



River Nile
Learning
Centre



2024

ANNUAL REPORT

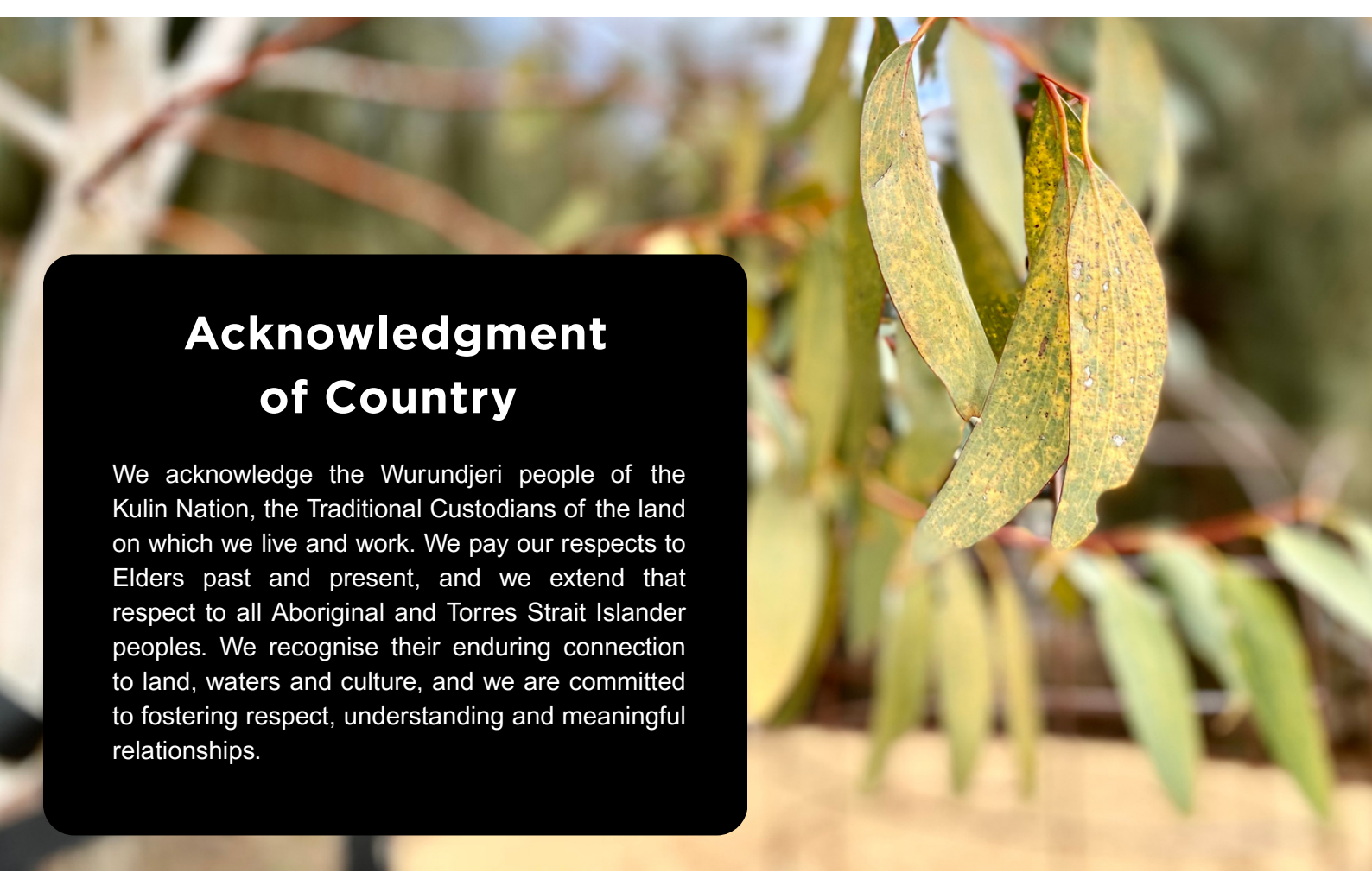
The River Nile Learning Centre

About Us

Established in 2006 to support the education of the African refugee community, the River Nile Learning Centre (RNLC) has since expanded its impact by drawing on over a decade of community experience and connections, culminating in the launch of its current structure in 2017. Today, the organisation is dedicated to supporting adult women from refugee, asylum seeker, and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds across Australia. These women face significant challenges such as limited English proficiency, barriers to employment, and the lasting impacts of trauma on mental health. These issues often lead to social isolation and economic disadvantage, limiting their ability to fully participate in community life.

As a not-for-profit dedicated to equity and inclusion, RNLC offers holistic programs tailored to meet the diverse needs of women. Our classes develop essential skills for everyday life and employment, while our support services help women access vital community and government resources, removing practical barriers to participation. Through our wellbeing programs, we nurture social connections, enhance mental health, and celebrate cultural identity.

RNLC's programs are sustained through grants, donations, and fundraising, reflecting our community-centred approach to empowerment, inclusion, and lasting impact.



Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live and work. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and we extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We recognise their enduring connection to land, waters and culture, and we are committed to fostering respect, understanding and meaningful relationships.

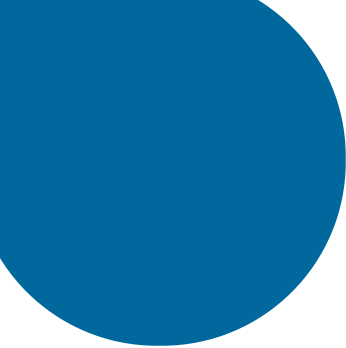
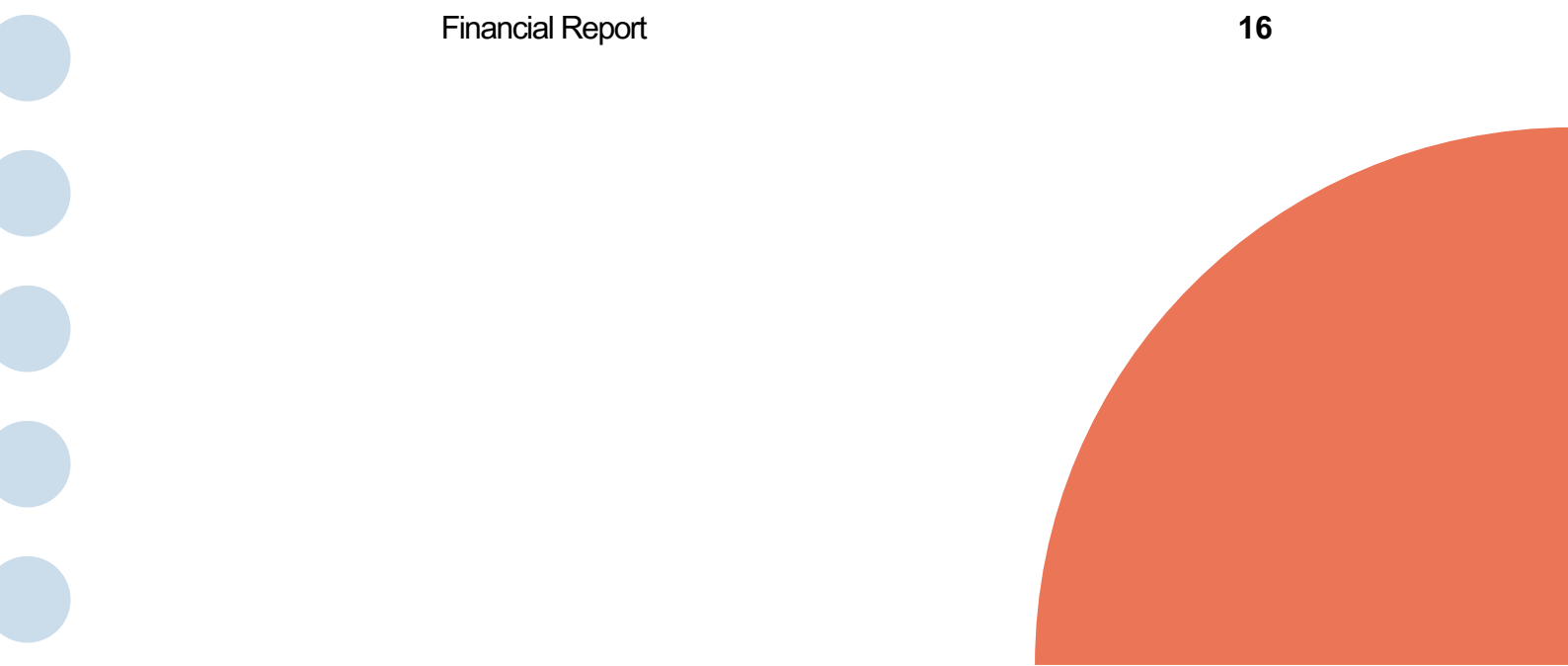


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Message from Our Chair

It is with great pleasure and a sense of profound gratitude that I reflect on the 2024 calendar year and the extraordinary journey of the River Nile Learning Centre. This year has been defined by both transition and immense impact, and I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to our students, staff, volunteers and our entire community of supporters.

A key highlight of this year was a significant change in leadership. We were delighted to welcome Yi Fan into the newly created role of General Manager. Her immediate impact has been remarkable, bringing a fresh and energetic perspective to our operations and team. We are incredibly excited about her vision for RNLC as we embark on the next chapter of our updated strategic plan. I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the years of exceptional service from our former Executive Officer, Rahel Davies. Rahel's commitment was unwavering, and her legacy is most visible in the strong and caring relationships she cultivated with our students and the broader RNLC family. We wish her all the very best in her next endeavours.

This Annual Report contains powerful stories that truly capture the spirit of our work. I encourage you to read the journeys of Sabra and Aziza. Their experiences are a testament to the transformative power of education and holistic support, and they demonstrate the incredible outcomes and impact that RNLC achieves every day.

The work we do would simply not be possible without the tireless dedication of our volunteers, who are the lifeblood of our centre. It was a great to see one of our own, Jennifer King, recognised with a 2024 Volunteer Award from North Melbourne Rotary for her service and dedication to RNLC. This well-deserved acknowledgement reflects not just her efforts, but the collective passion of all our volunteers and fellow Board members who give so generously of their time, skills, and energy. You are all critical to our ongoing operation.

It is also important to highlight a fundamental truth about RNLC: we are 100% dependent on the generosity of our supporters through grants and donations. It takes a huge effort each and every year to secure the funds necessary to achieve the extraordinary outcomes and impact that you will read about in these pages. As we look to the year ahead, we have ambitious goals to continue our vital work and create more stories like Sabra's and Aziza's. We cannot do this alone. I urge you to consider making a donation or becoming a member of RNLC so that we can continue to empower women to build new lives of dignity and autonomy. With warm regards,

Rich Brown



Chair, RNLC Board of Directors



Message from Our General Manager

As I reflect on 2024, I am filled with gratitude and optimism for the River Nile Learning Centre community. This year has brought change and fresh beginnings. We said goodbye to our former Executive Officer, Rahel Davies, whose kindness and dedication left such a big mark on RNLC. We are so thankful for all she gave and we wish her nothing but the best in what comes next.

Our students have been truly inspiring. All year they have shown incredible strength, working hard to build their skills, confidence and independence. Watching them face challenges head on and embrace new opportunities has been one of the real highlights of my year.

We have also been growing as a team, welcoming new people, creating a supportive space, and making sure our classes and programs continue to meet the needs of our students. From English and digital literacy to wellbeing and community support, everything we do is about helping women feel confident, connected and capable in their everyday lives.

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we will be able to provide childcare support in 2025, which will make it much easier for mothers to join our programs. We are also deeply thankful to all our supporters whose contributions keep RNLC going day to day, and who make it possible for our students to learn, grow and thrive.

This year we have also been shaping our new 2025 to 2026 strategic plan, which will help guide us into the next stage of RNLC's journey. With a strong team and a clear vision, we are excited for what is ahead.

I feel proud and lucky to be part of this community, and I am constantly inspired by the resilience and determination I see every day at RNLC. Looking ahead, I am excited to keep building a centre where every woman who walks through our doors feels welcome, supported and ready to create the future she wants.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who makes this work possible. I cannot wait to see what we achieve together in 2025.

Sincerely,



Yi Fan

General Manager
River Nile Learning Centre



2025-2026

Strategic Plan

1



Mission

Provide a free and safe learning space with holistic support to women from refugee, asylum seeker, and CALD backgrounds to build capacity and thrive in the community

2



Vision

To create an equitable society in which all women can participate in social and economic life with autonomy and dignity

3



Values

- Respect and Dignity
- Access and Equity
- Collaboration and Community
- Gender Equality and Inclusion

4



Goals

1. Enhance Student Engagement and Satisfaction
2. Deliver High-Quality and Relevant Wellbeing Programs
3. Strengthen Collaboration and Partnerships with Key Stakeholders
4. Foster a Satisfied and Motivated Team
5. Design and Implement Pathways to Empower Student Success
6. Achieve Financial Sustainability and Growth
7. Integrate Students' Voices into the Decision-Making Process

Our Highlights of the Year

In 2024, we have achieved many remarkable things together with our students and volunteers. While some of these achievements might seem modest, as a small organisation we are very proud to be able to create positive changes for students and their communities. You can learn more about our highlights of the year below.



We partnered with the Melbourne Zoo for an amazing overnight zoo experience through their "Roar and Shore" camping program. It was an incredible experience for our students and their children, offering a unique after-dark zoo tour, a fantastic dinner and a private morning tour before the zoo opened to the public.

45

Student
Enrolled

10

Excursion
Organised

5

Talks on Healthy
Relationship



6

Weeks of
Cooking Classes

30

New
Refurbished
Laptops

6

Weeks of
Sewing Classes



30

Volunteers

5

Student
Placements

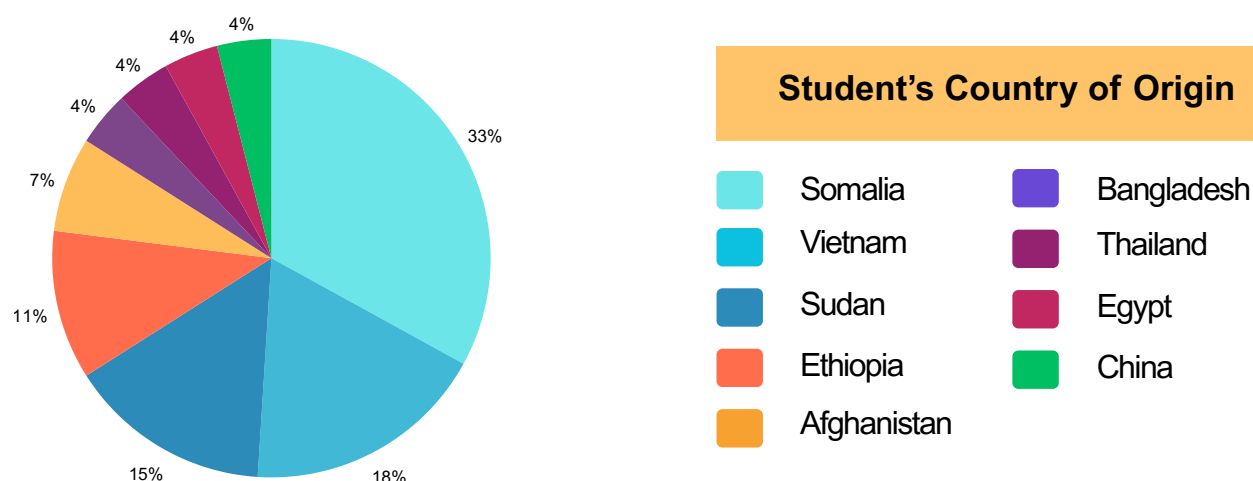


Our Core Programs

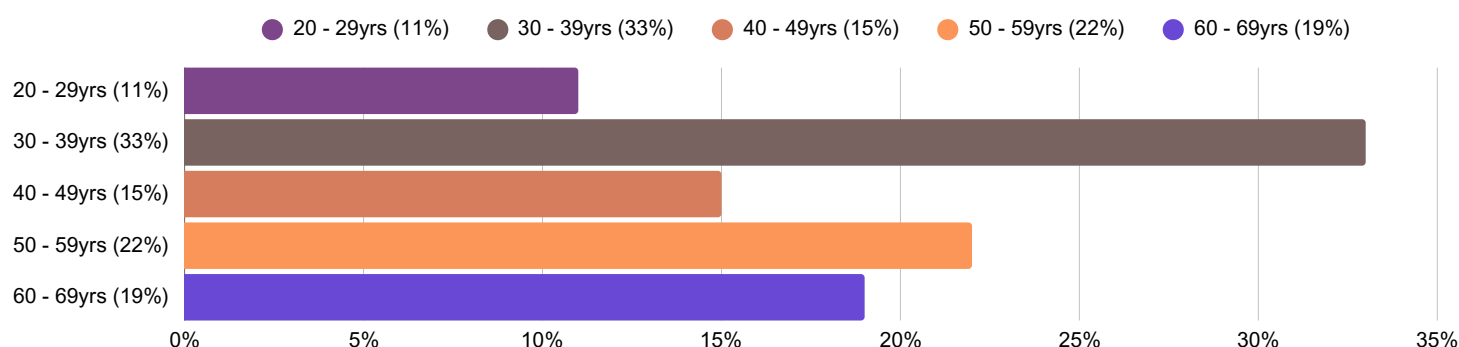
Pillar 1: English as Additional Language, Numeracy, & Digital Literacy Program

At RNLC, our English, digital and numeracy classes play a critical role in supporting our students in multiple ways. From developing practical skills for navigating daily life and gaining greater independence in accessing government services and community resources to improving English proficiency for further education, employment, or community engagement, they are skills that help students for the rest of their life. We design our classes to be more than just a learning space by providing resources, opportunities and connections that support positive changes in the lives of our students.

This approach contributed to increased enrolment in 2024, and it was exciting to both welcome new students and see many familiar faces who are committed to continuing their learning. We expanded to two classrooms to accommodate our students more comfortably, but still retain an intimate environment where they can learn from close collaboration with our experienced teachers and volunteers.



Student Age (% of Age Group)



Our Core Programs

Pillar 2: Wellbeing Program



At RNLC we recognize that many of our students face significant challenges – including trauma, mental health concerns, food insecurity, caregiving responsibilities and financial hardship – that can significantly impact their ability to engage in learning.

The wellbeing program includes everything from social parties, excursions and community walks to swimming lessons and life skills training, such as cooking classes. All of these activities help to boost students' confidence, independence and overall wellbeing.

We are always looking to expand the wellbeing program to better support our students, and in 2024 we introduced healthy relationships sessions with support from partner organisation Foundation House. Offered over two terms, the classes focused on creating a safe space in which to explore healthy relationships, with a particular focus on students who are victim-survivors of family or domestic violence. We provided interpreters to ensure students could express themselves fully and openly, and their active participation in the sessions was testament to the success of the initiative.

Our Core Programs

Pillar 3: Wrap-Around Support



Community Service Program

Language barriers often prevent our students from independently accessing essential government and community services. Our community service program is designed to provide client-focussed wrap-around support to RNLC students, who are often among the most marginalised women in the community, such as women who are asylum seekers or holding Bridging visas. The team provides advocacy, referrals and support to help women navigate complex systems, including education and training, Centrelink, health, housing, immigration and domestic family violence services.

Under the leadership of Tania, our community service worker, the program expanded in 2024 with the introduction of a volunteer initiative. The fantastic team of community service volunteers enabled RNLC to more efficiently meet the needs of our students.

The community service program has developed partnerships with a range of key stakeholders on wellbeing and guest speaking events. Students are benefiting from quarterly information sessions and onsite assistance with Services Australia Multicultural Service Officers as well as guest speaker incursions focused on employment, training, financial programs, health and welfare. Another initiative in 2024 was a six-week sewing workshop in partnership with SisterWorks. Led and taught by a former RNLC student, the workshops were an opportunity for our students to gain skills that can help them improve their lives.

Barrier Reducing Programs

The programs aim to address immediate needs while promoting long-term outcomes. We provide food relief, childcare support and transportation assistance (such as Myki cards) to our students to reduce their barriers and to be able to engage in learning more effectively.

Our Students

Sabra's Journey with RNLC

When Sabra arrived in Australia from Eritrea in 2019 with her daughter and young son on a refugee visa, she had no idea what was in store for her. Over the coming years, Sabra would embark on a transformative journey – one that she now reflects on with pride and joy.

At first, Sabra was scared. The only English she knew was the alphabet and she struggled to understand or communicate. Her daughter, who is now a hospital health assistant, had studied at River Nile Learning School and encouraged her to enrol at RNLC, explaining that she would find a supportive and welcoming community there.

From the moment she stepped through the doors, she found comfort and friendship. “Everyone helps me,” she shared, smiling. “I feel comfortable coming here every day ... I am happy.”

Over time, Sabra's English improved, her confidence grew, and she found new independence. She learned essential skills – such as sending emails, paying bills and renewing her passport – and built deep friendships. Together, she and her classmates went shopping, shared meals and supported each other.

At the centre Sabra participated in workshops on employment, government and healthcare services, gaining valuable knowledge about how these systems work in Australia. Digital literacy classes were life-changing: she learned to navigate the internet and used it to practise for her citizenship test, which she later passed.

Most exciting of all, she's now searching for a job in childcare – a dream she's ready to turn into reality. Her story is one of courage, growth, and community – and we're proud to be part of it.



“ I feel comfortable
coming here every day
... I am happy. ”



“ I like to help make others
feel welcome ... the same
way I was welcomed at
RNLC. ”

Aziza's Journey with RNLC

In 2017, Aziza arrived in Australia with her two young sons on a bridging visa after fleeing conflict in Ethiopia. She hoped for safety and a chance to build a better life in a new land— but the early years were difficult.

Her English was very limited, and although she attended classes at asylum seeker centres, she often felt overwhelmed and isolated, and struggled to access services both for herself and her children. “Just doing everyday things in my life felt really difficult, I wasn't sure what to do,” she recalled.

Things changed in 2022 when a friend introduced her to RNLC. When Aziza took the plunge and started attending classes, she found that she was not just learning the language – she also became part of a community where she felt seen, heard and understood.

While trying to learn and improve her English, Aziza was able to access services with support from our community service team. One of her significant achievements was passing a driving test and getting her licence. “Gradually my confidence began to grow,” she said.

Aziza is now a permanent resident but still comes to RNLC. “I like to help make others feel welcome,” she said, “the same way I was welcomed at RNLC.”

Our Volunteer Program

There has been a significant expansion of the RNLC volunteer program during 2024 with over 20 volunteers and student placements supporting the centre. The program has expanded to include five crucial volunteering roles including Administration, Classroom Support, Grants and Fundraising, Community Support and Food Relief. These volunteers have been crucial in assisting the staff in developing and implementing many new processes and systems, in supporting the teachers to ensure students' learning needs are met at the various competency levels we see within our classrooms, in delivering key services and programs such as foodbank and our self-care program and in securing ongoing funding for the centre. Our community services volunteers are also invaluable in delivering much needed support to our students such as online applications, form filling and connecting them to crucial services with their communities.

One of our longer standing volunteers, Kate Riordan was appointed Volunteer Coordinator in late 2024 and is responsible for setting up key processes to manage our volunteers including the onboarding and offboarding of volunteers, OH&S requirements and ensuring volunteers needs are being met. A new volunteer induction was created and has been successfully delivered to all new volunteers.

We are also very pleased to report that one of our longest serving volunteer Jennifer King was honoured with a 2024 Volunteer Award with North Melbourne Rotary for her service and dedication to RNLC.



Our longest-serving volunteer, Jennifer (left), receiving her Volunteer Award alongside our General Manager, Yi (right)



Our wonderful volunteers Ruby (left) and Jude (right) helping out at the food bank

Our Board Members

Rich Brown - Chair

Rich is a founding partner at Strufold, a digital consultancy specialising in supporting small and medium-sized businesses. He draws on his extensive experience as Chief Operating Officer at Cambridge Boxhill Language Assessment (CBLA), where he was central to the company's growth and operational success. Before this, he held leadership roles at CPA Australia and worked on security related policy in federal and state government departments. A passionate contributor to the community, Rich is a co-founder of Impact100Melbourne, now on the Advisory Committee, and serves as the current Chair for the River Nile Learning Centre.

John O'Shea - Treasurer, Secretary & Public Officer

Retired teacher and school principal. Formerly Head of Pastoral Care before becoming Principal of Mowbray College. John was instrumental in shaping the River Nile Learning Centre into its current form, contributing his vision and leadership from the early days. He also set up an English language school in Ningbo, China, and has been involved in several business ventures there. Now retired, John continues to support RNLC with his experience and guidance.

Charmaine Kinuthia

Charmaine is passionate about serving marginalised communities. Her enthusiasm led her to RNLC, where she began as a volunteer and later joined the staff. Charmaine's ability to connect with people from diverse backgrounds has been key to her success at RNLC. She holds a master's degree in development studies from the University of Melbourne. As a young woman from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background, Charmaine brings a unique perspective and a deep commitment to promoting inclusivity. As a board member, she is dedicated to ensuring that RNLC initiatives effectively address the needs of all community members.

Ximena Avalos

Ximena holds a Bachelor of Arts (International Affairs) from The Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey, and a Master in Development Studies with a Gender Specialisation from The University of Melbourne.

She began her career in the humanitarian and development sector in Mexico, her home country, before moving to Australia in 2020. Ximena's experience includes working at the United Nations, the Human Rights Office in the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Carlos Slim Foundation, the Mexican Food Banks Association, and the International Agency of Quality Education.

Ximena is a certified Clown Doctor and has extensive community-based volunteering experience.

Since 2022, Ximena has been with The Ian Potter Foundation as the Research and Evaluation & Major Grants Officer.

Peter Brent

Retired civil engineer and consultant. Has been a proactive RNLC volunteer since 2014, leading the identification and writing of RNLC philanthropic grant applications and organizing our FoodBank for students each week.

Jackie Megessa

Jackie Megessa has been actively involved with River Nile Learning Centre since becoming a volunteer in 2017. Jackie was drawn to RNLC for its unique work with newly arrived multicultural women who enrolled to study English language classes in a supported environment.

Strong support for the women was a key focus with childcare, foodbank and wellbeing delivered to each and every student. Jackie contributes strong skills in community engagement and comes with a lived experience emphasis. Jackie believes in multicultural women becoming educated and empowered – this way they can make their own decisions and build independence.

Financial Report

For the year ended 31 December 2024

Income Statement

	2024 \$
Income	
Donations & Grants	370,267
Interest Received	2,371
Memberships	82
Total Income	372,719
Expenses	
General Expenses	
Accounting Fees	2,300
Advertising/Marketing	774
Bank Charges	401
Capital Works Deduction	505
Cleaning	15,945
Depreciation	4,276
Insurance	3,685
Office Expenses	4,842
Postage	8
Repair & Maintenance	560
Staff Amenities	807
Subscriptions	3,090
Superannuation Contributions	26,381
Telephone	546
Wages & Salaries	230,410
Workcover	5,694
	300,223

Financial Report

For the year ended 31 December 2024

Income Statement

Services Fees	
Education Programs	4,820
Occupancy, ICT & Resources	33,314
Work & Life Skills Program	2,678
	40,813
Student Costs	
Classroom Resources	2,108
Donations Disbursed	5,000
Student Support	429
Student Travel	24,723
Student Welfare	14,068
	46,327
Total Expense	387,363
Surplus for the year	(14,644)
Retained earnings at the beginning of the financial year	163,764
Retained earnings at the end of the financial year	149,120

Financial Report

For the year ended 31 December 2024

Balance Sheet

Current Assets	
Petty Cash	73
Westpac Bank Acc 8382	7,236
Westpac Bank Acc 8390	123,456
GST Paid	3,809
Real Estate for Student	2,400
Total Current Assets	136,975
Non-current Assets	
Property, Plant and Equipment	28,303
Total non-current Assents	28,303
Total Assets	165,278
Current Liabilities	
Trade Creditors	1,178
Prepaid Grants	4,566
Other Creditors	150
GST Collected	150
Superannuation Payable	2,712
PAYG Withholding	7,402
Total Current Liabilities	16,158
Total Liabilities	16,158
Net Assets	149,120
Member's Funds	
Retained Earnings	149,120
Total Member's Fund	149,120

Thank You

to everyone who supports our work

The River Nile Learning Centre would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all of our donors and partners for their support in making these wonderful programs a reality.



Together We Make This Possible

Every class, every program and every story in this report has been made possible because of the generosity, kindness and belief of our community. To our students, volunteers, staff, donors, partners and friends – thank you.

Your support means more than just funding programs. It means mothers are able to study while their children are cared for. It means women can gain the skills and confidence to find work, connect with their community and build new lives filled with dignity and hope.

We are excited for what the future holds and we invite you to continue walking alongside us in 2025 and beyond. Together we can keep creating a place where every woman who comes through our doors feels welcome, supported and empowered.



The River Nile Learning Centre does vital work that is deeply valued by the women who take part in our programs. Yet we receive no ongoing funding and rely on the generosity of individuals, philanthropic groups and occasional government support to keep our doors open.

If you would like to be part of this journey, please consider making a donation. Every contribution – big or small – helps us provide education, wellbeing programs and practical support that change lives in meaningful ways.

DONATE