

SSI Annual Report 2017-18

Our vision:

to achieve a society that values the diversity of its people and actively provides support to ensure meaningful social and economic participation.

Our mission:

we support newcomers and other vulnerable Australians to prosper. we build our sector's capacity and create positive, social outcomes with government, corporations and communities.

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2017-18 Impact

- 4,200+ refugees were supported in the early stages of their settlement journey
- 26,975 clients came through the doors of SSI's four primary offices
- 300+ volunteers contributed approximately 58,000 hours of time
- 9,992 families connected with their community during Community Hubs activities
- 3,932 people seeking asylum were supported to live in the community
- 5,500+ people received assistance with their employment goals
- 2,300+ media stories about SSI were each read by an average of 5,000 people
- 1,100+ people secured employment with SSI's support, including 700+ people from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds
- 100+ entrepreneurs with a disability or from refugee backgrounds were supported to establish and expand small businesses
- 100+ employers partnered with SSI's employment and enterprise team
- 30,000+ individual sessions were held with migrants and refugees through the NSW Settlement Partnership
- 190+ young people engaged with Youth Collective activities
- 870+ refugee families received support securing long-term accommodation
- 327 people were supported as artists or participants in SSI Arts and Culture project
- 4,737 people with disability and 1,006 family members and carers were supported towards their goals
- At least 165 children each day were cared for by SSI's Multicultural Foster Care program
- \$90,000+ in educational scholarships awarded to refugees by SSI and Allianz Australia

Highlights

August 2017 – Support for newcomer families

SSI's Cultural Shift conference explored new and innovative measures to maximise the chances of successful settlement for refugee and migrant families.

September 2017 – Inaugural SSI Mosaic Gala

Over a night of entertainment, food and music, the SSI Mosaic Gala raised awareness and funds for SSI programs that help people to overcome education and employment barriers.

September 2017 – People with disability shine in storybook

The voices of people with disability were at the heart of an Ability Links NSW (ALNSW) storybook, launched by NSW Disability Services and Multiculturalism Minister Ray Williams on behalf of SSI.

October 2017 – Jobs for refugees

More than 500 job seekers of refugee background received employment advice and guidance at the Refugee Job Start: Information Expo, organised by SSI, the Federal Department of Employment, the NSW Department of Industry and Multicultural NSW.

November 2017 – SSI CEO receives top honour

SSI CEO Violet Roumeliotis was named as the 2017 Telstra Australian Business Woman of the Year – selected from finalists across Australia who are achieving great things in their respective fields.

November 2017 – New Beginnings Festival in Spring

Sydney's newest community members took centre stage at Darling Harbour for the SSI New Beginnings Festival in Spring, where hundreds gathered to enjoy the talents of people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

January 2018 – Community Innovation Fund

SSI awarded a total of \$50,000 to the first six recipients of grants from its ground-breaking Community Innovation Fund, which honours the unsung heroes who offer grassroots support to newly arrived communities.

March 2018 – SSI expands

New England MP and former deputy prime minister Barnaby Joyce opened SSI's office in the new refugee settlement region of Armidale. This was one of five new office openings during the year.

March 2018 – International Women's Day at SSI

An SSI event for International Women's Day brought together people from all walks of life for a day of food, dance, music and celebrating the achievements of women from around the world.

April 2018 – Conference addresses disability challenges

The DiverseAbility NDIS Inclusion Conference brought together more than 200 delegates to tackle the big issues and challenges facing people with disability from CALD backgrounds.

June 2018 – Refugee Week launch

Ashod Palouljian, an entrepreneur supported by SSI on arrival in Australia, shared his story with Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton at a special Refugee Week event in Canberra, supported by SSI.

Jun 2018 – SSI's local knowledge goes global

At the annual UNHCR NGO Consultations in Geneva, SSI's Yamamah Agha played a pivotal role in influencing global refugee policy through her role as Rapporteur.

From the Chair + CEO

As an organisation, SSI must be front-footed in our approach to emerging trends and expectations — learning from other sectors, from academia and research, and from our counterparts overseas. SSI and its board observes and responds to these developments to ensure we remain a standard setter in our sector.

This past year, SSI's learning and development journey hugely benefited from a range of very significant opportunities that reflect this imperative. First and foremost, we have a strong leader in Violet. She and her team have availed themselves of opportunities here and overseas to both showcase SSI's work and to bring back information to further our growth.

Well-deserved accolades for Violet — including 2017 Telstra Business Woman of the Year and 2018 InStyle Women of Style Award for Charity and Community — not only demonstrate the esteem in which she is held, but they have also increased awareness of SSI's work and garnered support for newcomers to Australia.

With the successful acquisition of a number of new contracts, we have increased our work on risk management, improving systems that will serve us well into the future. Our service standards meet the requirements of our funding bodies and accreditation standards, speaking to our transparency and performance. Always referencing our own goals against that of external benchmarking ensures we also continue to meet community expectations. Other ways include being in dialogue with sector collaborators through initiatives such as the DiverseAbility Conference.

We need to keep reflecting on how we can maximise our efforts in the service of our communities. Our growing international protection work and the appointment of a Victorian State Director for Strategy, Growth and Partnerships allow us to envision a future with increased national and international possibilities. At present, this is seed work and will be undertaken thoughtfully, responsibly, and with respect for other services on the ground. We are looking at gaps and opportunities to help the people we serve; there is no value in duplicating efforts.

The extraordinary growth over recent years has required us to keep reviewing the skills needed at board level. We are introducing board evaluations this year to ensure that our people and processes will serve the needs of a fast-paced, high functioning, innovative organisation.

I continue to value the balance of our independent and member-based director contributions, as we explore new frontiers together, and look forward to the year ahead.

SSI Chair Elisabeth Shaw

A focus on sustainability and strengthening our systems in 2017-18 has left SSI in a better position than ever as we enter the new financial year.

Extensive business planning has led to the implementation of a new strategic and business plan that builds on the solid foundation of our successes to date and sets out a

roadmap to take SSI to our next stage of growth and maturity. It focuses on four strategic priorities that reflect the breadth and scale of our work in 2017 and beyond for more information).

We have also realigned our organisational structure to capitalise on opportunities for growth. We remain a client-centred organisation but with an improved capability that will enhance our work with clients, members, partners and other stakeholders. The reorganisation will see SSI adopt a flatter structure that reflects our strategy, addresses key risks and highlights organisational priorities.

Another cornerstone of the development of stronger systems at SSI has been an IT review that will see our organisation push ahead with an integrated digital and technology strategy. These organisational improvements will give us the flexibility to take advantage of new commercial opportunities, along with a more mobile workforce, additional support for our rapidly expanding geographic footprint, and more meaningful data analytics. For SSI to go to the next level, we must use integrated digital solutions to enhance service delivery and to improve the experiences of the clients, donors and stakeholders who engage with our organisation.

To enhance our organisational sustainability, SSI also made inroads into new geographic areas in 2017-18, including our first interstate move into Victoria and the launch of several new offices in regional NSW. We do our best work when we are close to our clients and partners. Rapid expansion in our refugee settlement and employment has seen us co-design bespoke partnerships with our MRC members and secure new premises in Liverpool, where we are supporting vulnerable individuals and families close to their communities and creating new relationships with local employers and other service providers.

After spending 2017-18 focused on systems and sustainability, SSI is now navigating a new path of ambitious but exciting change and new horizons in the year ahead.

SSI CEO Violet Roumeliotis

Where we're heading

During the year, SSI embarked on a new forward plan that will guide our organisation into the next stage of growth and maturity. Our 2017-2020 Strategic Plan focuses on deepening our engagement with clients, staff and stakeholders, while also ensuring our long-term sustainability against a backdrop of uncertainty, complexity and increased competition.

SSI is now in its 17th year. We've multiplied from a small specialist organisation into a large, diverse business, delivering services to both newcomers to Australia and many other vulnerable communities. This plan builds on the solid foundation of our successes to date and sets out a roadmap to take SSI to our 20-year anniversary.

Our last strategic plan guided us through our growth to where we are now as a leading not-for-profit and social business. We should acknowledge and be proud of our successes as an organisation: not only are we now one of the largest settlement services organisations in Australia, we also support many other individuals and families who are at a point in their lives where they are experiencing a vulnerability.

A vast amount of work has gone into our new strategic plan. Following an extensive discovery process, consultation with the broader SSI ecosystem, and thorough research and analysis, we narrowed our focus to **four strategic objectives** that consider and address the many challenges and opportunities that await us. These objectives will strengthen our organisation, help us to shape and influence our environment and equip our organisation to move to our next stage of development:

- SSI is a leader in collaboration and social innovation
- Our organisation and its governance are positioned for sustainable growth
- SSI's clients and communities are empowered and at the centre of our service
- SSI is a financially sustainable and fit-for-purpose organisation.

New mission guides SSI

SSI's vision is as relevant today as it was when first adopted, and our values continue to inspire and guide the work we do every day. But our organisation has outgrown its original mission, which we have now adjusted to reflect the breadth and scale of our work in 2017 and beyond.

We'll continue to build on the collaboration and innovation we're so strongly associated with. We'll invest in our organisational capability, to position us for sustainability and to adapt to our changing environment. Importantly, our clients will remain firmly at the centre of our work, and their voices will be heard in the planning, implementation and evaluation of our services. Funders expect us to monitor, measure and report on our outcomes, which means becoming systematic in the way we collect and use data and evaluate our services and programs.

We're confident this plan will help SSI to continue to adapt, consolidate our strength and invest in developing the capabilities we will need for continued success in a changing world.

SSI's new Business Plan

Following completion of the strategic plan and formal acceptance by the Board, SSI initiated a rigorous business planning process using external facilitators, with the end goal of developing a business plan with whole-of-organisation focus, rather than programmatic, or division based responses. The resulting business plan encompasses five core strategic goal objectives:

- Our services, referral practice and pathways are responsive to client and participant strengths, priorities and needs. Our responsiveness and evidence-based approach will be gauged by regular client/participant feedback, more transparent referral processes, and community input into research and evaluation across key program areas.
- SSI has achieved operational excellence through implementing and embedding a trauma-informed care framework that philosophically and operationally aligns our culture and practices to our organisational values.
- SSI is a sustainable and scalable organisation, with diversified revenue sources and producing a net surplus for targeted reinvestment in our mission.
- SSI maintains and builds effective stakeholder relationships that enhance the organisation's reputation, strategic priorities and client services.

- We enjoy a high-performance culture, achieving substantial results for our participants and clients and for those who entrust us to undertake our work. Our workforce diversity reflects the communities we work with, and our values are aligned to SSI's purpose and mission.

What we do

SSI is a sustainable social business with a local, national and international footprint. We take an integrated approach to supporting newcomers and other vulnerable Australians to realise their potential. Through collaboration and innovation, our services wrap around individuals and families to capitalise on their strengths, identify their priorities and meet their current and future needs.

Each person we support has a different journey through SSI because the support we offer is tailored to their unique strengths and requirements. Working hand-in-hand with governments, corporations and communities, we supported the 26,975 individuals who came through the doors of SSI's main offices in 2017-18, along with thousands of others who engaged with our members and partners.

We provide services that level the playing field for people who are at a point in their lives where they are experiencing a vulnerability, such as forced displacement or unemployment. The voices of the individuals and families SSI supports influence our work at all levels of the organisation. By operating efficiently, we reinvest our surpluses in new and innovative initiatives that meet gaps we've identified through feedback from service users.

We work with vulnerable communities to build capacity and enable them to overcome inequality. SSI is an advocate for the people and communities it represents and serves. Through the work we do, we empower people to change their lives. Through our advocacy and representation, we influence and shape ideas and policy, and we change people's minds.

The people our organisation works with don't just survive — they prosper.

Meet Jubran and Maggie. Both Jubran and Maggie came through SSI's doors as new arrivals to Australia — seeking support with basic needs such as accommodation, language and employment. Because of the wraparound, strength-based approach SSI takes to service delivery, our support goes beyond these immediate requirements and helps individuals to realise their dreams.

Meet Maggie

Originally from Syria, Maggie is a highly experienced white-collar worker, who came to Australia in 2017 as a refugee. Through SSI's Humanitarian Support Program (HSP), she was supported on arrival to Australia with airport pickup, short-term accommodation, community orientation and health assessments.

Maggie was referred to SSI's Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP), where she obtained work experience and subsequently gained casual employment as a receptionist. With support from across SSI, Maggie quickly completed an English language qualification and embarked on a certificate in business administration, which will support her long-term

goal of finding a permanent job in an area where she can use skills she gained in her long career as an accountant.

The mother of two also participated in SSI excursions and Community Engagement activities designed to connect newcomers with the Australian community.

“On Australia Day, we saw some Indigenous Australians for the first time. It was nice to see their dancing and learn about their culture. We also saw some Aboriginal paintings at the museum. We now know more about Australian culture, which has helped us. Now I feel that, one day, I will be Australian too. I feel that I’m a part of this community.”

Meet Jubran

Like Maggie, Jubran also came to Australia as a refugee. A car accident as a young adult left Jubran in a wheelchair, so along with the settlement support he received from SSI, Jubran was referred on to SSI’s Ability Links program and RESP.

With collaboration from staff in three areas, Jubran has secured long-term accommodation, enrolled to study English, applied for disability support, obtained a driver’s licence, begun studying two vocational education courses, found casual employment, connected with a local community table tennis team, and engaged with the Diversity and Disability Alliance (DDA), where he has undertaken training and now mentors other people with disability.

As a DDA mentor and now an ambassador for Ability Links, Jubran is on the path to achieving his goal of supporting people with disability to access employment and education opportunities.

“My life has changed totally. I am more independent. I know my rights. SSI’s support has increased my wellbeing and helped me to become more resilient. It has enabled and empowered me to gain experience and knowledge to reach my goal of supporting other people with disability and working in the sector,” he said.

Supporting newcomers

SSI provides crucial support to refugees and humanitarian entrants building new lives in Australia, with a strong focus on developing the skills and knowledge required to become self-reliant and active members of the Australian community.

The 2017-18 year marked an exciting period of change as the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) replaced both the Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) and Complex Case Support (CCS) programs.

Following a highly competitive tender process, SSI was successful in becoming one of only five service providers delivering the program across Australia. Not only did SSI successfully re-tender to deliver HSP services in the Sydney region, but we also expanded our service to include the NSW Regional contract area, which includes Newcastle, Coffs Harbour and the new refugee settlement location of Armidale.

With a renewed focus on English language, education and employment outcomes, HSP provides support to refugees for up to 18 months after their arrival in Australia. In 2017-2018, SSI supported more than 4,200 refugees in the early stages of their settlement journey.

To support our work in regional areas, SSI expanded its operations, opening offices in Newcastle, Coffs Harbour and Armidale. SSI has also introduced support workers and

administrators into the HSP structure, enabling staff to focus on achieving better settlement outcomes for individuals and families.

The transition to HSP brought new challenges and opportunities. SSI worked proactively to build awareness around HSP service delivery and address areas of concern with key stakeholders. The smooth transition into HSP would not have been possible without the ongoing professionalism, dedication and passion of the HSP team.

SSI's tailor-designed orientation sessions are another key component of the new program. Service providers are required to build upon an orientation framework that covers 10 core settlement topics, with SSI developing a specialised, in-language program, featuring input and collaboration from external stakeholders such as NSW Police, Legal Aid and NSW Refugee Health Service. During the year, 3,152 clients attended 252 orientation sessions in Sydney alone.

SSI was also honoured to support HSP Program Manager Yamamah Agha, who was selected by UNHCR for the important role of 2018 Rapporteur at its annual NGO Consultations in Geneva.

Further along the settlement journey

During 2017-18, SSI and its partners held more than 30,000 individual client sessions with refugees and migrants who are further along in their settlement journeys, through the NSW Settlement Partnership (NSP).

Led by SSI, the NSP has seen a successful collaboration of 23 highly experienced settlement providers, which offer settlement support across much of Sydney and parts of regional NSW to new migrants and refugees who have exited HSP.

In its fourth year of operation, the NSP reached new heights, providing referral, advice and information in 5,424 instances. To date, the NSP has delivered more than 480 immigration assistance sessions, 92 leadership training workshops and engaged more than 350 volunteers. In its lead role, SSI has conducted 68 visits to partners and run more than 50 activities to engage and strengthen NSP relationships.

The NSP continues to focus on supporting people to achieve outcomes in employment, English and education. For example, during the year, the NSP developed and endorsed the NSP Employment, English, and Education and Training (EEET) Strategic Framework to guide the operations and reinforce consistent approaches in this area.

Another avenue through which SSI supports newcomers to Australia is the Community Hubs Program — part of a national initiative that serves as a gateway to connect families with each other, with their school, and with services. SSI is the support agency for 20 hubs in the South West and West Sydney regions.

This year, the hubs engaged on average 2,674 participants each school term, connected more than 100 participants to employment, and facilitated structured training for more than 800 participants in areas including English language, first aid and education. In total, the team supported close to 10,000 families to connect with their communities and services.

People seeking asylum

The Status Resolution Support Service (SRSS), which provides support to people seeking asylum who are living in the community, was redefined by the Department of Home Affairs during the year, with a greater focus now being placed on assisting people to overcome employment barriers.

In supporting individuals and families through the challenges associated with the redefined program, SSI has been a leader in collaborating with the community organisations to assist people who are no longer eligible to receive services. For example, more than 100 people attended a civic leaders' forum in June 2018, which was co-designed by SSI, in collaboration with other agencies, to raise awareness and support for people exited from SRSS.

A great testament to the noteworthy work of SSI's SRSS staff is the contract extension received in late in 2017, which will take the program through until June 2020.

During the year, SSI's SRSS team supported 3,932 people seeking asylum. Of these, 737 people were supported into employment, 135 were granted a Temporary Protection Visa, and 539 received a Safe Haven Enterprise Visa.

Meet Mahdia

Mahdia is originally from Iran, where attending school was all but impossible due to social and financial barriers. That all changed when she came to Australia by boat in 2013 with her mother and brothers.

SSI provided Mahdia and her family with essential support while their application for refugee status was assessed. Best of all, she began high school and subsequently secured a full university scholarship to study nursing. Mahdia is now almost finished her degree and working part-time as a childcare educator.

"I wish people would understand that refugee is just a label and underneath it all we are all humans, we are all equal, and refugees have dreams and hopes for a better future like everyone else does," she said.

Meet Mania

Mania Terzabian's long-term aim for life in Australia is to work as a case manager, helping other refugees through the early days of settlement. She's checked off the first step — studying a Certificate IV in Community Services — and is now on to the second: volunteering one day a week with SSI to build up her experience supporting refugees. Originally from Aleppo, Mania and her family were supported by SSI on arrival to Australia, where staff greeted the family at the airport and took them to a house they lived in for the first few weeks in Australia.

"We were very happy. Our kids thought the house was like a castle. They were saying, We love Australia. Mum, look at these roads, look at this.'

I was so happy for them," Ms Terzabian said.

"They'd left their friends, their school, their clubs, their soccer team. But when we stayed in that house, they built relationships with the neighbours and played soccer together. They didn't understand each other because they spoke different languages, but through body language and signalling, they built their first relationships in Australia."

Achieving economic independence

Finding a job is a crucial step in the journey towards social and economic independence, but many of the vulnerable communities SSI works with require tailored support to overcome barriers to securing sustainable, meaningful employment.

The SSI Employment and Enterprise Services team provides individually tailored employment support that generates real outcomes for refugees and people seeking asylum, youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, long-term unemployed job seekers, people with a disability and their carers, and parents of young children.

This area continued to grow in leaps and bounds in 2017-18, with SSI establishing new programs for people with a disability and parents of young children seeking employment. We now deliver 15 employment and small business start-up programs (for information on our Ignite initiative and social enterprises).

During the year, we supported more than 5,500 people across these programs, including more than 1,100 people who were supported to secure employment — over 700 of whom came from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds.

Collaboration with employers forms a crucial part of how we deliver employment outcomes for the people we support. During 2017-18, we worked with more than 100 employers, including the NSW government, which employed more than 90 people from refugee backgrounds.

These partnerships provide a win-win for all parties. Job seekers secure meaningful, sustainable employment, while employers gain access to a diverse and often untapped talent pool.

To add value to our corporate partnerships, SSI offers recruitment advice and support that is tailored to the unique needs of both the business and their candidates.

For example, many newcomers to Australia don't perform to their full capacity during traditional recruitment processes due to barriers including limited English literacy or a lack of knowledge about local workplace practices.

In addition to working with clients to overcome these challenges, SSI supports employers to tailor their recruitment processes to bypass these barriers. This includes, for example, swapping traditional telephone screening for a face-to-face workshop, where candidates can demonstrate soft skills relevant to the role, such as teamwork and the capacity to take directions.

Working with our members

SSI now delivers three employment programs in partnership with our member organisations. This local delivery service model has proved highly effective and allows us to provide tailored, local support for a large cohort of the people we support. With the Refugee Employment Support Program (RESP), for example, we are able to offer employment support to newly arrived refugees in their local areas by subcontracting to a number of our member organisations.

Drawing on our in-depth recruitment and employment experience, SSI supports our members to develop their own skills in this area, building on their existing expertise in working with newly arrived communities. We regularly convene delivery partner forums to share best practice, take an active role in developing training materials, and share job vacancies acquired through our network of corporate and employer partners.

Meet Safwan

Working at Woolworths is a little different to his previous job as a petroleum engineer, but Safwan has high career aspirations and believes that everyone needs to start somewhere.

Originally from Iraq, Sawfan was a petroleum engineer in the Middle East for 23 years, with experience in leading large government projects.

“Managing such large projects from start to finish taught me that even the best planner cannot predict the obstacles that can come up along the way, and what is important is to take the first step,” he said.

Along with 13 other people supported by SSI’s RESP team, Safwan was offered employment with Woolworths after participating in a three-week work experience program. Woolworths, in partnership with SSI and Community Corporate, has provided opportunities for newcomers to enter their business as part of their wider diversity and inclusion strategy and genuine commitment to have a workforce that reflects the local community.

Empowering young people

Employment, education and English are the key focuses of SSI’s youth programs in recognition of the unique barriers young people face in these areas.

During 2017-18, 190 young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds participated in 74 activities coordinated by the Youth Collective (YC) — an initiative of SSI and its member organisations that aims to improve service delivery outcomes for multicultural youth in NSW.

Through innovative and collaborative initiatives led by youth, YC supported young people to reach their goals in employment, education, English and extra-curricular activities. The annual 20 Voices Youth Symposium, for example, brought together 73 young people for a forum on employment, education and homelessness.

In 2017, the Newly Arrived Refugee Youth (NARY) project was launched — an early intervention project developed to minimise risks of youth disengaging from support services once they exit the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP). The project supports youth in the Liverpool and Fairfield areas to link with activities run by settlement services providers from the NSW Settlement Partnership (NSP). To date, more than 150 young people from refugee background have engaged in the project.

Securing stable, sustainable, meaningful work

During the year, SSI’s youth employment programs supported high numbers of disadvantaged young people to overcome extensive barriers and gain stable, meaningful employment.

Through the Youth Pathways and Placement Project (YPPP), SSI supported 80 disadvantaged youth aged between 18 and 24 years, offering paid work experience at one of SSI’s four social enterprises. Participants developed vocational skills relevant to industry and local labour market opportunities in areas including retail and customer service, marketing, production, hospitality, data entry and administration. SSI has achieved outstanding results for this pilot project, with 80 per cent of participants successfully transitioning into either stable employment or further education.

In just one year, SSI’s mainstream Youth Employment Program (YEP) worked with 200 young jobseekers to overcome barriers and gain employment. One hundred and fifteen participants have already secured external employment. The success of our approach in this area is demonstrated by participants’ success in retaining their employment long-term.

The successful outcomes of SSI's youth employment programs hinge on strong collaboration with employer partners and corporate trainers who facilitate a range of industry-specific training and employment opportunities. One notable example is Allianz Ladder, a pre-employment program delivered in partnership with Allianz Australia to offer work experience and cadetship opportunities to refugee youth. Other significant employers offering training and employment opportunities include Google, Atlassian, Commonwealth Bank, Booktopia, Service NSW and The Bread and Butter Project.

One SSI youth initiative that wrapped up during the year was Youth@Work — a two-year project that used a mentoring program to address underemployment and unemployment among young migrants and refugees. Some 143 young people participated in the initiative. Of the 38 that had a job at the time of sign up, all participants either maintained or progressed in their work under the guidance of mentors. With the help of mentors, a further 18 participants secured either an apprenticeship in the field of their interest, an internship in the field of their interest or a casual/part-time job while studying. All young people exited the program with a career plan, gaining insight into education and employment pathway options available to them in Australia.

Mentors and participants reported high satisfaction and positive results from their mentoring experiences, with one mentor commenting that: "It's been a pleasure to volunteer for SSI — the program from start to finish has been really professional and supportive."

Meet Joel

Arriving in Australia as a refugee from Syria, Joel received support from several areas of SSI, including the Youth Placement and Pathways Program — a three-month paid work experience program that offers unemployed youth support to get their foot in the door of the labour market.

The work experience with YPPP was a launchpad for Joel to improve her English, gain work experience in Australia and become job ready. She is now working part-time as an Office Administration Assistant with Australia for UNHCR and has paired this with further study in an online business course.

"I learned a lot from SSI. A lot of communication — customer service — I am improving my English and I have experience now in office, I am very very happy," she said.

Innovating and evolving

Innovation is at the heart of SSI's capacity to support individuals and families to overcome the barriers they face to achieving their full potential. Informed by our field expertise and the voices of the communities we work with, SSI identifies gaps in the services available to newcomers and other vulnerable Australians and creates innovative, integrated solutions.

Igniting entrepreneurial potential

Starting a business can be a great way to achieve economic empowerment for many people who face barriers to gaining employment in Australia, whether that is discrimination from employers or unrecognised overseas qualifications and experience.

Through SSI's self-funded Ignite Small Business Start-Ups initiative, we support new arrivals to establish or expand small businesses, while our IgniteAbility program assists

people with a disability in the same endeavour. Across these two programs, we supported more than 100 people during the year, with the result that 41 new businesses were established in 2017-18.

Another innovative endeavour for SSI includes selling its first domestic licence for the Ignite initiative to Access Queensland. In March 2018, two new facilitators were trained, and the program is now delivering support to newly arrived refugee entrepreneurs who have relocated to Logan and surrounding areas.

Social enterprises

SSI's portfolio of social enterprises continued to go from strength to strength in 2017-18, with more than 350 jobseekers gaining valuable work experience at the social enterprises during the year.

We launched a simulated learning environment known as The Experience Centre to address the growing need for professional workplace experience opportunities to match the existing skills and career aspirations of many of the newly arrived refugees that SSI supports.

Supported by the AMP Foundation, The Experience Centre provides refugee participants with a range of simulated work experience in office-based roles, including bookkeeping, accounting, marketing, and call-centre operations. Within two months of launching, 71 participants had undertaken training and short-term work placements at the centre, with 12 going on to secure employment as a direct result.

SSI's low-cost supermarket, The Staples Bag, continued to grow and scale its operations.

We now partner with more than 21 local community organisations to support people in need with affordable food. This growth has given us greater capacity to offer job seekers work experience within the social enterprise, gaining skills in retail, customer service and warehousing. During the year, more than 150 participants received essential work experience at the premises, of whom 40 per cent secured employment as a direct result.

Humble Creatives, SSI's handmade candle-making enterprise, also supported more job seekers with work experience in marketing and commercial production during the year. We supported 140 people with experiences of trauma with an outlet for creative expression in a therapeutic environment, while providing on-the-job training and work skills.

During the year, SSI's food truck enterprise, Food for Thought, supported more than 40 participants with work experience in hospitality and on-the-job training in catering and event management. Food for Thought featured at some large scale events and, using a profit-sharing model, three refugee cooks expanded their hospitality experience in an Australian context.

CALD communities

Providing tailored support for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities is at the heart of many SSI services, which draw on our organisation's in-depth knowledge of this area.

SSI has been contributing to a significant shift in attitudes towards inclusion of people with disabilities, particularly in CALD communities, through its Ability Links program, which provides linkages to services and support for people with disabilities, their families and carers.

During 2017-18, the SSI Ability Links program supported 4,737 people with disability, and 1,006 family members and carers on their path to social, education, employment and other goals.

In April 2017, SSI initiated the Wellbeing Outcomes Research Pilot, which measured the impact of this program. The findings indicated that SSI's Ability Links program is having a positive impact on participants' lives across almost all wellbeing outcome areas. The research showed that, after three months, 70 per cent of participants experienced a small positive change, which was not only sustained but further increased by the six-month mark.

Disability and engagement with CALD communities are also at the heart of SSI's FutureAbility project. The FutureAbility project aims to increase knowledge of and participation in the NDIS through initiatives such as the DiverseAbility NDIS Inclusion Conference, which brought together 230 delegates in April 2018 to raise awareness about the changing landscape of the disability sector in Australia and opportunities the NDIS offers to CALD communities in NSW.

During 2017-18, FutureAbility continued to implement strategies to consult widely with CALD communities and other stakeholders through engagement, education and marketing. These included eight regional roundtable discussions with 500 participants, 22 in-language NDIS sessions delivered to 327 participants, and 18 workshops for disability-related providers held with 240 participants. More than 2,400 people also attended in-language theatre plays, while a comprehensive SBS Radio campaign reached 240,000 listeners in 13 languages.

Children and families

Another area in which SSI is working to meet the unique needs of CALD communities is its Multicultural Foster Care program, which emphasises maintaining the bonds of culture, religion and language when forging foster care placements for children from diverse backgrounds.

During the year, our focus on finding permanent homes for children through restoration, guardianship and adoption saw the team expand with the creation of the Multicultural Child and Family Support Program, which extends SSI's culturally responsive services to children exposed to child protection.

Culturally responsive care remains a fundamental platform for our work, focusing on responding to children's cultural needs, their ethnicity, faith and language. This year we connected with more communities to recruit a larger pool of volunteer foster carers, including matching our first children and carers from the Jewish and Chinese communities. We increased our capacity to care by 22 per cent, now caring daily for at least 165 children. As at June, almost a third of our children (51) had a care plan goal for restoration and an additional four for guardianship, while seven had carers who were seeking open adoption.

The Multicultural Foster Care team also continued to collaborate with the Department of Family and Community Services and partner agencies to design the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) tool — an Australian first framework to collect and report on children's outcomes in seven areas.

Community Engagement

SSI's Community Engagement unit creates pathways to meaningful engagement and inclusion by working alongside community and civic structures to support and foster a spirit of community belonging and welcome.

The latest program addition this year was our Welcome2Sydney project — a partnership initiative between the City of Sydney and SSI that aims to encourage newcomers to explore Sydney and develop a sense of belonging. The project comprised volunteer-hosted social, cultural and recreational activities, including excursions to the Yabun festival, Australia Day celebrations, Lunar New Year events and Mardi Gras.

The Community Innovation Fund also commenced this year to provide resources for recipients who would not typically attract grant funding. The fund provides grants of up to \$10,000 to support great ideas that enrich the capacity of community leaders and groups to build stronger, more vibrant and resilient communities in south-west Sydney. The first round of funding saw five recipients receive grants to define and meet their communities' aspirations.

The team continued to strengthen SSI's disability and inclusion work by connecting with and supporting, businesses and community groups to provide more inclusive communities and workplaces. This year the focus was on supporting businesses to strengthen their inclusion for the community.

Arts and Culture

One of the Arts and Culture program's greatest annual undertakings – the SSI New Beginnings Festival – attracted more than 2,500 people to the Spring component of the festival, where they experienced music, dance, visual arts, short films, craft and cuisine by talented artists and entrepreneurs from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Supported by Commonwealth Bank and the City of Sydney, this free festival engaged over 90 artists and makers – our largest event to date.

For the first time, three artists from refugee background also led and devised a series of creative workshops for newcomers. The artworks created were later showcased at the Refugee Week component of the New Beginnings Festival, presented in collaboration with the Community and Refugee Welcome Centre and the Inner West Council.

The Arts and Culture team also supported over 100 newly arrived artists and makers to participate in Sydney's creative community by facilitating and providing professional development, showcase and employment opportunities, and connecting artists to relevant industry networks. Highlights include a new partnership with Peacock Gallery – a Cumberland Council facility – to provide increased access to exhibition space.

Other collaborators included public art organisation Muralisto for ArtCrew – a youth-focused art mentorship project in Liverpool and Fairfield – and The Human Sound Project, which produced a music video and collaborative song with newly arrived communities in Auburn. In total, 207 people participated in these projects.

SSI Training

In 2018, SSI established a fee-for-service training program that supports organisations to work with CALD communities and create more culturally responsive and inclusive workplaces.

Our first year saw SSI Training deliver close to 100 workshops to more than 1,300 participants from government, non-government and corporate services areas. As a leading service provider working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, our learning solutions are grounded in SSI's direct experiences with these communities. Workshops covered aspects of working with diversity in areas including foster care, disability, young people, volunteering, housing and child and family.

Meet Carly

One of IgniteAbility's youngest entrepreneurs, Carly, started her coffee delivery business in the Shoalhaven area during the year.

With the support of her IgniteAbility facilitator, her small personalised coffee delivery service has grown to an extent that she is now employing one other young woman to ensure that she provides a fast and seamless coffee delivery service to her customers. "Ignite provided me with the opportunity to start my business. I had no idea about the process and where to begin," Ms Bishop said.

"Ignite has supported me by helping draw up the business plan, being with me in initial meetings with shopping centre management, organising flyers and business cards, setting up of social media accounts, and insurance."

Meet Peter and Roz

Peter and Roz recently became the first foster carers to become guardians for the children placed in their care by SSI's Multicultural Foster Care (MFC) program.

MFC matched Peter and Roz with children from the same religious background as the couple, who also offer respite care, in addition to caring for the siblings full-time from birth. Peter and Roz continue to engage with the children's biological family and community, including gathering to celebrate the children's milestones celebrations such as birthdays.

Meet Shobhna

For Shobhna, the most important part of being a mum is that a mum knows what is wrong and what is right.

"I've been unemployed for a long time, and I worry that I'm not able to teach my kids properly because I don't feel connected to the real world. Sure, I've done a lot of volunteer work... but it's not a career," she said.

While volunteering at the school canteen, Shobhna was introduced to the Ability Links program, where she was connected with a Linker, who is helping her to achieve her goal of finding a job.

"I used to work at McDonalds before my kids became my priority, so I do have employable skills, but my Linker has been very helpful in helping me plan and work with me to bring back my confidence so I can get ready to start working again."

Working locally, thinking globally

Influencing positive social justice policies in Australia requires engagement with international networks and forums. Through these, SSI not only gains a global perspective on refugee and migration issues, but it also has the opportunity to highlight the experiences of people who come to Australia as refugees.

The goal of strengthening partnerships and policy drove the 2017-18 work of SSI's International Protection team, which developed international engagement with global refugee body UNHCR and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA). In June 2018, SSI's HSP Manager Yamamah Agha took on the challenging role of Rapporteur for the UNHCR Annual Consultations with NGOs, which bring together non-government organisations from around the world to discuss refugee issues in a global forum.

With the support of the International Protection team, Yamamah compiled the 2018 report on behalf of NGOs. Yamamah also delivered the recommendations in the report at the 69th session of UNHCR's Executive Committee, where the global refugee body reviews the preceding year and establishes its program of work for the next 12 months. SSI continued funding a Community Representative to participate at the UNHCR Annual Consultations, supporting Adam Bujairami. Complementing SSI's role at the Consultations, CEO Violet Roumeliotis continued our engagement at the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement, exchanging expertise in resettlement with thought leaders globally. Another core focus for the International Protection team is elevating the voices of refugees in global forums by supporting people with refugee experience to attend and contribute at these events. In addition to supporting refugee voice and leadership, SSI consulted newly arrived communities to provide opportunities to collate feedback and experiences for SSI to take forward to UNHCR.

During 2017-18, Mireille Girard, UNHCR Representative in Lebanon, and Thomas Albrecht, UNHCR Regional Representative for Australia, NZ, PNG and the Pacific, visited SSI to learn about our work resettling refugees in Australia. The visit was also an opportunity for people supported by SSI's refugee resettlement program to advocate directly to the UN's refugee agency.

SSI also took part in the consultative process of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) through its partnership with the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) and collaboration with ICVA. Acting in the role of co-chair for the Working Group on Durable Solutions, SSI also contributed to the development of a policy paper on the GCR, which was presented by the International Refugee Congress to the European Union to the UN.

Closer to home

During the year, SSI partnered on GCR initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region, including supporting the implementation and monitoring of gender commitments made in the GCR. Through SSI's partnership with APRRN, SSI strengthens stakeholder relations in the local region and is building the capacity of NGOs working in the protection sector with a focus on women and girls.

SSI is also driving the development of an innovative model for Community Sponsorship in Australia. As the team continues to build on what it has learned from Canada and other international stakeholders in its development, the model will directly contribute to the program of action in the Global Compact on Refugees for expanded third-country solutions for refugees.

People making a difference

People power is what makes it possible for SSI to support vulnerable individuals and families to achieve their potential — whether that's the efforts of our 700-strong workforce or the hundreds of volunteers, donors and partners who support our work each day. SSI engages with community members who are committed to our values and would like to contribute their skills, experience and commitment to our vision. We value the involvement of more than 300 active volunteers across Sydney and, during 2017-18, we also expanded our volunteer program into regional NSW.

SSI volunteers undertake more than 40 different roles across a range of programs. Many programs rely heavily on the contribution of volunteers to achieve positive outcomes and build the capacity of the people we support. Our volunteers help newcomers to Australia to access support services. They mentor new business owners and support families and individuals to engage in meaningful social activities — and much, much more.

In 2017-18, more than 45 people participated in SSI's student and intern program, which reflects our commitment to supporting and developing people across the community. Students gained valuable skills and knowledge in the workplace, while in turn making their own contributions to various programs and initiatives.

During the year, SSI also participated in fundraising and partnership initiatives that enabled people to support our work, including community fundraisers and corporate partnerships with Allianz Australia, Atlassian, Belvoir Theatre, CBA, Deutsche Bank, Google, TEDx and TripAdvisor.

One example was an innovative project between SSI and Sensis White Pages that connected new migrants and refugees with businesses and services in their local area. The Connective Collective used a number of tools, including welcome packs, to connect newcomers with the owners of small businesses, recognising that they were often leaders in their communities and could provide a link for refugees and migrants to engage with their local area.

During 2017-18, Allianz Australia won the annual Human Rights Business Award for its partnership with SSI, which has, among other outcomes, helped dozens of refugees to secure permanent employment through an innovative cadetship-style program.

In September 2017, SSI also held the inaugural SSI Mosaic Gala, where more than 375 people gathered to raise awareness and funds for SSI initiatives that help refugees overcome barriers to employment and education.

SSI volunteering snapshot

More than 300 active volunteers across our community contributed approximately 58,000 hours in 2017-2018.

With volunteers fulfilling over 40 unique roles across metropolitan Sydney and regional NSW, our amazing volunteers have contributed in-kind hours valued at a conservative \$1,440,000!

The social impact volunteers have on SSI clients and their value working in programs is priceless and we are grateful for their ongoing contributions to the community.

Meet our corporate volunteers

Seven staff from Deutsche Bank who volunteered at SSI's Armenian-themed Community Kitchen on November 15 were so excited by the experience they have vowed to return with more of their colleagues.

Community Kitchen is SSI's free multicultural lunch and social day for refugees and people seeking asylum held fortnightly at Auburn Centre for Community.

Camilla, one of the Deutsche Bank participants at Community Kitchen, said the refugee and asylum-seeking cause was something that resonated with her team so they came to spend a day learning more about the challenges refugees face and how they could help. She said, "The best bit for me was chatting in the kitchen with the other volunteers, learning about Armenian food, helping out and meeting new people."

Diversity and inclusion at SSI

At SSI, diversity is at our heart. We have a diverse workforce, offer diverse programs and initiatives, and we work with diverse individuals, families and communities. Diversity is referenced in our vision, and it is one of our seven organisational values. While diversity has always been a strength for SSI, this year we have taken it a step further.

We have developed an internal diversity and inclusion strategy for our workforce to help our people and those we work with to feel welcomed and valued, which in turn enables us to effectively and respectfully meet the needs of the people to whom we provide services. Our approach aims to harness individual differences and build an inclusive environment where everyone thrives.

We are capitalising on our strengths, particularly in cultural and linguistic diversity, to continue to embrace diversity in all forms.

Our workforce comprises more than 700 staff and 300-plus volunteers. Collectively our staff speak more than 100 languages and dialects, while our volunteers speak 50. We represent a vast range of ages, gender identities, cultures, religions, sexual orientation, abilities, experiences.

But, just because we are diverse, it doesn't mean inclusion always comes naturally. Like any good relationship, investment is required. This is why we are lifting our focus on inclusion across our workforce over the next two years. We are building our awareness and confidence in three specific areas: disability, gender and sexual diversity, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and peoples. Of course, integrating the needs of our culturally and linguistically diverse workforce, clients, and communities remains vital in everything we do.

At SSI, inclusion is about having an environment where everyone can bring their whole self to work; an environment where people are respected and valued for the perspectives and capabilities they bring and the contribution they make. People can bring their best to SSI and find a sense of belonging.

Progress to date

We have made significant progress in creating an inclusive environment for our workforce over the past year, including

- Established an internally focused Diversity and Inclusion Network with representatives from across the organisation and our volunteer base. This also

includes a subgroup focused on inclusion specifically for gender and sexual diversity

- Joined key peak bodies to draw on specialist expertise in diversity and inclusion including the Australian Network on Disability, Diversity Council Australia and Pride in Diversity
- Achieved Disability Confident Recruiter status with Australian Network on Disability. We are also piloting their PACE mentoring program for students and job seekers with disability
- Introduced paid domestic and family violence leave
- Ran a traineeship program for 10 trainees from diverse backgrounds
- Celebrated key dates including Sorry Day, NAIDOC Week, and Wear It Purple Day
- Improved awareness among the 350-plus staff and 250 volunteers who completed disability awareness and culturally responsive practice training.

Meet the Diversity and Inclusion Network

In May 2018, SSI sought expressions of interest from staff and volunteers looking to join a new committee — the Diversity and Inclusion Network. The Network comprises 12 staff and volunteer representatives from a range of SSI programs, who bring with them a variety of professional and personal experiences.

The Network has provided valuable input into the development of SSI's diversity and inclusion strategy, helped to define what inclusion means for SSI, reviewed internal diversity and inclusion policies and practices, and much more. It will also play a key role in designing and rolling out initiatives under the new strategy.

As one representative, Monica put it: "As a new member of staff I have been heartened by the proactive nature and drive of the D&I network. I see a genuine engagement from staff in identifying and driving a truly inclusive workplace for staff and volunteers."

Another representative, Jinane, commented: "Being part of the D&I network team introduced SSI as a wider organisation. It's not just a job. I feel I am being heard, and not just me personally — the whole department."

Finance and governance

During the 2017-18 financial year, SSI achieved solid revenue levels of \$92.8 million. The revenue growth was in keeping with SSI's long-term trend and follows record high revenue in 2016-17 as a result of a significant one-off increase in Australia's refugee intake.

The audited financial statements for the financial year highlight revenue of \$92.8 million down from the \$113.4 million high recorded for 2016-2017. Despite the decline, SSI still achieved a net surplus of \$0.4 million during 2017-18.

SSI's revenue streams that are reliant on major contracts have an inherent variability, particularly for the Humanitarian Settlement Program and Status Resolution Support Services. This is driven by changes in government policy settings and client numbers. The number of humanitarian entrant referrals or arrivals often fluctuates due to offshore circumstances beyond the control of the government departments and SSI.

These changes are reflected when comparing SSI's 2017-18 results to the prior year, when the organisation settled more than 10,000 refugees thanks to a one-off intake of

people affected by the war in Syria and Iraq. This compares to just under 4,000 clients in 2017-18. Conversely, the SRSS program was initially projected to have zero clients by 30 June 2018, but due to program changes, SSI is currently supporting just over 2,000 people.

Despite the year-on-year decline, an analysis of SSI's data over the past five years shows revenue levels are on trend, maintaining their upward growth trajectory.

Revenue base more sustainable

SSI's revenue portfolio is heavily weighted to a mix of both federal and state government funding, but the organisation is making good progress on its goal of achieving a more balanced revenue portfolio mix.

Government funding accounted for \$84.9 million of SSI's 2017-18 revenue, or 92 per cent of the total revenue base, down from 95 per cent in the prior year.

In line with the topline decline, SSI reduced operating costs from \$98.8 million to \$92.3 million. Staffing levels continue to represent a significant portion of overall costs at 47 per cent of total expenditure with our service delivery programs.

While the overall result is a significantly reduced surplus position compared to the prior year, it reflects a strong underlying core result for SSI.

The financial results incorporate both challenges and strategic investments, such as major contracts converting to a fee-for-service model; significant changes in client numbers; an adjustment of \$436k for asset write-offs; increased investment in SSI's self-funded initiatives; and program challenges including operational losses from the community housing program.

The community housing program included emergency and long-term housing, not directly related to the funded HSP clients. This non-core program will be discontinued during 2018-19 following an operational review concluding that it would not be financially sustainable into the future.

Investment in self-funded initiatives increase

SSI's strong point of difference has always been its self-funded initiatives, which use innovation to address gaps in the support available to the vulnerable individuals and families our funded programs support.

During 2017-18, SSI invested an additional net \$2.3 million in initiatives such as Ignite Small Business Start-ups, Community Engagement, and the Arts and Culture program. Over the past five years, SSI has increased its investment in self-funded initiatives, which continue to produce robust outcomes for SSI clients and the organisation's corporate and government engagement strategy. See 'Innovating and Evolving' in this report for an update on these areas during 2017-18.

SSI's cash and cash equivalents are on par with prior year at \$27.9 million, with \$11.7 million held in reserves. Net assets are \$23.3 million, which represents a \$0.5 million increase over the previous year. This incorporates a \$1.2 million reduction in property plant and equipment assets over the period, which included some assets being written off as a result of SSI's first asset stocktake, undertaken in May 2018.

It is vital that SSI be effective and transparent in the way we manage our funds in supporting our clients. We are committed to continually improving our financial governance and management processes. A key focus area during 2017-2018 has been strengthening

our internal financial controls. We commissioned an independent internal audit conducted by our auditors Grant Thornton to identify areas for improvement. We introduced some new organisational policies such as Related Party Transactions and Cash Handling Policy, as well as reviewing and tightening all of our existing financial policies and procedures. We have also focused on improving the procurement function organisational wide to: strengthen our internal controls; increase efficiency; reduce costs; and meet our HSP contractual requirement to increase the proportion of Indigenous enterprises in our supply chain.

This process has included updating our purchasing policies and procedures; introducing SSI standard supplier terms; reviewing supplier details and contracts, including identifying Indigenous suppliers; and negotiating significant price savings and process efficiencies with some larger contracts, such as electricity. We have also reviewed suppliers for the introduction of a new Procure to Pay system to streamline and automate our procurement function, which will create significant time and cost efficiencies organisational wide, reducing risks, which we anticipate implementing during 2018-19.

The financial outlook for 2018-19 remains positive, with a focus on maintaining quality services. A broader organisational focus on our operating models will ensure we have the right tools and processes to enable both qualitative and quantitative measurement and analysis of client outcomes, at a deeper level reflecting new government contracts having an increased linkage between outcomes and funding.

Corporate governance

SSI recognises that a commitment to corporate governance, transparency and accountability is essential to our long-term performance and sustainability, and to achieving the best outcomes for members and other stakeholders. We regularly review our governance arrangements in line with good practice, expectations and regulation.

The Board is responsible, and is accountable to members, for managing SSI's business.

The Board has adopted a charter that details its role and responsibilities. The Board is assisted by the Finance and Audit, Risk and Compliance, and Board Nomination Committees.

SSI strengthened its corporate governance in 2017-18 with a review of committee and board reporting. Committee reporting was reviewed to ensure each was receiving the appropriate information to ensure good governance and reporting up to the SSI Board was enhanced.

One new director joined the board in 2018, Claudia Perry-Beltrame. Claudia joined the Board as a member director, replacing Lou Bacchiella who retired at the 2016 Annual General Meeting.

The Board actively seeks to ensure it has an appropriate mix of diversity to effectively discharge its responsibilities and equip SSI for good governance. To assist in identifying areas of focus and maintaining an appropriate experience mix, the Board has developed a skills matrix that is reviewed regularly.

Following the requirements of the Corporations Act and our Constitution, Directors must declare any conflict of interest and abide by the Conflict of Interests Policy, including, in certain circumstances, abstaining from participating in discussions or votes.

The performance of the Board, associated committees, directors and Chair is reviewed annually, and the findings and recommendations of this review are provided to the Board.

Other areas at SSI

Clinical Practice Unit at SSI

Across Sydney and regional NSW, the specialist clinicians in SSI's Clinical Practice Unit (CPU) provided more than 270 sessions to foster care families and/or children and more than 325 to families from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. CPU specialists contributed to the development of SSI staff and stakeholders, delivering training in areas including mental health, suicide intervention skills, trauma-informed care, reflective practice, and parenting.

The CPU also collaborated with agency stakeholders to undertake new work in domestic and family violence among multicultural communities and extended SSI's partnership with Relationships Australia NSW through a scholarship program for family counsellors.

Facilities and Administration at SSI

The Facilities and Administration division of SSI supported the organisation's growth during a very busy year. SSI established new offices in regional NSW in Armidale, Coffs Harbour and Wallsend, and expanded in Wollongong. SSI also established its first interstate office in Melbourne and, more locally, opened a new office in Liverpool.

The Reception and Administration team provided support to all these new locations. In SSI's four key offices of Ashfield, Parramatta, Liverpool and Bankstown, 26,975 people came through our doors to receive support during the year, while an additional 31,198 phone calls were taken.

Research and Policy at SSI

In 2017-18, SSI's Research and Policy team commissioned an evaluation of our delivery of the Ability Links NSW program, which found that it is supporting strong outcomes for CALD and non-CALD participants in employment, education and training. It also pointed to the ongoing value of Ability Links, particularly for vulnerable groups, in an NDIS environment.

This year, researchers from three Sydney universities, in collaboration with SSI and other settlement agencies, secured funding to explore the settlement trajectories of refugees from the Syrian conflict. This partnership is the third where SSI is an industry partner in longitudinal studies funded by the Australian Research Council.

Business Development at SSI

SSI has continued on a growth trajectory, securing funding for new programs in disability CALD engagement, employment, disability employment and parental support. This growth has been achieved in partnership with our members, who are now entrusted with providing these services.

Consistent with SSI strategic intent, Business Development worked diligently to better assess funding opportunities and scope new areas of work — demonstrated by our high tendering success rate from a relatively modest investment.

During the year, Business Development launched SSI Training, continued the FutureAbility project, and held the Cultural Shift conference, which brought together 341 delegates to consider how to create the best settlement conditions for families.

Legal and Compliance at SSI

Quality assurance and risk management are key elements of SSI's compliance framework. Integral to this is the continuous improvement to systems and processes and identifying and controlling risks in a proactive way.

This year, we focused on identifying and mitigating cyber and data security-related risks with the development and establishment of processes to deal with data breaches and privacy management.

The past year has also seen improvements to SSI's incident management system to better record and manage incidents, mandatory reporting, complaints, allegations and other events. Our aim is to mitigate the risk of harm to clients, staff and carers.

The Legal team continues to provide comprehensive legal advice and support to the Board, the CEO, senior corporate and program management staff.

Strategic Policy at SSI

This past year saw some consolidation of policy portfolio areas including in domestic violence, advocacy for women and refugee resettlement. A national vehicle to advance policy issues for women of CALD backgrounds now exists in the newly launched Harmony Alliance: Migrant and Refugee Women for Change, with SSI holding a seat on the body's council.

Working with Relationships Australia NSW, SSI successfully bid to run a men's relationship program to address potential domestic violence issues. Most importantly, SSI formed a Community of Practice with other settlement providers to harness our collective knowledge and resources to tackle domestic violence.

With its mandate on settling refugees, SSI has also remained a strong contributor to the Joint Partnership Working Group that has a policy and strategic responsibility for refugee resettlement in NSW.

People and Culture at SSI

A significant project for the People and Culture (PaC) team in 2017-18 was the development of Achieve@SSI, a new performance and development framework that provides a clear line of sight between SSI's strategic plan and individual staff members' goals. Achieve was designed by collaborating with employees to understand what process and tools would best assist them to see the link between their day-to-day work and SSI's vision.

The framework is underpinned by performance coaching. All SSI leaders were provided with an opportunity to enhance their skills by attending workshops and practice labs. Achieve encourages two-way dialogue and transparency around role expectations and development opportunities.

Government and Member Relations at SSI

During 2017-18, SSI focused on extending government and broader stakeholder relationships into regional NSW, in line with an expansion of its HSP program into new

areas such as Armidale and Coffs Harbour. Government officials constitute a large part of this work, and, in this area, SSI has been effective in communicating the needs of our clients across a range of consultative structures at a local, state and federal level. SSI also undertook work in the area of member relations, including a detailed co-design and subsequent operationalisation of both Disability Employment Services and ParentsNext. In both these new program areas, SSI is delivering services alongside our member organisations, representing a strategic evolution in the way we engage with one another.

Corporate Communications at SSI

Corporate Communications promotes the outcomes and achievements of SSI services and the people we work alongside. We share stories from the communities we support to help influence the public narrative about vulnerable individuals and families.

We shape and influence the public narrative through media and digital content. SSI's engagement via social media channels increased by 26 per cent in 2017-18, with more than 91,000 interactions. The total amount of followers on our social media channels grew by 78 per cent compared to the previous year. SSI also achieved more than 2,200 media articles on topics including office openings, the New Beginnings: Refugee Arts & Culture Festival and refugee entrepreneurs.

How can you help?

get in touch with SSI to volunteer, donate, fundraise or collaborate

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