

Angeles Relief Inc

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2023 Annual Report

ANGELES RELIEF INC

Angeles Relief Inc is a not-for-profit association incorporated in the state of Victoria, Australia. It was established in 2018 to provide services for the relief of poverty, sickness, distress, misfortune, and/or helplessness to children abandoned by their fathers in the Philippines.

PURPOSES OF THE ASSOCIATION

To provide relief from poverty, sickness, distress, misfortune, and/or helplessness to children abandoned by their fathers in the Philippines, by undertaking activities such as:

- (a) providing money for education, shelter, health needs, legal help and other material and financial assistance;
- (b) recruiting, training and retaining a staff, both paid and volunteer, dedicated to delivering the assistance; and
- (c) advocating for the Australian Government to accept applications for child support direct from the mothers in the Philippines.

PRINCIPLES

The agency provides a service that is:

- Free
- Confidential
- Impartial
- Independent
- Respectful of the clients' rights to make their own decisions.

CONTACT DETAILS

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Our little organisation has had another challenging year, but also one visited with considerable success in improving the lives of the children we support. As always, our success is contingent on the continuing loyalty of our donors, our woman on the ground Marivic Panilawan and the volunteer efforts of our board.

As I write, I am about to depart for my annual trip to the Philippines. I will be in the country from 7-17 October, with most of that time spent visiting the children in Angeles City. I plan to spend as much time with them as possible. In some cases, the children are now no longer children, but have turned 18. In those cases, we cease support unless we can aid in the young adult undertaking further education and training. However, we remain in touch with these families.

Last year, I reported on a distressing event concerning a 12-year-old girl (now 13) who we had been supporting since before the incorporation of ARI. For the purposes of this report, I will refer to her as Y. Following the mother becoming drug addicted, Y was trafficked online to make sex videos. Our intervention resulted in her being taken into a children's shelter run by the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and at the time of writing this is where she remains. As a result we have supported the children's shelter direct, as well as providing some limited support to Y's family as they try to overcome their difficulties. We are in weekly contact with Y and her carers in the children's shelter, and she is one of those involved in the successful DNA testing project, which I describe below.

I reported last year on the DNA testing project, which has been undertaken in partnership with Hear Their Cries, a charity founded and managed by lawyer Andrew MacLeod. Hear Their Cries has as its main focus holding sex offenders in the international aid community to account.

In short, children – some of whom we support, others from the wider community in Hadrian's Extension – provided DNA samples, and using information now available through sites such as Ancestry.com, and the services of DNA detectives attached to Kings College London, we were able to trace the fathers of some of the children.

One of the successful cases is that of Y, and earlier this year we took action in the Australian Family Court to force the father, a Queenslander, to do a confirmatory DNA test. As a result the court has now declared that he is Y's father. We are now seeking to obtain Australian citizenship for Y, and will follow this up with an application for child support. Meanwhile we have a Filipino family in Australia who are interested in fostering her, should she wish this and her family of origin consent.

We have also successfully traced the families of six other children, two of whom are now over 18. The results, are of course, mixed.

- We are taking action in the Canadian courts in the case of X, a 15 year old girl, whose father is proving uncooperative. We are seeking a declaration of parentage, and Canadian citizenship, plus child support. We expect a court hearing in December.
- In the case of B, a 13 year old boy, the father was happy to acknowledge his son (who he did not know existed) and is now supporting him. They have a relationship that includes half sisters who are also Philippines born.
- In the case of C, a nineteen year old man, we have identified his family, but have not managed to determine which of three brothers is his father. The family are refusing to have anything to do with the matter, much to his sorrow. Since he is over 18 there is no case for child support, so at the moment we are stuck, but will continue our efforts.

- In the case of D, an 18 year old boy, we have identified the father as a criminal presently in a USA jail. However, D is in touch with the wider family, who are providing him with some support, and has adopted his father's surname.
- In the case of E, a six year old boy, we have identified the father as one of two brothers – both Australian/British dual citizens. Each was in Angeles City at the relevant time, and they are accusing each other and refusing to do confirmatory DNA tests. We are seeking pro bono lawyers to assist us in advancing this matter.
- In the case of F, a fifteen year old girl, we have identified the father, a Queensland resident, but at the moment he is not responding to us. We have engaged our pro bono lawyers to correspond with him, and will take legal action if necessary.

I must thank our pro bono lawyers, Harry McDonald of Damien Greer Lawyers in Brisbane, and Max Blitt KC of Spier Harben in Calgary, Alberta, for their many hours of free assistance in these cases. Andrew MacLeod has also contributed many hours of work, and in one case flew to Calgary at his own expense to serve court papers on a father.

This summary is confined to the children that ARI has been supporting. In all these cases, the effect of finding their fathers has been profound. It is not only, or chiefly, about financial support but rather about a sense of identity.

A year ago Andrew MacLeod gained the interest in a documentary film maker, Clover Films, in this work. They have filmed myself and MacLeod and the families in Angeles City, and the resulting documentary is likely to be screened early next year. The ABC Four Corners have expressed interest, and it will be screened on Channel Four in England.

Thanks to funding provided by Clover, another 20 DNA tests were done in the wider Angeles Community, and more families – not among those supported by ARI – have found their parents as a result. While ARI is not formally involved in this wider project, it has been extraordinary to watch. In one case, a 78-year-old man found out his parentage for the first time – sadly, a week after his father died.

But other children in the wider community are now being supported by their natural fathers, and others have the option of pursuing legal action.

Sadly, in some cases, the process was not successful and these children remain frustrated.

This work has been extremely difficult and emotionally draining, but transformative. When the documentary screens, we can expect further interest in our work, and perhaps more pro bono legal help.

Last year I reported that we were supporting our Philippines partner organisation, Children's Better Life, to remain registered as part of making sure our worker on the ground, Marivic, is properly protected. We recently renewed CBL's registration for another year.

Marivic completed one year of a social work course under our sponsorship, and achieved excellent academic results, but sadly felt she could not continue due to her many commitments and responsibilities to her family. Sadly, Marivic lost her mother to Covid, her father and brother have also been unwell and her own health is not great.

Meanwhile, the DNA project involved Marivic in a great deal of extra work, and during the year we agreed to clarify her duties, what was included in the regular amount we pay her, and when we would pay her an extra fee.

During all this we have been able, thanks to the generosity of our donors, to maintain levels of support to our families, as well as take these extra actions and steps.

It is fast becoming time to consider our future. Some years ago, we took a decision not to seek expansion – which would require considerable fundraising and hiring professional help, but rather to seek to support the children we know through to adulthood. That has been achieved in some cases, and is in reach for others. The youngest child we support is now six years old.

The Board will, this year, give consideration to what comes next, and the ways forward.

Our impact is, as ever, modest on the scale of the need – but I think we can be proud that we continue to make a profound difference in the lives of the families we support

Margaret Simons
President
3 October 2023.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Income and expenditure statement for the year ended 30 June

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
Income		
Donations received	23,623	25,509
Interest	1	1
Total income	23,624	25,510
Expenditure		
Grant for aid project	22,805	24,635
Total expenditure	22,805	24,635
Surplus/(deficit)	819	876

Assets and liabilities statement as at 30 June

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
Assets		
Cash at bank - Bendigo Bank	5,654	4,835
Total assets	5,654	4,835
Liabilities		
Total liabilities	0	0
Net assets	5,654	4,835

Movements in equity as at 30 June

	2023	2022
	\$	\$
Retained earnings		
Opening balance	4,835	3,959
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	819	876
Total retained earnings	5,654	4,835

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

As at 4 October 2023

President	Margaret Simons
Secretary	Chris Sherrell
Ordinary Members	Peter Gribbin
	Heather Jarvis
	Gillian Wright