



Whittlesea
Community
Connections

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22



making a positive difference everyday



Whittlesea Community Connections is a place based non-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

Locations

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

**Thomastown West Community Hub,
98 Main Street, Thomastown VIC 3074**

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

**Whittlesea Food Collective,
Building D – Barn 4, Melbourne Polytechnic Epping campus,
Dalton Road**

Epping, Victoria, 3076

www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au

Social Media Links:



Facebook:

www.facebook.com/whittleseacommunityconnections



LinkedIn:

www.linkedin.com/company/whittleseacc/mycompany



Instagram:

www.instagram.com/wcc_connect/?hl=en



YouTube:

www.youtube.com/channel/UC7WJ3f0cRTrC_nI2WEBz09A



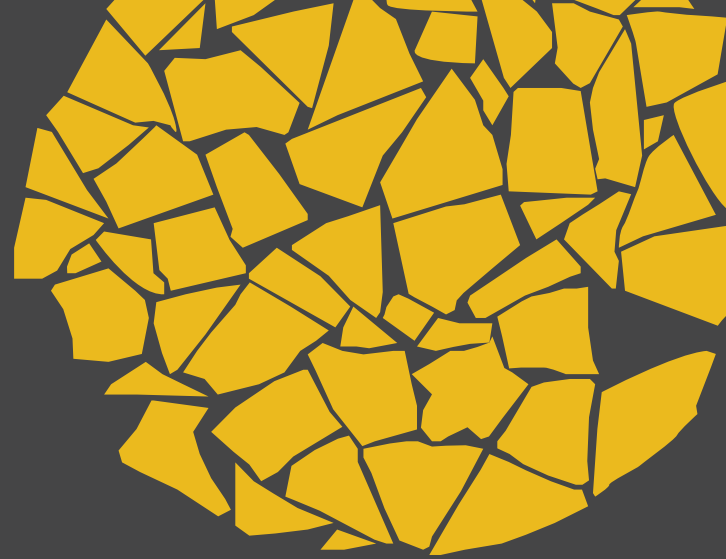
Sound Cloud:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-560210663>

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 confirm our commitment to reconciliation, justice and the recognition of the living culture of all Aboriginal people.



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Our Board

As at 30 June 2022

Emmanuel Gauci

President

Teresa Farid

Vice President

Nessie Sayar

Secretary

Harry Jenkins

Treasurer

John Fry

Volunteer Representative

Lydia Wilson

City of Whittlesea Representative

Angela Bausch

Member

Vicki Selvaggio

Member

Susan Nikolaidis

Member

Peta Fualau

Member

Ray Rosales

Member

Thank you to Matthew Odgers for his contribution to the Board.

Our Community Advisors

As a place based organisation with a strong community development approach our work is always informed by people in our community.

In addition to the insight we get from our amazing volunteers we have a number of Community Advisory group structures that provide opportunities for us to work closely with people across our communities. Over the last year we have been fortunate to have had the insight and engagement of many talented and driven people who join with us to make Whittlesea a fairer more connected community.

Women's Advisory Group and Community Leader Working Group

- Ariarti Ariarti – WAG & CLWG
- Barbara Minuzzo – WAG & CLWG
- Bobby Lama – CLWG
- Fatima Aman – CLWG
- Kalyani Baskaran – WAG & CLWG
- Krishanthi Liyanage – WAG & CLWG
- Michael Kinyuna – CLWG
- Nathalie Nzouakeu-Njako – WAG & CLWG
- Roslina Maharjan – CLWG
- Sadia Amjad – CLWG
- Yousef Alhawati – CLWG

LOT (Leaders of Tomorrow) – Youth Advisory Group

- Abdullah
- Aron Raward
- Gabrielle Attenborough
- Jibreel Rafiq
- Marianne Bottroos
- Mily Elambasseril
- Rachel Sands
- Sophia Ocon
- Victoria Sih
- Zara Khan

Mernda Community House Advisory Group

- Muhamad Abduh
- Carrie Chen
- Hayley George
- Soo Hoon Chua
- Praveena Rajkopal
- Sooma Nosratpour
- Tharini Rouwette
- Krishanthi Liyanage

Whittlesea Food Collective Community Advisory Group

- Sally-Ann Delaney (Chair)
- Alex Fabiani, Infinity Church
- Gianna Donato, Encompass Care
- Joanna Borg, The Shak
- Kevin Potter, Countrywide Mission
- Narelle Pettifer – Community Member
- Gurinder Kaur – Sikh Community Connections
- Damian Fleischmann – St Monica's College

Wollert Community Farm Advisory Group

- Pablo Gimenez
- Jane Juliff
- Sharna Brown
- Michael Longmore
- Sally-Ann Delaney
- Sunshine Cross
- Ahmed Alsabe
- Shruti Malavde
- Vinay Nair
- Viktor Faulknor

**It gives me great
pleasure to present
this year's report.**

President's Report

Whittlesea Community Connections is unique in Melbourne as a place based community organisation. Our focus is on improving the quality of the lives of the people in our community and to work with other organisations and the three levels of government to improve the range of services and programs that our community can access.

Our strength lies in our people – our volunteers and our staff, led by our dynamic CEO, Alex Haynes. On behalf of the Board of Management, I would like to express our heartfelt and deep appreciation for the passion and loyalty of our volunteers and for the professionalism and hard work of our staff.



I would like to highlight, in particular, the amazing contribution of our Health Navigators. These Navigators are newly arrived bicultural workers who have been supporting our community with health information and support to increase the vaccination rate within our community. The commitment and dedication of our staff and volunteers enables Whittlesea Community Connections to adapt our services and advocacy to meet new and emerging needs.

We have worked with our volunteers and staff to review our strategic directions. Using information that we and other agencies collect about our community, we concluded that housing and homelessness, multiculturalism, equity of access, gender equality, young people, employment and mental health continue to be significant risk issues for people living in the municipality. These issues continue to be our priorities. We also identified the impact of climate change as an emerging priority. We recognise that change takes time, and so have identified immediate, intermediate and long term outcomes we wish to achieve. Importantly, we have also developed the tools to measure our performance against these aspirations.

Over the last twelve months I have had the good fortune to meet volunteers, partner organisations and community members at the Whittlesea Emergency Relief Network Christmas function; at the launch of the Mernda Repair Café at Mernda Community House; at the information forums conducted as part of our anti-racism project with Victoria University and at the Reconciliation BBQ where a new Meeting Place was the centre of a beautiful welcome to country and smoking ceremony delivered by Thane Garvey, a senior member of the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung.

A specific focus has been on employment. We have commenced a new employment service that has been exceeding expectations. We also adopted a position statement on social enterprises, recognising the role that social enterprises have in creating employment opportunities while addressing social and environmental issues. We have also agreed to invest in the creation of an Indigenous Plant Nursery. The Nursery will operate on an enterprise model, designed to generate a surplus that could be used to support the aims of the Whittlesea Community Farm and Food Collective.

CEO's Report

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.

The Board has continued to spend time on its governance obligations, focussing on our constitution and our performance. I sincerely thank all the current Board members for their dedication to this organisation and to the guidance and support that they have provided me, as President. I would like to thank the Board Members of 2021-2022 - Angela Bausch, Teresa Farid, John Fry, Peta Fualau, Harry Jenkins, Susan Nikolaidis, Ray Rosales, Nessie Sayar, Vicki Selvaggio and our Council representative Lydia Wilson. I also want to acknowledge the unique and valued contribution Aaron Bezzina, Matthew Odgers and Amrita Gurung who retired from the Board during the year.

It has been a privilege to serve as the organisation's President and to work with such an extraordinary group of people.

EMMANUEL GAUCI

President, Whittlesea Community Connections

I am really proud to lead such an amazing group of staff and volunteers. We have grown together over the last year and strengthened our organisation and our capacity to respond, innovate and partner for the benefit of our community.

We have taken on the challenge of supporting people to build confidence and find pathways into secure and meaningful employment, continued our assistance with people's legal, transport, financial assistance needs and our core mission of community information, referral and volunteer support.

We have found new strength to tackle persistent issues like family violence, social isolation, racism and discrimination. All while trying to recover from the huge disruption of COVID.

We are committed to achieving progress across all our strategic priorities. The growing body of work in each area is testament to our belief that they are the things we are meant to be doing to create the environment in Whittlesea where people can live their best life.

I am grateful for the opportunity to listen to, learn from and serve our community and work with partners whose values are aligned.

Alex Haynes

ALEX HAYNES

CEO, Whittlesea Community Connections





About us

OUR VISION

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.

Our values

- Self-determination
- Independence
- Confidential
- Non-judgmental
- Diversity

Our approach

- We welcome everyone in our community
- 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
- Mernda Community House
- Community Support, Information and Referral
- Community Transport
- Community Visitors Scheme
- Employment support
- Family violence Housing Program
- Family violence prevention
- Financial assistance, NILS and material aid
- Whittlesea Food Collective
- Wollert Community Farm
- Friendly Connections
- Health Navigator program
- Legal information, advice, casework and advocacy
- Migration advice and casework
- Pre-accredited learning through Learn Local
- Road Safety, L2P and Adult and Women's Driving Programs
- Settlement advice, casework and support groups

- Tax Help
- Thomastown West Community Hub
- Volunteer Resource Service
- Children and young people programs and support
- Women's Employment & Empowerment Project

Social Enterprises

- OurBUS - community bus hire
- Women in Work – mobile childcare
- DriverED - driving school
- Walert Plants and Seeds - indigenous nursery

And, leading several collaborative networks:

- Whittlesea Multicultural Issues Network
- Whittlesea Housing and Homelessness Action Group
- Whittlesea Emergency Relief Network
- Whittlesea Family Violence Network

Reconciliation Action Plan and RAP working group

HIGHLIGHT

A highlight this year was the explicit focus on Reconciliation – we established a Reconciliation Working Group to collectively develop WCC’s first Reconciliation Action Plan along with supporting activities focussing on cultural awareness, cultural strengthening, community engagement and community access. We developed a reflective RAP focussing on building relationships and strengthening the organisations cultural understanding.

Some highlights in our road to Reconciliation include:

- The development of WCC’s Meeting Place located at our Food Collective was built in partnership with Marda Dandi.
- The Meeting Place was created to be a space for community to gather and bond. The design ensured the use of recycled materials from Wurundjeri country.
- Internal Cultural Safety Training delivered by WCC’s Aboriginal Engagement Worker (Sharna Brown), taught us about the experience and impact of colonisation and loss of cultural identity, Lateral violence Cultural load.
- Having Bubup Wilam staff member, Di Lovett, working with us one day a week to build trust and connections across the organisations.
- Aboriginal mentoring program with Epping Secondary College led by Eva Mumbler, WCC’s Aboriginal youth worker in partnership with Council.
- Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Training – 2 workshops delivered by Sharna Brown (WCC) and Cathy Austin (DPC) to over 40 local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers from a number of Aboriginal organisations.
- Reconciliation BBQ was held on 31st of May at our Food Collective with a huge turnout. We were welcomed to country with a smoking ceremony by Wurundjeri man Thane Garvey.
- An employment information session for Aboriginal Women delivered by Sharna and WCC’s Women’s Leadership & Development Project Coordinator.
- WCC staff attendance at Koori Court to observe and learn about cultural court protocols and practices and the role of elders within that.
- Anti-Racism Community Yarns – Our Aboriginal Engagement Worker held 3 yarns for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members to come together and discuss experiences of racism identifying ways to create and learn culturally safe responses to experiences of racism.
- HAPPEE Hearing Program, supporting HAPPEE hearing to deliver audiology testing and early intervention to Aboriginal children up to the age of 7.
- Walking through country, Sharna in collaboration with local community leaders Matty Douglas and Uncle John Brown organised and encouraged local mob to join in walks to support social connectedness mental and spiritual wellbeing by connecting community to country.
- Art at Epping –connecting Pacific Epping with local Aboriginal artists, businesses and projects to link community with opportunities for self-determination, sharing of culture and local art.
- Delivery of Tote bags containing information on services/resources as vouchers and activities for children to stay connected to community during lockdown.



“Traditionally meeting places were where Aboriginal communities would gather, they would usually have rich resources nearby. Travellers from different tribal nations would leave a marking or stone behind at the meeting place to let others know they had been there” says Sharna Brown, proud Gunditjmara woman from WCC.

Strategic Directions

1.

People have access to safe, secure and affordable housing

WCC's Strategic Directions

Based on local and comparative data, the impact of COVID19 and through a series of planning sessions, WCC has committed to remain focused on strategic directions; affordable housing, gender equality, young people, employment opportunities within a sustainable local economy and healthy lives connected to community and services. As climate change increasingly impacts on our local community, WCC will also more deliberately undertake actions to mitigate risks across multiple strategic directions. Multiculturalism and Equity of Access underpin WCC's approach, objectives and long-term outcomes and as such are embedded in each strategic direction.

WCC will use prior learning and progress in these areas to reframe intended outcomes, which is articulated in a theory of change. This will help WCC reflect on what we do and why, engage staff and stakeholders in a common purpose and implement an impact measurement framework.

WCC also recognises its role in response to these complex social issues in relation to working with local partners, specialist services and peak bodies.

Whittlesea Housing and Homelessness Action Group

WHHAG is made up of local community, health and housing providers committed to informing, supporting and advocating for improved long-term housing outcomes in the City of Whittlesea. Together the group works on joint advocacy, shares opportunities to work together and builds a collective understanding of the housing and homelessness service needs in Whittlesea. Key achievements this year included:

- Working with Community Field Officers to support people at risk and experiencing homelessness to complete the 2021 ABS Census. This will help build a better picture of homelessness and hidden homelessness in Whittlesea.
- Developed a State Budget Funding submission that highlighted the need for: an initial Assessment and Planning access point in Whittlesea; crisis accommodation in Whittlesea for women, children and young people and, resources to implement Victoria's 10 Year Social and Affordable Housing Strategy.
- Supported Everybody's Home Campaign by advocating to the Federal Government for an increase in the rate of Jobseeker and investment in social and affordable housing.
- Welcomed new housing providers as a result of Victoria's Big Build initiatives successful in Whittlesea.



Family Violence Housing Brokerage Project (FVHBP):

Funded by Ian Potter Foundation, 2019-2022

The FVHBP was funded by Ian Potter Foundation until June this year. Between May 2019 and March 2022 we assisted and supported 117 victim-survivor women to enter or sustain private rental accommodation; with 147 dependents. On average each FVHBP client had 5.85 casework sessions, and 3.95 hours of casework support. Of the 1,200 issues addressed with the women the main issues included personal and family safety, financial and material wellbeing and mental health.



ASSISTED AND SUPPORTED TO ENTER OR SUSTAIN PRIVATE RENTAL ACCOMMODATION

In 2022 WCC contracted an external researcher to evaluate the program. Some of the main barriers for women accessing FVHBP identified in the evaluation included:

- Women in high-risk situation requiring immediate accommodation to escape family violence
- Complexity of women's needs, requiring support through periods of crisis
- Women feeling overwhelmed due to multiple service involvement
- Inflexibility of rental inspections
- Readiness and priority to move into private rental

The evaluation also highlighted factors that help women engage with FVHBP included:

- Prompt and easy access for women
- Broad project eligibility criteria
- Understanding and supportive caseworkers
- Collaboration with referring FV caseworkers

The key outcomes identified through the evaluation are:

- Women expressed the program supported them to maintain safe and stable housing
- Women and their children had increased sense of safety
- Women felt supported to engage with other services
- Through the process of building knowledge, agency and sense of hopefulness for their future; being empowered and sense of agency
- The women reported improved mental health
- As a part of recovery some of the women felt ready and motivated to re-enter or enter the workforce for the first time

"Knowing that there was more for me, I could have a future without any abuse or trouble it was hope, they give you strength, you can do other things in your life"

The key recommendations for the program include:

1. Provide access to respite and occasional childcare for clients
2. Build a network and establish referral pathways with local companies required for relocating
3. Provide further and ongoing education, information sessions and promotion of the project
4. Expand and broaden the FVHBP by recruiting specialist caseworkers
5. Build relationships with the Real Estate Institute of Victoria
6. Advocate for better access to social housing for victim survivors of family violence



Women achieve equitable life outcomes and are safe from violence

The Gender Equity and Family Violence Team has continued to deliver primary prevention and early intervention activities to the City of Whittlesea community and wider.

June 2022 saw the funding period for the Family Violence Housing Brokerage Project come to an end. Between May 2019 and March 2022 this program assisted and supported 117 victim-survivor women and 147 dependents to enter or sustain their private rental accommodation. The evaluation of the program presented key outcomes for the women and children, which included maintaining safe and affordable housing, increased sense of safety, supported to engage with other services, empowered and a sense of agency, improved mental health and motivated to re-enter/enter the workforce. Evaluation recommendations will inform future program design and funding promotion. Quote from FVHBP client:

Key activities are:

- WCC's Whittlesea CALD Women's Group Grants Program continued to run, supporting 9 CALD women's groups to deliver their groups online and the Women's Advisory Group continuing to play an integral part in the delivery of this program.
- Multicultural COVID-19 FV Program developed and delivered a suite of FV resources in language co-designed with the Community Leader Working Group, facilitated in partnership with Brotherhood of St. Laurence the 'Community Safety & Wellbeing Forum', developed an internal 'Elder Abuse Scoping Report', and ran multiple FV awareness raising information sessions with community. We are really pleased to have strong ongoing relationships with our funding partners for this work; Sunshine and Crocodiles, Victorian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet, Family Safety Victoria and Victorian Government Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

- WCC has led the 'Supporting Alignment Together: Community of Practice' state-wide with participation from all Multicultural & Settlement Services prescribed in phase 2 to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Management Framework. We also delivered 'Bilingual/Bicultural Worker Information Sessions' to the sector.
- First year of the Phase 2: Whittlesea CALD FV Project the Project Steering Group has been established with members from key stakeholders and representatives from the Community Leader Working Group. Further, Department of Education & Training, Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria, Melbourne Polytechnic, and Victoria Legal Aid are working together on developing FV awareness content to be embedded into the course curriculum for AMEP and YAMEC students at Melbourne Polytechnic.
- The 'Recognise, Respond, Respect: FV Training' has been delivered to 32 students, volunteers and staff across the community.
- WCC convene the Whittlesea FV Network which has grown to a membership of 70 local practitioners.

Across the year WCC has strengthened partnerships with InTouch co-facilitating their Recovery Program for South Asian victim-survivor women, with DPV Health together we walked for the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence and with Multicultural Centre for Women's Health developing an Advocacy Briefing paper in conjunction with the Multicultural and Settlement sector. Internally WCC has established the Gender Equity Working Group which is leading the agencies alignment to MARAM and preparation for Rainbow Tick Accreditation. For further information on all activities please see Gender Equity, Family Violence and Inclusivity Supplement document.

WCC continues to be committed to the prevention of family violence and gender-based violence locally and state-wide. Our work is informed by the evidence-base, advocate-survivors experience and community. Due to the breadth and depth of our work in this area we have prepared a supplement to this annual report update which is available on our website.



CALD Women's Driving program

The CALD Women's driving program started as a pilot prevention program funded by Eastern Metropolitan Primary Health Network after Victoria Police identified a potential suicide cluster among women from South Asian backgrounds in Whittlesea. WCC was a key member of a multiagency working group that EMPHN facilitated – The CrossRoads group which developed a strategy to use the Coroner's Court of Victoria to highlight the issue. Alongside the Court process, we were reaching out to women and started a multilingual Facebook group and online sessions where women-identified learning to drive as a priority. As a result, the program was co-designed with the women, and EMPHN agreed to fund a pilot.

This pilot matched 20 women of South Asian background with volunteer mentors to work towards their Victorian Drivers Licence in order to support at-risk women to be more independent, reduce social isolation, and improve their ability to build formal and informal support networks. The

program helped to overcome the barriers for vulnerable women who often cannot achieve the necessary hours and skills required to complete a full driver's licence.

A participant quoted:

"When I passed my test, no one in my family could believe it. My husband didn't want me to learn to drive and still doesn't allow me to drive the family car. He always tells me that I don't know anything; I am incapable. He does not acknowledge my efforts and contributions to the family. Being part of this program has proven to my family and me that I can do it. I now work in a medical institution on casual shifts, collecting money to buy my car. Getting the permit made me feel independent and good about myself again. I am thankful for the driving program. I can now reach many more workplaces easily and prove them wrong - Thank you".

Five bi-lingual mentors participated in the program and provided appropriate training and support to ensure a culturally, psychologically and physically safe environment. Each volunteer undertook VicRoads-approved road safety training and training for recognising and responding to Family Violence and suicide disclosure.

Mentors come from different backgrounds and ethnicities and hold different professional backgrounds aiming to support the community in terms of Family violence prevention and mental health awareness.

The pilot confirmed the effectiveness of this program in addressing women's social isolation and improving connection to appropriate services and the pathways created through being able to drive. The pilot also highlighted the positive outcomes for the children of the participants.

With new Womens safety funding from the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs WCC built on the success and learning of the EMPHN pilot. We designed a similar designed a similar program for newly arrived women from refugee backgrounds across the North/West metropolitan Melbourne delivered with Spectrum. We have engaged with 30 vulnerable women - 11 women have already passed their test, 10 more women have booked their test dates and they feel confident in their driving abilities, and the remaining 9 women are still practicing with WCC community support.



Whittlesea Community Connection Legal

Police allege Mr [Prabhal] Sharma stabbed his 39-year-old wife, dental nurse Poonam Sharma, and their six-year-old daughter, Vanessa, at a home on Kellaway Crescent in Mill Park in Melbourne's north-east about 7.50pm on January 13.

Homicide squad Detective Inspector Dean Thomas said earlier this month Ms Sharma fled to her neighbour's house for help, allegedly pursued by her husband. She left blood on the neighbour's door in her futile search for safety and later died. Vanessa's stab wounds were also serious, and she died in hospital.

Police on Tuesday confirmed they had charged Prabhal (Raj) Sharma with two counts of murder. They said he remained under police guard in hospital.

The Age Newspaper 25 January 2022

On 22nd February 2022, Whittlesea Community Legal Service (WCLS) lodged applications for public inquests into the alleged family violence murders described in the epigraph in the previous column, together with application for further procedural orders, including convening a public inquest into the deaths of both mother and daughter.

We are disturbed by these deaths.

The City of Whittlesea has one of the highest rates of family violence in the Melbourne Metropolitan area, measured in 2021 at 1,404.8 per 100,000 of population, a higher rate than that of Victoria, which is 1,315.

Violent deaths of mothers and children in the North of the City, vulnerable to the same forces that bore upon the deceased, may continue to occur. This is what is at stake.

Questions crowd in upon us.

What is wrong in the City of Whittlesea, such that men are so upset, as to turn to violence as a necessary way of expressing it? In their thousands? With violence tending now, to so inhumane a degree? What becomes of a public, desperate for an antidote, seeking which, thousands of women pour into courts, while numbers keep rising as the years go by? Even after a Royal Commission is held, with 227 recommendations handed down on 29th March 2016, to attempt to minimise these problems, almost 6 years ago to the day? Is the expectation that the courts can solve the problem of injury and death of women and children in the city of Whittlesea, in any way realistic?

It is here that we are moved to enter the forum of the Coroner's Court and move immediately, to invoke the s.70 'power to recommend':

S72(2) A coroner may make recommendations to any Minister, public statutory authority or entity on any matter connected with a death or fire which the coroner has investigated, including recommendations relating to public health and safety or the administration of justice.

This power, (one of the widest discretions found in the law) offers the opportunity to inquire into matters of public health and safety touching on deaths into which the Coroner inquires. It is to this power that the legal service is turning.

Whether or not the jurisdiction of the Coroner may extend to an ability to answer our questions, is moot, and the ability of the legal service to assist, is a work in progress. However, to the extent that a CLC may help, by way of active engagement in the Coronial process, our experience and recent results in that jurisdiction, are offered as by far our best hope.

THE CITY OF WHITTLESEA HAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST RATES OF FAMILY VIOLENCE IN THE MELBOURNE METROPOLITAN AREA COMPARED TO VICTORIA*



*Measured in 2021 per 100,000 of population.

3.

Young People have a sense of belonging & voice in their community

Post the pandemic and lockdowns, the Empower program continued to work with and support vulnerable and disengaged young people who live and study in the City of Whittlesea.

As disengagement was on the rise for youth, empower was a major access point for support and information. Empower utilises multiple strategies and techniques to continuously engage young participants and enables them to identify and create goals that help to improve their overall wellbeing and create pathways to social, educational and economic participation opportunities.

There have been excellent outcomes re-engaging young people back into education and employment whilst making good referrals for their health and wellbeing creating referral pathways to appropriate services. The group work aspect has seen us have a presence with a safe LGBTQI+ group as a local secondary school. Empower continues to build on young people's strengths and celebrate their achievements.

Engage! was re-funded for an additional 3 years going from continuing to create volunteering opportunities for young people to building design thinking programming and collaborating with the Whittlesea Tech School. We delivered training for Young people in financial literacy, civic participation, youth voice, campaigning and leadership. Young people designed, led

and participated in the 16 days of activism campaign. The youth advisory group (THE LOT) moved to becoming an advocacy group, advocating for dedicated safe youth spaces at the top of their list. The LOT have joined forces with existing youth groups to build momentum and create a larger voice and platform.

At Thomastown West Community Hub, we have continued our fantastic work this year with seven programs being provided to students. The students have enjoyed being able to utilise The Hub space in person again. We continued to run Young Voices in Media, Homework Club, STEAM, Fun Reading Club and Strategic Board Games. In Term 2 2022 we introduced a new program, Digital Art, which has proved to be popular.

Empower is funded by the Victorian Government Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and Engage is funded by the Victorian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet Programs at the TWCH are funded by the Ward Ambler Foundation, with particular thanks to Ralph and Barbara for their interest and support.



"The LOT has helped me connect with my local community. WCC's Youth Advocacy Group- The LOT has engaged me with Whittlesea's issues, opportunities, and obstacles for young people like myself - I'm thankful to The LOT for assisting me in getting to know my peers and raising my awareness about problems that concern me and them."

VICTORIA WINATA

The School holiday program continues in its popularity. This year, we have again facilitated 'Art Studio'; most recently we partnered with Lalor Men's Shed where volunteers helped students build and paint their very own tool box. In another session, students were able to explore different art mediums including sketching, painting, watercolours and French knitting. Other SHPs have included a Movie day, Games day, and 'Monster and Mindfulness'. These programs have helped engage students with recreation and social activities, where they otherwise may not have been able to during their holidays. In recent evaluations, students described the hub as making them feel safe, happy and proud.

Koorie Kids club at TWCH and Koorie mentoring group at Epping Secondary College are groups that are run to create a safe place for young Aboriginal children and young people to learn about their culture and form an identity. At the start of these programs the students are asked what they know about culture and what they would like to learn. A large number of these students ask to learn more about culture. Teaching basics on Aboriginal culture helps give these participants more understanding about their culture as well as an understanding how we as Aboriginal people connect to our tribe, water/waterways, land, and sky. Giving them an understanding of Aboriginal kinship system and to be proud that they are part of the oldest living civilised culture of the world. These students have said that they are happy to be learning about Aboriginal culture.

The Children and Young People team continue to support local schools, neighbourhood houses and libraries with running homework clubs, through volunteer recruitment and setting up of these programs. The team has also advised and helped to setup temporary youth spaces/groups with Neighbourhood houses and recreation facilities. The hotspot program in partnership with YPRL has seen families and their school aged kids access free Wi-Fi for 12 months.

DEAN MARANDO

Children and Young People Team Leader

Supporting young people to get their licence - TAC L2P and Road Safety

Since coming out of COVID restriction in November the L2P program has struggles to keep its learners active as a result of the low number of volunteer participation. Majority of our older volunteers discontinued mentoring due to fear of catching COVID in the community. Our existing mentors shrank from 38 to 23, leaving the program under a lot of pressure from demand in Doreen, Laurimar and Mernda. Current volunteers have generously supported at least two learners per week in order to reduce the ever-growing waitlist, which have resulted in a total of 426 volunteer hours.

In the seven months out of 2021/22 financial year, 47 learners have been fully engaged with their supervised mentors providing them with driving experience. A total of three learners gained their probationary licence (P1). There are currently 58 learners on the waitlist, 26 pending assessment.

EDMOND BABATUNDE

Road Safety Team Leader







There is equitable access to employment opportunities within a sustainable local economy

Our work in this priority area includes both direct employment service support and a range of engagement and enterprise activities.

Our work in direct delivery has significantly expanded this year with support from the Victorian Government Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR) to establish a specialist Jobs Victoria Employment Service (JVES) and to deliver the Jobs Victoria Advocates (JVA) program in partnership with the City of Whittlesea.

Jobs Victoria Advocates



WCC delivers the JVAs program across the municipality. JVAs support people who are looking for work by connecting them to information, advice and the right services. JVAs provide an outreach service at different locations across Whittlesea every day including libraries, community and leisure centres, events and expos. Our JVA team represent Whittlesea's diverse community and

speak 9 different languages other than English. This year 3348 people have been provided information and referral services from JVAs. Referrals were made to employment services, training and education and other wrap around supports including financial assistance and mental health services.



THIS YEAR 3348 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN PROVIDED INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES.



Jobs Victoria Employment Service (JVES)

WCC Specialist JVES works to meet the needs of jobseekers from migrant, refugees and asylum seeker backgrounds to overcome barriers, engage and sustain employment. This year 114 people have been supported to gain employment in a range of sectors including the local food industry, manufacturing, early childhood education and care and community services.

Case Study

Ali registered with Jobs Victoria Employment Services who approached us after hearing about the service. A humanitarian entrant, Ali had no resume or work experience in Australia and very low English language skills. We worked on Ali's resume, introduced him to some employers and accompanied him to an interview where he was successful. WCC supported Ali with safety equipment and work clothing with flexible funding. Ali continues to be employed full time and is happy in his job. We conduct regular post placement calls to both the employer and Client.

(Client's name has been changed)

Women's Employment & Empowerment Project

Women's Employment & Empowerment commenced in July 2021 with funding from the Australian Government Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Women's Leadership and Development Program. The program provides workshops, trade tasters and individual support to help women enter or return to the workforce, potentially in roles they haven't previously considered. To date 68 women aged 15-66 have participated in 8 courses including computer upskilling, interview skills for migrant and refugee women, small business ownership, and try-a-trade events at Melbourne Polytechnic. One participant said,

"I would recommend these programs to women who are out of workforce long-term. It helps build self-confidence and connect with the community".



Carers Employment Support

This program supports carers and hidden carers, particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to gain access to information and support in relation to volunteering, training and employment. Carers are supported to explore their goals and interests, options and supports to enable carers with funding from the Victorian Government Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to take next steps at a pace led by the carer. Established in January 2022 this program has supported 23 carers with their employment pathway.



Social enterprises

We have been building a group of social enterprises for almost ten years. They are a key strategy in supporting employment and building a stronger and fairer local economy.

DriverEd is a driving school that delivers impacts beyond safe driving lessons. We provide opportunities for driving instructors who are looking for experience to develop a career in the industry. In its third year of operation this enterprise has grown and is now a certified social enterprise by Social Traders. Social Traders is the leader in social procurement with business and government members. DriverED provides lessons across three Melbourne LGAs, Hume, Whittlesea and Nillumbik. The first half of the year was challenging for the team – a large numbers of learners were unwell – this made scheduling lessons difficult for instructors. However, a high point was recruiting two new Arabic speaking driving instructors and working with a large number of new learners on our settlement driving program. Our instructors didn't just help learners become safe drivers but learn the skills to become independent and connected community members.

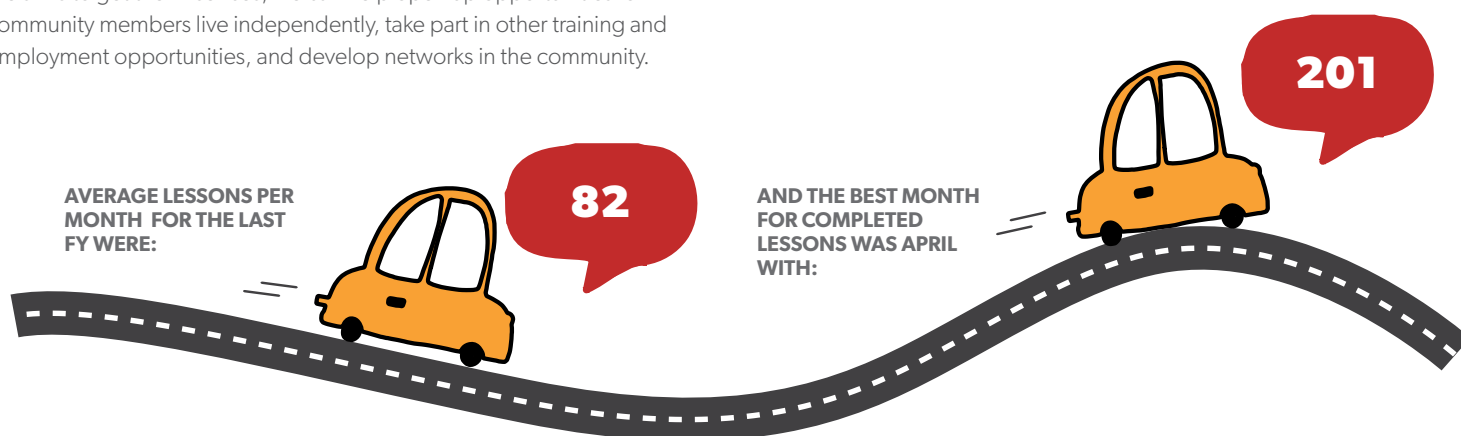
We pair learners with a fully trained, qualified driving instructors who are multilingual, from different cultural backgrounds or a particular gender. Our instructors have adopted safe hygiene standards as part of their normal routine and are skilled at assisting learners with diverse life experiences and skill levels. This safe and inclusive approach ensures the learners are safe and in a productive learning environment. We have specialised experience in working with people with refugee and migrant backgrounds and all our instructors have similar backgrounds. By supporting people to practise the skills to get their licences, we can help open up opportunities for community members live independently, take part in other training and employment opportunities, and develop networks in the community.

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 group activities. This program had increased demand in the second half of the financial year with restrictions easing and community organisations restarting programs and activities. We provided 7 women with casual employment. The workers provide a safe and caring environment for the children that enables parents to participate in events, programs and appointments. The workers are fully qualified childcare professionals with WWC, First Aid, Anaphylaxis and current Police Checks.

Our **Bus hire** service continues to provide low cost, safe and reliable buses for community organisations. With supply chain difficulties for organisations buying new vehicles we have had strong demand for bus hire in the last half of the financial year.

PARRY WILLIAMS

Manager Operations and Enterprise





There is equitable access to employment opportunities within a sustainable local economy (continued)

Wollert Community Farm

Wollert Community Farm provides a new platform from which WCC can generate positive social and environmental outcomes through First Nations initiatives, revegetation projects, peri-urban farming and employment and skills programs.

WCC is establishing a social enterprise indigenous seed and plant nursery that is integrated with, and can fund and support the other WCC activities onsite. A nursery enterprise model was presented at the December 2021 board meeting and subsequently approved.

Wollert Community Farm (WCF) is a partnership project of Whittlesea Community Connections, Melbourne Polytechnic and Yarra Valley Water, with support from the City of Whittlesea (CoW) and the Victorian Government. Over the last year the partnership has worked to finalise the Master Plan for infrastructure development and secure

planning approval. This involved commissioning several plans and reports, including a Detailed Farm Plan, Conservation Management Plan and Sustainability Management Plan. A major piece of work was a Cultural Heritage Management Plan and Cultural Values Study, which ensured the development recognised and safeguarded Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung connection to Country. After a long planning journey, approval was granted on the 20th May this year. A cause for celebration!

However, the tender process delivered the unfortunate reality of a large budget shortfall for developing initial infrastructure. This is largely due to inflation and the soaring cost of construction. Nevertheless, a contractor has been awarded the tender for a revised set of works, the Cultural Heritage Induction has taken place and construction will commence in August, with a view to having stage 1 infrastructure completed by mid-2023. Meanwhile the partnership has developed an advocacy plan for securing additional funding to complete the Master Plan.

Wollert Community Farm was previously titled Whittlesea Community Farm. The name change came about to clarify the farm's location, given Whittlesea is both a local government area and a town; to reinforce the place-based and land-based nature of the project; to connect to the Woi-wurrung origins of the word Wollert (Walert); and to differentiate the project from partner and supporter names.

VIKTOR FAULKNER AND CHARLOTTE GORDON

Projects are already in motion despite not having full access to the site. With the support of a committed group of volunteers, we have established a trial grassland seed orchard on Melbourne Polytechnic's (MP) Epping campus. So far we have harvested seeds from six species and will be working with MP to propagate seeds and grow out tube stock to revegetate the farm site. Planned conservation projects are the restoration of Curly Sedge Creek with Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Narrap Rangers and Melbourne Water, and stony knoll revegetation at the adjacent Galgi Ngarrk (Craigieburn Grasslands) site, alongside Parks Victoria.

We have been awarded the Rathdowne Community Grant for revegetation tools, our farm hub shelterbelt will be funded under the Planting Trees for The Queen's Jubilee program and we have also applied for funding under the Volunteering Innovation Fund to support seed collecting and training for volunteers involved in our conservation programs. We were also able to use funding from the Scullin Stronger Communities Programme to work with Aboriginal construction company Marda Dandhi and build a Meeting Place. This is where we held our 2022 Reconciliation Day celebrations, attended by over 200 community members



**ATTENDED 2022 RECONCILIATION DAY
CELEBRATIONS**



5.

People lead healthy lives connected to community and services



Across all teams work aligns with this strategic direction both in ongoing programs and new initiatives.

Towards adequate support and reporting services for Whittlesea residents experiencing racism

A collaborative initiative of Whittlesea Community Connections and Victoria University

The Whittlesea Anti-Racism Community Project is a collaborative initiative of WCC and Victoria University. The project seeks to understand and put into practice mechanisms that will support people who experience racism and discrimination in Whittlesea. This year we have been listening and providing an opportunity for people to have their say ensuring recommendations are informed and led by community. We have listened to community through individual and organisational surveys, community led focus groups and community forums. The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and Victoria Police also attended a community forum to provide information about existing reporting mechanisms. A report based on findings will be released shortly and we look forward to the next phase of the project, implementing actions in partnership with community and community organisations.



Building connections in new growth areas - Wollert Community Engagement

We continued to deepen our understanding and connection with the diverse and rapidly growing Wollert community through a series of engagement activities designed in response to community feedback and areas of interest. Activities centered on arts and crafts, cultural celebration and exchange, health and wellbeing and employment with a focus on women and children. There was good participation and community members were keen to engage even when activities were moved to online delivery due to COVID lockdowns. Most participants were from South Asian backgrounds however more than 20 different cultures were represented.

We commenced operating from the new Council-run Kirrip Community Centre in February 2022 and community members have

embraced opportunities to meet face to face again. The sewing group (in partnership with Sisterworks) has been particularly popular and provides a pathway to self-employment for migrant and refugee women. As participants developed trust in Dixsha, the Wollert Community Engagement worker, she was able to provide support with referrals to services including family violence and financial assistance. Our employment and Community Help teams have commenced outreach at Kirrip to increase access to information and advice for the local community.

An evaluation of the available data and our work in Wollert identified the ongoing impact of COVID, with increasing rates of mortgage stress, food insecurity and social isolation. Local families identified concerns about the

impact of lockdowns on their children who lacked opportunities to build social skills through friendships and engagement in sport and recreation. There were a number of recommendations including the need for improved transport and recreation facilities as well as improved services and support for young people, women and children. As the population continues to expand there is growing inequity in the availability of spaces such as Neighbourhood Houses which are needed to facilitate community-led initiatives.

Part of our response has been to strengthen our partnership with Edgar's Creek Primary School in Wollert and we look forward to trialing a new school Hub model with the commencement of services and activities from the school in July 2022 with support from the Ward-Ambler Foundation.

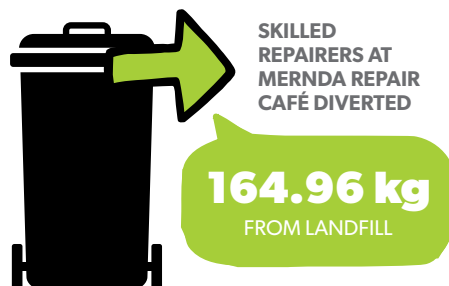


Mernda Community House

Like most people, organizations and services, the experience of the last couple of years has called on all our individual and collective energy to manage the impact of the global pandemic. During this period our small team, supported by many WCC colleagues, has been able to offer supports, programs and events to keep community connected. Post lockdown, those efforts have come back to reward us with the joy of renewed connections with old and new individuals and families in our local area of Mernda and Doreen.

Some of the highlights of 2021/22 include the establishment of the Mernda Repair Café and re-establishment of some of our key programs, including Women's* Shed, Pathways for Carers and Homework Club.

Mernda Repair Café has gone from strength to strength due to the excellent stewardship of Maylei Hunt. The program now has a wonderful crew of skilled repairs who volunteer their time each month to fix peoples treasured items, diverting 164.96 kg from landfill. In addition to the monthly cafes, our repairers will also be running workshops to teach people how to fix things themselves.



Finding ways to financially support our volunteer repairers shows our appreciation of their valued time and expertise and for some has helped them establish a small repair business.

Women's* Shed is also maturing and finding its feet after its humble beginnings. Where once women were using garden benches to saw wood they now have a wonderful facility they can call their own. Giving women the chance to learn how to use tools, make and fix things is part of our efforts to support older women in particular, to live independent lives. The asterisk in Women* refers to all people who identify as women, non-binary and trans-women.



Homework Club and our children's art classes continue to thrive showing us the amazing young talent in our Neighbourhood. Pathways for Carers is a reminder that there are so many people in our community whose time (mostly unpaid) is spent caring for family members who need their support.

PARAS CHRISTOU *Mernda Community House Coordinator*

Finally, our volunteer Advisory Group continues to meet each fortnight to help guide the direction of our programs and community development efforts. Some of the key work in 2022 has been to design and deliver a community consultation framework and to engage in advocacy to keep Mernda Community House thriving. The group has grown from its initial membership and collectively represents an incredible array of talent and experience. We are very lucky to have them part of the MCH family.

Our Advisory Group is one expression of our ethos to be a community driven space. As we move forward and continue to grow our community connections and community building efforts, we are often reminded that Mernda Community House is not only a vehicle for delivering programs and events but also to support community to meet or realize their aspirations. Every person that walks in the door grows our understanding of the community we are a part of. That is why we are excited to be engaging a community arts practitioner in a story telling project, which will reflect on community's journeys to Mernda/Doreen. The project will be founded on learning about the long and rich Aboriginal history from which all our stories are built on because without an understanding of where we have come from we can't move towards a shared future.



Whittlesea Food Collective

The first half of the year continued with COVID lockdowns and we responded by providing food relief through deliveries and contactless access to the Supermarket. As we entered 2022 we were able to resume twice weekly in person access to the free Supermarket for food, fruit and vegetables and prepared meals. The Supermarket provides food support capacity for 60 households or approximately 240 people a week. Our employment team have also commenced outreach to help address barriers to employment for people accessing the supermarket.

Effort towards increasing community support to keep the Supermarket shelves stocked has received greater focus as the Whittlesea Food Collective (WFC) seeks to be financially sustainable. This has led to greater promotion of Community Shelf (dry goods/non-perishable donations), Grow to Give (fresh produce donations) and Tax Deductible Financial donation initiatives.

ORESTE POMPETTI *Whittlesea Food Collective Coordinator*

The Demonstration Garden has been redesigned with an Aboriginal Meeting Place at the centre surrounded by Wicking Garden Beds. Paras has successfully engaged new volunteers in gardening activities along with school groups.

We were able to offer Vittle Feast, a local Emergency Food Relief provider, use of the WFC space to store their food supplies and pack their food boxes during lockdown periods. This demonstrates the Collective nature of WFC which is an important part of our vision through working together collaboratively to support our community.

Moving out of lockdown saw the resumption of public gatherings and events hosted at the Food Collective, including "For the Whole Community" Olive Harvest Celebration, a Reconciliation BBQ and a Refugee Week event.



During May 2022, we partnered with 3000 Acres, CERES to run a week of Olive Harvest celebrations that was funded by an Australia Post grant. The weeklong celebration was called “For the Whole Community” and in addition to the Olive theme, the workshops and events sought to highlight the importance of positive mental health and wellbeing. During the week, we harvested olives from the local community, ran an olive pressing workshop, a soap making workshop and capped it off with a community celebration on Saturday May 14. Approximately 200 people participated at the main Saturday event and an additional 100 people were involved with the workshops leading up to this event. Community involvement in the activities and overall support was highly favourable with good feedback received and strengthened connections made.

Engagement with YAMEC students at Melbourne Polytechnic has re-emerged in 2022, particularly through our partnership with the UCAN2 Program involving Foundation House, Centre for Multicultural Youth and Melbourne Polytechnic YAMEC program. A range of weekly activities to support and increase participant capacity takes place at the Food Collective. One series of activities culminated in a cultural food cooking day featuring a diverse range of dishes with food preparation, busy sounds of young people working together and laying out an amazing spread of dishes as students sat around a super long table to eat together.

2022 saw schools preparing meals through our Cooking for a Cause initiative and volunteering at the Food Collective. This saw over 850 meals prepared, 60 volunteer hours contributed and 75 students engaged in the first half of 2022. An educational excursion with a Food Security theme has been developed with a view to commence a pilot program in August. We were also invited by St Monica’s College, one of our partner schools, to speak about the work of WFC at an afternoon event including staff, students and parents. It was an honour to be invited to this event and further strengthen our relationship with a partner school and encouraging to receive positive feedback from senior staff, parents and students.

I have been highly appreciative of the excellent contribution that Ziane Ramadan as the Schools Program worker has made over the past ten months. I wish Ziane all the best as she takes on extra days in her Settlement Youth Worker role.

Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service

More than 200 community members were provided with volunteering information and support, 65% of whom came from a multicultural background. Information sessions on the benefits of volunteering were provided online, at expos and through schools and TAFE. We worked with the City of Whittlesea to deliver workshops tailored to the needs of local sports clubs, helping to rebuild community groups post COVID19. The Whittlesea Partnership on Volunteering and Community Engagement Network continued to meet and grow in membership, supporting local best practice in volunteer involving organisations across Whittlesea. Videos on volunteer rights and responsibilities, benefits of a diverse volunteer workforce, and volunteering in Arabic, Swahili, Maltese and Urdu were developed and are now available on WCC’s website.

If you are interested in finding out more about volunteer opportunities in Whittlesea give us a call on 94016666 and someone will get in touch with you to organise an interview or else log onto our website and fill in the below volunteer registration form
www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au/community-services/volunteering/volunteer-with-us

EMMA NAVARRO

Volunteer Resource Service Coordinator





5. People lead healthy lives connected to community and services (continued)

Settlement

WCCs settlement services, funded by the Australian Government SETS program in partnership with Spectrum offer support and address the needs of recently arrived migrants and refugees. Services are provided through casework, group sessions, outreach, celebrating events and peer support groups.

WCC Settlement casework service aims to develop clients' capacity and resilience by working with individuals, families and communities to navigate their journey into the Australian way of life.

Despite the pandemic and its effects, the Settlement team continue to deliver a wide range of group activities for SETS clients during this reporting period. WCC casework support can range from building the ability to complete forms and understand documents to providing referrals to essential support like legal advice and advocacy to resolve any issue and safely settle in Australia. We also assist with language skills, housing, community integration, financial hardship, immigration procedures, community connectedness, social participation, personal wellbeing, mental health, family relationship and more.

Our Civics and Citizenship Group remains our most attended activity across the organisation. The latest changes to the Citizenship Test immediately translate to a massive demand for relevant support services and increased attendance in this group. We also use the group to provide important information to the community, including civic rights, referrals, COVID-19 restrictions, and vaccinations. We also engage in topics that are considered taboo within the community, including sexual health, age of consent, and family violence.

Similarly, social groups, including the Women's Group, Multicultural Women group, Multicultural Youth Group and Men's Group, were well attended. These groups include various activities, from mental & physical health services to financial counselling and housing literacy, budgeting, Centrelink, NDIS, energy compare, and insurance, including navigating Australian services. These channels are used to provide important information and referrals and connect community members. This is especially important as refugee clients have reported feeling isolated and lacking confidence in engaging in relevant support services during the lockdown.

Other group activities have been designed to target specific needs within the community, such as English-speaking classes, Homework Club, Retail Training, technical & digital skills, getting a learner permit and driving lessons. These activities involve the development of skills that are crucial for our clients' settlement journeys. Shared outcomes include increasing our clients' confidence, independence, and awareness of and engagement with relevant support services. Improving technical skills and digital literacy in these classes are also crucial for gaining employment and achieving financial security.

Further, the Settlement team at WCC worked closely with the community engagement team at Mill Park Leisure centre, who provided Men's health checks. During the men's health month, a full-body composition scan from the latest scientifically validated technology through a confidential check-up conducted by qualified fitness professionals and pre-exercise screening tools that identify potential health risks and recommendations to a range of local health and wellbeing practitioners. During Men's Health month, we have also engaged some of our women's group participants who enjoy the same service. Our participants were part of this project in different group sessions. The groups discussed with fitness professionals who highlighted how the program works and the steps. Then the participants have a one-on-one appointment with the fitness professional while everyone else enjoys a group fitness class or uses the gym.

Working with Melbourne Polytechnic:

The team was present 3 days a week on site at Melbourne Polytechnic Epping providing one-on-one casework support to students. This platform helps students to get access to services and assistance with their issue in a convenient and familiar space.

We also engaged with Melbourne Polytechnic on various projects and events supporting SETS-eligible clients, including outreach, information sessions, Harmony day, Orientation day and Refugee Week. WCC collaborated with Melbourne Polytechnic and provided two on-site courses for clients who need to test for their learner permits. New migrant participants who needed to test for their learner permits took the courses, which helped them obtain the learner permit and start their first step toward driver permits.

HIYAH RAHMAN AND SARAH DALY.

Manager Engagement and Multicultural Communities



HIGHLIGHT

The Health Navigator program: Health promotion and employment pathways

Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) students at Melbourne Polytechnic (MP) identified health as a sector they wanted to move into, and it is a major growth industry in Whittlesea.

MP and Northern Health developed a co-design and co-delivery model to inform student language and skill development through a health navigator elective course. Students were also able to share their experiences of accessing health and the sector listened to those barriers to inform service provision. At the same time COVID19 was having a significant impact on community. Whittlesea had a vaccination rate lower than the average for the Victorian population. As at 31 December 2021 the City of Whittlesea ranked 14th out of Victorian

LGAs, with an active case rate of 510 cases per 100,000 residents. This comprised approximately 4% of the state's new daily COVID-19 cases. Data also showed that women, young people, refugee and asylum seeker communities and international students were most adversely impacted by the COVID19 pandemic. Response to multicultural communities during coronavirus Phase 2 funding (MASC) enabled the Bi-Cultural Health Navigator project to be established.

WCC provided on-going mentoring support to help navigators address unspoken barriers working in an Australian work place. This was particularly important where this role was the first employment experience in Australia. The Bi-Cultural Health Navigator role gives participants much needed Australian work experience and a strong platform to explore further pathways.

As a result, more than 38 information sessions were delivered to 450 people in different community languages including Arabic, Assyrian Chaldean, Farsi, Persian, Urdu, Hindi, Indonesian and Malay. Vaxchat sessions, Facebook posts, WhatsApp groups further promoted COVID19 information in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways. At least thirty COVID19 vaccination popup clinics were supported by Health Navigators across CoW, including primary schools and secondary colleges, Lalor Muslim Women's services, Mill Park Baptist Church, Libraries and several community centres such as Bundoora, Doreen, Epping, Lalor, Thomastown and Wollert. At the end of 2022 financial year, the City of Whittlesea with the help of Bi-Cultural Health Navigators, coordinated COVID19 information and support booths across the municipality. In addition to supporting the community with COVID19 needs and issues, Bi-Cultural Health Navigators have supported community members to access other support including financial, food, material aid and casework.

The Health Navigator model was recognised by the Cancer Council Victoria (CCV) as a practical project to support the community in identifying symptoms, early detection of cancer, and improving screening rates which had declined through Covid.

Under CCV's breast, bowel and cervical screening project WCC recruited and built the capacity of five Health Navigator team members to reach their communities in Whittlesea with information about Bowel, Cervical and Breast cancer screening targeting communities include: Arabic, Punjabi, Hindi, Afghani, and Chaldean.

Health Navigators delivered education and resources to 1,250 community members and supported more than 250 eligible community members to either order their bowel kit or schedule a breast and cervical screening.

In addition, Whittlesea Community Connections shared the stakeholder social media toolkit and cancer screening resources provided by CCV with several key organisational and network contacts, as well as on social media platforms including Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and website.

The Health Navigators played a significant role in helping our community stay safe and protect themselves and built invaluable skills and experience to move onto other health roles.



Financial Statement



Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income for the Year Ended 30 June 2022

	Note	2022 \$	2021 \$
Income			
Grants received		5,231,525	4,357,191
Funding received from ACFE Board		28,569	19,150
Donations		24,742	32,429
Interest		15,945	19,989
Service generated income		169,388	61,682
Other revenue		29,825	645,262
		5,499,994	5,135,653
Expenses			
Accounting & book-keeping fees		15,100	20,650
Advertising & marketing		11,076	65,739
Audit fees		6,000	6,000
Bank charges		825	540
Depreciation		134,712	121,861
Home loans forgiven		4,500	-
Interpreting services		7,647	17,320
Information technology		93,724	112,401
Insurance		3,693	3,722
Interest Paid		889	2,329
Legal practicing certificate		1,943	2,682
Meeting expenses		8,957	1,230
Motor vehicle expenses		51,638	40,278
Printing and stationery		13,117	13,124
Police and working with children checks		3,669	3,571
Postage and couriers		808	2,544
Program costs		414,459	708,163
Rent and outgoings		76,913	81,982
Repairs and maintenance		27,379	2,380
Subscriptions and memberships		9,774	16,648
Sundry expenses		8,675	5,385
Telephone and internet		39,813	32,649
Volunteers' expenses		3,678	2,832
Wages and related costs		4,549,725	3,305,889
Total expenses		5,488,714	4,569,919
Operating surplus (deficit) before income tax		11,280	565,734
Income tax expense	2(e)	-	-
Operating surplus for the year		11,280	565,734
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year		11,280	565,734

Financial Statement (continued)

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2022

Current Assets

Cash and cash equivalents	2,944,063	3,621,038
Trade receivables	655,093	157,543
Sundry receivables	59,377	33,147
Housing loans	18,137	18,319
	3,676,670	3,830,047

Non-Current Assets

Plant and equipment	4	361,363	380,444
Investments		60	60
		361,423	380,504
		4,038,094	4,210,551

Total Assets

Current Liabilities

Trade creditors		195,884	180,894
Sundry creditors and accruals		246,396	124,203
Grants to be carried forward	5	1,281,035	1,663,315
Provision for employee entitlements	6	688,300	592,300
Secured loans		2,180	33,200
		2,413,795	2,593,912

Non-Current Liabilities

Secured loans		-	3,620
		-	3,620

Total Liabilities

Net Assets

Equity

Accumulated surplus brought forward		1,613,019	1,047,285
Current year surplus		11,280	565,734
Total Equity		1,624,299	1,613,019

Statement of Changes in Equity for the Year Ended 30 June 2022

	Accumulated Surplus \$
Balance as at 1 July 2020	1,047,285
Surplus for the year	565,734
Balance as at 30 June 2021	1,613,019
Surplus for the year	11,280
Balance as at 30 June 2022	1,624,299

Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended 30 June 2022

	Note	2022 \$	2021 \$
Cash flows from operating activities			
Receipts from operations		5,642,508	7,513,613
Interest received		19,105	16,619
Cash inflows		5,661,613	7,530,232
Payments to suppliers and employees		(6,222,955)	(5,696,650)
Net operating cash flows	3(b)	(561,342)	1,833,582
Cash flows from investing activities			
Net payments for plant and equipment		(115,633)	(91,511)
Net investing cash flows		(115,633)	(91,511)
Net (decrease)/increase in cash held		(676,975)	1,742,071
Cash at the beginning of the financial year		3,621,038	1,878,967
Cash at the end of the financial year		2,944,063	3,621,038

A huge Thank you to our volunteers

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Whittlesea Community Connections. We have over 250 volunteers, who enable us to deliver an enormous range of activities and programs.

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 has been brought sharply into focus this year as we have come in and out of lockdowns. Through their remarkable flexibility and resilience we have been able safely 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.

A big thank you to the amazing people who made it all possible...

Volunteer list

- Abbey Daag
- Abby Shaker
- Aisha Khurram
- Allan Martin
- Alzahraa Al Shammary
- Andrew Tim Goodwin
- Angela Bausch
- Angela Bonadio
- Anna Karoutsos
- Anna Luci
- Anne Mouawad
- Aron Raward
- Avneet Kumar
- Aya Cheikh Hussein
- Baskaran Perumal
- Breanna Farrugia
- Carmel Sannino
- Carol Mrish
- Caroline Matanhire
- Carrie Chen
- Chelsea Lo Guidice
- Christopher siderakis
- Chuang Kong
- Dalia Mahmoud
- David Whelan
- David Williams
- Denis Fitzgibbon
- Devika Chandrar
- Diane Pearl
- Efed Alkeselias
- Elizabeth Anagnostou
- Elyse Weidlich
- Emmanuel Gauci
- Fadi Shedid
- Fadia Aldeeb
- Faith Low
- Fars Saeed
- Franca Bellobuono
- Fred Venturini
- Gabrielle Attenborough
- Gabriela Garchitorena
- Glenn Ballinger
- Gnanes Suthaharan
- Gregory Luttick
- Gurneet Kaur
- Hadi Ehtsham
- Hala Toma
- Hansikaa Sharma
- Hansikaa Sharma
- Harry Jenkins
- Harsh Jindal
- Holly Cannon
- Humeyra Yildiz
- Issa Alchadaydah
- Jamie Sagarar
- Janelle Collins
- Jeanette Pettifer
- Jen Ebert
- Jennifer Delaney
- Jennifer Haarsma
- Jesse Mann
- Jessica Barnes
- Jessica Dixon Elliot
- Jibreel Rafiq
- John Shanahan
- John Fry
- Jonathon Samuel
- Jose Mari Marco
- Joseph Battista
- Josephine Stooke
- Judy Franklin
- Julie Harris
- Julie Parry
- Kaif UI Wara
- Karen Gail McKenzie
- Katherine Braverstock
- Kathy Robb
- Kerry Ladd
- Khalida Mayar
- Lani Silva
- Lauren Maruff
- Leanne Wilkins
- Leeanne White
- Linda Rayner
- Lisa Baldini

- Lisa Widjaja (parker)
- Liz Buckley
- Loar Deng
- Louise Bartolome
- Lydia Wilson
- Lyndall Harrop
- Maedeh Kooti Veis
- Manotharshi Rohan
- Margarita Vasilopoulos
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- Mariam Almusawy
- Marianne Bottroos
- Marilyn Hansen
- Mary Hughes
- Matt Odgers
- Max Mahli
- Mayank Sharma
- Menchie Granada
- Michelle Davies
- Michelle Garvan
- Mily Elambasseril
- Mina Gebraeel
- Mina Ghanthan
- Muhamad Abduh
- Murray O'Callaghan
- Nahid Soltanlo
- Naomi Spence
- Narandran Shan
- Narjas Albahrani
- Natalie Barnett
- Nicola Parisi
- Nicole Smith - Walker
- Nilam Kothari
- Oliver Naylor
- Owen Stanley Waldie
- Parwana Ahmadzai
- Patience Masawi
- Patricia Nibete Munyad
- Peta Fualau
- Poornima lywan
- Prabhjeet Kaur
- Prashani Gunasekara
- Praveena Rajkobal
- Priya Sethuramalingam
- Que Phuong Lam
- Rabin Basnet
- Rachel Sands
- Rahul Rajrana
- Rajwant Lally
- Rani Pentecost
- Ray Rosales
- Ray Wyatt
- Rehan Alzin
- Reham Alzin
- Rhea Velasco
- Rima Faisal
- Robyn Keane
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- Tom Ward
- Tracey Greig
- Vicki Ann Selvaggio
- Victoria Lee
- Victoria Winata
- Vedit Goyal
- Vivian Ly
- Wayne Leech
- Wendy Gillard Bowles
- William Hutchins
- Yousef Alhawwat
- Zara Khan



"Everybody is so warm and friendly, and I've enjoyed meeting so many new and wonderful people, and learning so much from the many diverse cultures. I hope that I am able to bless them with the same joy that they have given me."

JEANETTE

Staff who contributed to our success this year

Aiman Said	Jobs Victoria Employment Services Mentor	Hiyah Rahman	Manager Engagement and Multicultural Communities
Alex Haynes	CEO	Jackie Mathew	Office and Communication Coordinator / Mernda Community House Administration Coordinator
Anas Qishta	Data and Evaluation Support	Jane O'Callaghan	Child and Youth Program Officer
Ann Lightowler	Community Lawyer	Jennie Barnes	Women's Leadership & Development Project Coordinator
Audrey Dalton-Power	Empower Youth Worker	Jenny Williams	Community Lawyer
Belinda Leon	Manager Community Support	Katricee Bolden	Gender Equity & Family Violence Team Leader
Caterina Angelis	Student Placement Coordinator	Kim Lai	Finance Manager
Charlotte Gordon	Conservation Lead	Lama Sankari	Transport Support officer
Chris Howse	Principal Solicitor	Leila Nafarsefiddashti	Payroll and Account Support
Chris Ryan	Community Lawyer	Linda Rayner	L2P Team Member
Dean Marando	Children and Young People Team Leader	Maria Mayors	L2P Road Safety Coordinator
Deepty Cusima	Family Violence Response & Prevention Worker	Maylei Hunt	Repair Cafe Coordinators
Dixsha Dhar	Community Engagement worker	Michael Damcevski	Office Coordinator
Edmond Babatunde	Road Safety Team Leader	Michelle Newton	Volunteer Engagement Coordinator
Emma Antonetti	Manager Equity and Access	Michelle Patching	Employment support
Emma Navarro	Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service Coordinator	Mohammad Alnayef	Settlement Caseworker
Emma O'Neill	Family Violence Lawyer	Moses Florendo	Community Lawyer
Erwin Zuber	L2P Coordinator	Norma Medawar	Jobs Victoria Employment Service Mentor
Eva Lee Mumbler	Aboriginal Youth Worker	Oreste Pompetti	Whittlesea Food Collective Coordinator
Farah Haddad	Settlement Support Worker	Pablo Gimenez	Development Manager
Fatima Amman	Settlement Case Worker	Paras Christou	Mernda Community House Coordinator
Georgianna Brooks	Community Transport Assessment Worker	Parry Williams	Manager - Operations and Enterprise
Ginette Beguely	Community Help Team Leader	Pradeep Timalsina	Finance and Acquisitions support officer
Grozda Nedeljkovic	Immigration Advisor	Prakriti Jnawali	Financial Assistance Program Co-ordinator
Hangama Hamid	Settlement Support Worker	Rema Panaligan	Community Lawyer
Hannah Chubb	Youth Worker, Schools Program; Whittlesea Food Collective	Rennie Ervinawati	Jobs Victoria Advocate
Harpreet Singh	Transport Support officer	Ruvee Ratnayake	Children and Youth Program Worker
Hassan Rasool	Jobs Victoria Advocate	Sadia Amjad	Carers Employment Support Worker
Hiba Ayass	Settlement Team Leader	San Rupasinghe	Jobs Victoria Advocate

Sarah Daly	Manager Engagement and Multicultural Communities
Sarah Wassouf	Empower Youth Worker
Sharna Brown	Aboriginal Engagement & Caseworker
Sonali Sehgal	Jobs Victoria Advocates Assistant/ Jobs Victoria Advocate
Sreyasi Chaudhuri	Communications Coordinator
Stephanie Scherping	Youth Worker (Schools Program)
Steven Crennan	Supermarket Coordinator
Suraj Walson	Employment & Participation Team Leader
Suzan Makhoul	Jobs Victoria Advocate
Tanya Stelmach	Community Lawyer
Toni Bentley	Community Primary Prevention Projects Coordinator
Vanessa Galea	Contact Centre Coordinator
Viktor Faulknor	Wollert Community Farm Team Leader
Vivian Butler	Employment & Participation Team Leader
Ziane Ramadan	Youth Worker

Women in Work – childcare workers

Ahlam Mina, Donia Darwish, Fawzia Abukalam, Lina Salem, Mahnaz Mousawi, Nagwa Kori, Rachel Kori, Raifa Hussein, Rasha Komar, Maysoon Elia

Health Navigators

Abir Aboukhres, Basant Ahmed, Binaz Ourabi, Chahoud Al Deib, Fatima Ait Bela Ou Ali, Ferdaous Farjallah, Gurinder Kaur, Mina Gebraeel, Morteza Fayyazi, Mohammad Abduh, Nour Haddad, Parika Sharma, Richa Sharma, Saadiya Khan, Sadeq Hosain Mowahhedi, Salem Mohsen Salem Mula Al-Dwailah, Yasser Qaso

Driving ED Instructors

Zeinab Adelpour, Irina Galileos, Yasser Aljawabra, Duraid Nihad, Issa Alchadaydah

Learn Local Instructors

Tania Stone, Karen Daking, Samar Fouda, Shruti Malavde, Kathleen Tants, Wathsala Sewwandie Yaddehige

Food Collective

Fadi Shedid

Mernda Community House Teachers

Daniela Calcagno, Helen Pollard, Irina Giles, Christine Wallis, Elizabeth Kennedy, Shweta Bhatti, Richard Bergami, Tatjana Este



Our Partners & Supporters

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

Service and Project Partners

- AMES
- Ashley Park Primary School
- Banyule Community Health
- Big Group Hug
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- 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 (CisVIC)
- Creeds Farm Living and Learning
- Deakin University
- DPV Health Limited
- Eastern Metropolitan Primary Health Network
- Edgars Creek Primary School
- Edgars Creek Secondary College
- Encompass Care
- Epping Secondary College
- Foundation House
- Haven Home Safe
- Home Ground Real Estate
- Hope Street
- Housing Choices Australia
- Hume Grammar Anglican Primary School
- Hume Whittlesea LLEN
- Hume Whittlesea Primary Care Partnership
- Infinity Church Community Meals Kitchen
- InTouch - Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence
- JewishCare Victoria
- Kinglake Neighbourhood House
- La Trobe University Law School
- Lalor Living and Learning Centre
- Lalor Secondary College
- Launch Housing
- Lendlease (Aurora)
- Marymede Secondary College
- Melbourne North Food Group
- Melbourne Polytechnic
- Melbourne Polytechnic
- Merri Outreach Support Services (MOSS)
- Mill Park Leisure
- Mill Park Secondary College
- Multicultural Centre for Women's Health
- Nillumbik Shire Council
- Northern Centre for Sexual Assault (NCASA)
- Northern Health
- Northern Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Service – Berry Street
- Northern School of Autism (Lalor)
- Parkers Auto Plus Pty Ltd
- Plenty Valley Retirement Village
- PRACE
- Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre
- St Mary's Parish Primary School
- St Monica's College
- The Smith Family
- Thomastown Bears Football and Netball Club
- Thomastown Language School
- Thomastown Meadows Primary School
- Thomastown Neighbourhood House
- Thomastown Primary School
- Thomastown West Primary School
- TRAC
- Victoria Police
- Victoria University
- Victorian Legal Aid
- Volunteering Victoria
- Volunteer West

- Whittlesea Community House
- Whittlesea FoodShare
- Whittlesea Secondary College
- Women's Property Initiative
- Yarra Plenty Regional Library (Thomastown, Lalor, Mill Park)
- Yarra Valley Water

Funding Partners, Donors and Sponsors

- Aaliyah Mathias
- Alpaslan Ocal
- Amelia Rambaldi
- Amrita Gurung
- Andrea Babon
- Arilla Retirement Village
- Ashley Park Primary School
- Australian Communities Foundation
- Barbara Jackson
- BAS Foods
- Belinda Leon
- Bendigo Bank
- Bonnie Gill
- Brett Miles
- Brite
- Bunnings (Epping and Mernda)
- Bupa
- Cadell Food Services
- City of Whittlesea
- CityLife Church (Lalor)

- CMV Staff Foundation
- Commonwealth Bank (South Morang Plenty Valley and Thomastown)
- Connecting Home
- Craig Parker
- Daniel Moseby
- Daniela Ziccarello
- DataSquad Consulting Pty Ltd
- David Angelkovski
- Dibyanshu Shrestha
- Domestic Violence Victoria (Hannah Dwyer)
- Donation-Gift Wrapping
- Downer Group
- DPV Health Limited
- Dyson Group
- Elizabeth & Wilf Thorsen
- Enjoy Church North
- Farah Khan
- Fareshare
- GenesisCare Oncology Victoria (Epping)
- Graham Anderson
- Greek Orthodox Church Thomastown
- Harry Jenkins
- Holding Redlich
- Honda Foundation
- Ian Potter Foundation
- Issam Khalil
- JMD Australia (Epping)
- Jordan Zaz
- Kosta G

- Lendlease (Matilda Langley)
- Lendlease Communities (Australia) Ltd
- Leonie Matthews
- Robyn Lowe
- Lucille Griffiths
- Made Dewi
- Mainwest Forklift Service
- Major Roads Victoria
- Melbourne City Mission
- Montmorency Asylum Seeker Support Group
- Northern Kia
- North of Yarra Quilters
- NSM Importers & Wholesalers
- O'Brien Electrical Thomastown
- Oreste Pompetti
- Pablo Gimenez
- Pets for the Homeless
- Procal Dairies
- Richa Puri
- Robin Webster
- Rotary Club of Bundoora
- Rotary Club of Whittlesea
- Roxy Kebabs + Café
- Roza Pakin
- Russell Williams
- Ryan Thompson
- Sandeep Bhangu
- Scanlon Foundation
- Siobhan Steven
- St Monica's College
- Sunshine and Crocodiles Pty Ltd
- Tamil Women's Intercultural Organisation (TWICO)

- The Loan Room
- The Queens Fund
- Tracey Chesswas
- Trio Plumbing
- Victor Lee
- Ward Ambler Foundation
- Westpac (Whittlesea)
- Yarra Valley Water
- Yasir Hasan
- YMCA
- Zac Bazzano

Government Funding Partners

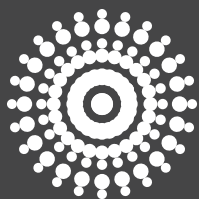
- Australian Department of Health
- Australian Department of Home Affairs
- Australian Department of Industry, Innovation and Science
- Australian Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Australian Department of Social Services
- City of Whittlesea
- Family Safety Victoria (FSV)
- Traffic Accident Commission (TAC)
- VicRoads
- Victorian Department of Education - Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE)
- Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) – Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)

- Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS)
- Victorian Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR)
- Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion
- Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet, Office of Youth (DPC)
- Victoria Legal Aid
- Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation
- Youth Affairs Council of Victoria

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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.





Whittlesea Community Connections

Making a positive difference everyday

Volunteer

www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au/community-services/volunteer-resource-services/volunteer-registration/

Donate

By making a financial contribution to Whittlesea Community Connections you are contributing to the work of an organisation committed to meeting the needs of disadvantaged members of Whittlesea's communities. You are also assured that all of your donation will be spent locally to meet local needs and that 100% of your donation will go directly to service delivery.

For information about how you can support us financially contact Kim on 9401 6666 or email klai@whittleseacc.org.au.

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 complete a membership form from the website.

www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au/get-involved/membership/

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.

www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au/get-involved/contact-us/

Get Involved

Information

whittleseacc.org.au

facebook.com/whittleseacommunityconnections





Whittlesea
**Community
Connections**

Making a positive difference everyday



Making
a positive
difference
everyday