



VOLUNTEERS TO ASSIST CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES LTD.

VACD AUSTRALIA CHAIRMAN'S

**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE VACD BOARDS of Australia, USA and Sri Lanka
2018/2019**

"What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal." — Albert Pike

Our Goal: VACD's goal is to enrich the lives of children with disabilities in some of the poorest provinces of Sri Lanka because of the acute shortage of proper infrastructure and support facilities available to them. We aim to achieve this by teaching them skills and surrounding them with facilities and infrastructure that will help them lead productive, independent and fulfilling lives and attain their future ambitions, goals and dreams.

What do we do? To help these children achieve their dreams and aspirations, we provide their parents with education, training and guidance to persevere with the challenges and hardships of caring for their children. Through our VACD centres we provide our children with special education, life skills, vocational skills as well as music, dance, art, sports and computer literacy training etc. We sponsor and equip health clinics at local hospitals, conduct health camps to facilitate regular check-ups and provide therapy and rehabilitation services that will enable these children to be healthy, valued and respected citizens within their own local communities.

How we achieve our mission? To accomplish our mission, we establish VACD Centres and engage with local communities, religious groups, businesses, government and medical authorities through our local leadership, VACD parents and Young VACD Club members who are the present and future advocates of our mission. Through engagement, awareness programs and communication we strive to eliminate poverty, ignorance, discrimination, social isolation, vilification, emotional, physical and sexual abuse and incest etc. We encourage communities to care, love, respect, assist and advocate the rights of children with disabilities and to promulgate these values within their local neighborhoods.

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Incorporated in Australia on 27th March 2015 under Australian Securities and Investment Commission licence No: 605 017 016, Australian Business Register Number 80 605 017 016 and Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission on 15th April 2015

Our history in brief:

Volunteers to Assist Children with Disabilities (VACD) was established on 27th December 2011 in the township of Bandarawela in the Uva province of Sri Lanka in response to an appeal to help 11 children with disabilities who were in a 'special' classroom without a specialist teacher, a structured curriculum or any consideration to their distinctive needs. A VACD centre was subsequently opened in July 2015 in Bandarawela, which now caters to up to a maximum of approximately 30 children followed by the second VACD centre in the township of Badulla in February 2019 which also caters to a similar number of children.

VACD was registered as private benevolent limited liability company with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) on 27th March 2015, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) on 15th April 2015, was endorsed by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) for income tax exemption and GST concessions from 15th April 2015 and Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status effective 1st December 2015.

With our focus being children with disabilities in the Uva Province in Sri Lanka, VACD Sri Lanka was registered as a private benevolent company on 27th January 2016 in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

The VACD USA chapter was registered as a limited liability benevolent company on 16th May 2017 with tax exemption status being granted by the US authorities effective 16th May 2017.


About us:

We have over 350 children who have been medically diagnosed with down syndrome, autism, physical and intellectual impairments since birth registered with VACD Sri Lanka from across the Uva province. However, the actual number of children with disabilities across the entire province is believed to be round 3,000 or more.

Statistics of Children with Disabilities in 10 out of 15 Divisional Secretariats in the Badulla Administrative District.

Divisional Secretariat	Number as per census & Dept. of Social Services	Active number of registered VACD children	Number of children requiring VACD assistance
Badulla	90	31	59
Bandarawela	73	88	-15
Ella	156	27	129
Hali-Ela	99	29	70
Mahiyangana	105	51	54
Meegahakivula	118	3	115
Passara	70	5	65
Wellawaya	76	3	73
Welimada	112	23	89
Uva Paranagama	204	6	198
Total	1103	266	837

Notes: 1) Statistics for the Monaragala Divisional Secretariat area are being sought by us
2) Most parents opt not to participate in these surveys for cultural and social reasons

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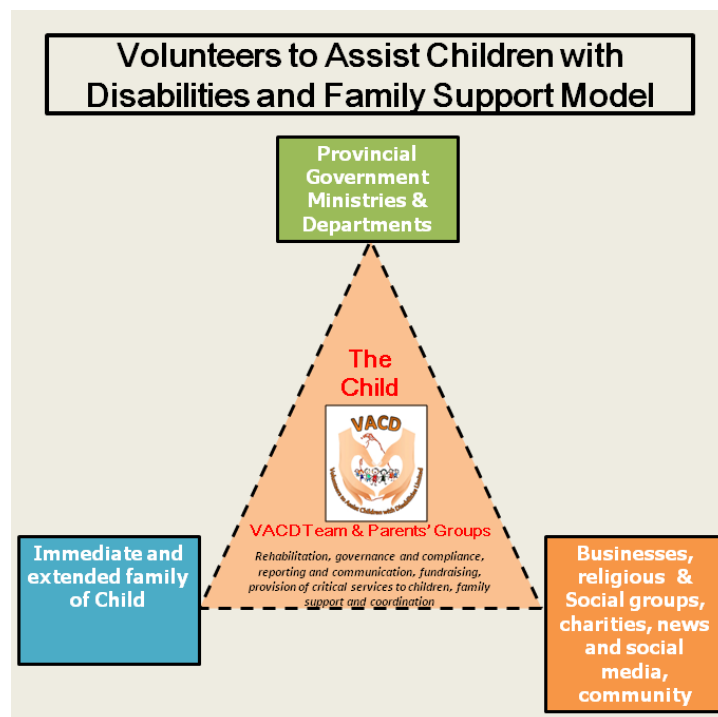
The above statistics cover only 10 of the 26 administrative districts in the Uva province making the estimate of around 3,000+ children who need attention a reasonably reliable estimate. Most parents do not divulge that they have children with disabilities due to social and community discrimination, isolation and vilification.

Our goal is to open more centres in different townships to extend our services to more children with disabilities in impoverished and remote parts of the province. Further, medical authorities in the region continue to urge us to do so as they lack the facilities and resources to provide the comprehensive services that we provide our children.

Our VACD centres provide children with special education, life skills, vocational skills, computer literacy, as well as music, dance and sports training. VACD also sponsors and equips health clinics at local hospitals to facilitate regular check-ups, therapy and rehabilitation services. Parents and carers are provided coaching and training in leadership, child rehabilitation, planning and implementation of projects and programs etc. (so that they can eventually administer the centres by themselves under VACD Board oversight and guidance), in addition to being provided with microfinance facilities and crafts instruction.

To accomplish our mission we engage with local communities, religious groups, businesses, government and medical authorities and through discussion, awareness programs and workshops strive to eliminate poverty, myths, ignorance, discrimination, social isolation, vilification, incest and sexual abuse etc. while promulgating and encouraging communities to value, uphold and respect the rights of children with disabilities.

The VACD operating model:

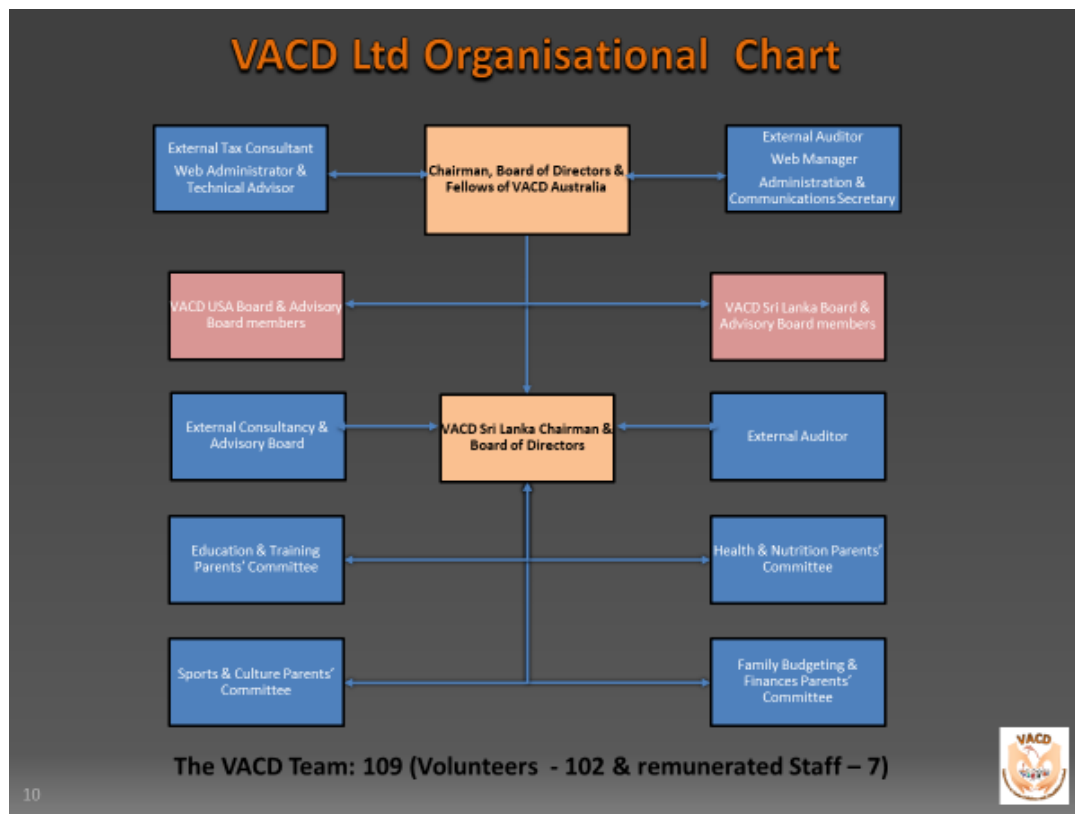


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VACD Organisational Structure:



Our compliance and Governance regime:

In order to ensure that we safeguard the reputation and integrity of VACD and protect vulnerable beneficiaries of our mission, the following policy and compliance framework was advocated, promulgated and implemented by us since inception:

- Child Protection Policy;
- Code of conduct for VACD leadership, team, parents & visitors;
- Anti-Terrorism, Anti-Fraud & Anti-Money Laundering Policy;
- Privacy policy & Whistle blower Policy;
- Memoranda of Understanding between VACD Australia, USA and Sri Lanka;
- VACD Constitutions unique to each legal jurisdiction.

Our Supporters:

We are most grateful to all friends, family, ex-colleagues, Consultant Paediatricians in the local hospitals, government officials, business people and well-wishers who are too numerous to name individually who support us in numerous ways – financially, providing pro bono services and free facilities, giving advice and providing valuable contacts.

A heartfelt 'Thank You' to each one of you, and to every one of our 102 volunteers for their invaluable contributions, dedication and commitment to our mission.

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Our leadership Teams:

Apart from the paid teachers, office assistant, music and dance instructors and caretakers, all VACD's projects and programs are implemented through volunteers, which makes a significant positive contribution towards reducing administrative expenses. Parents of registered children serve on committees to assist and support the board and office bearers in carrying out our projects and programs.

The Boards of Directors in Sri Lanka, Australia and USA have been restructured and expanded and now include the following individuals:

VACD AUSTRALIA Team:

Mr. Felix Stephen - Chairman
Mr. Giles Gunesekera – Secretary & Director
Mr. James Meighan – Treasurer & Director
Mr. Greg Fendler - Director
Mr. Hemraj Fernando - Director
Mrs. Shanthi Manamperi - Director
Ms. Gabriella Vascotto - Director
Mr. Matthew Levy OAM - Director
Mr. Nalin Perera - Auditor
Mr. Patrick O'Brien – Tax Consultant
Mrs. Yasmin Stephen – Administration and Communications Secretary
Mr. Chris Thomas – Web Administrator & Technical Advisor
Mr. Mirzaa Cassim – Web Manager

VACD USA Team:

Mr. Frank Fendler (Pennsylvania) - President & Director
Mrs. Ellie Fendler (Pennsylvania) - Secretary & Director
Mr. Rasika Padmaperuma (North Carolina) - Treasurer & Director
Mr. James Gruver (Chicago) - Director
Mrs. Marriane Gruver (Chicago) - Director
Mrs. Nelum Walpola (Dallas) - Director
Mrs. Shanti Willy (Houston) - Director
Mr. Mikhail Sookoor (Dallas) – Director
Prof. Benjamin Friedman (Boston) – Advisory Board Member
Mr. Desmond Macintyre (Boston) – Advisory Board Member
Mr. Daniel Farley (Boston) – Advisory Board Member
Mr. Dulasiri Amarasinghe (New York) – Advisory Board Member
Mr. Felix Stephen – (Sydney, Australia) – Advisory Board Member
Mr. Giles Gunesekera – (Sydney, Australia) – Advisory Board Member
Mrs. Yasmin Stephen (Sydney, Australia) – Advisory Board Member

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VACD SRI LANKA Team:

Mr. Sisira Ratnayake - Patron
Mr. Sunil Fernando - Chairman
Mrs. Prabha Karunaratne - Deputy Chairman & Director
Mr. Sunil De Alwis – Deputy Chairman & Director
Colonel (Retd) R.M. Kumarasinghe – Secretary & Director
Mr. Sujeewa Abenayake – Assistant Secretary & Director
Mr. Dayarathna Kandambige – Treasurer & Director
Mr. Thushara Serasinghe – Assistant Treasurer & Director
Deshamanya Mr. N.G.R.D Kumarawansa - Director
Dr. M.J. Thilakarathna - Director
Mr. R.M.D Dayarathna - Director
Mr. Athula Rathnayake - Director
Mr. Pathmasiri Weraniyagoda - Director
Mr. R.M. Abesinghe Bandara – Director
Mr. D M Ranathunge – Advisory Board Member
Mr. Felix Stephen – Advisory Board Member
Mrs. Yasmin Stephen – Advisory Board Member

How VACD children fared in the past year?

This was a remarkable year for the talented and hardworking children of VACD, especially the following whose achievements are listed alongside. We are so proud of them.

Inter-Divisional Disabled Athletic Championships



Left to right: Avishka Imesh Kumara (1st in Putt Shot, 1st in 100m Under 15), Malki Nimasha (1st in Long Jump, 2nd in 100m, 2nd in Discus over 15), Arulanadan Sujidaran (2nd in 100m under 15). Avishka and Malki have earned the right to compete in National Competitions in Colombo.

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2018 Art Festival Competition – Uva Province



Awiska Imesh, A Sujidaran, Danushka Pradeep Kumara, Tharidu Prabodh & Prasad Malinga – 2nd place in Boys’ Folk Dance

Thakshila Dilrukshi, Imasha Semini, P Thathshine, Indusarani Imansha & R Thirisha – 3rd place in Girls’ Modern Creative Dance.

Thakshila Dilrukshi – 1st place in Classical Solo singing for girls and second place in Solo Folk singing for girls

Prasad Malinga – 3rd place in Classical dancing boys over 17 years

Danushka Pradeep Kumara – 3rd place in Classical dancing boys under 17 years

VACD activities in Sri Lanka:

Our leadership team in Sri Lanka were extremely busy during the period under review as they established a new VACD centre in the township of Badulla and relocated the Bandarawela centre.

Opening the VACD Badulla centre:

The “Dora Jeanne Centre for Children with Disabilities” located at: No. 23, Keppetipola Road, Badulla was opened with traditional and cultural customs being observed.



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Relocation of the VACD Bandarawela centre:



VACD parents spent a day cleaning up the yard and preparing the new Bandarawela centre to be occupied by them and their children very soon.

The main VACD centre “**Sir Robert Clark Centre for Children with Disabilities**” in Bandarawela was relocated to: No. 49 A, Springwaththa, Vishaka Mawatha, Bandarawela during this month.

VACD’s procession through the town to mark UN’s Day for Disabled Persons:

VACD celebrated World Children’s Day and the United Nation’s Day for Disabled Persons on Sunday, 2nd December 2019. Donations of gifts from overseas visitors, financial and other donations from local well-wishers and businesses and assistance from parents helped to defray costs of this annual event.



These public activities raise awareness of issues relating to children with disabilities and helps enhance VACD’s profile in the local community.

Inauguration of “The Young VACD Members’ Club”:

On Saturday, 10th November VACD reached another high point when the “Young VACD Members’ Club” (YVMC) was officially inaugurated in Bandarawela. This group of 40+ enthusiastic founder members are made up of siblings of VACD children with disabilities and

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their friends. We view this as a great opportunity for us to identify and groom future leaders for our mission.



The Sinhala/Tamil New Year 2019:

The local New Year was celebrated at the “**Sir Robert Clark Centre for Children with Disabilities**” in Bandarawela with our children, their families, VACD team and the local community in attendance, as seen below:



Parents at the “**Dora Jeanne Centre for Children with Disabilities**” in Badulla decided to organise their first ever VACD New Year celebrations at a nearby public ground with

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traditional food, dancing, games and plenty of entertainment and fun for our children, their families and attendees, without any financial support from VACD as seen below:



These cultural events are an important part of our rehabilitation & development programs for our children. Community engagement initiatives such as this help build support for our children, their families and our mission.

Medical Examination & Evaluation Clinic:



Dr. Tiraj Mendis – Consultant Paediatrician Provincial General Hospital Badulla (presently Consultant Paediatrician Base Hospital Diyatalawa) who has been a long-standing and passionate advocate of our mission conducted a clinic at the VACD centre in Badulla to evaluate the health conditions of our VACD children and had discussions with their parents and VACD Staff.

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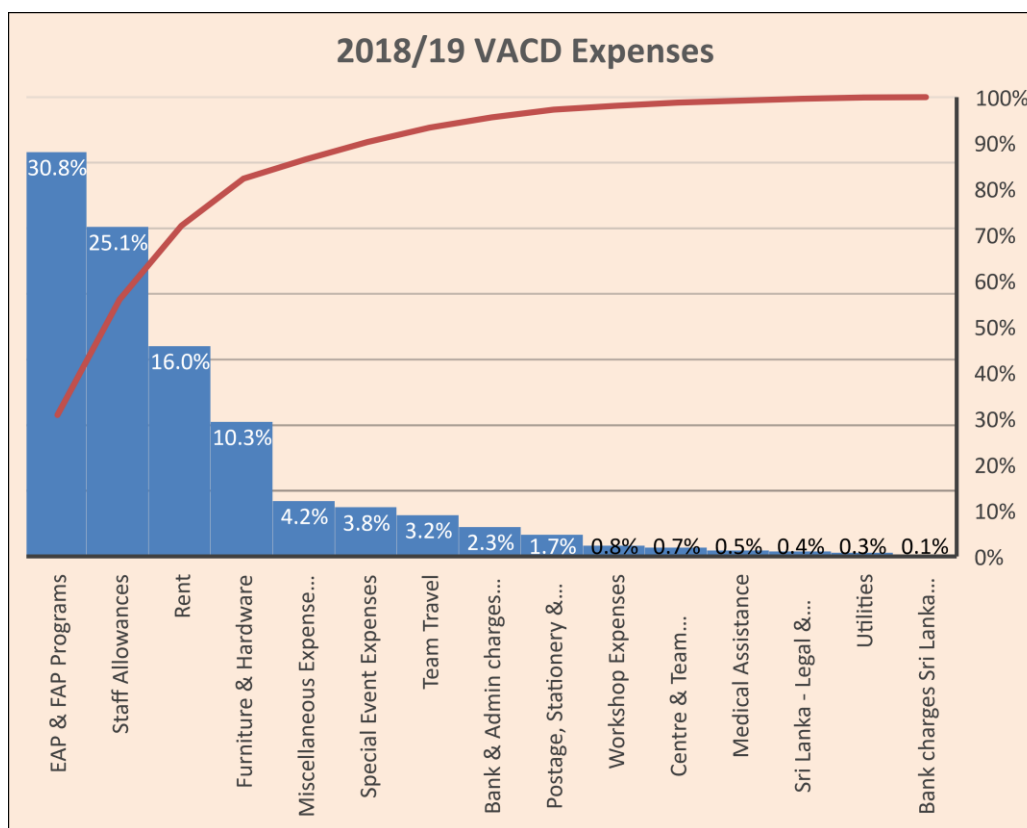


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VACD 2018/19 Financials:

Expenditure:

Despite substantial expenses being incurred by us during the relocation of the Bandarawela centre and the refurbishing and equipping of the new Badulla centre, VACD ended the financial year 2018/19 in a stable position primarily due to the diligence and discipline exercised by our leadership team in Sri Lanka who eliminated unnecessary expenses and ensured that funds deployed were beneficial to our children and in line with our mission. Analysing funds deployed by us during the 2018/19 period, 97.2% benefitted our children while administration expenses accounted for just 2.8%. We did not incur any expenses on team travel, team accommodation and meals, guests' meals, travel assistance or special celebration expenses while telephone, utilities and miscellaneous expenses were reduced significantly. Funds deployed that did not have any direct benefits to our children were 13% in 2015/16, 9% in 2016/17, 3% in 2017/18 and now at 2.8%. This is an excellent outcome thanks to our leadership team in Sri Lanka.



We anticipate our expenditure to shift higher during the new financial year as we focus heavily on rehabilitation & medical clinics and training camps, workshops and seminars for our children, their parents and members of our Young VACD Members Club.

Income:

Financial support from donors in Australia continue to dominate and provide a stable financial position for VACD while the gradual increase of donations by the local Sri Lankan

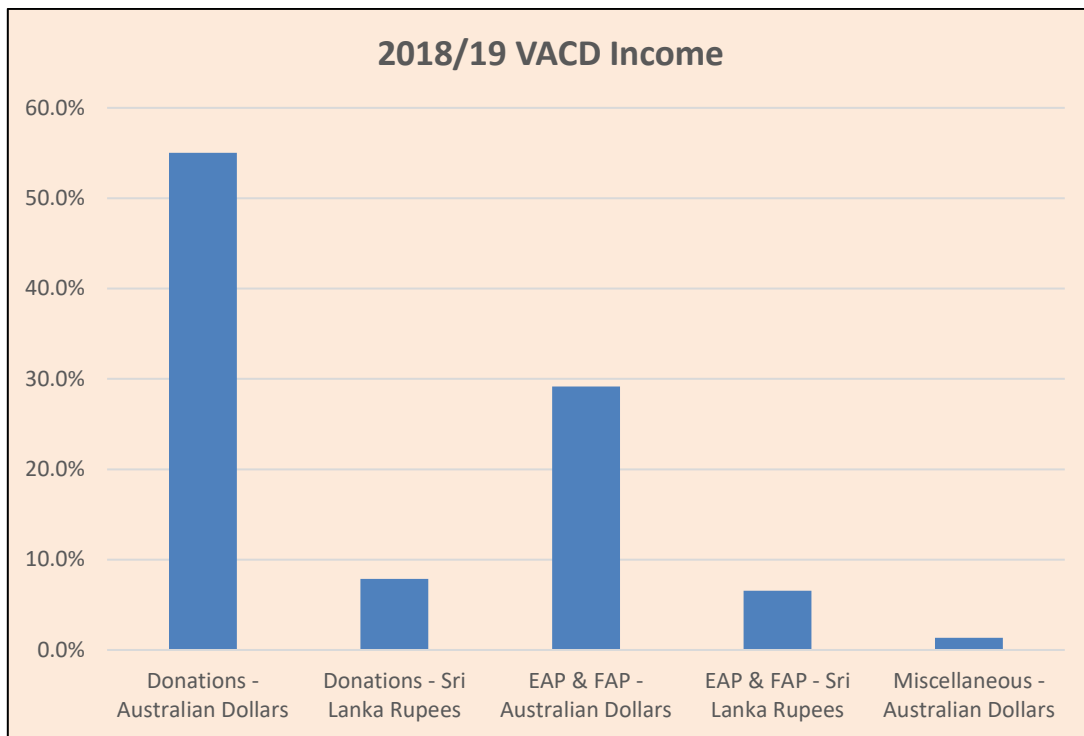
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community is an extremely positive outcome. Donations in Sri Lanka rupees have been 4% in 2015/16, 5% in 2016/17, 4% in 2017/18 and 7% in 2018/19.



We are working very diligently to build adequate reserve funds to guarantee our sustainability over a 5 -year horizon period and maintain two VACD centres without any disruption. This will be in keeping with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission’s guidelines to medium to small charities like ourselves.

Looking to the future and generating support:

We have for now placed our capacity expansion initiative on hold because we need to secure adequate funding at least for five years and be able to rent a suitable building and recruit specialist staff to administer a new centre. Our immediate priority is to generate support for our following programs in the coming financial year and ensure that the two VACD centres function at their optimal capacity:

- Organising quarterly Health & Home-based Rehabilitation and Medical Clinics in collaboration with Dr Gopi Kumar Kitnasamy (Chartered Physiotherapist) and his team, where parents are instructed on general care and nutrition and trained to provide physiotherapy to their children in their homes. Estimated cost approximately A\$2,500 for each clinic;
- Organising leadership, vocational and skills training workshops and seminars for our children and parents. Estimated costs approximately A\$ 1,000 per event;
- Building up funds to maintain two centres that require around A\$ 3000 per month to administer and enhance our levels of sustainability;

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- Generating support for our Educational Assistance Program for needy children who are identified as showing academic potential and granting them an allowance of A\$20 per month ensuring they are not deprived of schooling due to financial reasons.
- Generating funds for the Family Assistance Program to support financially stressed families, to whom we give the equivalent of A\$20 per month to supplement their incomes.
- Generating donations of \$100 to provide a child with medical, dental, therapy expenses, medication, visual and hearing aids, travel and accommodation costs for specialist services, exercise equipment, life skills, dance and music instruction, vocational and computer training etc.

I wish to place on record my deep, profound and sincere thanks and appreciation to the leadership teams in Australia, USA and Sri Lanka and all our fellows and volunteers for their dedication, passion and commitment to our mission and the support extended to me to fulfil by duties and obligations to our mission in my official capacity. Our 7+ years of this challenging, rewarding and fulfilling humanitarian journey and successes that we have achieved would not have been possible without you and Yasmin (founder member, Administrative & Communications Secretary and my wife) standing firmly by my side.

I look forward to the future with confidence knowing that your continued support, guidance and counselling will help me lead our VACD family to collectively make a significant difference in the lives of children with disabilities and their families in Sri Lanka, one by one, for whom we are their only hope!!!

Thank you, best wishes and warm regards,

Yours in service,



Felix Stephen

Chairman of the Board of Directors,

***Volunteers to Assist Children with Disabilities Limited. Australia,
& Member of the Advisory Boards of VACD USA & VACD Sri Lanka***

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