



Whittlesea
**Community
Connections**

Annual Report 2022-23

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, VIC, 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.

Cover photo: Mural of Marsha P. Johnson by Marco Pennacchia Photo credit: Trapped Photography

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Steve Crennan at the Whittlesea Food Collective
Photo credit: Anthony

Our Board

As at 30 June 2023

Emmanuel Gauci	President	Ray Rosales	Member
Teresa Farid	Vice President	Richard Schwartz	Member
Harry Jenkins	Treasurer	Sandra Natale	Member
John Fry	Volunteer Representative	Suzi Duncan	Member
Vicki Selvaggio	Member	Ewen Luc	Board Observer (Westpac Board Observers Program)
Susan Nikolaidis	Member	Jacqui Ellul	Board Observer (Westpac Board Observers Program)
Peta Fualau	Member		

Thank you to Angela Bausch, Lydia Wilson and Nessie Sayar for their contribution to the Board.



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 insights 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 (WAG) and Community Leader Working Group (CLWG)

- Amrita Gurung – CLWG
- Anojan Raveendran – CLWG
- Barbara Minuzzo – WAG & CLWG
- Bobby Lama – CLWG
- Entissar Aasi – WAG & CLWG
- Hsham Aburghif – CLWG
- Jamuna Adhikari Rijal – WAG & CLWG
- Krishanthi Liyanage – WAG & CLWG
- Manvir Kaur – WAG & CLWG
- Praveena Rajkopal – CLWG
- Roslina Maharjan – CLWG
- Susmita Dhakal – WAG & CLWG

LOT (Leaders of Tomorrow) – Youth Advisory Group

- Alaa Alrahal
- Ayn Jayesh
- Bianca D'Aloia
- Bonnie Gill
- Fizza Yazdani
- Kimberley Chu
- Laura Bonney
- Marianne Bottroos
- Mily Elambasseril
- Shreyalina Victoria
- Sophia Ocon
- Victoria Winata
- Zara Khan

Mernda Community House Advisory Group

- Carrie Chen
- Krishanthi Liyanage
- Muhamad Abduh
- Praveena Rajkopal
- Soo Hoon Chua

Our Community

ADVISORS



President's Report

I am delighted to present this year's report.

As we come to celebrate 50 years of service in December 2023, I reflect on the proud heritage of Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC). It is a community organisation that has long and deep connections with our community, that has been built on the hard work, generosity and creativity of local people and that engages with its community and works with other organisations in order to make a real difference in people's lives.

An outstanding feature of the WCC culture is the passion and contribution of our volunteers. This year their extraordinary contribution has been acknowledged widely. A number of our volunteers were recognised by the City of Whittlesea in its Australia Day



and Community awards, and by the Federal member for Scullin, The Hon Andrew Giles, Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, in the Scullin Volunteer Awards. It is humbling to meet our volunteers, many of whom have supported WCC over several years and some for over two decades! Their commitment and dedication is the cornerstone of our success as a community organisation.

We have continued to attract increased investment from government and philanthropy to consolidate and expand our services and programs. This report outlines new funding in the areas of family violence, women's safety, food security, employment, and biodiversity and conservation. Our success is built on a solid foundation of meaningful partnerships with a broad and diverse range of community organisations and government corporations, and a deep understanding and advocacy of community needs informed by our various advisory groups and consultations with community.

Importantly, this growth has been focussed on our strategic priorities and driven by the dedication,

industry and professionalism of our staff, led by our dynamic CEO, Alex Haynes. The ability of a comparatively small organisation to work effectively across multiple program areas and with a diverse range of partners is an ongoing source of pride to members of WCC. On behalf of the WCC Board of Management I want to express our sincere appreciation to all those volunteers, staff and managers who have contributed to this success.

The past year saw the board conclude a long-term process of constitutional review. At its last AGM, the members adopted a set of significant amendments that expands our statement of purpose; allowing WCC to work in neighbouring areas where this will bring resources to the municipality; broadening our membership criteria to include those with a connection to the municipality who do not live or work here; and revising board membership. These changes will enable the organisation to move forward while also meeting current governance standards and obligations.

I have had the very good fortune of working with a dedicated group of

board members whose guidance and advice has been instrumental in this change process. I would like to thank the WCC Board Members of 2023-2024 —Harry Jenkins, Teresa Farid, Vicki Selvaggio, Peta Fualau, Susan Nikolaidis, Ray Rosales, John Fry, Sandra Natale, Richard Schwartz and Suzi Duncan. I also want to acknowledge the significant and valued contribution of Nessie Sayar, a long-term Board Member and former President; Angela Bausch, a Volunteer Representative; and our last Council Representative Lydia Wilson, whose membership on the board ended in 2023.

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.

It is an honour and 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

CEO's Report

Thank you to everyone who has encouraged and supported us over the last year and thank you to the communities across Whittlesea for trusting us and engaging with us to make sure our responses and advocacy are well informed and effective. We have done amazing new things this year to deliver on our strategic priorities



All our new work is enabled through strong partnerships and relationships across the region. Highlights include:

- Designing our Refugee Employment Pathways social enterprise project, supported by Department of Home Affairs
- Developing our capacity to support people experiencing barriers into employment, supported by Jobs Victoria and City of Whittlesea
- Hosting the region's first PRIDE Festival with support from City of Whittlesea, Banyule Community Health, DPV Health and KidsFirst
- Starting important conservation and revegetation work at the Wollert Community Farm with Yarra Valley Water, Melbourne Polytechnic, Narrap Rangers and Parks Victoria
- Trialling the nugal biik Ranger program to build opportunities for local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, young people and adults to connect with Country
- Embarking on a three year project, supported by VicHealth, to improve access to fresh, healthy culturally appropriate food in Whittlesea and build a fairer local food ecosystem.
- Initiating Safe Journeys, a Health Justice partnership with City of Whittlesea Maternal

Child Health team supported by Department of Justice and Community Safety

- Developing an intersectional model - Working Together: Strengthening Family Violence Support with Multicultural Communities with Berry St, DPV Health, Kids First Australia and Northern Centre Against Sexual Assault supported by Family Safety Victoria

We have also strengthened our existing services, programs and enterprises. Highlights include:

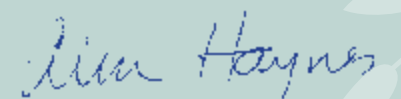
- Expanding our work with children and young people in schools, strengthened support for young people experiencing hardship, continued our mentoring for Aboriginal students and Rainbow group at Epping Secondary and engaging young people in volunteering
- Building on our research to support the evolution of an Anti-Racism network in Whittlesea
- Extending our partnership with La Trobe Law School to increase access to legal support across Whittlesea
- Scaling up our successful Multicultural Women's Driving Program
- Winning the City of Whittlesea Business Innovation and Enterprise Award for

DriverED, Australia's first multilingual driving school enterprise

- Continuing to find ways to tailor WCC's Settlement Engagement and Transition (SETS) programs to support Melbourne Polytechnic's Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) to achieve better outcomes for new arrivals

We enter the 23-24 financial year with a new strategic priority, Climate resilient communities. This acknowledges the growing community concern and interest and the negative impacts likely to disproportionately effect our priority groups. We are already delivering on this priority through Wollert Community Farm, Whittlesea Food Collective, Mernda Repair Café and community education through our Financial Assistance and Community Help programs.

There is much to be proud of about the year that was, and much to be optimistic about in the year ahead.. our 50th year of harnessing community passion, participation, practical support and hope.



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
- Children & Young People Services (programs, support & child safe training)
- Community support, information and referral
- Community transport
- Community Visitors Scheme
- Employment support
- Family violence prevention
- Financial assistance, NILS and material aid
- Legal information, advice, casework and advocacy
- Mernda Community House
- 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
- Whittlesea Food Collective

- Women's Employment & Empowerment Project
- Wollert Community Farm

Social Enterprises

- driverED - driving school
- nugal biik - Indigenous Plant nursery
- OurBUS - community bus hire
- Women in Work – mobile childcare

Collaborative networks:

- Whittlesea Housing and Homelessness Action Group
- Whittlesea Emergency Relief Network
- Whittlesea Family Violence Network
- Whittlesea Anti-Racism support Network





WCC staff promoting the PRIDE festival
Photo credit: Jackie

HIGHLIGHT: Inclusivity & Support

WCC has taken significant steps over the last year to actively champion inclusivity and support for the LGBTQIA+ community in Whittlesea.

Organisational development activities have been delivered through an intersectional lens, with targeted resources developed and strategic partnerships formed. Digital systems and physical spaces have also been transformed celebrating the vibrant tapestry of our community. WCC participated in the annual Midsumma Pride March and Carnival for the first time this year, and were also very proud to host the inaugural Whittlesea Pride Festival! These endeavours highlight our cross organisational dedication to fostering a welcoming and celebratory space, empowering individuals and promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusivity.

2023 WHITTLESEA PRIDE FESTIVAL

Funded by Whittlesea Community Connections and City of Whittlesea Community Event Funding Program

WCC hosted the inaugural Whittlesea Pride Festival on the 7 May 2023 at the Meadowglen International Athletics Stadium.

The Festival was the culmination of eight months of planning by the WCC Pride Team - Anas Qishta, Katriece Bolden, Toni Bentley and Sarah Wassouf – along with Event Planning Committee members from partner organisations DPV Health, Kids First, Banyule Community Health, and representatives from the Whittlesea, Hume and Mitchell Shire Councils, Victoria Police, Transgender Victoria and the Pride in the North Network.

Celebration and visibility of LGBTQIA+ communities is lacking in the north-east of Melbourne. The Whittlesea Pride Festival purpose was to bring visibility, enhance connections and sense of belonging for the LGBTQIA+ community in the City of Whittlesea, and to create a space and opportunities for the local community to come together and celebrate diversity.

The Festival achieved its priorities of safety, diversity, inclusivity and accessibility. The design of the Festival involved consultation with young people from local Rainbow Groups, queer run and owned businesses, and community members. A four stage promotional strategy ensured that safety was kept as the highest priority for this event. All performers, facilitators, vendors and stall holders were representative of multicultural, people of colour and queer communities.

Despite it being the coldest day in Melbourne in 20 years, 250 people attending on the day, with 700 people registering their interest to attend. The main stage was kicked off with a Welcome to Country from Aunty Di Kerr, and the Festival opened by the Minister for Equality, the Hon. Harriet Shing and the Minister for Climate Action, the Hon. Lily D'Ambrosia. Our Masters of Ceremonies, Tommy Christopoulos and Freida Commitment, kept the energy high throughout the day. The main stage featured drag performances from Belial B'Zarr, Linh Uendo, Moxie Delite, Bae L'amour and Amanda B, as well as sets from the Burn City Queenz dance group, Harlow & Hart, twirling and hula hooping from Krystal, and DJ Katalyna. Roving performers the Punk Emus kept things colourful, and an audience dance-off closed the Festival. There was even a marriage proposal!

Festival goers enjoyed Recycled Fashion Workshops held within the main building. Stallholders included DPV Health, WCC, Pride in The North Network, Kids First, Innovation Youth Centre, Mickleham Rainbow Playgroup, Queerspace, Baseline, and Headspace. Facilities available on the day included gender neutral bathrooms and a sensory room.

A big thank you to the performers, funders, project partners, committee members and WCC staff and volunteers for making this event such a huge success.



PAGE

WCC's internal Gender Equity Working Group has evolved into the Whittlesea Pride Awareness & Gender Equity (PAGE) group.

This evolution reflects a wider focus for the group to include both gender equity and LGBTQIA+ inclusivity through an intersectional lens. The group consists of representatives from across the organisation including members with lived experience who have been crucial in steering organisational development activities.

Primary group objectives have included:

- changes to governance through development of policies and position statements.
- creating safe spaces for debriefing around issues facing same-sex attracted/trans/gender diverse staff members.
- consultations for event planning and resource development.
- overseeing capacity building workshop activities and promoting cross organisational participation
- identifying new referral pathways and opportunities for advocacy and implementing organisational changes in line with both MARAM principles and Rainbow Tick standards.

Rainbow Group

WCC workers co-facilitate Rainbow Group sessions at a local secondary school on a weekly basis.

The Rainbow Group consists of same-sex attracted, trans and/or gender-diverse secondary school students, including students from multicultural and migrant backgrounds. Sessions are delivered with pride-related themes each week including: LGBTQIA+ history, personal identities, LGBTQIA+ music, capacity building workshops, consultations, pride event planning, and design activities.

Some of the students' favourite Rainbow Group activities this year have included a jewellery design workshop with First Nations designer Haus of Dizzy, and a youth empowerment workshop delivered by Minus18. The Capacity for Intersectionality project has helped strengthen our Rainbow Groups model this year and develop new program materials. WCC is using this model to continue advocating for more Rainbow Group at other local secondary schools.

Midsumma Pride March & Carnival

WCC has strengthened our partnership with the Pride in the North network, a collaborative of health and community organisations aiming to promote LGBTQIA+ pride and inclusivity in the Northern suburbs.

Representatives from WCC marched alongside the Pride in the north contingent at the Midsumma Pride March for the first time this year, joining over 110 representatives from different member organisations in our marching contingent. We also supported the Pride in the North booth at this year's Midsumma Carnival, with representatives from our organisation running design activities and helping provide community information. WCC will continue to work holistically with network members to strengthen partnerships and expand our work in this area.

WCC staff and friends attending the Midsumma Pride Carnival



Marco Pennacchia creating the mural Photo credit: Anthony

Capacity for Intersectionality Project

WCC was successful in receiving LGBTQIA+ organisational development funding from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to deliver the Capacity for Intersectionality project.

PAGE group members were instrumental in steering key project deliverables focusing on capacity building and inclusion. Minus18 and Queerspace delivered LGBTQIA+ capacity building workshops for both WCC staff and students at a local secondary school. New targeted resources were developed including multilingual flyers, digital marketing campaigns, and LGBTQIA+ program materials and referral tools. The project also focused on promoting the visible inclusivity of our physical spaces. Most notably, professional mural artist Marco Pennacchia has transformed our Food Collective space with a large colourful mural celebrating prominent figures from the past and future of LGBTQIA+ advocacy.

PRIDE EVENT TEAM

Katriece Bolden, Anas Qishta, Toni Bentley, Sarah Wassouf



Initiatives in 2022-2023

Whittlesea Food Collective

The Whittlesea Food Collective is one of seven Victorian food hubs that received three years of funding under VicHealth’s Future Healthy Program. Over the past year, this funding has helped us to increase access to healthy, affordable, locally sourced and culturally appropriate food for the community, including vulnerable groups. The Program includes business development support for food hubs, as well as a training program for young people, supporting them to become changemakers in local food systems. We were thrilled to welcome our youth food hub workers, Hayley Thomas and Jude Armanazi, to the team at the start of the year and witness their capacity, passion and enthusiasm for the program.

Wollert Community Farm

While the Wollert Community Farm has been in development for a number of years we were finally able to start on site activities this year. Several conservation and revegetation projects led by Charlotte Gordon are well underway with support from Parks Victoria, ANZ Bank Foundation, Melbourne Water and Narrap Rangers.

We worked with Wurundjeri Cultural Heritage Corporation to name our activities, with Elder Aunty Gail Smith suggesting nugal biik, which means ‘Belong to Earth in woi-wurrung language.

Scott Tunbridge joined the team as Nursery Manager to lead the development of our nugal biik Plants and Seeds indigenous plant nursery.

Sharna Brown moved within WCC to a newly created Cultural Lead role. Sharna is progressing First Nations activities, including the Meeting Place and Interpretive Trail, as well as developing the nugal biik Rangers Program that will connect local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people to Country and culture through conservation and land management training and experiences. This involves partnering with local primary schools to deliver a ‘mini rangers’ program and local high schools to deliver a ‘junior rangers’ program.

Safe Journeys Health Justice Partnership

The Safe Journeys Health Justice Partnership commenced in July 2022 and has built a strong partnership with the Whittlesea Maternal and Child Health Service. Funded by the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety under the National Partnership Agreement – Family Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses, the referral pathways partnership ensures that new parents needing legal information, advice, casework or support can receive fast track referrals made to lawyers at Whittlesea Community Connections. Nurses, social workers, family violence practitioners and lawyers have worked collaboratively to support these parents in their journey with the legal and services systems.

Together with the Enhanced Team at Whittlesea Maternal and Child Health (MCH), we have assisted more than 50 women and their families to obtain legal support in a holistic and safe manner that aims to deliver sustainable legal solutions as part of a cooperative strategy to prevent family violence across our municipality.

Tanya Stelmach (WCC FV Lawyer), Hayley Blair (EMCH Family Social Worker) & Sarah Brown (EMCH Family Violence Practitioner)

As part of this project, we have co-facilitated community legal education sessions with more than 45 nurses and are producing information resources to be included in the invaluable Green Book used at Maternal and Child Health visits. A key strategic priority of this project has been to meet women where they are, both figuratively and literally, in their legal journey. To this end, the Safe Journeys partnership has been able to flexibly meet women during MCH appointments and at home visits. Without this flexibility, legal assistance may not have been available to these community members.

Economic Pathways for Refugees Initiative

In December 2022, WCC received fantastic news that our application to the Department of Home Affairs Economic Pathways to Refugee Integration Program – Grants to Social Enterprises had been successful. WCC is the recipient of \$1.249M to improve economic participation outcomes for local refugees and humanitarian entrants through supported training in foundational and job specific skills, with a horticulture focus grounded at Wollert Community Farm’s indigenous plant nursery. The target cohort are those with low skills and/or low English in Melbourne’s north eastern and north western employment regions.

Edmond with Jude and Hayley from the Food Hub team



nugal biik rangers with Sharna



Family fun day at WFC





Strategic Priorities

WCC remains committed to delivering on our strategic directions. As climate change increasingly impacts on our local community, WCC has also more deliberately undertaken 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 draws on prior learning and progress in these areas to reframe intended outcomes, which is articulated in a theory of change. This helps 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.

1

Access to safe, secure & affordable housing

WCC continued to convene the Whittlesea Housing and Homelessness Action Group, a Whittlesea Community Futures working group.

Together we aim to:

- Undertake joint advocacy on Whittlesea's affordable housing and homelessness service needs
- Build a collective understanding of the housing and homelessness service needs in Whittlesea
- Inform community and service planning connected with affordable housing and homelessness services and positive community outcomes in the development of affordable housing

2

Women achieve equitable life outcomes and are safe from violence

Family violence unfortunately happens in every community but we know that women with migrant, refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds experience additional barriers accessing the help they need.



That is why WCC has been working in this space for more than ten years, developing the knowledge and skills to share with other multicultural organisations across Victoria. In partnership with AMES and Jewish Care, WCC delivered the Multicultural Capacity Building project, which included establishing and facilitating the Bilingual/Bicultural Practitioner Community of Practice.

WCC also delivers multiple local programs and services that support women to achieve equitable life outcomes and be safe from violence. This year programs have included the:

- Women's Driving Program —, supporting multicultural women to gain independence and an ability to access essential services and opportunities such as education and employment.
- CALD Family Violence Women's Group Grants —, increasing women's awareness of family violence, access to support networks and building leadership capacity. This year seven7 multicultural women's groups were funded; a total of 42 over the program's nine9 year duration.
- Whittlesea Family ViolenceV CALD Project Phase 2 —, which continues to build on our learning to address family violence with a whole of community and community-led approach. A significant achievement this year has been the development of Respectful Relationships curriculum, integrated into Melbourne Polytechnic AMEP and YAMEC classes. This has been supported by resources, secondary consultations and professional development for teaching staff.

The Gender Equity (GE) and Family Violence (FV) Team continues to work towards better outcomes for women and children in the City of Whittlesea through their response, early intervention and prevention work they do. This year saw previous projects continue make meaningful impact and new projects begin in the space of response to family violence and sexual assault. It has seen a change to the model and structure of the team with welcoming one of WCC's family violence lawyers. The multidisciplinary team is now made up of which now comprises of social workers, community development practitioners, bBilingual and bBicultural practitioners and lLegal practitioners all specialising in GE and FV. We are excited to see what this innovative model brings to all the work we do.

KATRIECE BOLDEN
Gender Equity & Family Violence Team Leader

Sector Capacity Building Grant Program – Multicultural & Settlement Services

Funded by Family Safety Victoria, 2021-2023

In the second year of this project, WCC has continued to work in a consortia with AMES and JewishCare to support the 41 Multicultural and Settlement Organisations prescribed in Phase 2 to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Management (MARAM) Framework. WCC continued to convene the 'Supporting Alignment Together: Champions Community of Practice' and established the new 'Supporting Alignment Together: Bilingual Practitioners Community of Practice'. This Community of Practice provided a forum to support practice alignment to MARAM, strengthen collaboration between Bilingual Practitioners across Multicultural and Settlement sector, sharing of resources and providing a safe space for reflective practice. Over the 12 month period five meetings were held and had a strong attendance of approximately 20 practitioners each meeting. Another addition to activities to this project was the development and delivery of the 'Aligning your practice to MARAM' workshops for Bilingual and Bicultural Practitioner's. These workshops were co-facilitated by Katriece Bolden (WCC) and Anu Krishnan (AMES), delivering the workshop ten times to over 190 practitioners.

Family fun day at WFC



CALD Women's Driving Program

Funded by Department of Home Affairs and City of Whittlesea

The Women's Driving program continues to be one of the most popular and needed programs at WCC, with more than 200 women from refugee and migrant backgrounds taking part in obtaining their Australian driving licenses. The driving program not only teaches women how to drive safely but is also considered positively affect women to live fulfilled and productive lives. It empowered participants to make positive changes in their life and the lives of their children and family. Further, in long-term impact, women start to engage more in activities such as social, education, employment, and volunteering.

Family Violence Practitioner Group (FVPG)

The FVPG now in its second year, continues to be a space for WCC practitioners to feel supported and build their skill around working in the space of family violence. This financial year saw a couple of the sessions being facilitated by a family violence specialist practitioner from Berry Street. The group has 14 staff regularly attend with feedback demonstrating improved practice, collaboration and wellbeing.

Phase 2: Whittlesea CALD Communities FV Project

Funded by Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, 2020-2023

Much has been achieved in the second year of the Phase 2: Whittlesea CALD Communities FV Project across all six elements of this project. Here are just some of the highlights:

- Delivery of eight training sessions to multicultural women covering a variety of topics related to employment. Resulting in at least eight participants successfully gaining employment.
- Delivery of three FV awareness workshops in partnership with other local services and community groups reaching over 80 community members. Established a new partnership with the Board of Imams.
- Working in partnership with Melbourne Polytechnic and Victorian Legal Aid, the 'Family Relationships in Australia' course has been developed and delivered in co-facilitation with Melbourne Polytechnic teaching staff to AMEP and YAMEC students. Pilot 1 was delivered in Term 2 this year. Feedback and consultations will inform pilot 2 which will be delivered in Term 4.
- Community leader representatives as a part of this project continue to build on their leadership and advocacy skills by completing associated training and facilitating various workshops that aim to build the leadership of multicultural women in the community.

Phillip Dimitriadis (Melbourne Polytechnic Teacher) and AMEP students of Family Relationships in Australia course. – AMEP PILOT



Whittlesea Family Violence Network (WfVN)

Local Government Area Network convened by WCC

The members for the WfVN stands at 81, which is an increase of 11 since last financial year. Meetings over the 22-23 financial year consisted of presentations from Northern Integrated Family Violence Services Partnership; Manal Shehab CEO Sisters4Sisters; and Caraniche. Network members provided a deep dive on some of their projects, including of Sports Prevention Project (DPV Health & City of Whittlesea), Health Justice Safe Journeys Partnership (Enhanced Maternal Child Health & WCC) and the Multi-Service Coordinated FV Response Project (WCC). In June 2023 the annual forum was held with the theme of 'Children, Young People and FV'. Guest experts included Dr Wendy Bunston, Victorian Police representatives, Lauren Vanderzeil from Berry Street, Georgia Ransome from Banksia Gardens Community Services and Sameera Fieldgrass and Kim Almeida from Centre for Multicultural Youth. With over 25 attendees to the event we received excellent feedback showing the importance of such forums and meetings in capacity building local practitioners to better respond to family violence.



Whittlesea FV Network 2023 Forum

Multi-Service Coordinated FV Response Project

Funded by Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Family Safety Victoria), 2022-2024

The Multi-Service Coordinated FV Response Project (MSCFVRP) is a newly funded project as a part of Family Safety Victoria's Working Together: Strengthening Family Violence Support with Multicultural Communities grant program. This project aims to support multicultural communities at risk or experiencing FV and/or sexual assault (SA) in reducing barriers to accessing the FV and SA service system. We connect with victims by outposting Bilingual FV System Connectors (BFVSC) at key locations and mainstream services across the City of Whittlesea. The BFVSC's support and provide guidance to victim survivors in navigating the service system.

This project also seeks to capacity build FV and SA practitioners in responding to the complex needs of multicultural communities and to improve service provision to be culturally safe and responsive. This will be achieved through the Practitioners Community of Practice. Partners of the project include Berry Street, Northern Centre Against Sexual Assault, Kids First and DPV Health and form the Project Steering Group overseeing the project deliverables. The project is in the early stages of the funding and is already connecting victim survivor women into the FV and SA services. Further, the Community of Practice has shown areas for system change.

Multicultural Women's Grant Groups

Funded by the Sunshine and Crocodile Pty Ltd

The Multicultural Women's Grant Program continued to provide a vital role for women who experience limited opportunities to connect socially. Nine groups began at the start of 2022 with six groups finalising at the end of the year. Women participated in a range of activities such as: dance, cooking, Week without Violence T-Shirt painting, pottery and health information sessions. WCC also provided family violence information sessions to the groups and provided support to some group leaders who had members experiencing family violence. In April 2023, the program had 14 grant applications submitted with the Women's Advisory Group, providing grants to seven group recipients. This program has been running for nine years and continues to improve connections, raise awareness of family violence and build leadership for multicultural women in the community.



MANAS – Mental Awareness Network and Support Group for South Asian Women.

Community Leader Working Group (Women's Advisory Sub-Group)

Funded by the Sunshine and Crocodile Pty Ltd

WCC welcomed 11 members to its Community Leaders Working Group (CLWG) in December 2022. Members of the group represent the rich multiculturalism within the City of Whittlesea coming from Nepal, Iraq, Sri Lanka, India and Italy. The CLWG provides input into WCC's strategic priorities and aligned programs and services. Highlights for CLWG members this period are:

- Master of Ceremonies at Whittlesea Family Violence Network Forum 2023
- Five members oversaw the rollout of new funds to recipients of the CALD Women's Grants Program
- Two members are representatives on the Project Steering Group for the Phase 2 Project

3

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

Working with disengaged young people, mentoring Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander young people and building support networks through a Rainbow Group for LGBTQIA+ multicultural young people are just some of the initiatives delivered for young people this year.

The Youth Advocacy Group progressed its work on a youth hub for Whittlesea and WCC's youth media and creative arts projects that create different ways for young people to raise their voice.

Rainbow Group

Supported by Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and in partnership with a local secondary schools

- The rainbow support group is youth-led. Young participants who identify as being part of the LGBTQIA+ community are consulted regularly to inform and create the content and focus of the program. The group discusses barriers for those who identify, and plans events to raise awareness and a sense of belonging in safe places.
- One example was the Wear it Purple Day, an annual day that recognises and celebrates young people who identify as LGBTQIA+. The rainbow group organised a school event where students from all year levels in secondary school got together to celebrate pride. The event was a success with high levels of engagement and positive feedback from students who attended.
- "Rainbow Group students have shown significant growth over the last year and are a lot more confident. A student was very timid and soft-spoken at first but has grown immensely and become more of a leader within the group." – Wellbeing Leader



Empower

Supported by Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

We provided case management support to young people between 12 and 25 who are disengaged from education, work and family life, or at risk of disengagement. Aspirational plans are created that include short- and long-term goals. Empower works primarily out of the WCC office, with outreach at Melbourne Polytechnic, the Innovation Youth Centre and Mernda Community House.



Engage!

Supported by Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

We delivered 'gap training' life skills for young people in financial literacy, civic participation, youth voice, campaigning and leadership among much more. Young people designed, led and participated in the 16 days of activism campaign. The youth advocacy group continued their work in the dedicated safe youth spaces area. The LOT advisory group have joined forces with existing youth groups to build momentum and create a larger voice and platform. There was a youth voices podcast program, youth-led projects and a youth voices exhibition. Engagement, participation, youth voices and training all featured heavily.

282 unique young people participated across different Engage! programs, activities and events.

Koorie Youth Mentoring In partnership with Epping Secondary College, Lalor Secondary College and The Lakes South Morang, Hazel Glen College (starting in June)

Within the City of Whittlesea, there are 20+ schools with 20+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) identifying students. This is a large number compared to other municipalities.

Questionnaires provided to the students have revealed their increased engagement and willingness to ask questions, indicating improved knowledge and curiosity about their culture, although the level of knowledge to begin with is very low.

The lack of comprehensive cultural education within schools and the absence of truth-telling in the curriculum are seen as disappointing and underscore the importance of initiatives like this program.

This program provides valuable support and mentoring to young people aged 11-18 years old. The program serves as a platform for these young adults to connect, engage in meaningful discussions, learn about their Aboriginal cultural heritage, and empower them with necessary life skills, while also receiving guidance and support.

The program focuses on different cultural topics such as kinship systems, the Freedom rides, the 1967 referendum, Naidoc, traditional games, racism, and more.

Students actively participate and learn about their culture, demonstrating a growing understanding and connection to their heritage, tribe, land, and waterways



3 Young people have a sense of belonging & voice in their community – continued

Thomastown West Community Hub Expansion (TWCHE)

Supported by Ward Ambler Foundation

In the past two years, TWCH has embarked on an expansion effort to extend its support to a greater number of disadvantaged children residing in Thomastown and Wollert, areas sharing similar needs. These children, living in low socio-economic conditions, face multiple barriers arising from intersecting factors. To address their collective needs effectively, we have collaborated with different schools to develop tailored programs aimed at achieving specific outcomes. These programs strive to foster school re-engagement, enhance literacy and numeracy comprehension, boost confidence, promote English conversation skills, and empower children to express themselves.



@Thomastown West Community Hub

In partnership with Thomastown West Primary School

Young Voices in Media: Students use iPads and recording equipment to create podcast segments, covering various topics like personal stories, fiction, games, and interviews. They engage in discussions on important issues and learn about responsible use of technology.

Homework Club: Students receive support to complete homework in subjects like English and mathematics. It provides a space for socialising and mindfulness activities.

STEAM (STEM + Art): Students use 'Little Bits' to create circuits and models, encouraging problem-solving and the sharing of knowledge. The program also introduced a food science group.

Digital Art Pixels and Paint & Art Club: Students explore traditional art mediums, including sketching, painting, and sculpting via digital technology.

Fun Reading Club: Students improve English skills for those that are newly arrived, through reading, writing, and storytelling activities.

Koorie Kids Club: Is aimed at awareness and knowledge of culture for those that have Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background.

Math Club: A program focused on fun learning environments whilst engaging with mathematics games and multiplication tables to enhance numeracy skills.

Strategic Board games: Students play strategic simulation board games to develop critical thinking, teamwork, and integrity skills.

Chess Club: Was played external to the classroom on giant painted gravel with life-size pieces, concentrating on creativity, strategy and logic.

Refugee Educational Support Program: Is aimed at improving attendance and fostering parent engagement and trust.

SHP Summer Program: Slime and Origami workshop, Sports Days, and Art Studio where students create sculptures and explore different art mediums.

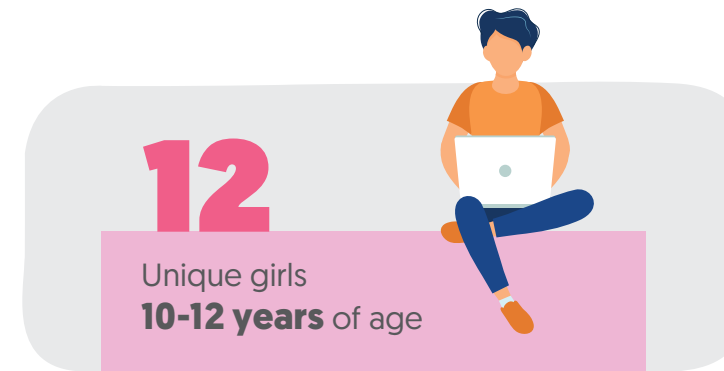
SHP Autumn Program: Art Studio with various mediums, papier-mâché, lantern making, wand making, wizard hat making, slime making, and sports activities involving soccer and AFL experts in their field.

The Hub also provides space for PRACE to deliver English conversation classes weekly with parents and school kids.

@ECPS Hub

In partnership with Edgars Creek Primary School (Wollert)

Girls Group: A support group for girls aged 10 to 12. The program covers topics like healthy eating, mental health, online safety, bullying, and maintaining healthy friendships. It provides a safe space for young Muslim girls to share experiences and feelings, while building resilience and self-esteem through practical activities.



@TMPS Hub

In partnership with Thomastown Meadows Primary School

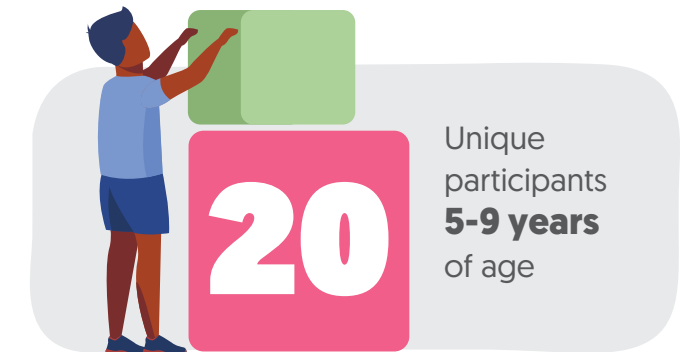
Family Learning Club: Focusing on supporting newly arrived families and children from diverse backgrounds. The goal is to help parents understand how they can support their children's learning at home, especially in areas like reading together, language development, and text comprehension.



Homework Club: Supports students from Foundation to Grade 6, especially those with migrant and refugee backgrounds, in English and mathematics. Dedicated volunteers offer guidance and support, creating an inclusive environment for students to thrive academically and socially.



Lego Club: For disadvantaged children from CALD backgrounds who may feel isolated or lack friendships during lunchtime activities. Engaging children through Lego helps to provide a platform for connection and friendship-building, promoting the development of new relationships beyond just Lego building whilst learning basic building, following instructions and logic skills.



3 Young people have a sense of belonging & voice in their community – continued

Kids Get Active

Supported by VicHealth & Ward Ambler Foundation in partnership with Edgars Creek Primary School, Thomastown West Primary School, Thomastown Meadows Primary School, Epping Secondary College, Lalor Secondary College, The Lakes South Morang & Mernda Community House

The Kids Get Active Sports Program is an inclusive multi-sports initiative that targets children from CALD backgrounds facing social and economic disadvantages in Thomastown, Lalor, Epping, Wollert, Mernda, South Morang and surrounding suburbs. It aims to prevent disengagement from education and society by providing team sports opportunities, enhancing and creating new skills like communication and teamwork, and improving physical and mental health outcomes. The program creates connections, support networks, and a sense of belonging, empowering children and enhancing their confidence and self-esteem and ultimately promoting stronger school connections. The program also has an element of connection to local sporting clubs and creating pathways to otherwise expensive sporting fees. Kids Get Active has built strong partnerships with local, state and federal sports governing bodies and national teams across sports. A trial sports/engagement program was set up at Mernda Community House.



Swim Program

Supported by National Career Institute Partnership Grant and in partnership with TRAC

Our strong partnership with TRAC, allowed us to provide practical learning experience in swimming lessons, swim training and learning to be a swim teacher for unemployed young people who are newly arrived and from diverse cultural backgrounds. Three young people have been employed and four got to the interview stage, which created a new set of skills for them. The next stage will see further education about becoming a swim teacher. Participants were provided with any swim gear they needed.

16 Days Of Activism

Supported by the SAFE + EQUAL Grant

An annual Young Voices Exhibition and Forum around gender based and sexual violence for young people had 60 people attend, 30 being youth specific. This was a very informative and safe event that allowed young people to talk to other young people about the issues that pertain to them and others across our municipality. Forum panelists were made up of current and past LOT members. This was WCC's 3rd annual event.



Schools Employment Expo

Supported by the National Career Institute Partnership Grant in partnership with Epping Secondary College

The expo encompassed a variety of career opportunities for employment and training in trade, corporate and professional sectors. The presenters provided an interactive platform for year 11 and 12 students to source the knowledge they need to achieve their successful future.

The youth speakers discussed their education, work/life balance, challenges and rewards. Young people from these sectors/industries presented and they included the Australian Defence Force, a freelance beauty make-up specialist, youth workers, sports and recreation management from Thomastown Recreation and Aquatic centre, Belgravia Leisure, The Loan Room and a nurse from Northern Health Hospital. Each young person went into a workshop/information session with two industries.



With thanks to our wonderful team: Sarah Wassouf—Empower Youth Worker, Ruvee Ratnayake—Children & Youth Program Worker, Eva Mumbler—Aboriginal Youth Worker, Serdar Tackiran—Children's Program Worker Sports, Ruqia Mohamed—Youth Advocate

...and a big thank you to Ziane Ramadan—Fun Learning Club, Norma Medawar—Swim Program, Anas Qishta—Rainbow Group, Katriece Bolden—16 Days of Activism, Edmond Babatunde—L2P Child Safe Training, Jennie Barnes—School Jobs Expo, Emma Antonetti—Manager Equity & Impact and all our lovely volunteers.

DEAN MARANDO Children and Young People Team Leader



4

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



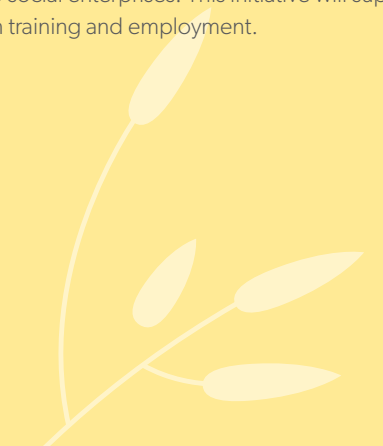
Funded by Jobs Victoria, WCC continued to deliver the Jobs Victoria Employment Service, Jobs Victoria Advocates and Carers Employment Support programs. More than 180 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers have been placed into employment over two years, seventy percent of those people were women and their top countries of birth were Syria, Iraq, Iran, India, Lebanon and Sri Lanka.

WCC was also funded by Jobs Victoria in 2022/23 to deliver a Priority Workforce Project in partnership with RMAA Australia, a new automotive manufacturer based in Mickleham. More than 80 priority jobseekers were placed with RMAA including women over 45 years, young people, Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander people, long-term unemployed and people with migrant, refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds. Participants have been supported with pre-employment and accredited training, brokerage funds, transport and mentoring post-placement.

The Women's Leadership & Empowerment program has supported more than 250 women and girls to build confidence and capacity to return to the workforce, start a small business or engage in education and training opportunities in non-female dominated industries.

In 2022/23, WCC welcomed the news of \$1,249,000 Department of Home Affairs funding through the Economic Pathways for Refugees Initiative grants to social enterprises. This initiative will support humanitarian entrants with low English proficiency with training and employment.

nugal Biik mini ranger Photo credit: 3KND



Wollert Community Farm

Wollert Community Farm has continued to develop over the last year and is pushing closer to having operational facilities. The partnership between ourselves, Yarra Valley Water (YVW) and Melbourne Polytechnic (MP) overcame a financial stumbling block in 2022 when YVW completed a business case for biodiversity protection and enhancement works on YVW sites. This enabled YVW to allocate \$3M for Wollert Community Farm over FY23 – 28, including \$2M for capital expenditure. These additional funds enable a significant investment in stage 1 farm hub infrastructure, including civil works, fencing, greenhouses, shade structures, services and a multi-purpose nursery building, though the completion of this permanent infrastructure has been delayed until 2024. In the meantime WCC is establishing an interim hub, operational from October 2023, that enables farm activities to progress and project momentum continue. Meanwhile, the City of Whittlesea has moved from partner to supporter of the project and a new partnership MoU was signed off in December 2022.

The Wollert Community Farm team has welcomed new staff over the last year. Sharna Brown moved within WCC to a newly created Cultural Lead role. Sharna is tasked with progressing First Nations activities, including the Meeting Place and Interpretive Trail. Sharna is also developing a nugal biik Rangers program that will connect local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and youths to Country and culture through conservation and land management training and experiences. This involves partnering with local primary schools to deliver a ‘mini rangers’ program and local high schools to deliver a ‘junior rangers’ program.

In December 2022 WCC received the news that our application to the Department of Home Affairs Economic Pathways to Refugee Integration Program – Grants to Social Enterprises had been successful. WCC is the recipient of \$1.249M to improve economic participation outcomes for local refugees and humanitarian entrants through supported training in foundational and job specific skills, with a horticulture focus grounded at Wollert Community Farm’s indigenous plant nursery. A particular target cohort are those with low skills and/ or low English in Melbourne’s North Eastern and North Western employment regions. Osman Osman has come on board to coordinate the EPRI program and the farm team is working closely with WCC’s settlement and employment teams on delivery.

In April 2023 Scott Tunbridge also joined the team as nugal biik Plants and Seeds Nursery Manager and has been ably progressing nursery operational planning with WCC’s new Social Enterprise Lead, Narelle Sullivan.

Charlotte has continued her good work in the conservation space. Curly Sedge Creek

restoration began in 2023, with \$15,000 funding support from the ANZ Community Foundation and \$26,937.90 from Melbourne Water’s Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways grant. Several planting days over May and June 2023 involved conservation volunteers, mini rangers and Melbourne Polytechnic students. In April a Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony was held at the farm to celebrate the beginning of WCC and Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Narrap Rangers’ conservation and caring for country programs in the grassy woodland and Curly Sedge Creek. Charlotte has also secured philanthropic funding to finance the establishment of the Seed Production Area (SPA) at the Farm. The SPA will contribute seeds for, and receive expert technical assistance from, the University of Melbourne research project Repurposing urban construction waste to create diverse wildflower meadows, which was recently funded for four years through an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage grant application.

VIKTOR FAULKNOR
Wollert Community Farm Team Leader



Our mini rangers planted 125 plants in pairs, the rangers learnt about bush tukka, bush medicine and they learnt about the crafty side of native plants.

Social Enterprises

WCC’s portfolio of **five social enterprises** aim to fulfil the organisation’s strategic objectives of employment, access and connection, equitable life outcomes, and climate change mitigation.

WCC’s social enterprise activities are supported by Social Enterprise Advisor, Pablo Gimenez and Social Enterprise Lead, Narelle Sullivan who commenced this newly created role in March 2023. Pablo and Narelle work across all social enterprises to support staff in enterprise planning, operations, scaling and sustainability.

Three of our social enterprises – driverED, Women in Work and nugal biik Plants and Seeds – are certified with Social Traders, enabling us to work with a wide range of values-aligned industry partners.

Our 5 social enterprises are :

driverED

**Women
in Work**

OurBus

**nugal biik
Plants and
Seeds**

**Food
Collective
Market**



Turn over to read more >

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

driverED

- 2022/2023 ACHIEVEMENTS:**
- Launched the Women's Driving Program, which supported 319 migrant and refugee women at risk of or experiencing family violence to obtain their drivers licence.
 - Extended the delivery of its L2P program to 83 young people aged 16 to 21 across the North West region of Victoria
 - Won the Innovation & Enterprise Award at the 2023 City of Whittlesea Business Awards
 - Increased its pool of female multilingual instructors to five
 - Introduced licence simulation sessions to support learners with complex needs.



Our driverED Instructors, Azize Issa and Sayran Rostam

Now in its fourth year of operation, driverED is a multilingual professional driving school that provides high quality, low cost, culturally appropriate lessons to learner drivers experiencing barriers to obtaining their driving test due to language, income or a limited understanding of Australia's road laws and regulations.

More than just a driving school, driverED provides employment pathways to migrant and refugee women into the transport industry.

driverED operates across the northern suburbs of Melbourne, covering the local government areas of Whittlesea, Nillumbik, Merri-bek, Hume, Banyule and Darebin.

Its pool of female multilingual instructors are trained to work with people who are culturally and linguistically diverse or newly arrived to Australia, and can deliver driving lessons in Kurdish, Arabic, Kashmir, Kokani, Arabic, Russian, Farsi, Hindi and English.

driverED achieves its 98% first-time test pass rate for learners through delivering a tailored service that addresses the particular barriers being faced by them, and that offers the most supported, safe and productive learning environment possible. Where required, learners are matched with instructors from similar language, cultural background or gender. The driverED competency report ensures that learners are achieving the required level of skill development in the crucial first stage of their driving education.

Social impact area: Employment pathways and Transport disadvantage

1457
Lessons delivered

403
Beneficiaries

Clients: Employment and training, community services, refugee settlement, gender equality and prevention of violence, L2P programs.

Women in Work

Established in 2010, Women in Work is an affordable mobile childcare service that provides care for children of all ages at workplaces and venues. Its fully qualified and accredited childcare professionals provide a safe and caring environment for children, enabling parents to participate in events, programs, appointments and training and education activities.

Women in Work's purpose is to provide employment pathways into the childcare industry for recently arrived migrant and refugee women, increasing their economic participation and equitable life outcomes. In addition, this unique service facilitates the inclusion and participation of parents in community services.

Surplus from the childcare service is used to create training, employment and local work experience opportunities for disadvantaged women.



Our WiW staff with children

Social impact area: Employment pathways and inclusion for women

8
Number of childcare workers

120+
Number of sessions delivered

360+
Number of children

Clients: Child and family services, education and training, member-based organisations

2022/2023 ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Two new childcare workers joined Women in Work, increasing the team to 8 part-time and casual workers
- We supported three of our workers to secure permanent employment with other childcare providers.

Our clients can attend essential appointments and courses with the support given by your devoted childcare workers; without them, a lot of women can't attend.

WOMEN IN WORK CLIENT

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

OurBus

OurBus hire service provides low cost, safe and reliable buses for community organisations. Our fleet of fully serviced and comprehensively insured 12-seater buses feature a wheelchair hoist and steps for easy access.

Surplus generated from OurBus supports WCC's Community Transport service, which provides essential transport for local residents experiencing transport disadvantage due to age, health or income.

Tim Goodwin and Steven Lim, our transport volunteers *Photo credit: Anthony*



2022/2023 ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Increase in revenue
- Securing of long-term leasing arrangements for 2 vehicles.

Social impact area: Transport disadvantage

250+

Bus trips delivered

1200+

Beneficiaries

Clients:

Community organisations spanning youth, disability, settlement services, senior community members.

nugal biik Plants and Seeds

nugal biik Plants and Seeds is a wholesale indigenous plant and seeds nursery located at the Wollert Community Farm. When operational it will specialise in local provenance species from the Greater Northern Melbourne region, and native cultivars.

nugal biik means 'Belongs to Earth' in Woi-Wurrung language. This name was granted to WCC to use by **Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Gail Smith.**

The nursery's primary purpose will be to generate a surplus in order to support First Nations, Connection to Country, revegetation and conservation activities at the Wollert Community Farm.

2022/2023 ACHIEVEMENTS:

- Employed a full-time Nursery Manager, Scott Tunbridge. An Environmental Scientist, Scott comes to us from Latrobe Wildlife Sanctuary's Indigenous Plant Nursery
- Nursery infrastructure well underway
- Nursery certification with Social Traders and the Nursery and Garden Industry of Victoria (NGIV)

Social impact area:

Reconciliation, climate action, employment pathways.

Food Collective Market

This year saw us launch our fresh produce market, a social enterprise that is part of the larger Whittlesea Food Collective initiative. Situated on campus at Melbourne Polytechnic in Epping, the market sells locally sourced and culturally appropriate fruit, veggies and produce to students and staff.

As well as providing access to fresh and affordable food, the market also features regular events, including cooking demonstrations where members of the community create recipes from their culture. This popular initiative is a true celebration of culture through food, providing a delicious free lunch to students and using up any leftover market produce, thereby reducing waste.

In the year ahead, we will be exploring more opportunities to engage with the local community and increase access to fresh, locally sourced food for Whittlesea residents. We aim to broaden the market's reach by opening to the general public, trialling food boxes and catering, and increasing the engagement of young people in the food system through the development of an education program focused on food justice.



Social impact area: Food access

60+

Number of customers per market

5

People lead healthy lives connected to community and services



WCC's core and essential services – food and financial relief, community information and support, legal help, volunteering, settlement support for new arrival migrants and refugees and transport service – continue to provide help and support to people when they need it most.

WCC's place-based approaches—Thomastown West, Thomastown Meadows, Edgars Creek School & Community Hubs, Mernda Community House, Whittlesea Food Collective and Wollert Community Farm—integrate core services and community engagement to meet community needs, build capacity and provide opportunities for participation.

Whittlesea Food Collective

This year we have built on partnerships with Melbourne Polytechnic and a range of local schools through the design and delivery of student excursions incorporating hands-on practical activities and awareness raising about social and environmental issues. Activities ranged from food growing and harvesting, cooking meals for food relief and putting together food boxes for families in need.

We also collaborated with Melbourne Polytechnic to deliver an AMEP Innovation course that promoted English learning through practical workplace activities. Topics included warehousing, horticulture, food systems, community services and hospitality.

The project culminated in the Refugee Week event, one of many successful events held at the Food Collective over the past year.

The Food Collective demonstration garden continues to be a place to engage people in learning about food growing, including through our Learn Local Introduction to Horticulture course. We are very thankful for our volunteers, Leigh, Ibrahim, Yousef and Sharon who have been working hard on maintaining the garden and developing the vision to improve and expand the use of the space. They have been able to grow some beautiful organic produce to donate to our food relief program.

We are excited about the year ahead, which will see us continue expanding on the range of social enterprises under the Food Collective

umbrella, including our fresh produce market. To find out more, head over to the Social Enterprise section of the report.

SARAH DALY
Manager Engagement and Multicultural Communities



Al and Sonalee at the Market Hub



Fresh product at the Market Hub

5 People lead healthy lives connected to community and services – continued

Mernda Community House

Mernda Community House enjoyed another full year of renewed and new, community connections.

Our team of staff, teachers and volunteers have together supported, nurtured and imparted many skills and much knowledge to our local community and of course rejoiced in everyone’s accomplishments. Celebrating individual accomplishments brings us the most joy but collectively, and as one of the newest Neighbourhood Houses in Victoria, we have much to celebrate. Four years on from establishing our program and improving our space, we can say that our programs offer a real point of difference in our municipality. We can be proud of delivering the first Repair Café and Women’s Shed, launching our mini Op Shop, trialing Pathways for Carers, becoming a NHVic acknowledged Carer Friendly House and a Welcome Here space.

Mernda Repair Cafe team ,winners of the Climate Action Award at Neighbourhood Houses Victoria Annual Awards



In 2022/23, we welcomed three of our volunteers into paid positions within our team, offering them an opportunity to teach and share their knowledge. We also supported two Learn Local facilitators to teach for the first time. We have a wonderful group of 25 volunteers across our programs, some of whom have gained skills and confidence at the house and moved onto paid employment. We have been able to finish some infrastructure projects such as completing our community shed facility, establishing a fledgling community garden and putting together a new garden/repair cafe shed.

At the end of 2022 we welcomed Koko to our team. Koko has been able to offer our teachers and participants the support needed to deliver the best programs possible. This included supporting the growth of our newest group, Mernda Community Gardeners, Seed, Sow and Grow. Thanks to amazing community leadership and coordination, the group are consolidating their vision for community gardening. And while

A happy customer at the Mernda Repair cafe



the gardeners are busy sowing outside, our Intro to Fashion Sewing group are busy sewing inside. Through expert tutelage from Eromi, this group are building skills towards small business as well as being creative.

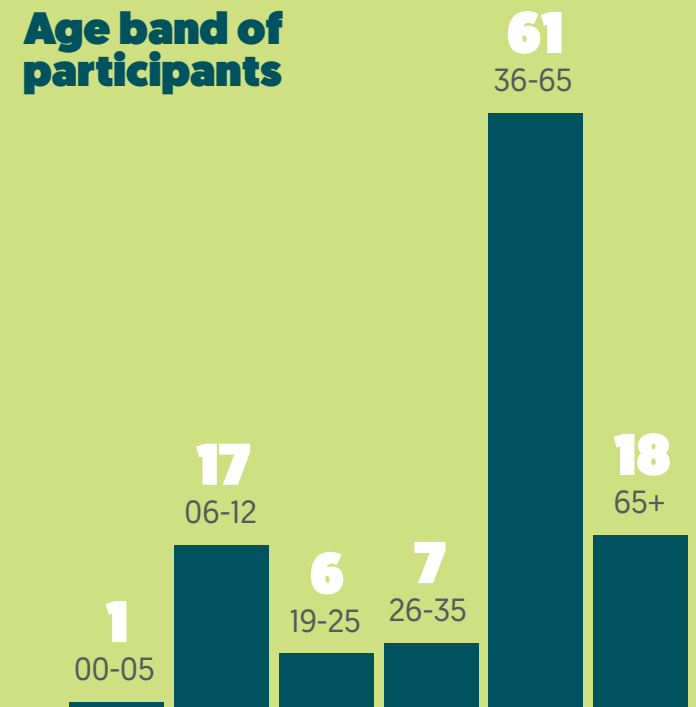
We were also able to celebrate new partnerships in this reporting year. Of note is our work with Hanson’s and Mernda Uniting Church. We thank Hanson’s for sponsoring our garden/repair cafe shed and for championing our program. Our relationship with Mernda Uniting Church is most welcomed and offers us additional space to spread our wings. Our upcoming Mernda Community Lunch will be delivered from the Church Hall and we are very much looking forward to it.

Each year we are imbedded in community, and we grow our understanding of community-led practice. We embody this through our Advisory Group. This incredibly dedicated group of local community members have devoted their time, expertise and voice as representatives of our local community to guide the growth of Mernda Community House. We regularly communicate our approach as a community space and encourage everyone to create, build and take ownership of what inspires them. We are proud and indebted to all community that have participated in building this community space whether it is through joining our programs or leading its direction. It definitely take a village to grow such a welcoming and creative place for connection and belonging.

PARAS CHRISTOU
Mernda Community House Coordinator



Group photo at the end of year celebration at the Mernda Community House



5 People lead healthy lives connected to community and services – continued

L2P

The TAC L2P Program assists young drivers between the ages of 16 and 23 without access to a supervising driver or appropriate vehicle to gain the 120 hours of supervised driving required to obtain their license. Trained volunteer driving mentors not only assist young people to gain the required hours of driving experience, they also represent consistent, safe adult role models at a critical time in young people's lives. The program has multiple community benefits including increasing road safety and addressing transport disadvantage, one of the biggest barriers for young people seeking employment.

We are currently funded to support 80 young people in our program which spans the City of Whittlesea and Murrindindi local government areas. The program has rebounded from a lack of volunteer participation post-COVID and is experiencing re-engagement from community members wanting to volunteer. This year our dedicated mentor pool increased from 19 to 32,

resulting in an additional 24 active learners in the program and 18 young people achieving their probationary licence.

On average, our current mentors support two learners each per week and have contributed an incredible 1,205.45 volunteer hours. The rapidly growing City of Whittlesea continues to experience high demand for the program, with approximately 80 learners on the waitlist and 24 applicants yet to be assessed.

The program would not exist without the commitment and dedication of our volunteer mentors. One of our highlights this year was a 10 year celebration of our longest serving volunteer mentor, Judith Franklin.

L2P staff and volunteers at the volunteer week event 2023 *Photo credit: Anthony*



Community Transport

2022 – 2023 was a busy year for transport. We welcomed two new staff to the team— Lama Sankari and Harpreet Singh, along with five new volunteers Daniel, Sami, Rebecca, Mulham, Roy and John S.

Our focus for this year was to recover from the significant impact the pandemic had on our ability to deliver transport services. This year has been the first year since the pandemic that we delivered on 100% of our KPI's as outlined in our funding agreement.

Our recovery efforts focused on volunteer recruitment, intake responding to over 800 service enquiries, welcoming 190 new clients and maximising our runs each day.

This next year we are excited to be investigating technology solutions that will further maximise our capacity to deliver transport.



Community Transport staff and volunteers *Photo credit: Anthony*

Community Road Safety

Whittlesea Community Connections continues its engagement with Melbourne Polytechnic on road safety education for AMEP and YAMEC students. When learner permit tests moved online, some newly arrived students with limited English struggled to access resources and testing. The WCC road safety and settlement teams collaborated to address this by providing support to students with navigating the VicRoads online environment. This program has significantly improved their road knowledge and understanding of the licencing system and ultimately contributed to the achievement of their learner driver permits.

Community Support

Funded by City of Whittlesea and Whittlesea Community Connections

SOME HIGHLIGHTS:

- October 2022 saw our financial Assistance Program merge with our Food Collective Supermarket, allowing us to support 40 people/families per week with food relief 20 appointments per week for financial assistance and facilitate broader financial information and referral with Job Advocates and Uniting's financial counselling service outreach onsite.
- We undertook outreach at Andrew Giles and Bronwyn Halfpenny's office to facilitate access to Power Saving Bonus for broad range of community members.
- We delivered our community help support from a range of placed based locations including Mill Park Library, Whittlesea Community House (Fix it Friday Initiative), Kirrip Community Activity Centre and Thomastown Library.



Caption : Community Help volunteers Sonalee and Stella

A busy year again for the Community Support Team our activities have included

- Responding to 16,841 community enquiries in our contact centre
- Providing 186 support/community help appointments
- Supporting 34 social work students with placement experience
- Assisting 247 community members to access the state government Power Saving Bonus
- Assisting 32 community members to lodge their tax return via the Tax Help Program
- 767 emergency relief interventions/assistance including food relief, Queen's Fund grants, Telstra vouchers, material aid (Big Group Hug etc)

Whittlesea Emergency Relief Network POP-UP FOOD RELIEF MARKETS



Pop Up Market Project

Partnering with the City Of Whittlesea Emergency Relief Network, WCC led the pop-up market project to deliver 12 food relief markets across the municipality from November 2022 to May 2023.

The markets distributed a large range of healthy food including milk, bread, eggs, and 11 types of fruit, 18 types of vegetables and 23 staples equating to 17,825 kg of food distributed

A total of 15 support services attended at least one pop-up market. Support services included mental health, Centrelink, NDIS Yarra Valley Water, job advocates, community legal services family violence, financial counselling and Gambler's Help.

Eighty-seven Power Saving Bonus applications were completed for people who had not already accessed the scheme.

A total of 1,279 community members across the municipality accessed the markets with an additional 50 community members receiving food deliveries due to transport disadvantage.

As project support, WCC facilitated the relationship development between the emergency relief partners and support service agencies that attended the markets. This was the first opportunity for these small volunteer led providers to deliver both food relief and practical support to community members experiencing a range of need/hardship.

The project also obtained ongoing additional resources for the network including a local small fruit shop donating their excess food to Love Thy Neighbour, Food Share receiving donated eggs each week and Pinchapoo extending their donations to WCC in order to distribute to the broader emergency relief network

It is the intention of both the network and services involved in the project to explore how (post project) we can continue to work together to offer opportunities for people to engage with support whilst accessing emergency relief.

Settlement

WCC's Settlement Engagement and Transition Team (SETS) provided support through case management services and group-based activities to 1,000 clients through 4,000 personal contacts.



Funded by the Australian Government in partnership with Spectrum, SETS offers support and addresses the needs of recently arrived migrants and refugees in their first five years. Services are provided through casework, group sessions, outreach, celebrating events and peer support groups.

SETS casework support ranges from building the ability to complete forms and understand documents providing referrals to essential supports such as legal advice and advocacy in order to resolve issues and safely settle in Australia. We assist with language skills, housing, community integration, financial hardship, immigration procedures, community connectedness, social participation, personal wellbeing, mental health, family relationships and much more.

SETS social and educational groups, such as the Arabic Speaking Men's group and Arabic Speaking Women's group, Homework Program, and English classes for both intermediate and beginners, aim to develop skills crucial for our clients' settlement journeys. Shared outcomes include increasing our clients' confidence, independence, and awareness of and engagement with relevant support services.

Our Civics and Citizenship Group remains the most needed course for our communities. 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 engage in topics that are considered taboo within the community, including sexual health, age of consent, and family violence.

The SETS team continues to outreach at Melbourne Polytechnic Epping campus three days a week, providing one-on-one casework support to students. This platform helps students to get access to services and assistance with their issues in a convenient and familiar space. In addition, WCC collaborated with Melbourne Polytechnic and provided two onsite courses for clients who needed to test for their learner permits, which helped them obtain the learner permit and start their first step toward obtaining their driver's license.

Staff at Melbourne AMEP 75th anniversary event



Fun day out with Settlement Clients, catching the train to Docklands

5 People lead healthy lives connected to community and services – continued

With the support of the Victorian Government, WCC organised events and activities to engage and reconnect with communities and link them to various activities that improve their mental health, wellbeing and social connectedness after COVID. The SETS team organised a cruise excursion to Docklands, attended by more than 100 clients which has helped the community to safely use public transport and take on a new experience around the city. Our family fun day celebrating the end of the year and Christmas, engaged more than 300 people from both Whittlesea and Hume LGA's. Communities shared traditional culture through dances, music, food and a special visit by Santa.

The Settlement Women's Driving Program continues to be one of the most popular and needed programs at WCC, with more than 200 women from refugee and migrant backgrounds taking part in obtaining their Australian driving licenses. The driving program not only teaches women how to drive safely but is also considered positively affect women to live fulfilled and productive lives. It empowered participants to make positive changes in their life and the lives of their children and family. Further, in long-term impact, women start to engage more in activities such as social, education, employment, and volunteering.

With the help of the Department of Health, the Health Navigator program continued to support the community to stay safe from COVID and deliver language information sessions and one-on-one support.

This year, one of the most challenging times that affected the community was the Syria/turkey earthquake. To support people affected by it, WCC partnered with Melbourne Polytechnic and organised a fundraising BBQ.

Our Celebrating Refugee Week 2023 - Finding Freedom event saw more than 250 people from a refugee background and other stakeholders like Melbourne Polytechnic acknowledge every refugee's journey and celebrate the strength and courage of those who have been forced to flee their home country to escape conflict or persecution. The event was also an occasion to build empathy and understanding for the refugee's plight and to recognise their resilience in rebuilding their lives. In addition, WCC, Whittlesea Council and TRAC organised a women-only event, an opportunity to help women find their freedom by attending a Zumba class and having a tour around TRAC, Thomastown Library and the neighbourhood house.

HIYAH RAHMAN
Manager – Engagement and Multicultural Communities

The Settlements and Food Hub teams
Photo credit: Anthony



Fun day out with Settlement Clients at Docklands

Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service

This year almost 300 community members were individually given volunteering support in partnership with the WCC Jobs Victoria Advocates Team. In addition, around 400 community members were given information on volunteering via information sessions and expos at Melbourne Polytechnic, WCC, CFA Wollert, retirements villages, schools, universities, the Whittlesea Community Volunteer Expo and the City of Whittlesea Community Festival.

The Whittlesea Partnership on Volunteering and Community Engagement Network continued to meet and grow in membership with over 60 organisations signed up to the Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service Network newsletter sharing information on the latest news and activities on volunteering, locally and state

wide. Workshops on best practice in volunteer management were developed and delivered to sports clubs and small-to-medium organisations participating in the City of Whittlesea ‘Engagement and Leadership Program’. Over 70 community members attended online volunteer training covering a range of topics from Aboriginal Awareness Training, to Cross Cultural Awareness Training, From Volunteer to Employee Workshops and Child Safety.

Strong partnerships were established with local schools and local volunteers involving organisations enabling around 230 students to participate in youth volunteering opportunities with a focus on sustainability and food preservation.

Social media campaigns were developed and launched to celebrate and recognise volunteering and volunteer management across the municipality – 10 posts were created to celebrate International Volunteer Managers Day and National Volunteer Week. The WCC ‘volunteering section’ on the website was updated with the latest information on volunteer management and a new section on ‘Volunteer in an Emergency’ was created with a volunteer registration form attached.

EMMA NAVARRO
Volunteer Resource Service Coordinator

WCC volunteer and staff at the volunteer week event 2023 Photo credit: Anthony



Looking forward > New strategic priority

This year WCC has increasingly undertaken activities that contribute to climate and community resilience in response to a changing climate. This includes:

1 Wollert Community Farm’s work towards being carbon positive, restoration and conservation

2 Whittlesea Food Hub’s focus on reducing food waste, connecting local growers to consumers and building a circular economy

3 Repair Café at Mernda Community House diverting waste from landfill (e-waste, bikes, household/garden items and clothing/textiles)

4 Learn Local courses in sustainable gardening, conservation and horticulture, which are proving to be very popular with community

In June 2023 the Board approved elevating this work to a strategic priority. WCC will work more to understand our role and develop outcomes for this new and emerging strategic priority, particularly as we know that climate change will affect low income households and disadvantaged communities disproportionately.



Employment and Participation team Photo credit: Anthony

HIGHLIGHT: Jobs Victoria Advocates

WCC partnered with City of Whittlesea to deliver the Jobs Victoria Advocate (JVA) program in Whittlesea. The JVA was funded by the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions during and post COVID-19 to support people looking for work with information, advice and referrals.

JVAs acted as an entry point to employment and the broader service system and aimed to reach people not currently connected. Community outreach was critical to the JVA engagement strategy and Whittlesea’s JVA team were located in community activity, recreation and shopping centres, local libraries, neighbourhood houses, schools, TAFE, community and pop-up events across the municipality.

The JVA team provided more than 8,000 individuals across Whittlesea with information, advice and referrals to:

- Skills and training through Work and Learning Centres, TAFE Skills and Jobs Centres, and apprenticeships.
- Additional support through a Jobs Victoria Partner that provides hands-on job support such as CV and interview skills.
- Wraparound support services such as food and financial assistance, NDIS, migration advice, housing and homelessness.

The JVA team were made up of six members who between them spoke ten community languages and an Aboriginal Employment Engagement Worker. Together with the City of Whittlesea, the JVA team held an Aboriginal Employment Event with 18 Aboriginal employers and support services. Special mention to Hannah McVean and Simon Scrase from City of Whittlesea who helped us establish and deliver the program from start to finish.

Whittlesea Community Connections
Making a positive difference everyday

Aboriginal Talk and Tea Time at Mernda Community House
Come and meet Rita Hippi and learn about different employment pathways.
Every 2nd Fridays or every fortnightly on Friday.

Hope to see you all there and having a good yarn!

Mernda COMMUNITY HOUSE

ADDRESS: 2 Heals Road, Mernda VIC 3754
TIME: 10:00am – 12:00pm
PHONE: 0499 747 852
EMAIL: rhippi@whittleseacc.org.au

CASE STUDIES:

- A Single mum was working in aged care on a low income and struggling to make ends meet. She approached JVA wanting to work in a different industry with a better salary. Based on her interests and skills, JVA referred her to Dysons, as they were recruiting for women bus drivers. She had an interview, was successful and started training for work. She was very happy to find a quick option to resolve her problem.
- A woman had been unemployed for 10 years caring for her children, one of whom has a disability and needs extra support. The client was keen to go back to work and was referred to WCC’s Women’s Empowerment program to receive one-on-one support with her resume, interview and computer skills. She attended an interview with SERCO and is waiting for the result.

Financial Statement



Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income for the Year Ended 30 June 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
Income			
Grants received		6,612,860	5,231,525
Funding received from ACFE Board		76,256	28,569
Donations		31,339	24,742
Interest		61,871	15,945
Service generated income		284,205	169,388
Other revenue		29,825	29,825
		7,066,531	5,499,994
Expenses			
Accounting & book-keeping fees		16,100	15,100
Advertising & marketing		9,712	11,076
Audit fees		10,150	6,000
Bank charges		644	825
Depreciation		143,097	134,712
Home loans forgiven		14,740	4,500
Interpreting services		4,029	7,647
Information technology		176,046	93,724
Insurance		3,751	3,693
Interest Paid		12	889
Legal practicing certificate		2,108	1,943
Meeting expenses		7,074	8,957
Motor vehicle expenses		87,938	51,638
Printing and stationery		32,175	13,117
Police and working with children checks		3,800	3,669
Postage and couriers		2,474	808
Program costs		831,341	414,459
Rent and outgoings		130,784	76,913
Repairs and maintenance		5,054	27,379
Subscriptions and memberships		17,544	9,774
Sundry expenses		6,509	8,675
Telephone and internet		51,308	39,813
Volunteers' expenses		12,964	3,678
Wages and related costs		5,403,561	4,549,725
Total expenses		6,972,915	5,488,714
Operating surplus (deficit) before income tax		93,616	11,280
Income tax expense	2(e)	-	-
Operating surplus for the year		93,616	11,280
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year		93,616	11,280

Financial Statement (continued)

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents		3,278,289	2,944,063
Trade receivables		715,646	655,093
Sundry receivables		89,906	59,377
Housing loans			18,137
		<u>4,083,841</u>	<u>3,676,670</u>
Non-Current Assets			
Plant and equipment	4	316,342	361,363
Investments		60	60
		<u>316,402</u>	<u>361,423</u>
Total Assets		<u>4,400,243</u>	<u>4,038,094</u>
Current Liabilities			
Trade creditors		277,611	195,884
Sundry creditors and accruals		318,038	246,396
Grants to be carried forward	5	1,331,079	1,281,035
Provision for employee entitlements	6	755,600	688,300
Secured loans			2,180
		<u>2,682,328</u>	<u>2,413,795</u>
Non-Current Liabilities			
Secured loans		-	-
		-	-
Total Liabilities		<u>2,682,328</u>	<u>2,413,795</u>
Net Assets		<u>1,717,915</u>	<u>1,624,299</u>
Equity			
Accumulated surplus brought forward		1,624,299	1,613,019
Current year surplus		93,616	11,280
Total Equity		<u>1,717,915</u>	<u>1,624,299</u>

Statement of Changes in Equity for the Year Ended 30 June 2023

	Accumulated Surplus \$
Balance as at 1 July 2021	1,616,019
Surplus for the year	11,280
Balance as at 30 June 2022	<u>1,624,299</u>
Surplus for the year	93,616
Balance as at 30 June 2023	<u>1,717,915</u>

Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended 30 June 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
Cash flows from operating activities			
Receipts from operations		8,282,219	5,642,508
Interest received		19,741	19,105
Cash inflows		<u>8,301,960</u>	<u>5,661,613</u>
Payments to suppliers and employees		(7,869,658)	(6,222,955)
Net operating cash flows	3(b)	<u>432,302</u>	<u>(561,342)</u>
Cash flows from investing activities			
Net payments for plant and equipment		(98,076)	(115,633)
Net investing cash flows		<u>(98,076)</u>	<u>(115,633)</u>
Net (decrease)/increase in cash held		334,226	(676,975)
Cash at the beginning of the financial year		2,944,063	3,621,038
Cash at the end of the financial year		<u>3,278,289</u>	<u>2,944,063</u>



A huge thank you to our volunteers

Volunteers are the lifeblood of Whittlesea Community Connections. We have over 150 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.

WCC 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...

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abdul Mansur • Abdullah Siddiqui • Aisha Khurram • Alzahraa Al Shammary • Amanda Farrelly • Amanda Shields • Amardeep Kaur • Andrew Tim Goodwin • Angela Roper • Antonio Campli • Bill Hutchins • Carl Reid • Caroline Matanhire • Carrie Chen • Colin Spencer • Daniel Garcia Delgado • Daniel Vlahek • David Whelan • David Williams • Dearne De Luca • Deemail Osmanovski • Denis Fitzgibbon • Devika Chandrar • Diane Pearl • Effie Zoukis • Emmanuel Gauci | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eromi Anton • Erwin Zuber • Ewen Luc • Fadi Boska • Fadia Aldeeb • Faith Low • Farida Amiry • Fatemeh Tanzadeh • Fiona Mara • Fotini Argyros • Frank Torcasio • Gabriela Garchitorena • Glen Ballinger • Gnaneswary Suthaharan • Gregory Luttick • Hadi Ehtsham • Hala Ajber • Harry Jenkins • Hirohito Guerrero • Ibrahim Ayash • Iman El-Mohammad • Jacqui Ellul • Jacqui Roberts • Jad Saeed • Janelle Collins • Jeanette Pettifer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jill McKeever • Jing Yi • John Donnelly • John Fry • John Shanahan • John Sveticic • Jose Mari Marco • Joseph Battista • Judith Franklin • Karen Gail McKenzie • Karnail Multani • Kathy Robb • Kerry Ladd • Kerryn Burgoyne • Kumar Pradhan • Lama Jraes • Lauren Maruff • Lea Antich • Leanne Leonard • Leeanne White • Leigh Barrett • Leigh Bradstreet • Liam Briginshaw • Linda Rayner • Lisa Baldini • Lisa Edwards |
|--|--|--|

- Liz Buckley
- Louisa Bartolome
- Louise Bartolome
- Lyndall Harrop
- Maria Alvarez
- Matthew D'Amore
- Michael Petrovski
- Michael Sordelli
- Michelle Garvan
- Muhamad Abduh
- Mulham Ghaith
- Muzna Siddiqui
- Nadia Youssef
- Nahid Soltanlo
- Narelle Pettifer
- Neil Hazeldene
- Neil Marshall
- Nibras Abed
- Nicola Parisi
- Niel Hazeldene
- Noor Alsaedi
- Paolo Treccia
- Parwana Ahmadzai
- Peta Fualau
- Peter Coad
- Phuc Pham
- Ponifasio Lua Vaka
- Praveena Rajkopal
- Priya Rajiv
- Priyanka Kashkari
- Rabab Ourabi
- Rani Pentecost
- Ray Rosales
- Rebecca John
- Richard Schwartz
- Riead Mansour
- Robyn Keane
- Ronald Williams
- Roshanthi Joseph
- Roy Smith
- Ruth Wilkinson
- Sally Casmi
- Sami Shtewi
- Sandra Natale
- Sara Asareh
- Sarah Alrajeh
- Shagufta Anjum
- Shaimaa Kadhem
- Hussien Al-Tammi
- Shane Kaluza
- Sharon East
- Sharon Fode
- Shiron Warnakulasuriya
- Shoukry Sidrak
- Sokmom Sun
- Soo Hoon Chua
- Stella Gorham
- Stephen Middlebrook
- Steven Howell
- Steven Lim
- Susan Nikolaidis
- Susan Perkins
- Suzi Duncan
- Teresa Farid
- Vicki Ann Selvaggio
- Victoria Lee
- Victoria Winata
- Wafa Trkeeh
- Waleed Yousif Shamoon
- Wayne Leech
- Wendy Flannery
- Wendy Gillard-Bowles
- William Hutchins
- Yousef Alhawat
- Zara Khan

Sadly we lost one of our Whittlesea Community Connections icons, Rolf Peake in June 2023. A very special and incredibly giving person, he lived a life dedicated to the community. Rolf started volunteering with WCC in August 1999 and was very proud to volunteer and proud of the work we do everyday. He was a very decent human, generous with his time and his advice—we will miss his visits and the time he spent telling staff and volunteers what good work they were doing. Many of you will have your own memories of him — as a regular visitor to Shop 111, a fellow volunteer, a community transport client, a Board colleague, a Cancer Council mug lover, editor of our WCC newsletter and teaching computing. Rest in peace Rolf knowing you made a positive difference.



Vanita – We thank you for sharing your story with us and our community to help raise much needed funds for the Whittlesea Food Collective.

Staff who contributed to our success this year



Aiman Said Jobs Victoria Employment Services Mentor
Alex Chirayath Driver -RMAA
Alex Haynes CEO
Al Wicks Whittlesea Food Collective Enterprise Lead
Anas Qishta Data and Evaluation Advisor
Ashi Chaudhuri Communications Coordinator
Basant Ahmed SETS Worker
Belinda Leon Manager – Community Support
Bobby Lama Gender Equity & Family Violence- Project Coordinator
Caterina Angelis Student Placement Coordinator
Charlotte Gordon Wollert Community Farm Conservation Lead
Chris Howse Principal Solicitor
Chris Ryan Community Lawyer
Cud Armanazi Whittlesea Youth food hub worker
Dean Marando Children and Young People Team Leader
Deepty Cusima Early help program Family Coach - Kids First
Dixsha Dhar Recovery Group Program Facilitator
Edmond Babatunde Road Safety Team Leader
Emma Antonetti Manager Equity and Access
Emma Navarro Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service Coordinator
Eva Mumbler Youth Worker
Fadi Shedid Whittlesea Food Collective Worker
Farah Haddad Case Worker & Women In Work Coordinator
Fukuko Matsumoto Mernda Community House Program Support Officer
Georgianna Brooks Community Transport Assessment Worker
Ginette Beguely Community Help Team Leader

Grozda Nedeljkovic Immigration Advisor
Gurinder Kaur Bilingual Family Violence System Connector
Harpreet Singh Community Transport and L2P Coordinator
Hayley Thomas Whittlesea Youth Food Hub Worker
Hiba Ayass Settlement Team Leader
Hiyah Rahman Manager Engagement and Multicultural Communities
Irina Zdraveska Recruitment and Community Engagement Coordinator
Jackie Mathew Office and Communication Coordinator
Jennie Barnes Women's Leadership & Development Project Coordinator
Jenny Nicholls Employment Mentor - RMAA
Katrice Bolden Gender Equity & Family Violence Team Leader
Kim Lai Finance Manager
Kimberley Chu Employment Mentor & Training Support
Lama Sankari Transport Support officer
Maria Rodriguez Mernda Repair Café Administrator
Maylei Hunt Mernda Repair Cafe Coordinator
Michelle Martinez Community Lawyer
Michelle Patching Employment support
Mohammad Alnayef Settlement Caseworker
Moses Florendo Community Lawyer
Narelle Sullivan Social Enterprise Lead
Norma Medawar Jobs Victoria Employment Service Mentor
Osman Osman Refugee Employment Pathway Program (REPP) Coordinator
Pablo Gimenez Social Enterprise Advisor
Paras Christou Mernda Community House Coordinator
Rema Panaligan Community Lawyer

Rennie Ervinawati Jobs Victoria Advocate
Rita Hipp Original Employment Engagement Worker
Rommy Noeth Community Lawyer
Ruqia Mohamed Youth Advocate
Ruvee Ratnayake Children and Youth Program Worker
Sadia Amjad Carers Employment Support Worker
Safiyah Wazeer Bilingual Family Violence System Connector
San Rupasinghe Jobs Victoria Advocate
Sarah Daly Manager Engagement and Multicultural Communities
Sarah Wassouf Empower Youth Worker
Scott Tunbridge Nugal Biik Plants and Seeds Nursery Manager
Serdar Tackiran Youth Volunteer Project Worker
Sharna Brown Cultural Lead
Shawn Lee COO
Sonali Sehgal Jobs Victoria Advocates Assistant/ Jobs Victoria Advocate
Steve Crennan Warehouse 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
Vincenzo D'Agostino RMAA Trainer

Women in Work – Childcare Workers
 Ahlam Mina
 Lina Salem
 Maysoun Elia
 Mohsin Ghulam
 Rachel Kori
 Rasha Komar
 Ruqaya Jabbar

Health Navigators
 Morteza Fayyazi
 Bassant Gamal
 Nour Hadad
 Salem Mula Al-Dwailah
 Sadeq Hossain Mowahhedi

Driving ED Instructors
 Duraid Nihad
 Irina Galileos
 Yasser Aljawabra
 Zeinab Adelpour

Learn Local Teachers
 Ajith Weerakon
 Elizabeth Clare Foran
 Eromi Anton
 Jason Dalli
 Karen Daking
 Katerina Klimovski
 Kathleen Tants
 Matt Stephenson
 Mina Gebraeel
 Natalie Lim
 Carolin Sabe
 Gavin Jackson
 Hatim Mansour
 Rose Zurina Omar
 Wathsala Yaddheghe

English Teacher
 Tania Stone

Mernda Community House Teachers
 Soo Hoon Chua
 Zoyka Francalanci
 Gnanes Suthaharan
 Maria Ciavarella
 Katrina Naish
 Kathy Robb

50 year History Project
 Susan deJersey

Thank you to those we farewellled including Andrew Mitrovic, Ann Lightowler, Anna Lucci, Binaz Ourabi, Hassan Rasool, Leila Dashti, Linda Rayner, Michelle Newton, Morteza Fayyazi, Nour Haddad, Petre Neskovski, Prakriti Jnawali, Saada Mohammed, Sadeq Mowahhedi, Salem Al-Dwailah, Sasha Ramos, Shane Kaluza, Yasser Qaso and Ziane Ramadan.

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

- AFL
- Al Siraat Secondary College
- AMES
- ANZ
- Ashley Park Primary School
- Baseline
- Banyule Community Health
- Big Group Hug
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre
- Cabrini Outreach
- Cancer Council Victoria
- Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY)
- Centre for Participation Horsham
- CERES
- CFA Wollert
- City of Whittlesea
- Community Grocer
- Community Information and Support Victoria (CisVIC)
- Creeds Farm Living and Learning
- Cricket Victoria
- Cube Sports
- DPV Health Limited
- Edgars Creek Primary School
- Edgars Creek Secondary College
- Encompass Care
- Epping Cricket Club
- Epping Secondary College
- Fareshare
- FoodINC
- Football Australia
- Football Victoria
- Foundation House
- Friends of Grasslands
- Haven Home Safe
- Home Ground Real Estate
- Hope Street
- Housing Choices Australia
- Hume Grammar Anglican Primary School
- Hume Whittlesea LLEN
- InTouch - Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence
- JewishCare Victoria
- KidsFirst
- Kinglake Neighbourhood House
- La Trobe University Law School
- Lalor Landcare
- Lalor Living and Learning Centre
- Lalor Secondary College
- Launch Housing
- Lendlease (Aurora)
- Marymede Secondary College
- Melbourne North Food Group
- Melbourne Polytechnic
- Melbourne Victory Football Club
- Merri Creek Management Committee
- Merri Outreach Support Services (MOSS)
- Mill Park Leisure
- Mill Park Secondary College
- Multicultural Centre for Women's Health
- Narrap Rangers, Wurundjeri Cultural Heritage Corporation
- Northern Centre for Sexual Assault (NCASA)
- Northern Health
- Northern Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Service – Berry Street
- Northern Pride Netball Association
- Northern School of Autism (Lalor)
- Open Food Network
- Parkers Auto Plus Pty Ltd
- Parks Victoria
- Plenty Valley Lions
- Plenty Valley Retirement Village
- PRACE
- River Plenty College
- Reservoir East Primary School
- Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre
- St Mary's Parish Primary School
- St Monica's College
- Tamil Women's Intercultural Organisation (TWICO)
- The Lakes Secondary College
- The Smith Family
- Trust for Nature- Warreen Beek (Sharna added- 19/06/2023)
- Thomastown Bears Football, Cricket 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
- Volunteering Victoria
- Volunteer West
- Vic Health
- Whittlesea City Basketball Association
- Whittlesea Community House
- Whittlesea FoodShare
- Whittlesea Secondary College
- Women's Property Initiative
- Yarra Plenty Regional Library (Thomastown, Lalor, Mill Park)
- Yarra Valley Water
- Your Community Health
- 3knd radio

We also appreciated the support of our local MP – Andrew Giles (Federal Member for Scullin), Bronwyn Halfpenny (Member for Thomastown), Lily D'Ambrosio (Member for Mill Park) and Lauren Kathage (Member for Yan Yean)

Funding Partners, Donors and Sponsors

Thank you to all the people and groups who generously donated throughout the year. Thank you also to all those clients who supported our community enterprises.

- Alex Haynes
- Andy Grant
- Arilla Retirement Village
- Ashley Park Primary School
- Australian Communities Foundation
- Barbara Jackson
- Bunnings (Epping and Mernda)
- Bupa
- CISVIC Emergency Relief
- City of Whittlesea
- CityLife Church (Lalor)
- CMV Staff Foundation
- Commonwealth Bank (South Morang, Plenty Valley, Epping, Thomastown)
- Connecting Home
- DataSquad Consulting Pty Ltd
- Decathlon
- Dennis Family Corporation
- DPV Health Limited
- Elizabeth & Wilf Thorsen
- Emanuela Savini
- Enjoy Church North
- Equity Trustees Limited
- Federation of Community Legal Centres
- First Nations Traffic Management
- Grace Rose-Miller
- Hanson Construction Materials
- Harry Jenkins
- Honda Foundation
- Jane Schinas
- Kids First Australia
- La Trobe University, Law School
- Amanda Ravaneshi
- Lea Thornton
- Lendlease
- Lendlease Communities (Australia) Ltd
- Liberty Financial (Helen Ryan)
- Lisa Ehrenfried
- Lisa Stoddart
- Mainwest Forklift Service
- Major Roads Victoria
- Melbourne City Mission
- Melbourne Water
- Michelle Cook
- Montmorency Asylum Seekers Support Group (Maria Axarlis-Coulter)
- Natasha Grozdanov
- Neighbourhood Houses Victoria Inc
- Nillumbik Shire Council
- Northern Kia
- NSM Importers & Wholesalers
- Pacific Epping
- Parks Victoria
- Paul Bailey
- Pauline Morrow
- Pets for the Homeless
- Ray Beaton
- Rebecca Haynes and Dennis Bailey
- Rennie Ervinawati's Multicultural Women's Group
- Rotary Club of Bundoora
- Rotary Club of Whittlesea
- Safe and Equal
- Sandhurst Trustee Aurora
- Sandra Scarfe
- Scanlon Foundation
- St Monica's College
- StreetSmart Australia
- Sunshine and Crocodiles Pty Ltd
- Sustainability Victoria
- The Loan Room
- The Queens Fund
- Trio Plumbing
- Uncle Lionell Dukkakis
- Victorian Women's Trust
- Ward Ambler Foundation
- Westpac (Whittlesea)
- Wettenhall Environment Trust
- Yarra Valley Water
- YMCA
- Youth Affairs Council of Victoria



Government 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
- Domestic Violence Victoria
- Family Safety Victoria (FSV)
- Transport Accident Commission (TAC)
- VicHealth
- Victorian Department of Transport and Planning (DTP)
- Victorian Department of Education - Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE)
- Victorian Department of Education – Health, Wellbeing & Specialist Services
- Victorian Department of Environment, Water, Land and Planning (DELWP)
- Victorian 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

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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 finance@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.

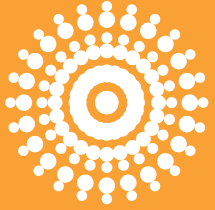
www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au/get-involved/contact-us

Information

whittleseacc.org.au

facebook.com/whittleseacommunityconnections





Whittlesea Community Connections

Making a positive difference everyday



Making
a positive
difference
everyday

Marco Pennacchia standing in front of the mural he created Photo credit: Trapped Photography