

**Liverpool**  
**MRC**

*Annual Report*

***2011***

## *Mission Statement*

*Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre  
is a community-based non-profit  
organisation established to actively  
and directly relieve the situation  
of immigrants and refugees whose  
social condition renders them  
disadvantaged.*

## **Chairperson's Report**

## *Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre at a glance*

xxx clients serviced at the centre

xx students attended

- x English Classes/Beginners and Intermediate Level
- x Introduction to Computing Classes — English
- x Introduction to Computing Classes — Vietnamese
- x Introduction to Floristry Classes
- x Introduction to Sewing Classes

Tax Help Program (xx clients)

x Volunteer Placements including Student Placements

x Ethnic Groups are using our Meeting Room Facility

Outreach Services to:

- Warwick Farm “Paint and Play” Playgroup
- Lurnea and Miller Intensive English Language Centres
- Miller Hub

Information Sessions on:

- Youth Services
- Centrelink
- Democracy & Australian Parliament
- Immigration and Settlement
- Women’s Health Issues
- Legal Rights and Responsibilities
- Financial Management
- Housing
- Tenancy
- Volunteering
- Understanding NSW Health System
- Employment workshops

CVS continued for its 18th Consecutive Year

Now with xx funded Places:

5 playgroups operating in Liverpool, Hinchinbrook

- 1 language-specific playgroup
- 4 multicultural playgroups
- 105 families; 123 children enrolled

## Supporting Community Events

- Nigerian Cultural Day
- Timorese Cultural Day
- Sudanese Cultural Day
- Congolese Cultural Day
- Kurdish Cultural Day

In Partnership with other Community Organisations, undertake various social activities:

- Australian Mandaean Cultural Club
- Samoan Community
- Liverpool Australian Sudanese Community Inc
- Australia Forum
- Tongan Catholic community
- The Federation of the Congolese Community of NSW
- Australian Ethiopian Community
- Australian Ethiopian Good Family Welfare Association Inc.
- United Kurdish Association

Supported the following Networks:

- Liverpool Migrant & Refugee Interagency
- Community Sector Management Forum
- Settlement Council of Australia
- Warwick Farm Services Network
- Liverpool Youth Workers Network
- Liverpool Family & Children's Service Interagency
- 2168 Committee

## ***With thanks to our Funding Bodies***

Dept of Immigration and Citizenship

Department of Health and Ageing

Department of Family and Housing, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs  
(FaHCSIA)

Department of Community Services

Community Relations Commission of NSW

Families NSW

Better Futures — Community Builders Partnerships

Liverpool City Council

## **Management Committee members: 2009-2010**

Dr. Vincent Ogu — Chairperson  
Fr. Allan Hornery — Deputy Chairperson  
Haidar Abdalla — Treasurer  
Blanca Arely Espinoza — Secretary  
Dr. Amad Mtashar — Member  
Najla Turk — Member  
Denise Moses — Member  
Abdul Wahab Talabani — Member  
Amer Yousif — Member  
Doris Athanasio — Member  
Simon Fox — Ex-officio Liverpool City Council  
Cllr Ned Mannoun — Ex-Officio Liverpool City Council

## **Sessional workers**

Afagh Afaridan — Iranian Community Organization  
Louay Moustapha — Lebanese Community Council of NSW  
Huy Nguyen — Vietnamese Community in Australia  
Paola Sayegh — Melkite Welfare Association

## **Child Care workers**

Xuan Thi Bui  
Julie Grime  
Saja Haidar  
Charanjit Kaur  
Megumi Mamome  
Kelly Nugent  
Jennifer Joy Plat  
Lynette Pressman  
Nawal Salman

## **Staff**

Kamalle Dabboussy — Centre Manager  
Ayman Al Haboub — Humanitarian Caseworker  
Rassem Asmar — Arabic Caseworker  
Shabnam Bhana — Youth Settlement Worker (till 1/4/2011)  
Mariam Dabboussy — Information Officer  
Mesfin Desalegn — Ethiopian support Worker  
Alcina Desouza — Administration Team Leader  
Behrooz Gouniai — Caseworker — Farsi/Dari till (31/3/2011)  
Pietty Greenwood — Multicultural Families Resource Co-ordinator  
Anke Kotte — Senior Complex Caseworker  
Michael Kwiatkowski — Caseworker — Spanish (till 10/6/2011)  
Elham Mandwee — Bilingual Receptionist  
Maria Karameli Manouso — Family Support Clerical Worker

Linah Merdawi — Iraqi Support Worker/Community Visitors Scheme Co-ordinator  
Jimmy Mtashar — Youth Settlement worker  
Salem Naja — Infrastructure & Development Co-ordinator  
Maria Pereira — Community Support Worker  
Sandra Romanelli — Family support Worker  
Natalie Taha — Senior Complex Caseworker  
Mariëtte van der Meer — Community Projects Officer  
Ali White — Research & Policy Officer  
Cai Xiaobing — Families Support Caseworker

## **Volunteers**

Anmar Abed	Hala Dishar	Mary Pushparaj
Elham Ahmed	Preethi Evgene	Gazal Sabbagh
Alhlam Almarachli	Rajaa Fulfiel	Badegül Sağ
Nisreen Andulrahm	Heifaa Gatea	Maria Louise Sagayamar
Nang Seng Arm	Zena Al Khamis	Laye Sesay
Joe Asfoura	Kim Chi Le	Margaret Tofaeono
Biljana Baljak	Maria Nguyen	Ljuba Trajkovska
Daly Bolongo	Thi Nga Nguyen	Sahar Yousif
Maria Theresa di Corrado	Thi Xuan Houg Pham	

## **Student Placement**

Jean

## **Administration Team Report**

This project is funded by Department of Immigration and Citizenship to provide direct service based on client needs through front counter. And what a year it has been! With the introduction of the Humanitarian Settlement Program in the second half of last year, we saw an increase in clients and in the complexity of client issues which led to a very busy and interesting year.

***A total of 4843 clients were serviced through the Front Desk alone***, providing direct information, appropriate appointments with caseworkers; certifying documents; enrolling for courses within and providing answers to general queries.

The partnership with Liverpool TAFE is proving a continuing success and provides valuable education and skills to our clients. The administration team was actively involved in organising classes by liaising with students, teachers and providing administration support.

***A total of 184 students attended the following classes:***

- 4 English Classes/ Beginners and Intermediate Level
- 2 Introduction to Computing Classes — English
- 1 Introduction to Computing Classes — Vietnamese
- 2 Introduction to Floristry Classes
- 2 Introduction to Sewing Classes/Pattern Making

***55 Clients were assisted with lodging of Tax Returns*** through ATO's tax help program. The Administration team promoted the program and managed the appointments for the program.

***53 clients attended information sessions*** organised by the Administration Team in partnership with Liverpool City Council on topics such as personal safety; car safety and home safety and how to save energy and money at home in partnership with Melkite Catholic Eparchy Association.

***26 students and volunteers*** were supervised by the Administration Team — providing them with valuable local work experience with various projects of the MRC and training in developing a portfolio, preparing a resume and a covering letter, preparing for a job interview and marketing themselves effectively.

***22 community groups*** were resourced by Liverpool MRC with meeting room facilities and equipment. The Administration Team assisted groups during hours and on weekends with allocation of meeting rooms and other resources.

***145 service flyers and audio/video*** information was displayed at the reception area. The front desk maintains a 'Bilingual Information Hub', whereby information on various services in Liverpool and Sydney are collected, displayed and updated at the reception area.



The Administration team has also been involved in the promotion and orientation of the Centre to newly arrived migrants and refugees through Information Sessions, Workshops and Information Stalls at Community Events.

## **CASEWORK AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

### **AGM Report CCS Program**

As a member of the Humanitarian Service Panel of the Complex Case Support (CCS) Program, the LMRC has delivered specialised and intensive case management services to refugee and humanitarian entrants for the third year since commencement of the program.

The CCS Program funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship targets the needs of individuals and families who may experience specific difficulties that place themselves and their families at risk, who cannot access appropriate support via mainstream services and who require time-intensive case management.

The program has provided case co-ordination, advocacy, referral and the overseeing of issues experienced by the client and their family and has worked in collaboration with other existing service providers to maintain relationships and to holistically address the needs of all family members.

In the timeframe from July 2010 to June 2011 we have been able to successfully work with 19 clients and their families, for durations of 2 to 8 months per approved Case Management Plan, depending on the circumstances and needs of the family or individuals.

Most of the referrals to the CCS Program were made by LMRC SGP Caseworkers and the Cultural Connect Project at the LMRC, who assessed the complexity of needs of their clients that required intense support. Other referrals were made by schools, Housing NSW, women's refuges etc.

As the completion of a referral is very time consuming, the LMRC CCS Staff has assessed referred clients and send completed referrals to CCS NSW.

Working with each family and individual requires a holistic assessment of individual circumstances, history, barriers, needs, motivations and goals. The individually tailored CMP aims to address all aspects of the families and individual needs, options and possible outcomes.

The approach in working with each individual and family is to improve the capacity and understanding of their circumstances and to support the development of skills and knowledge to resolve them. This includes direct support to link clients with appropriate mainstream services and programs, providing support to access and attend them successfully.

Confidence in one's ability could be built by direct experience of successfully engaging or managing or achieving goals, while someone is walking the road with them. In some cases it was vital to have someone stand up for them through advocacy

or by providing emotional support (to attend, for example, a court session), which made a difference in how they perceived settlement and life in Australia. In other cases confidence was built by knowing that someone was supporting them through every step of the change.

Although clients have gained skills, integrated and function more confidently in the community and developed capacity to engage further with services and managing difficulties in life, they often still require further support by LMRC services due to limited language skills, continued impact of trauma that cannot be improved over a short time.

In addition to the issues covered so far, other common issues presented by Complex Case Support clients have included Family Violence, mental health issues, physical health, financial mismanagement, child protection issues, legal issues concerning employment, lack of social/family support, high level of dependency on others, poor access to health services, and clients with a pre-migration history of torture and trauma.

We are looking forward to assisting more individuals through this program in the years ahead. We thank the Team at the LMRC and the Complex Case Support Team at DIAC NSW and Canberra for their continued support.

## **Iraqi**

Liverpool MRC has been flagged as the Centre of support and advocacy for a great number of Iraqi migrants and refugees in Liverpool LGA. The MRC provides services to people of Iraqi ethnic backgrounds — including Mandaean, Assyrians, Kurds, Chaldeans and Muslims.

The Iraqi support worker provided regular support and advocacy to the clients in issues related to financial assistance, document help, accommodation, general household management, support for single parents and help in accessing mainstream services so they can take advantage of their availability.

The Liverpool MRC held information sessions for newly arrived migrants and refugees coming from Iraq and to orientate clients to settlement and mainstream services. The sessions were provided in Arabic for better understanding of the information delivered and to encourage clients' participation and engagement. Topics of sessions were prominent issues relating to Australian elections, the Education Tax Refund and taxation system, TAFE and education, the health system and mental health, employment, support for carers, Centrelink, housing and financial management.

The MRC organised a Cultural Awareness Forum on Liverpool's Iraqi Community, in order to increase local service providers' awareness of the community. The session recorded a positive impact with other services in the area, allowing them to better network and liaise with the MRC Iraqi worker and to deliver better service to their clients.

The Liverpool MRC support worker continues to network and build strong relationships with mainstream agencies, promoting and representing client needs through participation at interagency forums. The forums highlight the major issues that need to be carried out to the relevant stakeholders, so they may provide assistance and support to new migrants and refugees.

## **SGP Generalist Humanitarian**

### ***Chinese Community***

The total client contacts number is 168. The main issues are related to language barriers, financial and income support, housing and rent issues; health and Medicare access; employment, education and training and social isolation.

Apart from referrals, the worker also provided information relevant to clients' issues to empower and encourage them to access mainstream services. There was a Liverpool hospital tour on 25 August 2010. Positive feedback was received spontaneously from individuals.

The worker ran an employment support information session on 28 September 2010 in partnership with Liverpool Centrelink, to help new migrants to get more effective information to look for a job. This was particularly helpful for people who came on skilled immigration visas, who now know more about how to assess their overseas qualification for their job seeking purposes.

There was an information session conducted on 22 March 2011 which aimed to assist clients to know more about NSW Election before the Election took place.

An ongoing basic computer class ran every Wednesday from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm. There was a volunteer teaching the class and average of 10 participants every time.

The worker became involved with the South-Western Sydney Chinese Community & Health Workers Network, attending quarterly meeting and promoting its services and activities in LMRC.

*Insert Chinese pic here*

### ***Humanitarian project***

Through 2011, the humanitarian project continued its efforts to directly relieve the situation of immigrants and refugees whose social condition renders them disadvantaged. The core of the project is providing casework and direct support to our clients. We have been able to deliver a range of other services (including information about different services) and also link our clients with other services, as well as increasing their access to health services and other essential services.

### ***Humanitarian Case Work***

The majority of clients came from China, Iraq, Iran and Sudan. Most of these clients came from humanitarian and other protection visas. Diverse issues were picked up, due to the different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Clients were appropriately referred and advocacy was done as needed.

### ***Information sessions***

A unique Health Tour jointly organised by Liverpool MRC, Multicultural Health at Liverpool Hospital and Emergency Department (ED) was conducted. Different community groups participated and they found opportunities to speak to the doctors and nurses at the ED. It was very useful for them to understand how the emergency health system works in Australia, starting from how to call an ambulance and what is behind the waiting rooms in the EDs. From participants' feedback it is clear that this session had great positive impact, as it help our clients to increase their capacity to better access health services in our Liverpool LGA.

Providing information about private rental housing and how to access it was another important information session we delivered to clients in two different languages.

Financial budgeting is still one of the most areas need to be look at. We organised a special *Helping you manage your finances* info-session about for the Congolese community in the Liverpool LGA. It was clear from this a need for more sessions regarding financial help and management has has been indicated.

'*How to Vote*' in Australia and NSW is an information session held in Liverpool MRC to different community groups as to explain about the political process for new arrivals from CALD groups. The session was of great impact and important for newly arrived communities, who obtained an increased understanding and of the democratic process in our country through this info-session.

### ***SGP — Humanitarian Case Worker***

This role was significant for lifting the image of newly arrived migrants living in the Liverpool area. That was achieved in 2 local papers articles, where a small group of Migrants of different backgrounds were interviewed by leader, speaking about their experience, and how they are trying to successfully settle in the new country.

The second interview also was with clients — an Iraqi Mandaen *Ganzibra* (holy man) (or *Tarmida*?) and his wife —who spoke about their experience living in Liverpool. These two interviews by local papers contribute positively to making the humanitarian entrants' presence felt by our local communities, and to showcase their inputs to local business and local communities.

The services provided by LMRC caseworkers included:

- Alleviating the pressure, especially when client gets caught in a situation with implications of legal actions being taken against them. On two occasions at least, our caseworkers have brought legal issues to resolutions without penalties or financial loss to our clients. These positive outcomes made a real difference to our clients' lives.
- Building client's capacity for self-reliance. The numerous information sessions, organised by LMRC officers, with a variety of topics relevant to clients' needs, were successful tools of educating clients — lifting their capacity, as both groups and individuals to become self-reliant, developing a capacity to help others in their communities.

During the process of service delivery, capacity-building and educating our clients, a solid basis emerged for potential leaders to develop. That itself will lift each communities' collective confidence, as well as its capacity to become active players in local communities daily life, and in all aspects of social activity.

We are heartened, and we feel more committed to continue the path of success, and to always look at improving on all aspects of our duties to our clients who placed a lot of trust in us, to assist them to improve their lives — to make the settlement journey successful, and to help them to make positive contributions in their new country, which they now they call home.

### ***Women's Project***

The women's project has primarily Women on Visa 204 "*Women at Risk*" as its focus, which are single women with or without children. They might not be accepted in their own community, further exacerbating their isolation and/or opportunities for support.

### ***Orientation to Australia***

Client intake was one and a half time as many as was stipulated in the Project Plan, that is, 121 clients were serviced versus 80 in project Plan (***CHECK!***). Main issues centred around: financial assistance; education, training & employment and household management.

Clients learned about other support and mainstream services in the Liverpool LGA and understood to adhere to protocols to access specific services, for example, referral mechanisms such as making appointments prior to visiting services.

There were 183 formal and 119 informal referrals, again well beyond Project Plan requirements, that is, two and a half times. Main issues for referral were: Centrelink/Family Assistance; Charity and Accommodation/Housing. Clients learned about Financial Counselling services in Liverpool and eligibility requirements, as well as gained knowledge about the value of TAFE courses, how to apply and/or enrol and geographical locations of educational institutions in Liverpool.

### ***Developing communities***

A therapeutic program to support women and their families to cope with the effects of trauma to enable them to identify issues and attendant stresses they face, build their capacity and empower them to access relevant mainstream services independently. Topics included: anxiety, depression and communication, others dealt with children's behaviour and the importance of giving children both attention and quality time.

The sessions reduced isolation of the targeted women and enabled them to go out in the wider community with more confidence. The women learned about support among each other to strengthen themselves and about support services which could assist them.

The gain in confidence increased personal capacity and independence to either solve issues as they arise and/or seek out assistance as needed.

### ***Integration — Inclusion and Participation***

Parent information sessions on the Australian education system to promote better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of schools, teachers parents and guardians, were held to inform women of options in the Australian School system. Options canvassed included *Transition from Primary to High School*. There was an education forum with two separate sessions addressing the Australian Public School System and Tax in Australia and five sessions on the Education Tax Refund. Sessions were well attended; bi-lingual facilitators and/or TIS Interpreters were provided.

Feedback from the various sessions indicated participants learned or had a better understanding of:

- Enrolling children in school;
- Zoning and school boundaries;
- The differences between private and public schools;
- School fees;
- The differences between TAFE and Universities;
- The Tax system: obtaining and using Tax File Numbers, ways of claiming tax;
- The differences between Family Tax Benefit Part A and/or Part B.

#### ***‘Taking Care of Oneself and Discovering what Liverpool offers’***

This program was conducted over eight (8) weeks and involved women from Afghanistan, sessions included:

- Visit to Liverpool Street University;
- Visit to Liverpool Anglicare;
- Information session presented by Transcultural Mental Health Centre (TMHC), facilitated by a Dari-speaking psychologist;
- Information session about personal grooming presented by a TAFE Teacher;
- Information session on the ‘Walking Program’ provided by Liverpool Hospital on behalf of the Heart Foundation;
- Aqua aerobics (two sessions);
- Discovery Tour of Liverpool provided by Liverpool City Council.

#### **Settlement support group for women**

The SGP worker recruited Mandaean women who were linked with other Liverpool MRC projects in order to enhance knowledge of opportunities beyond ‘home duties’, reduce isolation and venture into activities with other women, while learning new skills, sharing experiences, and building confidence and resilience.

#### **Overall outcomes of the Women’s Project:**

- The Project provided opportunities for participants to reduce isolation;
- The women were able to make connections with other women within their community and were linked to mainstream services;
- The sessions on Education and the ‘Taking Care of Oneself’ project were delivered at a grassroots level which addressed immediate needs; participants were introduced to local service providers face-to-face, which enabled them to make connections;
- Continuation of engagement and service delivery allowed building and establishing trust with the women over time.

- It also enabled the perception and recognition of needs and responses by assisting participants to work through issues together.

*Insert 'Taking Care of Oneself and Discovering what Liverpool has to Offer' pics & captions here*

## **FAHCSIA PROJECTS**

### ***Mandaean Refugee Women's Support Group***

A partnership was established with Liverpool Hospital. In consultation with participants and the specialist from Liverpool Hospital, a program was developed in order to deliver outcomes that were meaningful and significant to participants, that is, encouragement in changes in behavioural patterns. Participants were connected to relevant staff in Liverpool Hospital, to enhance continuation of support after completion of the program.

After more intensive support, single mums or women at risk were encouraged to participate in other support activities to build skills, confidence and resilience, including involvement in the family programs of the Liverpool MRC.

### ***Visual Art Stories for Sudanese Men***

Through the medium of paint, mixture of colour and application, use of both natural and other media Sudanese men found a different way of expressing oneself as sensitive issues, such as a new way of life, family relationships and/or mental health issues are not always easily able to be expressed through words as known in the Western way. Natural elements such as bark, flowers, grasses, etc. provided added depth and symbolism.

Partnering with the Transcultural Mental Health Centre (TMHC) allowed and provided additional support sessions.

Works of the Sudanese Men group were proudly displayed at the Refugee Week Street Festival.

### ***Art and Craft Workshop — Women's Knitting Group***

It was observed that initially there was hesitation and/or reluctance from some of the participants to be involved in activities which looked at past experiences, especially where trauma was concerned. Many of the women were also isolated, not going out on their own.

Facilitators created an environment that was non-threatening and comfortable for the group and provided opportunities to speak one-on-one. Some information/support sessions were provided.



As the group got into learning the skill of knitting the group bonded further, producing a huge range of articles, which the women decided they wanted to donate a local charity.

### ***Afghan and Iranian Women Support Group***

The Women's Support Group was a mix of nine Afghan (Dari-speaking) and Iranian (Farsi-speaking) women who are isolated with support of a Professional Counsellor. However, due to local cultural and socio-economic situations, it was at times necessary for some of the sessions to separate the groups to enable sharing of similar experiences thus to better facilitate the sessions.

### ***Iraqi Women***

A parenting program was held for a small group of eight Iraqi women needing an intense level of support in dealing with children who have challenging behaviours. The rapport and trust which already existed with Liverpool MRC staff and continues allowed involvement in all of the relevant sessions. Referring staff members facilitated interaction with a mainstream specialist service. Women were provided with further support and options after the program.

### **Youth**

The youth worker has provided casework provision to 67 clients providing 130 referrals. Through the delivery of casework provision, clients have increased their knowledge of services available and acquired greater confidence and capacity to access these services. Casework provision has built clients' independence and personal capacity and as a result clients are more aware of mainstream services.

A number of sessions have been held in a range of topic areas including *Budgeting, Rights and Responsibilities, Time Management and Goal Setting* and *Positive Decision-Making*, which have assisted clients to build self-esteem and confidence in their settlement process. The sessions have provided the target group with resourceful contacts and capacity to access mainstream support services. Clients have been provided with decision-making skills and conflict resolution training to help promote independence and problem solving skills.

A study skills program was held with a drama teacher and facilitator from Lurnea IEC to use this medium to promote classroom and broader school engagement. The sessions looked at script writing, reading and writing, as well as acting and dance as ways of promoting literacy outcomes. Students were provided with a variety of activities through the sessions focusing on literacy and building independence.

A performance was held at refugee week on 25 June 2011 at Macquarie Street Mall, Liverpool. Participants were from Iraqi, Iranian, Lebanese, Sudanese, Sierra Leonean, Bosnian, Filipino, Pakistani and Columbian cultural groups.

The after-school soccer program run in partnership with Football United was highly successful in providing students from Miller and Lurnea IECs a chance to experience sport without the associated cost of mainstream sport. The program helped build confidence and self-esteem amongst participants as well as promoting the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

This education and employment pathways program has assisted some of the most disadvantaged students in Miller IEC. Students have been identified as struggling to meet the demands of schooling but are not engaged with services to access available educational and employment opportunities. Participants were provided with a range of educational opportunities which cater to their particular interests. They were also consulted and surveyed on their workplace preferences and accordingly a taster course was identified, to give participants a preview of what it would be like to work in their self-identified occupation.

*Insert youth pics here*

## **Family Support**

Families NSW funds the Cultural Connect Project, with additional one-off funding by Liverpool City Council to complement service delivery. The Cultural Connect Project Team had a very successful year and achieved great results for both families and children with 115 families and 134 children enrolled. By the end of this reporting period the Cultural Connect Project facilitated six Playgroups from funds received from:

- Families NSW four playgroups — three Multicultural Playgroups and a Language Specific Playgroup (Vietnamese) which operates in Partnership with Miller TAFE Outreach.
- Two additional playgroups complemented from funds received from the Liverpool MRC and held in partnership with Liverpool TAFE Outreach and Miller TAFE Early Childhood Studies.

### ***Support for families — Parenting Programs***

Miller TAFE Outreach facilitated a Behaviour Guidance Course. This nine-week course culminated in families addressing individual concerns they each had with their children and learning to set up boundaries. Families received a Statement of Attainment. This acknowledgment was very meaningful to many families who had never previously gained access to tertiary education overseas or in Australia.

An Early Intervention Parenting Program for Iraqi families was run in partnership with Liverpool Hospital. This program grew out of requests from families from the playgroups to help address immediate needs. These families met key staff at Liverpool Hospital: social workers, a psychologist and a paediatrician. This unique program helped families to gain an entry point to services in a confident and competent manner. Key achievements included a child receiving a diagnosis of autism and referrals to appropriate services.

### ***Support for families - Exposure to tertiary education***

There was an increase in families from the playgroups who enrolled at TAFE to study. This process was aided by current partnerships with Liverpool and Miller TAFEs. Three TAFE Teachers worked closely across three of the playgroups with families and children. Course outlines and enrolment dates were displayed to promote access to courses.

### **Social Capital**

The Cultural Connect Project continues to assist families to decrease their level of isolation as in the case of families who are going through a settlement process upon arrival in Australia. We have linked families to other families from their own culture, language or religion. Through friendships and feelings of connectedness, families gradually move to use other LMRC services and mainstream services.

### ***Support for children – Early Intervention***

During the reported period we have successfully referred and supported children that were identified as requiring early intervention to local services such as Miller Preschool, Learning Links and the Liverpool Hospital/Rainbow Cottage Screening Clinic.

The children continued to be supported through an early childhood program based on play. The school readiness program is an integral component of the Multicultural Playgroups. Fourteen children graduated in 2010. Twenty children are eligible to start school in 2012.

### ***Supporting the local community – Vietnamese Playgroup***

Six children from the Vietnamese Playgroup, with the support of their families, performed at the Centrelink Office Liverpool during the 'Families Week event'. Five families and their children from the Vietnamese Playgroup visited a nursing home during Seniors Week to perform Vietnamese songs for their residents.

### ***Innovative programs to address needs of children***

The 'Active Play' @ Playgroup Program commenced mid-June 2011 at two of our playgroups. The first stage consisted of surveying parents. As the importance of early play has been highlighted in the National Recommendations for physical activity for children aged 0-5 years, The Cultural Connect Project Staff are committed to learn from this program and to instigate more active play programming ideas in order to pass clear messages to families. The motivation to undertake this program stems from concerns we have with many of the playgroup participants who primarily live in high-rise buildings and are fearful of accessing local recreational facilities.

### ***Complementary one off Funding***

Liverpool City Council provided funding for the 'Developing Happy Families Project'. Forty-four families and sixty-one children took part in excursions to local parks and an excursion to the Power House Museum. In addition, funds were used to support the Behaviour Management Course at the Playgroups. A small resource library for families and children was developed with relevant books to reinforce concepts learned.

Following the LMRC's successful attainment of PBI status by the Tax Office, an application to Barnardos-Max E Grants was successful. This grant assisted two siblings with educational expenses.

### ***Challenges we have encountered***

Maintenance problems at the playgroup venues continued for this reporting period. Playgroup venues are hired from Liverpool City Council. As a result playgroup sessions were cancelled for the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesdays playgroups on a number of occasions. Continuous closure of playgroup sessions has had an impact on our target group who look forward to attend weekly playgroup sessions.

Over the past couple of years the Cultural Connect Project has operated at a significant but manageable deficit. The LMRC Management Committee values the contribution this project provides to the overall core business of the organisation and therefore the Management Committee has until now maintained the Cultural Connect Project with supplementary funds from other LMRC Projects to support the continuation and growth of the Cultural Connect Project. The Future of the Cultural Connect Project in its current unique structure may depend on funding availability.

### ***Reporting Methodology – Additional Funding***

Families NSW has introduced Outcome Based Accountability Performance Measures to compile data and prepare relevant reports. From this reporting period we have embarked on a new challenge to prepare reports. Due to funding agreement parameters, the Cultural Connect Project must report under the Key Performance Indicators of Supported Playgroups, Community Capacity Building and Family Worker. Under the Family Worker strand, the Cultural Connect Project had received additional funding over the 2011/12-2013/14 period.

*Insert Playgroup pics here*

## **Community Capacity-Building and Community Leadership**

The Liverpool MRC takes great pride in assisting individuals through providing casework, and assisting newly established community groups and agencies with guidance and support or auspicing, to enhance community development.

This also means that individuals and communities are provided with the opportunity to meet with significant others in Australian society, such as local Federal and State MPs, Local City Council, as well as obtaining knowledge of the various Federal and State Departments, what they represent and the respective responsible Ministers.

Government representation can be daunting, especially for those who have been persecuted by government, and it is therefore essential that a good understanding is given about government in Australia and NSW.

### ***Auspicing, assisting existing-new emerging communities and Community Development***

Consultations to assist in gaining a better understanding of the specific settlement issues in newly arrived communities were conducted with the Congolese and the Ethiopian communities. The material compiled from surveys, meetings, as well as

casework, informs the type of activities, information sessions and programs for the respective communities and serves as back-up evidence in the process of applications.

By modelling and advice, assistance is also provided to the respective communities, showing how to open and manage a bank account, how to approve and spend funds and how to keep records.

One of the additional achievements for the Ethiopian community has been the setting up of Amharic language classes.

### ***Funding applications for and with communities***

The Liverpool MRC continued to support newly established community agencies through its brokerage funds, which provide small amounts to communities to enable them to engage and set up their own specific activities.

Communities supported were: the Tongan Community; Federation of the Congolese Association; Australian Liverpool Sudanese Association; United Kurdish Community; Congolese Community of NSW; Afghan Women's group; Igbo Community Australia (ICA); Liverpool Australian Sudanese Community, and the Liverpool Sudanese Australian Union.

In addition, appropriate other funding sources were sought and applications prepared with newly-arrived communities to assist them in addressing identified need and in settling in Liverpool.

Both above initiatives have shown an increase in communities looking for funding sources to set up their own community activities.

### **‘Meet the Pollies Nights’**

The past financial year was a busy election period: first the Federal Election late in 2010 and then the NSW State Election in March 2011. To enhance the opportunity for new refugees and migrants to see what respective politicians had to offer, two sets of ‘Meet the Pollies Nights’ were offered.

#### ***Federal Election***

On 12 and 16 August 2010 two ‘Meet the Pollies Nights’ were held for both the Labor and Liberal Parties respectively.

- Labour: with nominated Candidates for Hughes, Werriwa and Fowler.

There were 29 Community members from fourteen (14) community groups at this event.

- Liberal: with nominated Candidates for Hughes, Werriwa and Fowler.

Sixteen (16) community members from nine (9) communities participated at this event.

A lively discussion was held at both events. Participants raised issues around discrimination in looking for employment, support for recognition of qualifications, accommodation and housing support, and support for culturally appropriate Domestic and Family Violence initiatives.

Participants also stated the need to continue engagement with local politicians.

### ***NSW State Election***

Again two events were organised for 10 and 17 March 2011 for Labor and Liberal Parties respectively.

- Labor Party present: Mr. Paul Lynch MP and Dr. Andrew McDonald MP

Twenty people attended from 8 communities.

The session with the Labor Party was again lively; one of the more specific questions was about support from the Australian Government for the country of origin.

- The meeting with the Liberal Party was cancelled due to other commitments.

### ***Meet and Greet the new Police Commander, 26 May 2011***

The Liverpool MRC assisted with invitations to community leaders to meet with the new Police Commander, Superintendent Raymond King.

## **Information and Education Sessions**

Information Sessions were organised according to needs identified through casework or, as mentioned before, through consultations. These sessions aim to provide newly-arrived refugees and migrants a better understanding about the types of services available, what the services can and cannot do, as well as life skills in order to negotiate the various settlement issues.

### ***Promotion of and Advocacy for Access & Equity issues to mainstream service providers***

The Liverpool MRC continued to promote and highlight access and equity issues to mainstream service providers through convening, chairing and participating in its various networks, forums and other appropriate venues.

## **Conferences, Forums, Inter-agencies and Networking**

### ***Liverpool Community Services Conference: Making a difference for tomorrow' Organised by the Liverpool City Council and held at Casula Powerhouse***

The Manager presented a session at the Conference on 'Working with Diverse Populations' to key services in the Liverpool LGA, addressing issues affecting recently arrived migrants with a specific focus on refugees. The presentation focussed on current trends, issues of concern, high risk indicators, etc.

### ***Liverpool Refugee and Migrant Inter-agency***

As Co-Convenor of the Liverpool Refugee and Migrant Inter-agency (LRMI), the Liverpool MRC has contributed to the inter-agency, which functions as a reference

point for information exchange and issues related to refugees and migrants and, where possible, advocacy.

Some of the issues raised were:

- The placement of Humanitarian Settlement (HSS) with MRCs and/or Diversity services was explained and the likely impact and demand on current Settlement Grants Program (SGP) projects and mainstream services by the influx of new refugees who may have high needs.
- Increase in mental health cases due to extended detention and the uncertainty of outcome: this may increase mental health more than the atrocities people have fled from.
- Increase in complex domestic violence cases — not only related to women, but also to men — in the local area and the lack of support services.

For women and children culturally appropriate support services are lacking, resulting in women being unable to resolve the question of abuse.

The dearth or rather lack of support services for violated men has been equally evident: while abuse may not be physical, the abuse on the economic and psychological level can be extensive, with the rights provided to women and children in Australia eroding a sense of worth for men. They cannot obtain special (financial) assistance or emotional and/or psychological support in any sense, which may also be hampered by cultural values.

- Concern about the review of the role of the NSW Police Multicultural Liaison Officers (MCLO's) and the lack of consultation with community groups as stakeholders. A letter was prepared and sent to The Hon. Michael Gallagher, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, on behalf of the LRMI.

Participation in other inter-agencies are also to promote the services of Liverpool MRC and raise the inescapable fact of influx of refugees in Liverpool and attendant issues affecting newly-arrived refugees and migrants. Below are inter-agencies in which the Liverpool MRC participates regularly:

- Human Services Planning Group (HSGP), an offshoot from the Community Services Management Forum;
- 2168 Community Management Committee and 2168 Community Inter-agency;
- Warwick Farm Inter-Agency;
- Liverpool Community Safety and Crime Prevention Plan Working Group;
- Other Inter-agencies and/or networks in respective Projects.

***Harmony Day: 21 March 2011***

The Liverpool MRC in conjunction with Liverpool City Council, Centrelink, Green Valley LAC Police, Liverpool TAFE, Neighbourhood Connections, Cancer Council and University of Western Sydney, a Harmony Day was organised and held on 21 March 2011 at the Macquarie Mall.

Though initially the weather appeared to play havoc, the day turned out quite successfully with plenty of entertainment and stalls with information. Presentations were by a representative of Liverpool City Council, Prof. Kevin Dunn, as well as various cultural entertainment activities.

***Training & Employment Expo: Pathways to Work  
at Casula Powerhouse: 31 March 2011***

The issue of training and employment — apart from education itself — is paramount, next to the myriad of other issues for new arrivals. A Working Party with representatives from Centrelink, CatholicCare, Melkite Welfare Association, University of Western Sydney and Liverpool MRC organised the Training and Employment Expo with presentations from the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for Human Services, Minister for Social Inclusion, Mr. Laurie Ferguson MP, Member for Werriwa, Ms. Wendy Waller, Mayor of Liverpool and Mr. Harry Hunt, Chairperson of the Chamber of Commerce.

There were at least 400 participants (some quoted 600!), at least double the number aimed at.

***Refugee Week: 19 June-25 June 2011***

The primary movers in the Refugee Working Party involved Liverpool City Council, Liverpool MRC, Centrelink, Liverpool Green Valley local Area Command, MTC Training Solutions, Neighbourhood Connections, New Horizons, TAFE Liverpool, Outer Liverpool Community Services and Burnside.

***Forum at Liverpool Library, 20<sup>th</sup> June***

Pino Migliorino, Chairperson of the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia (FECCA) accorded us the favour of being the Master of Ceremonies (MC).

Most impressive was the entertainment brought by students from Lurnea IEC telling of their own experiences in song, dance and music.

To put the refugees issue in perspective internationally, regionally and in Australia, and ultimately focussed on local impact at Liverpool, presentations were made by:

- Graham Thorn, Refugee Co-ordinator, Amnesty International — Australia.
- Lucy Morgan, Information Officer, Refugee Council of Australia.
- Kamalle Dabboussy, Manager, Liverpool MRC, who provided a local picture of new developments in the refugee influx and the impact on the Liverpool MRC and local services.

Four workshops were organised along the following issues:

- Family Relationships;
- Health & Well-being;
- Children's Services;
- Education.

Outcomes and Recommendations of the workshops will be compiled for presentation and potential use at the LRMI, as well as for its planning session.



### ***Street Festival at Macquarie Mall: 24 June***

A lively day was held at the Macquarie Mall which included presentation by Ms. Wendy Waller, Mayor of Liverpool and Mr. Paul Lynch MP.

Various community groups and individuals contributed to the Festival, there was an exposition/display of the Sudanese Men Arts Group which gave the day a most lively aspect. In addition, the opportunity was provided by Ghasan Saaid to participate in a communal painting to which respective dignitaries were invited and participated.

### **Community Visitor Scheme (CVS)**

Since 1993 Liverpool MRC has hosted the Community Visitor Scheme (CVS) project funded by the Department of Health and Ageing. CVS aims to engage the residents at aged care hostels and nursing homes who have been identified as being lonely or socially isolated due to Non English-Speaking Backgrounds. Volunteers from the same background engage with residents through one-to-one visits.

The CVS Co-ordinator at Liverpool MRC recruited and co-ordinated a team of volunteers from the Arabic and Spanish-speaking backgrounds, matching each volunteer visitor with a resident at age care services in South West/South Coast Sydney. The Co-ordinator provided training and support to the volunteers through a monthly meeting, which was supplemented by a counselling session when required.

Liverpool MRC volunteers contributed a couple of hours from their time every fortnight, to make a social visit to the seniors at nursing homes. Our volunteers look on this as a rewarding experience for them, as well as something that makes someone else's day a little brighter.

The volunteers witnessed the difference on the resident's quality of life after they started their visits to them. They observed the positive impact through the way the resident chatted back and welcomed them each time they went for their special visit.

Between July 2010 and June 2011 the CVS Co-ordinator recruited 21 volunteer visitors from both Arabic and Spanish-speaking backgrounds, who made more than 350 visits to different nursing homes around Liverpool, Fairfield and Bankstown areas.

Special thanks go to the CVS volunteer visitors for the year of 2011.

#### **Spanish Speaking Background Volunteers:**

Zunilda Navarro, Sandra Virga, Francisa Murillo, Guadalupe Alvarez, Amanda Orellano, Clara Bucarey, Rosalia Moreno, Eva Alvila, Ana Gloria Beltran

#### **Arabic Speaking Background Volunteers:**

Abir Lotfi, Mervat Benyamin, Admon Yokhana, Roslin Laki, Ranin Farjo, Dhamyaa Al Bayati, Afaf Adlouni, Nadia Shlaimon, Dalila Gorgis, Juliet Warda, Blendine Shlaimon.

### **Therapeutic Arts Program**

Ayman!

## **CRC PROJECTS**

### ***Ethiopian community***

An Ethiopian worker was employed for one day each week.

A consultation was held on 9 October 2010 with 33 participants. There was a follow-up after the event and compilation of results.

The Consultation informed activities for the Ethiopian community, which were planned accordingly and implemented in the given time.

Information sessions included:

- Financial Management;
- Stress management;
- Discovery Tour of Sydney CBD and Harbour with a social/picnic event

### ***Young Women's Leadership***

The youth worker conducted a young women's leadership program with outstanding outcomes. Various personalised sessions were held to build leadership skills through a variety of activities. Some of the sessions held include Relaxation through Dance, Public Speaking through Drama, Health/Wellbeing through make-up and skin care, Careers and Sewing, Self Confidence through Drama and Team building through Art.

Participants gained knowledge around the concept of leadership skills and about being positive role models in their communities. The young women learned how to take care of their emotions and ways to deal with stressful moments. It also provided encouragement for young women to be more engaged in community activities and support groups, as well as direction in future planning, various study options and employment readiness skills. Participants were able to work in groups and teams and produce a conjoint quilt.

The sessions assisted the young women greatly in building of confidence and self esteem to undertake initiative and had less fear in public speaking, thus contributing to the communities and society. This program defiantly succeeded in raising the self-confidence and self-esteem of the participants. The program has potentially created new young women leaders with the proficiency and abilities to educate and model the various skills they have developed.

**LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL**  
***Developing Happy Families Project***

The Liverpool MRC received funding under the Community Donations Program for the *Developing Happy Families Project*.

***Impetus for Expression of Interest***

Development of a Program for families whose English language skills level is competent and who requested support with their children's behaviour. As the funding received was considerable less than requested, priorities had to be set in terms of how to make most effective use of the received funds.

***Target group:***

The target group for this project was families with young children from refugee backgrounds, small emerging communities and CALD communities.

***Resources:***

***1. Staffing:***

- An Early Childhood TAFE Teacher at Miller was engaged to facilitate the Parenting Program;
- Additional Child Care workers for supervision during the Playgroup sessions to enable parents and carers to participate in the Behaviour Management Program;
- Four (4) Liverpool MRC Child Care Staff were engaged at the two Liverpool excursions;
- Two Liverpool Staff members were engaged at the excursion outside Liverpool.

***2. Educational Tools:***

- Purchase of educational resources to support participants and parents during the Parenting Program;
- Purchase of children's books conveying simple messages for children in the areas of sharing/taking turns, saying 'thank-you', etc., relating to the topics addressed in the Parenting Program.

***Activities:***

***1. Parenting Program - Behaviour Management Program***

A nine week program, two hours per week during Term 1 and 2, 2011, was facilitated by an Early Childhood TAFE Teacher.

An average nineteen Participants from Hinchinbrook Multicultural playgroup attended. The course was tailored to a practical outcomes, where the participants had the opportunity to:

- Explore causes of their children's inappropriate behavior;
- Learn strategies to modify their children's behavior;
- Explore parenting style and learn how parent's reaction can affect children's behaviour.

***2. Planned excursions encouraging positive parent/child interaction***

- Two excursions were held in the local Liverpool LGA, i.e. Chipping Norton Lakes;
- One excursion was held outside Liverpool, i.e. to the Powerhouse Museum.

***Outcomes:***

A total of 58 families and 79 children benefitted from the *Developing Happy Families* Project.

As the Parenting Program progressed the Early Childhood Facilitator was able to identify children who exhibited developmental and/or behavioural concerns and the Liverpool MRC Playgroup Co-ordinator made referrals to the Screening Clinic of the Liverpool Hospital or other relevant agencies which assist children with additional needs for further support and was followed-up regarding outcomes.

In particular, Playgroup staff noticed positive changes in children's behaviour and better parent/child interaction. The excursions enabled families to learn about recreational activities.

**Establishment and delivery of Humanitarian Settlement Strategy program at Liverpool MRC**

This year Liverpool MRC experienced a major change in its operational staffing and service structures. We began delivery of the intensive Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (HSS) service as a subcontractor to Settlement Services International (SSI) who was successful in acquiring the new HSS tender. HSS is a DIAC program designed to deliver on-arrival intensive settlement service to newly arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants (replacing the familiar IHSS).

More than simply 'a subcontractor', LMRC along with other SSI members contributed assiduously to the entire tender process and modelling of the proposal. Leveraging the 30+ years of experience in service delivery to migrants and refugees as well as their infrastructural strength the new HSS program is managed by SSI and delivered on the ground by MRCs/MSAs in the relevant regions within NSW.

Liverpool MRC's major programs deliver settlement services to refugees and humanitarian arrivals in the area under the Immigration Department's Settlement Grants Program (SGP). This is, generally, a 5 year program available for relevant arrivals. It is the longer term settlement assistance available when clients 'exit' the intensive IHSS program (now HSS). The period leading up to the announcement of the new tender was an intense and uncertain period. To have infrastructure and level of staff ready to deliver service to clients on arrival is not an overnight process; however SSI and the MRC network had direct prior experience in operating this program immediately prior the recent IHSS provider.

The period between November 2010 and March 2011 meant that we were working with the previous provider (under the old IHSS) — who was unsure of contract continuation — to exit large numbers of clients to our SGP programs, while simultaneously planning for transitional arrangements in anticipation of the new tender announcement. Will the same provider continue? Would the service model change? Will there be a new provider?

This period kept the management and executive on constant vigilance, as it was superimposed by continual political debates surrounding refugee policies and constant media barrage surrounding the issue.

The expectations were that IHSS clients will be exiting the program at a faster rate and therefore in greater numbers than usual — adding pressure on the Centre's SGP and administrative staff. At the same time, new HSS clients would also be arriving and requiring intensive case management service!

Meanwhile LMRC, in anticipation, decided to dedicate a team of staff to implement a series of organisational planning and infrastructural re-think to house the HSS program delivery for the region. The strategy to conduct the HSS program alongside the SGP program delivery is both sound and makes perfect sense. To this end, LMRC was adamant that such service will run within the same space and develop a synergy between the programs, providing seamless transition and service to clients as they move from one program to the other. It also provides closer relationships and communication between the case managers to better understand the clients' needs and plan for meaningful service.

A number of internal process changes were prioritised in the past year to better equip LMRC with the onset of expected changes, highlighted by the clear complex and deepened needs of new client arrivals. This is seen as another value-add contribution to the establishment and resourcing of the HSS program.

Two main tools that were pushed high on the agenda included Information Management policies and processes and, among other policies, a Risk Management policy revisit. The Information Management processes identified a number of sub-topics including a design and implementation of an LMRC Database tool. A database was already on the boil and in its infancy. New approaches needed to be added, however, to develop and design the database — not only for taking case notes, but also as client management tool, appointment management system and a source for anecdotal information, research, and data mining. This can place LMRC as a reference organisation for information, report writing and submissions, information for government departments, and local residents and students.

Another priority was Case Management policy reform. The entire organisational client interaction process is being revisited for this purpose. A holistic 'Community of Practice' approach was, and continues to be, played out over a series of meetings, training and workshops to develop quality service by the entire organization — from front desk officers to executives. Also, an overhaul of the entire *Policy and Procedures Manual* which was made easier with Dr Ali White on board as the Research and Policy Officer.

On announcement LMRC was ready. Despite the fact that the HSS program began so close to the Easter break, which saw a deluge of referrals come through, existing experienced LMRC senior caseworkers were immediately appointed to receive newly-arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants, to be managed internally by an LMRC team leader, while physical infrastructure work began to accommodate up to four HSS staff (which soon became seven!). This gave SSI the chance to prepare its

structures, setup headquarters, recruitments and contractual arrangements with the department and contractors.

LMRC office space was rearranged to accommodate up to six HSS Case Managers and a Co-ordinator as well as access to dedicated client contact case rooms, meeting rooms, and administrative support. All in all, Liverpool MRC provided crucial management, supervision and administrative start-up to the program. Liverpool MRC continues to provide this value-add co-ordination to the HSS program and is in the process of acquiring further office and training space in anticipation of growth.

The co-operation by all team members and efforts by SSI contributed to the thought development of such a complex and intense program. All attempts put into its establishment meant this HSS program is on a strong foundation to continue and grow for successful settlement of humanitarian entrants. LMRC will remain heavily involved in this project at both the Management level and daily operational implementation of the service.