



ANNUAL REPORT

2020-2021

POWERED BY
COMMUNITY

Chair's Address

Nathan Hagarty



The meeting is a testament to our standing in the community from grassroots to all levels of Government.

I started last year's address with the words, "this has been a year like no other." Sadly this past year has also been dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Tragically for Australia, the effects of the pandemic and the Delta variant have been more devastating than in 2020.



No one wants to experience a global crisis, but the problems and issues COVID-19 presented were ones the MRC stood ready to address.

While the seeds to respond to this pandemic were planted several years ago in our strategic priorities, it is effectively the culmination of 40 years of work. No doubt, this far into the COVID-19 pandemic, we are well and truly 'zoomed out'.

That said, my proudest achievement this year was a Zoom meeting the MRC facilitated as the Delta virus was taking hold in South West Sydney. Within 24 hours, we convened an online meeting with several hundred community leaders, MPs, Mayors, Ministers and the Premier.

The meeting supported the Government in disseminating critically important health advice to our local community. I don't believe it's an exaggeration to say that forum saved people's lives.

The meeting is a testament to our standing in the community from grassroots to all levels of Government. As the situation on the ground changed rapidly, Western Sydney MRC continued to parallel and match its changes with rapid responses, agility and insight.

Western Sydney MRC's Strategic Plan once again was highlighted this year; 'Purpose-led Leadership' - giving voice to our community and advocacy alongside 'Impact through Partnerships' - reviewing, analysing and reflecting on community and client need and response through research at the height of the pandemic. Analysis of the study has amplified voices during COVID-19 and garnered significant media exposure, and rightly so.

It asked our most important stakeholders and community vital questions and made necessary and valuable recommendations.

I commend staff, management, directors and members for their work over the past year, especially during the lockdown. We have all gone above and beyond while maintaining a high quality of service.

In closing, I note this will be my last as Chair. I intend to stay on as a director, but other commitments will take priority in 2022. It has been a privilege to be Chair of the board at Western Sydney MRC, an organisation that has had a profound and lasting impact on my community. As many before me know, you never entirely leave the MRC, and I intend to have a relationship with the organisation long after I've officially finished my board duties.

Table of Contents

02	Chairs address	20	Family and Children Programs
04	Program Summary	22	Family Survey 2021
05	CEO address	24	Our History
06	Settlement	25	Penpal Giants
08	Employment Program	26	Community Wellbeing Community Program
10	Community Development	28	Aged Care Support
12	Community Leadership	30	Acknowledgements
14	Community Harmony Dinner		
16	Sound of Terra Festival		
18	Youth		

Acknowledgement of Country

We would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre operates, the Cabrogal Clan of the Darug Nation and pay our respects to their ancestors past, present and emerging. We also pay respect to all our Community elders past, present and emerging.

Program Summary

Services

Employment Support

MiWork Employment Program
Zoom4Youth Employment Sessions

Aged Care Support

CHSP - Aged Care Respite
Flexible Respite
Community Visitors Scheme

Families and Children

ParentingVillage
Multicultural PlayVillage Playgroups
Homework Support
Penpal Giants

Community Capacity Building

Leadership Training
Community Consultation
Partnerships

Settlement Support

Information and Referral
Casework Services
Youth Casework Services
Educational Sessions
English Classes
Citizenship Forms
Citizenship sessions
Tax Assistance
Connect Conversation English

Financial Support

Temporary Visa Management Support
Emergency Relief
Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA)
Work and Development Order (WDO) Sessions

CEO's Address

Kamalle Dabboussy



The connection and conversations with our stakeholders have proven invaluable, forever embedded in the organisation..”

Over the year, the term 'unprecedented' was so often used to describe what we are facing with the impacts of COVID-19 on our lives and health, that it became universal... did it lose its meaning? And in managing services that support people in their everyday life was also a challenge to the organisation. A challenge that every part of the organisation met and exceeded; teamwork was everything. The continuing health crises, the most significant impact in over 100 years, again came back in the second wave, the Delta wave, in the last weeks of June 2021.

Looking back to the last year's successes, the pivot to digital services, building linkages and bonds to community leadership, and continuing with essential face-to-face services was an extension of the building blocks on which Western Sydney MRC has been built. The adaptation was consistent with our values and mission, and it was plain to see how valued that consistency was and that resonated with our communities and stakeholders.

Our responsiveness continued this with our assistance in supporting our partner organisations to continue the valuable work they undertake. The Harmony Day event 'Sounds of Terra' is an example of community partnership and empowerment featured in our report. We also partnered with CORE CS to identify and recognise the voluntary community leadership essential for the ongoing health of Western Sydney.

The organisation's building blocks have proven to be essential moving forward, a real value to Western Sydney and Liverpool communities. The connection and conversations with our stakeholders have become an asset that has proven invaluable, forever embedded in the organisation, from its management to staff, clients, and stakeholders.

For the future, our unique position allows us to leverage growth, support our footprint to impact people's lives, and add to the services and roles we currently undertake. We have heard the community needs and are adapting and shaping to try to meet them. Focusing on community mental health and wellbeing, providing services that are complementary to clinical services; Aged Care, working with communities to deliver services that are culturally appropriate and reflecting the expectation of our locally diverse communities; Social Cohesion, identifying how we live harmoniously in a society that is diverse by ethnicity, language, sexuality, and location.

For future address, valuing the capacity of local place-based services to have the ability, flexibility and trust of stakeholders to identify and manage local issues as they see them, and the freedom to do so is essential to impacting a real and deep need. We call on investments to continue at a local level as services that are closest to the community.

Kamalle Dabboussy
CEO, Western Sydney MRC

Settlement

The Numbers behind the lives



1260 CASEWORK SESSIONS

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION
ADVOCACY SUPPORT
INFORMATION / ADVICE / REFERRAL

823

INDIVIDUAL CLIENTS SUPPORTED THROUGH CASEWORK SERVICES AND SUPPORT

Supporting newly arrived individuals bridge, bond and belong.



Document Assistance Sessions



clients supported through Emergency Relief



supported through EAPA



Enrolled for WDO sessions



young people increased their confidence in communication skills



clients supported with English language

800 Digital Assistance Sessions



youth participants attended school holiday excursions



Volunteers gained paid employment



increased knowledge of positive parenting



Enrolled in TAFE



increased knowledge of safe driving



Casework sessions for legal support



Community Leaders attended Digital Community Consultation

Employment Support

Through the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, many people faced uncertainty and clarity on the future that lay ahead.

MiWork Employment Program

The MiWork employment program aims to assist individuals in identifying their skills and interests and begin career pathways towards success. The program is designed to create strategies that generate employment opportunities. The 5 step employment program supporting key milestone areas to finding work. Our program focuses on expanding current skill sets, refining career interests and securing long-term meaningful employment.

COVID-19 program impact

Western Sydney MRC is continuing its pilot of the MiWork program through the SETS funding. From January - March 2021 through a 2 day a week position, we have supported over 20 clients with job readiness mentoring and have placed 5 clients in work experience placements. Due to COVID-19 restrictions work placements have to be paused and the program moved to an online setting.

Employment Support Online

MiWork Employment program continued to operate and facilitate training online to support those who were registered in the program.

Future Pathways for Employment

A report that was launched in December based on Settlement experiences of refugee families in Australia outlined several gaps in employment. The report highlighted that many reported frustrations with finding employment, with barriers of recognition of qualifications, lack of prior Australian work experience alongside a lack of support from job search agencies.

Further highlights identified Liverpool had over 70% of women that had never held a job. This has paved a pathway for a specialised program that will help women build a skill set beyond employment. It will encourage them to think outside the employment box and venture into the multiple income avenues available to them in Australia. Western Sydney MRC is currently developing a program under the MiLivelihood banner that will empower and bridge the gap between women and their employment opportunity.



Digital Employment Toolkit



Community Development

Equip and empower eligible clients and communities to address their identified settlement needs in order to improve social participation, economic well-being, independence, personal well-being and community connectedness more broadly.



Partnership

With the NSW COVID-19 outbreak, Western Sydney MRC partnership with CORE communities held another successful community leader's digital forum. This is now our 7th meeting. This had over 40 attendees and was a space for community members to discuss and provide feedback about COVID-19 community support, current challenges and possible solutions in their communities. Joseph La Posta (CEO of Multicultural NSW), PMs Melanie Gibbons and Guy Zangari were in attendance.



Empowerment

Western Sydney MRC is continuing to support communities to be informed and have a space to ask questions regarding COVID-19. In July, Western Sydney MRC held an online forum in partnership with the Iraqi Australasian Medical Association to support the information roll out of the COVID-19 vaccine with over 100 participants.

Leadership

15 leaders from diverse backgrounds have participated and are in the process of developing community lead program initiatives. The feedback has been overwhelming positive with initiations of running the program again later in the year.

Community Leadership plays a significant role in Australian Society. Community leaders must possess empathy, have an ability to inspire, strong communication skills and pride in their community. Community Leadership Course 'Statement of Attainment in Leading and Managing Groups' course (Community Leadership course) was organised by Western Sydney MRC in alignment with our SETS CCB funding, designed and delivered by TAFE Liverpool, and funded by Training Services NSW. The course focused on skills and knowledge to: Work with the community to develop and provide projects on relevant issues; Design, promote and offer systems that identify and develop potential and existing leaders to build capacity within the community; Research information about compliance and ethical practices and responsibilities.

The course was organised in a participatory way with the facilitator, Paola Nunez, Teacher Community Services and Project Management and Business Services at TAFE NSW, making extensive use of stories, role plays, and group exercises.



Social Participation

In preparation for the Round-table with the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs, Hon Alex Hawke MP, on the Humanitarian Program 2021-22 Western Sydney MRC held a community consultation attended by 16 active community members to ensure the community insights were expressed as part of the round table.



On Friday 21st May 2021, Western Sydney MRC held a community consultation with 16 community leaders to input into the 2021 Australian Humanitarian Program.

EXCERPT: As Australia and the world comes out of the COVID-19 pandemic, we appreciate the need for the Australian Government to consult on the management and composition of the Humanitarian Program going forward. Australia has a long history of accepting refugees and humanitarian entrants. Western Sydney MRC has been a proud partner in Australia's humanitarian program for over four decades and looks forward to continuing to be a leader in the sector. As an organisation that is proudly powered by community, we acknowledge the contribution community leaders have made to this submission. The feedback and opinions shared within this submission are a genuine reflection of our community.

[Read Consultation Summary](#)

Community Leadership

Background

Western Sydney MRC and CORE Community Services have been continuing to deliver on a promise they made to communities over 40 years ago. Both organisations are renowned in the community for offering a variety of services and supports to migrant and refugees in the Liverpool and Fairfield LGAs.

Consultation and Advisory Committee

In late July 2020, Western Sydney MRC and CORE Community Services partnered to hold their most attended Community webinar to date. With attendance from the CEO of Multicultural NSW Joseph La Posta, their new online community forum proved yet again that opportunities to hold and facilitate dialogue and information exchange between Government, community and grass roots organisations is a successful undertaking and valued greatly by all in attendance.

Many of the leaders provided very clear feedback on the impacts that COVID-19 has had on everyone, specifically the role they play and the task at hand within many CALD communities. Community leaders and key members, alongside community organisations, have filled critical roles in health messaging, updates and importantly community connection.

This type of meeting has encouraged Multicultural NSW to gain further substantiated feedback through online surveys as well as opportunity to hold regular sittings with community members, staying informed and up-to-date.

Several themes emerged from the community leaders, a request for Government to match its COVID-19 response with initiatives that specifically meets the needs of many Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

(CALD) communities including training, financial support and tools. Literacy, isolation in practice, digital and online access as well as the suggestions of community led video messaging working together to produce accurate information is reaching those that need it most. Seventy-seven (77) registrants included Lebanese, African, Mandaean, Sabien Mandaean, Sudanese, Assyrian, Iraqi community representatives. Multicultural NSW and NSW Government health and community service professionals.

"I look at COVID as a reminder of where our society is... it goes to underline that we are on the front line... marginalised communities are disproportionately exposed... in my community there are lots of students and I know the jobs they do. We have made it a point of duty to speak to every member of our community every fortnight."

Silas Monieke, IGBO Community.

"We are reaching out and broadcasting twice a day to get the information out to our community. Meaning we have been receiving the information each day and each night, translate in Khmer and broadcast in morning and evening during the first wave."

Srey Kang from the Khmer Association.



JOIN OUR COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Join our community advisory group, helping to inform and advise our network of relevant community insight that feed back into key Government Departments.

With limited spots available we ask that those that would like to join can:

- Commit to attending for a minimum of 3 months fortnightly 1 hour meeting
- Community views and insights be shared
- Commitment to disseminating resources back to community
- Opportunity to connect with other community leaders.

GET INVOLVED

To get involved, email either nadia@wsmrc.org.au or marie@corecs.org.au

Community Harmony Dinner

To acknowledge the outstanding commitment and work of our community leaders in supporting community safety and response to COVID-19; Western Sydney MRC and CORE CS held a Community Harmony Dinner. The event was a huge success, with attendance at capacity and incredible feedback.

March 2021

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, access to trusted information, a lack of digital literacy, financial stress, mental health issues, access to broader services and aged care were all highlighted as requiring further support. Community Leaders were able to identify gaps in messaging and highlight community concern, this being paramount to community organisations' response. Notably, the pandemic showed that Western Sydney MRC is closely linked to the community and was at the forefront of responding to community needs efficiently. Being place-based with passionate and caring staff and management resulted in achieving outcomes with efficiency.

By creating a community leader advisory group mid-pandemic, we have been able to stay attuned to the community need, alongside creating and identifying new initiatives in mental health and wellbeing. The loss of connection was felt universally by staff, clients, and the community. The impact on overall wellbeing has been challenging. Once reopening the

Western Sydney MRC physically, the most significant demand was for programs to foster social connection. We have further extended our ability to support vulnerable individuals through remote services, extended again by the community leaders' dedication and commitment to ensuring that no-one is left behind.

With this reflection, we organised a Harmony Week Community Leader dinner held in Fairfield in March 2021 to acknowledge, reflect, and connect with our community leaders, allowing key stakeholders and officials to recognise the valuable contribution and support future participation and collaboration. A face to face COVID Safe event was very much welcomed by all. Harmony Week celebrates Australia's cultural diversity. It's about inclusiveness, respect and a sense of belonging for everyone, and our community have certainly embraced this through their dedication, amplified by the pandemic.



Sound Of Terra

Multicultural Connection through the Arts

The Sound of Terra event was a resounding success, with almost 300 people in attendance, including numerous VIPs. With the support of Multicultural NSW and Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre we had the opportunity to deliver an evening of musical melodies, cultural connection, and community spirit.

- 234 Tickets sold (120 printed and 114 online)**
- 20 VIP invited guests: Community leaders, Guests speakers and Media**
- 39 tickets for bands**
- 14 volunteers**

Music is a universal language which can transport people around the world, seeing how music melts together and can unite cultures and people, the evening united enjoyment and recognised that each community has more in common with each other than what separates them.

Master of Ceremonies

Mr Craig Donarski, Director of Casula Powerhouse
Miss Fatima Yousif, Youth Leader and member Australian Sudanese Association Youth Committee, in Liverpool

Speaker Summary

1. Uncle Russell - Welcome to Country and performance
2. Salam Maryoush, President of SACA - welcoming
3. Deputy Mayor Cllr Mazhar Hadid- Liverpool city council
4. The Moroccan Ambassador, Karim Medrek
5. Yassmen Yahya, My Refugee Journey
6. Kamalle Dabboussy - Closing the event

The event included between 20 to 30 minutes of the musical performance of the following musical bands:

- Koomurri Entertainment- Aboriginal performance
- CHUTNEY- Klezmer performance
- KINNARUM- Iraqi performance
- NIGHTED- Latin and Middle Eastern fusion performance
- GNAWA- Moroccan Sub-saharan Africa
- MAKI AL BADRY- Comedy piece
- Ismail Fadhil- Maqam performance



The vision for a Sound of Terra was a multicultural event of music showcasing our collective strength and highlighting that humankind has resilience in the face of adversity. Music evokes a part of every person that connects them to sound and rhythm collectively. The event reignited and awakened our senses. The audience was elevated to a place beyond the stage, by connecting them to their home and through the sound of Terra. With an encore production in the pipeline, the Sound of Terra will be available as a playlist for the experience to be continued into the homes of our community.



Youth

Youth Festival 2021

In Partnership with Liverpool Council, Western Sydney MRC held a Youth Festival in January. This included Street Art sessions with Casual Powerhouse, a 5-week Futsal competition and Art Together painting classes. The focus was on bringing youth together after the disruption of 2020 and had over 60 young people in attendance.

During the end of 2020 and 2021 Western Sydney MRC in partnership with Liverpool City Council via Department of Communities and Justice funding held a series of events under our Youth Festival.

- Over the course of 2 months, we delivered:
- 2 Street art sessions at Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre
- 2 painting classes at Paint and Sip Studios
- A 5-week futsal competition at Michael Wenden centre.

There were over 60 youth participants across all activities. As with many programs, our original festival activities could not be implemented due to COVID-19 restrictions, however the connection with our young community was a positive step towards youth consultation on services, and presented interesting challenges to future youth collaboration and community development.

Youth Week

On 16 April 2021, a special Youth Week event took place – An opportunity to meet other young people and other youth service providers with wide range of activities - live performances such as Lucky African Dance and Afghani Dance, Premiere of Youth Speak Video, Youth-led panel discussion – young client Steven Naser represented Western Sydney MRC at the discussion then Football and Cricket activity games.



As part of our youth program, we delivered Art4Youth using an art therapy model where 11 young people increased confidence and communication skills.

Using creative and innovative techniques of art therapy to bring out young adults' potentials and goals. Art therapy is used to help people explore emotions, develop self-awareness, boost self-esteem, and work on social skills. This art program is aiming to create safe space and opportunity for the young people to identify and help them navigate their life goals regarding their education, lifestyle and future careers.

Through working with pairs or individually clients produced art project which enabled clients to share thoughts, emotions, head space and their mind set and goals. Each session clients successfully and eagerly completed their artwork and talked about designated theme.



Family and Children Programs

Western Sydney MRC Family and Children's Programs are available to the Liverpool and Greater Western Sydney community members. 'ParentingVillage and the 'PlayVillage Playgroup' programs are funded by the Department of Communities and Justice and Settlement Services International (SSI). The programs are designed to develop and further build the capacity of individuals from CALD/migrant and refugee backgrounds in terms of socialisation, parenting skills, child development and transition into primary school education in Australia.

Introducing ParentingVillage and PlayVillage

ParentingVillage and playgroup staff are a combined group of individuals connected to the community and are culturally and linguistically diverse, connecting through commonalities and promoting and encouraging differences and multiculturalism

The ParentingVillage involves a weekly community group gathering which focuses on strengthening and developing cohesive relationships between parents and their children. It uses a strength-based approach by empowering participants through education, learning, information and capacity building. Western Sydney MRC acknowledges an individuals' strength and promotes the notion that parents and carers are first and foremost the most influential role models to their children.

community members to participate. Both programmes encourage participants to use their home languages and practice English to communicate with one another and the staff.

The programs are delivered at the Western Sydney MRC in the heart of the Liverpool CBD, Liverpool Public School and Liverpool City Council Library. The location allows the community to attend local service, build relationships, and socialise with other parents and children in their community and share commonalities.

These include the culture of parenting and access to childcare-socialisation, education and interest-led play-based learning for both parents and their children.

The ParentingVillage Mission and Aim

- To create a nurturing and safe space that supports and empowers parents to develop and build effective and resilient families, honouring and promoting their strengths and unique cultural identity.
- To provide a space filled with warmth, laughter, acceptance where parents learn and help each other, to share their journey as parents the up and downs and know they are not alone.
- To provide a space that inspires and encourages parents to be the best they can be by providing the current best parenting practices training and relevant government and health department assistances programs for families.

The PlayVillage playgroup encourages early childhood education for children and infants to further their skills and development. Western Sydney MRC offers the playgroup to families/individuals from a migrant and refugee background with children aged 0-5, families from emerging communities, young parents, fathers and extended family members.

The PlayVillage aims to educate and further children's development, whether cognitive or social, through play with other children or educational activities.

Both programs encourage diversity and aim to provide a comfortable setting for

Our programs are tailor made - to meet the needs of families, parents and children. People really matter to us. And we go the extra mile. We amplify our client's voices, supporting them to and we are trusted.

Pio Macri, Families and Children Program Coordinator

A range of sessions including PlayVillage at the park, Parenting Village sessions, Gogo Gecko visits PlayVillage at Liverpool Public School, Penpal Giants Program, NAIDOC week celebrations with Uncle Malcolm and Intergenerational Sessions.



Family Survey 2021

Background

The limitations of various human rights frameworks to provide for the social justice of refugees are acutely visible when we examine the assistance models adopted by aid agencies. Focus on short-term emergency relief versus longer-term development assistance means that the human rights of internally displaced people are compromised (Goetz 2006). Within this context, the provision of education to children in camps remains a low priority (Oh and Van der Stouwe 2008; Wrigley 2006).

As a result, the educational disadvantage of refugee children in Australia can be traced to their exclusion and/or marginalisation from the educational systems of asylum countries. The small minority of refugees who are settled in western countries also suffer educational disadvantage due to the protracted time spent in refugee camps. A stay of 5–10 years in a refugee camp is common and such time frames have a devastating effect on educational development and attainment (Oh and Van der Stouwe 2008, Taylor & Sidhu, 2009)

In 2021, Western Sydney MRC surveyed program participants to evaluate the family's programs' success and their impact. 70 families were surveyed spanning engagement with one or more of our programs within the last 5 years. The survey results showcased that 99% of participants agreed that the families' programs allowed them to feel less isolated and build new social connections and positively impact their Child's development.

The Families' programs positively impacted all of the participants parenting skills. Survey evidence showed the main impacts and results of the ParentingVillage to be that the families programs have improved children's language and social skills. Families programmes have played a major role in preparing their children for transitioning into primary education.

The survey showed an increased need for additional programs in the family sector that decrease social isolation. During the pandemic, the postponement of MRC family programs meant that community members felt the impact of social isolation, specifically those from CALD and refugee-like backgrounds.

99% of participants agreed that the families programs allowed them to feel less isolated and build new social connections as well as positively impacting their Child's development.

The established family programs are a safe space where parents and their children feel empowered to learn, interact, create social relationships and build capacity.

The families programs have proven to be a great success in specifically building infants and children capacity in terms of language, social and cognitive skills. Survey results showcased a vast number of participants asking for more and longer playgroups to be implemented. Participants expressed PlayVillage was successful in assisting their children as well as being accessible as many participants were unable to afford childcare.

Moreover, a gap identified an outcome the survey finding was the need for more children programs that cater to children aged 5-12. However, there have been implications in scheduling and funding for this initiative as the focused age group has limitations in which activities could only be run during school holidays between schooling terms. Although the Western Sydney MRC values inclusivity and the needs of the community, we strive to convey this by developing a children's program which breaches this gap and allows for community members to further their collaboration with the MRC in furthering programs for ages 5-12.

Family and Children's Program Coordinator, Pio Macri coordinates our program working to ensure complete transparency between participants and staff, encouraging mutual dialogue and respect.

The survey has conveyed that community members are experiencing a great strain on their settlement in Australia during the pandemic. Many face isolation and issues with access and communication via technology. The families program provides a chance for community members to develop social and support groups and minimise isolation between CALD parents with young children in the western Sydney community.

There has become an even greater need to combat isolation amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

These programs play a critical role in supporting families, navigating new systems for the newly arrived, providing education about Australian life and parenting, school and education support and important social connection and a trusted space to build new relationships.

This survey results show the programs are a great success in the perspectives and behaviours of the community members who actively participate in the families' programmes. Unfortunately, due to a lack of funding and appropriate resources, there is a gap in children and family programs involving adolescents aged 5-12 years old. The success of this families program suggests that having more family's programs that cater to children aged 5-12 will present great success in the Liverpool community for both children and their parents.

Our History

For 42 years Western Sydney MRC has delivered services, programs, and projects to many clients and communities. The Western Sydney melting pot holds an assortment of culturally and linguistically diverse people, and those that have crossed our path have sought a variety of supports, connections, and assistance. Our staff, management, and board have ebbed and flowed alongside a multitude of partnerships. The lives of many individuals have intertwined, creating social connections, colleagues, and friendships... with a unified driver - a need to help others, to guide and nurture the passage of settlement that has existed for over 4 decades.



We work with newly arrived migrants, refugees, and diverse communities. We provide a range of services and programs, from casework to community program facilitation. We ensure that our program, events and support are based on our clients' and community's needs and wants.

Our Vision

Our vision is a socially inclusive Australia where diversity is celebrated.

Our Mission

Western Sydney MRC champions our diverse community to be empowered, informed and connected.

Our Values

- | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Diversity
We celebrate our diversity and respect the diversity of others</p> | <p>Integrity
We act ethically in all situations and decision making</p> | <p>Collaboration
We work as one team to support our communities.</p> | <p>Innovation
We strive to develop innovative solutions to challenging social issues.</p> | <p>Excellence
We strive for quality outcomes in all that we do.</p> |
|--|--|---|--|--|

About Us

The company is a community-based non-profit organisation established to actively and directly relieve the situation of people and communities from diverse backgrounds whose social condition finds them disadvantaged. We aim to promote the principles of access and equity for diverse communities and identify and promote particular disadvantaged groups' needs to ensure that no one is left behind. Underpinning our principles are the core values for Human Rights. We all have our thoughts and ideas, should all be treated in the same way, and given the same opportunities, living in freedom and safety.

Penpal Giants 2021

In a digital world, finding a time where pen meets paper between social interaction is a rare occurrence. The Penpal Giants program was designed to create friendship and connection through letter writing and envelopes.

The two schools that participated in the program enjoyed a series of resources and ideas to help them deliver a penpal experience. Liverpool Public School and St. Peter Chanel Catholic Primary School participated in a co-design program that explored and encouraged the love of letter writing.

Each week the students discovered the structure of letter writing and ideas on how they could introduce themselves to their allocated penpal. The art of addressing and mailing a letter was also incorporated into the program. Over the following weeks the students exchanged letters, designed envelopes and learnt about their own interests as well as their penpals. There is nothing more exciting than receiving a letter in the mail, in anticipation of what you will find inside.

The program finale had been organised for the students of each school to meet face to face at Featherdale Wildlife Park. Unfortunately, the restrictions of COVID-19 cancelled the event and the students were unable to meet. In spite of the set back, the team at Western Sydney MRC organised a zoom meet up for both schools to meet online and have some fun.

When the students connected online their excitement was felt by teachers and penpals alike. Each student had the opportunity to say hello to their letter writing friend and a quick message. The online event ended with an emoji trivia game which saw some friendly competition between the students. Each school was also granted a five-hundred-dollar fund by SSI's Innovation fund for each school that participated in the program.

The Penpal Giants program was a great success and students now have the lifelong skill set of letter writing and connection. We hope that the program continues to spark the imagination of students and builds a lifetime of friendships between penpal friends.



Social Wellbeing Community Program PeerLink



PeerLink has flourished this year with both Arabic speaking men and women's groups focused on participants with mental health challenges and disability. Some highlights have been excursions to Manly Beach, Taronga Zoo and the visits from the NSW Police to discuss how they work.

PeerLink started in August 2020 and was designed to address the needs and challenges of people concerned about their mental health and/or disability. The objective was to assist participants in socialising, coming together, making friends, increasing referral pathways, and most importantly making connections, sharing stories and experiences.

Through a co-design process with the community, PeerLink Connectors Admon, Lina and Michelle successfully established one PeerLink group for women and a second PeerLink group for men which launched in early 2021.

The 10-week term includes counselling, services, referred casework alongside excursions, train rides, library and visiting the city.

"Western Sydney MRC clients are at a different stage of their settlement journey, than I have experienced. So many clients are impacted by severe trauma and the level of support they require is very dissimilar... I have learnt a lot in just three months."

Admon arrived in Australia 22 year ago and has volunteered at the MRC for just over three years, providing translation support, zoom sessions, volunteering with people in nursing homes and information and referral front desk support. He is passionate about helping everyone. He believes in serving the community, it brings him joy and fulfillment to his life, and he uses his connection to God to help guide his strong-willed nature. He is an embodiment of the work and support services that the MRC provide, and over the years he has built his capacity to deliver multiple layers of community support.

Michelle talks of the connection that Lina has made with some of the participants. "The level of trust that has been established has allowed PeerLink women to share sensitive information free from judgement and in a safe place. Through a group based connection and conversation - we have created a space for trust and sharing alongside specialised support and assistance to other services. Lina has been at the MRC for 3-months and recently finished the first round of the women's PeerLink sessions. Lina brings the professional experience of over-the-phone crisis support alongside her lived experience of migration and passion for community. "We were able to see a range of mental health challenges and barriers to moving forward in life including PTSD, PND, depression," says Lina.

"Our aim was to build their capacity and work on their strength. The women have shared they are stronger through this program" says Lina. Her voice wavers as she relives their end of year event held at the end of December. They sang and danced. The laughter could be heard throughout the MRC. We also provided beautiful hampers for the women, made possible by Liverpool City Council, the women were so very thankful.

Our entire team acknowledge and welcome the layered connections we have established underneath the ILC PeerLink program, and we see it's potential to grow.



Our team dynamics, experience have a crucial role in building and growing the PeerLink programs. Our community connectors speak Arabic, allowing the participants to open up in the language they feel most comfortable. The relationship is unique, somewhat similar to a caseworker, but overlapped with a sense of peer connection providing a wonderful dynamic within the group.

Michelle joined us from a for-profit organisation, whilst Admon is from the community, and Lina from a mix of both. Michelle highlighted the difference in values, process, interactions and challenges with for-profit organisations,



Aged Care Support

Western Sydney MRC has the following programs funded by the Department of Health for people over 65 who have been assessed by MyAged Care. Our programs cater for the culturally and linguistically diverse community in the Liverpool and Fairfield area.

Centre-based Respite

We offer structured group activities where you can make friends and learn new skills such as painting and learning how to use the internet.

Flexible Respite

We provide support in the home to provide carers respite from their caregiving responsibilities. This can be short-term, one off support or ongoing.

Community Visitors Scheme

The Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) is an initiative of the Australian Government which is funded nationally by the Department of Health and Ageing. It aims to enrich the quality of life of residents of Aged Care Homes (Nursing Homes or Aged Hostels). These are the areas in Aged Care that have been identified as being lonely or socially isolated. Many of these individuals benefit from having a regular friendly visitor as part of their social wellbeing.

During COVID-19, our ability to deliver this program came to a standstill so we began phone check-ins and connecting with residents. The impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the Aged care facilities, carers, staff, residents, and families had been a significant issue with isolation. Our CVS volunteers dedicated their time over the past few years to those that have little to no family or community to care for them and to check in on their health and wellbeing.

With the initial wave of COVID-19 passing, our volunteers have settled into understanding the impacts of restrictions and have adapted to a new way of connecting and supporting their residents in Aged Care.

Community Visitor Virtual Scheme

In collaboration with Uniting Care, Lilian Wells Nursing Home in Parramatta with Western Sydney MRC have started a series of zoom connections with their clients. In a new virtual world, we wanted to be able to bridge the gap, and still be able to connect with residents utilising the skill and passion of the carers onsite. We have re-engaged with the Lifestyle Coordinator who is keen to engage other Uniting - local Nursing Homes to advocate for not only the approach but share the outcomes and insights.

Our volunteers have been able to connect with their clients and assist them in virtual shopping trips, enjoyed afternoon tea, been a companion in watching Arabic TV shows and celebrating birthdays with them.

We are hoping to undertake additional sessions with other residents, building the capacity of our volunteers and continuing to deliver the much-needed connections with those that are isolated.

The shape of volunteering has changed in the past few months as many community leaders are taking on added responsibility within their own community to check in on many individuals requiring support. Many of the volunteer roles within the organisation are paused, with remote services being initiated. Our CVS volunteers have been able to create relationships with people living in Aged Care Homes, specifically for residents who are from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

"Every person is a new door to a different world."



Acknowledgments

Our team are the core of who we are as an organisation. We pay respect and gratitude to their efforts in achieving our many goals.

STAFF

Anna-Marie Kanaan
Admon Yokhana
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Darren Chan
Deniz Genc
Dunia Aofi
Eptesam AlBankani
Gizem Berberoglu
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Nada Miski
Nadia Bouchti
Natalie Pauls
Nina Sakr

Pio Macri
Rachel Haywood
Rhianne Jeyakumar
Rosaria Raco
Shamaalie (Michelle) Perera
Sophia Strickland
Suhad Khalaf
Tahereh Kargar

2021 BOARD DIRECTORS

Clr Nathan Hagarty (Chair)
Myee Gregory
Dr Amad Mtashar
Feng Guo

Helen Wortham
Vijhai Utheyan
Rola Hijwel
Gaurav Singh (until Nov 2020)

External Appointees

Jerel David - Finance & Audit Subcommittee

The contributions that the volunteers make to the Western Sydney MRC clients and community is invaluable. Our volunteer highlights this year include: 65 New EOIs were received and 41 were inducted; Western Sydney MRC placed 37 new volunteers across the organisation in different supporting roles and 15 were able to achieve their goal of finding employment.

VOLUNTEERS

Yamamah Abbood
Clara Bucarey
Khalid Fenjan
Zunilda Navarro
Amal Shijar
Veronica Zapata
Cathy Abangan
Noor Abdelwahd
Suha Abood
Nadine Abou-Daher
Shams Adam
Julie Adamson
Mark Adamson
Erum Adnan Khan
Fatima Ahmed
Priscilla Ahn
Nadia Al Anzi
Hiyam Al Azazi
Jehan Al Galmash
Fatima Al Hussein
Ban Al Khamisy
Ali Al Mahdawi
Jamal Al Mindwy
Hanan Al Zuhairi
Mirvet Al Zuhairi
Sabreen Al Zuhairi
Fatimah Albraihi

Azza Alguma
Zinah Al-Haidari
Zahra Alhassani
Imam Al-helli
Rasha Alkhamis
Ardwan Alkuheli
Asmar Al-Najjar
Ayeda Alsaberi
Juman Alsalihi
Guadalupe Alvarez
Diana Alzohairy
Dunya Alzuhairi
Basira Amiri
Suzan Banna
Valentina Bau
Phuong - (Annie) Bui
Cassandra Cannon
Rita Chaloub
Dane Chan
Naomi Coote
Ilisapesi Coskun
Bryony Cumberpatch
Penny Cummins
Sheenagh Dabbagh
Yordana Dagne
Rama Dankha
Mona Dawoud

Navtej Singh Deyal
Shameema Duncan
Esther Fernandez
Nancy Gangari
Kloud Gardner
Mary Gardner
Marwa George
Sylvia Giannone
Rashi Raj Gupta
Vivienne Harb
Manar Hussein
Tina Huynh
MARAL IBRAHIM
Dheyaa Idan
Duaa Issa
Fouzi Jamhour
Nibras Jasim
Noora Jasim
Rumaysah Jawad
Essam Khalaf
Noor Khaleel
Faiza Khan
Jamil Khuri
Renee Koh
Basma Koro
Malakah Kswani
Edward Lau

Wan Wen Li
Vevyan Mansor
Carine Marashli
Mary Mejbek
Natasha Michels
Nabira Mirza
Maria Mughal
Fareed Muradhanna
Tanton Nguyen
Christine Nichols (Chung)
Naqib Noori
Ahiegwu Odeh
Roya Omar
Amanda Orellana
Rayan Osman
Sara Peters
Rachelle Pike
Simran Pillay
Shomal Prasad
Natasha Pye
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Niam Saeed
Niam Saeed
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Francis Thomas
Maria Valdes
Sandra Carina Virga
Tri Wahyuningsih
Juliet Warda
Henry Xu
Azhar Yeswo
Admon Yokhana
Butros Youmran
Arkan Yousef

SUPPORTING AGENCIES

Department of Home Affairs
Department of Communities & Justice
Department of Health
Department of Human Services
Multicultural NSW
National Disability Insurance Agency
Focus Connect
Settlement Services International





Western Sydney MRC is a not for profit organisation working with newly arrived migrants, refugees, and diverse communities. Our approach to project, service and program design ensures our clients' and community needs and wants are met. We champion our diverse community to be empowered, informed and connected.

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