



Whittlesea
Community
Connections

Making a positive difference everyday

Annual Report 2025

Grounded in place, and growing impact through partnerships



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.

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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 operate, the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung 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 and Torres Strait Islander people.

Cover Photo: Nour Maqsodi (Children and Youth Volunteer) Photo credit: Courtesy of La Trobe University



Contents

Our Board	4
President’s Report	5
CEO’s Report	6
Place based partnerships creating positive change	8
Strategic Priorities	13
Buy from us and build opportunities	44
Your Voice Matters: Volunteer Feedback Survey 2025	48
Financial Statement	52
The people who make it happen	56
Volunteers	59
Staff who contributed to our success this year	60
The amazing people who support us	63
Get Involved	67



Our Board

Melina Skidmore	President
Richard Schwartz	Treasurer
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Emmanuel Gauci	Member
Ray Rosales	Member
Sandra Natale	Member
Jacqui Gardner	Member
Lando Antonelli	Member
Maggie Arnold	Member

President’s Report



This year has been one of significant transition, resilience and achievement for our organisation.

In April, I was honoured to take on the role of President. I am grateful for the generous guidance and mentorship provided by longstanding Board member and former President, Emmanuel Gauci. His wisdom and deep connection to WCC have been invaluable.

Throughout 2024–25, WCC has continued to deepen its connection to the local community while evolving to meet growing and complex needs. With a clear purpose and place-based approach, we have delivered meaningful programs and services that reflect the lived realities of those we serve.

Guided by the strong leadership of our CEO, Alex Haynes, and supported by our dedicated staff and volunteers, WCC has navigated a challenging social and economic environment with compassion and innovation. I’ve been fortunate to meet many of our people and am constantly inspired by their warmth, professionalism and commitment to social justice.

This year, we have seen long-term projects reach exciting stages of implementation. The Food Collective continues to expand its reach providing not only essential support to families, but also creating opportunities for skills development, training and local leadership. Likewise, the Wollert Community Farm, is a testament to the power of community-led planning, strong partnerships and patient, persistent effort.

Both initiatives are part of a broader commitment to social enterprise, a vital and growing area of WCC’s work. These are powerful examples of what can be achieved when local knowledge, community leadership and strong partnerships come together.

I extend my sincere thanks to our Board, partners, volunteers and staff. Together, we are strengthening our foundations, investing in local leadership and growing enduring solutions from the ground up.

As an organisation, we remain in a stable and responsible financial position, as confirmed by our audited financial statements. This enables us to focus on what matters most responding to need, championing inclusion and building long-term, locally driven solutions.

Looking ahead, WCC is charting an exciting path forward one defined by innovation, collaboration and a fierce commitment to justice. I am honoured to be part of this journey and to serve an organisation that continues to be such a vital part of the Whittlesea community.



MELINA SKIDMORE
President, Whittlesea Community Connections

CEO's Report

They come around so quickly these annual reports! This year, like the seven before it, has been full of amazing individual contributions, personal triumphs of staff, volunteers, students and clients, strengthened and respectful partnerships and significant funder support. Combined this has enabled substantial collective impact across our five strategic priorities.

It has been a pleasure to witness the benefits of WCC's natural aptitude for, and significant investment in, collaboration and partnerships. After six years of working with Yarra Valley Water we moved into our new Wollert Community Farm, home to nugal biik plants and seeds and nugal biik rangers. Together we have created a regional community asset that demonstrates how to build social and environmental value from buffer land using recycled water and green energy, combined with community ideas and energy. And with new funding from the Australian Government, it is set to grow again next year.

Whittlesea Climate Action Network has flourished and demonstrates how much insight, expertise and energy there is in the communities across our region. With an idea from Mernda Neighbourhood House, some seed funding from Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation and commitment from community leaders this network has grown quickly and purposefully.

We have really seen the impact of our focus on building meaningful employment pathways for people experiencing significant barriers to employment. Working with both job seekers and local employers we are contributing to a more inclusive employment landscape across our region.

This year, with support from Jobs Victoria and Department of Home Affairs, WCC worked with more than 420 jobseekers to secure and maintain employment across Hume and Whittlesea LGA's along with supporting 400 refugees with low English and to be job ready with 55 now in employment or self-employed.

Our multi-faceted partnership with Melbourne Polytechnic enabled us to launch the Food Collective Café, and catering social enterprise in July 2024 and launch our fruit and vegetable wholesaling in September 2025. All this enterprising activity creates training and employment pathways for people experiencing barriers to work alongside making healthy culturally appropriate food more accessible and over the longer term, building a more equitable regional food system.

We started working with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations in October 2024 to deliver Parent Pathways, a voluntary program supporting parents with a child under 6 years old. This required a significant uplift in our systems and technologies which has created the opportunity to really set the standard for service delivery, privacy, compliance and security.

It also gives us an opportunity to influence how programs and policies are shaped amongst the significant employment services reform agenda of the Australian Government.

It's a great privilege to lead this group of passionate and caring people and to help grow WCC as a strong, agile, confident, and fiercely independent community organisation. Everyone at WCC has worked hard to be equipped to tackle what is ahead. We will continue to be creative and brave, so WCC remains a local force for positive change for individuals, families and communities across the outer north.

Thank you for all your support and encouragement.



ALEX HAYNES
CEO, Whittlesea Community Connections



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After six years of working with Yarra Valley Water we moved into our new Wollert Community Farm, home to nugal biik plants and seeds and nugal biik rangers. Together we have created a regional community asset that demonstrates how to build social and environmental value.

Place based partnerships creating positive change

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 are proud of our agility and responsiveness but we know we can have the greatest impact when we work with others to identify gaps, design responses and advocate for change.



Melbourne Polytechnic and WCC's Food Collective Café and Catering, Learn Local and Settlement

In July 2024, we launched our Food Collective Café and Catering social enterprise. Located at Melbourne Polytechnic's Epping campus, the Food Collective serves up delicious food and exceptionally good coffee daily.

It is also a supportive training environment for young people and people from migrant and refugee backgrounds who are experiencing barriers to employment. Our model prioritises on-the-job training and individualised support from an employment mentor to build transferable employability skills and help people find a job. In our first year we supported 42 trainees and created 10 employment opportunities.

“

My experience of working in partnership with WCC staff and volunteers in a variety of projects and on-going initiatives over the years, has always been one of shared commitment; where all contributions of time, expertise and resources are valued and trusted leading to meaningful collaboration that has a genuine impact on the lives of the individuals, families and communities we seek to support and accompany.

CAROLE PONDEVIE-LAY, COMMUNITY LIAISON AND ENGAGEMENT MANAGER
MELBOURNE POLYTECHNIC

Learn Local and Settlement

Being on Epping campus we have the opportunity to work with Hume Whittlesea Local Learning and Employment Network, Whittlesea Tech School and Pavilion School and be part of the new Secondary Schools Precinct.

“

The staff at Whittlesea Community Connections are deeply committed to supporting disadvantaged individuals, delivering essential services with compassion and purpose. By working in partnership with like-minded organisations, they extend their reach and deepen their impact. Whittlesea Community Connections strengthen community connections, enhance health and wellbeing, open up pathways to training and employment in the hospitality sector, and provide vital food relief to households in need. Their work is reflected not only in the services they deliver, but in the lives they transform and the sense of hope they help restore across Whittlesea community.

MELBOURNE POLYTECHNIC

Place-based and community-led anti-racism support in Whittlesea – Victoria University, WCC and the Whittlesea Anti-Racism Support Network

Racism remains a big challenge across Australia and Victoria, and it continues to affect many people from various communities also in Whittlesea. We know that too often they find it difficult to speak out against it and to seek support after experiencing racism. A 2022 Victoria University study found, for example, that 59% of surveyed residents in Whittlesea had experienced racism in the past 12 months but only 17% had ever reported racism.

As part of this Victoria University study, local communities affected by racism also shared their views on what needs to happen to improve anti-racism support and to encourage more people to speak out. One central demand was to develop local, community-led anti-racism support services.

“

There should be some kind of community-organised [service] where we can have this discussion about racism, the effects, where to go, what actions to take if anything happens.

WHITTLESEA RESIDENT

In responses to this community feedback, Whittlesea Community Connections set up the **Whittlesea Anti-Racism Support Network** in 2022, together with local organisations committed to addressing racism and discrimination in Whittlesea.

Whittlesea Community Connections has now received funding to take part in a 12-month pilot project, coordinated by Victoria University, to further develop the anti-racism network and strengthen local support services for those experiencing racism and/or racial or religious vilification.

Whittlesea Community Connections, together with Victoria University, are engaging with network member organisation's and other grassroots communities and stakeholders to build and promote more accessible community-led anti-racism support services in Whittlesea, where everyone who faces racism can report and access basic information, support and referral services. The Whittlesea Anti-Racism Network is one of three local anti-racism networks that work together, the other two operate in Wyndham and Melbourne's southeast.

“

In my role as project team leader at Victoria University, I’ve had the privilege of collaborating closely with Whittlesea Community Connections since 2021 to strengthen local community-led support services for people who experience racism. This work would not have been possible without the enormous extent and depth of WCC’s engagement and relationships of trust with local communities. From the beginning I have been impressed by WCC’s consistent capacity to combine their professionalism and expertise with deep empathy and care for the communities, and how this has been consistently translated into programs and projects with real impact on the lives of local communities.”

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DR. MARIO PEUCKER

Local schools enabling WCC to create opportunities for young people to build confidence, connection and skills

Reservoir East Primary and Reservoir Secondary and WCC’s nugal biik mini and junior ranger program

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My son came home, so happy about the excursion on planting trees. He was telling me how Aunty taught him about different plants and trees, including which ones he can eat and how to look after them. He enjoyed it and said that he couldn’t wait to go back on country with Aunty.”

PARENT OF A NUGAL BIIK MINI RANGER

“

Having successfully implemented this program for over a year now, I can attest to its remarkable success in empowering both our First Nations and non-indigenous students and fostering a deeper connection to our shared First Nations culture, language, and community. Through immersive on-Country learning experiences, our students have had the opportunity to engage with their education in a manner that is both meaningful and authentic.

The outcomes of our program have been nothing short of transformative. Students have demonstrated a heightened sense of connection and pride in their Aboriginal heritage, which has translated into improved academic performance and overall well-being. By bridging classroom learning with real-world experiences, we have witnessed a remarkable increase in student engagement and academic outcomes.

The decision to conduct the Junior Rangers program on-country has been particularly impactful. This approach not only allows students to deepen their understanding of traditional land management practices but also fosters a profound appreciation for environmental stewardship. Such experiences align closely with our curriculum’s emphasis on caring for country and have become integral to our educational approach.”

JAMES CUMMING, PRINCIPAL

Play Our Way – (*Funded by the Department of Health and Aged Care, Office for Sport*) Working in partnership with local schools and clubs, we introduced, Play Our Way, a national initiative that makes sport safer, more inclusive and more accessible for young women aged 12 to 25. Together we create spaces where young women from diverse backgrounds can participate in team sports. This program offer young women a space to build confidence, express a desire to play and create meaningful connections.

Rainbow Group (*Funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing*) is a peer support group for young people who identify as part of the LGBTIQA+ community. Based at a local secondary school in a multicultural community, participants navigate a range of social and family complexities. Group activities are educational, informative and engaging to support better mental health and wellbeing. This year the Rainbow Group expanded to several other secondary schools to form the Northern Rainbow Collective.

Young people and volunteers

With support from the Department of Social Services through the Strong and Resilient Communities (SARC) funding from 2022 to 2024, the Volunteer Resource Service partnered with eight schools and approximately 15 local volunteer-involving organisations to increase young people’s understanding of how volunteering can support their general wellbeing, study and employment pathways. Around 250 plus young people participated in hands-on volunteer activities, including gardening, food relief, painting and beautifying neighbourhood houses, providing social support to the elderly, and participating in community clean-up initiatives. Young participants shared that they enjoyed working as part of a team, developed leadership skills and valued the opportunity to give back to their community. Volunteer-involving organisations were also supported throughout the project. We assisted them in developing risk management plans, delivered training on engaging effectively with young people, and provided guidance on becoming more child-safe. As a result, both teachers and organisations reported feeling more confident and prepared to welcome young people into volunteer roles. Some young participants went on to formally register as volunteers after school hours, while others began exploring volunteering opportunities that could support their work and study goals.

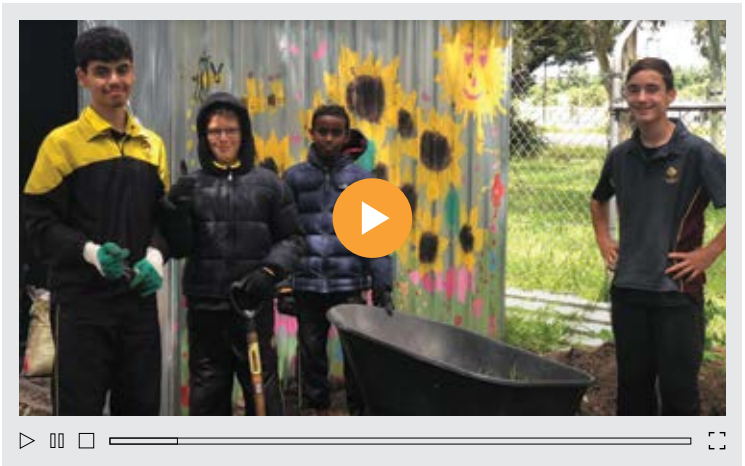
Overall, the project was a great success as local organisations expanded and diversified their volunteer base, and young people gained practical experience and a deeper understanding of the value and impact of volunteering.

“

...one of the benefits of volunteering is the variety of people I’ve been able to meet. Helping out the school program has enabled me to meet individuals who come from different cultural backgrounds, upbringings and beliefs that are different to mine which has allowed me to gain different perspectives and understanding. It’s also really refreshing being around children who are constantly cheerful, chatting and more importantly excited about things that most people who are older would find normal or boring...being surrounded by this energy enables me to find the joy in little mundane things, get to enjoy myself and reduce the stress that I feel from other aspects of my life.”

MARIA

Creating Volunteer Partnerships



Scan QR code to watch video

www.youtube.com/watch?v=4d5kmWUJLWk

La Trobe University and WCC enabling student success and creating pathways

WCC has a firm commitment to student opportunities and pathways within the organisation. We believe secondary and tertiary, local and international students have much to contribute and extend the awareness and reach of our services in the local community. Student placements and pathways enrich student learning outcomes and support work readiness skills. WCC offers students the opportunity to apply the theory and skills they have gained while studying in a professional workplace setting. This opportunity supports the student learning experience and increases the number of work ready graduates.

We have partnered with La Trobe University Law School for almost a decade. Last year more than 100 law students assisted clients through the Wills, Civil Actions and Divorce clinics.

“

La Trobe Law School’s partnership with Whittlesea Community Connections is an integral part of our practical approach to developing tomorrow’s lawyers. With a focus on social justice at the heart of our law school, the work La Trobe students do in WCC’s legal clinics offers an authentic experience of law and justice. Students learn through meaningful work with clients who are experiencing a range of legal problems, applying the academic knowledge they learn at law school in a real world setting. Feedback from our students on their experience at WCC is extremely positive, and invariably there is appreciation for the support and guidance they receive from WCCs legal staff. Thank you WCC for making our students so welcome and for your contribution to their development as ethical and justice focused future lawyers.”

MADELEINE DUPUCHE, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING DIRECTOR AND AUSTRALIAN LEGAL PRACTITIONER

“

I have gained experience in interviewing clients that have experienced trauma and abuse. The placement has helped me develop my active listening to be able to support the client and create a safe environment for them.”

LAW CLINIC STUDENT

Alexandra Ashmore's journey at law clinic, WCC in partnership with La Trobe Law School, 2024



Scan QR code to watch video

www.youtube.com/watch?v=NIR522uPEaM

Encouraged by the success of our partnership with La Trobe University we now have a range of disciplines including social work, marketing, conservation and land management and cyber security students working with us.

“

Our placement program with Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC) is proving a great success. At La Trobe University, we are dedicated to enhancing the employability of our graduates, and industry placements play a crucial role in achieving this goal. Our students thoroughly enjoy their experiences at WCC, where they feel welcomed and supported by the whole team. They engage in meaningful work and can clearly see the real-world impact of their contributions.

During my visits, students consistently express their appreciation for the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge in a practical setting. Thank you WCC, for offering such a diverse range of placement opportunities each semester, allowing our students to contribute meaningfully while enhancing their employability.”

GINA PEDERICK – MANAGER, LA TROBE TALENT

We also hosted 25 Social Work students from Federation University and RMIT who successfully completed their 500-hour field education placements across various Community Help programs. In total, these students contributed an estimated 12,500 hours of valuable service, gaining experience while supporting our work and expanding our capacity to assist the community.

In 2024, WCC trialed a one- year student graduate paid position within the Whittlesea Community Legal Service to attract talent and support alternative pathways into employment within the organisation. The graduate program aimed to support law graduates while attaining a full practising certificate. This led to the successful attainment of a full practicing certificate and employment post placement with WCC. WCC have extended the graduate program with 4 current positions.

Our partnership with La Trobe University also includes participation in the Northern Suburbs Study Hub Advisory Group, which provides strategic advice on the direction and local priorities of the Northern Study Hub. Located in Broadmeadows and Epping the Study Hubs are dedicated study spaces for tertiary students with free and safe access to technology, academic and learning support.

Local providers supporting each other – Whittlesea Emergency Relief network

Th collaboration across the network has led to significant improvements in coordination, resource sharing and service delivery across the emergency relief sector in our region. Regular quarterly meetings, guest speakers, and sector updates have increased participants’ knowledge of available supports, strengthened partnerships and enhanced referral practices.

“

I just want to express how deeply appreciative I am of the incredible work and unwavering support of the WCC team. Working alongside Ginette and the team has been an absolute privilege, they are consistently professional, compassionate, and collaborative in every interaction. Their commitment to supporting both clients and colleagues is truly inspiring. It’s organisations like WCC that make you proud to be part of this sector and remind you why you stay in this line of work. The connections, the teamwork, and the shared values make a real difference, not only to those we support but also to those of us lucky enough to work alongside them. Thank you, WCC, for everything you do.”

EMERGENCY RELIEF NETWORK MEMBER

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.

WOMEN ACHIEVE
EQUITABLE LIFE
OUTCOMES AND ARE
SAFE FROM VIOLENCE

Strategic Priority

1

Gender Equity Theory of Change

PROBLEM:

New arrival migrant, refugee and multicultural communities in Whittlesea experience additional difficulties identifying family violence and accessing the right supports due to barriers such as language, culture, racism and limited support networks in a new community. Multicultural women are further disadvantaged by other intersectional factors including gender diverse/ LGBTQIA+, living with a disability, low social economic, poor transport and age.

ACTIVITIES:



OUTCOMES:

INCREASED



IMPACT:



Women achieve equitable life outcomes and are safe from violence



whittleseacc.org.au



Culturally responsive and community-led transforming family violence (FV) responses are the fundamental principles and practices in strengthening our FV prevention interventions. More than 1,000 women living in Melbourne's outer northern region directly benefit from and contribute to the success of this strategic priority.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Women's Employment

Redefining Women's Work connected with 243 women aged 15 to 55 living in Hume and Whittlesea. Women actively engaged in practical workshops that built their confidence and everyday skills in areas often seen as male-dominated, like car maintenance and wiring — challenging gender norms through hands-on learning.

2. MARAM Alignment

The Berry Street Family Violence Service Practitioner has been embedded within WCC building our capability to identify and respond to family violence and support women victim survivors to connect to specialist family violence services. Berry Street provides secondary consultations to staff and supports community to access family violence services where there are additional barriers.

3. Prevention & Partnership Projects

Multicultural Women's Driving Program

The Multicultural Women's Driving Program continues to support vulnerable women, particularly those who have experienced or are at risk of family violence. In the past year alone, the program has empowered over 120 women. Obtaining a driver's licence is a crucial step towards independence, enabling access to essential services, employment, education and volunteering opportunities. Beyond mobility, the program fosters social inclusion and community connection, contributing to improved mental health and a stronger sense of safety. By supporting women and, by extension, their children the program has created lasting positive change, enhancing participants' confidence, autonomy and overall wellbeing.



Safe Journeys Health Justice Partnership

The Safe Journeys Project is a health justice partnership between Whittlesea Maternal and Child Service (MCH) and Whittlesea Community Legal Service. The project directly linked a FV lawyer and project worker with MCH nurses to provide wrap-around legal support in FV, family law, VOCAT and intervention orders. As a result of this project 42 services were opened for women experiencing or at risk of family violence. This is in addition to 161 women assisted with specific family violence matters through the legal service. Many had experienced violence over many years, beginning before and in the early stages of pregnancy. The Legal Service will continue to build on this work and ensure that women get the support they need early by building on our partnerships with local health services.

Work in this strategic priority is built around partnerships. We have partnered with InTouch over the last 15 years, most recently in our Integrated Family Violence System project.



Whittlesea Community Connections has demonstrated a strong commitment to building connected, informed, and resilient communities through the delivery of community forums focused on a range of social issues and capacity-building training. These community platforms provided safe spaces for community members to come together, share lived experiences and strengthen their understanding of key issues impacting their wellbeing and inclusion. It also provided an opportunity to network with other service providers.

In collaboration with WCC, InTouch partnered with multi-cultural community group who were deeply rooted in cultural understanding and were designed in consultation with longstanding community members who were not only participants but active contributors to shaping the support offered. The initiative of working together with the WCC was characterized by genuine community partnership, cultural responsiveness, and a shared commitment to healing.

Local workers with deep community ties played an essential role in facilitating trust, promoting the groups, and ensuring the delivery was culturally safe and inclusive. Their long-standing engagement made them natural champions of the program, consistently demonstrating a willingness to support, promote, and advocate for the emotional wellbeing of their communities.

This collaborative approach fostered stronger cross-sector relationships, empowered local leaders, and supported culturally meaningful healing and recovery for communities impacted by family violence, migration stress, and systemic barriers.

The WCC and InTouch partnership is well-supported by a diverse and accessible community infrastructure that fosters connection, inclusion, and wellbeing."

INTOUCH



Case Study: United Force of Community Leaders Group conveying culturally responsive Family Violence key messages

The Community Leaders Group (CLG) informs and supports WCC to develop culturally responsive family violence prevention initiatives. The CLG builds relationships between WCC, family violence services and Whittlesea’s multicultural communities as well as social connections between women from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Through the Working Together project, the CLG are co-developing culturally safe messaging and culturally appropriate communication strategies to address fear and misinformation related to migration status and child protection. The CLG support multicultural women to better understand their rights and available support services and challenge gender norms while respecting cultural values. The CLG have transformed local family violence prevention initiatives.



4. Family Violence Network

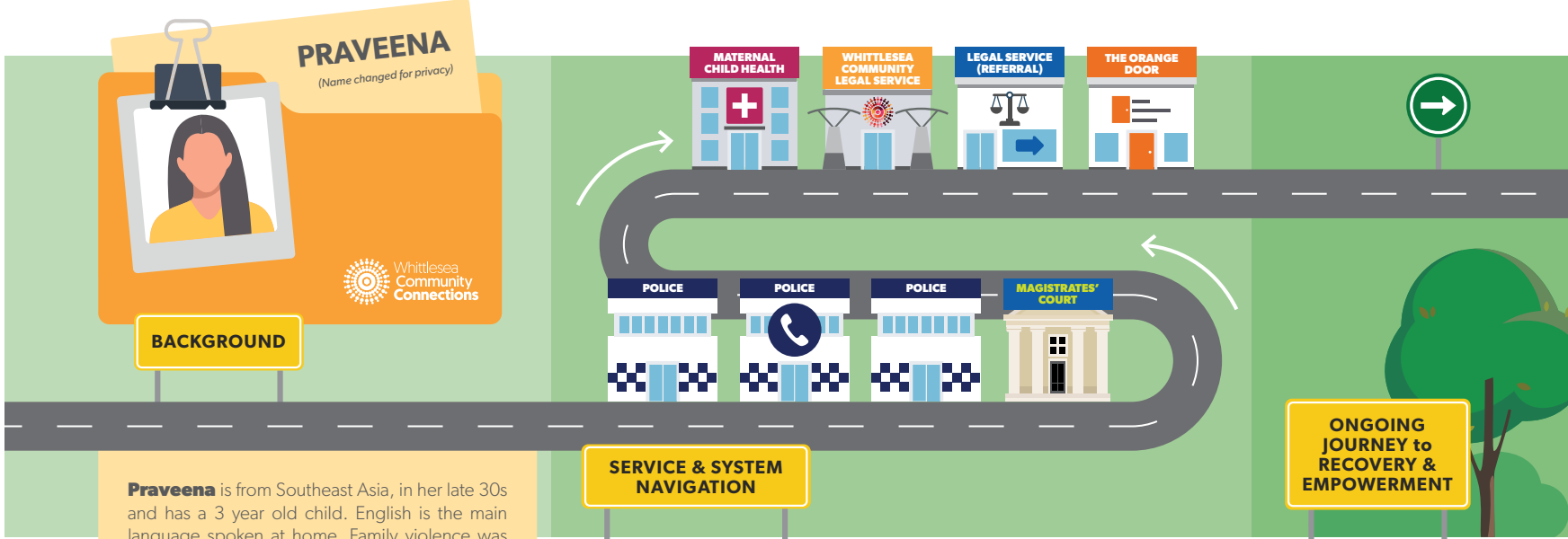
The Whittlesea Family Violence Network (WFCV) is a voluntary alliance of 35+ services, community organisations and government that are committed to the alleviation of family violence in the City of Whittlesea.

The WFCV provides a space for community education and development, coordination of services and building knowledge and capacity of local work force.

Women victim-survivors participated in in-depth interviews to help identify challenges accessing help across different services systems. These journey maps have helped us advocate for system change to improve women and children’s safety and life outcomes.



Journey Map



Praveena is from Southeast Asia, in her late 30s and has a 3 year old child. English is the main language spoken at home. Family violence was present from the outset.

Praveena’s journey began five months into the relationship when a limited Intervention Order (IVO) was put in place.

She stayed in the relationship because he told her it was her fault, she provoked him. She blamed herself. Her family did not understand due to her cultural background. Praveena felt stuck, isolated and trapped in an abusive relationship.

Praveena fell pregnant during COVID. Straight after falling pregnant, she married her partner – driven more by circumstance than by choice. The violence stopped for a few months. Then she faced significant challenges. She had no local support, her entire family was overseas, and she became increasingly reliant on her husband. After giving birth, he was initially supportive, then the violence resumed. He became increasing controlling, absent, volatile and threatened to kill her and the baby. Cultural expectations and family pressure made it difficult for her to consider other options. One day he walked out, but the violence and threats continued.

Praveena’s experience with police was poor. She reported breaches to the police, they were not consistent in updating her on her matter, she was given a wrong hearing date and not informed when a hearing was adjourned. Once, Praveena waited 4 hours with her toddler to give a statement. Overall, she found it difficult to seek police assistance. When Praveena attended one station she was told they could not assist as they did not have a family violence unit. She called another station who told her to go to a station with a family violence unit. She felt passed around like a number and the only way to be taken seriously is when someone kills you. When she was able to seek assistance for an IVO, it took 4 days for the police to serve it because her husband could not be found. During this time Praveena was told the IVO was not yet in place and instructed to stay somewhere safe with the child. On another occasion her husband broke into the house. He told her he knew where she was. It took days for the police to act. An IVO is in place.

The referral from a Maternal Child Health (MCH) social worker to Whittlesea Community Legal Service (WCLS) was good. It was easy to get an appointment. She reported that she felt culturally safe, represented as a woman and understood in relation to her culture and background. She was, however, unable to receive legal support about property rights due to WCLS’s limited casework guidelines. Praveena cannot afford a private lawyer, and her frustration lies with the system legal costs – she has no financial assistance even with child support. But trust with WCLS lawyers helped her engage with the legal system.

Praveena received support from The Orange Door and received the Escaping Family Violence Payment to move house.

Praveena is still navigating family law matters and safety risks. She hopes to apply to extend the IVO when it expires and requires further legal help.

Praveena joined healing circles and art therapy sessions which have provided her with a strong peer network.

“Praveena cannot afford private legal services and is frustrated with system legal costs for the missing middle.”

YOUNG PEOPLE
HAVE A SENSE OF
BELONGING & VOICE
IN THEIR COMMUNITY

Strategic Priority

2

Youth Theory of Change

PROBLEM:

Young people who experience social and economic disadvantage and intersectional identities have inequitable opportunities to participate in community impacting on life outcomes.

ACTIVITIES:



OUTCOMES:

INCREASED



IMPACT:



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



In FY25, our team focused on delivering initiatives that responded directly to gaps identified by young people, schools and families in our region. Our work supports wellbeing, connection, leadership and safety. It is diverse but connected by the belief that young people deserve to feel both seen and supported.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Group Work

The Rainbow Group supports LGBTQIA+ young people with multicultural backgrounds to connect in a safe space, explore and celebrate their inter-sectional identities. This year we expanded the Group to the Rainbow Collective increasing the number of schools and young people we work with as well as building connections between different schools to expand young people’s networks across the community. The Rainbow Collective is peer led by LGBTQIA+ multicultural young people and for some is the only space where they can express themselves. We continue to strengthen and increase access to safe spaces for identity, connection and advocacy, so that young people build networks of safety and empowerment.

2. Youth Advisory Group

The LOT (Leaders of Tomorrow) established in 2018 stepped into a new chapter of leadership. Operating independently and sustainably, they launched their SAY priorities: racial equity, climate action and tech empowerment. These priorities will influence WCC’s broader youth engagement and provide young people a voice and sense of belonging in community.

3. Community Information, Education & Casework

Building on the foundations within the community legal sector and our relationships with local schools we developed a Lawyer in Schools program. WCC’s Youth Lawyer delivered 17 community legal education sessions on topics such as social media, consent, police powers and illicit substances. Participating schools included The Y, Epping Secondary and the Pavillion, increasing safe access to legal assistance for young people. We look to formalising these partnerships next year to ensure we continue to identify and respond to the needs of young people who need it most.

Case Study: Annam’s Journey with the L2P Program

Annam Rashid joined the L2P program in 2024. Annam was matched with a dedicated L2P mentor, Louisa, who played a key role in her learning experience. Louisa tailored driving lessons to Annam’s interests, particularly her passion for photography. They explored scenic locations in Melbourne, making lessons both educational and enjoyable.

“We talked about my interests, and she would take me on drives. I like photography, so she would try to take me to areas ideal for it. During our breaks, we would talk about the scenery and the history of Melbourne—there were a lot of things I didn’t know, so it was a really great experience.”

As the eldest in her family, obtaining her driver’s licence was a significant milestone, enabling her to support her siblings and improve her family’s mobility. With her father living away and her mother unable to drive, she now plays a crucial role in her family’s transportation needs. She can pick up her younger sister from school and community activities, reducing reliance on public transport. Additionally, cutting down time on her daily commute has given her more time for personal growth and responsibilities.

Being a part of the L2P program, Annam understood the impact of volunteering.

“I would love to be a part of volunteer program as a mentor and just engage with the community. There’s so much you can do to influence a person. During my drives I not only picked up how to be a safe driver, I learned to engage with different kind of situations. It has taught me to be an independent person, because in driving especially when you’re on the road, you’re the one in charge of the car. You’re the one in charge of everyone’s safety around you. It taught me to be more responsible.”

Annam’s journey with the L2P program showcases the transformative impact of structured driving mentorship. Beyond gaining her licence, she built confidence, developed life skills and cultivated a deeper connection with her community. Her experience underscores the importance of personalised mentoring and community-driven initiatives in empowering young drivers.

WCC’s L2P program is funded by TAC and administered by VicRoads.

Client Testimonials:

“

The Youth Worker took over from a mental health program I was getting help from. She always checked in on me and she helped me access sexual health service too. We focused on stuff like my anxiety and emotions while she helped me get in touch with a doctor, she even did a doctor appointment with me over the phone.”

“

I was helped to find a youth group that I connect with based on my interest which is religion. I was able to go on camp with them and I am really feeling welcomed and enjoying. She listened to me.”

“

Dean and his Team genuinely listen and respond to the needs of our students, which has made a real difference. Collaborating with WCC always feels grounded in fairness, inclusion, and making a real impact. WCC’s support of our whole-school initiatives and the timely assistance to vulnerable students and families through tutoring (at the After School Homework Program), legal youth support, and Empower Youth for disengaged young people has been significant.”

LALOR SECONDARY COLLEGE

“

WCC has a strong commitment to listening and responding to the needs of the local community. This responsiveness has allowed us to offer meaningful, targeted support to a diverse range of student groups through a range of programs and groups that have been facilitated through WCC. In particular, the ongoing support for our Rainbow group has been incredible. It’s made it possible to sustain a space for inclusion and connection that may not have otherwise existed.”

EPPING SECONDARY COLLEGE

24 Young People
Received their P plates

17 Community Legal Education
Sessions Tailored to Young People

155 Community Legal
Education Participants



100% respondents
feel that participating in the
Young Women Get Active program
improves access for girls,
young women and women

THERE IS EQUITABLE
ACCESS TO
EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITIES
WITHIN A
SUSTAINABLE
LOCAL ECONOMY

3

Employment Theory of Change

PROBLEM:

Traditional employment models often fail to accommodate individuals facing complex barriers to work, such as language barriers, care responsibilities and limited local experience. These challenges disproportionately affect priority groups, leading to social and economic exclusion. Without targeted pathways many remain excluded from economic participation and opportunities for growth.

ACTIVITIES:



OUTCOMES:

INCREASED



IMPACT:



We help people with local hands-on learning experiences through volunteering, training and our social enterprises, creating pathways to further education, training and employment.

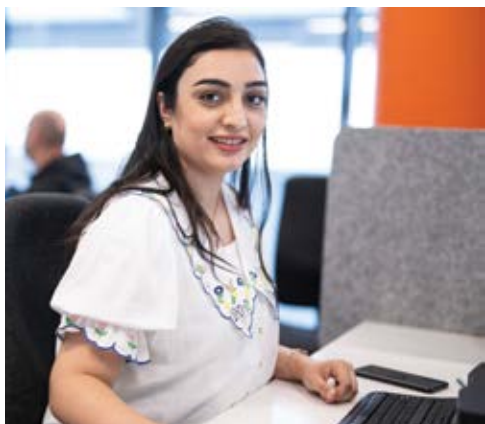
KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Employment Pathways

The Economic Pathways to Refugee Integration (EPRI) Program supported 400 participants, focusing on improving employment outcomes for refugees and humanitarian entrants. Economic participation is essential to successful settlement, and EPRI creates accessible pathways to employment and self-employment for individuals with low skill levels and limited English proficiency. EPRI offers a tailored, hands-on approach that includes:

- employment pathway planning
- foundational skills training
- job-specific skills development
- English as an Additional Language training
- supported work experience and on-the-job training
- paid internships

These supports build confidence, skills, and long-term economic independence.



Rewshen Hussein

Rewshen’s New Beginning in Australia

Rewshen Hussein was born into a Kurdish family in rural Syria. Despite deep roots in her homeland, they were never recognised as citizens, a reality faced by Kurdish communities across Iraq, Turkey and Iran. Even though systematic barriers to education existed, her parents believed fiercely in education. In 2014, she completed a four-year teaching degree, only to lose her graduation records when warplanes bombed her college. With no certificate and mounting danger, her family fled to Iraq, where she married and welcomed two beautiful children. When Rewshen and her family landed in Melbourne in 2023, they carried little more than hope and the weight of their past. She recalls her experience with WCC.

“Everything shifted when I connected with Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC) through the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program and the Economic Pathways to Refugee Integration (EPRI) pilot. With six months of tailored English tuition, individual SETS casework, and guided exploration of study and work options, I went from an uncertain newcomer to an empowered community worker.

When our Australian refugee visa finally came through in 2023, I immediately enrolled in intensive English classes. Same time, my SETS caseworker at WCC, introduced me to the EPRI team who asked me the pivotal question: “What’s next?” The EPRI team open my horizon to several study and work options, including becoming an interpreter. But community services won my heart—a field I’d never imagined but instantly embraced. The EPRI program didn’t just sharpen my language and employability skills; they opened doors to a vocation aligned with my passion for supporting vulnerable refugees. They enabled me to translate and adapt my overseas qualifications to meet workforce shortages in Australia. I learned heaps including how social enterprises supports our local communities.

EPRI fast-tracked my enrolment in the Diploma of Community Services at Melbourne Polytechnic and organised a 200-hour placement. That hands-on experience turned theory into practice: I conducted client assessments, made referrals and coordinated casework under expert mentorship. While many classmates struggled to secure meaningful roles, I thrived in WCC’s supportive, family-like environment. Upon completing my placement, EPRI supported my application for a casual position at WCC, where I now juggle study, work and family life with confidence.

Today, I’m a Kurdish mother of two, a Diploma of Community Services student at Melbourne Polytechnic, and a paid team member at WCC—helping others build their new lives just as I did.”

Rewshen’s story is just one of many. Through SETS and EPRI, we’re not only integrating refugees—we’re empowering future changemakers.

2. Employment Support

Jobs Victoria Mentoring Service

The Jobs Victoria Mentoring Service supported 1260 people living in the City of Hume and surrounding areas who were unemployed for more than twelve months or facing significant employment barriers. We provided a safe and respectful space and customized support to jobseekers and employers.



95% of our clients felt respected and listened to by WCC staff

93% of our clients feel that the information we provided was clear and easy to understand

88% of our clients feel that the WCC staff were able to address their needs in a timely manner

86% of our clients are satisfied with our overall services

Client Feedback:



I would like to appreciate the staff during my placement. They treated me with respect and made me feel that I am important and my opinion is valued. I think that support increased my self-confidence, and pushed me to give more.”

JVMS CLIENT

Parent Pathways

In October 2024, WCC was successful in gaining the Parent Pathways contract for Whittlesea and surrounding areas, the only new and place-based provider in Australia. Parent Pathways is a voluntary program for parents receiving parenting support with a child under the age of six. The program provides financial assistance, individual mentoring and support to access relevant services helping parents achieve their education and employment goals. We deliver Parent Pathways in outreach sites including Reservoir, Epping, Mernda, Doreen and Wallan. In our short time delivering the program we have supported more than 180 parents with food and financial relief, education and training costs, clothing and travel for work.



I’m very pleased that I joined this program. To have someone supporting you in your study and work is very inspiring, also the vouchers and the tablet were very helpful for me.”

PARENT PATHWAYS CLIENT





“

I am really lucky to have this short hospitality course opportunity. I have been looking for this kind of course for a long time.

3. Education & Training

Learn Local – Adult Community and Further Education

Learn Local – Adult Community and Further Education provided high-quality, accessible education that empowers individuals to achieve their personal and professional goals. More than 300 attendees participated in courses including Ready for Hospitality, Introduction to Fashion Sewing, Computer Basics, Digital Essentials, Sewing for Employment, Citizenship Ready, Woodwork and others.

Learn Local plays a crucial role in enhancing social and economic well-being by providing practical skills and fostering a supportive learning environment encouraging participants to pursue further education, employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Our courses are designed to build participants' confidence and independence. Small class sizes and professional, experienced instructors create a relaxed and supportive learning environment.

In addition to Learn Local training we delivered a tailored training program through the Food Collective Café and Catering enterprise.

100%
increase in social skills

100%
satisfaction rate



90% relevance in
helping with industry
employment

“

I am really lucky to have this short hospitality course opportunity. I have been looking for this kind of course for a long time. It covers almost all hospitality courses, which helped me gain experience and confidence in this short period. I know WCC provides many programs for the community and women. Please keep going, preparing more programs for women, especially stay-at-home moms. Finally, I would like to say thank you to my teachers and WCC.”

FOOD COLLECTIVE TRAINEE

Employment outcomes require partnerships

We can only be successful in supporting people into employment if we build trust and strong relationships with employers and funders.

“

From 2022 to 2024 RMA Automotive Australia Pty Ltd was involved in a partnership with Whittlesea Community Connections as part of the Priority Workforce Project, funded by Jobs Victoria. The original aim of the project was to create 50 full time job opportunities for priority job seekers.

The project exceeded this job opportunity target. 117 priority job seekers were placed in employment with RMA Automotive Australia Pty Ltd through the direct support of Whittlesea Community Connections. All priority job seekers were placed into permanent ongoing roles.

From RMA Automotive Australia Pty Ltd's perspective, the project was highly successful; without the support of Whittlesea Community Connections, RMA Automotive Australia would have struggled to meet its workforce needs.

The project also influenced inclusive workforce practices by providing permanent ongoing employment opportunities for women over 45 years, young people under 25 years, people from non English speaking backgrounds, Aboriginal Victorians, people from culturally and linguistically backgrounds, recently arrived migrants, refugees, and the long term unemployed.”

DAVE SMITH, HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES, RMA AUTOMOTIVE AUSTRALIA PTY LTD

“

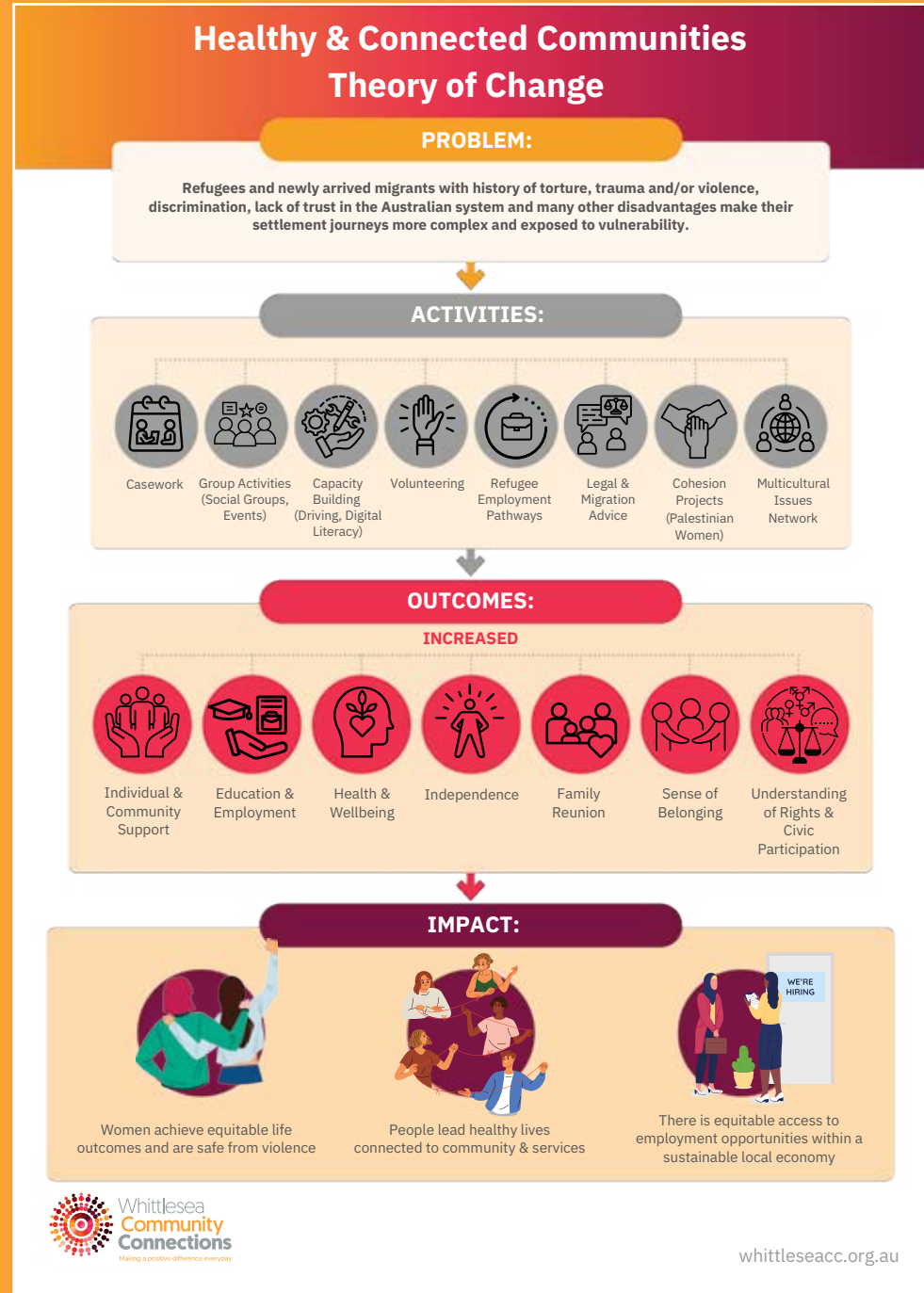
Such a wonderful project delivered by such remarkable mentors all the way through. Thank you for your passion and positivity to provide life changing opportunities to so many in the community. Your work will resonate throughout your community for years to come.”

SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER – EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT,
DEPARTMENT OF JOBS, SKILLS, INDUSTRY AND REGIONS

PEOPLE LEAD HEALTHY LIVES CONNECTED TO COMMUNITY AND SERVICES

Strategic Priority

4



Our services support a diverse range of individuals, families and communities. We deliver culturally appropriate, trauma-informed programs that empower people through volunteering, training, and community engagement. Our committed and diverse employee base reflects and serves as an extension of the varied communities we support. Community connection and inclusion remain at the heart of our work.

Together, we reinforce our role as a healthy and connected community by supporting people to overcome barriers, access essential services, develop skills, and create meaningful pathways to independence. We also respond with compassion to communities affected by global crises. Through these initiatives we strengthen individual wellbeing and build the collective resilience of our local community.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Community Help

Funded by the City of Whittlesea



Over **11,000**
Contact Centre enquiries
responded to

452 Community
Help clinics.
37% of clients were CALD (born
in more than 24 different countries)

95 low-income
earners helped with free Tax Help
that maximised refunds, reduced
financial stress and improved tax
knowledge.

135 Energy Assistance Program
appointments with **90%** of
community members requiring
assistance with energy debt and
hardship support and 81% with
adding or backdating concessions.

Community Help provided information and support to over 12,000 community members through a range of access points including phone, website, outreach and community lunches and clinics delivered in partnership with relevant service organisations.

“

It is really helpful, I used to be stressed about filling out forms in the past. Now I know I can easily walk in when I need such assistance and I even refer many other people to the service.

COMMUNITY HELP CLIENT

The Women’s and Youth Lunch Series promoted social connection and belonging, while empowering women and young people with information and knowledge. Strong engagement with the service sector meant that women were linked directly with over 40 service providers for ongoing support in relation to financial wellbeing, legal rights and health services. The Youth Series, delivered in partnership with Melbourne Polytechnic, engaged young adult migrants in topics of interest including climate change, cyber security, volunteering and social connection/ belonging.

“

I loved the talk by Lawyer Randa on family violence and divorce. It was very informative and valuable. As someone with lived experience, I thought, “I didn’t know any of this back then. I wish I had access to this kind of information when I was going through it.” Even though I can’t change the past, I feel so grateful to have this knowledge now. It makes me feel strong. I will share it with others who are going through a similar experience. I can help someone else by passing on what I have learned. I was pleased to see the variety of services available and the broad range of topics covered. I came with a friend, and we both enjoyed the food and the conversations at our table. It was more than just a lunch.

‘KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AND THE LAW’ WOMEN’S LUNCH PARTICIPANT

2. Legal Help

Funded by National Access to Justice Partnership (Victoria Legal Aid) & Victorian Legal Services Board

In 2024-25 WCLS provided 1,127 legal advice to 909 clients, 26% of all legal services opened in this period were in relation to infringements and fines, debt matters and motor vehicle accidents. In the same period the Civil Actions Clinic succeeded in withdrawing fines and settling debts worth approximately \$322,141. Many of these clients were impacted by other legal issues including family violence.

To help community develop a better understanding of the infringement system in Victoria the Fine Your Way Out board game was designed. The board game, funded by the Victoria Law Foundation and launched during Law Week, supported community legal education in a fun and engaging way.

Fines withdrawn/debt settled
\$322,141



Equivalent to **644** weeks of rent
or **12** years of rent (at \$500 pw);
or **2,147.61** weeks of groceries
or **41** years of groceries (at \$150 pw)



2025 Law Week event attended by City of Whittlesea Mayor Martin Taylor CR and the Hon Andrew Giles MP.



3. Settlement

Funded by Department of Home Affairs, Good Things Foundation and Department of Social Services

The program focused on improving social participation, economic wellbeing, personal independence, overall wellbeing and fostering deeper community connectedness—empowering individuals and families to thrive in Australia.

Community Education & Training

Digital and Cyber Security Programs: Through initiatives such as Digital Sisters, Cyber Security Awareness, and Get Online Week, we supported community to improve digital literacy and build confidence using technology for daily life, study, and employment. Participants gained practical skills using email, navigating online services, and staying in touch with family through social media, ensuring no one is left behind in an increasingly digital world.

Group Work & Capacity Building

Community and Cohesion Support Program (CCSP): More than 1,200 participants benefited from our engagement and social activities this year. FY 2024/25 was marked by strong need and our commitment to strengthen social cohesion and respond to local communities affected by international crises. CCSP was tailored to support children and women from Palestinian, Muslim, and Arab backgrounds at risk of marginalisation. Through individual support, group sessions, and culturally significant events including the Start of Year gathering, Ramadan Iftar, and Harmony Day celebrations, WCC created safe and welcoming spaces for connection, and healing. This has been vital in reducing isolation and building bridges across communities in Whittlesea and Hume.



Through **2,428** sessions and **3,158** attendances this year, our SETS program supported humanitarian entrants and eligible permanent migrants to address their settlement needs and build a strong foundation in their new community.

51 young digital mentors trained to support older Australians

Over **200** CALD participants have increased their digital capacity and are safer online

25 face to face sessions highlighting cyber security delivered in 5 community languages

4. Food Relief & Security

Funded by Department of Social Services

Hardship Help provided critical support to individuals and families experiencing financial hardship, through direct assistance with fresh, nutritious food and partnerships with aligned services including Big Group Hug, Gertz Avenue Pharmacy and the Queens Fund. A dedicated team of 12 volunteers contributed their time with food packing, delivery, gardening and one-on-one assistance for clients navigating financial hardship.

With the support of DFFH, Hardship Help clients were offered delicious food and opportunities to build social networks through fortnightly community lunches at the Food Collective Café.

88 applications for financial assistance approved by the Queens Fund, valued at **\$33,923**, with an average of **\$385** per applicant.

\$2,502.48 in medication costs for people in financial hardship through a new partnership with Gertz Ave Pharmacy

1,846 food packages valued at **\$138,450**

10,382 essential baby and child items distributed to **309** families in partnership with Big Group Hug, providing practical relief to parents and caregivers.


500 toys distributed through a Christmas toy drive in partnership with Emergency Relief Network

5. Volunteer Pathways

Funded by Department of Social Services and City of Whittlesea

Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service builds empowerment and social networks for people seeking volunteering opportunities while also building the capacity of volunteer involving organisations. More than 180 community members were supported to find a suitable volunteering role. This year we delivered a series of information sessions on volunteering in partnership with local organisations including Creed’s Farm, Lalor Neighbourhood House, Hazel Glen College Donnybrook, Sikh Community Connections and Melbourne Polytechnic. We also worked together with volunteer involving organisations, schools, young people and other Volunteer Resource Centres to develop and deliver training and promotion resources supporting youth volunteer engagement.

Two videos were produced to highlight the benefits of volunteering and engage Arabic and Hindi-speaking communities

What motivates you to volunteer? (With Hindi Subtitles)



Scan QR code to watch video

www.youtube.com/watch?v=SUh77EWK3-M

6. Community Transport

Funded by Department of Health

The Community Transport service helps older people access essential health appointments, social support groups and other important points of connection in the community.

AS OUR PARTICIPANTS SAY:

“The service means that I can access transport for my health and medical needs. Transport to essential shopping means that my wife who is a client with the service get to go out which is so very important for her wellbeing. Its not the shopping but the ability to be able to socialise and experience life that makes the service so important. We really love and enjoy the client lunches that you provide and are looking forward to attending the Christmas lunch this year.

“I don’t drive much now and the traffic is really bad. I am very happy with the service the lovely volunteers and staff who are very kind and helpful. We really love being driven every week to and from the hydrotherapy classes by your wonderful volunteer Mari.



11,442 trips over **120,399** kms

18 volunteers and **10,388** driving hours

7. Mernda Neighbourhood House

Funded by Department of Families Fairness and Housing, City of Whittlesea, Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation, Heidelberg Materials and Whittlesea Community Connections

“

Another Year of Connection, Growth, and Impact

This past year has been another wonderful chapter in our journey of meeting, connecting and growing with the community.

We've greatly appreciated the invaluable support of Whittlesea Well being Local in co-delivering Craft, Coffee and Chat social support group and Men's Shed, both of which are helping to foster connection and counter social isolation.



Community Lunches welcomes people from all backgrounds to share healthy food and we thank all the volunteers who set up and cook delicious food for all to enjoy.

We're proud of our 6-year partnership with PRACE, delivering English Conversation. These classes offer a unique window into Mernda's rich cultural diversity, a beautiful example of how language can bring people together.

Community Shed and Sister's Woodwork continue to build woodworking skills and a strong sense of belonging. Recent efforts to transform the coffee room into a more usable space reflect their creativity, care, and commitment. We thank them for their contributions to MNH.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Mernda Uniting Church. Through this valued partnership, we've delivered additional programs, accommodating our growing community. It's an ideal collaboration that reflects the spirit of shared purpose.

Repair Café continues to thrive, helping community keep belongings in use and out of landfill. This initiative supports the circular economy, an important step towards a more sustainable future. We sincerely thank Heidelberg Materials for their sponsorship of Repair Café and our Community Lunch program.

This year, we worked with WCC to establish Whittlesea Climate Action Network. The group is gaining momentum, building strong relationships and engaging the community in climate advocacy and action.

Our Advisory Group has welcomed new members, who together with founding members is working towards incorporation. It's been a long time in the making, and we're excited to reach this milestone. We thank WCC in helping Mernda Neighbourhood House become independent.

We also said a heartfelt goodbye to Koko, Admin and Program Support. Her warmth, friendliness, and welcoming nature left a lasting impression, and we wish her all the very best in her future endeavours.

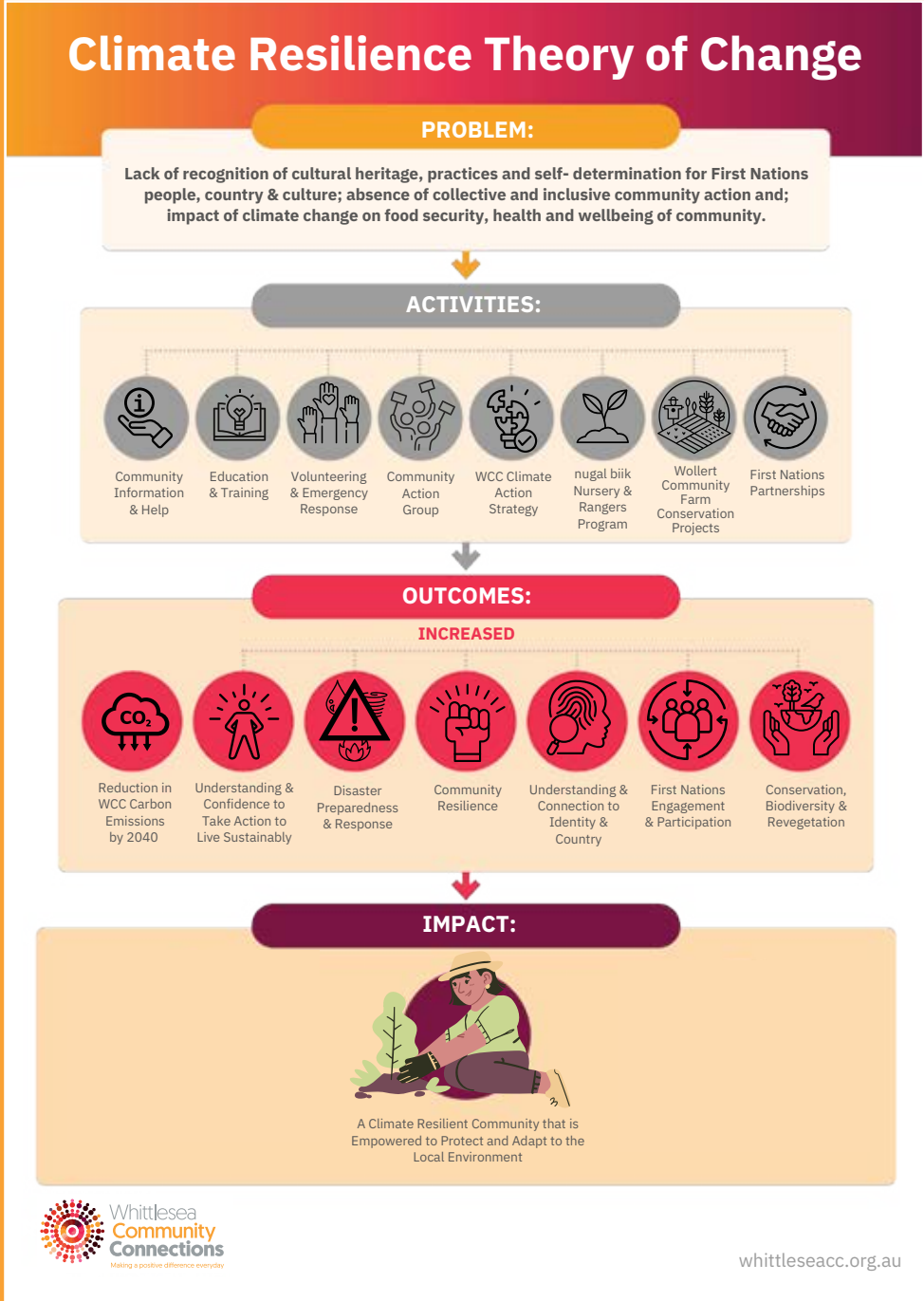
Exciting times lie ahead, and we're grateful to walk this path with our community.



WHITTLESEA
IS RESILIENT
COMMUNITY THAT
IS EMPOWERED TO
PROTECT, PREPARE
AND ADAPT TO A
CHANGING LOCAL
ENVIRONMENT IN
PARTNERSHIP WITH
OUR FIRST NATIONS
AND DIVERSE
COMMUNITIES

Strategic Priority

5



WCC’s activities contribute to the long- term outcome of a climate resilient community that is empowered to protect and adapt to the local environment.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Community Action Group

Whittlesea Climate Action Network (WCAN) increased community knowledge of sustainability, disaster preparedness and response and confidence to participate in climate action initiatives. Through grassroots activities and organisational networking WCAN is building local climate resilience.

WCAN has reached 400+ community members through resilience mapping workshops, community information stalls and climate education sessions. WCAN was involved in local sustainability initiatives including clean-up and community planting days. WCAN has collaborated with Friends of the Earth, Lalor Landcare, Friends of Edgars Creek, Melbourne Arboretum, Melbourne Polytechnic, Leaders of Tomorrow, Thomastown and Mernda Neighbourhood House.

2. Wollert Community Farm & Conservation Projects

Wollert Community Farm is a partnership between Yarra Valley Water and WCC, with many amazing supporters and contributors over the years. This year Wollert Community Farm achieved a momentous milestone moving into completed Stage 1 buildings and greenhouses. With funding for Stage 2 secured building of Wollert Learning Centre is now underway. Once complete the whole site will strengthen opportunities for community connections, learning and engagement with conservation, reconciliation and food growing activities.

This year Wollert Community Farm conservation volunteers contributed more than 1342 hours and planted 1800 plants, helping to revegetate Curly Sedge Creek and the broader site, increasing local water health and local biodiversity.

3. Nugal biik Nursery & Rangers Program

Nugal biik plants and seeds nursery produced an increased number, diversity and cover of native plant species.

This year more than 500 nugal biik mini and junior rangers participated in 20 excursions, connecting First Nations students to country, community and Elders and increasing knowledge of biodiversity and land management within cultural perspectives.

The nugal biik rangers program builds better outcomes through collaboration with First Nations organisations, for example by partnering with Wurundjeri's Narrap rangers on learning and excursion experiences. David Mullins, Narrap Ranger Program Manager, has written "The Junior Rangers Program aligns closely with our goals and values. It presents a unique opportunity for early engagement with young people-especially young First Nations community members-introducing them to pathways in natural resource management and the practice of caring for Country."

“

Whittlesea Community Connections creates spaces where people feel empowered, supported and connected. It's been a true privilege to work alongside WCC to help bring the Wollert Community Farm to life — a place where their vision is growing every day, through the strength of community-action and a shared care for people and the planet.”

TAEGEN HANNAH, MANAGER ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE, YARRA VALLEY WATER

“

I particularly enjoyed working with the nugal biik volunteers during my placement. It was a great chance to meet like-minded people, and I found the volunteer group to be a very welcoming and supportive community. I also really enjoyed planning and running a waterbug sampling session for the volunteers, which was a lot of fun as I was able to share the wonders of waterbugs and teach others what they can tell us about water health!”

HAYLEY PERKINS, WOLLERT COMMUNITY FARM PLACEMENT STUDENT

nugal biik

plants & seeds

Local indigenous plant nursery

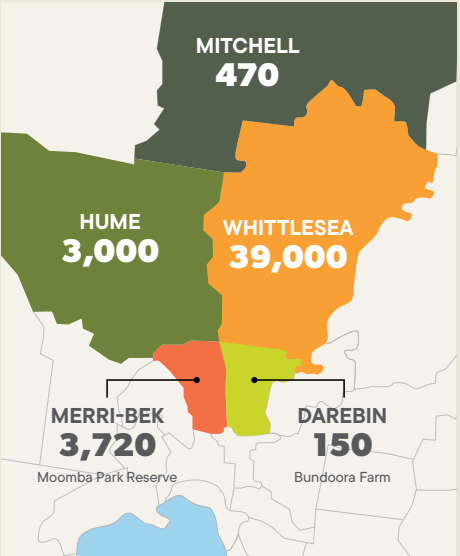
2024-25

Plants sold



46,000+ tubes sold

Number of plants sold in each LGA:



3 Key Sites - Whittlesea

A

30,000

Wollert Landfill

B

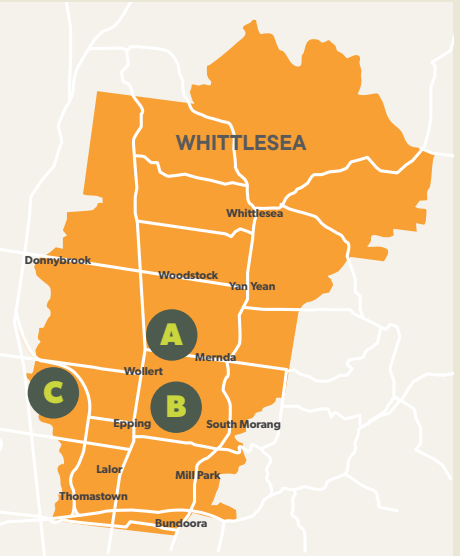
8,000

bunjil nganga Parkland (Quarry Hills)

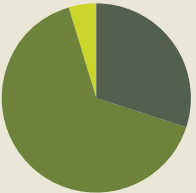
C

1,000

Wollert Community Farm



Purpose



- Greening/biodiversity
- Landfill cap ecology
- Other

Customers

- Local Councils
- Nurseries
- Heidelberg Materials
- Merri Creek Management Committee
- Melbourne Polytechnic
- Sustain Australia



Top 3 Trees

- Drooping Sheoak
- Swamp Gum
- Blackwood



FEATURE



Buy from us and build opportunities

We continue to build a diverse range of enterprises that directly respond to community needs and aspirations. We encourage you to learn more about them and consider buying from us – each enterprise delivers unique social, economic and environmental outcomes.



driverED

driverED is a multilingual, professional driving school operating across the outer northern suburbs of Melbourne.

It provides high quality, low cost, culturally appropriate lessons to learner drivers experiencing barriers to obtaining to their driver licence due to language, income, or a limited understanding of Australia's road laws and regulations.

More than just a driving school, we support migrant and refugee people to start their own business as certified driving instructors, offering real income alongside tailored coaching and support.

1685

Number of lessons delivered 24-25

566

Number of learner drivers

10

Number of instructors



www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au/drivered

Women in Work

Established in 2011, Women in Work provides on demand, flexible mobile childcare for organisations that support parents and families.

With just 48 hours' notice, we can have a vetted, certified and experienced educator deliver tailored childcare in an office, community centre or event, freeing up parents to participate in programs or attend appointments, worry-free.

8

Number of childcare educators employed 24-25

403

Number of childcare hours delivered

707

Number of children cared for



www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au/women-in-work



Food Collective Café and Catering

Located at Melbourne Polytechnic’s Epping campus, the Food Collective Café and Catering social enterprise serves up delicious food and exceptionally good coffee daily.

It is also a supportive training environment for young people and people from migrant and refugee backgrounds who are experiencing barriers to employment.

145

Number of catering orders 24-25

2186

Number of coffees made

42

Number of trainees supported



www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au/collectiveaction/food-collective

nugal biik

plants & seeds

nugal biik plants and seeds

nugal biik plants and seeds is a Wollert based production nursery specialising in indigenous flora of the greater northern region of Melbourne. Our nursery supplies bulk quantities of tube-stock for urban greening and biodiversity projects to wholesale clients such as councils, NRM companies, conservation organisations and land-owning businesses.

Proceeds from nursery operations will help support related nugal biik activities which focus on restoring natural heritage through revegetation and ecological management and facilitating First Nations led initiatives and connection to Country.

46,000+

Plants sold 24-25 (first year of operation)

12

Number of customers

Single biggest customer

Heidelberg Materials



www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au/nugal-biik-plants-and-seeds



Your Voice Matters: Volunteer Feedback Survey 2025

In July-August 2025, we invited our volunteers to share their experiences through a Volunteer Feedback Survey. The survey was designed to help us understand what is working well and where we can improve.

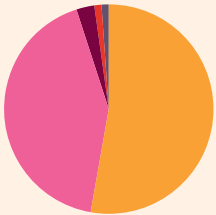
We were delighted to receive 74 responses, reflecting the diverse voices of our volunteer community. The feedback confirmed the many ways in which volunteering at WCC creates meaningful connections, builds skills, and fosters

a sense of belonging. Volunteers also provided thoughtful suggestions on how we can strengthen communication, training, and support.

Volunteering is the cornerstone of WCC, and these insights will guide the ongoing development of our volunteer programme to ensure it remains a rewarding and impactful experience for everyone.

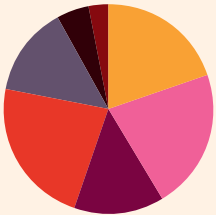
“ Thank you to everyone who provided feedback and to all the people who volunteer to support the communities across our region.

Gender



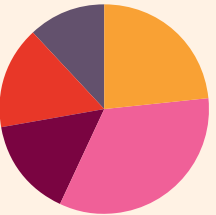
Woman	53%
Man	42%
Prefer to self-describe	3%
Non binary	1%
Prefer not to say	1%

How long have you been volunteering with WCC?



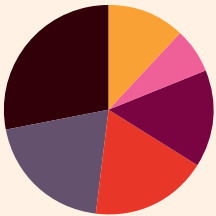
0-6 months	20%
6 months-1 year	22%
1-2 years	14%
2-5 years	23%
5-10 years	14%
10-15 years	5%
15 years or more	3%

What are you hoping to achieve through volunteering?*



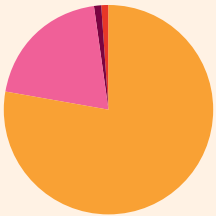
Upgrading my skills	54%
Social Connections	77%
To increase my confidence	35%
To be employment ready	36%
Other	27%

Age



18-24	12%
25-34	7%
35-44	15%
45-54	18%
55-64	20%
65 and older	28%

Overall, how satisfied are you with your experience volunteering with WCC?



Very Satisfied	77%
Satisfied	20%
Neutral	1%
Dissatisfied	1%

96% of our volunteers feels satisfied with the assistance they receive from our staff members

87% of our volunteers feels satisfied with the training they received in WCC

88% of our volunteers feels recognised for their efforts

82% of our volunteers feel satisfied with the range of experiences and opportunities available in WCC

* Respondents were given options to choose multiple responses which applies for them.

What volunteer story or experience are you most proud of?

“ When I helped an old refugee woman to open a Facebook account and connected her to all her grandchildren overseas. Her excitement put tears in my eyes.

“ A lady I taught to drive, went on to start a business driving NDIS clients to appointments.

“ I have been able to use my EAL teaching experience to help three older Chinese ladies, who would otherwise not have been able to stay in the Mernda conversation class. We have a lot of fun and have become good friends.

“ One volunteer experience I’m most proud of is forming meaningful friendships with two wonderful people from the LOT group. We regularly chat outside of volunteering hours, support each other, and deeply appreciate each other’s thoughts, values, and lived experiences. It reminds me that volunteering isn’t just about giving but it’s also about building community and finding people who inspire and uplift you.



Has volunteering changed your perspective on anything, and if so how?

“ Yes, it reminded me how impactful local stories can be in shaping awareness. Working with WCC helped me value storytelling as a form of advocacy and community connection.

“ I have learned how many good people there are in the world and that everyone has a story to tell.

“ Volunteering at WCC has completely shifted my perspective on so many levels—personally, socially, and as a leader. Before I started, I had this idea that making a difference in the community required big gestures or holding formal positions of power. But through my experiences, I’ve realised that real change often starts with small, consistent actions and with people who care enough to step up and support others, even in ways that might seem minor at first. It’s also taught me that leadership isn’t about being the loudest voice in the room or having all the answers—it’s about creating space for others to feel heard, empowering people to step into their own strengths, and working together to achieve something meaningful. I’ve learned how important collaboration, empathy, and active listening are when it comes to bringing people together and building trust in a community. On a personal level, volunteering has helped me grow in confidence and self-awareness. It’s opened my eyes to the diverse challenges and needs within the community, but also to the resilience and strength of the people in it. I’ve come to appreciate how crucial it is to give back in whatever way you can, and how rewarding it is to be part of something bigger than yourself. These lessons have stayed with me not only in my volunteering work but in every area of my life.

“ Absolutely! Volunteering has completely shifted my perspective. It’s helped me feel genuinely involved in my community and connected to something bigger than myself. Through this experience I’ve been able to give back in meaningful ways, learn from others and build strong relationships with people who share similar values. It’s also helped me feel less isolated.

“Volunteering at WCC helps me to...”



“ What motivates me to volunteer at WCC is the opportunity to give back to my community in a meaningful way. Volunteering allows me to not only contribute my time but also my thoughts and ideas toward creating positive change. I’m passionate about working collaboratively with others to address local issues and amplify the voices of underrepresented individuals.

NOUR (CHILDREN AND YOUTH VOLUNTEER)



“ Volunteering has changed my perspective by helping me understand others’ struggles and appreciate what I have. It’s made me more empathetic, grateful, and aware of how small acts of kindness can make a big difference.

MUZNA (COMMUNITY TRANSPORT, VOLUNTEER)



“ I am grateful for the opportunity I have that I can give something to people who don’t have the same opportunities that I had.

PAUL (L2P VOLUNTEER)



“ Volunteer work has inspired me to be more involved and connected to the community through my skills and experience. Volunteering is giving me the opportunity to give back to the community.

SUMITHA (RECEPTION VOLUNTEER)



Financial Statement

Whittlesea community connections inc
ABN: 49 881 724 827

Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income for the Year Ended 30 June 2025

Income

Grants received	7,790,582	7,568,322
Funding received from ACFE Board	78,272	92,170
Donations	13,734	15,782
Interest	98,419	113,933
Service generated income	708,509	363,445
Other revenue	6,350	12,773

Note	2025 \$	2024 \$
	8,695,866	8,166,425

Expenses

Accounting & Book Keeping Fees	28,572	25,100
Advertising and Marketing	37,516	28,295
Audit fees	11,439	11,500
Bank charges	3,543	3,023
Depreciation	132,887	150,727
Loans Forgiven	-	(160)
Interpreting services	4,910	4,730
Information technology	183,773	157,442
Insurance	53,818	3,713
Interest Paid	-	82
Legal Practising Certificate	1,512	2,877
Meeting expenses	1,023	2,400
Motor vehicle expenses	107,523	112,986
Printing and stationery	22,575	37,889
Police & Work With Child Checks	5,049	5,130
Postage & Couriers	4,526	3,695
Program costs	981,441	784,302
Rent and outgoings	245,592	127,460
Repairs & Maintenance	2,620	12,214
Subscriptions/Memberships	16,088	22,212
Sundry expenses	88,456	47,176
Telephone & Internet	51,426	41,188
Volunteer Expenses	5,865	8,600
Wages and related costs	6,574,471	6,570,268

Total expenses

	8,564,625	8,162,849
Operating surplus (deficit) before income tax	131,241	3,576
Income tax expense	-	-
Operating surplus for the year	131,241	3,576
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	131,241	3,576

2(e)	-	-
	131,241	3,576
	-	-
	131,241	3,576

Financial Statement (continued)

Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2025

	Note	2025 \$	2024 \$
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents		3,493,127	2,808,328
Trade receivables		436,889	352,895
Sundry receivables		373,765	74,980
		4,303,781	3,236,203
Non-Current Assets			
Plant and equipment	4	297,432	385,128
Investments		-	60
		297,432	385,188
Total Assets		4,601,213	3,621,391
Current Liabilities			
Trade creditors		138,297	249,669
Sundry creditors and accruals		352,864	284,084
Unearned grants received in advance	5	1,569,442	714,147
Provision for employee entitlements	6	610,386	652,000
		2,670,989	1,899,900
Non-Current Liabilities			
Provision for employee entitlements	6	77,491	77,491
Total Liabilities		2,748,480	1,899,900
Net Assets		1,852,733	1,721,491
Equity			
Accumulated surplus brought forward		1,721,491	1,717,915
Current year surplus		131,242	3,576
Total Equity		1,852,733	1,721,491

Statement of Changes in Equity for the Year Ended 30 June 2025

	Accumulated Surplus \$
Balance as at 1 July 2023	1,717,915
Surplus for the year	3,576
Balance as at 30 June 2024	1,721,491
Surplus for the year	131,242
Balance as at 30 June 2025	1,852,733

Statement of Cash Flows for the Year Ended 30 June 2025

	Note	2025 \$	2024 \$
Cash flows from operating activities			
Receipts from operations		11,788,631	8,524,469
Interest received		98,419	128,473
Cash inflows		11,887,050	8,652,942
Payments to suppliers and employees		(11,153,207)	(8,909,014)
Net operating cash flows	3(b)	733,843	(256,072)
Cash flows from investing activities			
Net payments for plant and equipment		(49,044)	(213,889)
Net investing cash flows		(49,044)	(213,889)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Net (decrease)/increase in cash held		684,799	(469,961)
Cash at the beginning of the financial year		2,808,328	3,278,289
Cash at the end of the financial year		3,493,127	2,808,328

The people who make it happen



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.

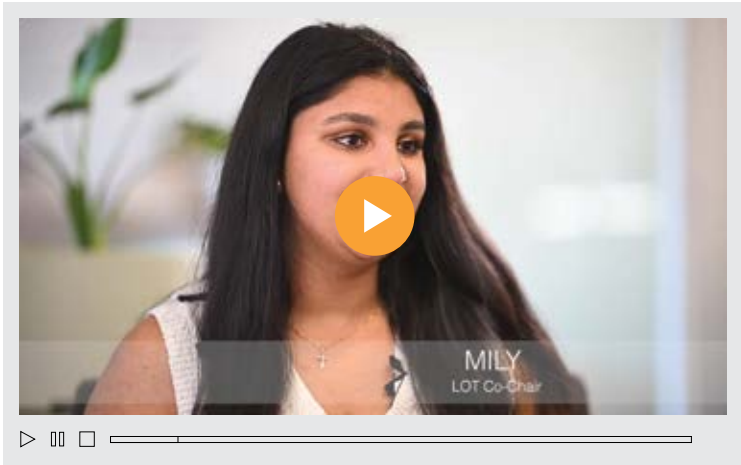
This year is significant as both the LOT and Mernda Neighbourhood House took concrete steps towards independence. The LOT transitioned from being facilitated by WCC to operating with its own governance structure and MNH is well on its way to becoming an independent association. This is very exciting for us to be able to seed networks, programs and groups and support them in ways that enable them to grow and develop.

LOT (Leaders of Tomorrow) – Youth Advisory Group

The LOT are driven by purpose — representing and uplifting youth voices across the City of Whittlesea. From community consultation to advocacy, we are re-shaping a future where no young person is left unheard. Why do we volunteer? We care. We lead. We are the future.

The LOT has been working diligently to advance its 2025 priorities under the SAY initiative - Standing for racial equity,

Acting on climate issues and Youth tech empowerment.



Scan QR code to watch video

www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsPf4Ge_Reg

Mernda Neighbourhood House Advisory Group

- Muhamad Abduh
- Samira Ghasempour (incoming Secretary)
- Carrie Chen
- Krishanthi Liyanage
- Mofi Islam
- Antoinette David (incoming Treasurer)
- Liz Buckley (incoming Chairperson)
- Rev Martin Boutros (incoming Deputy Chairperson)

We would also like to thank Glen O’Brien, Chukwuemerie Agunwah and Soo Chua who have stepped down as members of the Advisory Group.

Women’s Advisory Group (WAG) and Community Leader Working Group (CLWG)

- Amrita Gurung (CLWG, WAG)
- Anojan Raveendran (CLWG)
- Barbara Minuzzo (CLWG, WAG)
- Dixsha Dhar (CLWG)
- Entissar Aasi (CLWG, WAG)
- Hsham Aburghif (CLWG)
- Jamuna Adhikari Rijal (CLWG, WAG)
- Krishanthi Liyanage (CLWG, WAG)
- Manvir Kaur (CLWG, WAG)
- Praveena RajkobaI (CLWG)
- Roslina Maharjan (CLWG)
- Susmita Dhakal (CLWG)

Whittlesea Climate Action Network

- | | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| • Steph Matulin | • Liz Buckley | • Kaynat Virk | • Lea Thornton | • Suneeti Sharma |
| • Rohit taggar | • Krishanthimala Liyanage | • Jeff White | – Friends of Edgars Creek | • Paras Christou |
| • Vidhi Patel | • Kathy McCormick | • Fotini Argyros | • Liz Skitch | • Malcolm Wrest |
| • Shahan Shah Jahejo | • Callum Morgan | • Priyanka Kashkari | • Mustafa Khraim | • Liz Skitch |
| • Lena Matulin | • Batoul Barbar | • Salwa | • Maggie McDonell | • Nour Maqsodi |
| • Anna Gaffney | • Regina Ryan | • Cara Horner | • Kathi Wilson | |
| • Muhamad Abduh | • Mabruka – Libyan Women Association | • Daniel Vlahek | • Chandana Rao | |



Volunteers

- Melina Skidmore
- Kiran Basnet
- Mustafa Khraim
- Dora Psimaris
- Cong Phuong Khai Tran
- Tyra Nicolette Saavedra
- Natalie Caven
- Bavandeep Singh
- Tileisha Maree Dobson
- Doaa Al-Medhaje
- Senulya Ruwanpathirana
- Dhekra Heshmat Al Dalawi
- Elena Avraam-Maroun
- Angela Tran
- Joyce Koshy
- Annam Rashid
- Claire Woodall
- Michael Bryan
- Raisan Azam
- Hayley Perkins
- Lando Antonelli
- Sarah Donst
- Julie Nguyen
- Samira Ghasempour
- Christopher Marett
- Shayan Khurram
- Magdalene Arnold
- Charlotte Wood
- Leigh Bradstreet
- Eromi Anton
- Wendy Flannery
- Krishanthimala Liyanage
- Linda Rayner
- Kowselya Sivakumar
- Erwin Zuber
- Ray Rosales
- Stephen Middlebrook
- Bassam Nassour
- Bhupender Singh Sahni
- Lyndall Harrop
- Sandra Natale
- Mufeeda Colampadanna
- Wayne Leech
- Shreyalina Victoria
- Shane Kaluza
- Roberto Florez Berrio
- Paul Russell
- Anthony Holding
- Suzi Duncan
- Sanaa Trkeeh
- Sylvia Georgiadis
- Xin Min Low
- Nahid Soltanlo
- Jacqui Ellul
- David Whelan
- Miily Elambasseril
- Stephanie Watt
- Miguel Mora
- Diane Pearl
- Malsa Ghafoor
- Shenali Fernando
- Sadaf Rehman
- Frank Torcasio
- Nasser Alghezy
- Glen Ballinger
- Paolo De Vincentiis
- Robyn Keane
- Franca Bellobuono
- Jose Mari Marco
- Steven Howell
- Michael Siciliano
- Roy Smith
- Sylvia Carnovale
- Richard Schwartz
- William Lee Withers
- Nancy Dablan
- Karen Gail McKenzie
- Hlrohito Guerrero
- Abdul Mansur
- John Shanahan
- Denis Fitzgibbon
- Sam Marriot
- Joseph Battista
- Lisa Edwards
- Glen O'Brien
- Noriko Khan
- Christine Garbutcheon-Singh
- Karunyadevi Nagaraju Sumathi
- Skye Anderson
- Niaz Khan
- Shoukry Sidrak
- Emmanuel Gauci
- Colin Spencer
- Wayne Mann
- Basel Aldeeb
- Karen Ooi
- Leeanne White
- Muhamad Abduh
- Neil Marshall
- Louisa Bartolome
- Steven Lim
- Aliaa Sadoo
- Carrie Chen
- Jiaying Jiaying
- Puneet Tikoo
- Baldev Singh Gill
- Mia Ormiston
- Firas Dawood Al-daweri
- Asma Ayoubi
- Marcello Mastroianni
- Bill Hutchins
- Fadhil Albakri
- Satyaveer Keeroder
- Judith Franklin
- Sharon Fode
- Joel Baade
- Kim Lorraine Kocijan
- James Meneilly
- Dalia Kalous
- Fahd Hanna Alhawwat
- Sumitha Pillai
- Nicola Parisi
- David Williams
- Najmeh Yazdanpanah
- Abdullah Siddiqui
- Anjali Chhetri
- Lena Matulin
- Mulham Ghaith
- Elizabeth Buckley
- Gregory Luttick
- Jing Yi
- Muzna Siddiqui
- Janeeta Molla
- Cheng Lee
- Maria Vella
- Patrizia Martin
- Tareq Alomar
- Devika Chandrar
- Debra Graham
- Nour Maqsodi
- Sherrie Harries
- Abhijit Pal
- Megha Purushotham

Staff who contributed to our success this year

Staff

Ahlam Mina	WIW Childcare Worker
Aiman Said	Employment Mentor
Aisha Khurram	Hardship Help Coordinator
Alan Tudo	General Manager, Finance & Technology
Alana Dibartolo	Law Graduate
Alex Haynes	CEO
Anas Qishta	Data and Evaluation Advisor
Basant Ahmed	Settlement Worker
Caterina Angelis	Community Help Coordinator
Charlotte Gordon	Biodiversity Coordinator
Cud Armanazi	Settlement Caseworker/ Procurement Officer
Dalia Kalous	Settlement Worker
Dean Marando	Lead Children and Youth
Deepty Cusima	Senior Mentor - Parent Pathways
Emma Antonetti	General Manager, Equity & Impact
Emma Navarro	Volunteer Resource Service Coordinator
Entidhar Alsayab	WIW Childcare Worker
Farah Haddad	Settlement Caseworker/Parent Pathways Mentor
Gabriella Scollo	Nursery Hand
Georgianna Brooks	Community Transport Assessment Worker
Georgina Jackson	Barista/Cafe All-Rounder
Ginette Beguely	Community Help Team Leader
Gloria Marrochino	Catering Manager
Harpreet Singh	driverEd Coordinator
Hiba Ayass	Multicultural Team Leader
Hiyah Rahman	Lead Healthy and Connected Communities
Hsham Aburghif	Nursery Hand
Isabella Ford	Nursery Hand
Jackie Mathew	Office and Communication Coordinator
Jennie Barnes	Women's Development Coordinator
Kim Lai	Finance Manager
Kristy Baddeley	Barista/Cafe All-Rounder
Lama Sankari	Transport Support Officer
Laura Brookes	Youth Lawyer
Lina Salem	WIW Childcare Worker

Linhan Guo	Intake Officer
Lucy Carracher	Seed Collector
May Thu Ne Win	Lead Gender Equity and Family Violence
Michelle Martinez	Family Violence Lawyer
Michelle Patching	Learn Local Administration Worker
Mohammad Alnayef	Settlement Caseworker
Moses Florendo	Coordinating Lawyer Law Clinics
Nadia Teran	Youth Worker
Narelle Sullivan	Lead Employment and Participation (Social Enterprise)
Neha Kundu	Intake Officer
Nina Pham	Barista/Cafe All-Rounder
Nnedimma Ikeme	Senior Mentor - Parent Pathways
Norma Medawar	Employment Mentor
Oyindamola Atolani	Intake Officer/Parent Pathways Mentor
Paras Christou	Mernda Neighbourhood House Coordinator
Pearl Dewan	Multicultural Communities Lawyer
Rabab Ourabi	Early Help Family Coach - Kids First
Randa Rafiq	Community Lawyer - Family Violence and Family Law
Rasha Komar	WIW Childcare Worker
Raqiba Ayoubi	EPRI Support Worker
Rebecca Korossy-Horwood	Seed Collector
Rattanaporn Tongya	Barista/Cafe All-Rounder
Rewshen Hussein	Community Engagement Worker
Ruqaya Ghulam	WIW Childcare Worker
Sarah Daly	Lead Healthy and Connected Communities
Scott Tunbridge	Nugal Biik Plants and Seeds Nursery Manager
Sean Robertson	Community Lawyer
Souvik Chakraborty	Evaluation Coordinator
Sreyasi Chaudhuri	Communications Coordinator
Steven Ameen	Employment Services Officer
Suneeti Sharma	Community Help Worker and Climate Resilience Project Worker
Suraj Walson	Lead Employment and Participation (Employment)
Taghrid Saman	WIW Childcare Worker
Viktor Faulknor	Wollert Community Farm Lead
Wesley Hauler-Winterford	Food Purchaser

Facilitators and Teachers

- Barbara Minuzzo
- Carolyn Dunell
- Caroulin Sabe
- Eromi Anton
- Karen Thompson
- Kathleen May Tants
- Matthew Stephenson
- Richard Bergami

Driving Ed Instructors

- Aliaa Saado
- Anees Yaqoob
- Azize Issa
- Dalia Kalous
- Hajirah Dalwai Al Wardighi (Get2Go)
- Irina Galileos (The Way to Success Driving School)
- Masoomah Khavari
- Mohammed Shubbar
- Noor Alsaedi
- Sayran Rostam

Farewelled in 2024-2025

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| • Ajith Weerakoon | • Jad Saeed | • Rachel Kori |
| • Al Wicks | • Jason Dalli | • Rahaf Hasan |
| • Alex Ashmore | • Jennifer Shaw | • Rennie Ervinawati |
| • Andrew Mitrovic | • Jenny Nicholls | • Rita Hippi |
| • Azeb Mengistu Abebe | • John Yacoub | • Sadia Amjad |
| • Belinda Jamieson | • Katriece Bolden | • Serdar Tackiran |
| • Bobby Lama | • Kimberley Chu | • Shanshan Lin |
| • Caroline Matanhire | • Krisha Shrestha | • Sharna Brown |
| • Cecilia Moses | • Kritsadakon Orval | • Shawn Lee |
| • Edie Schmutter | • Luma Alhendi | • Sonali Sehgal |
| • Edmond Babatunde | • Mandeep Randhawa | • Tanya Stelmach |
| • Elizabeth Foran | • Mardi Denham-Roberts | • Tarek Najar |
| • Entissar Aasi | • Mohamad Jassem | • Toni Bentley |
| • Eric Du | • Mohamad Owice Shahbandr | • Wisam Dindo |
| • Fadi Shedid | • Mohammad Al Ayoub | • Zain Ayyad |
| • Fukuko Matsumoto | • Natalie Lim | |
| • Grozda Nedeljkovic | • Nawal Semaan | |
| • Gurinder Jeet Kaur | • Neelam Yadav | |
| • Hala Alkhoury | • Pablo Gimenez | |
| • Hayley Thomas | • Paramjeet Singh Brar | |
| • Irina Zdraveska | | |





The amazing people who support us

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
- AOGCOS House of Bread Thomastown
- Arabic Welfare
- Ashley Park Primary School
- Baseline The Edge Youth Council Services
- Banyule Community Health (now Holstep Health)
- Belgravia Leisure
- Big Group Hug
- Board of Imams Victoria
- Broadmeadows Broncos Basketball Club
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre
- Cabrini Outreach
- Cancer Council Victoria
- Catholic Care
- Centre of the Ageing
- Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY)
- Centre for Participation Horsham
- City of Whittlesea
- CERES
- CFA Wollert
- Connecting Home
- Community Grocer
- Country Wide Community Missions
- Creeds Farm Living and Learning
- Craigieburn Basketball Association
- Collingwood English Language School (Craigieburn, South Morang)
- Cricket Victoria
- Cube Sports
- DPV Health Limited
- Edgars Creek Primary School
- Edgars Creek Secondary College
- Empower Australia
- Encompass Care
- Epping Cricket Club
- Epping Secondary College
- Fareshare
- Foodbank
- FoodINC
- Football Australia
- Football Victoria
- Foundation House
- Friends of Grasslands
- Greensborough Family Relationship Centre
- Haven Home Safe
- Hazelglen College
- Health Ability
- Home Ground Real Estate
- Home of the Matildas (Women's National Football Team)
- Hope Street
- Hope Centre
- Housing Choices Australia
- Hume Grammar Anglican Primary School
- Hume Whittlesea LLEN
- Hume Youth Services
- InTouch - Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence
- Intelligent Training Solutions
- Islamic Council of Victoria
- JewishCare Victoria
- Kinglake Neighbourhood House
- La Trobe University
- Lalor Landcare
- Lalor Neighbourhood House
- Lalor Secondary College
- Launch Housing
- Love Thy Neighbour
- Marymede Secondary College
- Maternal Child Health Services
- Medicare Urgent Care Clinic
- Melbourne City Mission
- Melbourne North Food Group
- Melbourne Polytechnic
- Melbourne City Football Club
- Merri Creek Management Committee
- Merri Outreach Support Services (MOSS)
- Mill Park Leisure
- Mill Park Secondary College (Senior and Junior)
- Mill Park Baptist - The Shak
- Mount Ridley Secondary College
- Multicultural Centre for Women's Health
- Narrap Rangers, Wurundjeri Cultural Heritage Corporation
- Neami National
- 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 Door
- Open Food Network
- Orange Door
- Parkers Auto Plus Pty Ltd
- Parks Victoria
- Peter Lalor Secondary College
- Pets for the Homeless
- Pinchapoo
- Plenty Valley Lions
- Plenty Valley Retirement Village
- PRACE
- River Plenty College
- Reservoir East Primary School

- Reservoir High School
- Salvation Army
- Second Bite
- Services Australia
- Social Policy Group
- Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre
- Street Smart
- St Mary's Parish Primary School
- St Monica's College
- St Vincent De Paul Society
- The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)
- The Lakes (P-12) South Morang
- The Pavilion – Epping
- The Smith Family
- The Y Community School – Epping
- 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
- Uniting
- Victorian Complaints Ombudsman
- Victoria Police
- Victoria University
- Vittle Feast Project
- Volunteer West
- Volleyball Victoria
- Volleyball Coaches Collective
- Whittlesea City Basketball Association
- Whittlesea Community House
- Whittlesea FoodShare
- Whittlesea Secondary College
- Whittlesea Tech School
- Wollert Secondary College

- Women's Legal Service Victoria
- Women's Property Initiative
- Yarra Plenty Regional Library (Thomastown, Lalor, Mill Park)
- YMCA
- Your Community Health
- Youthlaw
- 3knd radio

Community Donors and Sponsors

- Aminata Hamadi
- Andrew Giles MP
- Arilla Retirement Village
- Ashley Park Primary School
- Bunnings (Epping and Mernda)
- Bupa
- CityLife Church (Lalor)
- CMV Staff Foundation
- Commonwealth Bank (South Morang, Plenty Valley, Epping , Thomastown)
- Connecting Home
- DataSquad Consulting Pty Ltd
- Decathlon
- Dora Psimaris
- Enjoy Church North
- First Nations Traffic Management
- Georgia Geary
- Gertz Avenue Pharmacy
- Grace Rose-Miller
- Guat Im Lee
- Harry Jenkins
- Heidelberg Materials
- James Harper
- Kapiri Bros (Vic) Pty Ltd
- Liberty Financial
- Major Roads Victoria
- M'Connell Dowell

- Meera Radha Krishnan
- Northern Kia
- NSM Importers & Wholesalers
- Parham Soleimani
- Peter & Phyllis Coffey
- Ray Beaton
- Rotary Club of Whittlesea
- Safe and Equal
- Satyanarayan Aggarwal
- Sarah Harvey
- Share the Dignity
- St Monica's College
- The Loan Room
- Trio Plumbing
- Uncle Lionell Dukkakis
- Westpac (Whittlesea)
- Elizabeth & Wilf Thorsen

Agency and Philanthropic partners

- Australian Community Foundation
- Cedar Woods
- Dennis Family Corporation
- Equity Trustees Limited
- Hugh D.T. Williamson Foundation
- Kids First Australia
- La Trobe University, Law School
- Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation
- Mary MacKillop Today
- Melbourne Water
- Sandhurst Trustee
- Scanlon Foundation
- StreetSmart Australia
- Sunshine and Crocodiles Pty Ltd
- The Queens Fund
- Ward Ambler Foundation
- Wettenhall Environment Trust
- Victorian Women's Trust
- Yarra Valley Water

Peak Bodies

- Community Information and Support Victoria (CisVIC)
- Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria
- Neighbourhood Houses Victoria Inc
- Settlement Council of Australia
- Social Enterprise Australia
- Volunteering Victoria
- Youth Affairs Council of Victoria

Government Funders

- Attorney Generals Department
- Australian Department of Industry, Science and Resources
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
- Department of Health
- Department of Home Affairs
- Department of Industry, Innovation and Science
- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts
- Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Department of Social Services
- City of Whittlesea
- Nillumbik Shire Council
- Victorian Department of Education
- Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
- Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing – Family Safety Victoria and Neighbourhood House Coordination Program
- Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety
- Victorian Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions – Jobs Victoria and Adult, Community and Further Education
- Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet - Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion and Office of Youth
- Victorian Department of Transport and Planning - VicRoads
- Victorian Legal Services Board and Commissioner
- VicHealth
- Victoria Legal Aid

Thank you to our key suppliers including i.D. Yours, Finrea, Anthony McKee Photographer, ARZO Consulting, Debra Rose and Allen Gerson for their ongoing support.

Vale Max Lee

You were the first person to welcome me to the area when I started as CEO of WCC almost 9 years ago. You were always up for a chat.. you blended the serious and the personal, the practical and political so effortlessly, and somehow knew when I needed you before I knew.

You were a real champion of Whittlesea Community Connections, our people, our place based approach and the importance of our partnerships. You added enormous value when you joined the WCC Board in 2018.

Together we campaigned to reduce gambling harm and to stop more poker machines, we created programs to support people seeking asylum, we developed a health justice partnership focused on addressing family violence in our growing suburbs.

You were a great listener, great thinker and talker and knew when each was needed.. you saw connections everywhere and you had a unique way of describing concepts ideas and systems, and a one of a kind vocabulary!

You were so generous and forgiving, and always optimistic we would find ways to make our part of the world better, if we just kept trying.. I will keep the faith. (Alex Haynes)





Get Involved

Volunteer

Volunteers are essential to our services and programs. More than 200 people of all ages and backgrounds work alongside our staff in a variety of roles and we welcome new volunteers. If you are interested in becoming an active member of our team we would love to hear from you.



Join

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.



Partner, support or donate

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 across outer northern Melbourne.

To have a conversation about how we can work together please contact our CEO Alex Haynes on 0408 255266 or email ahaynes@whittleseacc.org.au.

