



Whittlesea Community Connections

# MAKING A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE EVERYDAY

Year in Review 2015-16



Whittlesea Community Connections is a place based not for profit incorporated association and an income tax exempt organisation endorsed as a Public Benevolent Institution and a Deductible Gift Recipient.

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Whittlesea Community Connections acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we provide our services, the Wurundjeri Willum Clan of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and express our hope for reconciliation, justice and the recognition of the living culture of all Aboriginal people.



# CONTENTS

2	President's report
4	CEO's report
7	What never changes
8	WCC services
9	WCC initiatives and projects
10	Making a difference by responding to community issues
12	Client Team
14	Making a difference through place based collaboration
16	Settlement Team
18	Making a difference through social connection + groups
22	Legal Team
24	Making a difference through volunteering
26	Our Board and staff
27	WCC partners, funders and donors
29	Get involved





# PRESIDENT'S REPORT



## It gives me great pleasure to present this report for a year that has been extraordinarily busy for Board members, staff and volunteers.

WCC is an amazing community organisation with services and programs that have been independently delivered to this community for many, many years.

Earlier this year Jemal Ahmet resigned as CEO of WCC after 18 years and it wasn't until he highlighted his time here that we all took in how wonderful this organisation is. Jemal highlighted how we have grown over those years and the risks we have taken and put our money into services that count and benefit the people of Whittlesea and how we strive to give the community a better deal particularly to those who are marginalised or disadvantaged. WCC has very talented and dedicated staff and volunteers from this community and we pride ourselves on living and delivering on our values from this organisation.

Over Jemal's 18 years this organisation grow from a turnover of \$245,156 in 1998 to \$2.75 million in 2015-16, growing from 4 staff to more than 30 now and more than 300 volunteers. Our services and programs delivered for residents of the City of Whittlesea range from:

- ▶ Community Legal Service
- ▶ Emergency Relief
- ▶ Whittlesea Community Transport service
- ▶ Refugee and New Arrival Programs
- ▶ International Women's Day Event
- ▶ Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service
- ▶ Housing Support and Brokerage Project
- ▶ Women-in-Work Childcare community enterprise

- ▶ L2P and other driver education programs
- ▶ Thomastown West Community Hub
- ▶ Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project

This is only a snap shot of what the dedicated staff and volunteers do in collaboration with the community across the City of Whittlesea.

With Jemal's resignation the Board of Management felt that it was time to honour his service by awarding him with the Peter Cleeland Award for service to the community. Whittlesea Community Connections has become a household name for many residents due to the dedication, inspiration, compassion and forward thinking of Jemal. He has served this community well and the Board, staff and volunteers appreciated his dedication in putting the community first over his 18 years.

We now move onto a new chapter in WCC's life with a vibrant new CEO Alex Haynes who comes to us with some new vision but holding onto this organisation's values. I wish her well on her journey with WCC and its community and partners throughout the City of Whittlesea.

I would like to thank Peta Fualau now on maternity leave for her hard and dedicated work as Acting CEO, keeping the organisation running whilst in a rough transition to a new CEO.

I have been on and off this committee of management since 1987 through its renaming from Community Advice Bureau to Community Information Whittlesea and then

Whittlesea Community Connections. The time has come for me to move on from my five years as President and I also announced at International Women's Day earlier this year that I was stepping down as Convenor which I have been on for the past 17 years. I know that all of the events, programs and services that WCC provide will continue under the leadership of the next Board of Management.

I would sincerely like to thank all the current Board members for their dedication to this organisation as without them and the guidance they provide to the CEO, staff and volunteers this would not be the best organisation in the City of Whittlesea. It has been a very busy and challenging year for the Board and I have been proud to serve as a Board Member. I would like to thank the Board Members of 2015-16 - Rolf Peake, Dinny Jaconis, Nessie Sayar, Christine (Chrissy) Lewis, Martin Booth, Owen Waldie, Greg Godfrey, Ashleigh Trimmer, Stephen Lewis, Harry Jenkins and Cr Sam Alessi. Good luck to you all for the future.



**MAUREEN CORRIGAN OAM**

*President, Whittlesea Community Connections*



# CEO'S REPORT

This year was a momentous one for WCC with the CEO, Jemal Ahmet, resigning in March 2016 after 18 successful years. His tremendous legacy cannot be understated.

His departure left a sizeable leadership void within WCC and the broader community lost a strong advocate for equity and social justice. Despite the disruption the staff and volunteers did an admirable job maintaining their commitment to the community and ensuring services and programs were not affected while a new CEO was found.

I came to this role in September 2016 with my own skills and insight but more importantly I came with a strong belief that place based and community led organisations like WCC, while few and far between, are critical in the community sector. Their direct and trusted connections to their communities, the care, sensitivity and responsiveness in the way they work, their passion and their willingness to advocate and call out injustices are what makes organisations like WCC unique and effective. It is a great privilege for me to have the opportunity to keep WCC's vision alive and strengthen its positive impact.

There are funding challenges in all areas of our work with the Federal and State Government continuing to consolidate service delivery, review priorities and reduce funding in areas we would see as critical to addressing inequality and injustice and supporting the development healthy vibrant communities. We are also driven by the need to innovate to be able to respond to the growing and changing needs and aspirations of the communities in Whittlesea.

This report documents the work of the organisation during 2015-16 for which the staff, volunteers and Board can be very proud. WCC grew in revenue, in staff numbers, in community members connected and in volunteers. It was a pleasure for me to put it together as a way of sharing the work WCC do with the people who live, work, study and volunteer in the City of Whittlesea. I thank all those who supported WCC during 2015-16 and for the warm welcome I received from the staff, volunteers, partners and the Board.

*Alex Haynes*

ALEX HAYNES

CEO, Whittlesea Community Connections











**» OUR 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.

# WHAT NEVER CHANGES

## AT WCC WE LIVE OUR VALUES

### Self determination

We support individuals and communities in making choices and decisions that meet their own needs

### Non judgmental

We provide services that are impartial and supportive of diversity

### Not for profit

We provide high quality services that are free at the point of delivery to residents of Whittlesea

### Confidential

We approach our relationships and provide services in a way that protects clients privacy and confidentiality

### Diversity

We value the diversity of the community and commit to strengthening inclusiveness in all aspects of our work

### Independence

We value and guard our independence including the right to comment and advocate on local, state and federal government policy and to decide and manage our own affairs according to the laws of the land

At WCC we aim to identify and break down barriers to accessing information and specialised support services and work towards building individual and community resilience. As a community-led organisation, WCC works alongside individuals, families and groups to create opportunities to build and strengthen connections, supporting a community that is better able to support itself.

At WCC we aim to deliver high quality, flexible services that are person centred, holistic and integrated and will

- ▶ Improve people's lives and life chances
- ▶ Support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged
- ▶ Support access to appropriate and integrated services and resources
- ▶ Encourage everyone to participate to improve their own lives and the lives of others

WCC's Strategic Plan (2014-2018) guides our work but every year we identify emerging issues in the community that form our strategic priorities to further focus our efforts and ensure we are responding to the needs of our growing and changing community in a timely way. In 2015-16 these were family violence, financial hardship, asylum seekers and organisational responsiveness.

# WCC SERVICES

WCC has a strong culture of inter-agency referral and co-management.

## Community Information

Connecting people to the services and supports they need

## Settlement Services

Supporting and empowering new arrivals and refugees

## Volunteer Resource Service

Promoting volunteering and community engagement

## Emergency Relief and Casework

Enabling people to move to financial self-reliance and supporting those in financial crisis

## Community Legal Services

Providing access to the justice system through legal casework, community legal education and law reform

## Community Transport

Supporting Whittlesea's transport disadvantaged

Programs are all located in one space making the transition from one service to another accessible for clients. For example, a community member coming to the agency for settlement support may be referred to the legal service for assistance with an infringement, and then be referred to a social worker for financial support, or linked into our community support groups, or our volunteer resource service, all without having to physically travel from service to service or navigate a complex system that requires individuals to repeat their story and wait for lengthy periods before being assisted. Improving our clients experience and outcomes by working better together across our organisation and with our partners and other local organisations is a priority for 2016-17.



## PLACE BASED INITIATIVES

**Thomastown West Community Hub** (TWCH) is a small multipurpose facility located in the Thomastown West Primary School that provides enhanced learning opportunities for students, parents and the community of Thomastown West Primary School.

*WCC is partnering with Thomastown West Primary School, Preston and Reservoir Adult Community Education (PRACE), The Smith Family*



**Whittlesea CALD Family Violence Project** (WCFVP) brings together a range of key local agencies to design, deliver and evaluate an integrated place-based model to reduce and prevent Family

Violence in Whittlesea's CALD communities. It works across prevention, early intervention and response, aligning with the Victorian Framework for Primary Prevention of Violence against Women.

*WCC is collaborating with The Salvation Army Crossroads Network, InTouch Multicultural Centre against Family Violence, City of Whittlesea, Kildonan UnitingCare, Berry Street Northern Family and Domestic Violence Service, Plenty Valley Community Health, Victoria Police and Whittlesea Community Futures*

**Whittlesea Interagency Taskforce on Gambling** (WITOG) was established in December 2012 to address local issues related to gambling and reduce the harm associated with gambling in our community.

*WCC is collaborating with Plenty Valley Community Health, Kildonan UnitingCare, The Salvation Army Crossroads, Neami National, Hume Whittlesea Primary Care Partnership, Women's Health in the North*

## PROJECTS

**'Equity, Health and Wellbeing'** (2016-2018) is piloting integrated health justice initiatives prioritising growth communities in Melbourne's outer north to increase access to legal and social services and address barriers to accessing supports. This will address the unique physical and social barriers that disadvantage communities in growth areas and will test approaches to enhancing long term social justice, health and wellbeing outcomes.

*WCC is partnering with Plenty Valley Community Health, Hume Whittlesea Primary Care Partnership and La Trobe University with the support of Victorian Legal Aid*

**'Putting the Health and Wealth Back into Whittlesea'** (2015-2017) is a community based project aiming to prevent harm associated with gambling. The project focuses on groups whose patterns of work increase their exposure to gambling and their risk of engaging in problem gambling behaviour. This includes shift workers, people who work in close proximity to gambling venues and people who are unemployed or underemployed.

*WCC is working with YMCA Whittlesea, Melbourne Market, City of Whittlesea, Plenty Valley Community Health and job seeker agencies with the support of the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation*

**'Farms to Families'** (2016-2017) is a pilot of pop up style Farmers' markets that not only provide a variety and range of fresh produce that the recipients often can't afford but it creates community connectivity and destigmatises the need to seek food relief. The Farm to Families program gives people access to fresh and nutritious food in a meaningful and non-threatening way that maintains dignity and fosters connectivity with their community.

*FoodBank led project with WCC, City of Whittlesea, Plenty Valley Community Health*

# WCC INITIATIVES AND PROJECTS

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

## » by responding to community issues

Whittlesea Community Connections identified family violence as an emerging issue in 2012 through an alarming increase in people coming in to WCC to seek assistance.

### FAMILY VIOLENCE

It quickly became a strategic priority and we have continued to develop projects, services and supportive practices across the organisation to meet increasing demand for support for what can be very complex cases. In addition to building our own staff capacity in 2013 we partnered with The Salvation Army Crossroads to have a specialist FV worker in our office every week and this continues today. This provides specialist advice and support directly to clients and also secondary consultations to WCC staff.

In 2015 WCC, Women's Health in the North and Crossroads partnered with Whittlesea's Iranian community for the Hamdel project. We adopted a women centred planning model to design and deliver activities to prevent Violence Against Women and children. The activities included training for women, legal education for couples, family activity days and a respectful relationships soccer program for young men. WCC continue to facilitate Persian women's and men's groups. The Hamdel project was funded by Our Watch.

2016 saw the culmination of phase one of the Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project, with the completion of an evaluation produced by Monash University highlighting the project's achievements and challenges since its inception in 2012. The evaluation found many successes, including its strong collaboration and grounding in the community, an increase in CALD women's access to knowledge of family violence and services, and increased access to perpetrator interventions for Whittlesea's Arabic-speaking community. Phase two of the project will explore opportunities to increase access to family violence information and support for Whittlesea's CALD communities, taking into consideration the recommendations of the 2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence.

With support from Victorian Legal Aid and the Department of Justice 2016 also saw the inception of the legal teams family violence unit – two specialist lawyers offering advice, casework and where the case is

strong, representation up to and including a final hearing in the courts to press for an intervention order. We also offer application for Victims of Crime compensation where there is evidence of injury and liaison with police, especially where the women cannot speak English well, or at all, and may have had difficulties in the past.

Seeing what is happening in our local community we work hard to respond to emerging issues like family violence in a range of ways; prevention, education, service provision, developing effective referral pathways and advocating for more resources and a more responsive service system.



“ Seeing what is happening in our local community we work hard to respond to emerging issues like family violence in a range of ways



35  
Family Violence  
Court Appearances




MAKING A  
DIFFERENCE



30 files opened  
for women seeking Victims of  
Crime Assistance Compensation



130 women  
assisted by advice  
and /or casework



The Client Services team connect community members with the information, services and referrals they need.

# CLIENT TEAM

**\$120,155**

Distributed in  
Emergency relief

**11,700+**

Community  
transport trips

**1,466**

Community  
information enquiries

**280**

Casework clients

**700+**

local people assisted  
with volunteer  
opportunities



The Client Services team connect community members with the information, services and referrals they need. Through emergency relief and case management we provide financial and other support to those experiencing financial hardship. This includes our housing brokerage no interest loans which assist people enter the private rental market.

## In summary the CLIENT TEAM provides

- ▶ Community Information and referral
- ▶ Volunteer Resource Service
- ▶ Emergency relief and Social Work Casework
- ▶ Family Violence Casework (Crossroads outreach)
- ▶ Housing brokerage and support
- ▶ Community Transport
- ▶ Tax Help
- ▶ The Thomastown West Community Hub

Our **community information** volunteers ensure community members have access to services, groups, activities and facilities across the City of Whittlesea and beyond. They play an important role in welcoming people and navigating them to the most appropriate service.

The **Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service** continues to promote volunteering through the community by attending expos, visiting agencies and meeting with community groups to establish new and interesting volunteer opportunities for local people. We provide to provide individualized assistance to community members who require additional support in accessing local volunteer opportunities, and in 15/16 provided targeted assistance to 15 community organisations who sought support in recruiting volunteers. We also facilitate and support a network of Volunteer Managers in Whittlesea.

**Emergency relief and casework** is essential to WCC's support for those experiencing financial hardship. In addition to weekly assessments and distribution WCC leads the ER network in the north, delivers training to ER Assessors in Family Violence and Cultural responsive training. Generalist casework supports people with complex issues including financial hardship, mental health, family violence, housing and asylum seekers. Demand continued to increase throughout 15/16.

The Whittlesea Emergency Relief Network was successful in receiving a community grant through the City of Whittlesea to establish a local ER toolkit for volunteers. An Emergency Relief Community Guide has been developed and was launched in September 2016.

The **Housing Brokerage** fund continues to provide No Interest Loans to enable people to access the private rental market. Women are the greatest direct beneficiaries of this fund but many of these women are caring for children as well. WCC continues to seek support to deliver the necessary casework support to leverage the impact of the loans.

The **International Women's Day** celebration was held on 18th March, 2016 at Galada Community Centre. All women nominated were recognised for the valuable contributions they have made and continue to make in the community.

The **Community Transport** service celebrated ten years of operation in September 2016. A significant milestone for all those who advocated to establish and maintain and grow the service to meet the needs a transport disadvantaged residents in Whittlesea.



# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

## » through place based collaboration

The Thomastown West Community Hub is a multipurpose facility located in the Thomastown West Primary School that provides enhanced learning opportunities for students, parents and the community of Thomastown West Primary School.

TWCH aims to:

- ▶ intervene early to increase language, literacy and numeracy outcomes for children
- ▶ build connections for children and parents with the school, and programs and services in the broader community
- ▶ create friendships, support networks and a sense of belonging for students and their families
- ▶ provide a safe, inclusive and streamlined entry point to key services that support children and their families

In 2016 the Ward-Ambler Family Trust continued to support Whittlesea Community Connections and Thomastown West Primary School with the funding for program activities and a Hub Coordinator to build relationships and coordinate the programs delivered at the Hub. Other founding partners include Preston and Reservoir Adult and Continuing Education (PRACE) and the Smith Family who deliver programs at the Hub and contribute to the partnership direction and governance.

Over 90 students are attending the Hub's Homework and English Language support programs each week, ensuring they are able to access appropriate and targeted support to develop their language and literacy skills.

Over 38 adults and 25 preschool children are attending the Hub's Multicultural Playgroups and English Language support programs each week, helping them develop their language and literacy skills with their children and enable social interaction and information sharing.

Strengthening our partnerships with local organisations and providers to leverage additional resources and support for the Hub activities and programs continues and is aligned with the needs identified by the school. A new partnership was formed this year with Plenty Valley Regional Library who delivered a six-week early childhood literacy program called 'Read with Me'.

There are 20 local **volunteers** who support the Hub activities. Volunteers are recruited through WCC's Volunteer Resource Service and word of mouth in the community. They are a critical component of the Hub and the Coordinator has further developed training this year to ensure volunteers have the necessary support and skills to engage with students and parents and enhance their learning outcomes.

“It has helped me make new friends, learn new words and given me an opportunity to practise talking in English (with tutors).

(Sofia, 12)



Over 90 students are attending the Hub's Homework and English Language support programs each week.



## MAKING A DIFFERENCE



THERE ARE  
20 local volunteers who support the Hub activities.



“It has helped with my maths and spelling because if I need help, I am not scared to ask.

(Asel, 10, Cool Learning Club)





The Settlement team provides support, advocacy and referrals to newly arrived migrants and refugees to assist them with settlement in Australia.

# SETTLEMENT TEAM

**300**

Newly arrived clients assisted

**369**

Settlement group sessions

**2,043**

Hours of volunteer driving support

**65**

Young people supported to gain driving practice

**700+**

Hours of childcare provided

Settlement Services at Whittlesea Community Connections provides support, advocacy and referrals to newly arrived migrants and refugees to assist them with settlement in Australia.

The team supports people to gain information, establish new connections and networks and address the settlement issues they face as newly arrived migrants and refugees. The majority of people accessing our service are refugees and protection visa holders with a smaller number from the family visa streams. Groupwork, community development and advocacy are the backbone of our approach to supporting new community members.

### In summary the SETTLEMENT TEAM provides

- ▶ Settlement advice and casework
- ▶ Youth work and homework support
- ▶ Settlement support groups
- ▶ Community Development
- ▶ Women in Work childcare social enterprise
- ▶ Road Safety Programs
- ▶ The Harmony Arabic newspaper
- ▶ Migration advice

**Casework** assists newly arrived refugees and migrants improve their mental and physical health, deal with family separation and unemployment, establish education and training pathways, find secure housing, resolve legal, migration and citizenship issues.

We facilitate five multi faith, multicultural **support groups**: Arabic Women's and Men's groups, Persian Women's and Men's groups and a mixed Refugee Support group. Information sessions delivered in the group format include Victorian Legal Aid's 'Settled and Safe' program, health and nutrition, counselling, art therapy, parenting, financial literacy and family violence.

The Settlement team assist newly arrived **young people** through homework support, school holiday and other youth group programs, individual casework and personal employment support.

**Women in work** is a mobile childcare service that provides qualified women from migrant and refugee backgrounds to provide care to children whose parents are attending services, programs, education and training and group activities. Women in Work also facilitate two multicultural playgroups at the Thomastown West Community Hub.

**Road Safety** programs continue to be in demand with WCC offering L2P program, adult driver education and road safety for children.

WCC delivered its annual **Refugee Week event** on 22nd June, 2016 at Epping Memorial Hall for 300 community members. The event was held in partnership with Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Life Without Barriers, City of Whittlesea, AMES, VicSeg, Victoria Police, Australian Syrian Charity, Tamil community leaders and the Thomastown Library. The event included a range of activities including;

- ▶ Children and young people's arts activities
- ▶ Community participatory tool capturing young people's aspirations
- ▶ Musical and dance performances from Congolese, Syrian, Tamil, indigenous groups and a youth hip hop group
- ▶ A photography exhibition, "Voiceless Journeys" by Ondru, a Melbourne based community Arts organisation.
- ▶ Guest speakers spoke about the resettlement experience and the contribution of refugees in the community.



# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

## » through social connection + groups

### ARABIC SPEAKING WOMEN'S GROUP

Every Monday between 20 and 40 Arabic speaking women join the WCC settlement worker for a few hours of friendship, information sharing, structured sessions and English language support. The group has been going for more than fifteen years and provides a critical connection for newly arrived women and their young children. Some of the women from the group share what the group means to them.

*"There are a lot of amazing characteristics of this Arabic Speaking Women's Group. First, it's a place where you can express your feelings and share knowledge and ideas with other people. It is a place where you can integrate with other women from the same culture. You can get information about Australia and it's people, about the laws and about settlement. Everything about the Arabic Speaking Women's Group is enjoyable.. It's absolutely wonderful"*

Fatema

*"I would like to thank the Arabic Speaking Women's Group because I learned a lot of things" "Its nice to interact with other people" "I was taught about self care" I also would like to thank Owen the volunteer bus driver" "I would like to also thank Dalal for all her hard work with Arabic Speaking Women's Group"*

Hawra

*"I love the Arabic Speaking Women's Group, because I learn and benefit from it" Since inception of the Arabic Speaking Women's Group and subsequent weekly visits I developed a sense of worthiness as well as overcoming all my personal issues"*

Maissa

*"What I love about the Arabic Speaking Women's Group is the spirit of love between the group members. I benefit from the information sessions provided in the group. The love Dalal shows us is immeasurable.. I personally feel that Dalal is a sibling for us all"*

Inaam

*"I come to the group to overcome social isolation"*

Mariam

*"Honestly the Arabic Speaking Women's Group is the only vessel of enjoyment that, seeing Dalal on a weekly basis makes me feel a sense of comfort. Owen the volunteer bus driver is always willing to pick us up and drop us off and he has been very helpful. I find the Arabic Speaking Women's Group is very beneficial as we are learning a number of laws of Australia, sharing knowledge and ideas and learning from each others experiences"*

Maryana

*"I would like to thank Dalal and the Arabic Speaking Women's Group for teaching us the English language as I greatly benefited from it. I would like to thank the driver for being punctual. I am thankful for the information sessions provided on women's health and medical knowledge and for being introduced to new members of the group"*

Jakleen



“The Arabic Speaking Women’s Group is excellent and we feel very comfortable.

Hadyia

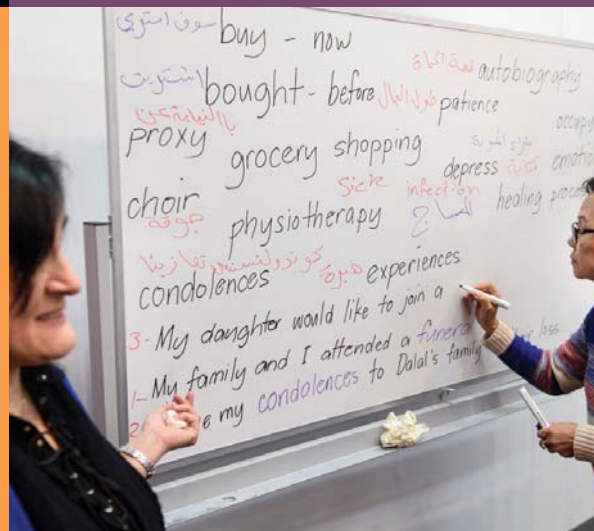


“I learned about the protection of women, our wellbeing as well as providing guidance in terms of family violence.

Badria



## MAKING A DIFFERENCE



THE GROUP  
HAS BEEN GOING  
FOR MORE THAN  
**15** years



“I would like to thank Dalal and the Arabic Speaking Women’s Group for teaching us the English language as I greatly benefited from it.

Jakleen

“ The Arabic Speaking Women’s Group is my family

Zeinab



“ My children and I are very happy to be part of Arabic Speaking Women’s Group.

Alham



» MAKING A DIFFERENCE





## MAKING A DIFFERENCE

» through social connection + groups

### ARABIC SPEAKING WOMEN'S GROUP continued

*"I would like to thank all those involved in helping to run the group especially Dalal who is always trying to make us listen and benefit from the group activities. I hope the group will continue to have English language program, excursions and continue to provide settlement information sessions"*

Anwar

*"I like the Arabic Speaking Women's Group a lot. I can hardly wait for the day to come to the group and get out of the house and overcome my depression because I feel relaxed when I come to the group and see my sister Dalal and all group members who are my friends. I feel that this group is my home and members of the group are my family members"*

Nasrin

*"I joined the group very recently. I meet new friends, and my children are benefiting and they are very happy to come here and socialise with other children and spend good time together. I also learn a lot about Australian law and integration into the society"*

Asraa

*"I would like to thank Dalal and Whittlesea Community Connections for the wonderful services they provide. Especially for us, newly arrived migrants and refugees, being away from our family and friends and trying to resettle in a new country. Whittlesea Arabic Speaking Women's Group was my first step to start a new life in Australia. I met very lovely new friends and was able to socialise with people from the same culture. I learned a lot of information and benefited a lot from the group activities and information sessions. I am unable to mention everything in this small piece of paper how much I benefited in every way of life aspects such as health and settlement information sessions"*

Ghayda

*"I would like to thank the Arabic Speaking Women's Group because it provides us with a lot of services such as transport to pick us up and drop us off, we gained a lot of knowledge and understanding about women's health, women's rights and healthy relationships, and children. We also learned a lot about the services available and we benefited from the excursions we had as well"*

Suzan

*"I have been with the Arabic Speaking Women's Group for the past five years and have met genuine women and continue to maintain a positive friendships. The information sessions are amazing and they help develop a positive outlook on life. The ease of transportation and facilitating trips have been great and such a routine breaker.*

Zainab





Our legal team takes pride in grounding its approach and priorities on the needs and experiences of the local community.

# LEGAL TEAM

**1,562**

Number of advice undertaken

**556**

Number of files opened as at 30 June 2016

**224**

Number of night service clients

**2,342**

Total number of people assisted

**58**

Court appearances

**497**

Cases closed

**31**

Immigration cases

Throughout the 2015-16 period WCC's legal team continued to provide effective and concrete assistance to the public through application of legal remedies with legal advice and casework forming the backbone of our work. Day-time, evening and outreach appointments were made available to ensure that our lawyers were accessible to as many in our community as resources allowed.

### In summary the LEGAL TEAM provides

- ▶ Legal information, advice and casework
- ▶ Community legal education
- ▶ Law reform and advocacy
- ▶ Migration advice
- ▶ Family violence
- ▶ Clinical Education program (with La Trobe University)

In response to our growing population and the geographical distribution of City of Whittlesea residents the **outreach** program continues to build relationships across the region. Legal services are offered in five locations: Mill Park Community House in Mill Park, Anglicare Victoria in Lalor, Laurimar Community Activity Centre in Doreen, Uniting Care Kildonan in Epping and Plenty Valley Community Health in Whittlesea and a trial is underway at Jindi Family and Community Centre in Mernda.

Our partnership with the **Greensborough Family Relationship Centre** (GFRC) ensures that local people have access to quality legal advice as they navigate through the dispute resolution process and we have consolidated both our relationship with the GFRC and the services provided there. Information sessions, advice, casework, and assistance during family mediation have been key aspects of the work undertaken and the demand for the services provided by this partnership continues to increase.

We continue to strengthen our partnership with **La Trobe University** and after a successful pilot program run in conjunction with the night service we have established a professional practice course for law students, a subject offered as part of the curriculum. The subject began with students seeing their first clients in July 2016.

We deliver **Community Legal Education** sessions covering topics from family law, wills and general law in community and group settings and education settings like Melbourne PolyTechnic and Whittlesea Secondary College. Family Violence information sessions, particularly with local culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, were delivered as part of the Whittlesea CALD Communities Family Violence Project. WCC's lawyers work across WCC teams to deliver information sessions to clients, facilitated groups and volunteers.

**Looking to the future** and despite the statistics evidencing growing legal need the Federal Government has announced cuts to Victoria Legal Aid funding which will in some form or other be passed on to Community Legal Centres like ours. The recent Victorian Government Access to Justice Review (October 2016) provides some key findings that provide a framework for improving access to justice in Victoria.

Towards the end of 2015-16 WCC began work on a legal needs analysis to clearly and comprehensively document the legal needs of the residents of the City of Whittlesea and broader region. This document will inform our priorities and will also form the basis of a business case to Victoria Legal Aid and the Department of Justice to ensure the differential access to legal services in growth and interface areas does not get worse.



# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

## » through volunteering

If you walk into WCC you won't know who is a volunteer and who is a staff member. Volunteers are integral to all our services and activities.

### EXAMPLES OF VOLUNTEER WORK

The Community legal service depends heavily on the contribution of local people who volunteer. Law students (and others) act as reception and in-take workers, assist as paralegals and undertake important legal research tasks that ensure we are able to deliver all of our legal services. We are also very fortunate to have an extensive group of experienced solicitors who volunteer on our weekly Monday Night Legal Service and thus provide an invaluable resource to the people of Whittlesea.

The Community transport service is built on the work and care of volunteer drivers providing almost 12,000 free trips to help people experiencing transport disadvantage get to health appointments, social groups or essential shopping.

They will greet you at reception, help you with information, make an appointment, pick you up in the community transport bus, help you learn English in settlement group, take you for a driving lesson, do your tax return and provide free legal advice through the night service.

With a ratio of 1 staff member for every 10 volunteers we wouldn't be as connected, as capable or as able to deliver our services without our volunteers. We have two volunteers on our Board, nominated and voted by the volunteers themselves. The care, attention, expertise and commitment of our volunteers keeps us strong and focussed on responding to our local community's needs and aspirations.

The L2P program relies on committed volunteers working with young people to obtain the 120 hours of driving experience they need to get their licence. Often this involves early starts with lessons before school.

Our Emergency Relief volunteers arrive early to take calls from people experiencing financial hardship, they make appointments and then work with those people in a caring, respectful and constructive way to help them navigate through a difficult time by providing financial assistance, referrals and other goods.

Our five settlement groups have dedicated volunteers who help facilitate the groups, teach and mentor, provide English as an Additional language support and activities and are always a friendly face and source of community information.

Volunteers are always involved in our projects like Farms to Families, our campaigning and provide expertise in photography, media and communications.

Not only are we incredibly lucky to have such dedicated volunteers adding value across our organisation but our Volunteer Resource Service recruits, trains and places volunteers across the City of Whittlesea to build our collective volunteering capacity, help build pathways to employment and social connections for the residents of the City of Whittlesea.

To all our past and present volunteers we extend our thanks and appreciation. We just could not do this without you..



“ The Community transport service is built on the work and care of volunteer drivers providing almost 12,000 free trips to help people experiencing transport disadvantage...



OVER  
**25,500** hours  
of dedicated volunteers time



## MAKING A DIFFERENCE



A RATIO OF  
**1** staff member  
**10** FOR EVERY  
volunteers



“ To all our past and present volunteers we extend our thanks and appreciation.

# OUR BOARD

(JUNE 2016)

**Maureen Corrigan OAM**

*President*

**Martin Booth**

*Vice President*

**Greg Godfrey**

*Treasurer*

**Rolf Peake**

*Secretary*

**Sam Alessi**

*Council Representative*

**Christine (Chrissy) Lewis**

*Volunteer Representative*

**Sebastian (Dinny) Jaonis**

*Member*

**Owen Waldie**

*Member*

**Harry Jenkins**

*Member*

**Nessie Sayar**

*Member*

**Stephen Lewis**

*Member*

# OUR STAFF

**Ann Lightowler**

Community Lawyer

**Anna Hutchens**

Client Services Program Manager (from April 2016)

**Ben Rodgers**

Lead Project Worker (to Nov 2015)

**Bianca Opasinis**

Lead Project Worker (from Feb 2016)

**Carmela Raudino**

Settlement Services Case worker

**Caterina Angelis**

Emergency Relief Case worker

**Chandana Rao**

Project Worker (to Oct 2016)

**Charlotte Inglis**

CALD Communities Family Violence Project Support Worker (to Oct 2015)

**Chris Howse**

Principal Solicitor

**Chris Ryan**

Community Lawyer

**Claire Varley**

Partnerships and Projects Program Manager (to Aug 2016)

**Dalal Sleiman**

Settlement Services Case worker

**Deepty Cusima**

Community Information and Resource Coordinator

**Despina Kouros**

Community Lawyer

**Edmond Babatunde**

Road Safety and Driving Coordinator

**Georgianna Brooks**

Community Transport and Assessment worker

**Grozda Nedeljkovic**

Migration advisor

**Haseeb Mian**

Community Lawyer

**Jackie Turner**

Settlement Services Group facilitator

**Jemal Ahmet**

CEO (to March 2016)

**Jonathan Lee**

Community Lawyer (to May 2016)

**Kate O'Sullivan**

Settlement Services Program Manager

**Katrice Bolden**

Emergency Relief Coordinator and Case manager

**Kim Lai**

Office Coordinator

**Mandy Giannarelli**

Community Transport worker and Women in Work coordinator (from July 2016)

**Michelle Newton**

Volunteer Resource and Training worker

**Nathalie Njako**

Women in Work coordinator (to June 2016)

**Nina Lim**

Thomastown West Community Hub Coordinator

**Parry Williams**

Community Transport Coordinator

**Peta Fualau**

Client Services Program Manager (to April 2016)

Acting CEO (April – June 2016 then maternity leave)

**Rani Flory**

Community Lawyer, Family Violence lawyer (from Feb 2016)

**Sam Charlesworth**

WCFVP worker (from Feb 2016)

**Sarah Haintz**

Youth worker (to Aug 2016)

**Tanya Francis**

Community Lawyer, Family Violence lawyer (from Feb 2016)

**Vanessa Galea**

Coordinator of Volunteers and Administration – Legal

**Vieli Choka**

Settlement Services Case worker

At the time of writing we had several new members of our staff team

**Alex Haynes**

CEO (from Sept 2016)

**Belinda Leon**

Organisational Development (from Nov 2016)

**Hayley Bateman**

Youth worker (from Oct 2016)

**Hiyah Rahman**

Settlement Services Case worker (from Oct 2016)

Thank you to all our casual staff - Fawzia, Jagjeet, Hanaa, Dorothy, Lina, Krishantimala, Nagwa, Rachel, Vivian, Howid, Ahlam, Fiona, Victoria, Manel, Nafiso, Nadarajah, Sherien, Gary and Omid.

# WCC PARTNERS, FUNDERS AND DONORS

## PARTNERS

In addition to our project partners 2015-16 WCC strengthened its service delivery partnerships with Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre to deliver Settlement Services and Community Information and Support Victoria to deliver Emergency Relief.

Our relationship with La Trobe University continued to expand with a successful pilot clinical education program for law students. This has now been formalised with an MOU and is offered as an ongoing Clinical Education subject.

WCC formalised partnerships with a number of key agencies, including the Brotherhood of St Laurence and Plenty Valley Community Health, committing to exploring opportunities for collaboration and avoiding duplication of work. These partnerships will help WCC continue to meet the changing needs of our community and increase supports and services in Whittlesea.

WCC has a multifaceted partnership with the City of Whittlesea that facilitates Home and Community Care community transport services, VicRoads L2P driving program, the delivery of Community Information and Volunteer Resource Services and supports key community events such as Refugee Week and International Women's Day

## FUNDERS

Thank you to all our funders:

- ▶ Australian Government Department of Social Services
- ▶ City of Whittlesea
- ▶ Crocodile and Sunshine Foundation
- ▶ Ian and Nelleke Clark Encouragement Fund
- ▶ Our Watch Limited
- ▶ Queens Fund
- ▶ R.E. Ross Trust
- ▶ Scanlon Foundation
- ▶ VicRoads
- ▶ Victorian Government Department of Justice
- ▶ Victorian Legal Aid
- ▶ Victorian Government Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship
- ▶ Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation
- ▶ Walter and Eliza Hall Trust
- ▶ Ward Ambler Trust

## DONORS

Thank you to all our donors who give individually, as families and community groups and who support our fundraising events and activities. Your contributions are significant and enable us to respond to emerging needs. All our Federal, State and Local elected representatives support our work in a range of ways for which we are very grateful.









## ▶ VOLUNTEER

We are always looking for new volunteers of all backgrounds and experience to join our WCC team. There are always opportunities as drivers, driver mentors, community information, homework tutors, English teachers, fundraisers, media and communications, legal services and shorter term project roles.

## ▶ DONATE

Please contact our CEO, Alex Haynes, if you would like to invest in the work we do with the residents of the City of Whittlesea.

## ▶ BECOME A MEMBER

Members of WCC contribute to the community ownership and direction of this unique local and independent organisation. Our strength lies in the support given by local people. Joining is easy. Contact us or download a membership form from the website.

## ▶ PARTNER WITH US

The needs and aspirations of our growing community are significant and we cannot respond alone. Get in touch if you are interested in partnering with us to deliver services, activities or create new opportunities for Whittlesea.

# GET INVOLVED

### TELEPHONE

03 9401 6666  
(General)

### LOCATION

Shop 111, Pacific Epping  
High Street, Epping VIC 3076

### INFORMATION

[www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au](http://www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au)  
[facebook.com/whittleseacommunityconnections](https://facebook.com/whittleseacommunityconnections)







MAKING A  
DIFFERENCE

