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CEO's Message

Exciting times lie ahead . Hard work over a significant period of time has helped to increase resources for a number of innovative and essential services and projects. Achieving federal funding for our legal service and Council support for our community transport service are just two examples of hard-fought-for program improvements.

In this edition you will also read about the Women-In-Work Community Enterprise, a project that invests in the capacities of local people as they attempt to breakthrough the barriers of disadvantage and discrimination. You will also read about an exciting driver education program to be delivered in partnership with VicRoads and the City of Whittlesea council. We also highlight the growth of our community transport service and the opportunity to develop a viable social enterprise that we hope will secure the future of this important and unfunded community service. Our Victims of Crime project enters its final phase as our newly recruited project worker prepares for presentation of our work at the National Conference of Community Legal Centres in October.

This edition highlights the important work of our bushfire recovery workers both in volunteer coordination efforts and legal services, as these projects wind-down.

Volunteering In Bushfire Recovery

Since the start of the bushfires in February 2009 WCC has been involved in the coordination and support of bushfire volunteers. In August 2009 we appointed two Coordinators of Volunteering in bushfire recovery,

who have been able to work extensively with communities affected by the February bushfires, particularly in Whittlesea and Kinglake. The coordinators have worked closely with agencies and groups to assist with volunteer recruitment, training and support. They have worked to ensure that volunteers are supported and that the role of volunteers in the recovery process is not forgotten. They have also supported the local community to advocate for the ongoing need for a volunteer coordinator in the Kinglake region This has included liaising with regional agencies to take on this role and assisting with funding applica-



tions. This role was vital due to the large numbers of volunteers already assisting with bushfire recovery, the large number still needed and the lack of service infrastructure in the affected areas which has meant that much of the work has been done by volunteer based groups. Congratulations to Emma Short and Meg Sandercock (pictured above) for all their hard work.

Women in Work Community Enterprise

WCC has been successful in receiving funding from the Melbourne Community Fund, for the Women in Work Social Enterprise. Through this project 22 local refugee and migrant women have already started training for Certificate 3 in Children's Services. Women involved come from diverse backgrounds including Iraq, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iran, India, Somalia and Turkey. Completion of this training will enable women to participate in the establishment of a bi-lingual child care service. This service will develop employment opportunities for marginalised women while also meeting a community service need in an area of high diversity.



Women in Work aims to increase the independence and resilience of women facing systemic barriers to work-force participation. In recognition of the skills and experience women have already attained, this project will build on and market existing capacities particularly in relation to linguistic and cultural competencies. The overall aim of the project will be to establish a sustainable mechanism for assisting refugee and migrant women to transition to independence through a participative and strength-based approach.

Accredited child-care workers will be contracted to work in a range of community services and settings, meeting high demand for locally available child-care services. This is particularly important in an area like Whittlesea, which is one of Victoria's fastest growing populations with a significant proportion of young families. This is an exciting opportunity for refugee and new arrival women.

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Youth Connections

WCC, a member of the NMIT TAFE led Hume Whittlesea consortium, has been successful in the Youth Connections tender. Youth Connections is a new Commonwealth funded program to assist young people aged between 13 to 19 years who have become disengaged from education and training. WCC has been funded to support disengaged new arrival migrant and refugee young people. Youth Connections emphasises a strength-based approach to achieve long-term goals, as identified by young people themselves.

Services provided through Youth Connections will be flexible and responsive enhancing young people's resilience, capacity and wellbeing. David Hannan has recently been appointed as WCC's Youth Connections Worker. David is well known to WCC staff and clients having completed a student placement with the settlement team in 2009. David works closely with NMIT and partnering organisations to achieve positive outcomes for refugee and new arrival youth in Whittlesea, providing connections back to community.

ART Meets ART



On Wednesday 28 July at WCC Harry Jenkins MP opened an exhibition on behalf of Amer Rashad and Preet Waraich. Both Amer and Preet were recognised artists in their countries of origin and having recently arrived in Australia, are trying to re-establish themselves as artists. Preet was born in Chandigarh, India and arrived in Australia in 2004.

Preet has completed her Bachelor in Fine Arts and Masters in History of Art and some of her work was purchased by the Punjab University Museum for permanent display. Amer was a renowned artist, editor, writer and caricaturist in Iraq. Exiled from Iraq in 1990, he lived in Jordan and Tunisia until he arrived in Australia in 2006. Many of Amer's paintings explore his personal story and the turmoil of his homeland. The exhibition also highlighted the positive contribution that migrant and refugee communities can make to the broader community.

Emergency Relief– New Casework Support Service

As a response to the complexity of issues faced by many of our ER clients, including unemployment, housing stress/risk of homelessness, debt, drug and alcohol issues, mental health issues or family violence, WCC is now able to offer case-work support to those that require more ongoing assistance. While ER provides vital short-term relief for families in crisis, the new service will compliment this by addressing broader issues and enabling us to work closely with clients to achieve long-term sustainable outcomes.

Volunteering in Emergency Management

This is a partnership pilot project with the CFA to increase the diversity of their volunteer base so that it better reflects the local community. The Volunteer Resource Service have worked with the CFA to develop a 'train the trainer' training program, recruit volunteers to be trained as peer educators, train the volunteers and assist the CFA to establish processes to enable them to support and supervise the volunteers. The volunteer peer educator roles have opened up new volunteer opportunities for community members who may not have previously considered volunteering with the CFA. People were recruited for the roles from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and then trained to deliver home fire safety training to local community groups. Five volunteer peer educators are now CFA volunteers delivering presentations in 5 community languages.

Driving Programs Enter new Phase

In 2009 WCC received funding from the Transport Accident Commission to address issues of road safety faced by new arrival communities. Barriers to obtaining full licences in Australia include low English proficiency, financial difficulties and a lack of understanding of new legal and cultural contexts. Limited transport options has a number of implications for meaningful community participation

The Settlement Team, and Philippe Roussel in particular, have supported more than 43 refugees and new arrivals with driving education and practical experience. As a result all pre-Learner's (16) gained their Learner's Permit and of the 27 Learner's 15 to date have successfully gained a driver's licence. More than 290 formal lessons and 350 hours of driving practice with volunteer support have been delivered. Refugee women (8) also attended the METEC driving education centre for additional driving education and experience. This project has enabled refugee and new arrivals to develop greater skills and confidence while also gaining greater independence for themselves and their family.

Recently, WCC has been successful in receiving funds for the L2P program, in partnership with City of Whittlesea and VicRoads. This program will support disadvantaged young people to gain the required 120 hours of driving practice in order to obtain a Victorian driver's license. A new project worker will start in this role in late August and we look forward to working with young people, helping to create safer roads and increasing access to opportunities.

Community Transport

A Social Enterprise will be developed to help the service to become financially sustainable



In February this year, we were able to add an 8 seater vehicle to our Community Transport fleet bringing our total vehicles up to 5. The vehicle has been made available through our partnership with Northern Transport Links Steering Committee and aims to support our work with residents who are disadvantaged and need assistance to access health appointments.

Connect Plus –Social Enterprise

The service has grown so much that it now requires a full time worker to coordinate it. With City of Whittlesea funding we have been able to appoint Stephen Lewis who will start full-time in September. His role will be to coordinate the existing community transport service while also developing a transport social enterprise that will help the service to become financially sustainable.

Volunteers

This year for National Volunteer Week, WCC organized a trivia night for all its volunteers. The MC for the evening was local MP and Federal Speaker of the House, Harry Jenkins who kept the event in order. Congratulations go to the table of volunteer tutors who despite their youth proved to be trivia geniuses. A fun night was definitely had by all.



Trivia Wooden-Spoons

Victims of Crime Project Enters Final Phase

In June, we welcomed Rani Flory as our new Victims of Crime Compensation (VOCAT) Project Worker. Rani has brought renewed vigour and commitment to the role as the project proceeds to its conclusion.

The VOCAT Project aims to improve access to justice to victims of violent crimes by developing best practice materials for VOCAT applications and other issues relevant to victims. Best practice guidelines will be made available to community lawyers to assist in better VOCAT applications and to better deal with legal issues relevant to those affected by violent crime. The project will also explore the potential for law reform activities to promote changes to the legal system so that it better responds to the needs of victims of crime. Rani will present the outcomes of our VOCAT Project to the National Community Legal Centres Conference in late October 2010.

Bushfire Legal Service winds-down

Ann Lightowler recently finished her 12 month position as our Bushfire Lawyer. This role was created following the aftermath of the Black Saturday bushfires, with Ann assisting clients at a variety of locations, including Whittlesea, Kinglake and Flowerdale. With Ann's contract coming to an end, we were delighted that she accepted an offer to continue with WCC in a role as a Community Lawyer.

Ann will feature prominently in our partnership with the Greensborough Family Relationship Centre (GFRC). This partnership commenced last year as an initiative of the Federal Government. Its main role is to assist couples involved in family disputes to explore outcomes that are less likely to result in a costly court process.



Attorney General, Robert McClelland, & Harry Jenkins MP with WCC Staff and Committee

At Last!! – Commonwealth Funding for Community Legal Service

WCC has finally received Federal Government funding to provide community legal services to residents of the municipality. Ever since, 2004, when we established the Whittlesea Community Legal Service from funds provided by the state government, we have been working extremely hard to ensure the federal government contributed its fair share to meet the legal needs of Whittlesea's communities. Finally that hard work has paid off and we are now funded in the same way as other legal centres in Victoria-jointly by state and federal governments.

The new funds will enhance legal services and help meet the existing high demand. Funding has also been received for a three year extension for an existing partnership project with the Greensborough Family Relationship Centre, to provide legal advice and information to families going through separation and divorce. These resources are very welcome and will help to increase our ability to help more people and reduce waiting times for legal appointments. On 30th September last year the Commonwealth Attorney-General Robert McClelland visited Whittlesea Community Connections and heard of the challenges and difficulties faced by a growing municipality with limited legal service funding. That visit was organised by Harry Jenkins PM, Federal member for Scullin and the Speaker of the House of Representatives who has been campaigning and supporting WCC's legal funding cause for over 10 years.