Overview of Activities and Community Services
It is a great joy to present this information on the Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) of Australia, an organisation of which I have been a member for thirty-two years. During this time, I have been continually inspired by the wonderful men and women from around the world who devote their lives to becoming better people - living consciously and serving humanity.

In gathering together this information I have been warmed through connecting with the loving service and the dedication of the members in Australia. I am aware that on a daily basis, individuals offer acts of kindness to those around them, without wanting any recognition. Around the country some of our groups have developed long-standing relationships with certain interfaith networks and service organisations and we are keen to build on these in order to make a greater contribution in the community. Testimonials from some of these groups have been included in this publication to provide a reference as to the nature and quality of our engagement with others. We are a relatively small organisation on the social landscape of Australia and unknown to most, but we seek to play an increasing role, alongside others, to help maintain a peaceful, inclusive and compassionate society. I hope that the information included here will provide a basis for increased connection with others.

The SSIO is a voluntary organisation comprising people from all walks of life, different cultures and all faiths, with a range of skills and talents. I believe we are therefore well placed to be able to make a positive contribution to interfaith harmony and to play a role in the strengthening of bonds between different groups. One of the strengths of Australian society is the diversity of cultures making up the fabric which unites its citizens and I believe this strength can only be enhanced by a commitment to mutual understanding and respect, seeking to celebrate the differences whilst experiencing the unity in all.

Jenny Monson, WA
National Community Engagement Referent
Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO), Australia
March 2019
Contents

4 Sathya Sai International Organisation — Global perspective
7 SSIO Australia
9 SSIO Australia International Service

Activities within Australia

16 Sathya Sai College
20 Institute of Sathya Sai Education (ISSEA)
22 Participation with Local Councils
25 Relationships with Non-Government Organisations (NGO’s)
31 Unity of Faiths and Interfaith Connections
37 Blood Donation
38 Health Projects
39 Service to Seniors
43 Young Adults
45 Ladies Program
47 Envirocare
53 Programs for Spiritual and Character Development
59 The Way Forward
60 SSIO Global Initiatives
63 Community Projects in India Initiated by Sathya Sai Baba
The Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) is a voluntary and not-for-profit organisation, operating in over 120 countries around the world.

It is a global spiritual movement promoting the practice of the five human values (Love, Truth, Peace, Right Conduct and Non-Violence), and providing opportunities for members to participate in service activities. It is a multi-faith organisation drawing people from all walks of life and all spiritual paths and religions. The SSIO has no membership fees and no one is permitted to solicit funds on behalf of the Organisation.

Service activities are practised as selfless service – service given without expectation of acknowledgement or reward. The service is offered to the One who is present within the heart of every other, and when offered with purity of heart, enables the reduction of ego and harmony of thought, word and deed.

Other activities offered by the SSIO include Education in Human Values, study circles, and devotional singing. All activities of the organisation are aimed to provide members the opportunity for personal transformation and improvement and avenues for the service of society.

The living ideal of the SSIO is the cultivation of oneness with others; family, community, nation and the world.
The founder of the SSIO is Sathya Sai Baba, a highly respected spiritual leader in India who initiated there a system of free education from primary school to post graduate university, incorporating Education in Human Values in the regular academic curriculum. As Chancellor, he advocated that education is for life, not simply for earning a living, and that the end of education is character. Sathya Sai Baba also initiated a free system of world class health care and water supply to disadvantaged villages and cities in desperate need of clean drinking water.
“The Sathya Sai International Organisation (SSIO) is a spiritual and humanitarian service organisation where the emphasis is on love and service to all. One of the pillars of the SSIO is that of Unity of Faiths and Harmony of Religions. Our members are encouraged to understand the teachings of all religions and to seek within them the underlying unity whilst respecting the diversity in each.

The teachings of Christianity reveal that Jesus urged mankind to treat one’s neighbour as oneself – and that compassion and service offered to others is offered to Him. This principle is echoed in the teachings of all the major religions, the essence of which is the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. This unifying message is the hope for humanity.

The SSIO focuses on selfless service and all are encouraged to engage in service remembering that every being is an embodiment of divine love and that the purpose of human life is to realise this.”

“A unique feature of the SSIO is that it does not have membership fees, does not engage in public fundraising and does not solicit funds. All service and humanitarian projects are funded by voluntary donations from members. Following the advice from our founder, donations go towards serving society with no overhead.

All positions in the organisation are filled by volunteers, who give their time, skills and creativity in the service of humanity. Our activities are inspired by the life and teachings of Sathya Sai Baba, whose life of love and selfless service has inspired millions around the world to base their lives on the highest human values and to contribute to making the world a better place for all.”
SSIO AUSTRALIA

In Australia, the SSIO has a membership of 3,500, concentrated mainly in the capital cities and also in some regional areas. Members gather regularly in local centres and groups for spiritual upliftment, personal development and service activities. Gatherings are held primarily in community facilities, such as family centres or schools and activities include classes in Human Values for the children of members.

The Sathya Sai International Organisation of Australia Ltd is a Registered Charity.

The website of the organisation is available for further information: https://www.saiaustralia.org.au
Current Senior Office Holders of SSIO Australia

Krishnan Nair
Central Coordinator of SSIO Australia and New Zealand

Doug Saunders
Deputy Central Coordinator of SSIO Australia and New Zealand

Singanayagam Indrapalan
National President, SSIO Australia

Dr Shivendra Kumar
Deputy National President, SSIO Australia

Navaratnam Anandakumar
Chair of the Sathya Sai Central Trust of Australia
SSIO AUSTRALIA INTERNATIONAL SERVICE

Humanitarian Relief

SSIO Australia participates in service activities and humanitarian relief both internationally and within Australia. To offer international service, the SSIO is divided into zones and Australia operates within Zone 3 of the International organisation, along with Fiji and New Zealand.

Neville Fredericks
Chair of Zone 3, SSIO

“...members in Australia have contributed to humanitarian relief efforts following cyclones in Fiji and Vanuatu by supporting the local organisation there to provide water, food and other supplies and have assisted in rebuilding after the initial crisis. Australian members also contribute financial assistance to locations of humanitarian crises across the world. At home, they have also assisted in disaster recovery, an example of which is the rehabilitation of rural properties after a bush fire in South Australia”

Albert Barelids, SA
Chair of International Humanitarian Relief Committee, SSIO
Sai Medical Unit – Service in Fiji

Since its inception in 1997, the Australian Sai Medical Unit has provided opportunities for medical professionals to use their skills in aiding those in need, as well as providing education to empower against physical and mental ill health and to encouraging self-sufficiency within health systems. The Medical Unit has also encouraged and promoted selfless service and the practice of human values by professionals and health care workers whilst serving. Medical care is offered to each patient with love and compassion.

Dr Gunu Naker
Co Convenor, Sai Medical Unit

Dr Ashok Lodhia
Co Convenor, Sai Medical Unit

Establishing the First Neurosurgical Unit in Fiji

An example of the Medical Unit’s focus on self-sufficiency was the training of a local doctor in neurosurgery instigated by Dr K Nandanachandran (Neurosurgeon) and his team from Canberra supported by the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. After a period of training in Canberra and Sydney, the trained doctor went on to set up the first neurosurgical unit in Fiji in 2013.
Fiji Medical Camps

In 2007, with inspiration and encouragement from the New Zealand Sai Medical Unit, and in collaboration with the Fiji Sathya Sai Organisation and the Ministry of Health in Fiji it has been possible to establish annual Fiji Medicare camps to serve many Fijians who are unable to access regular health care either through cost or isolation. This last year alone, over 700 people were attended to by nearly 40 health professionals and about 30 other volunteers including 20 medical students from Fiji. Apart from the service provided by the many volunteering health care professionals and other supporting people, this project has also provided altruistic opportunities for several Medical, Dental, Surgical and Pharmaceutical companies as well as many other contributing individuals. All medical treatment is provided free of charge and team members fund their own travel, accommodation and food. The annual rural medical work is lead by Dr Gunu Naker supported by a dedicated team.

“Spirituality is the basis for the deep, caring connections physicians and healthcare professionals form with their patients. While cure may result from technical and disease-oriented care, healing occurs within the context of the caring connection patients form with their physicians and healthcare professionals. This is why spirituality is essential to all of medicine and healthcare.”

Dr Christina Puchalski
George Washington Institute for Spirituality and Health

https://smhs.gwu.edu/gwish/about/message
With the help of local medical students and general volunteers, various clinics are set up in school classrooms and patients are ushered to the clinics after registration and triaging.

Some members of the team present on a particular theme at an annual combined medical conference organised by the SSIO of Fiji, the Sai Medical Units of Australia and Fiji in conjunction with the Fiji College of General Practitioners, the Ministry of Health of Fiji and Umanand Prasad School of Medicine, University of Fiji.

The team travels to Fiji, carrying equipment, instruments, medications and materials to utilize at the camps and for surgeries at the hospital. All effort is made not to utilize the resources of the already heavily burdened medical system in Fiji.

IT team registering patients, some of whom travel long distances

Doctors assisted by medical and nursing students

Dental Clinic

A very appreciative patient is shown the result of her new denture

Training for local doctors

Community Recognition

Several SSIO medical professionals have been awarded recognition for their medical and other voluntary services to local and overseas communities.

In 2011 Dr Naren Chellapah of Canberra was awarded the OAM (Order of Australia Medal) in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List General Division for service to the international community as a volunteer dental surgeon.

Dr. Kathir Nandanachandran of Sydney was awarded the Order of Australia in 2015 by the Governor-General of Australia, in the Australia Day Honours list, for providing outstanding healthcare services to the needy in the community. This Award was primarily for his outstanding commitment to the Fiji medical camps.

Dr Gunu Naker was awarded the 2019 Banks Volunteer of the Year Award for his volunteer medical services and for his work with the Resourceful Australian Indian Network Inc.

Mr Kantilal Jinna of Canberra, although not a SSIO member, has played a very instrumental role in the Fiji Medical Camps. He was awarded an OAM in 2017 for his services in the multi-cultural arena.

Dr Pal Dhall is co-Chair of the International Education Committee of Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation of SSIO and Advisor to the Human Values Centre of Prashanti Nilayam.

A medical professional from the ACT, Dr Dhall has been recognised internationally for his work in Education in Human Values. Prof Dhall and his wife Dr Tehseen Dhall are active in giving workshops and seminars in Human Values in Education in many Universities around the world. In 2016 Prof Dhall was honoured by the Ricardo Palma University in Peru with the University Medal as a Distinguished Academic and given the title of Honorary Professor of Ricardo Palma University. In Ecuador he and Dr Tehseen Dhall were honoured by the Mayor of the City of Guayaquil as Honoured Guests of the City.
LOVE ALL, SERVE ALL
HELP EVER, HURT NEVER

Sathya Sai Baba - Sanathana Sarathi July 1994 p170
ACTIVITIES WITHIN AUSTRALIA

Within Australia, the SSIO has two national service projects in which members around the country participate. These projects are the Sathya Sai College and the National Blood Donation drive. All other activities are regionally based with centres or clusters of centres responding to the needs of their local communities and connecting with local organisations to participate in service and interfaith activities.
Sathya Sai College

The Sathya Sai College was established over twenty years ago in Murwillumbah NSW as a demonstration primary school to show how human values can be incorporated into a standard curriculum to promote character development as well as academic success. The school has now expanded to include a secondary campus, which is in its third year of operation.
Children from the kindergarten class

Primary school students rehearse for a musical performance
Sathya Sai College is a non-denominational school with a NSW Board of Studies program integrated with the five human values of Love, Peace, Truth, Right Conduct and Non-Violence. It is one of 96 international Sathya Sai schools with over 20,000 students worldwide. The school values the uniqueness of each child, enabling their full potential to be realised. The principal is Cal Atkins.

Cal Atkins
Sathya Sai College Principal

Kingsley Sathanantan
Chair of Sathya Sai College Board

Secondary students from the Dungay campus
Working bee at Sathya Sai College

Members from SSIO Australia give voluntary financial support to the school, and this supplements the government grants, permitting tuition to be offered free of fees. Members also gather for working bees to offer their support to this endeavour.

Additional information about the college is available on:
https://sathyasaicollege.nsw.edu.au/
The ISSEA prepares material on values education for schools and for the general community. In Australia, the 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians stated that as well as knowledge and skills, a school’s legacy to young people should include national values of democracy, equity and justice, and personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience and respect for others. There is therefore a strong commitment to values education in Australia and many schools and teachers are seeking support and information in order to implement these ideals.

ISSEA is developing values education courses for teachers that can be registered under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and also workshops in SSEHV for all Australian teachers, to be accredited by NESA (NSW Education Standards Authority).

ISSEA conducts a Values Awareness for Parents Program which has been made available for members and this has been conducted in Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne. “Train the Trainer” sessions have been conducted, so that these sessions can be made available to community members. This program is also conducted for parents of students at the Sathya Sai College.

“The ISSEA is part of a network of Institutes around the world committed to making the world a better place for all. This is done through a program called Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) best described through the concept of “Educare” which is based on drawing out from within the inherent values of the person, enabling human potential to be realised.”
“What is education? It is of two types. The first type is collection of facts and knowledge about the external world and sharing them with students. The second type is Educare. Educare involves the deep understanding of the knowledge that springs from within and imparting it to students.”

Sathya Sai Baba
Sathya Sai Speaks 20 November 2001, Prasanthi Nilayam

Further information can be obtained through the website of the ISSEA:
https://issea.org.au/

“Our Sai Media Team has been charged with the promotion of the transformative qualities of the practice of the human values and especially of love and selfless service, not only to the one practicing, but also to the recipients and society in general.”

Andy Ravendran, JP
Chair, National Media Committee of SSIO
Participation with Local Councils

“Over the last twenty years local councils have moved from a focus on physical infrastructure to one including an emphasis on services to people. Councils are now interested in provision of services for child care, community health, the ageing, recreational activity, environmental issues and support of cultural affairs. Given the increasing direction in Australia towards cultural diversity, councils have become leaders in promoting interfaith and intercultural awareness and harmony.”

SSIO Australia is becoming increasingly involved in activities sponsored by local councils and we find that many are highly supportive of projects offered by us as an interfaith, service-oriented organisation with a commitment to our communities and to the environment. Some of these relationships have been long-standing and have played a role in supporting the council in its building of a compassionate and inclusive community.

Examples of projects conducted in conjunction with local councils include bushcare projects, interfaith events and services for the homeless.

Some of these projects are included here.

_In NSW_ During July 2018, in conjunction with National Tree Planting Day, 190 members across NSW came together to plant approximately 15000 trees. Members, including enthusiastic participation by children, attended six different locations. The activity provided a valuable opportunity to carry out community service alongside various councils and the wider public. In addition, regular Bushcare Programs are being conducted in two local councils. Bushcare activities include regeneration of native plants, removal of noxious weeds and plastic wastes. The SSIO families have also adopted a Community Nursery and have created a community vegetable garden. The community nursery offers free supply of plants and also encourage interested parties to develop their own vegetable gardens.
In NSW The SSIO groups participated in an International Day of Prayers for Peace, which was organised by Canterbury Bankstown City Council. In this event, leaders from diverse faiths together with the Mayor and local MP gathered together with the community to reflect on peace and offered prayers to encourage world peace and action through unity.

Another local council in NSW which has included SSIO in its activities is the Fairfield City Council which has staged the events Lunch@Bibby’s and Fun@Bunker.

Lunch@Bibbys was a celebration of the many cultures and faiths that are represented in the suburb of Bonnyrigg. The participants included amongst others, the Vietnamese Community Centre, Bonnyrigg Mosque, Gracepoint Presbyterian Church, Lao Buddhist Temple, and Parkside Church. They were all brought together to share food, cultural offerings, presentations and guided tours of places of worship.

The following year, the event was known as Fun@Bunker.
In Victoria SSIO has worked with the City of Greater Dandenong to participate in Interfaith events in a relationship which has existed for over twenty years. The most recent of these events focussed on the theme of “RealEyes, The Vision of Love”. This council holds monthly interfaith meetings in which SSIO members participate. (See Unity of Faiths and Interfaith chapter).

Also in Victoria, there has been a connection with the Whitehorse City Council in the production of the All Faiths Music Festival, coordinated by the SSIO in conjunction with the council.

There is also a long history in Victoria of connection with the Greater Dandenong Council and Melbourne Council in provision of meals for the homeless at the Dandenong Markets and Queen Victoria Markets. Hot meals are cooked and made available weekly to those in need.

“The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.”

- Mahatma Gandhi -

Australians are privileged to enjoy a range of services and programs provided by governments of all levels which meet the needs of families and individuals. However, there exists a degree of poverty and social need which is not met by government. NGO’s often play a vital role in filling this void. They represent an expression of the community's caring and concern and apart from providing services to the needy, hold vital information about the basic needs of vulnerable sections of the community, providing a link between government and recipients of services.

For the past twenty years, SSIO Australia has played a partnership role with some of the NGO’s supporting various programs and services, according to our capacity and ability. Given our relatively small membership, it is often more appropriate to play a supporting role to those agencies who have the infrastructure and resources to offer a sustainable service.

Some of the organisations supported by the SSIO include the Exodus Foundation, Parramatta Mission, Birthing Kit Foundation, St Vincent de Paul, Samaritan’s Purse, RSPCA, SAFE, SWARA (Sunshine Welfare and Remedial Association), Blue Nurses, Mission Australia, Anglicare, Vital Connections.

Activities include providing meals for the homeless, school breakfast programs, support to refugees, collection and distribution of food items, blanket appeals, support to women in refuges and prisons, homework support, carer respite, visits to nursing homes. Examples include the following.

“Apart from the relationships SSIO enjoys with NGO’s across Australia, our members individually connect with a range of different organisations in their local community. Our members participate in professional associations, volunteer in conservation groups, health services and palliative care programs, sing in community choirs and serve as directors on boards.

These connections play a part in helping members stay in touch with local community needs and also enable the SSIO to be part of the social networks which strengthen community.”
Exodus Foundation:

In NSW Meals for the homeless are provided through the Exodus Foundation. SSIO has partnered with the foundation since the mid-nineties. Members help by serving healthy vegetarian meals prepared by professional chefs according to food nutritional standards. SSIO members are rostered to serve the meals three times a month, serving around 200 people in need each session.

Members also prepare around 200 healthy homemade meals twice weekly and serve the homeless at Parramatta Park through the Parramatta Mission.

St Vincent de Paul Society:

ACT members are regularly involved in activities of this organisation, participating in a regular night patrol food delivery.

The Vital Connections Program:

In Queensland the Young Adults of the SSIO are part of the Vital Connections Program of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, who serve the homeless in the CBD of Brisbane. Members provide a 3-course vegetarian meal, donate other food items and provide and distribute clothes, blankets and sleeping bags.
Murwillumbah Community Centre:
The SSIO Gold Coast members have developed a relationship with the local Murwillumbah Community Centre in NSW and provide food hampers on a regular basis to residents in need. The Homework Club is a recent initiative of the SSIO young adults of Murwillumbah and offers homework help to local children.

YHES House:
Gold Coast members have also enjoyed a long-standing relationship with YHES House (Youth Health and Education Service), providing meals and items of need for homeless youth. Members contribute to the service at Angels Kitchen by becoming part of a meals roster for YHES House. In addition, members provide a regular donation of items for homeless youth, to provide a basic level of comfort. The donation includes sleeping bags, tents, backpacks and food items.

SWARA (Sunshine Welfare and Rehabilitation Association):
SSIO supports this work through having social interaction with its members and doing working bees around the property. The founding members of this NGO were Dorothy and Moyia O’Brien, two long-standing SSIO members who have since passed away.
Discovery Club:

In WA the SSIO volunteers through the Discovery Club provide regular respite to carers of people with a disability, taking care of their charges for three hours every three months. This brings a smile to all faces and is the members' expression of appreciation of the carers. The activities provided include face painting, musical entertainment and dance. Thirty people with a disability have been involved in this activity over a period of twenty years, with the volunteers deriving much joy from the experience.

School Breakfast Programs:

A number of regional collections of groups support School Breakfast Programs providing breakfast to children who do not have a meal before school, with members delivering breakfast items to the schools on a regular basis.

Partnership with the Birthing Kit Foundation Australia:

Another partnership is with the Birthing Kit Foundation Australia. Around 300,000 women and 3 million newborns die each year in under-developed countries from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. To help address this, the SSIO partners with the Birthing Kit Foundation Australia assembling Birthing Kits for distribution. The kits provide items that reduce the risks associated with childbirth. All states participate in this activity and approximately 8000 Kits are packed nationally by the SSIO and supplied to the Birthing Kit Foundation. The kits are distributed in communities in Bangladesh and Africa, helping over 8000 mothers.
Sister Kate’s Home Kids Aboriginal Association (SKHKAC):

In WA, members have been privileged to be recognised as Friends of The Sister Kate’s Home Kids Aboriginal Corporation (SKHKAC). The programs developed by the corporation are aimed to provide for their people a reconnection to their own cultural and spiritual roots. One of their objectives is to also develop healing relationships with the wider community. The Sister Kate’s “Homees” have been most gracious and inclusive of SSIO in their activities and the members who have become involved have experienced the healing power of the Aboriginal culture and spirituality through connection with Mother Earth. Several were invited to provide a testimonial for a publication celebrating the tenth anniversary of SKHKAC.

“SKHKAC is an Aboriginal NGO formed to support its members heal from the intergenerational impact of the stolen generations policies which had a profound impact in WA. This impact includes suicide, depression and alcohol and drug abuse. The Sister Kate’s Home Kids Aboriginal Corporation have become a leading organisation in WA in this work.”

Alvin Leo, WA
Board member of SSIO, Australia
Woodbury Autism Education and Research:

Woodbury Autism Education and Research is a leading school for children with autism. NSW SSIO members and their children have been in partnership with this school over recent years offering friendship and support in the cause of assisting children who struggle with autism. The connection was made at the instigation of the SSIO children as a service project commencing with a joint Christmas celebration with the children of both organisations. The following note was received from Karen McNeil, the Director of Administration:

Thank YOU so much for joining us on Saturday.
Our staff and families are still talking about how wonderful the day was and the sense of community that we all shared.
It truly was a very special day. I can recall just stepping back at one stage and watching everyone talking, and the children playing and thought to myself just how lucky we are to be part of such a caring community. Our ongoing friendship with your organisation means so much.

Karen later attended an SSIO event and enjoyed a play presented by the children. This is a friendship which has added great value to all those involved.

A number of activities take place in support of organisations which are dedicated to the welfare of animals - namely RSPCA and SAFE. Members have been involved in donating items to assist in the care of the animals, as well as providing other services such as, making animal pouches and working bees to clean cages and yards.
Unity of Faiths and Interfaith Connections

What is Unity of Faiths?

Spirituality can be considered the activity of life, living contact with the Creator; the blossoming of the One-to-One relationship with our Maker. The different religions have come into existence to lead mankind to Divinity.

There is a unity in mankind for all belong to the human race, be they rich or poor, black or white, prince or pauper. Whilst the human race is one, the different components’ feelings, thoughts and behaviour are often different. Religions reflect this difference but have an underlying unity, for all religions share important values and lead man to the same goal; Spirituality, Love and Divinity. This is Unity of Faiths.

In some states SSIO Australia has a long-standing place in the inauguration and development of Interfaith networks - notably the ACT and Victoria. SSIO members in Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia and NSW also have relationships with faith groups based on service activities. NSW has established very positive connections through its commitment to multi-faith events and pilgrimages to places of worship. We have also participated in interfaith events sponsored and coordinated by local councils.
VIC

In October 2018, children and young adults from the SSIO provided a performance of song and dance as part of the Interfaith program organised by the Interfaith Network partnered with the City of Greater Dandenong on the theme of ‘Real Eyes, The Vision of Love’. The Interfaith Network is a group of diverse cultural and religious faiths, working in partnership with the City of Greater Dandenong Council to promote peace and harmony within the municipality.

This program has enhanced the connection between the City of Greater Dandenong and the SSIO and it strengthened our ties of unity and tolerance with the Interfaith Network which have been developed over the past twenty years.

ACT

Members in ACT participate regularly in the Canberra Interfaith Forum (CIF) which was established to support interfaith activities in Canberra, ACT and to promote spiritual and multicultural harmony in the national capital within a formal group setting.
NSW

The SSIO in NSW has been connected with the Wayside Chapel for nearly thirty years with members from both groups joining together to offer service to the community and to participate in multi-faith worship services.

Members in NSW also undertook a Pilgrimage to Places of Worship in 2016. This included visits to Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh places of worship. The visits were to awaken amongst our own members the awareness of the underlying unity within the diversity of faiths. Participants learned about the essential teachings and practices of each faith. As a result of this pilgrimage important relationships were developed with the leaders of some of these faiths - in particular the Ahmadhiya Muslim Association and the Parramatta Mission Uniting Church.

Nalini Kumar, NSW
Pilgrimage Coordinator

“This pilgrimage was a wonderful opportunity to develop bonds of friendship, respect and understanding between our members and those of other faiths. We came away uplifted through the meeting of hearts and minds”

“No matter what your physical appearance, when you have kindness in your heart, You’re the most beautiful person in the world.”

- Mufti Ismail Menk-
(http://quotesofislam.com/islamic-quotes-part-2/#Character)
Another positive outcome of the pilgrimage was an event which followed, and which brought together the faiths with whom the members connected during the visits. This event was entitled ‘Oneness - Coming Together to Make our World a Better Place’. This was hosted by SSIO and brought together over 400 people from different faith and community groups, schools and an aged care facility.

In 2018, SSIO members took part in the World Peace Day Service at Parramatta Mission Uniting Church. This program was attended by many MP's, councillors, leaders and members of many different faiths and communities. Prayers were offered by representatives of sixteen different faiths followed by silent reflection and release of peace doves. SSIO Young Adults participated by offering two musicals based on love and peace.

In Perth WA, SSIO was invited to participate in a Symposium on Human Values in October 2018 hosted by the Sant Nirankari Mission. The focus was on the oneness shared with other faiths in the community. This included Muslims, Hindus, Temple of Fine Arts, Sikhs, ISKCON Devotees, Buddhists and Christians.

"Sathya Sai Baba encourages us to be good citizens and to understand and practise the teachings of the faith into which we were born. I find great fulfilment in making an active contribution to my local church as well as being a member of the SSIO.”
The following relationships are examples of interfaith activity based on service to the community:

In NSW: The St Brigid’s Marrickville Church in Sydney is a Christ-centred Eucharistic community in which people of many cultures worship God and inspire each other to live the Gospel message. The SSIO holds an annual Christmas service at the church and provides food items to help people in need in the local community. The food donations are distributed by the church in their work in the local community.

In WA: There has been a long-standing relationship with the Anglican Church in Perth. For fifteen years the SSIO members have delivered sandwiches each day to an Anglicare youth program. This enables homeless youth who access assistance from Anglicare to be offered a sandwich when they come for an appointment. Members also supply meals to support the Church of Christ’s community program. To offer a better standard of nutrition for the recipients, SSIO participated in a workshop on nutrition offered by the Edith Cowan University.
Another service which involves food for homeless people in Perth is linked to the street doctor service. Whilst the mobile van is in situ, SSIO members regularly provide hot toast, drinks, fruit and snacks to those waiting for appointments.

In SA: Members deliver cooked meals on a weekly basis to an Anglicare project called Fred’s Van, which serves the homeless in Adelaide. SSIO Members preparing the meals participated in a session with a dietician to better understand the health needs of the homeless.

“The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love. There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread but there are many more dying for a little love. The poverty in the West is a different kind of poverty — it is not only a poverty of loneliness but also of spirituality. There’s a hunger for love, as there is a hunger for God.”

Mother Teresa
A Simple Path: Mother Teresa
Blood Donation (Liquid Love)

Around Australia, members eligible to donate through the Red Cross Blood Bank are encouraged and supported to make regular donations of whole blood, plasma and platelets. An annual drive is coordinated by the Young Adults of SSIO Australia and in 2017 their creative promotional work was recognised by the Red Cross on their Facebook Page, reaching over 240,000 people. The SSIO through its Young Adults have enjoyed a close collaboration with the Red Cross and are part of their Red25 program in this life-saving service. During a ceremony in March 2019, the NSW branch of the Australian Red Cross Blood Service acknowledged the SSIO’s continued support with a 2018 Achievement Certificate.
A recent initiative has been the introduction of seminars and workshops for interested members of the community, focussing on healthy ageing and on mental health.

Healthy Ageing Workshops

Workshops entitled ‘Healthy Ageing’ were developed and initiated in Canberra, ACT by the SSIO. These were conducted by a team of health professionals comprising members of the Sai Medical Unit and some Canberra doctors and provided valuable information concerning health-related issues facing people as they move into the senior years. Workshops have been made available to medical professionals and also to the general public. ‘Healthy ageing’ is about enhancing opportunities for good health so that older people can actively participate in society and enjoy independent, high quality lives.

These workshops were accredited by the RACGP and All GPs attending the session were able to claim credit towards the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners’ (RACGP) internationally recognised Quality Improvement and Continuing Professional Development Program.

The Healthy Ageing workshop has also been conducted in Sydney and Bundaberg Qld.

Mind your Mental Health Workshop

Another health-related workshop was developed and conducted in September 2018 by the Sai Medical Unit and the SSIO ACT Region addressing the important issue of mental health. The topic, ‘Mind Your Mental Health’, was organised to coincide with ‘RU OK? Day’ - an Australian national day dedicated to raising awareness of and encouraging positive attitudes and action towards mental health issues.

Over 100 people participated in the event with attendees coming from diverse communities and age groups. These workshops on health issues are seen as a valuable contribution to the local community and are being adopted by other regions within Australia.
Service to Seniors in the Community

Every community stands on the shoulders of those who have gone before. The SSIO seeks to offer service to Seniors in gratitude and recognition of the part they have played in the development of our society.

In every state, our members make regular visits to nursing homes, providing entertainment through singing and having conversations with the residents. Children make an important contribution to these visits, providing their own joyful dimension to the occasion and offering residents contact with the young.

SA Members sing at a Nursing Home
Queensland members entertain residents in a nursing home

Young Adults in Victoria help to entertain with the Christmas spirit

Nursing Home Visit in Victoria
In the ACT, members have developed a solid relationship with the IRT Foundation (Integrity, Respect, Trust), Kanagara Waters.

This Foundation empowers older Australians to live free from disadvantage. The social impact strategy focuses on giving back to our communities by tackling homelessness, unemployment and social isolation amongst over 55s.

Members of the ACT SSIO initiated the Sai CARE (Care And Respect of Elders) Program with the objective of conscious appreciation and respect of elders. The program particularly sought to motivate the young to develop loving and caring relationships with their grandparents, learning to value and interact with the elderly in the process. It was also an opportunity for education of SSIO members in developing the ability to understand complex issues in an ageing population and the encouragement of the active practice of valuing the elderly in society.

The program was delivered with the involvement of the IRT Foundation, with members regularly attending the aged-care facilities providing a range of services to engage the residents including annual Christmas Carols.

The SSIO was privileged to receive an award as ‘Volunteer of the Year’ from IRT for their contribution to the residents. In making the award, Tony Dawson, IRT Foundation Manager said,

“The ACT winner is the Sathya Sai International Organisation of Australia, for their dedication, compassion and leadership in aged care,

The judging panel was impressed by Sathya Sai’s ability to cohesively work together as a group, show initiative and proactively liaise with IRT staff to satisfy the needs of residents.

The members of Sathya Sai visit residents that are socially isolated or at risk of social isolation and loneliness, and plan and implement a wide range of meaningful activities for residents on weekends.

They also participate in a meal assistance program to support residents who have a reduced ability to feed themselves due to physical and cognitive challenges.”
In Queensland the Bluecare Nurses serve elderly people living independently. The SSIO supports their work by providing a monthly afternoon tea and a concert to about twenty people, including providing transport as needed. For many this helps to alleviate social isolation as it is one of the few opportunities for some of the elderly participants to leave their home and interact with others.

In Victoria, SSIO member Mr Vishnu Prasad received the 2016 Senior of the Year Award from the Victorian Government for his service to multiculturalism. Mr Prasad and his wife Margaret have been an inspiration to many through their dedicated service to the community.

![Mr Vishnu Prasad receiving his Award](image)

In Perth, WA the members transport and entertain Seniors in an annual concert.

![Children in WA enjoy being able to entertain the Seniors](image)
SSIO Australia within its Young Adults Program has a group of very dynamic and creative young people who have been taking on leadership roles at all levels of the organisation. Their ages range from 18-40, with many being university students or engaged in fields such as teaching, science, engineering, medicine, dentistry, marketing, business and management, law, IT and other professions.

The Sai Young Adults are very active in community service, the arts, technology and of course, are very conscious of their need for personal growth.

These young people with their strong ideals and compassionate nature are often the instigators and leaders of new service projects such as connection with the Birthing Kit Foundation, environmental projects, or finding new avenues for feeding of homeless people. Many have participated in an international leadership course, developing skills which will enable them to become major contributors in society and in their fields of work. In some states, the Young Adults have developed a mentoring role with the secondary school age members, fostering positive relationships and offering engaging workshops on topics relevant for them.

Along with this commitment to service, the Young Adults find time to develop their spiritual awareness through reading, study and participation in all facets of SSIO activity.

Singanayagam Indrapalan, NSW  
National President, SSIO Australia

“SSIO Australia sees the Young Adults as future leaders of the organisation and with their altruistic commitment to service, major contributors to society. Their energy, skill and expertise are greatly valued and all are encouraged to develop their leadership skills to enable them to make a positive contribution to society.”
During the Easter weekend of 2018, the Young Adults joined with those of Fiji and New Zealand for the Beyond 2020 Festival in New Zealand. They participated in many interactive workshops and activities based on the themes of humanity, morality and spirituality.
The primary objective of the Ladies Program is to foster the potential of womanhood through programs focussing on personal growth, spiritual development, self-confidence and service. The SSIO places great value on the role of women and seeks to encourage women to excel in their roles, especially as mothers, the nurturers and teachers of the next generation, as well as leaders of society in their own right, bringing their skills, attributes and experience to all facets of life.

The Ladies Program has recently focused on the encouragement of a community-based mind set.

An activity with this in mind was an Australia-wide participation in the Mother’s Day Classic Walk. The walk is connected with an Organisation called ‘Women in Super’, which has been creating awareness of Breast Cancer and helping cancer research for many years. One of the participants, a cancer survivor, expressed her feelings in a brief note, “It was a true victory for me and I would like to assure others that life is beautiful and [to] live every moment happily. [I am] looking forward to the walk next year...”

The event coordinators recognised the participation of the Sathya Sai International Organisation as the largest community group participating within their category for the states of WA, ACT, Victoria and NSW.
Women also participate in workshops and seminars aimed to increase their awareness and life skills, covering topics such as leadership, communication, relationships, parenting, health and well-being, envirocare and domestic violence, to name a few.

An example of such activity occurred in NSW. The ladies there organised an educational and topical workshop on Domestic Violence. They focused on a confronting subject that stretched the parameters gaining insight into the various forms in which domestic violence can occur. The session provided understanding of the way in which violence can develop and highlighted the importance of mutual support, respect and understanding within families. As a result, they are now better educated and aware of the nature of domestic violence. In turn, they can now recognise when this may be taking place and offer appropriate support to those in need.

In Queensland the region held a Ladies Retreat at the Chenrezig Buddhist Institute with the theme “Dancing in the Light”. There was a focus on Oneness and participants experienced a very positive interaction with the Buddhist community there which included a session on Buddhist teachings with one of the nuns.

Participants enjoy the completed mandala, to which all contributed

Jill Fredericks of NSW thanks Venerable Tenzin Tsepal

The Garden of Remembrance at Chenrezig

Chenrezig Retreat - wearing the special T shirts
“Human life will find fulfilment only when ecological balance is maintained. Balance in human life and balance in nature, both are equally important.”

Sathya Sai Baba
25 September 2000
The Envirocare Program of SSIO Australia is an initiative which aims to encourage in members awareness of the importance of sustainable living, respect for nature and the planet consequently developing a sense of personal commitment to the environment. Members engage in study on these topics and are encouraged to practise moderation in their daily living, with any savings made being directed to community need.

From children to adults, members engage in tree planting activities, Clean Up Australia Day drives, Adopt a Road programs, bush regeneration and in newer activities such as mobile phone recycling and beach plogging – the environmentally friendly way to exercise. Members are encouraged to reduce waste, recycle and explore different possibilities for reuse of items, such as making reusable bags and containers. With the leadership of the Young Adults, they share tips on platforms such as Facebook, with the aim of taking personal responsibility for reducing waste and consuming less.

“Safeguard Creation because if we destroy creation, creation will destroy us! Never forget this!”

- Pope Francis

[https://quotesgram.com/pope-francis-daily-quotes/]

Many members from Australia attended a Go Green Conference in India July 2018, organised globally by the SSIO. Delegates from around the world gathered to explore the challenges of over-consumption and the impact this is having on Mother Earth.

One of those who contributed to the development of this conference was Dr Ross Woodward, environmental scientist and SSIO member from NSW, whose book “God, Nature and Man” was used as reference material for the conference.

Dr Ross Woodward, NSW
environmental scientist and SSIO member
Clean Up Australia Day 2018, SA

Clean Up Australia Day, Victoria

Clean Up Australia Day, Victoria

Clean Up Australia Day, Queensland

WA Team Tree Planting with SSE children
In Australia we are privileged to have the example and guidance of our Aboriginal people to show us the way in developing a reverent and sustainable relationship with the land:
“The land is my mother. Like a human mother the land gives us protection and provides our needs—economic, social and religious. We have a human relationship with the land: Mother, daughter, son. When the land is taken from us or destroyed, we feel hurt because we belong to the land and we are part of it.”

- Djinyinni Gondarra

(https://ideapod.com/10-aboriginal-australian-quotes-will-change-perspective-life/)
Nature is the vesture of God

- Sathya Sai Baba -
Sathyam Swam Sundaram, V4, P S5
Study Circles

SSIO centres offer members the opportunity to meet regularly to increase their understanding of spiritual teachings. Participants study and discuss the teachings of the different religions and their inherent values with the aim of applying these values in their own lives.

“All major religious traditions carry basically the same message, that is love, compassion and forgiveness the important thing is they should be part of our daily lives.”

- Dalai Lama

Values Classes for children of members

Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) is a program of regular classes carried out by the SSIO around Australia. The program aims to nurture in children their inherent values to foster character development and spiritual transformation. The outcomes are enhanced by the flow-on effects of the children applying these life principles and values in their contact with family, friends and the community.

Children are encouraged to participate in community service with the adults and have become an important part of activities such as nursing home visits and Christmas Carol presentations to the homeless. This is values in action and permits children to develop awareness about society’s needs, further enhancing their capacity for support, compassion and respect. The children are developing great awareness and want to be part of important events like Clean up Australia Day and Tree Planting for the care of our Mother Earth.
Children participate regularly in performances and presentations including song, drama and dance, and this contributes to the development of their confidence, creativity and skill.

One example of this community participation is the annual celebration of Christmas with Sydwest Multicultural Services in NSW. In 2018, young adults and SSE children provided the entertainment to three hundred Seniors from various ethnic backgrounds, in which the Seniors joined in with dancing and singing. The following letter of appreciation was received from Sydwest Multicultural Services:

“We love to see the joy that the music, dance and song brings to our clients’ faces. It is a testament to the hard work and dedication that your organisation and its volunteers put in each year to make our Christmas Celebration event such a success.”
Sai Lifestyle

The Sai Lifestyle program provides members with a structured program to support them in their understanding and practice of the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba and other spiritual teachers. It helps participants establish a lifestyle consistent with spiritual principles through small, focussed groups that foster participation and transformation.

Members meet regularly in facilitated groups and support each other to make positive change in their lives – their self-esteem, family relationships, community service, work performance, friendships and student life.

Members set goals for themselves and make a conscious commitment to personal growth and to each other. Some of the program topics are, Communication and Active Listening (The Art of Loving), Minding your Mind for Spiritual Growth, WATCH (Watch Your Words, Actions, Thoughts, Character, Heart), Anger Management, Time and Stress Management – to name a few. This program also attracts spiritual seekers in the community, where the program is known as Spiritual Lifestyle Program.

“This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness.”

-Dalai Lama-
(https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/dalai_lama_101711)
Leadership workshops

With a strong commitment to skill enhancement, SSIO Australia offers leadership workshops based on Human Values. Participants find these workshops supportive of their roles in the organisation and also in their work settings and community involvement.

Every two years, incoming committee members participate in a two-day retreat aimed at nurturing their leadership potential and skills. Leadership workshops are also conducted at a state level and at an international level, a Leadership Course is conducted annually for Young Adults. Many of the SSIO Australian Young Adults have graduated from this course.

Spiritual Retreats

All states hold retreats to provide to members the opportunity to come together for spiritual connection and to share ideas, develop their life skills and knowledge and to encourage and equip members to make a constructive connection with their local community. Retreat programs can include talks from guest speakers, workshops on a range of topics, children’s activities, nature walks, meditation, yoga and devotional singing.

“In Tasmania, retreats are an important annual event. They help overcome the barrier of distance and isolation and enable members to come together in a natural setting, to connect with each other and gain spiritual upliftment. It is an important opportunity for members to enjoy the company and support of other spiritual seekers.”

Dr Mick Thrush, Tasmania
Member of the National Media Committee, SSIO
National Conferences

SSIO Australia holds a National Conference every two years to enable members to gather together for inspiration, renewal and invigoration of their spirituality. These events provide a basis for a recommitment of members to their individual transformation and service and an opportunity for organisational review.

Aboriginal people participate in 2015 National Conference opening ceremony in SA

Lighting the Candle at 2015 National Conference in SA

Discussion on Sai Education in Australia at 2017 National Conference in VIC

SSE Children’s play at 2017 National Conference in VIC

National Conference 2019

With the theme “Boomerang Back to the Source” members from around Australia will meet from 19 - 21 April 2019 to hear speakers from both overseas and local areas and participate in workshops to gain inspiration and strengthen their connection with their inner divinity and its expression in service to society.
“God does not expect you to worship him; He expects you to lead an ideal life. Having been born a human being, you should strive for the welfare of society. You are a member of society, and your welfare depends on the welfare of society. Hence, undertake activities which are beneficial to society ... God is in you, above you, below you, around you. You cannot realise this unless you give up negative feelings ... “

*Sathya Sai Baba*

*80th Birthday Discourse. 2005*
SSIO Australia is a relatively small organisation in comparison with the many community, spiritual and religious organisations on the Australian social landscape. However, our members are dedicated to making an increasing commitment to the well-being of our society, through helping to develop bonds of friendship and respect, based on the principles of love and selfless service.

Our aim is to achieve an increasing connection with the very dedicated community organisations and faith groups. We want to build our interfaith connections by working with interested groups to nurture in our society the highest Human Values and promote harmony and understanding between the various cultures and faith groups in our very diverse society. We are keen to play our part in continuing the success of Australian society as one which welcomes people from all lands. The cultural and faith diversity of our own membership lends a strength to these endeavours.

We will continue to offer support to organisations providing services to the vulnerable in our community, seeking to offer assistance which is relevant and sustainable.

We are also committed to supporting the spiritual and community development of Aboriginal groups as the first Australians and are keen to grow and learn from their deep spirituality and relationship with the land. We believe that our future is connected with the rebuilding and healing of their culture and spiritual life and that Australian culture and our relationship with Mother Earth will grow through the thriving of our Aboriginal people as the first inhabitants and custodians of our country.
SSIO GLOBAL INITIATIVES

SSIO members have had a presence in almost all the disasters impacting on various locations around the world. Local members assist with the provision of immediate aid in the form of water, food, shelter and medical aid and they also offer support in the recovery period with the rebuilding of homes, schools, temples and provision of sanitation facilities.

Some of those initiatives are featured here:
Haiti Earthquake:

SSIO volunteers have had a strong presence in Haiti since the devastating earthquake struck in 2010, killing approximately 250,000 and rendering 1.5 million people homeless. The SSIO still has a presence in Haiti and in 2014 the following statistics indicated the SSIO commitment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Value of Services &amp; Supplies by Sai Organisation in Haiti:</th>
<th>$3,600,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount Paid to Sai Organisation Doctors &amp; Volunteers:</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Patients Seen in Haiti:</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Meals Served in Haiti:</td>
<td>Over 2,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time spent by doctors in Haiti</td>
<td>Over 8,000 volunteer hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of doctors who worked in Haiti:</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time spent by volunteers in Haiti:</td>
<td>30,000 volunteer hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total time in Haiti after earthquake:</td>
<td>Over 1000 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of free medicines and medical supplies:</td>
<td>Over $ 1.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash contribution for food, water, shelter etc:</td>
<td>Over $ 700,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sai medical team and other volunteers in Haiti*
Nepal Earthquake:
In Nepal, following the massive earthquake in April 2015, which killed over 9,000 and left many more homeless, SSIO members assisted with the initial response, transporting essential supplies and medical aid to isolated villages. Since the immediate crisis, they have been involved in rebuilding homes, schools and community prayer halls and providing temporary shelter from the monsoons. Water supply systems have been installed and housing constructed by SSIO members.

Indonesia Earthquake:
In Lombok, a series of powerful earthquakes struck the island in August 2018, killing over 500 people and making over 430,000 homeless. There were many injuries and a great need for medical aid. The SSIO members from Indonesia responded by providing food, water, medical aid and trauma counselling. They also installed public kitchens and bathrooms. One very isolated village could not be reached by the government response, so SSIO members managed to reach this village with aid and they have since “adopted” the village to ensure rebuilding of homes and facilities.

Sri Lanka cyclone:
In May 2017, Sri Lanka was impacted by cyclone Mora resulting in significant loss of life and missing persons. As the only access to most areas was by air, SSIO volunteers provided food, water, clothing and shelter items which were airlifted through the assistance of the Air Force.
COMMUNITY PROJECTS IN INDIA
INITIATED BY SATHYA SAI BABA
Two Super Specialty Hospitals, other General Hospitals and health care facilities are run by Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust in India providing free medical care to the sick and ailing with dedication, commitment, love and the best of skills, so that patients will be cured in body, mind and spirit. The Mission is to provide high quality medical care free of charge to all irrespective of caste, creed, religion and financial status in an atmosphere of love and care. The Super Specialty Hospitals are equipped with state-of-the-art diagnostic and treatment facilities and staffed with highly skilled medical, nursing and paramedical professionals delivering care with love and compassion in a clean, aesthetic and spiritual environment ensuring that healing happens in body, mind and spirit. The hospitals follow the guiding principles laid down by Sathya Sai Baba.
SUPER SPECIALTY HOSPITAL
Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Whitefield, Bangalore, Karnataka, India.
In 1981 Sathya Sai Baba established the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning by combining the colleges that had been established at Anantapur, Whitefield and Puttaparthi. These institutions provide education free of charge from primary school to post-doctoral level. This education places emphasis on the use of knowledge to serve society, with character building considered the ideal of education.
Under the guidance of Sathya Sai Baba the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust completed a number of projects that brought life-saving water to millions of people in Anantapur, Medak and Mahabubnagar, the metropolitan city of Chennai and the East and West Godavari district.

SRI SATHYA SAI WATER SUPPLY PROJECT
Andhra Pradesh & Tamil Nadu, India.