

## 10th Anniversary Special Edition

In November 2007 Melaleuca Refugee Centre will celebrate 10 years of incorporation as an organisation providing services to newly arrived families from refugee background and survivors of torture and trauma.

This extraordinary journey began in 1994, when the Federal Government organised training workshops for volunteers interested in working with people affected by torture and other traumatic experiences. From this humble beginning the seed was sown for Melaleuca to develop into an organisation that symbolises new growth, resilience strength and beauty. Hence adopting the melaleuca tree as its emblem.

So, for more than a decade the Melaleuca Refugee Centre has grown to represent the welcoming face of Australia to humanitarian arrivals in the Northern Territory.

Born out of the voluntary commitment of people in Darwin to provide a safe place to people who had endured upheaval, war and the violation of their basic human rights, Melaleuca combines the competency and commitment a professional team with the generosity and ability of a vibrant and energetic body of volunteers to provides assistance to people in the UNCHR humanitarian program setting up a new life in the Northern Territory.

Unique among similar service in Australia, Melaleuca offers an integrated approach to addressing settlement needs by hosting a range of services and programs under the same roof. These comprise:

- on arrival reception, orientation to the new environment, socialisation, information and referral, housing support, referrals to health and social security services;
- holistic therapeutic approaches including counselling for torture and trauma; emotional support; psychosocial connection and advocacy; and
- community development approaches including capacity building, information sharing, community education, liaison and awareness.

Underpinning these services and programs supporting people from refugee background is a vibrant network of partnerships between Melaleuca Refugee Centre, a large and enthusiastic body of volunteers, and a dynamic collaboration with government and non-government organisations.

The Melaleuca journey has not always been smooth or untroubled, nonetheless, it has enriched the lives of most us who have been involved with it in different capacities. We would like to invite you to share our memories, celebrate our victories and be part of the next phase of the journey.



### Celebrate with us

To kick off the celebrations of our 10th anniversary we are hosting an Open Day at our premises in the Rapid Creek Business Village from 10:00 am, November 16.

The Larrakia People will welcome guests to their country and to the celebrations; we will hear from community members with refugee experience and after a few official addresses we will also launch our website.

Visitors will be able to interact with staff and volunteers, enjoy the displays that have been assembled for the occasion and contribute to some of our interactive displays.

Saturday November 17, we will continue to celebrate with music and dance at the Portuguese and Timorese Club in Marrara from 7:00pm. Community members are welcome to join us. Drinks will be available at the bar, please bring some food to share.





## From the Director's desk

Welcome to our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration 1997- 2007. I would like to thank everybody who has been involved with Melaleuca Refugee Centre or previously the Torture and Trauma Survivor Service NT over the last 10 years. There certainly have been a great number of people involved to welcome and provide services to newly arrived refugees and longer established communities from refugee background. I would like to thank all current and previous staff, all volunteers, current and previous, committee members and the Darwin community to make our service what it is now.

We have been through many changes over the last 10 years and it certainly has never been boring, from humble beginnings of 2 staff members in 1997 to an organisation employing over 35 staff members. The centre has grown to accommodate the increase in arrivals and changed and adapted to the cultural mix of our refugee communities.

The Torture and Trauma Survivor Service NT was incorporated in November 1997. At the time only a few people from refugee backgrounds arrived each year, which made it hard to develop sustainable communities. Many people left to join family or community down south. Later when arrival number increased the refugee communities became more established, supporting each other and are now contributing to the cultural mix of Darwin.

After seeing only a few African faces in the community now they are part of the Darwin landscape. Currently we have extended our welcome to families from Burma who will also become part of the local cultural landscape.

From only providing torture and trauma counselling services in 1997 we are now a service with many different programs: settlement, counselling, groups for children & young people in schools, community development; and the only service in Australia to provide all these under one roof. In that sense we are a truly integrated service, never short of new ideas to create more innovative programs.

Plans for the future include consolidating our enormous growth and diversifying our funding base. But most importantly we will continue to provide services and advocacy for people who have endured human right abuses and have been displaced.

*Lava Kohaupt*



### Strong people, Strong stories.

A textile art project that brought together people with refugee experience and remote community people from south-east Arnhem Land.



Donald Unzi addresses people attending World Refugee Day.



Volunteers are an integral part of the settlement experience for newly-arrived families.

## From the Chair

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of Melaleuca Refugee Centre. Melaleuca has come a long way since its incorporation as the Torture and Trauma Survivor Service NT in 1997. From a small staff of 2 providing torture and trauma counseling services, the past 10 years has seen Melaleuca expand to become one of the most successful, comprehensive and respected service providers for refugee communities in Australia.

Melaleuca's growth has stemmed from strong leadership, the development of innovative programs and responsiveness to the needs of Darwin's newly arrived refugees and people from a refugee background. It is this commitment to service provision and cultural diversity demonstrated by Melaleuca's dedicated staff, volunteers, committee members and supporters that will guarantee our ongoing capacity to welcome and support refugee families well into the future.

I would like to congratulate everyone, past and present, who has been involved in Melaleuca's development and wish you all a very happy 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

*Natalie Gray*



## The journey so far

- 1994 - Following a public consultation Torture and Trauma Counselling Service starts in Darwin
- 1996 - Julian Smith is appointed as coordinator while the service is under the auspices of NTCOSS
- 1997 - Incorporation of the Torture and Trauma Service of the Northern Territory. The service gains financial independence from NTCOSS and becomes member of the National Forum of Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT)
- 1997 - Uniting Church funds the employment of a community development worker
- 1998 - Relocation to Phoenix Street Nightcliff
- 1998 - Jenny Mitchell is appointed as coordinator
- 1999 - Stick 'n' Stone Art Project
- 1999 - Timor Leste Tent Village
- 2000 - Helen Pavlin is appointed as coordinator
- 2000 - TEDGP funds "Guide to GPs Working with Refugees"
- 2001 - Pam Hartgerink is appointed as coordinator
- 2001 - Strong People Strong Stories Project
- 2002 - IHSS contract secured to provide settlement services
- 2002 - Relocation to Pavonia Way Nightcliff
- 2003 - Name change to Melaleuca Refugee Centre
- 2003 - Families in Cultural Transition Project
- 2003 - Mick Fox is appointed as director
- 2003 - National Volunteer Award Winner
- 2004 - Mark Wohling is appointed as director
- 2004 - Lava Kohaupt is appointed as director
- 2005 - Relocation to Rapid Creek Business Village
- 2005 - Welcome to Country Project
- 2006 - Timor Leste crisis brings evacuees to Darwin
- 2006 - Melaleuca grows to 27 full-time staff offering an integrated approach to the Humanitarian Program comprising Settlement, Counselling, Advocacy and Community Development
- 2007 - 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of incorporation celebrations

