

The background of the cover features a repeating geometric pattern of triangles. The triangles are in two colors: a vibrant orange and a dark navy blue. They are arranged in a staggered, interlocking fashion, creating a dynamic and modern visual effect. The pattern is composed of right-angled triangles, some pointing upwards and some downwards, creating a sense of movement and rhythm.

# **Annual Report**

2014 / 15

Liverpool MRC



**The Liverpool MRC seeks to champion and respond to the needs of refugees, migrants and the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of Liverpool and its catchments, to create a socially just and inclusive society in which both individuals and communities are celebrated and have the opportunities to reach their potential.**

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# Chairpersons Address



**DR VINCENT OGU**  
Chairperson

**It has been a busy and fruitful year at the Liverpool MRC. Over the past year, it has been pleasing to see the scope of service delivery expand and hone into crucial support areas impacting upon the culturally and linguistically diverse community members it serves.**

The past year has seen the Liverpool MRC become a part of the South West Sydney Partners In Recovery network, enabling the organisation to actively focus on and contribute to system improvement in the primary health and community services sector for culturally and linguistically diverse community members experiencing severe and persistent poor mental health.

The Liverpool MRC has also welcomed the embedding of the newly implemented Ability Links program at the centre, a precursory program to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), delivered by Settlement Services International (SSI). The Ability Links program has expanded the scope of hub services provided at the Liverpool MRC, supporting access and equity for culturally and linguistically diverse community members with a disability, and their carers. The program is particularly welcome in the context of transition to the NDIS which is on the horizon for South Western Sydney, and increasing numbers of newly arrived refugees living with a disability.

The commencement of the Liverpool MRC's service delivery in the 2168 area at the Miller Community Centre is also a welcome step forward in extending supports to diverse community members residing in the

Liverpool LGA. Many sources point to the incidence of disadvantage experienced by many residents in the area. With 47% of the residents who live in the area born overseas (ABS 2011), the provision of services at the Miller Community Centres stands as part of the Liverpool MRC's broader commitment to improving access, equity and well-being for community members living in the area.

Importantly, this has been a year of strategizing and positioning the Liverpool MRC for the future, while implementing and operationalising parts of the Strategic Plan – the outcomes of which will be seen for years to come.

I would also like to take this opportunity to reflect upon and recognise the dedicated work of the Management Committee of the Liverpool MRC, in guiding the organisation and championing the needs of the community members it serves. I wish to take this opportunity in particular to acknowledge and congratulate the work of the Liverpool MRC's long-serving management committee member Dr. Amad Mtashar, who was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in June 2015, in recognition of his time and dedication to supporting newly arrived migrants and refugees settle in Australia.

The Liverpool MRC should be proud of its progress and achievements over the past year, and I wish to extend congratulations to the staff, management committee, members and volunteers of the organisation who have contributed to the many and varied accomplishments over this time.

## CEOs Address



**KAMALLE DABOUSSY**  
Chief Executive Officer

The Liverpool MRC remains at its heart an agency addressing and supporting people to overcome social disadvantage. Not only does it support those who have just begun their settlement journey in a new country, but it also supports those who have been in Australia for many years. With around 50% of the population being themselves or with parents born overseas, those from diverse backgrounds are the norm in Liverpool.

We continue to provide our fundamental services; information and referral, casework, group work, research and advocacy to support our families, young people and seniors. We have begun travelling down a path of innovation, thanks to a new casework model; expanded senior's activities; and increased partnerships; all in addition to the existing range of activities that build community participation, none so impressive as that of the Interfaith engagement, White Ribbon Day and the family support program.

At the core of our partnerships, was the plan to establish a hub that would increase services for all of Liverpool. We doubled our physical space to allow other agencies a chance to base their operations from Liverpool and develop a more integrated service delivery model. As evidenced from the report, we can see increased on-arrival services for refugees through the Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS); increased support for people who face barriers to full life participation because of a disability through the Ability Links Program; and increased advice for those who need support with legal matters through the invaluable Legal Aid Partnerships – to mention just a few.

We have enjoyed numerous collaborations as listed in this report, but special mention must go to the growing and fruitful relationship with SSI through the HSS and Ability Links Programs; and to Catholic Care for the partnership we have developed in the Financial Counselling Program space.

This year we took on the challenge of assisting with vital reforms among the primary services that specialise in mental health, through the Partners In Recovery Consortium. By building on our already unique relationship with the communities we support, we focused on developing and fostering numerous alliances with doctors across Liverpool to enhance service delivery at the earliest possible point in our client's journeys so as to reduce hardship.

In our drive to reach those that would not normally have the capacity or means to visit our Liverpool centre, we ventured out to Miller with the goal of providing increased outreach services to the vulnerable migrant and refugee communities of 2168. This commitment builds on our long-term relationship with the 2168 Committee.

**This year has been one of reflection and progression, coupled with the development of new systems and the updating of old ones, to ensure the Liverpool MRC will continue to be an industry leader for years to come.**

We have invested in attracting and retaining quality staff, building the skill and capacity of our Management Committee, and the redevelopment of our Strategic Plan. Our success is also evidenced by one of our long-term Management Committee members, Dr. Amad Mtashar, receiving an OAM for services to the community including his service through the Liverpool MRC.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in this organisation for their dedication and hard work. We continue to develop and grow while impressing all those with whom we work – this is a credit to us all.

In the following pages, you will see a lot of what we have achieved, but even in that, I can confidently state that much more has been done that has not hit these pages. Our future should continue to provide us with success.

# Operations Team

**In April 2015, the Liverpool MRC undertook major refurbishments to the ground floor client service area to meet the growing needs of clients and staff.**

Following renovations, the Liverpool MRC now has larger interview rooms with disability access to accommodate the increasing number of clients with disabilities, while offering the capacity to see larger families and accommodate expanding group activities.

The premises now accommodates more than 70 staff, students and volunteers, including Settlement Services International Staff as part of the Humanitarian Settlement Support program, and the Ability Links program.

The space created has enabled us to provide a wider suite of outreach services to clients, supporting the development of the Liverpool MRC as a hub that improves access and equity for culturally and linguistically diverse community members. The need to cater for different needs under one roof has been identified time and again by our clients who feel confident in accessing an organisation that they know and trust.





The Maltese Women's Group have been using Liverpool MRC facilities for over 20 years!!

Complementary to our existing services, the following organisations undertook outreach from the centre:

- Legal Aid - Immigration, Family Law & Social Security Advice Clinics
- Melkite Catholic Eparchy Association – Settlement Grants Programme for Arabic-speaking clients
- Australian Taxation Office (ATO) – to assist clients with their tax returns

The Liverpool MRC's meeting rooms continue to provide space for group activities and orientation / information sessions on a daily basis, and we are pleased to have provided space for the following community groups and organisations this past year:

- Maltese Women's Group
- Spanish & Italian Speaking Seniors Group
- Mandaean Australian Community Cultural Club
- Igbo Community NSW
- United Kurdish Association of NSW
- SSI
- Melkite Catholic Eparchy Association
- Arabic Men's Group
- Mandaean Women's Group

# Client Services Team

Another busy year was had by the Client Services Team at the Liverpool MRC, with over 500 clients being supported through its casework services. Most of the newly-arrived refugees that the Liverpool MRC has supported this past year have been families and individuals resettling in Australia from Iraq.

The team has worked tirelessly to support newly-arrived refugees to settle and participate in the local community, with a focus on improving well-being, building connections and supporting access to much-needed services. At the core of the team's work has been the dedicated advocacy and championing of client and community needs.





## MILLER OUTREACH

The Miller Community Centre was opened on 4 December 2014, as an initiative of the Community 2168 Project in partnership with MTC Australia, the Centre for Health Equity, Training Research and Evaluation (CHETRE), the Liverpool MRC, SWSi TAFE – Miller College, Liverpool City Council, The HUB Community Health Centre and Budyari Community Health Centre. The Miller Community Centre accommodates employment and education programs and community outreach services. The focus of this initiative is to foster interagency collaboration and outreach services within the 2168 postcode area, targeting employment, education, participation and health needs.

The Liverpool MRC commenced the delivery of casework outreach from the Miller Community Centre in May 2015, with support now being provided at the centre four days per week. Casework outreach in Miller is co-located with other services including MTC English classes and CHETRE and the centre is also open to occasional users for group activities.

The Liverpool MRC Client Services team hopes that by providing outreach in Miller, the accessibility of the organisation for CALD community members residing the 2168 area and surrounding suburbs will improve, where public transport can present as a challenge and barrier to accessing such services.

## SETTLEMENT GRANTS PROGRAMME (SGP)

A broad range of issues were addressed through SGP casework support this year, including matters relating to poor health, legal needs and service accessibility due to language barriers. There were also continued demands for employment and education support. Financial hardship was a challenge that many people presented with at the Liverpool MRC, and this was only heightened by the rising rental and living costs.

The client services team was pleased to see the incorporation of a GP referral model to its SGP casework support this year, whereby GPs referred culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community members who identified as requiring further support because of poor mental health to the Liverpool MRC. This initiative was developed by the Liverpool MRC as part of the South Western Sydney Partners in Recovery (PIR) network.

A diverse range of activities were delivered by the Liverpool MRC under the SGP throughout the year, including the facilitation of an Arabic speaking men's group. The group meetings covered different aspects of settlement under the Families in Cultural Transition Program in partnership with STARTTS, and they also engaged in a series of therapeutic painting-based art workshops facilitated by the Liverpool MRC.

Several information sessions for newly-arrived migrants and refugees were also organised by the Liverpool MRC in partnership with Legal Aid NSW, SSI, Navitas, the Arab Council of Australia and the Melkite Catholic Welfare Association. Topics covered included cultural adjustment; law; and health; alongside civic-based sessions such as voting; citizenship; and driver safety.

## COMPLEX CASE SUPPORT (CCS)

It has been a challenging yet rewarding year in the delivery of the CCS programme, under which we have continued to work in partnership with Illawarra Multicultural Services (IMS). This year saw a significant increase in the number of individuals and families supported under the CCS programme, with a trebling in the number of clients assisted by the Liverpool MRC from the previous year.

Under the CCS programme, the Liverpool MRC has been able to support individuals and families who are experiencing a range of complex issues including physical and intellectual disability, family breakdown, domestic violence and homelessness. By using capacity building strategies, we have seen great client outcomes including the securing of appropriate accommodation, increased confidence and capacity to access mainstream services, and improved overall well-being.

It has been a privilege to travel alongside these clients on their settlement journey and bear witness to the positive changes in their lives while receiving CCS support. The programme continues to offer the Liverpool MRC the opportunity to provide intensive case management to newly-arrived refugees when it is needed the most.

# Case Study

Mohammed\* and Huda\* were referred to the Liverpool MRC by Liverpool Hospital after the birth of their first child. The hospital raised concerns as the baby girl, Amira\*, was not putting on weight, and the family were regularly missing appointments. Through further assessment with a Liverpool MRC caseworker, it became evident that there were multiple factors impacting upon Mohammed and Huda's capacity to care for their newborn baby. These included an undiagnosed learning delay, illiteracy in English and Arabic, vision issues and physical and mental health concerns.

The family were referred to CCS and received nine months of intensive case management. Through the provision of culturally sensitive and holistic support, the Liverpool MRC caseworker was able to address the parenting challenges that they were experiencing with them, and put innovative strategies in place to address the needs of the whole family.

As a result, Amira was diagnosed with a genetic disability that would significantly impact her daily life. However, through CCS support, Mohammed and Huda were able to understand the diagnosis and coordinate appropriate supports for her.

By the end of their involvement with CCS, the Liverpool MRC caseworker had supported the family to access long-term Housing NSW accommodation and had linked them to various mainstream services who could provide ongoing support for the family. Because of this, Mohammed and Huda are now able to care for Amira while meeting their own health and settlement needs.

\*Names have been changed to respect and maintain the privacy of the clients.



## Key Statistics

# 6786

interactions at  
front desk

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# 1268

casework  
sessions

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# 1933

referrals to  
external agencies

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# 122

individuals supported  
with intensive case  
management

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The support provided to the culturally and linguistically diverse members of our community would not have been as wide reaching or effective without our ongoing partnerships with other service providers.

We wish to acknowledge the dedicated contribution that CatholicCare has continued to provide in supporting tandem financial counselling sessions with our caseworkers which address financial hardship and build financial capability among our clients. We extend a special thanks to David Bell, who has especially dedicated his time and expertise as a financial counsellor to support Liverpool MRC clients, as this initiative comes to an end in its current form in June 2015.

We would also like to express thanks and acknowledgement to the great contribution of Legal Aid NSW at the Liverpool MRC, as established through partnership with SSI. The continuation of the Legal Aid NSW outreach support has been of great benefit to clients, and the newly established social security clinics have been very responsive to the emerging complexities surrounding the granting of the Disability Support Pension (DSP), which many of our clients are grappling with. The impact and efficacy of this outreach has been recognised through the Law and Justice Foundation's evaluation of the partnership, which was launched on 10 December 2014, in reaching and working holistically with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the other agencies we have worked closely with over the past year in achieving positive outcomes for clients, which although are too many to mention in entirety, include SSI, Illawarra Multicultural Services, Liverpool City Council, STARTTS, Uniting Care Burnside and the agencies that have formed the Partners in Recovery (PIR) network in South Western Sydney.

# Community Development Team

This year, the Liverpool MRC's community development focus was two-fold; we wanted to gain a better understanding of the communities we already work with; and learn more about new and emerging groups, so the organisation can continue to support both in the best possible way.

## ROHINGYA COMMUNITY CONSULTATION – A LIVERPOOL MRC INITIATIVE – NOVEMBER 2014

The Rohingya Community is a new and emerging group settling in Liverpool and surrounding LGAs. It was the intention of this consultation to meet with community leaders and members and discover what their needs were, what barriers they were facing and what their dreams, goals and aspirations were as they settled in Australia.

25 adults (Males 18, Females 7) and 14 children took part in the Liverpool MRC consultation and we found that the Rohingya Community's needs are multifaceted and not limited to one area of support.

Participants advised that the contributing factor that prevents them from seeking employment is their low level of English. Many have not received formal education in Burma or their place of transit and now face problems in literacy and numeracy. Additionally, most adults do not have the formal qualifications necessary to obtain employment in Australia.

Participants spoke about their background and the origins of their community – they are not accorded citizenship or provided with basic documentation (e.g. records of births, deaths, marriages), access to education, employment, and health services. On the latter point, participants stated that they would not even go to or send anyone to hospital under any circumstance as they feared they would be killed (i.e. "by poisoning"). Hence, most births were conducted at home and so too was the treatment of the sick.

After fleeing Burma, the countries transited to were those geographically closest, i.e. Malaysia (which was the most reported country of first transit), then Bangladesh, India, Thailand, and Indonesia.

We learnt that the community continues to gather in Liverpool every Sunday to offer social support to each other and the key Rohingya community leaders have taken on the role of guiding and assisting others to learn and access mainstream services. As a community, they heavily depend on each other for social, economic and psychological support upon arrival in Australia.

The Liverpool MRC would like to thank Mr Sayed Kasim, a Rohingya Community Leader of the Australian Burmese Rohingya Association (ABRA) who helped organise the event and also assisted with interpretation during proceedings.





**3000**

Rohingya people are reported to be living in Australia (including 400 in immigration detention centres)

**54%**

of participants resided in the Liverpool LGA while others lived in Auburn, Lakemba & Mt Druitt



**25%**

were studying English full time. Others advised that the reason they were not studying English was due to visa restrictions – they were asylum seekers on bridging visas

**94%**

of consultation participants had lived in Australia for 2-3 yrs and the rest 4-5 yrs



## Key Points

### Rohingya Community Consultation

**16%**

were in paid employment, with many of the women advising that they were not seeking employment as they were looking after their young children

## BLUE MOUNTAINS EXCURSION WITH THE ROHINGYA COMMUNITY - NOVEMBER 2014

Following the community consultation that the Liverpool MRC undertook with the Rohingya Community, it was evident that they could benefit from activities that were therapeutic in nature. The group chose to visit the Blue Mountains as none of the participants had had the opportunity before. Furthermore, Mt Tomah Botanical Gardens was chosen by the Liverpool MRC facilitators as a place where the community could relax and connect to nature.

The trip supported the development of social connections while providing a space to relax and have fun. It also meant that community members had an opportunity to visit and experience recreational activities in Sydney and learn about Australian history and key landmarks in NSW.

30 people participated in the excursion, including 18 adults and 12 children, all coming from a refugee background. Many of them had experienced life in immigration detention centres since their arrival to Australia.

Everyone advised they really enjoyed the day and the beauty of the Blue Mountains.



**"Excellent everything! I have never been out before. I am a single male and feel very lonely by myself. I have never heard about Mt Tomah Botanical Gardens before."**

## OLDER PERSONS IN CULTURAL TRANSITION

In September and October 2014, the Older Persons in Cultural Transition (OPICT) program was delivered in partnership with STARTTS to the Liverpool MRC Arabic Speaking Men's Group, with the use of Arabic-speaking facilitators.

The OPICT program provided an opportunity for the group, who were predominantly aged 55+ years, to meet, discuss and exchange ideas on topics including healthy ageing, home and community safety, stress management and the prevention of common health problems.



"We are learning and having valuable information from skilled facilitators and...the debate format gives freedom and more space for discussion and active participation in the dialogue" said an OPICT Program Participant from the Liverpool MRC Arabic Speaking Men's Group

## INTERFAITH BREAKFAST

The Liverpool MRC held an Interfaith Breakfast in November 2014 with the purpose of:

1. Providing an opportunity for religious and key community leaders to share how their communities have been affected by recent media coverage of issues relating to their communities;
2. Finding out from leaders how they are supporting their communities;



3. Forming a future religious and community leaders committee to work together towards bringing messages of harmony, unity and cohesion amongst all CALD communities.

19 people attended the Interfaith Breakfast with representation from various Christian, Islamic and other religious faiths, as well as representatives from key agencies including Liverpool and Green Valley Police.

The Liverpool MRC's CEO, Kamalle Dabboussy, shared Liverpool's Declaration of Religious Harmony with all representatives which had been developed and signed in March 2006 in celebration of Harmony Day.

It was agreed to strengthen and endorse the Declaration at a future meeting.



### WHITE RIBBON DAY MARCH & GALA DAY

On November 24th, Liverpool came together to raise awareness for the White Ribbon Day campaign. In a show of solidarity, over 300 people, including representatives from the Liverpool MRC, marched from Macquarie Mall, down Elizabeth Street to Bigge Park to demand a stop to violence against women. This year's event was organised by the Liverpool Domestic Violence Liaison Committee, Liverpool White Ribbon Committee and NSW Police, with sponsorship from the Liverpool MRC, Benevolent Society, NSW Police and Liverpool City Council.

The festivities at Bigge Park included dynamic performances from local schools whose involvement was instrumental and it was great to see so many young men out in support of this initiative.

A number of stalls were set up to engage participants and provide resources and information. Most notable of all was the pledge stall, where members of the public were encouraged to take the oath to never commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women. The Western Sydney Wanderers were also in attendance and promoted the event at their local match, on their website and to their thousands of members. This commitment included a dedicated marquee on the day where players including Brendan Santalab signed merchandise and took photos with the Asian Champions League trophy. The West Tigers were also in attendance.

A free barbeque concluded proceedings on what was truly a day to remember, as Liverpool stood as one to end violence against women.

### HARMONY DAY 2015

Harmony Day 2015 celebrations were two-fold at the Liverpool MRC. On the 19th of March, we took part in the Liverpool City Council Harmony Day Festival at Bigge Park, facilitating an art activity that encouraged participants to write down what harmony means to them (pictured).



We then took the Harmony Day celebrations to Miller Community Centre the day after, on the 20th of March, for clients who didn't normally access activities in the Liverpool CBD.

The Liverpool MRC ran a storytelling and photography workshop with 12 participants who shared their journey to Australia and what harmony means to them. The day was well received by participants, many of whom don't often get the chance to tell their story. The workshop was facilitated by two excellent and skilled community members who have turned the stories and photographs into a book for participants to keep.

# Family Support Team

## Youth

### CASEWORK

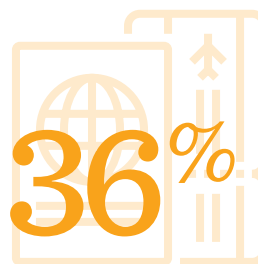
For refugee and migrant families, resettlement to Australia presents a new set of challenges alongside feelings of hope and opportunity. It presents with the challenges of navigating a new life within new systems, institutions and often with a lack of English language skills. Young people are faced with unique experiences and hurdles to that of their family, particularly as they seek to find their own path towards study, employment and settlement alongside the challenges of achieving their psycho-social and physiological development milestones.

Young people continue to access the Liverpool MRC to be supported through casework, information and referral, advocacy, and to develop the skills and capacity to address issues as they arise. Education and employment pathways continued to be the primary concern of young people, as they sought support in identifying their options regarding work and study as relevant to their skills and personal experience.



young people  
accessed LMRC  
casework services

were in the 19-21  
age group



arrived in 2014

came from Iraq

