

Angeles Relief Inc

# Angeles Relief Inc

## 2024 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

[angelesrelief@gmail.com](mailto:angelesrelief@gmail.com)

[www.angelesrelief.org](http://www.angelesrelief.org)

## PRESIDENT’S REPORT

The past year has brought significant change to our organisation, accompanied by challenges and opportunities. Once again, I am grateful and in awe of the continued commitment of our board, donors and the very many people who now offer us volunteer help – from lawyers representing children pursuing citizenship of their fathers’ countries to the social workers in Angeles City who do their best to help us on top of their already punishing workload.

As I write, I am shortly to depart for my annual trip to the Philippines. I will be in the country from 4 November for ten days, with most of that time spent visiting the children in Angeles City. I will visit all the children currently receiving support from us, as well as some of our “alumni” who are now making their own way, having turned 18.

The last two years have brought an important change and expansion to our work. In partnership with the international charity Hear Their Cries (HTC), and its founder Andrew MacLeod, we were part of a pilot program attempting to use DNA testing to track and hold to account the foreign fathers of children in Angeles City. In 2020, the documentary film maker Clover Films sponsored some of this work and made a documentary concerning it. A version of that was screened on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation program Four Corners in July 2024. The British Channel Four will screen another version at a date to be fixed in the next 12 months.

We have had modest but significant success with this work, and we have learned a lot on the way. The work took place in three waves, as resources became available. In the initial pilot, funded by Angeles Relief Inc (ARI) and HTC, we tested six children, and identified four fathers – three Australians and one US citizen. The outcomes are:

- One father is now paying child support for his daughter through an informal arrangement with ARI, and we are applying for Australian citizenship for his daughter.
- The US father is paying limited child support directly to his son’s mother, and has established a relationship with him.
- An Australian father has visited his daughter in Angeles City and has provided some financial support for her. The relationship is difficult and we continue to be involved.
- We traced another family – without identifying which of three sons was the father. Unfortunately this family have declined to engage with us, making it impossible to determine paternity. The child concerned is now over 18, so child support is not relevant, and so far he has not wanted to pursue citizenship.

Our second tranche of 20 DNA tests was mostly funded by Clover Films, and was not successful initially, due to using a database that proved not suitable for the work. Following this, another nine tests were conducted, also funded by Clover. We made the mistake of using the commercial tests provided through MyHeritage.com, as well as some from Ancestry.com. This taught us an important lesson. At present only the Ancestry.com database is large enough to be useful for our work. Nevertheless, we found another seven fathers, with the following outcomes:

- NZ citizen. Supporting his child, and seeking to establish a relationship. Complicated case but child stands to inherit a large sum of money.
- Canadian. Fighting us every step of the way – recent win in Canadian courts, which declared him to be the father on the basis of the DNA evidence we presented. Citizenship application for the daughter is underway. Father has no money, so no child support possible.

- British-Australian. Have identified the father as one of two brothers, one resident in Australia, the other in the Philippines. Both refusing to do clarifying DNA tests. Legal action in preparation. They have threatened and intimidated the mother, which has required legal intervention by us to protect her. However, an extended family member who is ashamed of her family's conduct has, on a confidential basis, approached us and is now funding the boy's education.
- US citizen – presently in jail in US for serious offence. Not interested in connecting with his child who is now over 18. Child has nevertheless adopted his father's name and hopes to connect in future. Not interested in pursuing citizenship.
- US citizen – father deceased by the time we found him. Has been important to (adult) child for feelings of identity. Fractious relationship with extended family.
- Australian father: not a definitive result from DNA testing, but indicative – basically we have found the grandparents. However, mother thinks the result is wrong, strongly counter to her recollection. No meaningful follow up.
- Additional British case where we have lost contact with the subject, and not clear if any follow up conducted.

In several of these cases, we have had to go to court to get help in holding the fathers to account, and in pursuing citizenship. We have now had pro bono assistance from five groups of lawyers in the Philippines, Australia, and Canada.

Thanks are due to:

- Harry McDonald of Damien Greer Lawyers in Brisbane
- Max Blitt KC of Spier Harben in Calgary, Alberta
- Jordann Sorokowsy RCIC of Glove Trotters Immigration, Canada
- Karyn Anderson and Isabel Owen of Clothier Anderson, Melbourne
- Richard Bannerman and his team, of Bannerman Solicitors, Perth.

While action resulting from the DNA work is still underway, the committee of ARI has decided that we will seek to modestly extend this work, and I will be taking twelve DNA testing kits to Angeles City on my forthcoming visit. In one case, I will be testing children who are alleged by the mothers to be the half siblings of a child already on our books. In other words, it is possible we will find up to three children fathered by a single Australian man.

This extension to our work will likely present further challenges. To date, we have tested only children we already knew, and in most cases children we had already provided with financial support. As we extend our reach, we are bound to be confronted with requests and needs for financial support.

The committee has been engaged in modelling what this might look like, and assessing our capacity and fundraising needs.

Another change this year was the resignation in May of Marivic Panilawan, our worker on the ground, following some health issues. This was a sad parting. Marivic deserves credit for helping us to get ARI operational and supporting our families.

We had in any case been planning to seek to employ a qualified social worker as an adjunct and support to Marivic. Her resignation led us to advance these plans, and we advertised the position with social work qualifications as a "highly desired" criteria. We had over 240 applications, and shortlisted five applicants, all of whom had social work qualifications. The successful applicant was Ms Pamela Yangco, who also works casually for the Department of Social Welfare and Development,

and specifically for the Angeles City Shelter for Children, where one of the children we support is presently living. Pamela started work in July and is working for us two days a week on a flexible basis.

Sadly, the departure of Marivic also led to our partner organisation, Children's Better Life Program Inc, severing its connection with us. It was Marivic who had made this connection for us, since she was also an officeholder in CBLP.

We have investigated establishing our own registered charity in the Philippines. However, the regulatory requirements are prohibitively expensive. We are therefore seeking another auspicing arrangement, and I will pursue discussions regarding this with a number of organisations on my forthcoming visit.

The committee has also decided to pursue registering as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and applying for DGR endorsement, and work on this is underway. Should we be successful, this would also bring tax deductible gift status for donations.

Thankfully, as a result of the Four Corners program, we have had an influx of people, including members of the Filipino-Australian community, offering help. This has included social workers, and "DNA detectives" who are happy to use their skills to help us track the fathers as a result of the next wave of DNA tests.

Meanwhile, we continue to provide support to nine kids, some on a monthly basis, and some on an ad hoc basis as needs arise. This support is able to be provided thanks to the generosity of our donors. We also channel child support to two children from their Australian families, in one case from the father, in the other from an extended family member. We also provide support to extended family members where this is judged to be in the best interests of the children – for example, we have assisted in getting one mother into a drug rehabilitation program.

If our endeavours are successful, we are anticipating a modest period of growth for ARI's operations, contingent on funding. It is therefore likely that our operations will continue past the time when the youngest of "our" current children reaches 18 (he is presently eight years old). This means that in the next year or two, we will have to think about succession for the key roles in our organisation. I will make this a priority, with the ideal being the inclusion of members of the Filipino-Australian community. However, our expansion is contingent on funding.

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  
8 October 2024

## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

### Income and expenditure statement for the year ended 30 June

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
<b>Income</b>		
Donations received	26,835	23,623
Interest	1	1
<b>Total income</b>	<b>26,836</b>	<b>23,624</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Grant for aid project	21,218	22,805
Salaries & wages recruitment expense	157	0
Legal fees	2,294	0
Bank charges	10	0
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>23,679</b>	<b>22,805</b>
<b>Surplus/(deficit)</b>	<b>3,157</b>	<b>819</b>

### Assets and liabilities statement as at 30 June

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
<b>Assets</b>		
Cash at bank - Bendigo Bank	8,811	5,654
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>8,811</b>	<b>5,654</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>8,811</b>	<b>5,654</b>

### Movements in equity as at 30 June

	2024	2023
	\$	\$
<b>Equity</b>		
Opening balance	5,654	4,835
Current year surplus/(deficit)	3,157	819
<b>Total equity</b>	<b>8,811</b>	<b>5,654</b>

## COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

As at 17 October 2024

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