee debate and the Government's restrictive position on illegal immigration and 'no more boats' policy. A SRASS (SA) manager observed that LWB is careful to avoid going against a department which funds one of its programs. Sector-wide advocacy is undertaken by the Refugee Council and Settlement Council, while local and professional partnerships through groups such as CALD provide a softer option for SRASS (SA) to influence partners on key asylum seeker issues. However, LWB's restraint misses opportunities to support and help mitigate negative perceptions of asylum seekers in the public arena. A stakeholder observed that Australians generally don't receive enough information to make decisions about why or whether to support asylum seekers and refugees.

## 1.22 Critical review of communications

### Organisational values

The SRASS team appears to have an unstructured approach to 'respectful' communications without clear links between its objectives and communications activities. Its aspirations are short-term and linked to budget opportunities, with a top-down internal, corporate public relations approach to this humanitarian issue. Little attention has been paid to understanding the cultures, languages and perceptions of the young people with use of quantitative rather than qualitative feedback mechanisms.

From a participatory communications perspective, SRASS (SA) provides little opportunity for asylum seekers to voice their opinions or influence their circumstances. Its communications are generally conservative and safe, in contrast to the espoused direction of LWB's 'refreshed' values relating to 'relationship, imagination, courage, respect and responsiveness.'<sup>1</sup>

Based on these values, it appears that both SRASS (SA) and LWB build relationships to meet the needs of young people and lubricate funding opportunities, but when in doubt takes the money. Its collective imagination appears to be limited to communication programs which don't unsettle the status quo or take SRASS outside the realms of its courage into awkward grey areas of bureaucratic uncertainty. While it operates respectfully with its stakeholders, LWB does not tackle wider issues impacting on the wellbeing of the asylum seekers in its care.

### Organisational objectives

Furthermore, in terms of its communications, SRASS (SA) is not fully delivering on three of LWB's four strategic objectives:

- Partnering with people, so they can better influence their own life outcomes.
- Working to lessen systemic disadvantage in our community.
- Be a more efficient, sustainable and dynamic organisation with passionate and engaged people.

These strategic objectives can be measured against SRASS (SA's) communications activities, using Quarry and Ramirez's three coordinates of participatory communications: champions, context and communications.<sup>5</sup>

**Champions:** LWB prides itself on championing the causes of its clients, and SRASS (SA) staff are earnest and appear to be well-intentioned but as indicated above, are silent on political issues. However, they are not alone and during PNOA interviews, other stakeholders also pointed to funding and political constraints on public discourse around these issues. Even so, the SRASS (SA) team is doing little to identify and encourage other champions within the ranks of the asylum seekers themselves or their ethno-cultural communities who could potentially lead their cause or support them through their journey as asylum seekers. At best, SRASS (SA) looks to external national bodies to represent the plights and rights of asylum seekers, highlighting again that SRASS (SA) is playing safe instead of *courageously* and *creatively* tackling systemic disadvantage within the asylum seeker community.

**Context:** LWB's communication program does not respond effectively to the shifting political and internal context of the asylum seekers. In addition to the upheavals which they asylum seekers have navigated en route to Australia, they are currently faced with a revolving door of government policies, carers, staff, agencies and opportunities. This provides little stability or certainty from which the asylum seekers can develop trust and begin to develop their lives in Australia. SRASS (SA) as part of LWB in conjunction with other agencies could be more instrumental in working with the wider community to develop social safety nets to buffer the young people throughout these upheavals.

### Communications

Overall, SRASS (SA's) communications fall into the 'telling functions' of policy, public relations and organisational communications. There is little evidence of concerted participatory 'listening' or advocacy communications being employed by the team. Neither is SRASS (SA) partnering with the asylum seekers through its communications program to empower them to influence their own lives. Rather, SRASS (SA) is delivering services and communicating top down through layers of staff to the young people, with little opportunity for their feedback and participation.

In regards to LWB's strategic objective of being an 'efficient' organisation, LWB's internal communication processes were described as 'cumbersome' by one member of the SRASS (SA) team who added that communication with senior staff was erratic, while another said important client data was not accessible across the unit. Similarly, having multiple carers

within SRASS can be confusing for young people, who may ask the same questions several times and be shunted from agency to agency.

A final word on LWB's remaining Strategic Objective – 'to deliver on our commitment to Reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities as the first Australians and Traditional Owners of this land.' Firstly, LWB doesn't have a service area for Aboriginal people whereas it does for asylum seekers and refugees. There is no expenditure line for Aboriginals in LWB's 2013 budget, whereas there is one for asylum seekers. Despite this, only one project for asylum seekers was identified in its annual report for the same year – a surfing program in Victoria. Meanwhile, in the same time, LWB produced a Reconciliation Action Plan, joined the Reconciliation Action Circle, Reconciliation Partnership, developed the Cultural Connections National Framework, and participated in National Apology Day, National Close the Gap Day, National Sorry Day, National Reconciliation Week, and National RAP Showcase 2013. It also won the contract for the Preferred Provider Status from the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

That is a considerable effort for a client group which lacks a dedicated service area, and indicates yet again that indigenous involvement is perceived as safe and politically correct, while asylum seeker issues are not.

### **1.23 Recommendations for improvement**

There are several areas in which SRASS (SA) through LWB can improve communications functions in order to deliver more effectively and legitimately on organisational values and objectives.

In a nutshell, both SRASS (SA) and LWB's communications need to be genuinely participatory if asylum seekers are to build trust and feel empowered to engage with the Australian community. However, there are no quick fix solutions given economic and political pressures, and any change would be slow and unpredictable in the unfolding context of Australia's 'war on illegal immigrants'.

Further, changes in the way LWB approaches its communications would require a solid understanding of the purpose and direction it would take. In terms of its values and strategic objectives, the organisation supports notions of participation, advocacy and empowerment and changes should theoretically slip seamlessly into LWB's modus operandi. In reality, this is unlikely to occur given its concerns around funding and partnerships.

As such, internal advocacy would be a preliminary activity of the SRASS team, if it wants to secure organisational backing for more a participatory communication approach throughout the organisation.

#### Participatory communications

Assuming SRASS achieves this backing, it could then set up mechanisms to work alongside the young asylum seekers to understand – among other things - what they need to know and learn, how they learn, what inhibits them from participating, what inspires them, what they want and don't want, where the gaps and opportunities lie between what SRASS needs and aspires to do for asylum seekers, as well as potential champions.<sup>4</sup>

Other research would assess capacity of the organisation, identify more participatory ways of understanding the communication needs and opportunities of its other stakeholders, to ensure a more holistic framework the new program of communication activities.

Communication objectives would be developed against phases, and fed into a draft communication strategy, costed, teased out into players, actions, timeframes, resources and evaluation methods. The plan would be developed in tandem with key stakeholders to help

ensure they have more ownership of the communication process and are championed by an asylum seeker or members of their communities.

For the purposes of this assignment, the following communication examples are proposed on the basis of comments by SRASS (SA's) stakeholders during research for the PNOA.

They are indicative of the type of participatory communications activities which could be developed to support SRASS (SA's) work, particularly in terms of alleviating pressures on the mental health of the asylum seekers. As such all functions have participatory elements.

### Advocacy

LWB can:

- Prepare position papers and deliver inoffensive but accurate presentations about the mental health of young asylum seekers to key sector organisations.
- Investigate establishment of an asylum seeker research fund in partnership with an Australian University to look at mental health issues from the perspective of young asylum seekers.
- Profile its asylum seeker program more widely at a national level by placing positive stories in the media about people living in community detention.
- Increase lobbying efforts through the Refugee Council

SRASS (SA) can:

- Lobby LWB Board and executive to influence more proactive organisational participatory and advocacy communications.
- Investigate and work with partners to establish a peak asylum and refugee organisation in South Australia to deliver joint messages back to the Australian Government, and lobby as a group for change. This would diffuse impact and repercussions' for individual organisations and ensure a more consolidated and impacting response to issues of concern within the sector.
- Strengthen its support for CALD, working collaboratively with partners to identify more effective strategies to manage mental health issues affecting young asylum seekers.
- Work with schools and wider community to find ways to integrate young asylum seekers, break down barriers, and build support for them through curriculum, interpersonal avenues and community events.

- Develop local partnerships with members of asylum seekers' own networks, to reinforce linkages between cultures and communities, support integration, alleviate isolation, and build greater acceptance of the young people.
- Form a working party of local school and community representatives to drive these initiatives.

### Policies

- Review all new communication initiatives and underpin them with supporting policies and procedures which embed a participatory approach to bottom-up communications into the organisation.
- Develop policies and procedures to support new asylum seekers initiatives.

### Public relations

- Develop a more proactive and accessible public relations platform through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, skype and mobile phones so public can take more active role in co-creating messages and meaning around asylum seekers. These virtual communities are potential ambassadors for LWB and lobbyists for its asylum seekers and can help drive public discourse and form collaborations which support them.
- Review coverage of asylum seekers issues in LWB communication materials for sensitivity, appropriateness and exposure.
- Develop Welcome Events and Welcome Kits for asylum seekers in culture-appropriate format including information about rights, advocacy, options, complaints and feedback processes at LWB.

### Organisational communications

- Feed staff communications upwards through consultative groups, cross-organisational committees, peer reflections, retreats and voluntary think tanks.
- Introduce personal interfaces between upper management and operational workers.
- Review SRASS (SA's) internal communication processes to ensure its efficiency and effectiveness.
- Invite house champions to work with staff to develop inter-house social events, 'house' Facebook chat room, educational workshops and communication materials.
- Introduce photo stories and video blogs for asylum seekers to feedback their thoughts and concerns about LWB's services.

- Set up more frequent meetings between carers of individual houses, and between houses.
- Develop an electronic records management system for asylum seeker information

#### Educational communications

- Introduce asylum seeker awareness training for staff.
- Introduce asylum seeker-specific mental health and crises care training for carers through LWB's registered training organisation.
- Work with young people to understand their personal and cultural learning styles as a basis for future educational activities.
- Develop educational programs in collaboration with asylum seekers to determine what interests to them.
- Provide opportunities for collaborative and cooperative learning with the option of teaching each other.
- Consider opportunities for edutainment and participatory education such as playback theatre, and role playing / simulation.

## **2. PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

### **2.1 Communication framework**

#### **2.11 Rationale**

SRASS (SA) has provided services to asylum seekers through contracts with DIBP and Red Cross for several years. Its recent PNOA indicated the asylum seekers are suffering high incidences of mental health episodes which are exacerbated by uncertainty, negative perceptions around asylum seekers, separation from family, and impacts of the Australian Government's restrictive immigration policies. It also found LWB's communications program does not effectively support asylum seekers in the area of health and wellbeing.

This communication strategy seeks to build organisational capacity and community and political support to mitigate factors impacting negatively on the wellbeing of asylum seekers. While the strategy focuses on youths under LWB's guardianship, it will have flow-on benefits for the wider sector.

In doing so, this strategy adopts a participatory approach to communications which reflects the voices, and is shaped by the ideas, of young asylum seekers themselves.

This approach will empower the young people to influence communications and decision making within the organisation leading to programs that are more closely aligned with their needs.

#### **2.12 Communication objectives**

The following communication objectives describe the relationship between communication activities and the asylum seeker issue.

They indicate the anticipated change in stakeholders' knowledge, attitudes and behaviours as a result of the participatory communications program and provide a basis for its evaluation.<sup>7</sup>

1. LWB's participatory communications strategy builds organisational, community and government support for asylum seekers in community detention
2. The health and wellbeing of SRASS (SA's) asylum seekers improves through heightened collaboration within the sector

3. SRASS (SA's) asylum seekers are actively supported by local communities and organisations
4. Asylum seekers are more feel accepted and understood by the Australian public
5. LWB's internal communications are streamlined to support participatory approaches and its SRASS program
6. LWB policies, guidelines and training programs support participatory communications and its SRASS program.

### 2.13 Communication functions by phase

All communications functions will be researched, planned, implemented and reviewed as part of this communication strategy.

	Research	Plan	Implement	Review
Participatory	✓	✓	✓	✓
Advocacy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Education	✓	✓	✓	✓
Organisation	✓	✓	✓	✓
PR	✓	✓	✓	✓
Policy	✓	✓	✓	✓

### 2.14 Audiences and methods

The audiences and methods identified in the table below have been informed by the recent PNOA and associated research on behalf of SRASS (SA). Further research would refine and enlarge this table.

Domains have been allocated against each method, however responsibilities will be collaborated across the organisation as needs.

While not specified, communication activities will be informed and developed on an ongoing basis in tandem with asylum seekers and relevant stakeholders.

AUDIENCE	METHOD	OUTCOME	DOMAIN	FUNCTION
<b>LWB BOARD AND EXECUTIVE</b>	Informal and formal briefings and workshops about participatory and advocacy communications	Board and executive adopt more proactive participatory and advocacy communications	SRASS (SA) and LWB Strategy and Engagement	Advocacy
<b>ASYLUM SEEKERS</b>	Series of PNOAs using photo stories and video blogs program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understand learning and cultural needs of asylum seekers</li> </ul>	Educational activities tailored to cultural and learning styles of asylum seekers	SRASS (SA)	Educational communications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine educational interest</li> </ul>	Educational programs match asylum seeker's interests	SRASS (SA)	Educational communications
	Collaborative and cooperative learning program	Asylum seekers learn through participatory education	SRASS (SA)	Educational communications
	Playback theatre, and role playing / simulation education program	Asylum seekers learn through edutainment and participatory education	SRASS (SA)	Educational communications
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inter-house social events program.</li> <li>Facebook chat room</li> </ul>	Asylum seekers social communication improved through social media	SRASS (SA) Strategy & Engagement	Organisational
	Welcome events and Welcome Kits in culture-appropriate format about rights, advocacy, options, complaints and LWB feedback processes	Asylum seekers welcomed and empowered	Strategy & Engagement	Public relations

<b>CARERS</b>	Asylum seeker-specific mental health and crises care training package	Asylum seekers receive appropriate mental health and crises care	SRASS (SA)  LWB registered training organisation.	Education
	Monthly, inter-house carer meetings	Networking between carers improves service delivery	SRASS (SA)	Organisational
<b>LWB STAFF</b>	Asylum seeker and cross-cultural awareness training	LWB staff relate effectively with asylum seekers	SRASS (SA)	Education
	Electronic records management system for asylum seeker information	Improved information and service delivery for asylum seekers	SRASS (SA)  LWB Corporate Services	Organisational
	Consultative groups, cross-organisational committees, peer reflections, retreats and voluntary think tanks program	LWB staff collaborate and influence organisational decisions	Executive  Managers	Organisational
	Informal meetings and social events with executive, management and operational staff	Improved teamwork across organisation	Executive  Managers	Organisational
	SRASS (SA) information systems review	Internal communication processes more efficient	SRASS (SA)	Organisational
	Participatory communication policies	Participatory communications embedded into organisation.	SRASS (SA)  Strategy & Engagement  Human Resources	Organisational
	LWB asylum seekers policies	Asylum seeker initiatives and embedded into organisation	SRASS (SA)  Strategy & Engagement  Human Resources	Organisational
<b>LWB AND SRASS (SA'S) PUBLIC</b>	Social media platform of Facebook Twitter, skype and mobile phones	Public informed and participates in asylum seeker debates.	Strategy & Engagement	Public relations
	Positive, sensitive LWB communication products	Public perceives asylum seekers	SRASS (SA)  Engagement	Public relations

		positively	& Strategy	
	Positive asylum seekers stories in mainstream and online media	Public perceives asylum seekers positively	SRASS (SA) Engagement & Strategy	Advocacy
<b>SRASS (SA) SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS</b>	Working party of local school and community representatives	Asylum seekers supported through community and school initiatives	SRASS (SA)	Advocacy
<b>SRASS (SA'S) ASYLUM SEEKER NETWORKS</b>	Asylum seeker network of champions	Asylum seekers accepted and championed in community	SRASS (SA)	Advocacy
<b>CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE (CALD) GROUP</b>	Asylum seeker mental health coalition	Asylum seekers' improved health and wellbeing	SRASS (SA)	Advocacy
<b>AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT</b>	Peak SA asylum seeker and refugee organisation	SA asylum seeker network lobbies more effectively	SRASS (SA)	Advocacy
<b>AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES</b>	Asylum Seeker Mental Health Research Fund	Asylum seekers' mental health understood and profiled with academics and government	LWB CEO LWB Board Strategy & Engagement	Advocacy
	Asylum seeker policy and advocacy submissions	LWB's position on asylum seeker influences decision makers	LWB CEO Strategy & Engagement	Advocacy
<b>REFUGEE COUNCIL</b>	Asylum seeker reports and information	LWB's position on asylum seeker influences decision makers	SRASS (SA) LWB CEO Strategy & Engagement	Advocacy

### 3.0 OPERATIONAL WORKPLAN

#### 3.1 Timeframe

Activity	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	
<b>Research</b>	<b>2014</b>						<b>2015</b>										
Seek executive team support																	
Seek Board endorsement and funding to develop communication strategy																	
PNOA asylum seekers																	
PNOA staff and partners																	
Consultations communities and schools																	
Review findings with key players, define objectives																	
Scope actions, methods, processes, timeline																	
Scope capacity and resources																	
Develop draft strategy																	
Review draft strategy with stakeholders, refine																	
Seek Board approval and resources to progress plan																	
<b>Planning</b>																	
Brief departments and delegate																	
Staff briefings																	
Engage contractors																	
Develop communication tools																	
Develop internal systems and policies																	
Develop external structures and processes																	
<b>Implement</b>																	
<b>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation</b>																	
<i>Refine strategy</i>																	
<i>Seek Board approvals recurring funding</i>																	
<b>Implement revised strategy</b>																	

### **3.3 Resource implications**

A sum \$10,000 is required to prepare the communications strategy, inclusive of PNOAs, material and staff resources (one P/T staff @ three months)

The resource implications of developing, implementing and measuring the communication strategy will be identified within the final strategy.

However, most of the new initiatives are labour rather than finance intensive and the estimated costs of developing and implementing material resources is expected to be approximately \$150,000.

## References

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