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CURRENT NEEDS

By 2007 the association had regarded its work as largely complete and wound down its activities. However, recently it has been determined that there is now an increasing need for its services such as:

- ❖ Many younger Khmer males have returned to Cambodia, married and then sponsored their spouses to Australia. The spouses do not speak English and are often socially isolated. Many of them are subjected to domestic violence.
- ❖ There has been a surge in extended family immigrating to Australia under family reunification visas. Often this process has been delayed because of the dislocation as a result of the Cambodian civil war.
- ❖ First born Khmer Australian children have been shown to have special needs. Often these children are the only English speakers in the household. They have had to manage the families which have placed them under the stress of adult issues. Many are “Latch Key” kids as their parents worked extended hours in menial jobs to provide a better life for their children. The parents were unaware of their children’s behavioural problems at school as they did not speak English. The children often manipulated their linguistically isolated parents. There is intergenerational conflict as the children do not accept the cultural values of their parents. The children are failing school and turning to drugs.
- ❖ Many of the initial refugees are now in their 80’s. Many do not speak English. Those that do are often reverting back to Khmer. Many of them have no education. They are becoming increasingly isolated in the community as they have retired and have no work place involvement.
- ❖ The increasing affluence of the community has led to a rise in gambling which is a cultural obsession for the Khmer. “Social” gambling is increasing within the community.
- ❖ The children who came to Australia in the 80’s and 90’s as refugees are now in their 50’s. Most of them have had menial jobs due to a lack of education. They have a disproportional level of arm and back injuries and are losing employment. This has lead to high rates of mental illness exacerbated because many of them suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as a result of being imprisoned as children in Khmer Rouge labour camps.