MAIA | Music & Arts in Action

'They Change Us':
The social and emotional impacts on music facilitators of engaging in music and singing with asylum seekers

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ABSTRACT

The literature on the social and emotional wellbeing of community musicians who engage with marginalised groups with complex mental health issues such as refugees, is relatively scarce. The *Scattered People* is a collective of volunteer musicians, music facilitators, and community development workers who engage, through musical activities, with asylum seekers and refugees who have experienced detention in Australia. This discussion focuses on key examples of social and emotional distress for community music facilitators through their interactions with asylum seekers. The community musicians explained the circumstances that had significant impacts on their wellbeing in terms of (i) their engagement with people in a detention centre, and (ii) the happiness and concerns linked to the asylum seekers they came across. Our paper presents the second author's reflections on two songs from the *Scattered People* repertoire, which were created and performed as the *embodiment* of these social and emotional impacts. Our aim is to ensure that this important aspect of community music, which has been thus far neglected, receives more attention.

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INTRODUCTION: MUSIC, HEALTH AND WELLBEING

If one should desire to know whether a kingdom is well governed, if its morals are good or bad, the quality of its music will furnish the answer – Confucius.

Music has wide sociocultural as well as psychological implications that are multidimensional, due to music's pervasiveness and its potential to affect feelings and thoughts over time and across diverse contexts (Bergh and Sloboda, 2010; Broeske-Danielsen, 2013; Commonwealth of Australia [CoA], 2013; Lenette, Weston, Wise, Sunderland and Bristed, 2015). Music "is an inherently social act, and one which contains enormous potential to bring people together and to facilitate various forms of social action" (MacDonald, Kreutz and Mitchell, 2012, p. 76). As novel approaches to evaluating the impact of music on health and wellbeing emerge through research endeavours (see for instance Lenette and Sunderland, 2014; Lenette *et al.*, 2015; Pettan, 2010), music has gained an important status through its ability to foster a process that can prevent psychological issues or at least reduce them (see DeNora's (2013) concept of 'asylum' as a space where one can 'flourish'). It is likely that such benefits extend to musicians, facilitators and performers due to the nature of community engagement (CoA, 2013).

Musicians and music facilitators often work effectively and consistently at the interpersonal and community levels through music activities. Community musicians, according to Higgins (2012, p. 159), are "educators that move in and between many diverse settings […] As skilled facilitators, their emphasis is on encouraging open dialogue among different individuals with differing perspectives". The overall purpose is to offer a social and enjoyable activity although further identity, health and wellbeing benefits may also be attributed to participation in musical activities. In fact, the CoA (2013) identifies that community arts programs have the potential to "engage individuals and diverse population groups to build and sustain social and cultural capital, foster community cohesion, promote awareness of health issues, facilitate interaction, inclusion, intellectual stimulation and reduce isolation". However, for some music facilitators, an awareness of the broader contexts of their work can produce feelings of moral distress and disillusionment as they experience the social and emotional impacts of their engagement, and wonder just how much of their efforts actually makes a difference to the lives of the people they work with.

Over the past three years, the authors have had the opportunity to consider issues linked to social and emotional health of community musicians following a collaborative, participatory research project involving the *Scattered People* (see mini-documentary at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GV_US5RyIgM). The second author, Brian, is a lead music facilitator who played a key role in setting up this initiative. *Scattered People* is an Australian-based collective of volunteer musicians, music facilitators, and community development workers who are deeply committed to promoting social justice and human rights across areas of social marginalisation, but particularly with asylum seekers and refugees who have experienced detention. Indeed, the mental health issues experienced by asylum seekers while in detention have been well documented (McLoughlin and Warin, 2008; Newman, Dudley and

Steel, 2008; O'Connor, 2007; Procter, 2011). Feelings of boredom, misery and despair are often associated with indefinite detention as is the case in Australia (Fleay and Briskman, 2013). Following our documentation of the impact of music interactions on the mental, social, and cultural health and wellbeing of asylum seekers (Lenette, *et al.*, 2015), some music facilitators began wondering about the social and emotional impacts that their continuous interactions with particularly vulnerable asylum seekers might have on them individually and collectively – although this was not part of the research project.

Since the social and emotional health and wellbeing approach generally receives limited attention in the literature (see for instance Weare, 2000; Huber, *et al.*, 2011), we first wish to address this lack of clear definition by drawing upon Indigenous Australian knowledge to conceptualise the term here, which refers to "consider[ing] mental health holistically by acknowledging and examining the broader socio-historical and personal choices that influence it" (Garvey, 2008). We focus on social and emotional health and wellbeing outcomes for music facilitators here for two reasons. First, our community music partners specified that this was where they experienced significant challenges and benefits in terms of their work, and hence requested that future research should focus on this theme. Second, social and emotional health and wellbeing is, as Weare (2000) states, "everybody's business", and is not limited to the work of trained health professionals; rather, social and emotional wellbeing is shaped and achieved in the daily give and take of relationships between people in social settings.

Concern for the 'artist' in community settings is not new. More than two decades ago, Rogowski (1990, p. 277) acknowledged the lacuna in understandings of artists' lived experiences in community development settings: "individual artists – actors, dancers, painters, sculptors, photographers, designers, crafts people, musicians, etc. – are an understudied group whose needs and attitudes are an important component of the role they play in community development". Concurrently, Jones (1988) described a range of impacts on a visual artist, arising from her involvement in a community arts project in Colorado, United States, in terms of affective, cognitive and behavioural shifts that occurred through such involvement. The paucity of such studies closer to our times is particularly striking. One important exception from the field of occupational therapy is Kerwin's (2013) auto-ethnographic exploration of interactions with asylum seekers in detention-like settings, where she identified the transformational ability of in-depth engagement, and reflected on how she "found meaning" (p. 16) through regular activities in such contexts. Similar to *Scattered People* musicians, Kerwin's 'myriad of emotions' (p. 11) and moments of self-doubt led her to question herself and the purpose of her engagement with asylum seekers: "we were out of our depth and not equipped to deal with this group. (…) there was very little we could do to help but I was hopeful that our intervention may provide some relief" (Kerwin, 2013, p. 11).

Yet, little has been said about how the act of sharing music and singing with vulnerable groups with complex mental health issues such as asylum seekers can affect the social and emotional health and wellbeing of musicians, artists and performers.

This gap in knowledge could eventually jeopardise the efforts of musicians and artists concerned for the welfare of marginalised groups and should be rectified. As more and more musicians are now involved in activities that aim to enhance the health and wellbeing of people experiencing psychological distress such as asylum seekers, this has created a new professional category that remains difficult to define (Daykin, 2012). Importantly, there are no clear guidelines as to what extent music facilitators engage with the mental health issues of their participants. Daykin (2012) highlights the lack of resources to effectively support those artists and musicians involved in the delivery of music activities in health settings. Yet, recent policy changes may assist in redressing this situation; one key example is Australia's endorsement of the *National Arts and Health Framework* (CoA, 2013) which aims to guide policy, practice and research in arts and health in a way that "value[s] the professionalism, excellence and ongoing development of those working in the field".

This paper provides a reflection on the potential social and emotional impacts on musicians from an arts and health perspective. While we plan on researching and writing about this topic more extensively in the future, we felt the urgency to prompt an international discussion and provide some initial thoughts on why the topic requires more attention in the arts and health literature. We first provide background information on the initiative from which we outline the social and emotional impacts on music facilitators of engaging in music and singing with asylum seekers. The facilitators' engagement in a detention setting and beyond is then discussed to highlight some key examples of social and emotional distress. Our paper uses the lead facilitator's reflections on two songs from the *Scattered People*'s repertoire, namely *All We Hope For* (<https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10871/23606>) and *Broken Wing* (<https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10871/23607>), to illustrate some of the social and emotional aspects embodied in the creation and performance of these songs. Our aim is to ensure that this important aspect of community music, which has thus far been neglected, gains more prominence in the literature and receives due attention from artists and performers, health practitioners and policy makers.

BACKGROUND: ENGAGING WITH ASYLUM SEEKERS

Australia's policy of mandatory detention of 'undocumented' asylum seekers who arrive by boat has been highly controversial in recent years, particularly in relation to 'indefinite' detention on Australia's mainland and in offshore settings, while awaiting processing (see Lenette, *et al.*, 2015, for more detail). In 2011, *Scattered People* established contact with people detained at the Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation (or detention centre) in Australia. Based on previous work with disadvantaged children and communities (see http://www.sweetfreedom.org.au/ scatteredpeople.html), and having witnessed how music brought together asylum seekers from vastly different backgrounds through the simple act of engaging in music together, the music facilitators hoped that detained asylum seekers could benefit from participating in music-making activities and get some respite from the drudgery of the detention centre, however brief. Brian recalled the first attempt to gain access to the detention centre:

> A phone call from the Lifeline Counselling and Community Development team to [Brisbane Immigration Transit Accommodation] BITA Management offering free access for the asylum seekers to our psychologists, social workers and community development practitioners resulted in a 'thanks but no thanks response' - "we have our own counsellors thank you".
>
> The following week, another phone call from the same team (not that we saw the need to disclose that) indicating that we are a small group of musicians who are interested in coming out to BITA in a voluntary capacity and playing our guitars and mandolins.
>
> "Yes that should be fine," was the response; "please come in and meet with our Activities coordinator who will guide you through the protocols - blue cards, police checks, orientation program etc." (February 2014)

BITA is a hostel-style accommodation facility, where asylum seekers are 'in transit' between detention centres. The facilitators attended BITA with guitars and other instruments once a week for a couple of hours mainly during evenings for three years (2011-2014) to meet asylum seekers in the common room and share musical activities informally. The group of participants could vary from 8 to 25 people; the numbers were relatively unpredictable because at times, the center management planned immigration-related or health appointments at the same times (despite people's desire to attend the music sessions). On other days, people were so depressed that not even the music could entice them from their rooms.

When they first entered the detention space, music facilitators were aware of the significant mental health issues people could experience while awaiting a decision on their refugee status applications (as in Fleay and Briskman, 2013). The lead facilitator's narrative about this experience in a group email to *Scattered People* supporters shows a certain level of apprehension prior to the musicians' first encounter with asylum seekers:

> Thank you to those of you who, sensing our anxieties surrounding the desire to take the healing power of music into places where people are hurting, contacted us and wished us well prior to our visit. (June 2011)

The trepidation associated with facilitating music-making activities in detention stemmed primarily from undertaking a process that was relatively unheard of (see Lenette, *et al.*, 2015 for a more extensive discussion). The music facilitators persevered because of a desire to connect with people in detention centres and to share the joy of music, despite dire circumstances. The ethos of the *Scattered People* to strive for socially just outcomes for asylum seekers guided the initiative. As such, music facilitators gave limited consideration to the social and emotional implications of engaging with asylum seekers (beyond the obvious arduous nature of the context) at the outset.

Twelve months after the initial gathering, the musicians started expressing doubts as to whether their involvement had any impact at all, given the enormity of issues detained asylum seekers faced and the growing sense of despair that was at times

palpable during the music-making sessions, as narrated by the lead facilitator in a group email:

> Sometimes we wonder about what we are doing. It doesn't seem to make much difference. We wished we could have done more to lighten the mood of the place. The collective depression is almost contagious. (June 2012)

After two years of weekly engagements with detained asylum seekers, as well as ongoing monthly gatherings with those released in the community in response to asylum seekers' requests, the lead music facilitators, clearly conscious of the emotionally taxing impact of their ongoing involvement, expressed concerns about their lack of time and energy to provide emotional support to one another as they would normally do (see also Kerwin (2013) on the importance of peer support). As Daykin (2012, p. 65) argues, a number of professional issues arise for musicians and artists who are confronted by high incidences of mental illnesses as part of their practice: "As artists they are not necessarily therapists and neither are they assumed to be specialists in healthcare". While the music facilitators were well aware that aspects of their engagement with asylum seekers were particularly distressing, the facilitators lacked the opportunity to reflect on the social and emotional impacts for them.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH: CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNITY MUSIC FACILITATORS WORKING WITH ASYLUM SEEKERS

The three music facilitators (one woman and two men, including Brian) who expressed concerns on this topic have been associated with *Scattered People* for a long period of time. This section focuses on the issues they raised during an informal conversation in October 2013. On that occasion, the facilitators were asked, "What areas of research do you think would benefit your current engagement with asylum seekers?". While they made a couple of suggestions in relation to asylum seeker health and wellbeing, they quickly identified that music facilitators' social and emotional health was a topic they wished to explore more formally and systematically in the future. The facilitators explained some of the circumstances that had significant impacts on their wellbeing in terms of (i) their engagement with people in a detention centre, and (ii) the happiness and concerns linked to the asylum seekers they came across.

(I) DETENTION CENTRES AS SITES OF DISTRESS FOR BOTH ASYLUM SEEKERS AND MUSIC FACILITATORS

The mere act of accessing an asylum seeker detention centre as an outsider can be an unprecedented experience, as the site is an "embodiment of asylum and immigration policies" (Szczepanikova, 2012, p. 130). The complexities characterising such places (see Szczepanikova, 2012; Fleay and Briskman, 2013; Procter, 2011) are bound to affect people who enter this space even temporarily. For instance, Kerwin's (2013, p. 11) reflections as a research student in a detention-like setting highlight the conflicted nature of *not knowing* what eventually happens to the asylum seekers she met: "I still worry for them and I pray they have received refugee status and are doing well". Music facilitators are then in a unique position to interact with asylum seekers, with

music and singing as their only means to communicate and engage with complex mental health issues. Concurrently, as a result of the restrictive nature of detention, asylum seekers may be keen to participate in music and singing on a regular basis while at the same time feeling powerless in the face of uncertainty and restricted rights while in detention. Szczepanikova's (2012, p. 137) study of asylum seeker accommodation centres in the Czech Republic for instance, revealed that: 'recreational activities can certainly make the waiting time in the centres more bearable, but they have little impact on asylum seekers' ability to access their rights and make informed decisions about their future steps".

Scattered People music facilitators were well aware of this discrepancy and at times doubted the usefulness of their ongoing presence and commitment in the face of such hardships, as illustrated by the third quote above. Indeed, it would be difficult for anyone regularly involved in a context where despair, uncertainty, ill health, support, friendship, solidarity and hope co-exist, to remain emotionally unaffected. The detention centre thus represents a site of distress which music facilitators can enter and exit at will, while leaving detained asylum seekers behind, unsure what the following visit would reveal.

(II) JOY AND GRIEF THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS WITH ASYLUM SEEKERS

Music facilitators could often experience a mixture of joy and grief as they got to know people, and then see them move on to the next stage of the resettlement process, sometimes without any prior warning. As Fleay and Briskman (2013, p. 115) explain, "[r]elationships of friendship develop when detention centres are repeatedly visited, allowing the gaining of insight into the lived experiences of asylum-seekers that may not otherwise be possible". The attachment to some asylum seekers and their families, whom they could get to know in a particularly intimate way through music, was at the core of the facilitators' commitment to maintaining engagement over time. During musical exchanges in detention and in the community, asylum seekers could often share personal stories on the origins or meanings attached to particular songs (such as *Broken Wing*, see further). While there is much joy expressed through the act of sharing songs and playing musical instruments collectively, music facilitators could also feel a sense of grief when they witnessed asylum seekers' mental health deteriorate significantly over time, or when someone was relocated or deported without prior warning. This attachment and the relationships that inevitably grew over time could then come to an abrupt end due to administrative (potentially bureaucratic) decisions enforced immediately.

Additional concerns arose when facilitators were unaware of asylum seekers' whereabouts post-detention and thus feared for their wellbeing. Importantly, while basic needs are met in detention (meals, shelter and security are provided), the music facilitators identified that this rigid environment did not prepare asylum seekers for life beyond detention. Szczepanikova (2012, p. 138) agrees that this structure can produce a level of dependency that is detrimental to asylum seekers' sense of agency and capacity to 'function' with self-sufficiency once they leave detention; the detention centre environment creates a "general attitude that many, even mundane,

problems will be identified and solved by others – those who are in control". The music facilitators thus witnessed how prolonged time in detention can lessen the chances for asylum seekers to fare well 'on the outside' because of extended segregation from society, and loss of skills and abilities to negotiate different systems and institutions that foster positive resettlement outcomes. This could be distressing for facilitators who were left to hope that asylum seekers fared well wherever they were.

THE SONGS

The inclusion of the lead facilitator's reflections on two of *Scattered People*'s songs not only adds a rich dimension to this discussion, but also highlights how the creation and performance of such songs embodies a number of social and emotional challenges which the music facilitators identified as part of their involvement.

All We Hope For

Video recording <https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10871/23606>

Many of the songs in the repertoire are written using asylum seekers' contributions or poems, or inspired from the experiences of seeking asylum. The lead facilitator explains the origins of one of these songs:

> '*All We Hope For*' was composed in 2006 by Anthony Polson, a nurse who volunteered his time at the [non-government organisation] Refugee Claimant's Support Centre. One of the rooms at the Centre was designated as the Health Care Room and nurses like Anthony were in attendance on Tuesdays and Thursdays. People confide in health care workers. They tell them things they'd be reluctant to share with anyone else. They speak of how they feel at night wondering if medication can help them to sleep and give them an escape from their disturbing thoughts. They describe when they began to feel this way – coinciding with tragedies they had witnessed and having to hurriedly say goodbye to people they love whom they will most probably not see again. They wonder if the nurse can suggest anything to stop the tears and the nightmares.

They confide their hopes. They never speak of houses in leafy suburbs with swimming pools or exclusive salons or trendy restaurants. They don't mention high status private schools. For them the simple things will suffice – clothes on their back, food on the table, children at school, willing and able – it's all they hope for.

Anthony listened to people in this fragile emotional place week after week. Medically, he did what he could. His listening with care was probably more therapeutic than he realised. He referred many on for specialist attention to Queensland Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma [a local non-government organisation]. One little girl from Ethiopia was having a birthday. She had never had the opportunity to be given a cake in her name. Volunteers at the Centre responded positively to Anthony's subsequent request – a cake materialised as did music and applause from all those attending the Centre on that day.

He picked up his guitar.

Clothes on our back, food on the table
Children at school, willing and able
It's all we hope for, all we hope for

Go out at night, freedom to wander
People accept that we need a home
It's all we hope for, all we hope for

We will it, we will it, we will it

I look in your eye and see you're not frightened
Your greatest surprise is a cake with your name
It's all you hope for, all you hope for

We will it, we will it, we will it

Walk in the sand and breathe in a new life
Where you understand our need to feel safe
It's all we hope for, all we hope for

The *Scattered People* perform this song in various settings. We tell the story of its origins. We re-engage with Anthony's feelings when we play it. Listeners seem to be able to do this too. It's a simple melody. People who have not heard the song before find themselves singing along. This is solidarity and understanding – an implied welcome and acceptance.

It's probably more than the asylum seekers expected but it's surely what they hoped for. (January 2015)

This narrative shows how encounters with asylum seekers materialised into a song about hopes and concerns that is now an anthem for *Scattered People*. The lyrics exemplify how the social and emotional impacts of such encounters are at the core of the music produced, performed and shared with others.

Broken Wing

Audio recording <https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/handle/10871/23607>

Songs in various languages and taught to music facilitators *by* asylum seekers over time are also part of the repertoire. A man from Iran and living in the community sang this classical Persian song a cappella at the monthly community gatherings in late 2013. He explained that this song had special meaning and reminded him of his homeland. The audience, at first mesmerised by his beautiful voice, applauded for a longer period than usual. The song was then professionally recorded to be included on the 2015 *Scattered People* album. The lead facilitator comments on the feelings evoked from listening to *Broken Wing*:

> I wept when I heard one of the young men from Persia (Iran) singing a traditional poem entitled *Broken Wing*. I didn't understand the Farsi lyrics but as Hans Christian Anderson said "where words fail, music speaks". It tapped into that internal reservoir most of us have that contains our loves and sorrows. Within that reservoir, differences between people dissolve and our essential commonalities come into focus. It's often distressing in there because a parallel process operates and we share, at some level, one another's pain. We also share, however, one another's resources – his resilient spirit and insights, our guitars and network of supportive friends. From this shared and precarious space, the best of each of us emerges (February 2014).

Despite the reference to shared resourcefulness and resilience, an element of moral distress clearly comes through in this reflection. The act of weeping not only suggests that he was touched by the beauty of the melody but also felt a connection to his own sorrows because of the melancholic nature of the song with a self-explanatory title. Reverting to 'essential commonalities' in a 'precarious space' implies a sense of vulnerability where another's pain and yearning for home are clearly felt. He further reflects:

> I've learned that it is good for me to enter this sacred ground of shared commonalities from time to time – of my own determination and not only when I'm drawn into it via unexpected personal tragedy. It would however be too intense for me to stay there. There are other aspects of my life that beckon my attention. Should I not enter this space at all and choose one of the many avoidance options within my carefully contrived repertoire, I'd be in danger of skimming the important things and living superficially. My capacity to relate on a level of significance to anyone would be affected accordingly.

My association with the asylum seekers has assisted me to cry at times. This only enhances my capacity to enjoy laughter at other times. I've had to dig deep with my music to compose melodies and songs of substance to as faithfully as possible honour the intensity of the poems that have been given to me. I am a better songwriter as a result.

I'm learning from my association with the *Scattered People* to awaken the sleeping giant of rage within – not to hit out recklessly but to understand and manoeuvre the energy as productively as possible. I am a writer not a fighter after all. I'm also a contented citizen in a first world country with a family, a house and a job, money in my pocket and freedom to practise my own beliefs. I'm one of the lucky ones on this planet. It is thus tempting to suppress any sense of rage and support the status quo for fear of jeopardising my privileged circumstance – to lullaby any niggling feelings of rage back to sleep. I have however become aware that with gifts, there comes a responsibility. US composer and band leader Marie Incontrere says it with passion "We as musicians have a responsibility to respond to the world around us, to give the people a song to raise their spirits and fuel the fight in their hearts".

For those of us who have been associated with the *Scattered People* venture – players and listeners, asylum seekers and kindred spirits, my sense is that the above-mentioned pervasive benefits will continue to burrow into our collective consciousness and sub-consciousness and thus affect the way we live our lives.

These experiences change us.

For this we are in their debt. (January 2015)

The intensity and range of emotions he experienced through happier and more arduous times during musical activities with asylum seekers is palpable here. Music became a vehicle to not only navigate the difficult context surrounding the plea of asylum seekers in Australia, but also to allow facilitators to reflect on how their own wellbeing was affected.

CONCLUSION

The idea of 'bearing witness' implies a genuine and deep understanding of others' experiences, which is then communicated to a wider audience (Fleay and Briskman, 2013; see also Thornton and Novak, 2010). The limited monitoring, research and media coverage of detention centres means that the involvement of musicians in such settings places them in a *de facto* position to bear witness to the experiences of detained asylum seekers. While music facilitators' ongoing involvement "can thus help to make visible what is largely hidden from most of the Australian population" (Fleay and Briskman, 2013, p. 128), the toll that bearing witness can take on them cannot be ignored. Indeed, Higgins (2012, p. 162) acknowledges that the role of community musicians can lead to a sense of distress: "I described this (…) as showing vulnerability. This opens the possibility for both parties to journey together, a chance to venture safely into the unknown". The idea of vulnerability is certainly present in the facilitator's narratives above.

While more narratives such as the ones presented here should be documented to enrich discussions on this topic, the ideas embodied in the music facilitator's words

indicate that one cannot remain untouched by such experiences (similar to Kerwin, 2013). The social and emotional health of community musicians should thus be the focus of further research and considered as *important* as the health and wellbeing of the people they work with. To prevent a situation whereby the wellbeing of artists and musicians is compromised because of a lack of clear guidelines on how to engage with – and by extension, disengage from – participants experiencing complex mental health issues, discussions on the links between arts and health should be expanded to include a specific focus on the social and emotional impacts on musicians, artists and facilitators.

The findings also add a new dimension to an already important body of literature of themes surrounding burnout among volunteers and practitioners in the third sector (see Cherniss, 1980; Holmes and Lockstone-Binney, 2014); volunteer turnover and predictors of burnout (see Van Vianen, Nijstad and Voskuijl, 2008); vicarious traumatization among volunteers (see Howlett and Collins, 2014; Thornton and Novak, 2010); and importantly, volunteer burnout prevention (see Kinsel and Nanson, 2000). The emotional journeys that can be triggered through regular volunteer engagement with asylum seekers can involve a range of feelings such as sadness, guilt, pride, anxiety, happiness, fear or anger (Kerwin, 2013), which may be perceived as unexpected or else unwarranted at times. However, the transformational aspect of such engagement in particular implies that, if provided with appropriate support mechanisms to navigate the social and emotional impacts, community musicians' engagement with asylum seekers can constitute rich and complex journeys of 'growth'.

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Brian Procopis is a community development practitioner and has been a member of the Social Inclusion and Community Development Team of Lifeline Brisbane, Australia, for many years. He is a community musician and takes his guitar (and his many *muso* friends) into places where people are experiencing social marginalisation in order to create a welcoming 'community'. Human services professionals from mainstream organisations often encounter closed (or reluctantly opened) doors into precarious situations – as in detention centres. Musicians, however, are always welcomed.