

35th
Annual
Report
2007-2008

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Whittlesea Community Connections

Whittlesea Community Connections is a not-for-profit community based organisation providing a range of services and programs designed to increase community participation and to address disadvantage within the municipality of Whittlesea.

Our core services and programs consist of:

- Information, support and referral services
- The Emergency Relief Service
- Settlement Support Programs
- The Whittlesea Connect Community Transport Service
- The Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service
- The Whittlesea Community Legal Service

WCC's vision is for a Whittlesea in which people and agencies work together to make a positive difference to their community, ensuring that everyone has equal access to the community's resources and services.

Front cover is a detail of basket woven by Everine Miburo, 2008

Our Vision

Contents

Committee of Management 2007-08	3
Staff	4
Volunteers	5
President's Report	9
Manager's Report	10
Settlement Program Report	11
Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service	13
Whittlesea Connect Community Transport Service	16
Whittlesea Community Legal Service	17
Emergency Relief	19
Information & Referral Services	20
Financial Report	22
Financial Statements	23
Auditor's Report	27

Committee of Management 2007-08

Raziye Baftiyar	President	Volunteer and Social Work and Human Services Student
Greg Godfrey	Treasurer	Mr. Greg Godfrey, Dip. Financial Planning, Financial Information Services Officer - Centrelink
Maureen Corrigan	V. President/Public Officer	Ms Maureen Corrigan, Ass Diploma SACS Electorate Officer, the Office of Peter Batchelor MLA, Member for Thomastown. President of The Olive Tree Community House, President Thomastown Traders Association, Member of Northern Hospital Corporate Fundraising Committee, International Women's Day Convenor (Whittlesea Community Connections)
Sam Alessi	Official City of Whittlesea Representative	Cr. Sam Alessi BA, BEd, Dip. Teach, Grad. Dip. Computing, City of Whittlesea Councillor from 1997, Mayor of City of Whittlesea 1997/8,2000/01 and 2004/05, Teacher, Vice President Municipal Association of Victoria, , Deputy Chairperson Yarra Plenty Regional Library Service.
Rolf Peake	Ordinary Member	Federation Computer Resource Facilitator, Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service (graphic design and promotion, International Volunteer Day Working Group), Secretary, Link Community Transport Board of Management, Treasurer, Lalor Living & Learning Centre Committee of Management, Northern Transport Links Steering Committee Member, COW Cultural Bridges working group Member.
Sebastian (Dinny) Jaconis	Ordinary Member	Community Information Worker; front desk reception, emergency relief assessor, Whittlesea Community Engagement Reference Group
Charles McLean	Ordinary Member	Retired: Vice President Swimming Victoria – Metro West; Qualified Official Australian Swimming Incorporated; Community Member Retired Ambulance Assoc.; Member of Ambulance Historic Society; Volunteer Link & WCC Community transport
Lena Garganno-Reddy	Ordinary Member	12 years volunteering at WCC; volunteer representative on WCC Volunteer Standards Committee; Whittlesea Community Engagement Reference Group; Member of Whittlesea Disability Network and International Disability Day Committee; Parents and Friends Committee, Concord School.
Martin Booth	Volunteer Representative	Graduated 2005 Bachelor of Behavioural Science (major psychology) from La Trobe University, Bundoora. Recently completed Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. Presenter, 2-day training course on Emergency Relief. Volunteer with WCC since 2007; member of the Committee of Management for just on 1 year.
Evette Dunstone	Volunteer Representative	
Jan Cleeland	Co-opted Ordinary Member	Staff Member Office of Senator, the Hon Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband Communications and the Digital Economy

Staff

Jemal Ahmet	Manager
Emma Antonetti	Community Development & Access Worker (Teamleader Settlement Programs)
Lucinda Antony (from January 2008)	Community Development Worker (Community Participation)
Michael Apout	Soccer Project Worker
Jill Cooper (to April 2008)	Community Development & Access Worker (Teamleader Community Programs & Client Services)
Robert Frajsman	Community Legal Education Worker
Sarath Gamlath (to December 2007)	Community Development Worker (Community Participation)
Vaithilingam Ganeshanathan	Accountant (p/t)
John Mirabile (from December 2007)	Volunteer Placement Worker (New Arrivals)
Belinda Lo (to August 2007)	Principal Solicitor, Teamleader Whittlesea Community Legal Service
Grozda Nedeljkovic	Settlement Support Worker (Family Support)
Susan Perkins	Community Development Worker (Community Engagement)
Silvana Prestia	Principal Solicitor, Teamleader Whittlesea Community Legal Service (from January 2008)/Community Lawyer
Philippe Roussel	Youth Worker (New Arrivals)
Dalal Samaan (to February 2008)	Coordinator of Legal Service Administration and Volunteers,
Emma Sampson	Coordinator, Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service
Dalal Sleiman	Settlement Support Worker (Arabic Speaking Communities)
Nivedana Achuthan, (nee Srikantha)	Outreach Solicitor, Law Reform Project Worker

Volunteers

Abdo, Souleiman	Legal Service Solicitor
Abojalboush, Na'el	Tax Help
Aderbehman, Parizad	Legal Service Day Team
Ahilaeswaran, Abarna	Tax Help
Alderson, Elaine	Federation Computer Room. Volunteer Resource Service
Alkayali, Dina	Legal Service Day Team
Anthony, Maria	Legal Service Day Team
Antonetti, John	Community Transport Service
Baboulas, Gale	Volunteer Resource Service
Baddeley, Barbara	Community Information Team, Administration
Badi, Raya	Settlement Team
Barry, Jan	Legal Service Day Team
Beatty, Marianne	Mentor
Belot, Veronica	Legal Service Day Team
Bhatara, Reena	Legal Service Day Team
Bhatt, Ameer	Settlement Team
Bisht, Ritu	Settlement Team
Bismyf, Janet	Mentor
Bithell, Cathy	Mentor
Booth, Martin	Community Information Team
Bosnich, Billie-Jo	Community Information Team, Community Engagement
Brooks Georgianna	Community Information Team
Buhagiari, Kelly	Legal Service Day & Night Service Teams
Buizetti, Bernice	Settlement Team
Bulloch, Adam	Tax Help
Byron, Bill	Community Transport Service
Caprioli, Melissa	Legal Service Day Team
Carlsson, Reinhold	Community Information Volunteer; Emergency Relief, Community Transport Service
Caruana, Michelle	Legal Service Day Team
Ceconato, Orfeo	Community Transport Service
Challenger, Dorothy	Community Transport Service
Chamatakundil, Jay	Legal Night Service Team
Chapell, Eddie	Community Transport Service
Cherian, Jolly	Legal Service Day Team
Chetcuti, Helen	Legal Service Solicitor
Chitgar, Rabeh	Legal Night Service Team
Chong, Jeon	Legal Service Day Team
Ciuffetllie, Dino	Administration
Clear, Denis	Community Transport Service
Cohen, Charles (Alby)	Community Transport Service
Colaluca, Eveline	Community Information Team, Community Engagement
Coleman, Janice	Legal Service Day Team
Craik, Jessica	Legal Service Day Team
Cvetkovski, Saso	Community Information Team, Federation Computer Room
Dao, Tran	Legal Service Day Team
Das, Ajanta	Community Information Team, Tax Help
Dellios, Paul	Legal Service Solicitor
Dimoska, Lydia	Community Information Team, Tax Help
Dosky, Meriam	Legal Service Day Team
Dunstone, Evette	Community Transport Service, Community Information Team, Committee of Management
Eliopoulos, Joanna	Community Information Team
Ellul, Lawrence	Settlement Team
Fallar, Jessica	Legal Night Service Team
Fares, Aida	Settlement Team, Community Information Team
Farid, Rosemary	Settlement Team
Farmer, Rosylyn	Community Information Team
Feng, Carol	Legal Service Day Team
Frilay, Peter	Legal Service Day Team
Fung, Jason	Settlement Team
Gajanayake, Sakunthala	Community Information Team
Gargano-Reddy, Lena	Community Information Team, Committee of Management
Georgiadis, Sylvia	Legal Service Day Team
Georgiev, Natalie	Legal Service Day Team
Giakimis, Jenny	Community Information Team
Gibby, Julia	Legal Service Day Team

Giovannini, Lidiana	Settlement Team
Glover, Carol	Community Engagement
Go, Mai	Legal Service Day Team
Golland, Maurice	Community Transport Service
Goodrick, Delwyn	Community Engagement, Strategic Planning
Goodwin, Andrew	Community Information Team
Guthrie, Marnie	Settlement Team
Habas, Jan	Legal Service Day Team
Habsyi, Huda	Community Information Team
Hammond, Karen	Settlement Team
Hancock, Frank	Community Information Team
Harba, Anthony	Legal Service Day Team
Havrilova, Maja	Legal Night Service Team
Hawkins, Gary	Community Transport Service, Mentor
Haycraft, Caroline	Legal Night Service Team
Haywood, Lauren	Legal Service Day Team
Helgesen, Carl	Community Transport Service
Henderson, Kevin	Community Transport Service
Hill, Jim	Community Transport Service
Holland, Julie	Community Engagement, NMIT Student Placement
Improso, Aline	Volunteer Resource Service
Jaconis, Sebastian (Dinny)	Community Information Team, Emergency Relief; Community Engagement, Committee of Management
Jayamanoharan, Devaki	Tax Help
Jayasinghe, Kanthi	Legal Service Day Team
Jayasuria, Shanaka	Tax Help
Jones, Jillian (Tilly)	Community Information Team
Kallatte Thazhekiniyel, Sreelaya	Community Information Team
Karafilis, Amanda	Legal Service Day Team
Kaur, Amandeep	Legal Service Day Team
Kaur, Gurvir	Legal Service Day Team
Kaur, Kamalpreet	Legal Service Day Team
Kenna, Paul	Legal Service Solicitor
Kirkovski, Elizabeth	Community Information Team, Administration
Kodituwakku, Lakshinee	Legal Service Day Team
Kolandayan, Shaun	Community Transport Service
Kotanidis, Sofia	Mentor
Kubat, Kaitlin	Legal Night Service Team
Kuganesan, Kumithini	Tax Help
Lavery, Bernadette	Mentor
Lee, Jonothon	Legal Service Day Team
Leek, Peter	Community Transport Service
Leine, Kate	Legal Service Day Team
Li Rossi, Daniella	Legal Service Day Team
Ling, Siew Ting	Legal Service Day Team
Lograsso, Robyn	Community Information Team; Volunteer Resource Service
Luo, Ross	Tax Help
Maan, Manpreet Singh	Community Information Team
MacDonald, Jan	Settlement Team, Mentor
Macrae, Catherine	Legal Service Day Team
Malavisi, Italo	Community Information Team
Mallia, Frank	Community Transport Service
Mallia, Mary	Community Transport Service
Mandawala, Kasun	Legal Service Day Team
Mandawala, Sachini	Legal Service Day Team
Manickam, Mangayarkarasi	Legal Service Day Team
Mapa, Nadeesha	Legal Night Service Team
Masters, Sally	Settlement Team
Maxwell, Sheena	Mentor
McLean, Charles	Community Transport Service
Michell, Penny Lee	Settlement Team
Miller, John	Community Information Team, Community Transport Service
Mitrovic, Gordana	Legal Day and Night Service Team
Montalti, Joseph	Community Transport Service
Moran, Shaun	Legal Service Day Team
Morkos, Michael	Legal Night Service Team
Moses, Ashley	Mentor

Mudiyanselage, Chamila	Tax Help
Muhsen, Thiab	Settlement Team
Murgano, Peter	Community Transport Service
Nassar, Mohamed	Mentor
Nuro, Gemila	Settlement Team
Nwankwo, Mary	Mentor
Odgers, Felicity	Settlement Team
Omasaraswatee Cusima, Deepty	Settlement Team
Palavikas, Alana	Legal Service Day Team
Passantino, Lorretta	Legal Service Day Team
Peake, Rolf	Federation Computer Room, Volunteer Resource Service, Community Transport Service , Committee of Management
Perera, Shiromi	Community Information Team
Perkins, Melissa	Community Engagement
Peter, Corolin	Legal Service Day Team
Petrovska, Hristina	Legal Night Service Team
Petrucelle, Madeine	Community Transport Service
Phemister, Jeaninne	Community Transport Service
Powell, Jamie	Mentor
Prasad, Chandrika	Community Information Team
Rachman, Robyn	Community Information Team
Rajapaske, Tanya	Community Engagement
Ramirez, Clememtina Josephine	Settlement Team
Regos, Andrew	Community Information Team
Reid, Janet	Community Transport Service
Renshaw, Mary	Community Engagement
Rhim, Ghayda	Settlement Team
Richter, Melisa	Settlement Team
Ridgeway, John	Mentor
Roberts, Alan	Community Transport Service, Emergency Relief, Community Information Team
Roberts, Carol	Community Transport Service, Emergency Relief, Community Information Team
Roberts, Dylan	Legal Service Day Team
Robinson, Jessica	Legal Service Day & Night Teams
Rout, Mark	Legal Service Day Team
Sagoo, Upinder	Mentor
Sanchez, Liz	Mentor
Sanjeevan, Sukanthi	Community Information Team
Santos, Marian	Legal Service Day Team
Selim, Jimmy	Community Transport Service
Sharma, Tina	Mentor
Sia, Samuel	Community Information Team
Sidrak, Shoukry	Tax Help
Simmons, Rosemary	Settlement Team
Sinclair, Anna	Legal Service Day Team
Sivashambu, Kajan	Mentor
Smith, Gabrielle	Community Information Team
Southurst, Glenys	Mentor
Spry, Jacqueline	Legal Service Solicitor
Sribalachandran, Nadarajah (Bala)	Community Information Team, Federation Computer Room
Srikantha, Vallinayaki (Valli)	Emergency Relief, Mentor
Stelmach, Tanya	Legal Service Day Team
Subramanian, Gomathi	Community Information Team
Sutton, Carol	Legal Service Day Team
Tadros, Sherien	Settlement Team
Taig, Chris	Legal Service Day Team
Tan, Mei Yoong (Ellen)	Community Information Team
Tan. Poh Yoke	Community Information Team
Terrell, Joan	Mentor
Toveska, Verce	Legal Service Day Team
Townsend, Tony	Community Transport Service
Treadwell, Andrew	Mentor, Settlement Team
Trunavuckarasu, Aravindan	Legal Service Day Team
Umbadhi, Taylan	Mentor
Uppu, Suseela	Community Information Team
Van Arkadie, Jarrod	Legal Night Service Team

Varalla, Cindy	Legal Service Day & Night Teams
Vavouris, Angelo	Community Information Team; Federation Computer Room
Vidakis, Nina	Community Information Team, Community Engagement, Administration
Vyas, Shiv	Legal Service Day Team
Walcott-Taylor, Ekumi	Community Information Team
Waldie, Owen	Settlement Team, Community Transport Service
Walia, Charanjit	Community Information Team
Wati, Saras	Settlement Team
Wheeler, Graham	Community Transport Service
Whelan, David	Settlement Team
Wighton, Michael	Legal Service Solicitor
Wijesinha, Ranjit	Emergency Relief
Williams, Greg	Legal Service Day Team
Williams, Robert	Legal Night Service Team
Woodlock, Tysen	Legal Service Day Team
Yekenkurul, Neva	Settlement Team
Zorzi, Elio	Community Transport Service

President's Report

Firstly I would like to say that it has been an honour to have been given the opportunity to represent WCC as President, always keeping in mind the late Peter Cleeland's commitment to the City of Whittlesea, especially his dedication, all his hard work and achievements at Whittlesea Community Connections.

This year has been a period of transition, personal growth and professional development for me. I would like to thank Jemal, my fellow committee members, staff and volunteers for their on going support during the year. Their continuous commitment and dedication has been the key to maintaining a well run and accountable organisation.

Whittlesea Community Connections continues to grow and meet the growing needs of a growing community. This financial year, as in previous years, staff have demonstrated through their commitment, continued responsiveness to clients, service delivery and program development.

Both paid staff and volunteers are to be congratulated as their contribution and dedication has been outstanding and second to none. I would like to make special mention of our Teamleaders who have worked extremely hard to secure funding for the services within their program areas. All program areas have at one stage or another been understaffed and under considerable strain during the year however staff continued to deliver services to meet the needs of the community.

This financial year staffing changes saw the departure of Belinda Lo and Dalal Samaan from our legal service team; Ali Kassem, Sarath Gamlath (Volunteer Resource Service) and Jill Cooper (Community Programs & Client Services) also moved on to new opportunities elsewhere. Their contributions to the work of the agency during the year and throughout their time at WCC are greatly valued and they will all be missed. On a more positive note, we welcomed John Mirabile and Lucinda Antony to our Volunteer Resource Service team and Philippe Roussel took on a new role as Youth Worker focusing on supporting new arrival and refugee young people within our Settlement team. Michael Apout also joined this team as a Soccer Project Worker in an exciting new one-year initiative delivered in partnership with the New Hope Foundation.

All our teams saw a marked increase in the rise of housing issues during the year. Low vacancy rates in Whittlesea's rental market, rising interest rates, the resultant increases in mortgages and rents, and the lack of diversity in housing stocks has severely affected families and those on low or fixed incomes. Housing services are under severe strain and hidden homelessness resulting in overcrowded living conditions has risen sharply. Significant collaboration and partnership work both locally and regionally is required to ensure that advocacy on this issue is effective.

During the year WCC initiated a process for establishing a three-year strategic plan. External stake holders, staff, committee of management members and volunteers were consulted. Five strategic directions have been identified which will ensure WCC builds on strengths and positions itself to harness opportunities as they arise. WCC would like to thank Dr Delwyn Goodrick for her invaluable contribution for enabling WCC to clearly articulate our vision, mission and strategic directions. The Committee and Staff look forward to implementing the strategic plan in the coming years.

Raziye Baftiyar *President*



Manager's Report

This year has been one of great success and achievement for Whittlesea Community Connections. Our programs have responded to changing and growing community needs and there has been an expansion in both the range of services we provide and the number of people whom we provide it to.

Substantial work was undertaken to consolidate the research and consultation phase of the Whittlesea Community Engagement Framework throughout the year. This innovative partnership project involved stakeholders from local agencies, local and state government and community members in developing and defining principles of community engagement relevant to the needs and aspirations of Whittlesea people. Our Volunteer Resource Service (in particular Emma Sampson) has produced an end product that not only this organisation but the whole of Whittlesea can take pride in. Already signs indicate that this project will have a significant and lasting impact on the local area.

The *Rebuilding Social Support Networks in Small and Emerging Refugee Communities* research project was finalised during the year. Emma Antonetti's work is of the highest quality and identifies important ways in which small and emerging refugee communities overcome the difficulties of settlement through extensive efforts of self-help and support. This research not only clarifies the important role that must be given to new arrivals in participating in local settlement processes but also provides opportunities for agencies to re-think their own roles in supporting emerging communities. The project has already influenced internal approaches and we look forward to further productive and mutually beneficial partnerships with new communities based on the learnings from the research.

Whittlesea Connect, WCC's Community Transport Service, has seen an astronomical increase in the demand for its services. Transport disadvantage (despite recent improvements to public transport services in the area) is undoubtedly the key issue affecting Whittlesea communities. Whittlesea residents (particularly families, people on low incomes, young people and older residents) consistently identify transport availability as an obstacle to community participation and social inclusion. Attempts to work with the state government to secure funding to ensure this service continues into the future have yet to produce results. It is our view that Whittlesea will be substantially the poorer if this service were not to be available. A radical re-think of how we achieve sustainability of the service will be required if efforts with government do not bear fruit.

Our legal team faced a significant period of staff shortage as finding appropriate replacements for key vacancies proved difficult. We were pleased however that Silvana Prestia accepted the position of Principal Solicitor and Teamleader of the Legal Service team, moving from her position as Community Lawyer. Her experience within the organisation has meant a seamless transition and provided a valuable opportunity to build on the good work initiated by her predecessor, Belinda Lo. The continuing success of the work of this team during this period of staffing shortage is a credit to the organisation.

The building of and maintenance of productive partnerships with local and regional agencies, the Council, state and federal government is important to the achievement of our aims as an organisation. During the year WCC has participated in key and influential partnerships including involvement on the Executive Committee of Whittlesea Community Futures, the executive committee of the Northern Transport Links Transport Connections Project as well as facilitating a range of forums, advisory groups and networks (such as the Whittlesea Multicultural Issues Network and the Whittlesea Volunteer Forum) in which other agencies have joined with us in collaborative approaches and initiatives.

Our successful partnership with the CFA, the City of Whittlesea and the state government on a project aimed at building Community Capacity for Responsiveness to Local Emergencies is an example of where our strengths and local expertise have been utilised to achieve common goals. Our partnership with local people to advocate for an inter-cultural centre (the Cultural Bridges Community Action Group) is also a significant move towards closer partnership work directly with the community. It is these types of partnerships that assist in achieving our aims and vision and in bringing us ever closer to the communities of Whittlesea.

In this, my tenth Annual Report as Manager of Whittlesea Community Connections, I think of all our achievements over that time. I remember all who have contributed to our sustained growth and evolution as a strong and vibrant community owned and community managed agency. But, most of all, I look forward to the future knowing that we are stronger than we were, we are more connected to our community than we were and that we are more ready than ever before to move forward. In particular I look forward to working with my team, my Committee of Management and with Whittlesea's communities in implementing our Strategic Plan for 2009-11.

Finally, I would like to end by thanking all staff members for their hard work and dedication during the year. I would also like to thank the Committee of Management for their unerring support and for their trust and, most importantly, to all community members who have participated in our work as volunteers, advisors, clients and service users, making WCC not just a place of work but an inspiring environment that allows for opportunities to make a difference.

Jemal Ahmet *Manager*

Settlement Programs Report

Volunteers

Volunteers have contributed more than 1,400 hours to the delivery of settlement services in Whittlesea. Community contribution through roles such as English tutoring, child care, group facilitation and coordination has ensured that support groups established for new migrants and refugee communities are sustainable and community driven. A greater focus on the capacities of new arrival communities has enhanced contributions to the settlement of their own communities, enhancing broader community inclusion. Long-term volunteers have also had the opportunity to join our staff team based on the experience and skills developed through assisting settlement support groups and activities.

Client Services

More than 430 clients have been assisted through settlement services in 2007-2008. Two-thirds of clients had been in Australia for less than five years and about half arrived under the humanitarian program. Countries of origin were predominantly Macedonia, Iraq and Sudan and top places of settlement in the City of Whittlesea were Lalor, Epping and Thomastown.

Document help, material and financial, accommodation and legal were the main issues addressed by settlement casework. Securing affordable and appropriate accommodation has become a significant challenge for new arrival families settling in Whittlesea, impacting on inter-connected settlement needs such as health and education.

Targeted information sessions and development of translated material on issues such as migration, changes to citizenship laws, family violence, women's health, education and training pathways further enhanced access to information and services for new arrival families and individuals.

Research & Community Consultation: 'We Make Strong Our Foundation to Help Ourselves'

The *Rebuilding Social Support Networks in Small and Emerging Refugee Communities* research project was based on more than 80 voices and experiences of emerging refugee communities. Research identified:

- The importance and different roles support networks play for emerging refugee communities particularly within the settlement context
- How issues such as loss of family and dispersed settlement have impacted on the way in which the community can come together and support one another
- What emerging refugee communities want to achieve within the framework of community strengthening and developing diverse partnerships
- And how organisations and government bodies can best support refugee communities to support themselves

Findings are beginning to impact the way in which local settlement services are provided, particularly in recognition of the capacity refugee communities have to contribute to their own settlement experience as well as the broader community.

Young People

A Youth Worker for New Arrivals was a welcome addition to the settlement team this year. About two-thirds of new arrivals that settled in Whittlesea between 2003-08 were under the age of 29. While young people are extremely resilient, new arrival youth also face a number of barriers. In recognition of this, several initiatives were established by WCC for new arrival youth:

- Local orientation tours for new arrival young people
- Learning Support Programs at Epping and Lalor North Secondary Colleges
- Life Skills facilitated by Life Saving Victoria
- Swimming Lessons
- A Girls Cooking Club in partnership with City of Whittlesea Youth Services
- Holiday Programs and Activities
- A program linking local police and new arrival youth, creating opportunities to exchange different experiences and understandings of the justice system
- Complex casework for youth experiencing interventions with the justice system, homelessness and other difficult issues

In 2008 a Community Soccer Project (Living in Harmony) was established for young people from refugee and migrant communities in partnership with the New Hope Foundation. The project provides opportunities for young people to get connected through soccer and establish links to local sporting clubs and community groups. The project has enabled people from refugee communities to gain qualifications in refereeing, access resources and provided opportunities for people of diverse backgrounds to come together based on common ground.

Settlement Programs Report

In partnership with Peter Lalor Secondary College and Sustainability Street a community garden was established on the school grounds. Community consultations identified that emerging refugee communities had extensive agricultural knowledge, skills and experience. Opportunities to develop existing skills within the settlement context were limited and the community garden provides an inclusive and accessible space to continue farming, although on a much smaller scale. *'Because of the garden I am still a farmer, just as I have always been.'*



Children's Art

An art class for children from refugee backgrounds was established in 2007-08 with the support of Plenty Valley Arts and Parks Victoria. Volunteer support helps guide children's learning experience through different mediums including clay, drawing and painting. It also provides children with social and play opportunities at Hawkstowe Park.

Supporting Arabic Speaking Women & Children

The Arabic Speaking Women's Group and Playgroup, established in 2003, continue to be successful mechanisms for new arrival women and children to develop effective support networks and establish broader community connections. The Arabic Women's Group has participated in several important initiatives and planning processes that have helped achieve these broader aims. Examples include a Women's Leadership Program, facilitated by Australian Lebanese Welfare and consultations that helped develop workshops for CLD women on domestic violence and women's health. The mentoring of new arrival women by established group members has further facilitated the settlement of Arabic speaking women living in Whittlesea.



Supporting Emerging Refugee Communities

The Refugee Support Group, facilitated each Saturday, brings small and emerging refugee communities together to create invaluable social and networking opportunities. Several group members travel extensive distances in order to maintain these connections exactly because of their small and emerging nature. Support from community members to develop new and existing skills such as language, computer and art and craft have led to outcomes such as increased confidence and a greater sense of community inclusion.

Celebrating Refugee Week

Whittlesea's Refugee Week Event held in June 2008 involved the participation of more than 150 community members through dance, music and poetry. The event provided refugee communities in particular an opportunity to show case their culture to the broader community. The support of the City of Whittlesea, Victoria Multicultural Commission, AMES, Mercy Hospital and Plenty Valley FM were integral to the event's success.



Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service

WVRS extended the reach of its services and programs in 2007-08, assisting over 1,072 community members with volunteer information, referral and support, and significantly developing its associated programs. A highlight for the year has been the contributions made by the 60 community members who have volunteered over 3,500 hours of their time, experience and knowledge to ensure the provision of transport, mentoring, community engagement and volunteering services, and more broadly to strengthen their local community. Volunteers have enabled WVRS services to grow and expand, have ensured that activities remain relevant to the needs and aspirations of local residents and have provided important opportunities for personal connections to be made across and between a diverse range of cultures and experiences.

Volunteer information, referral, support & training

In 2007-08 more than 295 people registered their interest in volunteering, with a further 783 instances of information, referral and follow-up support provided. WVRS has ensured that those facing disadvantage have access to its services, and are supported to overcome barriers in order to effectively volunteer. Of Whittlesea residents accessing its services;

- Over 48% are from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds
- Over 30% are newly arrived migrants and refugees
- 12% identify as living with a disability
- 12% are young people under 25 years.

Reasons for volunteering remain diverse and include the gaining of skills and improvement of employment prospects, the attainment of experience in the Australian workforce (for new arrivals), to meet people and connect with the community and to give back or help others. Volunteer interest areas are equally varied and include assisting new migrants to settle in Australia, providing childcare to local community groups, office work and administration and professional areas such as finance/accounting and engineering. Barriers to effective volunteer participation remain to be lack of available local meaningful volunteer roles that meet the needs and aspirations of Whittlesea residents, lack of access to transport and childcare, increasing costs associated with transport, and organisational cultures that do not promote inclusion.

WVRS's monthly volunteer information sessions remain an important way for local people to gain information about volunteering. 16 sessions were held in the year, with over 170 volunteers participating. Of equal importance, are opportunities for volunteers to develop and gain new skills. WVRS volunteer training calendar continues to be coordinated 6-monthly, and over the year delivered 20 sessions, which were attended by a record 383 people. New sessions included Emergency Response training, working with the aged and a session on grief and loss for volunteers.



Volunteering & Mentoring for Newly Arrived Migrants & refugees

Volunteering continues to be a pathway to settlement, employment and community connectedness for newly arrived migrants and refugees. There have been over 100 client contacts for volunteering information, intake and assessment and at least 50 new arrivals were supported into a volunteer placement. Clients came from a range of countries, the most common being India, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Burundi, and assistance has been provided around employment, housing, and access to appropriate education and training. Mechanisms have been developed to

support refugee clients to access volunteering, including the creation of a 'shadowing' volunteer role, and by involving mentors to support volunteers in new placements.

WCC's mentoring program has continued to grow and in the year recruited and trained 20 mentors to assist new arrivals with the skills, knowledge and resources in accessing and understanding services and systems, in looking for work and in searching and applying for private rental accommodation. Over a 100 new arrivals were assisted and supported through community mentors, and regular meetings were organised for mentors to discuss mentoring activities and receive ongoing training and support. The mentor program has been refined to target specific settlement needs, such as employment and housing in response to client needs, and has involved mentors developing important connections to new arrivals through the ongoing contact and support provided as part of the program. The program has also started exploring links with local organisations to recruit and support professional mentors in areas of interest to clients.



Volunteer promotion & recognition

In terms of volunteer promotion and recognition, WVRS achievements in 2007-08 include:

- The ongoing production of the Whittlesea Whisper Volunteer Newsletter that regularly provides volunteers with locally relevant volunteer-related information.
- The first Whittlesea Volunteering Expo, held at Epping Plaza as part of National Volunteer Week, and involving over 15 local organisations and community groups
- Now in its 5th year, WCC facilitated the International Volunteer Day celebration in partnership with Council, Parks Victoria and local volunteers, to recognise the contributions of Whittlesea volunteers. Attended by over 200 local residents, this year's event aimed to recognise the informal ways Whittlesea residents contribute to their community, and the involvement of many new arrivals, including the Sudanese Dance group were a particular highlight at this year's event.
- A partnership event with Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House to recognise and celebrate volunteering in the region, attended by over 30 local volunteers.

Building the capacity of local volunteer-involving organisations & groups

WVRS has provided volunteer information, training, support and the development of local capacity to over 100 local and regional organisations and groups. Highlights for the year include partnership work with Plenty Valley Community Health to support the Indigenous group and support volunteers involved in administration and allied health roles, implementation of Council's volunteer policy through the involvement and support of newly arrived migrants in the City of Whittlesea, and work with local schools to involve volunteers in areas of finance/accounting and to develop support mechanisms to facilitate the involvement of volunteers from refugee backgrounds in the classroom setting.

The Whittlesea Volunteering Forum has continued to provide an opportunity for local organisations to share volunteer-related information, advocate on the needs of local volunteers, & develop capacity to involve & support volunteers. The network actively contributed to WCC's Welfare to Work Law Reform project, advocating on the impact of such policies on volunteers and volunteering. Training and information sessions for local organisations and groups during the period included a session on Police & Working with Children's checks, Building Better Staff and Volunteer Relationships and Volunteering and Community Engagement in Whittlesea.

Whittlesea Community Engagement Project

A significant achievement within the year was the development of the Whittlesea Community Engagement Framework. The Framework has been developed through extensive community consultation, with a total of 357 local residents participating in a range of research methods, ensuring that the framework represents the diverse experiences and aspirations of the Whittlesea community. The range of consultation processes undertaken through this project has demonstrated the capacity and willingness of Whittlesea communities to provide quality, innovative and realistic contributions. This indicates that the community is well informed of broader community needs, as well as appreciating the processes involved for organisations to engage communities.

Local contributions have helped develop the Whittlesea Community Engagement Principles, which aim to shape the enhanced involvement of Whittlesea residents and communities in service planning, delivery and evaluation. The framework was successfully launched in November, where over 120 representatives from governments, developers, local people and organisations came together to endorse the framework and its principles, as well as discuss how the framework can be implemented locally. Work has begun with local organisations to promote the research findings, and discuss the ways in which the community engagement principles can be applied to strengthen engagement in Whittlesea. Council have been first to sign up to the framework, and are working with WCC to audit their community plan process.



News

Steeling local backbone

WHITTLESEA service agencies and community organisations now have more tools up their sleeves in the push to engage residents. Whittlesea Community Connections launched its long-awaited Community Engagement Framework with MP Mark Mitchell, Lily D'Ambrosio and Whittlesea Mayor Eric Pridemore last Friday. More than 60 residents and Whittlesea organisations and government department representatives were at the launch. A survey has found 67 per cent of locals do volunteer work, but only 17 per cent volunteer their time to community organisations. The framework comes from a series of focus groups, interviews and telephone surveys with 300 Whittlesea residents this year, which reported more community involvement was needed. Whittlesea Community Connections manager Janel Adams said the framework would go a long way to strengthening the service's work with the community. Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service co-ordinator Emma Sampson said the framework aimed to represent the experiences and aspirations of Whittlesea residents. "This empowers the local community to encourage and support people to have a say in the development of where they live," Ms Sampson said. "It details a set of locally developed community engagement principles. Applied in Whittlesea, these principles could help shape the involve-



MP Lily D'Ambrosio, Mayor Eric Pridemore and Whittlesea Community Connections general manager Janel Adams.

in service planning, delivery and evaluation. "It is a first step for organisations to effectively engage Whittlesea communities. She said the project increased

Ms D'Ambrosio said volunteers were extremely important to the community. "The framework is essentially a plan that spells out the range of services and projects to encourage

volunteering role." "Volunteers really are the backbone of our community." The project was funded by the Department of Planning and Com-

Historic farm register

A SLICE of Whittlesea's history has been preserved in Victoria. Successful bids for the site by the Victorian Heritage Commission to be the Victorian Heritage Commission. The decision can be processed in the next few weeks and then a Heritage Commission. Call the Heritage Commission and building added to the register. It was an example of archi- diting from it. "Back in the 1930s, this is one of a substantial set of buildings, all of which are still standing. It is regarded as the finest example of its kind. The complex may survive the early 21st century and local history. Whittlesea Heritage Commission said the history of being

Building Community Capacity for Responsiveness to Local Emergencies

Whittlesea Community Connections, in partnership with the City of Whittlesea, Country Fire Authority, Latrobe Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre and the Department of Planning and Community Development initiated the Building Community Capacity for Responsiveness to Local Emergencies Project. The project aims to not only increase the number and diversity of volunteers in the emergency management sector, but also to increase community participation and provide education around safety to local residents. The project involved undertaking locally based research with 135 local community members including women, youth, CALD communities and CFA staff and volunteers. The research aimed to identify barriers to participation in the emergency management sector, develop future priorities for CFA brigades in terms of volunteer recruitment and community education, and talking to local community members about their level of awareness around safety and how they believe emergency services should engage the community. In response to feedback from community members, several community education activities were successfully held with youth, women and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse groups focusing on basic fire safety. CFA also hosted a project launch, which provided community members with an opportunity to tour the brigade and receive safety information. A final part of the research was to establish a strategic plan to implement recommendations from the research. The strategic plan will be carried out in a second phase of the project.

Whittlesea Connect – Community Transport Service

Whittlesea Connect was established to assist those who face transport disadvantage in the City of Whittlesea. The service aims to support those who do not have access to any other form of transport or face barriers in using other transport. Volunteers are recruited and trained as drivers and transport assistants and deliver a high quality transport service using two mini-buses. Community members play a significant role in the operation of the service, not only as drivers but also in planning, decision-making and administration.

The transport service entered its second year strongly and has grown throughout the 12-month period. In particular individual referrals have increased from 1 or 2 per week to 18-20 per week in June 08. While most of the individual journeys have been for medical related appointments, we have also transported people to senior citizens groups, art classes, legal appointments and a range of social support groups. In total for the year there were 447 individual trips and 187 group trips.

Amongst the group bookings, we continued to provide regular transportation to the weekly Arabic Women's Group as well as to a group of indigenous clients and their children attending a group at Plenty Valley Community Health. Without community transport many people would be unable to access these groups. The regular run from Whittlesea Township to Epping Plaza every Tuesday has continued and has increased in popularity.

This year saw the development and approval of our Hire Out Policy for the buses. This has meant that local not-for-profit organisations may hire the buses for community activities that benefit City of Whittlesea residents. Sponsorship from Laurimar also meant that we were able to purchase signage for the buses so that they are identifiable on their travels.

The service has established itself as a model volunteer-involving service, involving community members in all facets of the service including service decision-making, the delivery of transport services, advocacy and fundraising. 31 volunteers have been recruited and trained over the year, contributing more than 2,000 hours to the service as drivers and transport assistants. Volunteers are also actively involved in the Transport Advisory Group, and have participated in advocacy activities to raise awareness of the transport needs of Whittlesea residents, and highlight the successes of the service, from their perspective as local people.



Our Volunteer Resource Service (WVRS) continues to oversee the recruitment, training, support & rostering of transport volunteers, and has provided ongoing training in areas of Driving Training/Assessment, Emergency response, Occupational Health & Safety, First Aid (Level 1 & 2), Food Safety & Hygiene, Cultural Awareness & in the use of the Wheel Chair Hoist & Child Restraints (delivered in partnership with LINK Community Transport). Volunteers also meet monthly to provide feedback about the service, receive training and as a way of connecting with each other.

Local people have ensured the service can provide much needed transport to those who face transport-disadvantage in the City of Whittlesea, including being involved in raising funds for the service in the absence of commitment by any level of government to fund the much needed service.

The administration of the transport services has given us a privileged insight into the transport needs of the municipality and we have used every opportunity to share this knowledge and advocate strongly for improvements to the transport networks in the City of Whittlesea.

Whittlesea Community Legal Service

Despite the challenges associated with staffing uncertainty during the reporting period, the Whittlesea Community Legal Service (WCLS) continued to be responsive to the growing and diverse needs of the community through casework, community legal education and law reform.

Belinda Lo (Principal Solicitor) and Dalal Samaan (Coordinator of Volunteers and Service Administration) left the legal service during the reporting period. Both had commenced in May 2004 and were instrumental in the establishment of the legal service.

Despite understaffing, the WCLS was able to continue with its commitment to delivering high quality legal services with the assistance and support of the wider agency and also of locum staff and volunteers. A thank you to Sulaika Dhanapala (locum Community Lawyer) and to Sangeeta Panjraton (locum Coordinator of Volunteers and Service Administration).

A special mention also to all of the WCLS volunteers who participated and were involved in the delivery of legal services. WCLS is indebted to the invaluable and active involvement of all of its volunteers who have made and continue to make considerable contributions to the operation of the legal service.

Casework Services

WCLS operates Monday to Friday from 9.00am to 5.00pm. The day service sees clients from Monday to Friday at Epping Plaza and at various outreach locations by appointment only. The night service operates on a drop-in basis every Monday night from 6.30-8.30pm.

Epping Plaza

WCLS has continued to provide legal advice for clients at the Epping Plaza office. Clients are seen principally on an appointment basis, however, WCLS seeks to ensure that clients who have legal issues that require urgent attention and are not able to be referred to alternative agencies are assisted. The service is well known amongst the community and agencies operating in the City of Whittlesea and continues to be very busy.

Outreach Services

Kildonan Uniting Care

Throughout the reporting period and in conjunction with the Preston office of Victoria Legal Aid, WCLS continued to provide a weekly outreach service at Kildonan Uniting Care located on McDonalds Road Epping.

Mill Park Community House

The WCLS also continued to provide a fortnightly outreach service at Mill Park Community House on Mill Park Drive Epping.

Anglicare Family Services

WCLS continued to conduct a committed outreach service for women presenting with family law and/or domestic violence concerns in close collaboration with Anglicare Family Services at Lalor.

Whittlesea Outreach

The reporting period has seen WCLS consolidate its fortnightly outreach service at the Whittlesea township. This outreach was initially trialled in the previous reporting period in response to the isolation of the township and the relative lack of public transport options for Whittlesea residents. Client attendance has been good and WCLS continues to promote the service to ensure its existence in future years.

Casework Statistics (1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008)

Number of advice undertaken:	573
Number of files opened:	267
Number of files open as at 1 July 2006:	188
Number of information and referrals:	752

Total number of people assisted: 1,780

Outreach

People assisted at Anglicare	37
People assisted at Kildonan Uniting Care	67
People assisted at Mill Park Com. House	38
People assisted at Whittlesea Township	33

Total of people assisted at Outreach 175

Night Service

The night service operates every Monday from 6.30pm to 8.30pm, providing members of the community that are not able to attend the service during the day, because of work, study or other commitments, the opportunity to seek legal advice at a time that is more convenient for them. The service is run by solely by volunteer solicitors and volunteer paralegals and continues to be well attended.

Community Legal Education (CLE)

The legal service aims to be responsive to the diverse legal needs of the community through the provision of a dedicated CLE program. CLE aims to make people aware of their rights and responsibilities in relation to the law so that they can make more informed decisions.

Whittlesea Community Legal Service

During the year, 70 CLE sessions were conducted on a wide variety of topics relevant to the community including divorce and family law, young people and the law, wills and powers of attorney, scams, police checks, seniors rights, consumer rights and workplace rights.

CLE aims to inform the community of the services that WCLS and the wider agency have to offer through information sessions and participation in community events with other service providers. CLE facilitated information sessions from other organisations including the Transport Ticketing Authority, the Consumer Action Law Centre and the Energy & Water Ombudsman.

CLE sessions are tailored to meet needs of the community and are in direct response to requests by the community. CLE will continue to build and maintain relationships with local groups and service providers in the Whittlesea municipality. For the upcoming year, CLE will aim to be more proactive by directly responding to casework trends and changes in the law. This will involve an increased focus on family law, domestic violence, infringement notices and motor vehicle accidents.

Law Reform Project

WCLS has been conducting a 2-year law reform project focusing on the changes to the welfare benefits system introduced in July 2006. The project aims to critically evaluate these changes, which are commonly known as "Welfare to Work", by adopting a community consultation framework.

The project explores whether the changes have negatively impacted on people affected by them and particularly certain groups in the community such as people with disabilities, single parents and recent immigrants. It also looks at the ways in which these changes have impacted on people's *choice* to volunteer.

Based on the findings emerging from a number of consultations with community members and with service providers, two submissions were made to the review of employment services commissioned by the new Federal Government in February and June 2007. A further submission was made to the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy.

Nive Achuthan has been employed in a part-time capacity to conduct this project, the duration of which has been extended to November 2008.

Volunteers

The work of WCLS would not be able to be carried out without the assistance of its volunteers. WCLS has a pool of approximately 40-50 volunteers who volunteer with the service during all of its operating hours including the night service. The majority of volunteers live locally and come with a diverse range of experience and knowledge and consist of both students and other members of the community.

The volunteers assist the service in numerous ways including administration, liaising with clients, research, casework and in the provision of legal advice (in the case of volunteer solicitors).

Part of WCLS's commitment to its volunteers is to induct, mentor and supervise volunteers and to continue to provide on-going training and support for volunteers. Four induction sessions were conducted throughout the reporting period for new volunteers. Once they have completed the induction training, new volunteers are mentored by existing volunteers under the supervision of the Coordinator of Volunteers and Service Administration. Training sessions were held throughout the reporting period for all agency volunteers.



Whittlesea Community Connections

Emergency Relief

The second largest provider of Emergency Relief (ER) in the City of Whittlesea, Whittlesea Community Connections continued to deliver a much needed service with respect for the dignity and self-determination of all clients. With rising inflation and the increasing cost of housing, many Whittlesea residents have been doing it hard. This year saw a 25% increase in housing related referrals from our ER service. A total of 123 clients presented with homelessness and 23% of all ER clients were paying more than 40% of their income on rent or mortgage repayments.

In 2007-2008 Whittlesea Community Connections provided assistance on 1,595 occasions to 846 residents of the City of Whittlesea. Assistance was provided from our Epping site as well as an outreach in the Whittlesea township. In total, \$87,357 was distributed (funds primarily attained from the Federal Department of Housing, Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs -FaHCSIA). We were also able to attain one off assistance for some individual clients meeting the criteria for the Queens Fund which supports single women and their families. These grants totaled \$10,131.

Volunteers are heavily involved in the Emergency Relief service and have all attended appropriate training to be ER assessors. Assessors, both staff and volunteers met regularly throughout the year to raise issues of concern and to share information to support our clients. As well as providing clients with emergency financial assistance, the service also plays a valuable role in referring people to appropriate services. While the largest percentage of referrals were to other emergency relief providers, frequent referrals were also made to local services providing financial counseling, health and social support and housing. ER clients were also linked into other services provided by WCC, including settlement support, legal advice and the community transport service. ER assessors also regularly advocate for clients who present with complex problems. This advocacy takes many forms including but not limited to: negotiating utility bills and payment plans; assisting with applications for utility relief grants; assisting clients to make appointments with other services and assisting to secure emergency housing.



Whittlesea Community Connections has continued to co-ordinate the Whittlesea Emergency Relief Network which met throughout the year. This network brings together all the ER providers in the City of Whittlesea LGA, and looks at trends in service delivery across the agencies, as well as discussing service issues, referral protocols and potential areas for joint advocacy.

While we pride our selves on being a responsive service, the community need still outstrips the amount of funds we have for distribution. Throughout the year we had to turn people away on more than 850 occasions due to lack of appointments or clients not meeting eligibility criteria. Eligibility generally relates to clients being unable to access the service more than once in a three month period.

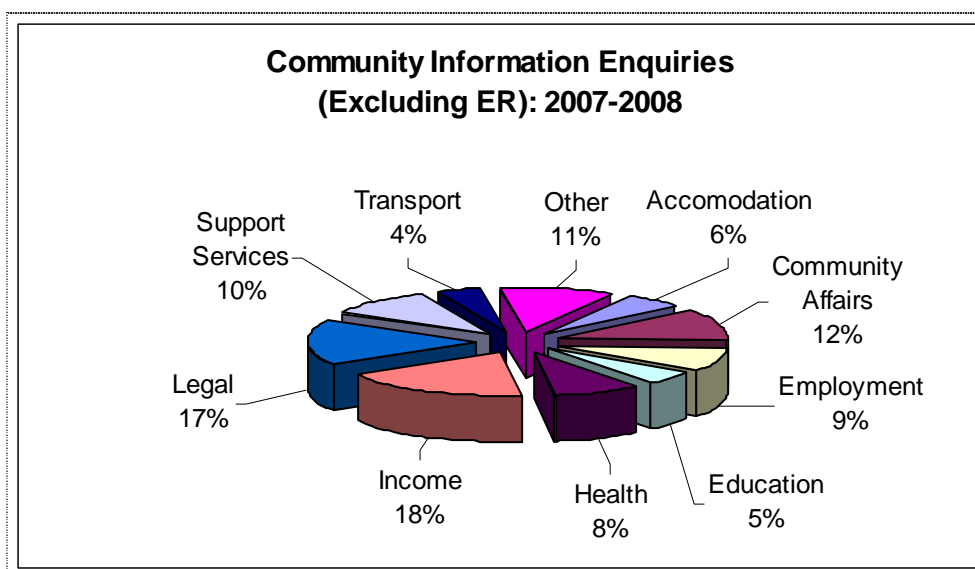
Information & Referral Services

Information & Referral Service

The provision of information and referral continues as a core service area for Whittlesea Community Connections. The service is staffed primarily by volunteers who respond daily to information enquiries from local residents. This year the service received more than 5,000 enquiries. Volunteers also provided reception for the many services provided at WCC throughout the year. Volunteers were also responsible for ensuring that all the pamphlet resources on display were up to date and replenished.

Information service volunteers are required to undertake a 9-week training course which prepares them for work in a Community Information Centre. During 2007/2008 there were 2 Courses conducted locally at Lalor Living and Learning Centre. From these courses WCC received 14 new volunteers for the information service. New volunteers were then linked up with a mentor to provide them with ongoing support and assistance. Regular volunteer meetings provided volunteers with the opportunity to learn from each other, increase their knowledge of services in the area and contribute to the ongoing development of the service.

Once again by far the largest number of enquiries were for Emergency Relief, taking up 42% of total enquiries. Leaving aside Emergency Relief, the following graph gives an indication of the other enquiries received during the year:



The Information Service relies heavily on the valuable commitment of our volunteers. This year we would like to congratulate Italo Malavisi on 10 years of dedicated service to WCC. A Friday morning wouldn't be the same without Italo's smiling face. We are very grateful to have someone as reliable and competent as Italo on our team and we look forward to another 10 years of being graced with his presence and support.

Federation Public Access Computer Room

The Federation Computer room continues to provide free computer access to members of the Whittlesea community. Operated by a small but dedicated team of volunteer IT facilitator who provide support and assistance where needed, the service has become a valuable community resource.

This year saw more than 700 people use the service, amounting to just over 1,212 hours. Unlike previous years where men were the primary users of the service, this year's usage was evenly spread between men and women, which is a very encouraging sign. While 55% of users were over 40 this year also saw an increasing number of young people using the service. Usage also continued to reflect the multicultural nature of the City of Whittlesea, with clients coming from 29 different ethnic backgrounds. Through partnership with the Settlement team we also saw an increase in the number of people from refugee backgrounds accessing the service.

The main programs used by clients were Microsoft Office and Internet/email. A number of clients used the service for study or research and the service was used also to assist in language development.

Tax Help Program

Every year WCC participates in the Tax Help Program, an Australian Taxation Office initiative, which uses trained volunteers to assist people on low incomes to complete their tax returns. This free service continues to grow in popularity, with WCC being one of the largest Tax Help centres in Victoria.

This year eleven Tax Help Volunteers drawn mainly from the local area, assisted to complete 483 tax returns from July to October, 2007. Much of the popularity of the service is due to its accessibility. Appointments were available each day, Monday to Friday with a popular evening session on Thursday nights. The service was particularly popular with new

migrants as the Tax Help Volunteers spoke 8 community languages between them. Clients appreciated being able to have, what can be a complex process, explained in their own language.

Our Tax Help Volunteers received training in tax returns and for a number who were already trained accountants they were able to gain some practical experience within the agency. We thank all our Tax Help Volunteers and wish them well in their future endeavors.

International Women's Day Awards

Now in its 7th year the Women's Day Awards have become a significant event in the Whittlesea social calendar. The awards provide an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the extraordinary contribution that women make to our local community through their voluntary work. While organized by Whittlesea Community Connections, the award recipients are chosen by an independent selection panel made up of local women representatives.

This year's guest speaker at the Award Ceremony was Ms Elleni Bereded-Samuel, Commissioner with the Victorian Multicultural Commission, and more than 50 people attended to hear her address and honour the award recipients This years award recipients were:

Young Achiever Award – Sarah Carew
(Nominated by City of Whittlesea Youth Services)

Senior Citizen Award – Ilma Duncan
(Nominated by the City of Whittlesea)

Rural Women's Award – June Kerr
(Nominated by Suzi Duncan, a local community member)

Personal Achievement Award –
Valerie Mukeshimana *(Nominated by Whittlesea Community Connections)*

International Women's Day Award –
Cheryl Duff *(Nominated by Pam McLeod, Councillor from City of Whittlesea)*



The financial statements of Whittlesea Community Connections Inc. for the year ended 30 June 2008 represents another year of sound financial performance. WCC's tradition of pushing forward with responses to community needs has continued. Our community transport service, established with once-off capital funds from the State government has been consolidated and, even without guaranteed running costs, has flourished with high levels of community use and support. Our more established services have grown the range and complexity of services provided and our staffing establishment has once again expanded. The committee and staff of Whittlesea Community Connections have ensured that all this has occurred within sound financial management practices.

Our total income increased by almost 17% made up mostly by increases in grants received, but also with a good showing in increased interest income. There was an almost corresponding increase of 19% in total expenditure funded partly from increased income as well as utilisation of previous years' surplus funds. Overall, there was a strong performance against our original projected budget and we achieved greater than anticipated income whilst spending less than forecast. Our reserves increased by \$74,149 to \$307,166. The bulk of this is committed revenue to fund 2008-09 activities.

As reported last year, \$45,000 from Victoria Legal Aid (Department of Justice) was utilised for the refurbishment of our Epping Plaza offices in response to growing accommodation needs for our staff and the programs and activities they carry-out. The issue of space is not one peculiar to WCC and will continue to challenge agencies in their efforts to increase the reach and quality of their work to a rapidly growing population. The Committee and staff of WCC will continue to advocate to local, state and federal governments to ensure that agencies such as ours are assisted with the core costs necessary to improve the physical infrastructure needed to respond to the needs of this growth area.

The Committee have ensured that financial contingencies have been set aside to fund improvements to staff conditions and these have included: an introduction of 14 weeks paid maternity leave, 2 weeks paid parenting leave and a reduction of the qualifying period for long-service leave from 15 years to 10 years. These changes reflect the organisations' commitment to fair employment and were fully-costed in the previous financial year.

Greg Godfrey *Treasurer*

Financial Statements For Year Ended 30 June 2008

Whittlesea Community Connections Inc. Financial Statements for the year ended 30 June 2008

Operating Statement for the Year Ended 30 June 2008

Revenues	Notes	30 June 2008	30 June 2007
Grants	1	\$ 1,105,485	\$ 991,421
Interest		\$ 26,707	\$ 15,898
Fundraising		\$ 3,172	\$ 1,211
Other	1A	\$ 89,838	\$ 39,591
Total Revenues		\$ 1,225,202	\$ 1,048,121
Expenses			
Employee and Labour related Costs	2	\$ 826,958	\$ 725,297
Telephone		\$ 15,782	\$ 15,045
Postage		2692	\$ 2,629
Stationery		\$ 6,594	\$ 7,773
Rental -City of Whittlesea		\$ 12,466	\$ 12,499
Advertising		\$ 1,992	\$ 7,286
Accounting & Audit		\$ 14,024	\$ 20,820
Project Costs		\$ 14,001	\$ 8,236
Staff Training		\$ 2,010	\$ 3,617
Volunteer Training		\$ 5,883	\$ 7,204
Subscriptions & Memberships		\$ 5,354	\$ 2,647
Staff amenities		\$ 1,045	\$ 1,173
Security Costs		\$ 1,010	\$ 810
Bank Charges		\$ -	\$ 8
Depreciation		\$ 8,483	\$ 16,850
Emergency Relief Community Support	12	\$ 87,357	\$ 67,927
ER Admin. Expenses			\$ 4,993
Printing and Photocopying		\$ 4,377	\$ 10,850
Legal Practising Certificate		\$ 698	\$ 905
Legal Library		\$ 3,730	\$ 3,013
Strategic Planning		\$ 10,000	
Information Technology		\$ 291	\$ 40
Project Management Costs		\$ 19,196	\$ 14,482
Community Transport (leases, fuel and maintenance)		\$ 28,300	\$ 20,309
Other	4	\$ 78,809	\$ 12,564
Total Expenses		\$ 1,151,053	\$ 966,974
Change in Net Assets resulting from Operations		\$74,149	\$81,147

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2008

		30 June 2008	30 June 2007
Current Assets			
Cash	5	\$ 420,199	\$ 414,961
Receivables	6	\$ 45,932	\$ 11,606
Investment-Shares in PCCU	7	\$ 60	\$ 60
Payment in advance-Salaries			
Total Current Assets		\$ 466,191	\$ 426,627
Non-Current Assets			
Equipment	8	\$ 5,157	\$ 13,640
Total Assets		\$ 471,348	\$ 440,267
Current Liabilities			
Creditors	9	-	\$ 8,312
GST Liabilities		14,377	\$ 12,093
Payroll Liabilities (Super Plus PAYG)		19,307	\$ 7,624
Grants Received in Advance	10	30,675	\$ 95,983
Total Current Liabilities		\$ 64,359	\$ 124,012
Non Current liabilities	11	\$ 99,823	\$ 83,239
Total Liabilities		\$ 164,181	\$ 207,250
Net Assets		\$ 307,166	\$ 233,017
Equity-Accumulated surplus		\$ 307,166	\$ 233,017

Statement of Changes in Equity For the Year ended 30 June 2008

Balance at start of Financial Year	\$ 233,017	\$ 151,869
Transfer to Accommodation (Building) Fund	-\$ 35,000	-\$ 35,000
	\$ 198,017	\$ 116,869
Accommodation (Building) Fund	\$ 35,000	\$ 35,000
Add Change in Net Assets resulting from Operations	\$ 74,149	\$ 81,148
Balance at the end of Financial Year	\$ 307,166	\$ 233,017

Notes to and Forming Part of the Financial Statements For the Year ended 30 June 2008

1. Grants

The Following Grants Received Funded	Notes	30 June 2008	30 June 2007
Core Operations			
SGP Employees & Programs-DIAC		\$ 336,358	\$ 256,068
General WCC Employees & Programs			
City of Whittlesea (Main Grant)		\$ 120,600	\$ 116,852
City of Whittlesea (International Womens' day)		\$ 2,300	\$ 2,000
DVC Grant		\$ -	\$ 2,000
(EastWeb)Melb. Com Foundation grants			\$ 3,000
FACSIA VMP Grant		\$ 53,126	
Stocland Community Spirit Program			\$ 1,500
Best Start Schools as Hubs			\$ 5,925
Best Start Transport program			\$ -
VMC(Refugee Week Grant)		\$ 2,200	\$ -
VICNET (Public Internet Access Program)		\$ 1,875	
City of Whittlesea Strategic Planning Grant		\$ 10,000	
Emergency Management Project		\$ 51,292	
Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service			
City of Whittlesea Grant		\$ 64,100	\$ 62,193
DFACS			\$ -
Volunteering Australia		\$ 1,000	\$ 33,000
DVC-VRC's Funding		\$ 70,000	\$ 88,050
Whittlesea Community Legal Service	13A	\$ 271,856	\$ 312,280
CoW-FVMM trng,Arab Women's Group			\$ -
Emergency Relief Program			
DFACS		\$ 78,803	\$ 73,020
City of Whittlesea-Mayoral Donation			\$ -
Plenty Valley Comm.Health Service			\$ -
The Queens Fund		\$ 10,601	\$ 10,900
Donations		\$ 700	
Whittlesea connect Community Transport Grant			
LGV Community Transp.Grant		\$ 30,675	\$ 20,234
Community Transport Grant-City of Whittlesea			\$ 4,400
Total Grants		\$ 1,105,485	\$ 991,421
1A. Other Income			
		30 June 2008	30 June 2007
Community Directory		\$ 112	\$ 4,453
Reception Services		\$ 1,599	\$ 1,842
ER Administration			\$ 4,743
Miscellaneous Income		56,510	\$ 9,625
Management Fee		19,196	\$ 14,482
Grants from Swinburne,Police & New Arrivals,School foc. Yth		10,663	
Other-LifeLine referrals			\$ 195
Other- Int. Women's Day Donations			\$ 400
City of Whittlesea Responsible Gaming Forum			\$ 3,767
Community Transport Voluntary Contributions		1,757	\$ 84
		\$ 89,838	\$ 39,591
2. Employee & Labour Related Costs			
Salaries		\$ 721,536	\$ 625,461
Workcare		\$ 10,059	\$ 10,200
Superannuation		\$ 64,547	\$ 57,591
Travel Claims Reimbursed		\$ 5,987	\$ 4,022
Prov. For LSL,AL Loading, Parental and SL		\$ 16,584	\$ 27,066
Recruitment costs		\$ 8,244	\$ 957
Total		\$ 826,958	\$ 725,297
4. Other Costs			
Annual Return Fee/AGM		\$ 4,732	\$ 531
Emergency Relief Miscellaneous		\$ -	\$ -
Insurance		\$ 1,159	\$ 602
Interpreting & Translations		\$ 6,966	\$ 3,181
Equipment Purchase		\$ 2,773	\$ 822
Room Hire		\$ 802	\$ 299
Internet fees		\$ 1,882	\$ 329
Legal Information Sessions		\$ 13	\$ -
Volunteer Expenses		\$ 1,917	\$ 2,717
Meeting Expenses		\$ 1,102	\$ 701
Refurbishment Costs		\$ 45,145	\$ -
Federation Room Running Expenses		\$ 22	\$ -
International Womens Day Aw.Ceremony		\$ -	\$ 1,203
Reference material		\$ 150	\$ 27
Fund-raising expenses		\$ 1,440	\$ 655
Catering		\$ 3,893	\$ 987
Sundry Expenses		\$ 1,102	\$ 508
School support Costs		\$ 795	
Furniture and Fittings		\$ 4,222	
Police and Work with children checks		\$ 693	
Total		\$ 78,809	\$ 12,564
5. Cash			
Bank of Melbourne		\$ 1,478	\$ 26,155
PCCU Cash Management Account		\$ 268,689	\$ 262,334
PCCU Multi-Term Investment Account		\$ 150,000	\$ 126,045
Petty Cash		\$ 32	\$ 427
Total		\$ 420,199	\$ 414,961

	30 June 2008	30 June 2007
6. Receivables		
Pledges Receivable-CoW Youth Service	\$ -	\$ -
Receivables on sale of Comm. Directories	\$ -	\$ -
City of Whittlesea-Rec.Service Fees	\$ 3,489	\$ 3,489
Victoria Legal Aid		\$ 8,117
Sundry Debtors		\$ -
-DPCD Vol.Support Grant	26,250.00	
-Var. Invoices paid in July 08	14,131.83	
-PCCU Bank error	756.10	
Westpac Bank Error	1,305.00	
	\$ 45,932	\$ 11,606
7. Investments		
Shares in Plenty Credit union	\$ 60	\$ 60
8. Equipment	30 June 2008	30 June 2007
Family Resource Donation		
At Valuation	\$ 6,000	\$ 6,000
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	\$ (5,999)	\$ (5,999)
Net Value	\$ 1	\$ 1
Federation Room		
Computer Systems	\$ 29,817	\$ 29,817
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	\$ (26,427)	\$ (22,964)
Net Value	\$ 3,390	\$ 6,853
Others		
At Valuation/Cost b/f	\$ 15,208	\$ 15,208
Accumulated Depreciation	\$ (13,730)	\$ (12,251)
Net Value	\$ 1,478	\$ 2,957
Volunteer Resource Service		
At Cost	\$ 14,657	\$ 14,657
Accumulated Depreciation	\$ (14,656)	\$ (11,863)
Net Value	\$ 1	\$ 2,794
Whittlesea Comm.Legal Service		
At Cost b/f	\$ 18,264	\$ 18,264
Accumulated Depreciation	\$ (18,263)	\$ (18,201)
Net Value	\$ 1	\$ 63
General		
At Cost b/f	\$ 2,744	\$ 2,744
Accumulated Depreciation	\$ (2,458)	\$ (1,772)
Net Value	\$ 286	\$ 972
TOTAL EQUIPMENT(NET VALUE)	\$ 5,157	\$ 13,640
9. Creditors		
Telephone, rent & photocopying	\$ -	\$ 3,506
Rental	\$ -	\$ 2,915
Photocopying	\$ -	\$ 834
Sundry Creditors	\$ -	\$ 1,057
Total	\$ -	\$ 8,312
10. Grants Received in Advance		
City of Whittlesea	\$ -	\$ 34,633
DFAC	\$ -	\$ -
LGV- Community Buses Funding	\$ 30,675	\$ 61,350
Total	\$ 30,675	\$ 95,983
11. Employee Entitlements		
Long Service Leave	\$ 52,558	\$ 44,979
Sick Leave	\$ 30,042	\$ 30,042
Annual Leave	\$ 8,218	\$ 8,218
Parental Leave Provision	\$ 9,005	
Total	\$ 99,823	\$ 83,239
12. Emergency Relief		
Major Expenditure		
Emergency Aid	\$ 87,357	\$ 67,927
13. Community Legal Service (Recurrent Funds)		
<u>Income</u>		
Victoria Legal Aid	\$ 271,856	\$ 312,280
Interest Income	\$ 7,110	\$ 4,195
Miscellaneous Income	\$ 7,710	\$ 6,600
City of Whittlesea	\$ 15,535	
Total	\$ 302,211	\$ 323,075

<u>Expenditure</u>		
Salaries	\$ 202,268	\$ 206,641
Superannuation	\$ 17,839	\$ 19,037
Salary On Costs	\$ 4,544	\$ 12,677
Rent	\$ 5,831	\$ 4,985
Other Premises Costs	\$ 60,990	\$ 380
Staff Training	\$ 1,373	\$ 3,383
Staff Recruitment	\$ 3,641	\$ 80
Communications	\$ 6,932	\$ 5,552
Office Overheads	\$ 6,971	\$ 8,809
Insurance	\$ 308	\$ 283
Finance,Audit and Accounting fees	\$ 6,472	\$ 9,671
Library, resources and Subscriptions	\$ 8,047	\$ 5,571
Travel	\$ 2,038	\$ 1,095
Depreciation	\$ 62	\$ 7,929
Programming and Planning	\$ 4,961	\$ 5,230
Other	\$ 2,877	\$ -
	\$ 335,156	\$ 291,323
Surplus/(Deficit)	\$ (32,946)	\$ 31,752

Statement of Cash Flows for the year ended 30 June 2008

CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES	30 June 2008	30 June 2007
Receipts from Grants Donations and sundry charges	\$ 1,074,810	\$ 1,060,308
Interest Received	\$ 26,707	\$ 15,898
Other	\$ 93,010	\$ 21,577
Total	\$ 1,194,527	\$ 1,097,783
Payments for employees and administrative expenses	\$ (1,189,289)	\$ (927,081)
Net Cash provided by operating activities	\$ 5,238	\$ 170,702
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Purchase of fixed assets	\$ -	\$ 5,912
Net Cash provided by investing activities	\$ -	\$ (5,912)
Net Increase (Decrease) in cash held	\$ 5,238	\$ 164,791
Cash at beginning of financial year	\$ 414,961	\$ 250,170
Cash at end of financial year	\$ 420,199	\$ 414,961
NOTES TO STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS		
(a) Reconciliation of cash		
Cash at bank and in hand	\$ 420,199	\$ 414,961
(b) Reconciliation of net cash provided by operating activities to operating surplus		
Operating surplus	\$ 74,149	\$ 81,148
<u>Non-cash flows in operating activities</u>		
Depreciation	\$ 8,483	\$ 16,850
Provision for Annual Leave Loading/Sick Leave/Long Service Leave	\$ 16,584	\$ 27,066
<u>Changes in assets and liabilities</u>		
Decrease/(Increase) in receivables	\$ (34,326)	\$ (6,090)
Increase/(Decrease) in creditors and provisions	\$ (59,653)	\$ 51,729
Net cash provided by operating activities	\$ 5,237	\$ 170,703
Cash at beginning of Financial Year	\$ 414,961	\$ 250,170
Cash at end of Financial Year	\$ 420,199	\$ 414,961
Increase in Cash during year	\$ 5,238	\$ 164,791

Notes to and Forming Part of the Financial Statements For the Year Ended 30 June 2008 Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

a) Basis of Accounting: The financial statements are a general purpose financial report which has been prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards. The Financial Statements have been prepared on the basis of historical costs. b) Reporting Entity: The results in this financial report includes all funds over which Whittlesea Community Connections Inc. controls resources to carry out its functions. Whittlesea Community Connections Inc. is a not-for-profit incorporated association and public benevolent institution providing information services, settlement services, Community Legal Services, a Volunteer Resource Service, an emergency relief program and other support services. The agency is staffed by a combination of paid staff and volunteers. Paid staff during the year have included a Manager, Settlement Support and Community Development and Education workers, solicitors and a casually employed accountant/bookkeeper. The primary source of funding is government grants. The entity is incorporated under the Incorporation Act 1981, with a Management Committee responsible for governance. c) Taxation: The Agency is an Income Tax Exempt organisation endorses as a Deductible Gift Recipient and Public Benevolent Institution. d) Equipment: Acquisition of assets are initially recorded at cost. The entity adopts a threshold of \$1,000 when recognising equipment e). Investments: All Investments are recorded at cost. Interest revenue is recognised as it is received. f) Employee entitlements: Liabilities for employee entitlement to wages and salaries, annual leave, long service leave and other entitlements which are accrued at balance date and are expected to be paid or settled within 12 months of balance date are accrued at nominal amounts calculated on the basis of current wage and salary rates, inclusive of associated on-costs. Liabilities for other employee entitlements which are not expected to be paid or settled within 12 months of balance date, are calculated as per Australian Accounting Standard AAS30; Accounting of Employee Entitlements: The liabilities are calculated at the present value of the expected future payments to be made in respect of services provided by employees up to balance date. In assessing future payments, regard is given to experience. g) Superannuation: The Superannuation expense for the reporting period is the amount of the statutory contribution the entity makes to the superannuation plan which provided benefits to employees. h) Cash for the purpose of the Statement of Cash Flows: cash includes cash deposits which are readily convertible to cash on hand and are subject to an insignificant risk of change in value which are used in the cash management function on a day to day basis. i) Grants: Grants are recognised as revenues when the entity obtains control over assets. Outstanding grants over which the entity has control are recognised as receivables and recorded at nominal amounts. j) Creditors: These amounts represent unpaid liabilities for goods received and services provided to the entity prior to the end of the reporting period. These amounts are unsecured and are normally settled within 7 days. k) Comparative Information: Comparative information, where necessary, has been reclassified to comply with the 30 June 2006 financial statement presentation.



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INDEPENDENT AUDIT REPORT

TO THE COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT WHITTLESEA COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS INC.

Scope

I have audited the financial statements of Whittlesea Community Connections Inc. for the year ended 30 June 2008.

The Treasurer of the governing body is responsible for the preparation and presentation of the financial statements and information contained therein. I have conducted an independent audit of the financial statements in order to express an opinion on them to the Committee of Management.

My audit has been conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards to provide reasonable assurance as to whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement.

My procedures included examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures in the financial statements, and the evaluation of accounting policies and significant accounting estimates.

These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion as to whether, in all material respects, the financial report presents a true and fair view in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements (Urgent Issues Group Consensus Views) which is consistent with my understanding of Whittlesea Community Connections Inc's financial position, the results of its operations and its cash flows.

The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

Audit opinion

In my opinion, the financial statements present a true and fair view of the financial position of Whittlesea Community Connections Inc. as at 30 June 2008 and the results of its operations and cash flows for the year, in accordance with the requirements of Section 30(3A) of the *Associations Incorporation Act 1981* and the Australian Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements.

 23/9/2008

Brian J. Egan CPA, Reg. Tax Agent
Plan Act Grow Pty Ltd

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