



Whittlesea
**Community
Connections**



Making a positive
difference everyday

Annual Report 2019-20



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.

ABN 49881724827
Registration No. A0008867P

Telephone

03 9401 6666 General
03 9401 6655 Legal
03 9401 6644 Financial Assistance
03 9401 6633 Women in Work mobile childcare
03 9401 6622 Community Transport

Locations

**Shop 111, Pacific Epping,
581 High Street, Epping VIC 3076**

**Thomastown West Community Hub,
98 Main Street, Thomastown VIC 3076**

**Mernda Community House,
2 Heals Road, Mernda VIC 3754**

**Whittlesea Food Collective,
Melbourne Polytechnic Epping campus,
Dalton Road, Epping VIC 3076**

www.whittleseacc.org.au
facebook.com/whittleseacommunityconnections

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.

Photography: Anthony McKee Photographer. Graphic Design: I.D.Yours.

Contents

2	Our Board and Community Advisors
3	President's report
4	CEO's report
5	About Us
6	Strategic responses
18	COVID response
24	Partnership Feature
30	Financial statement
35	Our volunteers
40	Our staff
42	Our partners and supporters
44	Looking forward to 2021
47	Get involved

Our Board

Our Board members (as at June 2020)



Harry Jenkins congratulating Paul Dellios on 41 years of volunteer service at WCC - Incredible!

Nessie Sayar
Teresa Farid
Harry Jenkins
Vicki Selvaggio
Max Lee
Lena Gargano-Reddy
Ray Rosales
Emmanuel Gauci
Lydia Wilson

President

Vice President

Treasurer

Secretary

Member

Member

Member

Member

Member, City of Whittlesea representative

Thank you to former members Elissa Andreacchio, Sam Alessi, Suzanne Bevacqua, Rosa Harrison, Holly Cusingh and David Williams for their contributions. Special thanks and acknowledgement for the contributions of Nessie Sayar serving for four years before stepping down as President in July 2020.

Our Community Advisors

CALD Women's Advisory Group

Binaz Ourabi
Hangama Hamid
Ariati Ariati
Nathalie Nzouakeu- Njako
Gowri Fernando
Kalyani Baskaran
Kranthi Chakilam
Barbara Minuzzo
Ljilian Ristevski
Sohir Aldaher
Magdalena Stoyanova
Manel Rouma
Avinash Kubhi
Stela Ilinor
Kristanti
Deepika Paul
Krishanthi Liyanage
Emeretta Cross

The LOT (Leaders of Tomorrow) – youth advisory group

Tarek Zeino	Jibreel Rafiq	Ayan Moussa
Mohamad Zeino	Sarah Wassouf	David Bottroos
Aron Raward	Aya Cheikh Hussein	Seneli Wijeratne
Jess Jong	Alexia Papadopoulos	Jaspreet Kaur
Zara Khan	Ziane Ramadan	Maree Pastouras
Indiana Tegovski	Hanin Ramadan	
Marianne Bottroos	Lucas Nasrallah	



Mernda Community House Advisory Group

Muhamad Abduh
Jackie Mathew
Naomi Spence
Jarrod MacDonald
Barbara Vaughan
Sooma Nosratpour

Whittlesea Food Collective Community Advisory Group

Sally Delaney (Chair)
Alex Fabiano, Infinity Church
Community Meals Kitchen
Gianna Donato, Encompass care
Joanna Borg, The Shak
Kevin Potter, Countrywide Mission
Rebecca Auriant, ADRA
Toan Phuong
i

President's report

It has been an extraordinarily busy year for the Board, staff and volunteers. Firstly with the tragic bushfires and then the sudden onset of the global pandemic which defined a new way of delivering COVID safe effective services and policies.

I am pleased to advise members that the Board is confident WCC is in a good financial position and can meet its obligations on time or when required as evidenced in our Audited Financial Statements.

During these unprecedented times, WCC staff and volunteers have been amazing working remotely and many times on the frontline supporting and delivering programs/ services, including food, masks and other vital needs to our community's most vulnerable and disadvantaged. As always, staff and volunteers hard work and compassion has been outstanding, thank you.

It has been a pleasure to work with CEO Alex Haynes. Alex's strong and impressive leadership, initiatives, funding achievements and partnerships makes WCC unique and one of the leading grassroots organisation's in our municipality. Alex works tirelessly to support

her team and the operational needs of the organisation and has been an exceptionally dedicated CEO over the years and during these challenging times. Alex's vision for a better community for all is evident in the success of the Whittlesea Food Collective, which today is providing some of the vital work for our community's most vulnerable residents. The Mernda Community House is connecting and empowering residents, and the Community Farm will greatly benefit our wider communities.

I am confident with Alex's outstanding leadership and team WCC will continue to grow from strength to strength and serve the needs of our community for many years to come.

I have now concluded my term as President and wish the incoming President all the best. 10 years volunteering at WCC has been empowering not only for me but many women

like me to reach their full potential in a safe and welcoming environment. Thank you to all past and present teams, it has been a pleasure working with you.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all current Board Members, Teresa Farid, Harry Jenkins, Max Lee, Vicki Selvaggio, Ray Rosales, Emmanuel Gauci, Lena Gargano and Lydia Wilson, our Council representative, for their hard work, dedication and support during my time as Chair. It has been an honour working with you.

Stay safe & well,

NESSIE SAYAR

President, Whittlesea Community Connections

CEO's report



This year it's all about gratitude – for the thousands of small efforts everyone has made to keep us safe and connected and to reduce the negative impacts of isolation and hardship that have been exacerbated by COVID.

At WCC we have been bold and brave this year. Making important decisions quickly without enough information and in a world of unknowns and putting all our energy and resources to maximum effect. We worked together, and worked hard. We held firm to our values and surprised ourselves how impactful we can be. Most importantly we have looked out for each other and been kind.

In the second year of our strategic plan we have again made genuine progress on our priorities and reinforced in our own minds how important they are for our community. Significant work on housing and homelessness, equity of access, gender equity and employment has been coupled with an increase in support and opportunities for young people. We fitted in some other things too - launched the Whittlesea Food Collective, grew the reach of Mernda Community House, started delivering Learn Local pre accredited training, expanded our legal clinics and redefined our community support model, our financial assistance program and our approach to volunteer support and participation.

We do everything in partnership as that maximises our reach and impact and helps us develop new knowledge, skills and connections. The list of partners we include at the end of the annual report gets longer and more diverse every year and we are grateful for the support they offer us and our community.

I am proud of the way we hold ourselves to account to our community and work everyday to make our place, our community, a more connected and compassionate one. We benefit enormously from our Community advisors – our CALD Women's Advisory Group, Mernda Community Advisory Group, The LOT (Youth Advisory Group) and our Food Collective Community Advisory Group. This insight has never been more important than this year. We have been tested to the extremes but it has brought out our strength, and our passion, perhaps more than we realised we had. We have risen to the COVID challenge in a remarkable way. We have been creative and compassionate, resourceful and responsive. We have had laser sharp focus on those needing our support the most, as well as keeping an eye on working for a better future and capitalising on the opportunities COVID brings to strengthen our community.

And there is so much to look forward to with a new community centre to build in Mernda, the development of the Whittlesea Community Farm in Aurora, securing support for a safe dedicated youth space in Whittlesea and more recognition of the significant and unique impacts of place based work.

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 our community, ensuring that everyone has equal access to the community's resources and services.

About Us

Our values

- Self determination
- Independence
- Not for profit
- Confidential
- Non judgmental
- Diversity

Our approach

- We welcome everyone in our community
- Our services are free
- We keep your information private
- We have bilingual workers and volunteers and use interpreters
- We support your rights
- We stand independent from the government or any other organisation
- We support you to build hope and confidence

What we do

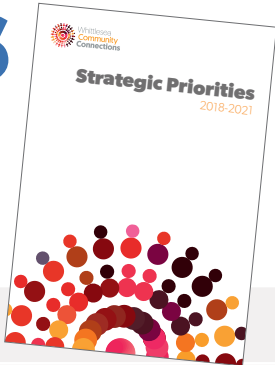
WCC identifies and breaks down barriers to accessing information and specialised support services and works towards building individual and community resilience. As a client-centred, community-led organisation, WCC works alongside individuals, families and groups to create opportunities to access information and services and to build and strengthen connections.

We achieve outcomes through providing

- Asylum seeker support
- CALD Women's groups grants
- Community Development activities and events
- Community Support, Information and Referral
- Community Transport
- Community Visitors Scheme
- DriverED driving school social enterprise
- Financial assistance and material aid
- Friendly Connections
- Housing brokerage support and no interest loans
- Legal information, advice, casework and legal education
- Mernda Community House
- Migration advice and casework
- OurBUS community bus hire social enterprise
- Road Safety, L2P and Adult Driving Programs
- Settlement advice, casework and support groups
- Social work casework service
- Tax Help
- Thomastown West Community Hub
- Volunteer Resource Service
- Youth work, Homework support and one + one tutoring
- Whittlesea Food Collective
- Women in Work childcare social enterprise and leading several collaborative networks
- Whittlesea Multicultural Issues Network
- Whittlesea Housing and Homelessness Action Group
- Whittlesea Emergency Relief network
- Whittlesea Family Violence Network (new in Sept 2020)

Strategic responses

Our Strategic Plan 18-21 continues to drive our focus. and we have made significant progress on all priorities this year.



We will work to...			
Improve access to Housing and reduce Homelessness 	Actively engage in strengthening Multiculturalism 	Improve equity of access to information, support and services 	
Increase Gender Equality in community settings 		Improve opportunities and outcomes for Young People 	
Increase local employment through enterprise 		Improve access to Mental Health services and support and reduce stigma 	

1. Improve access to Housing and reduce Homelessness

More than one-fifth (22%, n=93) of clients assisted by Whittlesea Community Connections' community support team were homelessness or at risk of homelessness between January and June 2020.

That's an 8% increase from the previous 6 months. Housing affordability, lack of appropriate local housing options, financial issues and family violence were all contributing factors.

It is estimated that 3,497 households have an unmet need for affordable housing in City of Whittlesea. This represents 5.2% of all households. Rental households were somewhat more likely than mortgagee households to report moderate or heavy housing related financial stress. This is despite median rental payments being lower than median mortgage payments. (City of Whittlesea, Household Survey, 2016)



Whittlesea Housing and Homelessness Action Group

In September 2019 The Whittlesea Housing and Homelessness Action Group (WHAAG) was established through the efforts of WCC. It has a collective focus on developing a 10 year shared action plan that responds to housing and homelessness in the City of Whittlesea.

The WHAAG has identified a number of priority needs across the homelessness and housing spectrum including:

- Access to showers and laundry facilities for people experiencing homelessness
- A locally based access point into homelessness services
- Local emergency family accommodation (more than 2 bedrooms)
- Additional transitional accommodation properties
- Increase supply of affordable housing options

Data collectively drawn from WHHAG members provides a current understanding of homelessness in the City of Whittlesea and highlights that the most significant gaps include safe, long-term options for young people, families with young children, particularly in response to family violence, and people with a disability.

WCC (Belinda and Emma) presented to the Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee's public hearing: Whittlesea

The members include:

- City of Whittlesea
- DPV Health
- Haven Home Safe
- Home Ground Real Estate Launch Housing
- Hope Street
- Housing Choices Australia
- Merri Outreach Support Services
- Whittlesea Community Connections
- Women's Property Initiative
- Yarra Plenty Regional Library

Family Violence Housing Brokerage Project

Funded by the Ian Potter Foundation, 2019 -2021

This project delivers intensive support to women in the first 6 weeks of entering the program to assist them with obtaining private rental accommodation and establishing themselves (and any children) in a rental property; an additional 6 weeks of casework support is provided to ensure women have adequate supports in place. This project builds on our existing builds on our successful Housing Brokerage loan scheme and our ongoing efforts to improve our response to those experiencing and recovering from family violence.

Strategic responses (cont.)

2. Actively engage in strengthening Multiculturalism

Whittlesea is a diverse community with a strong history of multiculturalism. It’s a place where people from all over the world have come together to make their home. We can’t take our social cohesion for granted however and these questions are part of WCC’s efforts to find out what else can be done to ensure that everyone in Whittlesea can continue to contribute and belong.

- What is your experience of multiculturalism?
- What does an ideal multicultural community look like to you?
- If there was something we could do to strengthen multiculturalism in Whittlesea what would it be?

Australia Poem written by Ibrahim Moussa

أستراليا

أستراليا يا جناح دافي وشمس ما بتغيب
أستراليا نبع المحبة والمجد كلو
أستراليا ، عيسى اللّ ي ضحّى فوق الصليب
وملايك حدّو حاملين شموع
كرمال عينيك بلّشوا يصلّوا
أستراليا يا بلّسم المحتاج لجرّاحو
يا نجوم في ليل العتم ظلّوا
عالكون نورك شعّ مصباحو
الله عطاك اليوم مفتاحو
حتى البشر من نبعك يملّوا

“My experience of multiculturalism starts with my own family. My husband is from a different background, he is African. I am from Indonesia and my son was born here. He describes himself as Aussie. We practise tolerance and patience because we are all different. We have different values.”

“My experience of multiculturalism is one of love and learning”

“My experience of multiculturalism is growing up in a multi cultural society – India where there is range of different lifestyles, religion and Ethnicity. When I came to Australia I see lots of multiculturalism. A multicultural place is one that is Joyful, positive and one where we can enjoy more out of life. For me only having one culture is like water in a well. Still and boring. We should be flowing like a river.”

“We are all different. I come from a multicultural country – Afghanistan. We have many different languages, different costumes. There is harmony, many languages between us. I prefer to work in a multicultural, diverse workplace. There is more cheerfulness , more openness and more support in a multicultural office. It creates connection. Multiculturalism is to respect the value of each other.”

“Meeting one person who is willing to understand, to take the time, who is clever enough to listen makes all the difference.”

Inclusive Community Support Program

Funded by Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion

The aim of the Inclusive Community Support Program (ICSP) is to enhance and value CALD women’s participation and leadership within the local community, as well as increase the capacity of community groups to implement change that supports equity and inclusion.

Funded groups ran different activities and thought of ways to promote and run existing activities differently. One of the funded groups shared that ICSP gave them the space to reflect on ways of running and promoting activities, which were inclusive of CALD women.

“Eye opening experience, think and learn of ways to be more inclusive”

“We now have 40% new people joining the classes... not happened before, people coming from different communities”

Funded groups expressed that actively facilitating connections with CALD communities was instrumental in promoting participation and engagement of CALD women.

“The connections committee members have within their communities enabled us to get women/girls to confirm to attend. The uptake was huge - we did not even need to produce a flyer to promote to wider community.”

3. Improve equity of access to information, support and services

WCC works to ensure community members, particularly those who experience barriers to access and participation, have equity of access. WCC works with people including new arrival migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum, people of all abilities, single headed households, victim survivors of family violence and people experiencing financial insecurity to ensure people have the appropriate information, capacity and supports to address and overcome difficulties. WCC also works in partnership with other service providers and all levels of government to inform and advocate for change to better meet the needs of our local community.

A new approach to Financial Assistance

Funded by the Australian Department of Social Services through CISVic, City of Whittlesea, City of Whittlesea (COVID Relief) and community donations

After a comprehensive review of the Emergency Relief program in late 2019 with a lot of valuable input from existing clients and others experiencing hardship we redesigned the service. We introduced it in March 2020 as COVID restrictions were coming in.

- 1,105 clients with 2,439 dependent children
- 509 clients were new to WCC during the period
- 68% female
- 39% were 20-39 years old and 52% were 40-64 years old
- 44% of clients had dependent children (23% sole parents and 21% couple with dependent children)
- 59% from Epping, Lalor and Thomastown
- 34% living with disability with almost half reporting a physical disability and 40% a psychiatric disability
- 83 people reported they were homeless
- 66 countries of birth other than Australia
- 40 languages other than English
- 679 outgoing warm referrals

In the last year we have provided \$207,123 in support.
The top five categories of support in \$ value:

\$65,684	\$51,355	\$35,490	\$12,869	\$10,700
Utility bill assistance	Food	Material aid	Transport assistance	Accommodation

Strategic responses (cont.)



Supporting people seeking asylum

Partly funded by Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion (MASC), 2018-2020, the Rotary Club of Bundoora, CityLife Church Whittlesea and Montmorency Asylum Seekers Support Group

We work with asylum seeker communities living in the City of Whittlesea and surrounding areas in Melbourne's outer-north. 13% of Victoria's asylum seeker population lives in the City of Whittlesea.

Many are living with no visa at all and those on bridging visas have varied conditions. As a result people seeking asylum living in our community are feeling fearful and uncertain about the future, experience poor mental health and remain isolated without connections to the broader community.

WCC's Koru project creates a space for people seeking asylum to come together in a way that is positive and based on self-identified needs and aspirations. It provides opportunities to develop invaluable support networks and access information about available services. Participation in the asylum seeker and broader community is supported through volunteer information and training, community dinners and activities, English language and employment readiness groups.

Throughout 2019 and up until February 2020, WCC coordinated regular shared meals cooked by volunteer asylum seekers, and supported by the Rotary Club of Bundoora, to connect people in a welcoming environment. Based on consultations with community members this program was expanded to include weekly English conversation classes and holiday activities. WCC also provides emergency relief and casework to support people seeking asylum experiencing financial and other difficulties and has recently established the Whittlesea Food Collective to deliver food to people's home daily. WCC has developed partnerships with Cabrini and Red Cross so that people seeking asylum are able to access free medication and financial assistance from WCC. Due to the current crisis supports for people seeking asylum have expanded to include regular food deliveries through the Whittlesea Food Collective.

"Feel more confident in the community since attending these dinners", "Dinners is a safe way to get in to services at WCC and outside".



Mernda Community House

Funded by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), from October 2018, the City of Whittlesea and WCC

With the City of Whittlesea's support to use Mernda Community House in Heals Road, Mernda we started operating in February 2019. We have a range of term time activities and an active advisory group of local community members. They held a planning day in July 2019.

On the 8th December 2019 Mernda Community House held its Official Opening event. The day was momentous and joyful. Our local Whittlesea Unit SES came and took charge of the BBQ (loaned from Mernda and District Residents Association) and set up numerous shelters, chairs and tables for people to enjoy a bite to eat. Our wonderful volunteers helped prepare food and our resident Art for Kids teacher Sarah Kerr, entertained the younger children with kite making and craft all day. We had Kellie Hunter perform a 'Welcome to Country', the then Mayor Emilia Sterjova start the speeches, with additional words of encouragement from Rob Mitchell MP for McEwen and Danielle Green State Member for Yan Yean. We were also entertained by Mernda Strummers and Singers which rounded up an overall memorable day. Since then Mernda Community House has continued to grow in many ways and we look forward to continuing to be a place of welcome and connection.



Danielle Green MP Yan Yean and Rob Mitchell MP McEwen officially launching MCH

Great support from the local SES



Strategic responses (cont.)

Road 2 Work

People living in the City of Whittlesea that come from a migrant or refugee background are finding it difficult to gain employment due to a variety of reasons, including (but not limited to):

- Having a lack of Australian work experience and/or referees
- Struggling to ‘stand out’ in written job applications and/or in job interviews
- Employers preferring to recruit Australian-born applicants
- International qualifications not being recognized in Australia

We designed Road 2 Work to address these barriers. It is an internship program for people from refugee backgrounds to help them gain professional work experience and ideally employment in the long term. Businesses located in or within close proximity to the City of Whittlesea can sign up to the program to host a Road 2 Work internship, receive free cultural awareness training for their staff and gain access to a pool of highly motivated and skilled interns that can make a positive contribution to their business.

The community supported through the first stage of this project were women and young Arabic speaking humanitarian entrants predominantly from Syria and Iraq. Many in these new arrival communities come from educated and professional backgrounds including health professionals (doctors, pharmacists), engineering, teaching, accounting and community services. Many experience common barriers entering mainstream employment in Australia such as language, cultural adjustment, learning how to navigate new systems, trauma and racism and discrimination. The community we worked with are very excited and passionate about exploring ways they can build their skills and employment networks and really want to contribute to their new community.

The partnerships with Northern Health and Refugee Health developed through stage 1 are promising, we have developed good working relationships based on similar values and aspirations and both organisations are committed to taking on more new arrival interns with high skill levels. We are currently interviewing candidates to undertake an internship with Northern Health. WCC will continue to foster these partnerships and explore on-going opportunities for new arrival humanitarian entrants, particularly women and young people, to participate in the mainstream workforce.



4. Increase Gender Equality in community settings

CALD Women’s Advisory Group

Funded by WCC

The CALD WAG is a diverse group of women who are passionate about issues impacting on women, women’s leadership and community development. Between January 2019 and April 2020, the group met regularly (18 times), more than originally planned in response to the needs and interests of members. Formal training sessions were delivered on leadership, being an effective bystander, identifying family violence, drama for confidence and good governance. Training sessions were held with other groups to provide further opportunities to network.

“I am now opening up with people and feel more connected with the people. Exploring myself to bring forth my ideas and what I feel and the best part about this is that your views are always welcome”

“Everyone has varying attitudes about gender roles, gender equality and family violence, so sharing real experience and information... enriches my understanding”

“Gained a lot of knowledge personally about the abuse that impacts various cultural groups... through the cross section of the women that make up the group”

“Members shared their raw and real stories on how what they have learned by being part of this group and how they were able to make more informed decisions”

CALD Women’s Group Grants program

Funded by the Sunshine and Crocodile Foundation

Philanthropic funding has enabled WCC to continue to develop the CALD Women’s Group Grants Program. Now in its 7th year it has funded 35 groups to start or expand.

“First of all I am very lucky being a part of this group because I meet with new people and exchange views about life, family and community which is very good. I love their company now we are friends. I never thought about to learn swimming but now I am learning and I feel that someone gave me wings to fly thanks to WCC who gave women’s this opportunity”, 2019 Grant Recipient

“Unfortunately, in some societies, even if we are in Australia there are still some cultures that prevent women from many things. But being there and learning from each other and our support for one another makes our sessions more alive and active”, 2019 Grant Recipient

African Communities Family Violence Leadership Project

Funded by Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion

WCC was the support agency for 15 African Community Organisations across the state of Victoria in the delivery of the Family Violence Prevention activities.

This project ran from March 2019 to June 2020.

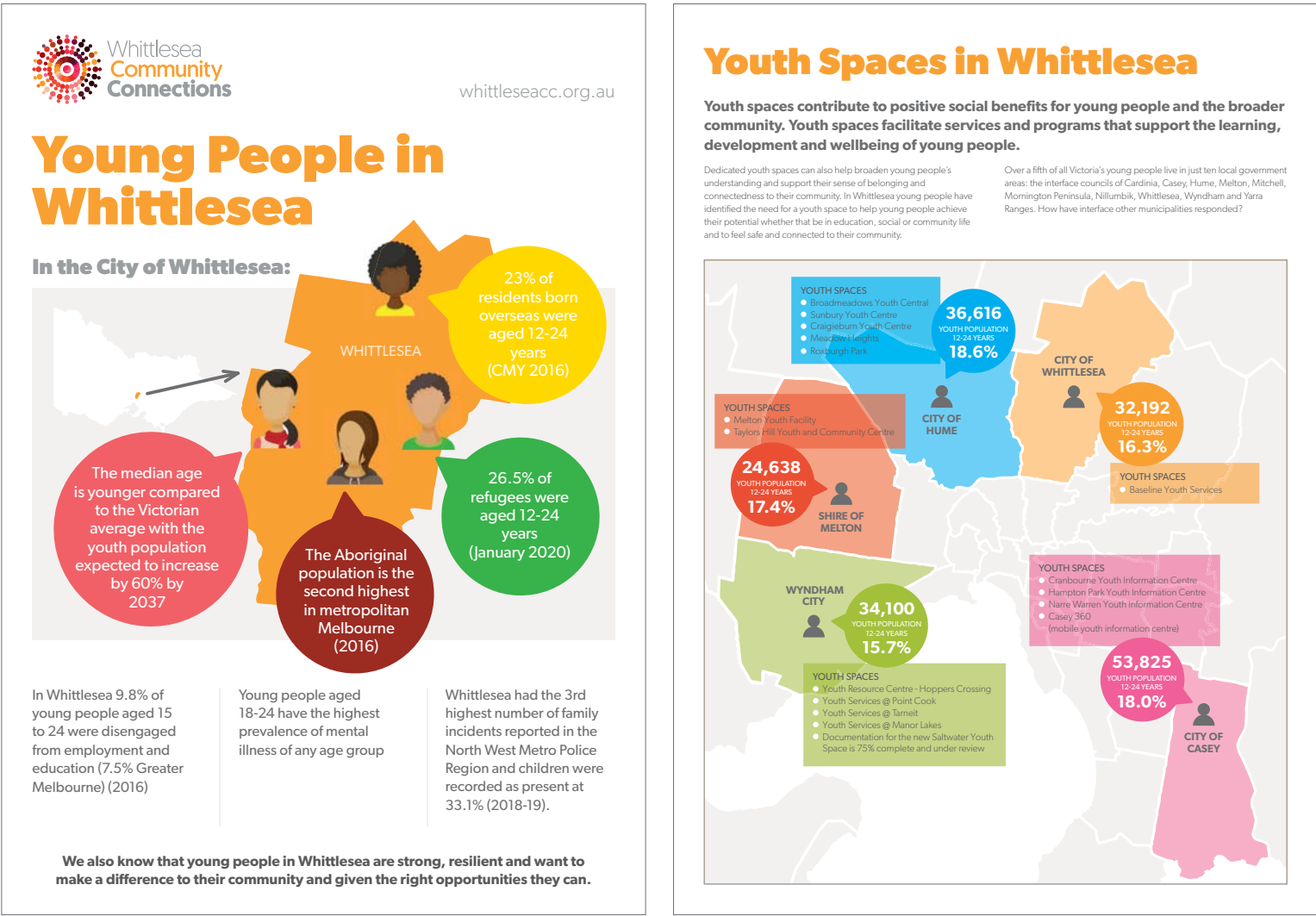
As the ‘Support Agency’ we fostered leadership and capability within the African Community Organisations their Family Violence Prevention activities and promoted safe delivery of these activities.

Some achievements were running 14 ‘Recognise, Respond & Respect: Family Violence Training’ across this period to approximately 225 African community members. The final report has identified that the African Community Organisations overall knowledge and skills in designing Family Violence Prevention activities has increased. As a result the African Community Organisations have developed well informed essential resources that they will be able to use in the future with community. Thus



Strategic responses (cont.)

5. Improve opportunities and outcomes for Young People



In 2018 we were successful in securing two streams of funding from the Victorian Government's Office of Youth, namely Empower and Engage. This has enabled WCC to strengthen its connections with young people and identify ways to make a difference to their lives and opportunities.

Empower program

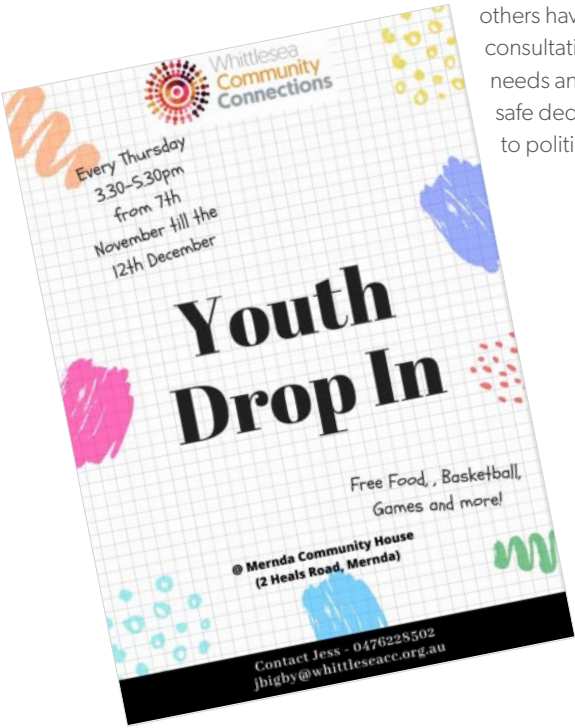
Funded by Department of Premier and Cabinet, Office of Youth

The Empower youth worker uses multiple strategies to engage vulnerable young people and enable participants to self-identify goals to improve health and wellbeing and pathways to social, civic and economic participation opportunities. This includes assertive outreach to build trust, group work to develop social and peer support, information sessions that facilitate connections to services and youth led social events that build on young people's strengths and celebrate achievements.

The Engage project

Funded by Department of Premier and Cabinet, Office of Youth

This year we have really seen young people develop their leadership and advocacy skills, become more confident, more socially aware and find different platforms to shout out their collective voices. Three LOT members were selected to be members of Council's Youth Advisory Committee and others have been active in consultation about community needs and advocating for a safe dedicated youth spaces to politicians.



Gambling Harm project

Funded by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (VRGF)

This project is reducing gambling harm through alternative recreation activities for migrant and refugee young people of all genders by coordinating a weekly soccer program. This also provide opportunities to raise the awareness of gambling harm as a public health issue, the risks associated with gambling and avenues to seek help.

TAC L2P program

We continue to deliver the L2P program across Whittlesea and the southern area of Murrindindi around Kinglake.



Dakota from Whittlesea Township passed her probationary licence test with the support of our dedicated volunteer mentor Karen. The L2P program worked with Dakota to overcome significant challenges around work and homelessness, acquiring her licence means freedom, employment to support her family financially and pursuing her education.

6. Increase local employment through enterprise



DriverEd

DriverEd is a friendly, trusted and professional driving school that helps people learn the skills they need to get their driver's licence. This enterprise has grown consistently and we delivered 800 lessons in our first financial year of operation. One highlight was securing a three year contract with Nillumbik Council to provide driving lessons for the L2P program in that region.

We help people that find it hard to practise driving for a range of reasons, such as lack of access to a car, difficulty finding a suitable instructor, and the high cost of regular driving lessons.

We match people with a fully trained, qualified driving instructor, so students can be sure they're learning from a professional that will help get them the experience they need. Everyone is welcome to take part and we can tailor lessons to make sure they are right for each individual, by providing instructors who are multilingual, from different cultural backgrounds or a particular gender. We have specialised experience in working with people who are migrants, refugees, or don't speak much English.

By supporting people to practise the skills to get their licences, we can help open up opportunities to get out and about independently, take part in other training and employment, and participate more in the community.

Top: Happy DriverED client

Bottom: Women in Work on excursion for PRACE to Scienceworks



Women in Work

Women in Work is a mobile childcare service that provides qualified women from migrant and refugee backgrounds to provide car to children whose parents are attending services, programs, education and training group activities. This program continues to be in demand in the local community and provides 9 women with casual employment. The workers provide an interactive safe and caring environment for the children which enables parents to participate in programs or appointments. They are fully qualified childcare workers with WWC, First Aid, Anaphylaxis and current Police Checks.

In Term 3 of 2019 our Women in work childcare service supported a PRACE program. The children enjoyed playing and learning during the Term and formed strong bonds with the childcare workers. Everyone had a wonderful day together on their end of program trip to Scienceworks.

Our Bus

Our Bus hire service continues to provide low cost, safe and reliable buses for community organisations. We have 23 community groups that regularly use our vehicles.

7. Improve access to Mental Health services and support and reduce stigma

One of the most concrete ways we have pursued this priority is through our partnership with Banyule Community Health and the LIFT mental health program. Their team, based in our office, report good connection and cooperation and increasing referrals to and from WCC.

The other significant way we have pursued this priority is through advocacy and action related to a cluster of suicides. In early 2019, Victoria Police and the Crossroads to Community Wellbeing Group, through Whittlesea Community Connections (specifically our Principal Solicitor Chris), contacted the Coroners Court of Victoria to convey concern about a perceived increased frequency of suicides of South Asian women in the City of Whittlesea.

The Coroner held a round-table meeting on 24 July 2019 at the CCOV. Representatives from Whittlesea Community Connections, Victoria Police, Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network, Berry Street, Whittlesea Council Health Planning and Community Safety Planning teams, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Coroners Prevention Unit participated, as well South Asian Communities Ministerial Advisory Council member Dr Manjula O'Connor.

<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/coroner-demands-culturally-safe-support-for-women-after-suicide-cluster-20200909-p55tu1.html>

ABC News: <https://apple.news/AmHrpxAUTK-61yvG04NUg>

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/calls-for-cultural-support-after-cluster-of-suicides-among-south-asian-women-in-melbourne>

These submissions highlighted a range of supports and services currently available to vulnerable women in the Whittlesea area, there was consensus that: the City of Whittlesea is disproportionately affected by lack of access to mental health and family violence services, compared with other municipalities; new and existing services need to be more culturally appropriate, which could be facilitated by further research and engagement with community members; and that vulnerable women often can't access existing services due to cultural barriers, experience of family violence including extreme controlling behaviours, and the geographical isolation of existing services compounded by the lack of public transport infrastructure in the Whittlesea area.

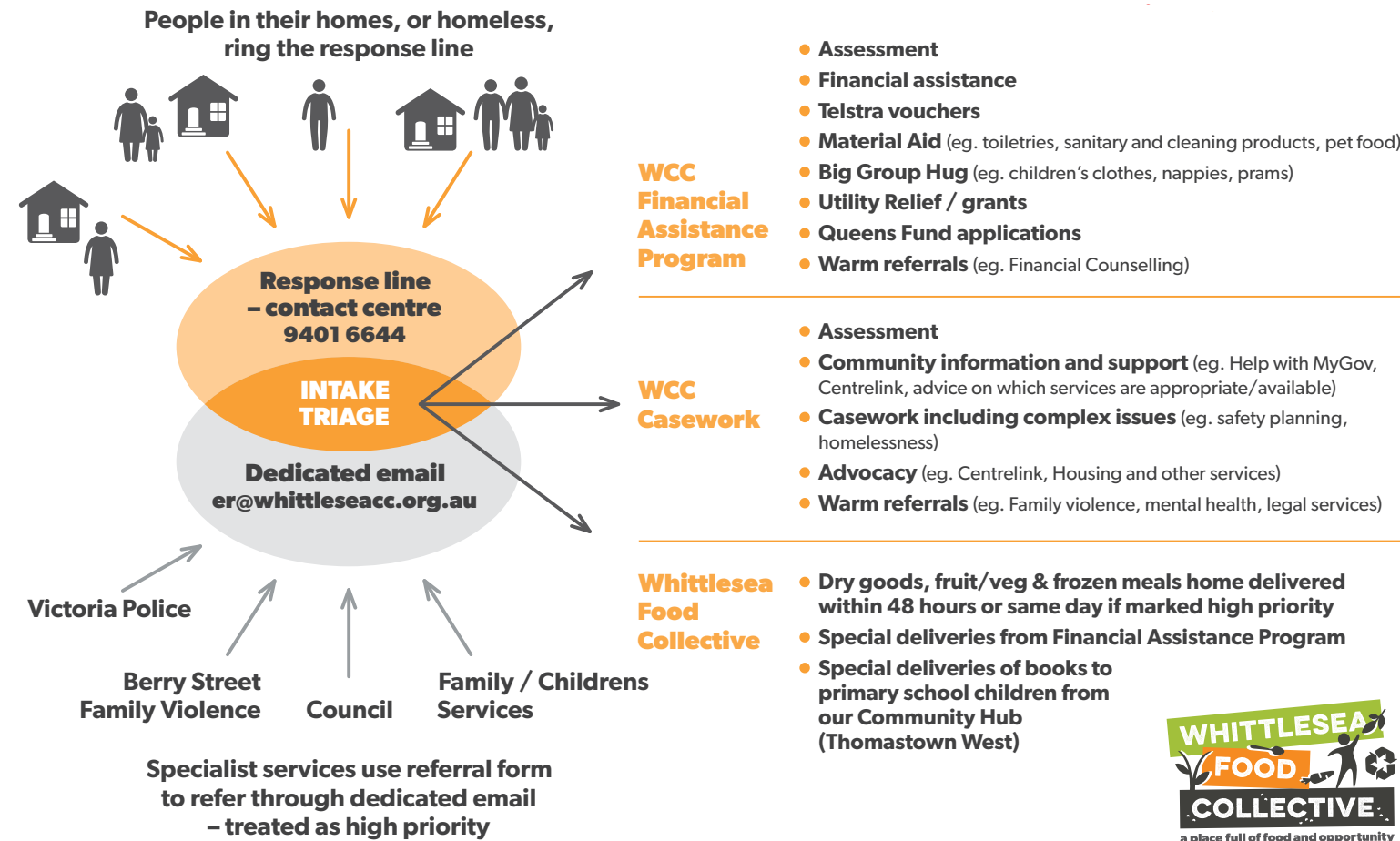
On the 8 September 2020 Coroner Jamieson issued her findings relating to four cases and included a recommendation:

"With the aim of promoting public health and safety and preventing like deaths, I recommend that the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services review current services that support the health and wellbeing of South Asian women in the City of Whittlesea, and consult with relevant service providers and other stakeholders, to identify opportunities to improve South Asian women's access to and engagement with such services."

These initiatives dovetail with Gender Equality, Multiculturalism and Equity of Access areas of emphasis for WCC.



COVID response



Our ability to connect and engage with the community is largely because of the contributions of our volunteers.

The care, attention, expertise and commitment of our volunteers keeps WCC strong and focussed on responding appropriately to our local community's needs and aspirations. Our volunteers really led the way throughout COVID - changing roles, working from home, keeping people connected and the vital WCC services accessible to those who need them.

Volunteers have been involved with all our efforts and the new programs developed through COVID19 including the Whittlesea Food Collective, Friendly Connections, Financial Assistance Program and the Contact Centre. They kept our Community Transport service operating for essential medical and shopping trips with volunteers picking up people as early as 6.30am for the older people's priority shopping hour when everyone was stockpiling toilet paper and essential goods from the supermarket.



Focus on safe and accessible client access to services and support

We made a smooth transition to working from home and providing phone based services in March 2020 through the energy, creativity and commitment of the staff. We developed a mini contact centre and new client pathways to respond to the huge spike in demand and urgency of requests. We problem solved issues with technology, communication, confidentiality, meeting new needs with new programs and services, all while being very mindful of staff and volunteer wellbeing.

Focus on those most likely to be affected

An important part of our response to COVID19 was identifying those we thought were likely to be disproportionately impacted by COVID and the Government's response to it.

People seeking asylum and **international students** who have lost employment due to COVID19 are particularly vulnerable as they are not eligible for the JobKeeper or temporary income support payments the Government introduced. These people have been left with no income, many unable to pay for food and other household essentials. For those without a Medicare card access to health care is even more difficult. And while there are protections against evictions in Victoria for 6 months people seeking asylum and international students living in other housing arrangements (shared housing, informal lease arrangements) fear inability to pay rent will lead to homelessness.

Steven worked tirelessly through COVID to keep the transport service available and safe, and did a few emergency deliveries for the Food Collective as well.



Julie driving the “virtual bus”

We have seen an increase in the number of **people living with disabilities** seeking support, now making up 23% of our callers. Some of their supports and services ceased operation during COVID leaving them without essential care and connection and the Disability Support pension did not increase although there were two supplementary \$750 payments made.

Older people were universally identified as at risk and many felt pressure from families to stay home and isolate themselves. Our team has made over 5,000 calls to older people in Whittlesea from April to August 2020. Our regular passengers were missing the volunteers so the team developed a very popular ‘virtual

bus,’ a phone conference facility that connected passenger groups with their regular weekly volunteer bus driver. The virtual bus keeps our volunteers engaged with the community and our passengers connected to the service and their friends. This has led to a virtual bake-off where the Food Collective is delivering recipes and ingredients to a group of would be bakers and then they get together and compare notes on the phone.

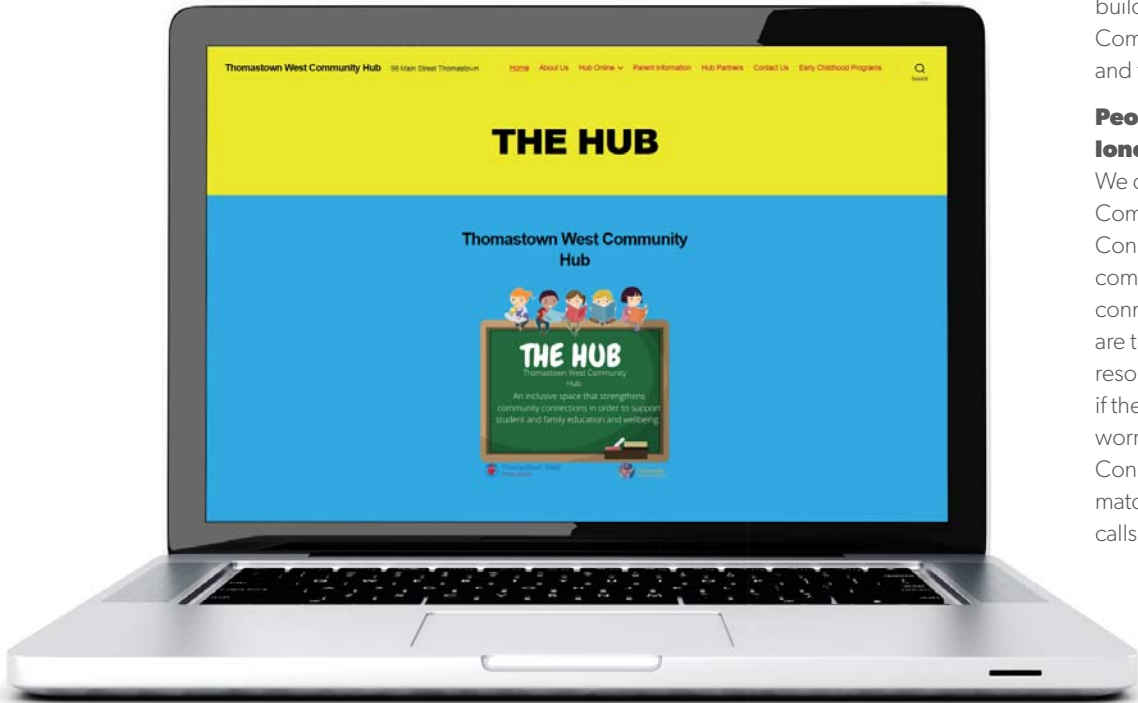
Children were another group particularly impacted with school closures. The **Thomastown West Community Hub** was dealt a blow by the virus, but did not rest idly by and wait for children to come back to school to resume programming. We put our time into building a digital resource, Thomastown West Community Hub online program, that children and families can easily access: www.twch.org.au

People began to feel more isolated and lonely as COVID restrictions were enforced. We drew on our experience delivering the Community Visitors Scheme to develop Friendly Connections. A simple volunteer match with a community member who wanted some weekly connection over the phone. The volunteers are trained, have community information and resources to share with the community member if they need it and have staff support if they are worried about their community member. Friendly Connections has 34 community members matched with 31 volunteers resulting in over 600 calls made between May and August 2020.

People experiencing financial hardship have been well served by the new Financial Assistance Program and the Food Collective and material aid available through our Whittlesea Emergency Relief Network partners. We thank the amazing ER providers that support our community, particularly those largely volunteer run services.

- ADRA
- Big Group Hug
- Catholic Care
- Country Wide Community Missions
- Encompass Care
- From Us 2 You
- Hope Centre
- Infinity Church Community Meals Kitchen
- Love Thy Neighbour
- Mill Park Baptist Church - The Shak
- Patience Community Services
- Share the Dignity
- Sikh Community Connections
- St Vincent De Paul
- Uniting Kildonan
- Vittle Feast
- Whittlesea Foodshare

Thanks to Andrew Giles MP and Bronwyn Halfpenny MP for their ongoing support and engagement with the Whittlesea Emergency Relief Network and the significant financial support from Council to network members.



Whittlesea ER Network learning how to distance at meetings



A snapshot of our impact April to June 2020



1960 households received food boxes **over 12 weeks** collaboration with Infinity Church and Encompass care and Hope Centre




Estimated retail value of food boxes delivered is at least **\$290,000**


Delivered 34,000kgs dry goods, **16,500kg** fruit and vegetables, **11,600** frozen meals and **2,900kgs** of toiletries and cleaning products along with some pet food with delivery support from Fruit2Work




136 households received baby items, kids clothes, nappies and formula through our partnership with Big Group Hug



155 women received Share the Dignity handbags full of toiletries and sanitary items





Our food boxes provide approx. **60%** of the average **weekly** Recommended **Dietary Intake (RDI)** for household of **2 adults** and **2 children**



Whittlesea Food Collective

With amazing support from community members, groups, local businesses, Council, Melbourne Polytechnic, Yarra Valley Water and Fruit2Work we established a home delivery food box program in late March 2020. By the end of June 2020 we had delivered 34,000kgs dry goods, 16,500kg fruit and vegetables, 11,600 frozen meals and 2,900kgs of toiletries and cleaning products along with some pet food. This work continues. We particularly want to acknowledge the collaborative efforts of Encompass Care, Big Group Hug, Infinity Church Community Meals kitchen and Fruit2Work throughout the last 6 months working with WCC and the Whittlesea Food Collective to maximise our impact.

"My greatest highlight this year has been the deep level of camaraderie, teamwork, organisational and community partnerships forged through the Food Collective during COVID19 response. We did this in the knowledge that we were assisting vulnerable people in our community through a collaborative effort - volunteers, staff, community organisations, individuals and Council" (Oreste, Food Collective Coordinator)



Thank you...

Thank you to all the amazing Whittlesea Emergency Relief Network members and all those who contributed to this effort.

“
I drove up to Wollert to do a special delivery for a woman who had just fled her home with four kids because of FV. I was delivering two boxes of food, 1 box of mixed baby foods, Formula, nappies, Share the Dignity bag, toilet paper, cleaning products, and shampoo and conditioner. I pulled up outside the house and they were all waiting for me.
”

ONE OF DELIVERY VOLUNTEERS

“
I spoke with an elderly lady who called to thank us for bringing the food parcel to her. She said this is the 2nd time she has received a food box and she really needed it as she lives by herself and has no other support. She said how grateful she was and she feels like it is a miracle. She said it was such an incredible feeling that she had to call and thank someone. She was happy to receive a chocolate Easter bunny and said she can't wait to eat it. It was a great feeling talking to her and a reminder of the great work we are all doing in this difficult time.
”

ONE OF OUR STAFF ANSWERING CALLS

“
We are so happy and so appreciative to have received a humongous and abundantly nutritious food parcel today. We are extremely touched and immensely grateful.
You have touched so many lives and nourished us that are poor and in disadvantage. I am a migrant single mother unemployed and I have full time care of my beautiful three year old daughter. We have escaped from family violence and I am now divorced from my husband. Tomorrow is my birthday. This is the best present I could have ever asked for. Thank you again
I can share some food with my next door neighbour too who is also a single mother
”

ONE OF OUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS



Andrew Giles MP meets Fergus the Food Truck

Partnership Feature

Thomastown West Community Hub

What a wonderful year of development, progress, and achievements we have all had at the Thomastown West Community Hub (The Hub).

The team has strengthened relationships with the Thomastown West Primary School Principal, Sandi and her staff and continued to work with PRACE, Smith Family and the City of Whittlesea. The Hub is part of the collaborative efforts along the Main Street precinct, Thomastown and works with Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, Thomastown Neighbourhood House and the Thomastown Library. The Hub also enjoys a wonderful partnership with the Ward Ambler Foundation who have supported the work we do with children for the last 8 years.

The Hub worked with 145 children this year, and of these, 84% are from migrant and refugee backgrounds and 8% from Aboriginal backgrounds. Through WCC's connection the Thomastown West Community Hub has continued to provide support to children experiencing barriers to education because of issues related to financial hardship, family violence and food support.

- Chess continues to be very popular and this activity spills out into recess and lunchtimes in the school yard. Chess has helped to develop intelligence, thinking, creativity and confidence with our students.
- Two 2019 Hub leaders have supported two other children to develop their skills to be the 2020 Hub leaders. This has created ownership and pride in the Thomastown West Community Hub and gives others around them the confidence to know that they too can contribute to the Thomastown West Community Hub and its programs.

- Getting a multimedia program from an idea to up and running and full, with dedicated children, is a glowing endorsement of the pro-activity of our team. A need was identified, and we set out to get funds to deliver it and we succeeded.

Evaluations of the Thomastown West Community Hub (December 2019) indicated that 100% of children either agreed, or strongly agreed, that they felt a connection to the Thomastown West Community Hub and 89% said they were happy to be part of the Hub in the future.

The Thomastown West Community Hub feels like a family. I have lots of fun and this reminds me of family

Nice place where there are nice people. Makes me feel part of something that makes me feel special and connected to people

Safety is of great priority to us, so we have worked hard at creating a safer environment for children at the Hub via an internal working group. WCC Hub staff are working with primary school staff to build a policy around child safety at the Thomastown West Community Hub and children are central to this process. All children indicated that they felt safe at the Thomastown West Community Hub.

I feel safe at the Thomastown West Community Hub because people care about us and help us'

People (staff) know how to react if something bad is happening

In addition:

89%
were happy
at the
Thomastown
West
Community
Hub

78%
had made
friends at the
Thomastown
West
Community
Hub

67%
felt their
reading had
improved

67%
gained a better
understanding
of cultures
around them

67%
believed
their spoken
English was
better.

We have seen an increase of volunteers, with 16 a part of all programs at the Thomastown West Community Hub. Volunteers are intrinsic to the Hub, as they increase and enhance support provided to children. Many of our volunteers are students who participated in Hub activities that are now at high school.



THOMASTOWN WEST COMMUNITY HUB

98 MAIN STREET THOMASTOWN | TERM 4 2020 |
YOU CAN ALSO PARTICIPATE AT THE HUB ONLINE WWW.TWCH.ORG.AU

MONDAYS
10:00AM - 12:00PM
PLAYGROUP
Bookings Are Essential Call
CITY OF WHITTLESEA
9404 8863

1:30PM - 2:15PM
CHESSE CLUB
with CHESSE MASTER JEREMY

TUESDAYS
10:00AM - 12:00PM
EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM
Bookings Are essential Call
CITY OF WHITTLESEA 9404 8863

1:30PM-2:15PM
STEAM
with SARAH

3:30PM - 4:30PM
LITTLE GREEN HANDS: COOKING
with SARAH

WEDNESDAYS
9:30AM - 12:30PM
TAPESTRY
Bookings Are Essential Call
ROSA 0423 060 989

1:30PM - 2:15PM
YOUNG VOICES IN MEDIA
with SARAH

3:30PM - 5:00PM
HOMEWORK CLUB
open to all schools
with SARAH

THURSDAYS
10:50AM - 11:20AM
LITTLE GREEN HANDS: GARDENING
with HIBA

1:30PM- 2:15PM
FUN READING CLUB
with HIBA

3:15PM-4:15PM
COOL LEARNING CLUB
For more info, call
THE SMITH FAMILY 9464 4866

FRIDAYS
9:30AM - 1:00PM
LEARN ENGLISH
Bookings Are Essential Call
PRACE 9462 6077

1:30PM - 2:15PM
KOORIE KIDS GROUP
with SHARYN

For Further Enquiries 9401 6666 or 9464 7950
Dean Marando dmarando@whittleseacc.org.au
Hiba Ayass hayass@whittleseacc.org.au
Sarah Wassouf swassouf@whittleseacc.org.au

WCC is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. We recognise the importance and responsibility for ensuring a safe and supportive environment that respects the rights of children and young people, enabling them to thrive.

THOMASTOWN WEST COMMUNITY HUB PRESENTS

HUB ONLINE: ZOOM SESSIONS

STAY TUNED FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR PROGRAMS TO BE RUN ONLINE VIA ZOOM

PROGRAMS WILL INCLUDE

- Homework club
- Fun reading club
- Young voices in media

For further enquiries
Dean Marando dmarando@whittleseacc.org.au
Sarah Wassouf swassouf@whittleseacc.org.au
Hiba Ayass hayass@whittleseacc.org.au



Partnership Feature (cont.)

Fix it Fridays

In addition to the core work of providing concrete legal help on Family Law, Civil and Criminal matters, WCC has been involved in a number of initiatives and projects to improve access to justice and legal assistance.

Building on the success of Espresso Legal, a mobile coffee van providing barista service free coffee, dispensed by lawyers, principally Moses and Chris, who are available to provide legal advice upon all areas covered by the legal service. The service often provides a legal education session in tandem with delivery of advice along with, of course, the coffee. A partnership formed in mid 2019 with the Department of Justice and Community Safety enabled a new variation to evolve - “Fix-it Friday”

Based at Whittlesea Community House in the township a range of DJCS services (e.g Sherriff, Births Deaths and Marriages, Consumers Affairs), WCC and partner services, all wrapped up with free coffee and BBQ sausages. It was a hit and even though DJCS has finished their trial Fix-it-Fridays has continued.

Over the last 6 months Fix-it-Fridays has had Banyule Community Health LIFT team, Centrelink, Merri Outreach Victims Assistance, Uniting financial counsellor, BSL for NDIS advice, Local MP Danielle Green in addition to all our services available to the people living in the township and surrounding rural areas.

Whittlesea Community House has supported and promoted the program as it provides a low fuss local access point to a range of services that can help address local people’s concerns and issues. They creatively transitioned the service to phone based event.



Our student program

Funded by WCC and Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and La Trobe University

The overall purpose of WCC’s program is to provide diverse placements for local students covering a range of areas and activities across WCC, covering elements of community development, youth work and social work.

Overall, we are contributing to the strengthening of the future workforce in the community sector, and particularly building a workforce with greater knowledge on local needs, services and community characteristics.

In May 2019 WCC was chosen to participate in the Enhanced Pathways to family violence work project, funded by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services. This has enabled us to expand our student placement program and build supervision capacity in our staff. In May 2020 WCC was awarded funding for another year of the Enhanced Pathways to Family Violence project. This year WCC supported 17 students to complete placement in Social Work, Community Services and Youth Work, many of them working remotely from home because of COVID restrictions. The team has been very creative and supportive to enable placements to continue.

In conjunction with La Trobe University, we the Legal team continue to offer the clinics that are staffed by solicitors who oversee La Trobe University students.

They are:

- **General Clinic:** Overseen by Ben Walsh, a senior lecturer at La Trobe University. This clinic provides four appointment places per week for generalist non-family law matters. They involve crime; motor car accidents; debt and consumer issues. The clinic is now in its 5th year.
- **Wills and Wishes Clinic:** Overseen by academic Heather McLean, this clinic continues to thrive, providing appointments at NCHER premises at Epping Plaza and, over the summer semester, at the Whittlesea Community House in Whittlesea township. The need being considerable, the clinic has thrived from the outset
- **Fines Clinic:** Overseen by solicitors Chris Ryan and Moses Florendo, this clinic continues to grow, offering assistance with infringements extending to applications for special circumstances and in-court representation where appropriate.
- **Divorce Clinic:** Overseen by solicitors Ann Lightowler and Rema Panaligan, this clinic is the newest clinic we have established.

The success of these clinics opens up the challenge of more of them being possible to offer La Trobe, extending perhaps to VOCAT and other civil matters.



Partnership Feature (cont.)

Melbourne Polytechnic

We continue to strengthen our partnership with Melbourne Polytechnic (MP) where humanitarian entrants study English.

Pre-COVID WCC staff worked from MP's Epping campus Monday to Thursday offering information, referral and casework support. We facilitate a range of fortnightly groups and activities for MP students, including additional English classes, computer classes with PRACE, a very popular Citizenship and Civics program, volunteering opportunities, excursions, and learning and employment pathways which engage MP students and help them establish social connections.

In November 2019 MP granted us a licence to use part of Building D to establish the Whittlesea Food Collective. Foundation Studies students, particularly YAMEC students, very enthusiastically helped us get the community garden going and helped with the Launch.

In Term 1 2020 we incorporated a range of Food Collective learning experiences into the curriculum of one YAMEC class as a pilot to see if hands on learning in a community setting assisted engagement and learning goals. This was abruptly brought to end with COVID restrictions but are keen to re-establish the integrated program as soon as we are able.

MP, along with Yarra Valley Water and City of Whittlesea, are partners with us to develop the Whittlesea Community Farm which will provide a significant local platform to create a huge range of learning and employment opportunities and pathways.

Our team worked with students from Melbourne Polytechnic to pass their learner permit course



YAMEC students helping to get the garden established



Graduation night for Sons of the West (in the North)



Team effort at Food Collective launch



Arabic Women's group trip to the CBD



Financial statement

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income for the Year Ended 30 June 2020

Income

Grants received
Donations
Interest
Service generated income
Other revenue
Profit on disposal of fixed assets

Expenses

Accounting & book-keeping fees
Advertising & marketing
Audit fees
Bad Debts
Bank charges
Depreciation
Interpreting services
Information technology
Insurance
Interest Paid
Legal practicing certificate
Meeting expenses
Motor vehicle expenses
Printing and stationery
Police and working with children checks
Postage and couriers
Program costs
Rent and outgoings
Repairs and maintenance
Subscriptions and memberships
Sundry expenses
Telephone and internet
Volunteers' expenses
Wages and related costs

Total expenses

Operating surplus (deficit) before income tax
Income tax expense
Operating (deficit) surplus for the year
Other comprehensive income
Total comprehensive income (loss) for the year

Annual Report 2019-20

Note	2020 \$	2019 \$
	3,743,043	3,272,959
	51,610	42,780
	21,958	20,277
	142,132	110,570
	421,827	117,045
	23,182	4,539
	4,403,752	3,568,170
	18,177	17,400
	17,526	47,646
	5,650	5,650
	200	1,323
	1,409	482
	104,159	67,567
	6,149	4,394
	65,609	38,699
	3,665	9,163
	3,100	-
	1,921	2,048
	1,278	5,257
	54,197	87,237
	14,427	14,715
	1,294	3,166
	3,242	3,066
	378,052	288,708
	89,231	86,189
	1,281	12,247
	27,847	34,899
	5,564	4,189
	24,225	21,730
	9,708	6,490
	3,173,545	2,617,304
	4,011,456	3,379,569
	392,296	188,601
2(e)	-	-
	392,296	188,601
	-	-
	392,296	188,601

Financial statement (cont.)

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2020

Current Assets

Cash and cash equivalents		1,878,967	1,574,252
Trade receivables		187,459	110,874
Sundry receivables		146,350	55,244
Housing loans		10,727	4,595
		2,223,503	1,744,965

Non-Current Assets

Plant and equipment	4	410,794	248,225
Investments		60	60
		410,854	248,285
Total Assets		2,634,357	1,993,250

Current Liabilities

Trade creditors		81,458	44,758
Sundry creditors and accruals		73,593	37,952
Grants to be carried forward	5	822,501	726,651
Provision for employee entitlements	6	539,500	528,900
Secured loans		33,200	-
		1,550,252	1,338,261

Non-Current Liabilities

Secured loans		36,820	-
		36,820	-
Total Liabilities		1,587,072	1,338,261
Net Assets		1,047,285	654,989

Equity

Accumulated surplus		654,989	466,388
Current year surplus (deficit)		392,296	188,601
Total Equity		1,047,285	654,989

Statement of Changes in Equity for the Year Ended 30 June 2020

		Accumulated Surplus \$
Balance as at 1 July 2018		466,388
Surplus for the year		188,601
Balance as at 30 June 2019		654,989
Surplus for the year		392,296
Balance as at 30 June 2020		1,047,285

Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended 30 June 2020

Cash flows from operating activities

Receipts from operations		4,467,158	3,944,804
Interest received		23,073	15,672
Cash inflows		4,490,231	3,960,476
Payments to suppliers and employees		(3,942,171)	(3,558,552)
Net operating cash flows	3(b)	548,060	401,924

Cash flows from investing activities

Net payments for plant and equipment		(243,345)	(118,192)
Net investing cash flows		(243,345)	(118,192)

Net (decrease)/increase in cash held		304,715	283,732
Cash at the beginning of the financial year		1,574,252	1,290,520
Cash at the end of the financial year		1,878,967	1,574,252

The full audited financial statement with accompanying notes is available on our website.



Thank you to the amazing people who make it happen



Our volunteers

We are an organisation founded by local volunteers and led by volunteers. Our ability to connect and engage with the community is largely because of the contributions of our volunteers. The care, attention, expertise and commitment of our volunteers keeps WCC strong and focussed on responding appropriately to our local community's needs and aspirations.

A HUGE Thank you to our volunteers from our new Chair, Emmanuel

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Whittlesea Community Connections. We have over 300 volunteers, who enable us to deliver an enormous range of activities, from reception, and data entry to teaching young people to drive, taking older people to social, shopping or medical appointments, assisting residents with financial and emergency relief, packing and distributing food parcels, supporting children and families with structured activities...just to name a few.

Our volunteers come from all walks of life and backgrounds, and bring this rich diversity into our organisation enriching our capacity to connect and support the most vulnerable in our community.

Their dedication, loyalty and care for the people we serve and support know no bounds. This selflessness has been brought sharply into focus this year as we have learnt to live and work in a COVID environment. Our volunteers have continued to support our clients safely and in creative ways, to accommodate the new world we live in. Through their remarkable flexibility and resilience we have been able to continue to deliver and support our community throughout the pandemic.

On behalf of the Board of Management, I would like to express our heartfelt and deep appreciation for the passion, commitment and loyalty of our volunteers. Your contribution has been instrumental in making Whittlesea Community Connections a valued resource in our community.

- Aaron Bezzina
- Abbey Dagg
- Adam Newman
- Adolf Samsa
- Adrian Palazzolo
- Ahmed Abdullahi
- Aimee Whelan
- Aisha Khurram
- Akash Deep Singh
- Alan Ip
- Alan Roberts
- Alanah Garzia
- Alexia Papadopoulous
- Amelia Watters
- Amira Mslam
- Anabel Buckland
- Angela Bausch
- Angelo Ratnasinghe
- Angok Agok
- Anna Sinclair
- Anne Mouawad
- Annemarie Veldsman
- Anthony De Santis
- Aron Raward
- Ashleigh Jahne
- Athur Staios
- Atoar Majuar
- Aya Cheikh Hussein
- Ayan Moussa
- Barbara Ackland
- Barbara Vaughan
- Bianca Surdorski
- Bill Hutchins
- Brittaney Webb
- Candace Colaco
- Carl Reid
- Carmel Sannino
- Celine Peters
- Chen Chen Li
- Chloe Ristevski
- Christian Janev
- Christina DiPierdomenico
- Claudia Di Michele
- Courtney Remington
- Dalia Mahmoud
- Daniel Peschel
- Daniel Reljic
- Darren Mariadas
- David Bottroos
- David O'Meara
- David Wani
- David Whelan
- David Williams
- Deana Sirianni
- Deborah Azzopardi
- Denis Fitzgibbon
- Denise Griffiths
- Diana Condello
- Eisa Anwari
- Eliana Abou-Yaghi
- Elissa Andreacchio
- Eman Gerberbi
- Emily Do
- Emily Pompetti
- Emmanuel Gauci
- Fadhil Albakri
- Fadi Shedid
- Faisal Anwari

Our volunteers (cont.)

- Farida Amiry
 - Farzana Haque
 - Fatemah Tanzadeh
 - Fayme Mercado
 - Francesca Bellizia
 - Frank Torcasio
 - Frank Virgona
 - Fred Venturini
 - Gary Walpole
 - George Aprim
 - Glenys Peart
 - Gloria Ozougwu
 - Glyniss Warren
 - Graeme Adams
 - Greg Luttich
 - Hamzah Din
 - Hanin Ramadan
 - Harry Jenkins
 - Henry Kupper
 - Hirohito Guerera
 - Holly Cannon
 - Humaira Dad
 - Hung Nguyen
 - Hung Tran
 - Iliana Flores Flores
 - Iman El-Mohammad
 - Issa Alchadaydah
 - Jackie Mathew
 - James Gamm
- Jamie Sagan
 - Jane Hopton
 - Janelle Collins
 - Jarrod MacDonald
 - Jasmine Hermiz
 - Jason Eid
 - Jaspreet Kaur
 - Jeanette Dusube
 - Jennifer Haarsma
 - Jenny Delaney
 - Jessica Arimatea
 - Jessica Condello
 - Jiaqin Tan
 - Jibreel Rafiq
 - Jim Sharp
 - Jiselle Hanna
 - John Reagan
 - John Shanahan
 - John Tullio
 - Joylyn Karunakaran
 - Judy Franklin
 - Julie Parry
 - Kaif Ul-Wara
 - Kalyani Baskaran
 - Karen Gail Mckenzie
 - Karnall Multani
 - Katelyn Sutton
 - Katherine Polazzon
 - Kimberlin Scully
- Kinan Alayche
 - Laura Di Loreto
 - Leeanne White
 - Lena Gargano-Reddy
 - Ljiljana Ristevski
 - Loar Deng
 - Louisa Bartolome
 - Lucas Nasrallah
 - Manotharshi Rohan
 - Maram Fayrooz
 - Maree Pastouras
 - Mari Marco
 - Maria Rafferton
 - Mariam Almusawy
 - Marianne Bottroos
 - Mary Shlemon
 - Max Lee
 - Melissa Fernandes
 - Michael Dean
 - Michael Siciliano
 - Mina Gebraeel
 - Mohamad Zeino
 - Muhamad Abduh
 - Murray O’Callaghan
 - Naomi Ng’ondeu
 - Naomi Spence
 - Narjas Al-Bahrani
 - Natalie Gurrisi
 - Naveen Kumar
- Nawal Mohamud
 - Nessie Sayar
 - Niati Sharma
 - Nick Parisi
 - Nicole Liu
 - Niveditha Balachandran
 - Noah Tei Ona
 - Norm Dykes
 - Owen Waldie
 - Patricia Munyao
 - Paul Brownrig
 - Paul Dellios
 - Paul Muscat
 - Paul Wilson
 - Peter Dupes
 - Peter Murray
 - Phuong Lam
 - Ponifasio (Poni) Vaka
 - Prajwal Ajjampur
 - Randa Rafiq
 - Ray Wyatt
 - Rayanne Chebbou
 - Rimah Wassouf
 - Robert Gray
 - Rohan Ratnayake
 - Rola Minawieh
 - Romina Ceballos
 - Ronald Geoffrey Williams
 - Rowayda Albadri
 - Ruchita Ruchita
 - Sabrina Connolly
 - Samar Fouda
 - Samia Barakzai
 - Samita Dhanapala
 - Sara Tebano
 - Sathya Punithan
 - Sayna Mosavi
 - Sebastian Jaconis
 - Seneli Wijeratne
 - Seyedeh Fatemeh Sanaei
 - Shaun Moran
 - Shoukry Sidrak
 - Sibelle El Jouni
- Siggie Pfeff
 - Silvana Ravel
 - Sinem Sahin
 - Singh Khushpinderjit
 - Sneha Vinod
 - Sooma Nosratpour
 - Souliman Abdo
 - Stella Gorham
 - Stephanie Samsa
 - Stephanie Scherping
 - Steve Crennan
 - Steven Howell
 - Steven Lim
 - Susan Wojciech
 - Suzana Grivicic
 - Suzanne Bevacqua
 - Suzi Duncan
 - Suzzanne Thomas
 - Syed Naqvi
 - Syeda Sadia Amjad
 - Tala Messade
 - Tanya Francis
 - Tarek Zeino
 - Teresa Farid
 - Thomas Heidt
 - Tony Howell
 - Tony Tran
 - Toulal Kalatzis
 - Trevor Daly
 - Trish Mackin
 - Vheremu Mukatsa
 - Vicki Selvaggio
 - Victoria Dimitrova
 - Victoria Winata
 - Wayne Leech
 - Yanwei Chen
 - Yara Al-Sakran
 - Yousef Alhawati
 - Yousry Sidrak
 - Zack Mc Guinness
 - Zaineb Ramadan
 - Zara Khan



Congratulations to Alan Roberts receiving Citizen of the Year for the City of Whittlesea in January 2020. It is a well-deserved honour acknowledging all his hard work and dedication to WCC and the Whittlesea community over more than a decade.





"Thank you for twenty years of dedicated service to WCC Shoukry - your community spirit, interest and care are valued enormously"



Our staff (as at June 2020)

Abril Garcia Negrón	Data Analysis and Evaluation Coordinator
Aiman Said	Settlement Worker
Alex Haynes	CEO
Ann Lightowler	Community Lawyer
Belinda Leon	Manager Community Support
Caterina Angelis	Social Worker
Chris Howse	Principal Solicitor
Chris Ryan	Community Lawyer
Dean Marando	Team Leader Children and Young People
Deepty Cusima	Caseworker
Edmond Babatunde	Team Leader Road Safety
Erwin Zuber	L2P Coordinator
Emma Antonetti	Manager Equity and Access
Emma O'Neill	Family Violence Lawyer
Georgianna Brooks	Community Transport Assessment Worker
Ginette Beguely	Financial Assistance Coordinator
Grozda Nedeljkovic	Migration Agent
Hiba Ayass	Caseworker
Hiyah Rahman	Quality and Integration Leader
Jackie Matthew	Mernda Community House Administrative support
Jenny Williams	Community Lawyer
Katie O'Brien	Social Worker
Katriece Bolden	Lead Caseworker
Kim Lai	Office Coordinator
Mandy Clement	Women in Work Coordinator
Michael Kinyua	Asylum Seeker Project Worker
Michelle Newton	Volunteer Engagement Coordinator
Michelle Patching	Volunteer Resource/Community Visitor Scheme Coordinator
Moses Florendo	Community Lawyer
Norma Medawar	Employment Pathways Coordinator
Oreste Pompetti	Whittlesea Food Collective Coordinator
Pablo Gimenez	Whittlesea Food Collective Development Manager

Paras Christou	Mernda Community House Coordinator
Parry Williams	Manager Community Transport and Enterprise
Rema Panaligan	Community Lawyer
Ruvee Ratnayake	Youth Worker
Sarah Wassouf	Thomastown Hub Support Worker
Sonali Sehgal	Community Transport Support Worker
Vanessa Galea	Volunteer Coordinator

Thank you to the staff we farewelled in 19/20

Bezy Mathew, Bianca Opasinis, Dalal Sleiman, Despina Kouros, Janelle Dunstan, Jess Bigby and Nina Lim.

Thank you to Sandra Natale who spent a few months with us on Quality Assurance and Improvement.

Women In Work childcare workers

Ahlam Mina, Donia Darwish, Fawzia Abukalam, Gemila Nur, Lina Salem, Mahnaz Mousawi, Nagwa Kori, Rachel Kori, Raifa Hussein

Driver ED driving instructors

Anelita Fono, Rafi Atom Moses and Zeinab Adelpour

English Teachers

Frances Henskens and Tania Stone



Our partners and supporters

Thank you to all the people and organisations who partner with us to deliver better outcomes for our community.

Service and Project Partners

- Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau
- ARZO Consulting
- Banyule Community Health
- Big Group Hug
- Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre
- Cabrini Outreach
- Campbell Page Disability Employment
- Cancer Council Victoria
- Centre for Multicultural Youth
- Centre for Participation Horsham
- City of Whittlesea
- Community Information and Support Victoria
- Deakin University
- DPV Health Limited
- Eastern Metropolitan Primary Health Network
- Encompass Care
- Epping Secondary College
- Kinglake Neighbourhood House
- Haven Home Safe
- Home Ground Real Estate Launch Housing
- Hope Street
- Housing Choices Australia
- Hume Whittlesea LLEN
- i-Feed refugees
- Infinity Church Community Meals Kitchen
- InTouch - Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence
- La Trobe University Law School

- Merri Outreach Support Services
- Red Cross
- Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre
- Thomastown West Primary School
- Thomastown Language School
- PRACE
- The Smith Family
- Melbourne North Food Group
- Melbourne Polytechnic
- Northern Centre for Sexual Assault
- Northern Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Service – Berry Street
- Victorian Legal Aid
- Victoria Police
- Whittlesea Community House
- Whittlesea FoodShare
- Women's Legal Service Victoria
- Women's Property Initiative
- Yarra Plenty Regional Library
- Yarra Valley Water

Funding Partners, Donors and Sponsors

- Alpaslan Ocal
- Andrea Babon
- Ashley Park Primary School
- ASRC
- Australian Communities Foundation
- Barbara Jackson
- BAS Foods

- B by B Australia
- Bendigo Bank
- Bonnie Gill
- Brite
- Bunnings (Epping and Mernda)
- Bupa
- Cadell Food Services
- Capital Tyres South Morang
- Centre for Participation
- CityLife Church Whittlesea
- City of Whittlesea
- CMT Panels
- Connecting Home
- Craig Parker
- Commonwealth Bank (South Morang Plenty Valley Branch)
- Downer Group
- DPV Health Limited
- Dyson Group
- Ecodynamics
- Enjoy Church North
- Fruit2Work
- GenesisCare Oncology Victoria (Epping)
- Hume Whittlesea Primary Care Partnership
- Ian Potter Foundation
- JMD Australia (Epping)
- Fareshare
- Grasslands Organics
- Greek Orthodox Church Thomastown
- Mainwest Forklift Service

- Melbourne City Mission
- Montmorency Asylum Seeker Support Group
- Northern Kia
- NSM Importers & Wholesalers
- O'Brien Electrical Thomastown
- Pets for the Homeless
- Philippa McLean
- Procal Dairies
- PZ Cussons Australia
- Roxy Kebabs + Café
- RACV
- Reece Plumbing Thomastown
- Rotary Club of Bundoora
- Rotary Club of Whittlesea
- Siobhan Steven
- Tamil Women's Intercultural Organisation
- The Queens Fund
- Trio Plumbing
- Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre
- Streat
- SunRice
- Sunshine and Crocodiles Pty Ltd
- Victor Lee
- Ward Ambler Foundation
- Westpac (Whittlesea)
- Yarra Valley Water
- Youth Affairs Council of Victoria

Government Funding Partners

- Australian Department of Health
- Australian Department of Home Affairs
- Australian Department of Industry, Innovation and Science
- Australian Department of Social Services
- City of Whittlesea
- Family Safety Victoria
- Traffic Accident Commission
- VicRoads
- Victorian Department of Education - Adult, Community and Further Education
- Victorian Department of Health and Human Services
- Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety
- Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion
- Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, Office of Youth
- Victoria Legal Aid
- Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation

Thank you to our key suppliers including ID Yours, Impact Digital, Finrea, Anthony McKee Photographer and Allen Gerson for their ongoing support.

Thank you to all the people and groups who generously donated throughout the year, particularly those who enabled us to extend our support during COVID. Thank you also to all those clients who supported our community enterprises.



Looking forward to 2021

Developing the Whittlesea Community Farm

With our partners, Yarra Valley Water, City of Whittlesea and Melbourne Polytechnic we celebrated the announcement in July 2020 that the Whittlesea Community Farm project had received \$1.5million infrastructure funding from the Victorian Government Department of Environment Land Water and Planning (DELWP).

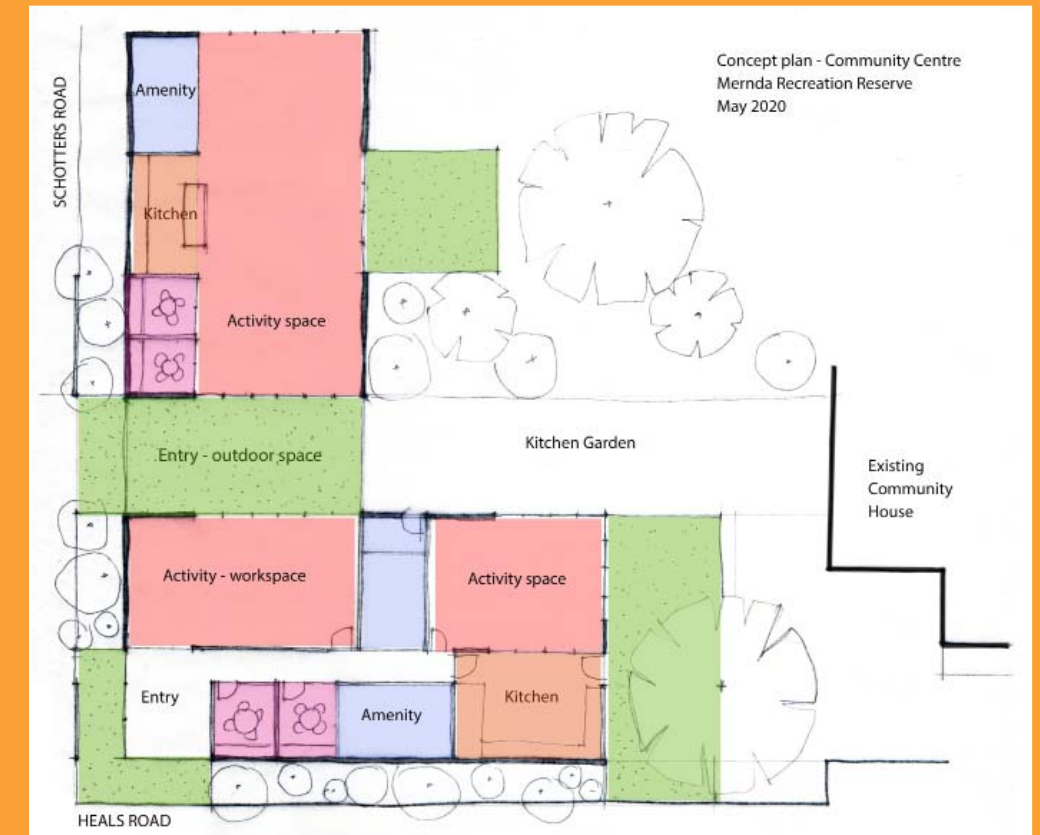


The detailed planning is well underway with construction starting in April 2021. This will be an amazing community resource and offers huge potential for Whittlesea Community Connections to create participation, training and employment opportunities through growing food, plants and enterprises and building community connections.

Designing and Building Mernda Community Centre

We are excited about the recent announcement from the Minister for Multicultural Affairs Ros Spence that we had been successful in securing Victorian Government funding to build a new community centre next to Mernda Community House.

With the support of the Community Advisory Group from Mernda Community House, City of Whittlesea and interested services and partners we will move ahead with the design and construction of the building to be completed in October 2021.





Whittlesea
Community
Connections

Making a positive difference everyday

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 workers, homework tutors, English teachers, fundraisers, media and communications volunteers, 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. You can also donate via the link on our website.

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

Information

whittleseacc.org.au

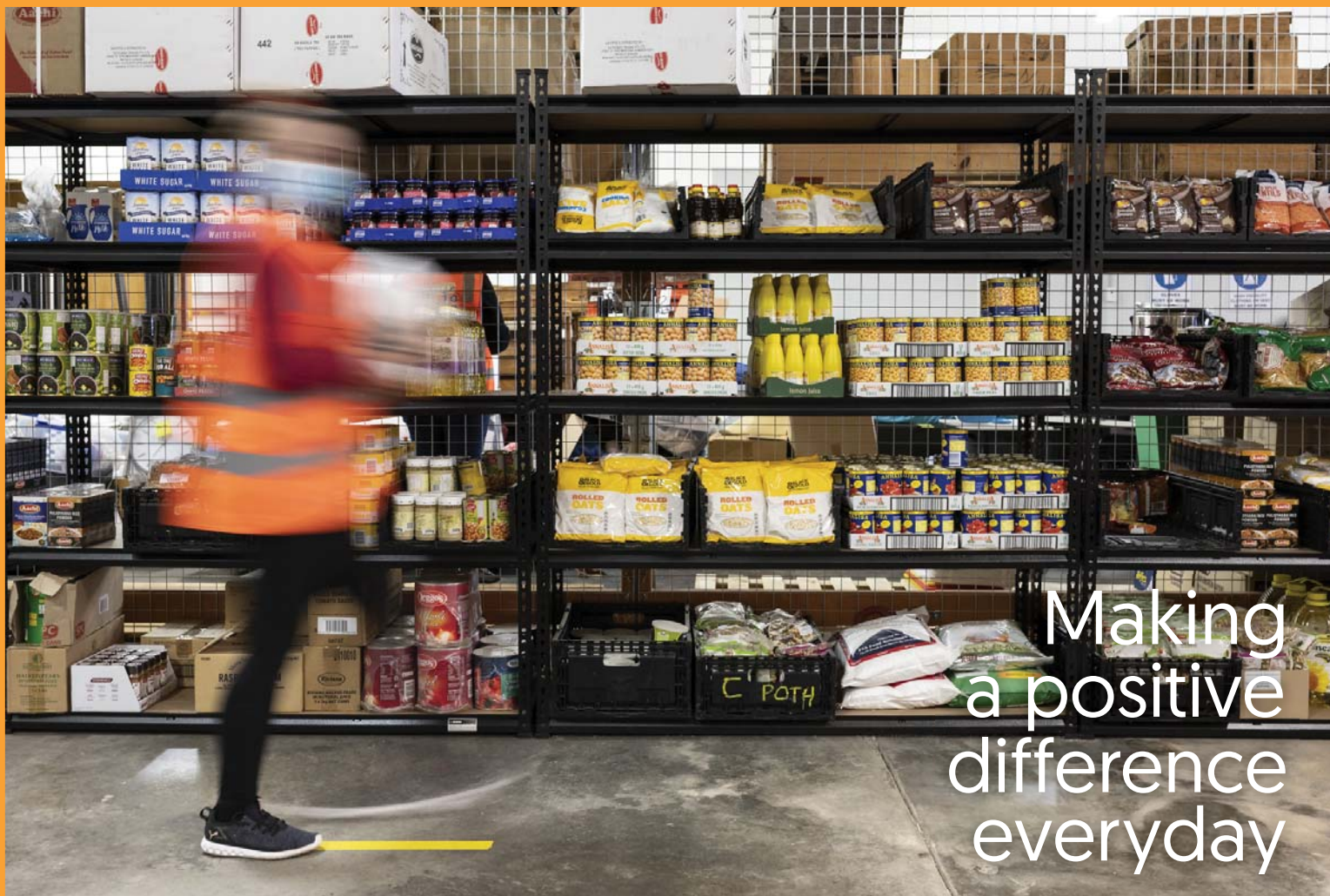
facebook.com/whittleseacommunityconnections





Whittlesea Community Connections

Making a positive difference everyday



Making
a positive
difference
everyday