

30th anniversary of STARTTS – NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors

Jorge Aroche*

2018 marked the 30th anniversary of STARTTS. Since its humble beginnings in 1988 the organisation has grown and expanded greatly in the last three decades. This storied milestone has created an opportunity for us to reflect, look back at our history and take stock of our enduring achievements. It is also a time to decide how we want our role to continue to evolve in order to meet the current and future challenges that face STARTTS as an organisation. To mark the 30 years of STARTTS, our 30th anniversary celebratory event was held on the 20th of September 2019.

Thirty years of uninterrupted growth has opened up opportunities for organisational transformation, innovation and international collaboration. It has also placed us in a position where we have much to share in terms of expertise and innovative interventions, not just with our colleagues working in the rehabilitation of torture and trauma survivors, but also those working in the wider trauma field.

When STARTTS opened its doors 30 years ago, nobody knew much about healing victims of torture. We had to learn, and in doing so, learning as we did

became part of the culture of that young organisation, a culture that endures as STARTTS has matured, and that I have mentioned many times. This learning was always for a purpose, however, to be better at what we do, to get better at this incredibly important task of assisting our clients to have a life after torture and suffering. Thus, continuing to get better, refusing to settle for good enough became another of the many characteristics that define STARTTS, and part of its DNA as an organization. We don't settle for good enough. Not when it comes to helping our clients have a life after torture and trauma. We have been constantly evolving and changing, growing when necessary, in pursuance of this goal. This has been the driving force for the last thirty years, and one that I trust will continue to drive us for the next thirty.

One new forum created to do that is the Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT) biennial International Conference, which STARTTS spearheaded so successfully in 2017 in Sydney. The success of the first conference was built on by our QPASTT colleagues in Brisbane this past March. The challenge of hosting the next 3rd FASSTT International Conference has now moved to our Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service (STTARS) colleagues

*) Chief Executive Officer, STARTTS
Correspondence to: stts-startts@health.nsw.gov.au

in South Australia and will take place in Adelaide in 2021.

STARTTS belongs to our clients first and foremost, who provide the inspiration, purpose and meaning to the organisation. It belongs to our friends, colleagues and supporters who play key roles in all the successes we have, to the refugee communities and the local community at large, who provide the context for healing in which STARTTS can do its work, and it belongs to Australian society at large, a society that continues to acknowledge the need to assist torture and trauma survivors to have a life after a torture, and chooses to make the resources available to make this possible. We should all be very proud of this, particularly in the current global context.

Thank you for being here with us, thank you for supporting us on this 30 year journey. Thank you for continuing to inspire us, so that we remain as committed to our work and as eager to tackle new challenges as we were thirty years ago.

Jorge Aroche.