



## Edmund Rice Community & Refugee Services

### *Annual Board Report* **2013**



Edmund Rice  
Community  
& Refugee  
Services

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# *Introduction*

**Edmund Rice Community & Refugee Services** (ERCRS), formally Edmund Rice Refugee Services (ERRS), was established in 2002 and operates in St. Albans in the western suburbs of Melbourne. Its mission is to provide free learning support, and opportunities for social and recreational participation to students from refugee or disadvantaged background. Many of the students from these backgrounds require extra tutoring and study support to enable them to remain engaged in school, and have access to further education and employment opportunities.

**Edmund Rice Community and Refugee Services** empowers volunteers from the community, and from various secondary schools to become committed tutors, who are able to provide critical one-on-one learning support. ERCRS provides recreational excursions and events that allow the students to experience a variety of learning environments.

Edmund Rice Community and Refugee Services continues to cultivate close working relationships with other agencies, and networks extensively with educational, social and health groups who work in this area. In 2013 ERCRS offered several programmes, aimed at supporting children and young people in the community. These programmes included a Homework Club, a Secondary Tutoring Programme, Young Women's Mentoring Programme and a Social and Recreational Programme. Edmund Rice Camps also support ERCRS by running annual camps specifically for children from refugee backgrounds and their families. Special events were held to promote community awareness and engagement and also to thank and celebrate all involved. These programmes have been developed in response to the growing need of the refugee and migrant community in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

## *Values Statement*

The following values are touchstones for Edmund Rice Ministries, such as ERCRS, and are a contemporary expression of Edmund's charism.

**Presence:** "Alive to the wonder of all creation opening us to intimacy with the Mystery of God." We seek to build relationships that are based on mutual respect, trust and accountability. As members of an Edmund Rice Ministry, we are formed and grow by becoming engaged in the lives, hopes, joys, fears and aspirations of the communities among whom we serve.

**Compassion:** "Opening our hearts to and standing in solidarity with the suffering world." This value challenges us to become involved. It is a compassion that goes beyond 'handouts' or 'living a healthy ecological lifestyle', and in so doing, it calls us to advocacy so that every person, and our earth, may be treated with justice, equity and respect.

**Liberation:** "Freeing and enlivening a world groaning under the weight of injustice." Significant progress and lasting change that benefits the disadvantaged can only truly come about by the effective empowerment of people, and not simply by systems that are dependent on a small group. Supporting education and continuing engagement with education is one major way of empowering people.





## *ERCRS Board*

The Board Members in 2013 were:

Dr. Denise Goodwin (Chair)

Br. Frank Perkins (Director)

Dr. Therese Power RSM (Secretary)

Mr. John McKenna

Ms. Liz Kofoed

Mr. Moses Lado

Br. Laurie Collins

Mrs. Mary Anne Collins

Br. Richard Walsh

Mr. Dane Stammers (Programme Coordinator; non-voting member)

## *Staffing at ERCRS*

The following were staff members of Edmund Rice Community & Refugee Services during 2013:

- Br. Frank Perkins - Director
- Mr. Dane Stammers - Programme Coordinator
- Ms. Asunta Deng - Community Support Worker
- Ms. Jenny McBride - Office administration and student/tutor registration at learning sessions
- Br. Richard Walsh - Information Technology Coordinator and manager of learning resources

Mary Anne Collins resigned from the Board in May, after serving as a member for 12 months. Work commitments with Caritas Australia meant that she was required to travel out of Melbourne on a regular basis, thereby making attendance at Board meetings difficult.

Four sub-committees of the Board operated during the year. These sub-committees were: Executive, Policy, Finance and Grants.

# Board Chairperson's Report

In 2013 the word presence resonated meaning in the work of Edmund Rice Community and Refugee Services (ERCRS), and it was the type of presence that highlighted the power of hope in a dynamic way. Not just the kind of hope that wishes for good things to happen, but the hope that acts as a living presence in places where the needs of the marginalized and vulnerable are met with life affirming action, as expressed in the Gospel values. My report focuses on the hope delivered in a child's story and describes the ways ERCRS has continued to deliver a positive presence in the knowledge that many of its students have shared in similar experiences.

In calling to mind the nature of hope I wish to tell the story of child affected by the war in Sudan. It is an all too common story of what can and has happened to children fleeing from a war zone. The youth in this story tells of his childhood, his journey in a war torn country, and offers meaningful reflections in the wake of his experiences.

He recounts how his older brother died when he was very young and how he can't remember what his brother looked like. In the midst of war, siblings are born and some semblance of family life is attempted, but there is rape, many killings and other random acts of violence in his immediate environment. He remembers with sadness the separation of his father from the family. He talks about the experience of even harder times in the wake of this separation. You may think it astounding that this child could feel so attached to his homeland, that he would think that Africa was one of the best places to live, and that he still feels the hurt of having to leave his homeland. In fleeing to Egypt the family are reunited with the father, and true joy was felt. Experiences of racism in Egypt find his family ultimately seeking refuge in Australia. The trauma associated with the death of a family member, separation and dislocation have been experienced here, but not exclusively, for love, solidarity and resourcefulness have surely made true meaning in this child's life. The conflict of painful experiences have not sullied his spirit.

In the western suburbs of Melbourne the Edmund Rice Centre, at the time, offered opportunities and assistance to help this young person with his school work. Looking back over the previous years he reflected on the many challenges and hard times he and his family had endured, and was thankful for the support and encouragement he had received. In this story we can see a young life faced with the possibility of many

crippling setbacks; however these were met with dignity, humility and a sense of purpose. The experiences and reflections offered in this young person's story highlights living in the kind of hope that is transformative in the best possible way, and helps to make known that ERCRS's commitment to refugee and marginalised young people in our community deserve our wholehearted presence.

In 2013 ERCRS has continued to provide a positive presence for young people such as these as well as vulnerable others in the community. The following demonstrates our resolve to deliver sound educational and recreational activities, which were aimed at enhancing these children's futures. Our learning programmes included a Homework Club for primary students and a Tutoring Programme for secondary students. A new initiative was piloted with the undertaking of the Sunshine Harvester School Learning Support Programme. The Young Women's Mentoring Programme as well as social, recreational and camp activities was also delivered. We continued our commitment to 'walk with people in need especially those made vulnerable by society.'<sup>1</sup> By preserving and improving current programmes and initiating new projects, ERCRS has acted as an advocate for refugees and community members, and an agent of change in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

Collectively, members of staff and volunteers undertook or attended the following education support and/or pastoral programmes: -

- Into The Deep Programme
- The Galilee Programme
- New Zealand, Edmund Rice Network Conference
- The Staff Development Day
- First Aid Inservice
- Centre for Multicultural Youth's (CMY) Tutor Training Session for volunteers

These aimed at developing right-relationships with those directly in our group as well as with others in our network. They encouraged and nurtured spiritual growth and educative support.

At ERCRS we networked with CMY, Brimbank Council, St. Albans Youth Services and the Catholic Education Office with the Mother of God Primary School, Ardeer (Helping One

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<sup>1</sup> Oceania Strategic Directions, 2008-2014, Direction 4: Proclaiming Liberation and Justice.

Student to Succeed, the HOSTS programme) , just to mention a few. Working and dialoguing with others who also stand in solidarity with marginalised, vulnerable and Refugee peoples, helped us to deliver a positive presence in our community by our collective witness for those we serve in the St Albans community.

Other important events that occurred in 2013 for ERCRS included the welcomed visit of Brothers Amandi Mboya and Gerald Mgalula from Tanzania. The sharing of stories and experiences enriched us greatly . We had our new logo proudly displayed on the window of the Good Shepherd office where we work, and this was notable because we had become a visible symbol of the service we provided in our community. Our website became operational in 2013 and we can be found at [www.ercrs.com.au](http://www.ercrs.com.au). This has given us greater exposure and the ability to be accessed by a wider audience. We were also successful in obtaining grants and have received generous donations to support our service, and we are truly grateful to those who support us in this way.

Our volunteers, staff and board members have worked hard and we have also taken the time to socialise with one another. We have shared in each other's company and celebrated in our success. Our active presence in the community encourages all concerned to hope for a better future, and sincere thanks to everyone associated with ERCRS for your wonderful support and another great year.

Dr Denise Goodwin





## *Director's Report*

In 2013 Edmund Rice Community and Refugee Services (ERCRS) witnessed further growth and strengthening in the programmes and services we offered. Our key focus continued to be the providing of free learning support to students (primary, secondary and tertiary) in the Brimbank region of Melbourne, especially those students from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

Four learning support sessions, each of two hours duration, were offered every week of the school year, with a fifth session beginning in August 2013, as a result of a partnership with Sunshine Harvester Primary School. As was the case in 2012, the learning support sessions for primary school students were held separately to those that catered for secondary and tertiary students.

The success of each session in terms of learning productivity was largely based on providing a sufficient number of volunteer tutors, whose skills and generous commitment of time and energy were integral to the programme. Many of the adult tutors have had experience in the education field, a significant number were current tertiary students, while others were active members of community groups that had a social outreach component. Many of these people bring with them either specialised subject and curriculum knowledge, or a wide range of professional and practical competencies which all added to the rich texture of the tutor / learner relationship. They are all valued members of our ERCRS team. We are also very grateful for the wonderful support we received from several secondary schools that provided senior students to act as tutors for the primary school Homework Help sessions. These senior students acted as mentors and role models to the primary school children they tutored, forming positive and caring relationships that helped provide educational progress in its widest sense.

The social and recreational programmes offered by ERCRS aim to support a holistic approach to the growth and maturation of the young people who are clients of ERCRS. Weekend excursions, school holiday camps and the Young Women's Mentoring Programme, allowed the students to experience learning in environments that differ from the formal classroom setting. ERCRS is grateful to the various organisations that offered the necessary financial or in-kind support, which allowed us to operate these programmes for our young people.

Examples of the different kinds of support that various groups and organisations have given to ERCRS are:

- Financial donations
- Donations of fruit and other food for students' snacks
- Donations of learning materials (stationary items, books etc.)
- Tutor training and cultural awareness training
- Gratuitous use of school buses and drivers
- Use of school facilities
- School staff who coordinate and transport the senior students who volunteer as tutors

Special thanks are due to Catholic Regional College, St. Albans. This College allowed ERCRS to use its school library each Saturday morning, for the secondary students tutoring programme. We were very fortunate to have the use of such a wonderful learning environment, which allowed the students and the tutors to focus on productive output.

As well as the solid core group of secondary colleges that provided volunteers, ERCRS also partnered with other organisations in order to provide quality programmes that allowed our members to benefit from the availability of shared skills and resources.

Some of these organisations were:

- Edmund Rice Camps Victoria
- Centre for Multicultural Youth, CMY
- Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service
- Edmund Rice Centre, Amberley
- Jesuit Social Services
- Brimbank Melton Local Learning & Employment Network

We continued to receive a significant level of guidance and support from the Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers. Advice and support with governance, formation, accreditation as an Edmund Rice Ministry, financial sponsorship and financial accountability and auditing, were significant ways in which the Oceania Province, and in particular, the Mission Directorate, enhanced the services that ERCRS was able to provide in 2013.

In August ERCRS partnered with Sunshine Harvester Primary School, in a collaborative venture and provided after-school learning support to children who were pupils of the school, were of CALD background and had recently arrived in Australia. Due to the strong support given to the programme by the principal and staff at Sunshine Harvester Primary School, and the generosity and enthusiasm of the volunteer tutors (including newcomer student volunteers from Overnewton Anglican College), this project proved to be very popular with the children who attended. Operated initially as a pilot scheme, evidence showed that the children's learning was showing signs of benefit. The Board of ERCRS in conjunction with Sunshine Harvester School made the decision to continue this programme throughout 2014.

In late October, an Inservice Day was held at the Treacy Centre in Parkville, attended by ERCRS staff and volunteers, representatives of the ERCRS Board, and members of the Edmund Rice Network, in order to reflect on where the service had come from, what were its present strengths and challenges, and what were the opportunities that could point the way into the future. This was a valuable time of growth for all, with many views, ideas and opinions being shared. A summary of some of the outcomes is given later in this document.

Finally, I would like to thank the staff, board members and volunteers who continue to give generously of their time and abilities, in order to aid the development and growth of others.

Br. Frank Perkins cfc



# Programmes 2013

## Homework Club

As in previous years, the key focus of the programmes offered by ERCRS was on supporting the growth of students' academic learning, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy. The reforms that were introduced in 2012 were continued and refined, so that the overall learning programmes were targeted yet flexible, were enjoyable but productive, were able to show that value learning was being added. In addition to these support was offered to the tutors, and their feedback was sought in order to improve outcomes for the students and the tutors.

## Homework Club for Primary Students

The learning support sessions for primary school children, continued to be held at the Errington Centre, St. Albans, on each Monday and Wednesday after school during the school term. Early in 2013 a decision was made to cap the number of students attending each session, to a maximum of forty. Numbers had been steadily increasing to the point whereby space was becoming limited, with a consequent increase in noise and distractions. Having a ceiling limit of 40 students in attendance, meant that some had to choose whether they came on a Monday or a Wednesday, but not both. However, limiting the numbers helped to ensure that almost every student could have a personal tutor, and this gave rise to a consequent improvement in learning productivity.

We continued to be well supported by several secondary schools that provided students from Years 10, 11 or 12, as volunteer tutors for the primary children's learning support. The feedback gathered from the secondary school tutors (often called peer tutors), showed that the great majority found the tutoring to be a really positive and enjoyable learning experience for them. ERCRS values the supportive relationships with the Colleges that supply peer tutors, and we are especially appreciative of the generosity of the teachers who not only arrange the student volunteers at their respective schools, but who also donate their time to act as drivers and supervisors. We continued the practice that began in 2012 of asking the peer tutors to attend for at least five learning sessions. We did this so as to build up a supportive working relationship with the primary students they were helping. Most of the schools were able to accept this commitment,



and it was encouraging to read in the tutor reflection journals, the sense of fulfilment achieved, and insight gained by the volunteers as a result of their completing the five week experience.

The secondary schools that regularly supplied peer tutors to our programme during 2013, were:

Ave Maria College, St. Bernard's College, St. Columba's College, St. Kevin's College, Overnewton Anglican College, Parade College, Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School, and St. Patrick's College, Ballarat. There were also two students from Catholic Regional College who volunteered as individual peer tutors, and who continued to give their time to tutor the children, well in excess of the normal five week commitment.

A growing number of adult volunteer tutors contributed their time and talents to aiding the learning development of the primary children at these sessions. Since these adults tended to remain with us for a good portion of the year, children and staff looked forward to their presence. As regulars, they were able to give sound insights into areas of growth and improvement in the language and number skills of the children they tutored.

In recognition of the different ways children learn, the primary children's programme also included sessions where significant community organisations were invited to deliver important presentations. We were thrilled that organisations such as the State Emergency Services (SES) and Life Saving Victoria (LSV) were available to present life-skills information that was not only essential, but also presented in such a way that captured the children's full attention.

## Secondary Tutoring Programme

A number of secondary school students from schools around the Brimbank area of Melbourne find that they require extra help and guidance in their studies. This extra support is needed for a variety of reasons, which includes the fact that many of the students being recent arrivals, have not had the opportunity to complete a full primary education in Australia before beginning secondary classes. It is always difficult playing catch-up, particularly in academic subjects, so the one-on-one tutoring support offers a structured way for students to receive help with their studies. They work with the same

tutor, gradually building up a variety of learning skills, and as a consequence develop self-confidence. Keeping the students engaged in education, particularly with secondary school, is another key objective of the tutoring programme.

Two sessions per week were held during 2013. One session was held for two hours each Tuesday after school at the Errington Centre in St. Albans, while the second session, also of two hours duration, took place each Saturday morning at the Catholic Regional College, St. Albans school library.

Enormous credit goes to the volunteer tutors, some of whom are qualified teachers, either current or retired. Others included university students who are studying a wide range of courses, as well as committed adults who share their skills and abilities. The generosity of these tutors should not be overlooked or taken for granted. Two tutors have regularly given their time and skills for two hours every week for the past four years, and another volunteer has attended 34 tutoring sessions during 2013 in order to support the students. It is particularly heartening to witness the growing trust that many of the students have in their tutors' ability to help them navigate their way through their secondary years.

## Sunshine Harvester School Learning Support Programme

Background of this project:

- 11<sup>th</sup> September 2012- A Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) sponsored consultation with the recently arrived Burmese community raised the issue of Burmese children needing extra help with their schoolwork, and English literacy in particular. Edmund Rice Community & Refugee Services were invited to be a partner with MRC in this consultation. Investigations showed that a significant number of Burmese children attended the Sunshine Harvester Primary School, and then moved onto either Braybrook College or Sunshine College for their high school education.
- 8<sup>th</sup> May 2013- ERCRS met with representatives from the Brimbank Council's Libraries and Learning department, Youth Services and Youth Connections to discuss possible learning support opportunities for the Burmese community in Sunshine. The needs expressed by the community in the discussions with MRC

(and Jesuit Social Services) were echoed by the staff in this meeting. The council expressed interest in supporting/partnering to make this happen. ERCRS was then put in touch with Chris Durbridge, the English as Another Language (EAL) Coordinator at Sunshine Harvester Primary School (SHPS).

- 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013: ERCRS attended two meetings at SHPS to look at how ERCRS might partner the school in providing out of class learning support for recently arrived students. The latter of the two meetings included representatives from the Burmese Community. The school and community representatives were very keen for a programme to begin on Thursday afternoons, but requested that the programme not be ethnically specific, and open to students from other cultural backgrounds, particularly those who were recent arrivals into Australia.
- 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2013: The Language and Learning pilot programme was formally launched in partnership with Sunshine Harvester School on Thursday afternoons from 3:00-5:00pm. Students were mostly from the Burmese community, with other students having Tamil, Indian or Iranian backgrounds. All students were selected based on a high need for literacy and English language support.



The ERCRS ministry at Sunshine Harvester was well supported in 2013 by a dedicated group of volunteer tutors, including the diligent and enthusiastic students from Overnewton College in Keilor. The appearance of these competent tutors each Thursday, brought joy and encouragement to the primary school students enrolled in the programme. The involvement of Overnewton College has added so much value to the programme. Their commitment, dedication and passion from day one, has been a key driver of this initiative. Special thanks go out to the staff members, Dianne and Jo, for their leadership and enthusiasm, and to the peer tutors for their committed, focused and friendly approach to tutoring. Overnewton College quote- "This is a fantastic opportunity for our students to get involved in giving back to those less fortunate than them, and using their skills in a compassionate leadership role. The students and Chris Durbridge are great to work with." The students from Overnewton College will continue to attend as tutors during 2014, and will be joined by senior students from Caroline Chisholm Catholic College.

The presence of adult tutors in the learning sessions is a huge help in terms of settling the students, and being productive in the group environment. Their added level of maturity and experience in working with young people meant that they could often handle more than one student at once, and were proactive and productive with their time. Adult tutors were able to build up great relationships with their students due to their regular attendance for the whole session. They also enable the programme to start promptly after the students arrive (soon after 3pm).

We are very grateful for the wonderful support of the Sunshine Harvester School in driving this programme, and cannot speak highly enough of the enthusiasm, energy and positivity exhibited by the EAL coordinator, Chris Durbridge.

A review of the programme at the end of 2013 unanimously supported its continuation, with anecdotal evidence from the school and the tutors confirming the growth of positive learning outcomes, a key objective that the programme was aspiring to promote.



## Tutor Experience Survey Results

For the second year in a row, ERCRS conducted the Peer Tutor's Survey in 2013, which is aimed at collecting important data about each tutor's experience. To make sure we have collected unbiased data, we surveyed only students who had attended at least five sessions by the end of their volunteering experience with ERCRS. Although some schools restrict the number of weeks each student can attend to three, in order to allow other students to have a chance of volunteering, we still gain a good number of students who attend five weeks or more. We therefore managed to survey 74 peer tutors. The results were very encouraging with many showing great satisfaction with their experience as a peer tutor at the ERCRS Homework club.

In this report we have included two important questions, selected from the ten questions of the survey. The first question is an open ended one checking skills and qualities that the tutors felt they developed during their experience, including cultural awareness. The results show that *teaching* and *communication* skills came out on top with scores of 25% and 24% respectively. However, it is also encouraging to note that the peer tutors personally recognised their growth in cultural awareness and empathy.

The second selected question is more restricted to a cultural competency; what they learnt from working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Again the results are very encouraging with 51% nominating yes they have improved their understanding of the issues face CALD communities.



**What skills or qualities do you think you have developed during your time with the programme?**

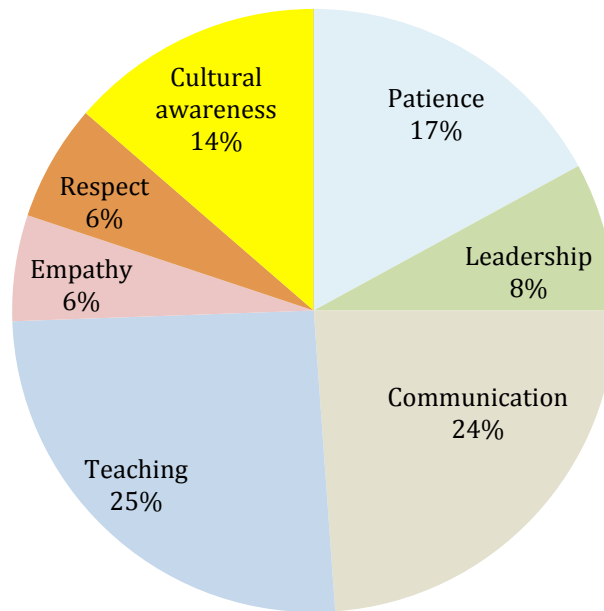


Figure 1: Pie chart illustrating the tutors' perceptions of the personal skills or qualities they developed during the programme.

**By participating in the ERCRS Homework Club, do you think you improved your understanding of some of the issues facing Culturally and linguistically diverse CALD communities in Melbourne?**

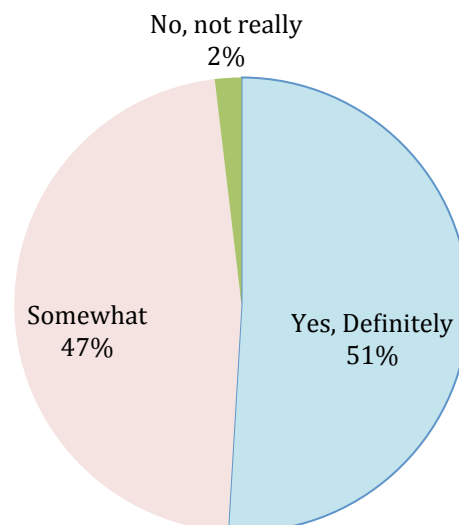


Figure 2: Pie chart illustrating tutor's perceptions of their awareness of CALD issues

## Tutor Journal

Engaging high school students as peer tutors for the primary school learning sessions, allowed us to achieve our goal of providing one-on-one help. Having said that, ERCRS remained committed to ensuring that the relationship should provide mutual benefits to both the high school tutors and our students. To track this objective, we followed students' experience through the Tutor Journals, which peer tutors use to record their reflection for each session. Tutor Journals helped the tutors to record their students' progress each week, and at the end gave them the opportunity to reflect on how they performed during their term with us.

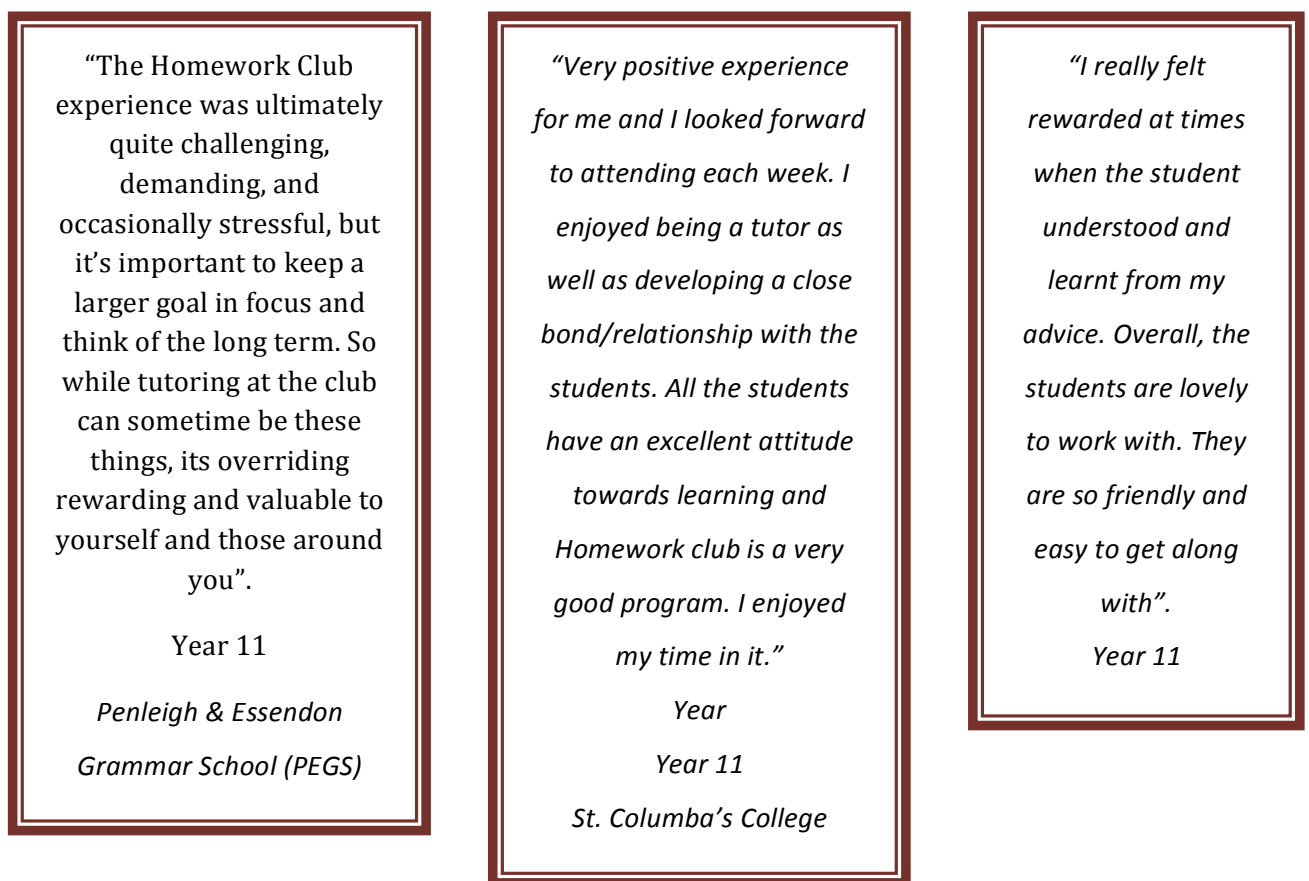


Figure 3: Volunteer students' reflections regarding Homework Club

## Young Women's Mentoring Programme

Towards the end of 2012, the ERCRS Board made a decision to re-implement the Young Women's Mentoring Programme in 2013. Natalia Sopelario, who had facilitated two pilot mentoring sessions as a volunteer in 2012, was employed by the Board as the Mentoring Programme Coordinator. Natalia embraced her role in a creative and energetic manner, enlisting the support of a number of empathetic female mentors who enjoyed the company of the teenagers, and who through their patience and flexibility, gained the respect and trust of the girls who attended the programme.

Natalia described the aims of the programme in the following way:

- 1. The Young Women's Peer-Mentoring Programme aims to help young women from a CALD or a refugee background by:**
  - Promoting positive relationships and building strong peer networks.
  - Building confidence and self-esteem.
  - Helping navigate the challenges of being a young woman: self-care, resilience and positive body image.
  - Helping them work towards self-empowerment.
- 2. With this in mind, the programme has been developed on the basis of two fundamental principles:**
  - The peer-mentoring programme is a safe space for young women to express themselves in whatever capacity they wish and to the extent that they feel comfortable.
  - The mentees are mature, competent young women.
- 3. In our practice as mentors this translates to contributing to a culture that is inclusive, respectful, non-judgemental and supportive. Ways in which this can be achieved is by:**
  - Approaching discussions as an 'opt-in' exercise rather than 'opt-out'.
  - Understanding that silence, though sometimes uncomfortable, is not necessarily bad or unproductive.
  - Practising a communication style that focuses more on listening than talking.



- Fostering a collaborative relationship with the mentees and working with them to achieve their goals.
- Respecting and treating the mentees as capable and mature young women

The peer-mentoring programme is fundamentally concerned with aiding in the mentees' self-empowerment. Essential to this is the mentees' ownership of the programme.

The following charter was produced by the mentees as a document outlining their shared values and beliefs, in order of importance, and what they would like to achieve as a group

### **The Charter**

1. We will respect each other's:
  - a. Differences
  - b. Personalities
  - c. Ideas and thoughts
  - d. Opinions
  - e. Cultures
  - f. Time (by being punctual and prepared)
2. We will make sure that everyone is treated equally and that no one is left out.
3. We will care about each other by:
  - a. Helping, supporting and talking to one another
  - b. Listening to each other
  - c. Encouraging others to participate
4. We will be positive influences for one another by:
  - a. Encouraging each other and not putting others down
  - b. Using positive and affirming language
  - c. Reassuring each other
5. We will be a community that shares with each other:
  - a. Our experiences and stories
  - b. The good and the bad (so we can learn from each other and share happy experiences)
  - c. Our goals, dreams, hopes and how to help each other achieve those goals

Sunday mentoring excursions were held each month from March until December, with a wide variety of themes and experiences offered to the young women. The outline of each session established a well-ordered pattern, with a presentation or input stimulus, followed by a discussion in the group with the girls and the mentors sharing their reflections.

Examples of the activities that the programme availed of during the year demonstrate the diversity of experiences that Natalia used to widen the young women's horizons:

- NGV exhibition of music, art and fashion, indoor rock climbing, Environmental sustainability, Healthy relationships and sexuality, Melbourne film festival, self-defence and the Big West Festival of art, music and dance.

Special thanks are due to Natalia for the success of this programme. Her positivity, enthusiasm and understanding allowed her to build up trusting and respectful relationships with the teenage girls. The Mentoring Induction and Training booklet that Natalia produced will be a valuable resource for future programmes.



## Social and Recreational Programme

### Camps

- 28<sup>th</sup> September – 2<sup>nd</sup> October: Family Camp at Doxa Malmsbury
- 30<sup>th</sup> March-2<sup>nd</sup> April: Easter Kids Camp

Once again in 2013, in association with Edmund Rice Camps Victoria, we were able to offer two camp opportunities to the students and families connected with ERCRS. The first camp, called the Easter Kids Camp, is traditionally held over the Easter long weekend (Saturday until Tuesday) and gives children of ages 9-12 years a chance to experience fun activities and games under the guidance of their young adult mentors. 23 children attended this camp in 2013.

The second camp occurs during the September school holidays, and in 2013 was held at the Doxa Campsite at Malmsbury. This was a family camp, and allows family groups to enjoy time away together. In 2013, a total of 24 people from five different families participated.

All the activities on camp such as sports, art and craft, hiking, swimming, camping out, song and dance etc. were designed to build up each person's self-confidence as well as helping them to relate easily and well with others. The one-to-one ratio of child to older buddy ensures that no one is left out, neglected or overlooked, but on the other hand is made to feel very special, accepted and welcomed. It is no wonder that the children are bubbly and glowing when they return after four exciting days. Many thanks go to the staff and volunteers at Edmund Rice Camps for their energy, care and professionalism.





## Excursions

- 17<sup>th</sup> March: Wonderland Fun Park
- 28<sup>th</sup> April: You Yangs, Excursion with Parks Victoria
- 15<sup>th</sup> September: Melbourne Sports and Aquatic centre (MSAC)

The following excursions were held during the year:

- a) **Wonderland Fun Park** in Docklands. This was a Sunday outing, held for the younger students in the Homework Club (Grades 3 & 4). This excursion offered a fun day of rides and thrills, with just enough scare value to get a little adrenaline flowing. As usual the dodgem cars proved very popular, with a variety of driving skills on display.
- b) **Excursion to the You Yangs** with the help of Parks Victoria. The Edmund Rice Camp leaders kindly offered to accompany 22 of the primary children for a day of hiking in the You Yangs, and at the same time, learning about the local fauna and flora. Many thanks to Parks Victoria for providing the grant to fund this outing.



## **MSAC Swimming**

- c) Towards the end of the third school term of the year, a recreational day was had at the Melbourne Swimming and Aquatic Centre. This wonderful facility with its diversity of fun water activities, including water slide and wave pool, always proved popular with the children.

It is always important to remember that these opportunities provide valuable social learning and cannot occur without the generosity of the volunteers who accompany the children as supervisors, drivers and buddies. We are also especially grateful to St. Bernard's College, Essendon, who once again made its college vans available to us for transport.

## **Planning Day 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2013**

Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> October saw members of the ERCRS staff and board gathered together at the Treacy Conference Centre in Parkville, for a day of reflection and planning on the general direction of the ministry. This was an excellent opportunity for all those available to meet together to reflect on where the ministry has come from (solid foundations), where it is now (present realities) and where it may go in the future (creative dreaming).

Sean McManus opened the day with a presentation on the history of the work of Edmund Rice Community & Refugee Services in the Brimbank area, from its beginnings in 2002. Terry O'Shannassy provided an overview of the development of the Edmund Rice Network in Victoria, and how ERCRS occupied an important niche in the network.

Discussion on the changes that had occurred in the programmes offered over the past two years, followed. It was encouraging to note the overall atmosphere of optimism and sense of achievement that participants enunciated, but tempered by the knowledge that the ministry must continue to be open to self-reflection, review and flexibility, if it is to remain vibrant and relevant.

Participants then spent time, sharing their thoughts about current issues facing the ministry, and the local community in which it operates. This sharing was focused on:

- Strengths- what are the good things we should hold on to?
- Areas for Improvement- where are we doing a less than fantastic job?
- Opportunities- what areas of service can we explore? Dreaming about possible avenues for growth/change.
- Challenges- things that are currently or may in future hold us back.

A selection of aspects on which there were general agreement included:

Strengths included:

- a staff that exemplified strong working relationships in a supportive environment
- the loyalty of our long term volunteers
- the expertise and diverse experience of our board members
- the collaborative partnerships forged with groups such as Edmund Rice Camps, Centre for Multicultural Youth, Brimbank Youth Services, Good Shepherd Youth & Family Services, and others
- the great locations where the learning support programs operate, notably the Errington Centre, St. Albans, Catholic Regional College, St. Albans and Sunshine Harvester School

Opportunities for future development included:

- forging close links with other Edmund Rice Ministries
- building connections with the students who feel disengaged from education
- to continue to seek out youth who are most in need of support
- to continue to build partnerships with other service providers

## Events

- 21<sup>st</sup> June & 6<sup>th</sup> December                      Tutor Dinners
- 27<sup>th</sup> November                                      End of year activity

### (a) Tutor Dinners

On Friday 21<sup>st</sup> June twenty-four of our volunteer tutors gathered at the Good Shepherd offices in St Albans for the biannual volunteer dinner. Those present enjoyed traditional African fare prepared by the Sorghum Sisters catering service. A highlight of the evening was the trivia quiz. Dane's selection of questions proved somewhat difficult and the answers eluded many of the volunteers.

A good time was had by all who feasted at the second volunteer dinner held on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> December at the Golden Terrace Turkish Restaurant in Brunswick. Lively conversation and pleasant company were enjoyed.

### (b) End of Year Activity Day

The 27<sup>th</sup> November marked the last day of Homework Club for 2013. As usual, we had an excellent turn out with some 100 students. Later in the afternoon siblings, parents and volunteers arrived to join in the festivities and celebrate the year by participating in various games and activities. Parents brought in their cultural dishes to share and everyone enjoyed having their face painted by Jo Vu. Nafeesa Khan lead groups of children in Christmas card making and this activity was enjoyed with some beautiful results achieved. Students also enjoyed playing soccer and T-ball on the Errington Oval, and overall it was a great way to cap off the year.



## Network Involvement

ERCRS continues to build collaborative partnerships with other service providers in the Brimbank area. Network linking with other groups is an effective way of sharing expertise and experience in a range of fields, and helps ERCRS increase the effectiveness of the programmes that it offers. These organisations include:

- The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers, and the Edmund Rice Network
- Brimbank City Council
- Centre for Multicultural Youth, CMY
- Youthlinks- a network of service providers engaged in working with young people
- Brimbank Melton Local Learning and Employment Network
- Good Shepherd Youth & Family Services, GSYFS
- EREA Schools and other secondary schools that provide tutors
- St. Albans Youth Services Network, SAYSN
- Jesuit Social Services, JSS
- Migrant Resource centre, MRC Northwest
- Catholic Social Services Victoria, CSSV



# Learning Support Programme Statistics 2013

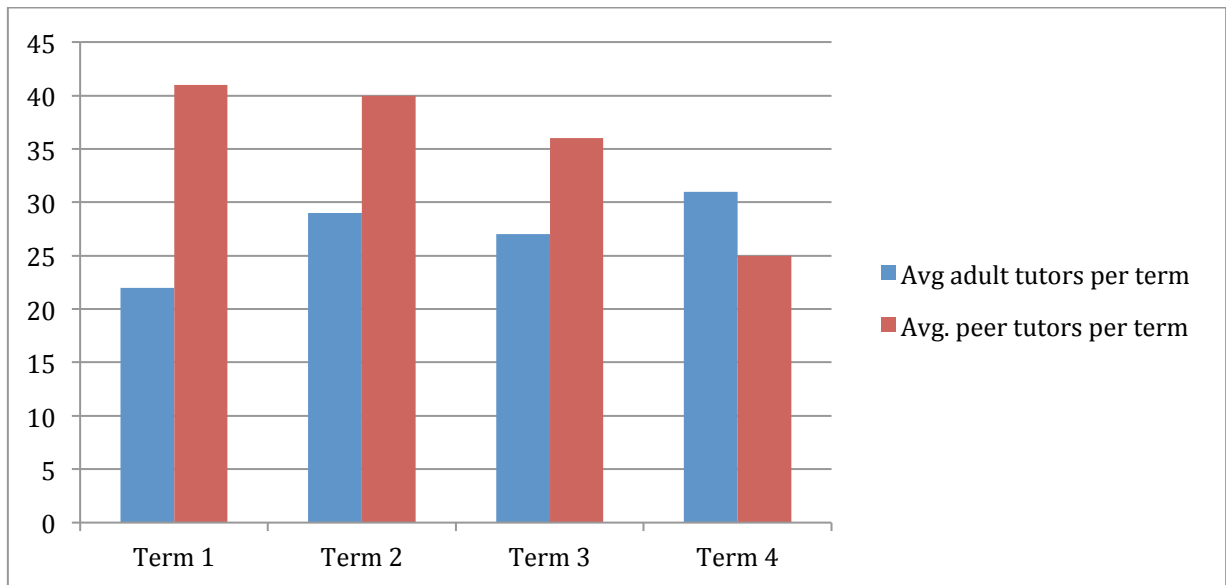
## Number of days of operation

Total number of days opens in 2013: 139 (contrast to days open in 2012 of 124)

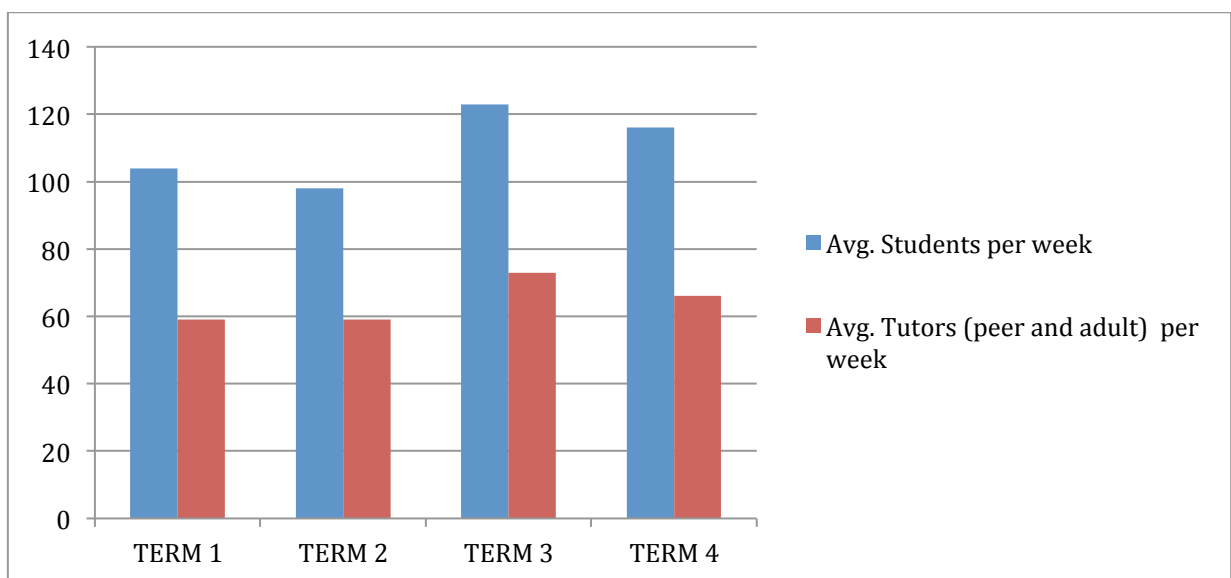
## Average Student and Tutor Attendance (per session)

TERM 1	Avg. no. Students	Avg. no. Tutors (peer and adult)
Mondays	40	24
Wednesdays	36	25
Tuesdays	19	4
Saturdays	9	6
TERM 2		
Mondays	31	19
Wednesdays	37	24
Tuesdays	21	9
Saturdays	9	7
TERM 3		
Mondays	37	22
Wednesdays	40	27
Tuesdays	19	7
Saturdays	7	5
Thursdays	20	12
TERM4		
Mondays	29	15
Wednesdays	34	24
Tuesdays	17	6
Saturdays	11	7
Thursdays	25	14

Average number of adult tutors and peer tutors per term



Average number of students and tutors (Adult and Peer) per term



Points to note from the general graph statistics:

1. As the school year progresses, the number of senior secondary peer tutors decreases as the general demands of their academic studies become more urgent. However, the number of adult tutors gradually increased during the year, thus largely helping to offset the decrease in peer tutor availability.
2. By widening the criteria of accepting students who wish to obtain free learning support and tutoring, our roll numbers have increased to over 100 students attending each week. This makes it difficult to obtain a 1:1 tutor to student ratio, however, we have managed to maintain an overall **average tutor to student ratio of 1 : 1.75**

## Financial Report

### Trustees of The Christian Brothers Victoria & Tasmania Region

#### Statement of Operating Performance for the year ending December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013

<b>Income</b>	<b>31 Dec 2013 Actual</b>	<b>2013 Budget</b>	<b>2012 Budget</b>
1 Donation	15,046	8,000	1,000
2 Interest	0	0	0
3 Grant Received	2,907	4,000	15,000
4 Other Income	1,190	1,200	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>19,143</b>	<b>13,200</b>	<b>16,000</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
5 Administration	40,581	41,450	43,200
6 Homework programme	40,703	44,300	45,500
7 Mentoring programme	6,753	5,400	3,200
8 Events	4,948	9,700	9,150
9 Edmund Rice Celebration days	347	2,600	4,550
10 Capital Replacement	0	2,000	3,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>93,332</b>	<b>105,450</b>	<b>108,650</b>
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Operating Surplus / (Deficit )</b>	<b>(74,189)</b>	<b>(92,250)</b>	<b>(92,650)</b>
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

**Surplus/(Deficit) against 2013 budget 18,061**

## Grants

ERCRS was privileged to receive the following grants during 2013:

- Trustees of the Christian Brothers, Oceania Province.  
The Christian Brothers' Province of Oceania generously provides financial support to the ministry of Edmund Rice Community & Refugee Services, by ensuring that funding is provided to cover any shortfall in the program costs of essential services.  
Value of this grant for 2013 = **\$74,189.00**
- Minter Ellison Lawyers.  
This grant was used to fund our Young Women's Mentoring Program. The grant was instrumental in allowing ERCRS to hire a program coordinator to facilitate the mentoring sessions for the teenage girls in the program.  
Value of this grant for 2013 = **\$5,000.00**
- FAHCSIA, Commonwealth Government of Australia.  
This grant was awarded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra.  
The funding provided by the grant is used to support the volunteers who are a major part of the services that ERCRS offers.  
Value of this grant for 2013 = **\$1,980.00**
- The Victorian Multicultural Commission awarded under Multicultural Festival and events grant  
Value of this grant for 2013 = **\$1,500**
- Parks Victoria  
This grant was specifically aimed at allowing ERCRS to organise and fund a one day excursion for students and volunteers, in the You Yangs Regional Park area of Victoria, to explore some of the wonderful natural features found there.  
Value of this grant for 2013 = **\$1,020.00**

## Donations

ERCRS is very grateful for the generous financial and in-kind donations received from the following supporters:

St. Patrick's College, Ballarat  
Caroline Chisholm Catholic College, Braybrook  
Holy Eucharist School, St. Albans  
Catholic Regional College, St. Albans  
St. Bernard's College, Essendon

Mount St. Joseph Girls' College, Altona  
 Overnewton Anglican College, Keilor  
 Parade College, Bundoora  
 Brimbank Libraries

## Acknowledgements

1. Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers
2. Centre for Multicultural Youth
3. Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service
4. Brimbank Youth Services
5. Edmund Rice Centre, Amberley
6. Second Bite food providers
7. Lander & Rogers Lawyers
8. Edmund Rice Camps Victoria
9. St. Albans/Keilor Schools Network
10. The following schools:
  - St. Patrick's College
  - St. Columba's College
  - St. Bernard's College
  - Ave Maria College
  - Parade College
  - St. Kevin's College
  - Penleigh and Essendon Grammar School
  - Catholic Regional College, St. Albans
  - Caroline Chisholm Catholic College
  - Mount St. Joseph Girls' College
  - Overnewton Anglican College

