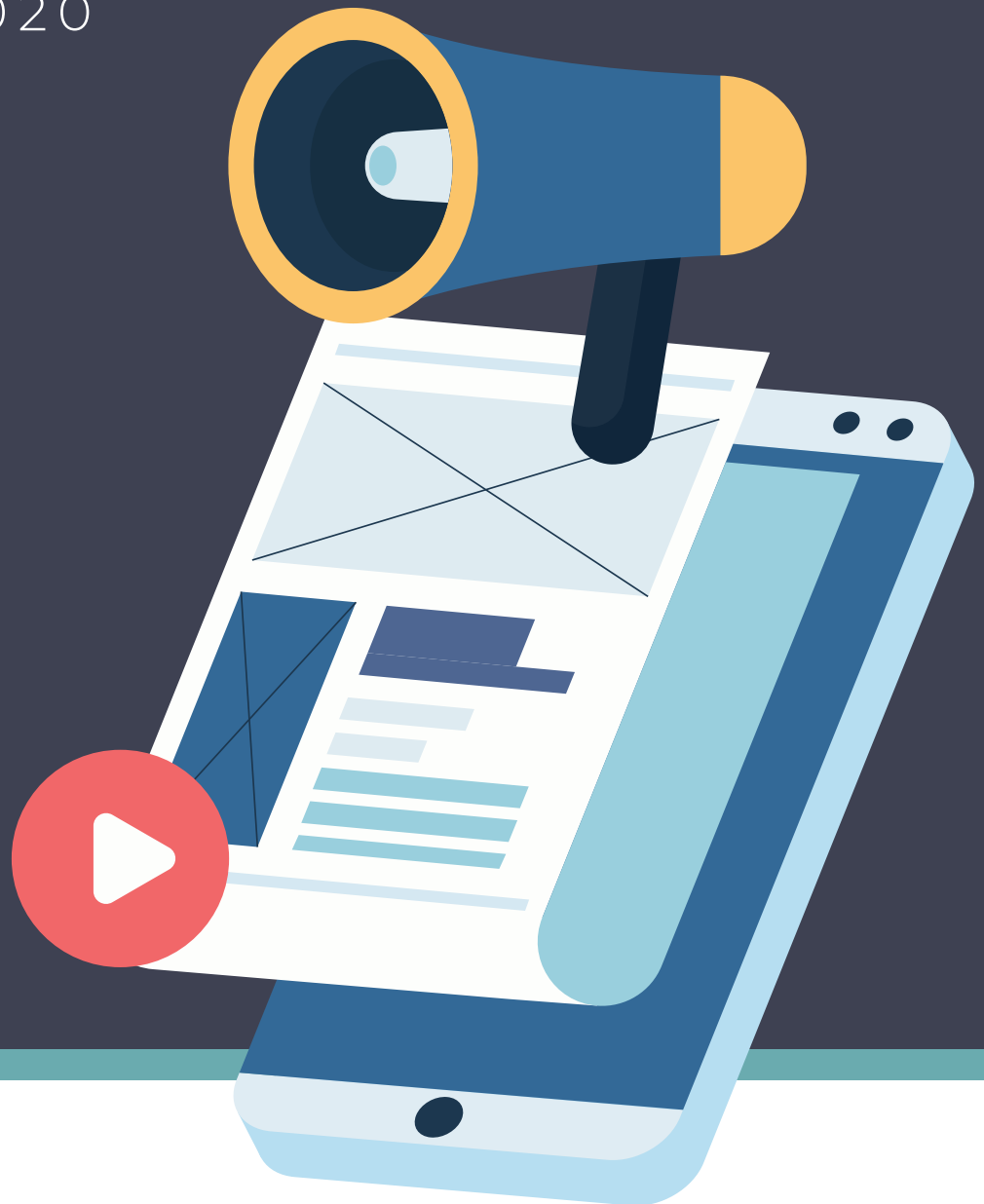


# COMMUNITY MEETING SUMMARY

AUGUST 2020



July 2020



On Wednesday 29th July we were joined by over 70 community members and leader sharing their insights and perspectives with our guests Joseph La Posta from CEO at Multicultural NSW, Local MP Melanie Gibbons and Guy Zangari.



## Key outcomes from the meeting and ongoing dialogue includes

- Actions to further support our community during COVID-19, and the effectiveness of the resources that has been made available. Are they being used?
- How can we have a structured and coordinated relationship with the NSW Government and key stakeholders on how we reach vulnerable and high need communities, as we acknowledge that there are multiple ways in reaching multicultural communities.
- What ways can we support and resource community leaders and influencers to deliver important accurate messages to their community?

# Meeting Summary



## Joseph La Posta, CEO Multicultural NSW



- Updated the attendees on the work Multicultural NSW has undertaken
- COVID-19 has exacerbated pre-existing social issues
- Multicultural NSW acknowledged that significant work will need to be undertaken to rebuild social capital in the community
- Janine Shamley from Multicultural NSW was introduced. Her role is to influence the Government to fund areas addressing unmet need. She was responsible for capturing the issues raised in the meeting
- Role of Multicultural NSW has been pivotal after events such as Sept 11, Bali Bombing, and now COVID-19. Their role is to dispel the fears and unite multicultural communities during these events/difficult times
- Multicultural NSW was able to secure funding from NSW Government for Asylum seekers, Temporary Visa Holders, and International students, so NGO's were able to support these community members
- Community Grants - \$600,000 was given to the community organisations across NSW
- Translated materials are available in 220 dialects in NSW and the translation of priorities languages is currently at 47 languages
- Multicultural NSW is also responsible for covering the costs of any material which is being translated by NSW Government departments, including Health and Police
- Engagement from Multicultural NSW with faith leaders has been robust, but Multicultural NSW is open to hearing about any gaps from community organisations, and community leaders to ensure they are included into existing forums
- Multicultural NSW has started campaign 'Remove Hate from the Debate' and is soon to undertake another to encourage community cohesion, anti-racism, as more needs to be done in this space. Multicultural NSW pushing the federal government to have a national campaign and is in dialogue with Department of Home

Affairs regarding this

- Community Hubs is being reinvested in for another 1 year to support young mums during COVID-19.
- In response to Dr Bushra's question about the Oxford vaccine, Joseph, confirmed that NSW Health and Government are watching the Oxford vaccine with great interest and optimism, however, as with any new vaccine, the analysis and monitoring of side effects during this trial stage is crucial. MP Melanie Gibbons added that everyone is working collaboratively in regard to the vaccine and that a unified / collaborative approach is being taken. NSW Health are watching any new vaccines very closely... there is an element of optimism...



*"I think some of the doctors and leaders within NSW Health and our own Chief Health Officer have been outstanding throughout this virus, managing not just the messaging, or the managing of the community but (create) opportunities to flatten the curve and find a vaccine."*

Joseph La Posta, CEO Multicultural NSW



## Community Challenges

- Not all communities engage and connect using printed formats, rather a connection on existing relationships and community person to person connection. How do we resource those relationships to inform the community?
- Community Leader - A need to have more Arabic information on television on the topic of COVID-19, such as SBS and ABC
- Inaccurate information in the community, from the social media
- Srey Kang from the Kymer Community - feeling left out, and has been hit hard, very little information in language. The leaders have been translating material via video and broadcast twice a day on social media, during the peak outbreaks. Delivering food to the community, especially elderly and single mothers. What can be done to further support this community?
- Challenges by authorities during peak outbreaks to keep on top of the outgoing information in community languages
- Cultural practices of hugging and kissing, atop those who don't accept this pandemic is real can cause a dangerous situation in spreading the virus and therefore increased community transmission
- Testing - people avoiding being tested, as then they would need to isolate, and they are reluctant
- People are sometimes illiterate in their own language, so the sole use of printed material is not effective for them
- Errors in translated material, e.g. Arabic, as there are different dialects, and some information can be inaccurate
- Victoria Government singling out the CALD community, weak argument, NSW Government has come through in strong supporting that we cannot and should not blame one part of the community. This virus does not discriminate
- Guy Zangari - work as a united group, trying to get the messages seen and heard through multiple channels and means. Challenges coming through from local residents is that there are too many messages coming through, different restrictions on different areas – leads to confusion
- MP Melanie Gibbons - following health guidelines is important, to control the second wave it important. Fear is a major issue, that needs to be addressed



*“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 Kymer Community*

*“The situation is not easy, it is very challenging, but every time we hear something that we should step up and translate it as community leaders.”*

*Bashar Hanna*

*“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 Moneke, IGBO Community Leader*

*“One area of discussion, which we (the entire population) have not put a good plan is, when we have to isolate in our home... other members of those household, how do you isolate in that house without exposing those who have not been exposed? And post COVID we will have to do a lot of things to lift these communities.”*

*Silas Moneke, IGBO Community Leader*



## Community Challenges continued

- Mums with young children - prior to schools age, needed more information, in the hope of reaching the most disadvantaged
- Newly arrived and emerging communities are disproportionately affected because of the employment of said communities (casual employment / no long-term security and benefits)
- Silas Moneke from the Igbo Community identifies that Self-isolation information is lacking - what is expected in those households, particularly with other members in the home, who have not been exposed. Particularly those who live in small homes, or those homes which are overcrowded
- Mandaean community leader mentioned that there is a lack of messaging in regard what isolation looks like for the whole family, who will support them financially? If they have no access to Centrelink, who will provide shopping for them? The community leaders believe that this is one of the reasons that the community avoid getting tested.
- Lots of TV and information about COVID-19 and its intricacies, but there is minimal information about what it means to be isolated. How does this impact families, how do people cope, what support systems and structures are put in place to support a single mothers who needs to isolate? If the whole family need to isolate, washing, cooking etc. Casual workers impacted by being asked to isolation. These are some of the reasons that those aren't isolating. How do we manage isolation?
- Complacency will be one of our biggest downfalls in containing this.
- With the shift and changes in messaging, ongoing updates are required. How can we support this and make sustainable initiatives come to fruition?



*"From my community I sometimes hear that this is a conspiracy... there is so much we can do in the community. The church is doing a lot to educate people. There were some issues mentioned, written information even though created, are illiterate in their own language. Videos is a very good idea. Short videos (in language) could educate people on how to act and how to take care of each other and themselves, how to be tested, churches are the best places to put information out. Community Radio stations is also a good idea."*

**Ramziyah Shaba, Assyrian Community**

*"Mothers and young people (within our community) and grand-nannys are not watching mainstream channels, but they are watching children's TV."*

**Mawat Majok, Chairman of South Sudanese NSW**

*"All good ideas. Not only theory...we need the practical part now. We have to agree what we are going to do next. Everything needs money. Production of clips need money. We have to think as a group... what's next? Social media is quick, and spending a lot of time on Facebook. Who will be responsibly, provide money for this. COVID is spreading out and we need to spread the message out... we are all happy to work together."*

**Father Fadi**



## Community Achievements

- Domestic Violence, and mental health - faith leaders are aware and sharing information on these topics to educate the community
- Iraqi Australian Graduate Forum - Information sessions in Arabic online to cover issues relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health, made available on their website
- A community survey was undertaken by Settlement Services International with 800 families, the majority of respondents all aware of Coronavirus, and value the information being shared, the best most useful information has been delivered via someone on the phone in language
- Faith leaders are placing updated information on white boards at churches
- IACA, Health is Wealth Community meetings and webinars supported by the MRC have been welcomed and achieved great reach and support to community members. Sessions delivered in Arabic meant that not only were community were building digital literacy but being provided with information and advice in their preferred language.
- Councillor Dai Le - RAF committee - video messaging, every community member needs to step up and take responsibility. Scan the news in Wetherill Park and Cabramatta, messaging is to reduce fears, and following safety messages, and asked the community to share important messages to those that are more vulnerable. We have the potential to reach out to a large group of people, and get information from NSW Health, and relay information.
- Community leaders have taken on such a huge role – their contributions to support their communities have been outstanding.



*“You can be walking around in the community without knowing you have it. It is lonely and stressful but so needed. Let us know if there is anything we can provide. Pick up the phone, email us - reach out - how can we better communicate.”*

*“Our local MPs, despite the side of the parliamentary isle, are working together, are collaborating in aiming to provide the community as much support and information as is extended to them.”*

*MP Melanie Gibbons, Member for Holdsworthy*

*“Everyday, the department of cabinet and health are contacting MPs disseminating information specific to our areas (91 MPS). They are creating their own newsletters with specify links to multicultural NSW, MPs are rigorously being part of the getting the messaging out there. MPs are trying to be that gel / glue - by acknowledging the community contributions. Our freedoms have been stripped away. The biggest challenges we have are the volunteer aspect, due to not being well, elderly and frail, and are on the verge of collapse.”* Guy Zangari.

*Guy Zangari, Member for Fairfield*



## Community Initiatives for consideration

- Community leaders were encouraged to step up and deliver videos with their community
- The production of short videos would be effective, like SBS previously have produced, and the topics should cover consequences of not following government directions
- Acknowledge that the community are doing a lot, the focus is how we work smarter
- Banners across the SBS and ABC in different languages on different channels
- Councillor Dai Le advises that she established a young entrepreneur group and they will run a Mental Health Forum
- Assyrian Community, Ramziyah - Second waves are highlighting that people are bored, conspiracy theories, address these concerns. The church is taking on the responsibility of eating through the church. Illiteracy is a big issue. Short videos would be useful to address many of the concerns and information. Utilising messaging through schools and churches is recommended. The trusted voice of these community leaders adds weight to the message. Multilingual Radio stations should be used further get message out. Social groups seem to still be functioning but delivery through Facebook. The churches would be happy to send out comms but needs financial support. Assyrian community have over 4000 members
- Mawat Majok - Chairperson of South Sudanese community in NSW. Knowing the message isn't the issue it is distribution to the wider community. Children's TV seems to be an avenue that could be explored further, being able to reach young mothers etc who are not being reached. He made statements of thanks to the community that translate
- Father Fadi - Practical Partnerships with clear funding, where do we go to next? Short clips are great initiatives,

yet who supports this and coordinates? The messages are every changing, we need someone to take the lead - to take accountable... practicalities are extremely important

- Guy Zangari, member for Fairfield is the patron mancave support group - supporting community when it comes to suicide and suicide prevention. We are all coping in different ways. His greatest fear is PTSD. The isolation and freedoms will ultimately have an impact on all of us. As a collective, we need to work towards supporting each other in identifying the early signs of PTSD. The disaster unfolding is not to be underestimated.
- Training programs that support community leaders on how to create assets, messages and practical advice to create messages.



*“Once thing we all need to be aware of. Suicide awareness and prevention has to be part of this conversation as well. Loss of job, loss of business, loss of family members. Too many losses and for some this is all too much. The mental health of many people is at breaking point.”*

*Guy Zangari, Member for Fairfield*



## Where to from here?

- A summary of the meeting is being prepared for the community and will be shared with yourselves. We will follow up on the critical ideas and gaps, exploring further and working with each of you to gain traction/development.
- Information Care kits - an easy access document of quick links, resources and assets grouped by language will be shared with the community. These will be a list of credible resources and aim to meet many needs, addressing some of those highlighted yesterday - Currently developing an Arabic version for community review
- A community advisory group developed to continue to inform the Government and key Departments. The community are being asked to register their interest. We will keep you informed on what this looks like to gain your level of involvement.
- Establishing a mental health ZoomCheck-in open to members of the community. More details to follow.



## Contact us

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