

SydWest
MULTICULTURAL SERVICES

Participate
Australia

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, SydWest Multicultural Services acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

About us

SydWest Multicultural Services is a leading organisation for cultural diversity issues, responding to community needs and opportunities throughout Western Sydney, and more recently, parts of the Inner west.

We help people of all ages and backgrounds live a better life through services including aged care; disability support; housing assistance; and programs for women, youth and families. Helping migrants and refugees settle into our community is a big part of what we do.

We are proud to have an inclusive, ethnically diverse and bilingual workforce sensitive to the languages, cultures and individual needs of the communities we service and support.

It's our goal to ensure everyone feels at home in our community.

Our mission

Our mission as a leading community organisation is to contribute to building the social capacity of our diverse communities. We strive to empower individuals of all cultures and abilities by offering person-centred direct services, skills sharing and evidence-based representation.

We focus on the vulnerable and the most in need across their life course.

Our vision

Connecting cultures.
Building community.

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Chair's report

It has been a pleasure to be associated with SydWest Multicultural Services as a long-standing board member. In particular, I have thoroughly enjoyed my second term as the chair and my involvement in the merger process to welcome Participate Australia as additional services within the NDIS arena.



Dr Chandrika Subramaniyan
Chair

I am proud to say that over this period SydWest Multicultural Services has achieved multidimensional growth with the able Chief Executive Officer Elfa Moraitakis and high calibre management team under her guidance.

I am thankful to my fellow board members who have provided unwavering support throughout our journey, especially when we encountered challenges, addressed issues and acquired new skills. We have shared many enjoyable moments as a team and together maintained a strong focus on improving the organisation.

Our primary focus has been on diversity, inclusiveness, community wellness, women and family welfare, and providing quality services to support vulnerable groups. Through our efforts, we have successfully gained the trust and confidence of the Western Sydney, and more recently, inner Sydney communities.

As I conclude my tenure as chair, I do so with complete satisfaction and happiness. SydWest Multicultural Services has provided me with a valuable platform to learn, take action, and serve the community.

Board members



Dr Chandrika Subramaniyan
Chair



Naveen Jayavarapu
Director



Angela Tsoukatos
Director



Dr Peter Zelas, OAM
Director



Peter Zangari
Director



Matt Pancino
Director

CEO's report

This fiscal year has seen us emerge from the depths of the COVID pandemic, committed in our mission to keep supporting the vibrant communities of the Greater West. We predicted that individuals would face worsening personal circumstances, grappling with an array of challenges, including financial and mental health-related.



Elfa Moraitakis
CEO

Responding to the year's challenges

The statistics and narratives into the pages of our 2023 annual report bear testament to the unwavering dedication of our staff and the profound impact of their professional support on our community, all achieved with fewer human and financial resources at our disposal.

Throughout the year, we embarked on a continuous journey of reflection, drawing invaluable lessons from the pandemic, particularly its disproportionate impact on our diverse communities. As a leading organisation, firmly anchored in our mission to enrich the social fabric of our communities through evidence-based advocacy, we crafted a robust government relations strategy and actively engaged in dialogues and roundtable discussions to broaden awareness and effect meaningful change. We lent our voices through submissions on topics ranging from improving access to social housing to the Migration Review and Australia's response to COVID-19.

We participated in discussions about the future of public health alongside UNSW, through the Inaugural Social Impact Summit with the Impact Institute, and offered our support to the Inaugural 2022 WEXPO where we led discussions on the vital subject of mental health for our diverse communities, in collaboration with WentWest. Furthermore, we hosted the Greater West Migrant and Refugee Employment Roundtable and launched our Employability Evaluation report, "Migrating from Settlement to Prosperity," in partnership with Australian Catholic University and its Stakeholder Engaged Scholarship Unit.

Our dedication also shone through in organising a Western Sydney forum to showcase the immense professional talents within our region, in collaboration with Sydney Greater West Jobs Local.

Merger with Participate Australia (PA)

In line with our growth strategy and unwavering commitment to empowering individuals from all walks of life through personalised services, our most pivotal decision this year was the merger with PA, a values-driven disability support organisation. This merger not only broadens our reach but also strengthens our disability services. With almost 8 decades of shared history, both organisations are guided by our core values and an enduring dedication to our vibrant community.

Despite the challenges and fatigue faced by many of our team members in the wake of the pandemic, the prevailing sentiment among the board and my colleagues regarding the future is one of optimism and enthusiasm. Our staff derives inspiration from our strengths as we persist in serving and supporting the diverse needs of Greater Sydney and keep exploring new avenues to broaden our service offerings.

The collaborative process behind this merger would have been immensely challenging were it not for the visionary leadership of outgoing PA CEO Angela Tsoukatos and the dedication of Participate Australia's longstanding Chair Glenn Ball OAM, along with all PA Directors and the vision of our own SydWest Directors. I extend my gratitude and congratulate them for their commitment in serving the community over the years.

While many other organisations are challenged by the tight margins in the NDIS, our SydWest board and I have instead made an informed and calculated decision to extend the reach of our services to the diverse communities of Western Sydney while maintaining a commitment to quality care.

I extend a heartfelt welcome to our newest team members, who have embraced our post-merger integration plan with enthusiasm and dedication, guided by the capable leadership of Thom Calma, our recent addition to the executive team. This coming fiscal year, our focus will be directed towards enhancing our internal capabilities, collectively revisiting our strategic direction, and strengthening our governance structure.

Thank you to our staff and supporters

I wish to also express my deep gratitude to our SydWest family and my leadership team colleagues for their ongoing support; they have all been instrumental in guiding their resilient and dedicated teams through a period marked by challenges, reviews, and transformative reforms. My heartfelt thanks also extend to all our supporters and dedicated volunteers who have once again contributed to making a positive impact on the lives of the individuals we are privileged to serve.

While the path ahead may present its fair share of challenges, our collective vision remains bright and optimistic. Together, we are poised to navigate the future with determination and an unwavering commitment to our mission.

At a glance



Aged care

Total hours of service delivered	91,863
Number of clients who received services	1,596
Group based services (social support & centre-based respite)	19
Sessions, activities, workshops and outings planned and delivered to group based services (social support & centre-based respite)	1,124



Housing

Total clients	128
Helped into a home	38
Helped to stay at home	90
Women supported with housing	74



Settlement

Total clients	520
Number of times clients accessed one-on-one services	1,776
People who obtained citizenship or passed the citizenship test	144
People who obtained a driver's license	170
Clients who accessed Justice of the Peace services	190



Women and families

Total clients	458
Domestic violence support (occasions)	120
People engaged in the community through event participation	1,657
Mothers and children who attended supported playgroups	68



Disability

NDIS support coordination	
- Hours of service delivered	20,285
- Number of participants (average per month)	480
NDIS group supports	
- Hours of service delivered	106,781
- Number of participants	149



Youth

Total clients	313
Clients aged 12-17	91
Clients aged 18-25	222
Individual and group client sessions	611
Youth in sporting activities	67

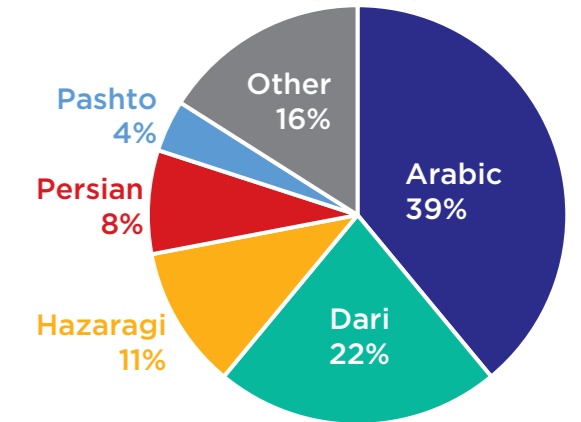


Total staff

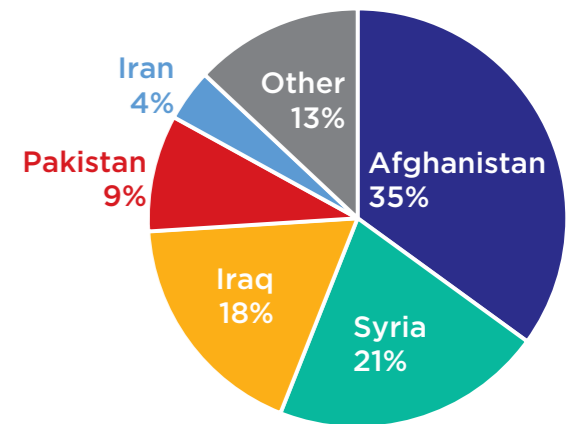
NDIS individual supports	
- Hours of service delivered	173,809
- Number of participants	129
Total hours of service in all categories	300,875
Total NDIS clients	758

Frontline staff	209
Office staff	97
Volunteers	22

Top client languages



Top countries of birth





Our aged care services

We provide quality, approved aged care services to help seniors from CALD backgrounds live independently both at home and in the community.



Our Aged Care team's unwavering commitment to excellence and the well-being of clients shone through during the year despite national care worker shortages and constant changes in the aged care sector.

We're proud to report that despite this challenging environment, SydWest delivered a significant 14.5% increase in service hours across all of our aged care programs. This is due to great teamwork between our care coordinators and clinical care managers, proactive case management and the team's determination that all clients get the quality care they deserve.

From September 2022, we expanded our social support program for local seniors after receiving funding that had been relinquished by another provider. This enabled us to introduce a range of new activities which has helped boost the overall social and emotional well-being of our social support and day respite clients.

Our clinical nursing team was kept busy advocating for clients, providing clinical-related education sessions and visits, and organising events including "clinic in the park" where they checked blood pressure and blood sugar.

Our commitment to fostering a sense of celebration and community was demonstrated through the hosting of a number of events including Seniors Week celebrations, which saw more than 250 clients attend.

Later in the year our care workers, who are the heart and soul of our organisation, were honoured and appreciated at a special lunch held at Blacktown Workers Club for Aged Care Employee Day.

We would also like to acknowledge one of our social support coordinators, Radica Ivanovic, who received a Rotary Club "Pride of Workmanship" award.

We are proud of the Aged Care Team's achievements this financial year and look forward to another year of making a positive impact and continuing to set new standards in aged care services.

Case study

Our person-centred care approach to aged care clients

Sometimes a little lateral thinking is all it takes to keep a senior happy and safe in their own home.

This was the case recently with one of our home care clients, Mr Giuseppe Scibilia, who needed 24-hour oxygen support and could not leave his house, leading to social isolation and depression. The only other choice appeared to be admission to a nursing home.

However, by carefully assessing his situation and talking to our client and his family, one of our clinical care managers was able to arrange for a portable oxygen machine.

This meant Mr Scibilia could move about freely in the community and gain back some independence.

This is just one of the ways SydWest staff help our clients navigate the later stages of their lives with dignity.



Case study Respite program the highlight of client's week

For 93-year-old Daphne Noronha, attendance at SydWest's respite program at Glenwood is the social highlight of her week.

"My mum is the lady who has been hiding out in fear of falls and other health issues," said daughter Smita, who is also her carer.

"She is so happy on Fridays, I see her old self coming back. That is why I want to ensure it continues to go well for her."

Mrs Noronha was been attending the program since August 2022. When she started, her confidence was low. However, with the assistance of both this program and other supports provided through her home care package, she has grown to love her weekly outings – the only time she leaves her house.

The respite program runs a variety of activities including music and art therapy, information sessions about health matters and digital literacy, group physiotherapy, and biscuit decorating.

Mrs Noronha now interacts confidently at the respite program with SydWest staff, external facilitators and her peers.

To help ensure she continues with regular social interaction, SydWest staff check in with the family every week.



"She is so happy when she visits," said Smita. "I'm glad we finally reached this place."





Our disability support services

We are a registered provider of NDIS services for communities in Western Sydney, the Inner West and other parts of Sydney. We support people with disability to live independently and achieve their life goals. We provide in-home and community support, as well as support coordination.



Over the past 12 months, Participate Australia (PA) has seen some great outcomes from our teams and for our communities.

The Support Coordination team saw a 25% growth, with 20 Support Coordinators now working in the team. This has enabled us to provide more support to our NDIS participants and pursue focused growth in both Justice Support Coordination and Specialist Support Coordination, both highly complex areas. This is important as there is a lack of providers in this area, allowing PA to fill the gap and support our most vulnerable participants.

Another highlight of the year was the opening of Canterbury House, a supported living accommodation setting for women. Canterbury House was the result of two long term friends having the goal to live together. The two participants wanted to rent together in the Inner West, in a house that was for women and staffed by women. The house opened in early 2023, and the two women are now looking forward to welcoming a third housemate. This is a great example of a participant led process, and we hope to run similar processes for more participants in future in both the Inner West and Western Sydney.

After working together for 6 years, in May 2023 PA handed over the supported independent living supports of Ryde Area Supported Accommodation for Intellectually Disabled Inc. (RASAID) to another provider. RASAID has been a critical partnership for PA, in which we provided the supports to 15 NDIS participants in a variety of housing settings. We would like to thank RASAID for their trust, support and partnership over the past 6 years and recognise the incredible support our direct support workers have provided during this time.

Finally, after almost a year of closure, PA returned to the Croydon Centre, much to the delight of our participants and staff. Our premises was closed suddenly in 2022, due to damage caused by heavy rains and flooding. Thankfully, our neighbours at St Christophorus Croydon stepped in to provide a venue as an urgent response. We then relocated to the Woodstock Community Centre in Burwood, supported by Burwood Council. We extend our gratitude to both St Christophorus and Burwood Council for their flexibility and support during this period.

Now back at Croydon and merged with SydWest, we look forward to the future with a great deal of excitement about the opportunities that will come.

Our goal is to expand the supports being offered in Western Sydney, in particular to our culturally and linguistically diverse participants. We will explore broadening the scope of our services to provide more clinical services, such as occupational therapy and behavioural support. We will also continue to focus on delivering high quality, participant-centred support for all our existing and future PA participants.





Going above and beyond – thanks to our supporters

Each year, a key reason we achieve the level of services we provide is due to the generous support of our volunteers, donors and community partners.

We would like to recognise a few of these supporters who went above and beyond in the past 12 months.

Firstly, we recognise the PA board of directors, Glenn Ball, Shaun Palmer, Sandra Casinader, Penny Gerstle, Genny Haines and Darren Dick, whose stewardship saw PA through the good times, as well as the challenging times. Through the merger, the PA board was dissolved, and we would like to formally thank each director for their contributions over the year.

Next, we recognise and thank Angela Tsoukatos for her outstanding leadership over the past 12 months. This was a challenging and complex year, which Angela led with trust, strong direction and empathy. Though Angela's tenure was brief, she was highly impactful, navigating the important merger and allowing PA to continue long into the future. She continues to be a member of the SydWest board.



Case study

Long term client loves newfound independence

Matilda joined PA, then known as FRANS, when she was just 2 years old. The reason her family chose PA was a simple and practical one – PA was willing to purchase a child seat for its van.

This gave her mother, Mary, a few hours to herself to do things like see a movie, or grab lunch with a friend, which was a rare treat. Now, 20 years later, Matilda is still attending regular activities at PA and couldn't be happier.

Matilda and 4 to 5 friends are part of a social circle group who meet every Saturday and attend local events around Sydney's Inner West. PA Social Circles are groups based on friendships and shared goals. They are flexible and centred around the group members' interests, preferences and NDIS goals.

The social circle came at the right time for Matilda as she had recently moved out of home. This was a big step in Matilda's journey but led to another issue.

“Saturdays were pretty boring for Matilda and I felt pressured to organise something for her to do with me. The Saturday group means that Matilda can see her friends, be active, and she doesn't have to spend her Saturday's hanging out with her mum!” said Mary.

Matilda now gets out and about weekly, exploring galleries, attending local performances, supporting disability focused events, and more.

Mary has also noticed that Matilda's confidence has increased, and her independent travel and problem-solving skills are improving. She is even trading in her Saturday sleep-ins and can't wait to get out of the house.



When asked what she likes about the social circle, Matilda simply states:

“I just love being with my friends, going to places around Sydney, and laughing”.

Staff story

Merger brings more opportunities

After working as an NDIS planner for around 3 years, and a Local Area Coordinator prior to that, Erin O'Connor joined the PA Support Coordination team in 2021 and hasn't looked back.

"Being a planner was limiting for me", said Erin. "I would gather information, build a participant's package, and that was that. I didn't get to interact with participants after this, and I never saw the outcomes or the individual's progress."

Erin made the switch to Support Coordination as she was drawn to working more closely with participants and being a part of an individual's journey. In the two years she has been at Participate Australia, Erin has gone from strength to strength, and is now one of our Specialist Support Coordinators, responsible for supporting those with highly complex situations.

One rewarding example Erin recounts was her support of Arjun (name changed), an 8-year-old boy who lived with his mother, a single parent.

Arjun requires complex support needs, and his mother was at breaking point, unsure of how she could continue to support her son. Arjun's mother didn't know much about the NDIS and Arjun's funding wasn't adequate to meet his needs. The situation was in crisis. Erin used her skills as a Specialist Support Coordinator to get a substantial increase to Arjun's package, something almost unheard of for a participant his age.

Thankfully, this increase meant that Arjun could receive the support he needed, the pressure was alleviated from his mother and the situation was no longer in crisis.

After an amazing 2 years at Participate Australia, Erin reflected on the 2 years ahead and what she was looking forward to.



"I am really excited about the future. I think the merger between Participate Australia and SydWest brings so many opportunities to the table that neither organisation could have taken full advantage of alone. I think it could be unstoppable. We have done nothing but grow our supports and have an even bigger positive impact in our communities!"

Program Spotlight:

Backswing

The Western Sydney Backswing program supports people living with disability from culturally diverse backgrounds to develop employability skills and gain hands-on work experience.

SydWest is able to deliver this program with the support of the Federal Government Department of Social Services.

This year, 100 hours of training as well as individually tailored job preparation skills were delivered for 20 participants. Half of our participants went on to secure jobs, while others were guided towards further study.



Case study

New job and greater confidence

Outer Western Sydney resident Matthew Melanie joined Backswing in March 2023. He was referred to the program by Afford Disability Employment Services after struggling to find and keep a job.

As a result, Matthew experienced a significant increase in confidence and overall job readiness, which helped him secure work at a local café. He's enjoying his new role and appreciates the advantages that come with steady employment. This positive change has made him happier and more optimistic about his future.



A parent testimonial

"As our son Sid ... finished school last year he was keen to start developing some real-world employability skills, with a view to seeing which employment path might be best for him. Backswing has equipped him with many of these skills, through a combination of both theoretical and practical training. Sid has thoroughly enjoyed attending sessions each week, and during this time we've noticed he has developed greater levels of confidence and motivation."



Our women and family support services

Our women and families team provides support to refugee and migrant women who are newly arrived in Australia with children up to age 8, to help smooth their transition to the Australian way of life and help them raise happy and healthy families. We also work in domestic violence prevention and support.

In 2022, the Blacktown local government area saw more than 2000 recorded domestic violence incidents, as reported by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. Despite these alarming statistics, SydWest remained committed to providing crucial support to women from new and emerging refugee, humanitarian entrant, and migrant backgrounds. This support extended through our housing services and the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program.

However, one of our biggest challenges during the year was our inability to offer culturally tailored services to 54 of our CALD clients, as they had resided in Australia for more than 5 years. This ineligibility for SETS assistance meant they could only be referred to mainstream services. SydWest acknowledges and welcomes the Federal Government's decision last year to expand the SETS program eligibility and we look forward to this being enacted.

Community education was another important component of our services, offered both through SETS and the CALD Domestic Violence Prevention Project. This early intervention strategy engaged over 7 CALD groups plus high school students via workshops and partnering with other agencies for key events including Sixteen Days of Activism Against Gender Violence.

In the lead up to the NSW election, we joined other agencies and peak bodies in discussions with local members of parliament to advocate for important changes and recommend improvements in response to Western Sydney's domestic violence crisis.

These proposed changes included longer term funding for community organisations, investment in community led services, support for the domestic violence prevention workforce, housing security for families leaving violence and the political will to call for an end to men's family violence.

We are pleased to report that next year our capacity to support those impacted by domestic violence will be enhanced through new case management and community education funding, secured through the Domestic, Sexual and Family Violence Multicultural Community Grants program and a new culturally sensitive Men's Behaviour Program.

In relation to our support for family settlement, we had a strong focus on assisting Afghan families who arrived in Western Sydney in waves following the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021.

Our Targeted Early Intervention Service worked with the Department of Communities and Justice to help the new arrivals settle well into Australia. Our 6 Women's Support Groups proved invaluable in helping families adjust to social norms and adapt to a new way of life and different customs. As well as addressing issues of social isolation, the groups helped address parenting challenges through both the Triple P and Transition to School programs. Our Women's Support Groups also partnered with private provider MAS Communications to run employment programs offering career development, coaching and mentoring with personalised career action plans. This program is critical as securing stable and well-paid work is a challenge for refugees due to language barriers, overseas qualification recognition, lack of local experience and a competitive jobs market.



Case study

Client escapes slavery with help of SydWest

Anjali (name changed) came to Australia from India 4 years ago after an arranged marriage.

However, after only a few months she was forced to return to India to care for her husband's parents and extended family, while her husband stayed behind in Australia. Anjali remained in India for three years in this role, not realising she had a valid visa for Australia.

Last year when she finally purchased a ticket and returned, she discovered she wasn't welcome and was cast out on her own. With the help of a friend, Anjali contacted SydWest's domestic violence support services online.

SydWest referred Anjali to Legal Aid to get advice about her about visa status and from there made other referrals to the Federal Police, Centrelink, Red Cross and counselling services.

Anjali discovered that she did have a valid visa for Australia and that her forced return to India was a form of slavery and illegal.

In the past 12 months, Anjali has found full-time work and shared accommodation. She has also started a small home-based sewing business with the help of a SydWest donated sewing machine.

Her confidence has grown through attending community events, including SydWest information sessions, and has now extended to helping others get work at her place of employment. She also refers other women to the SydWest services that have helped her so much.

Client story

Women's group helped with parenting challenges and more

In May 2015, Najim (name changed) migrated to Australia as a young, newly married woman.

She struggled to adjust to life in a new country until a few years later when a friend introduced her to one of SydWest's Women's Support groups. Soon, attending the weekly group became routine – and life changing – for Najim and her son.

“Migrating comes with multiple challenges,” said Najim. “Two of the dominant ones are parenting without a village and building your confidence. Organisations like SydWest play a very pivotal role in shaping lives, overcoming these challenges and building community.”

Najim said the women's group sessions have helped build confidence, reflect on her personal growth, combat parenting challenges and more.

“SydWest also supported me to get the courage to look for work and be work ready. As a result, I have been able to secure my driver's license, make good friends, volunteer, complete TAFE short courses and I recently secured a part time role at a government organisation.”

“Thank you SydWest for all the support.”





Our youth services

We help young people new to Australia make connections and friendships, adjust to the Australian way of life and settle well at school. We also support them to explore educational and employment pathways. Our programs are for those aged 12-25 from a migrant or refugee background.

SydWest continued to maintain a strong focus on young people through a range of services, recognising that starting a new life in a different country can be challenging.

Through our youth settlement programs, newly arrived refugee and migrant youth can access educational support and engage in sport and recreational activities. We were pleased to take part in the Federal Government's evaluation of the important **Youth in Transition Support** program to inform its future. This program helps humanitarian entrants and vulnerable migrants aged 15 to 25 participate in work and education. We welcomed the 1-year extension of the program with our service now funded to offer this until 30 June 2024.

Our **New Way Forward** project has been providing intensive and culturally sensitive case management to young people from African and Pacific Islander backgrounds, who have either been in detention or are at risk of being incarcerated. Through this program we were able to engage most of our 57 clients in either education or employment. Collaborative partnerships with organisations including the Blacktown PCYC, Savannah Pride, Cobham Youth Justice Centre, Thread Together and Wesley Mission facilitated access to vital initiatives for our participants such as Pacific Waves, AfroNited and Fit-for-Change, which all led to great outcomes including improved relationships between young people and the police, connection to culture and connection to services post release.

We continued our partnership with Mission Australia through the **Youth on Track** program, which also supports young people at risk of entering the juvenile justice system. A new tender offers an opportunity for us to continue this program of work with our CALD young people.



Case study

A young woman's journey

Zahra, 24, migrated to Australia from Afghanistan in September 2021 with her family, escaping the restrictions placed on women and girls, including the right to education and employment.

When she first met the SydWest Youth Team, Zahra was moved and inspired, as it was the first time that she had seen young women from a similar background in a workplace.

Our Youth Team encouraged Zahra to join our Blacktown Emerging Leaders and Advocates (BELA) Program, where young people participate in fortnightly training sessions to develop transferrable skills, such as conflict resolution.

Participants also attend monthly one-on-one meetings with a mentor to guide them towards achieving their career goals and becoming community leaders.

Because Zahra wanted to pursue a career in nursing, she was matched up with someone from NSW Multicultural Health to support her on her journey.

"I was very lost and confused, but he gave me very good advice," said Zahra of her mentor.

The workshops and mentoring sessions gave Zahra the confidence to present a speech in front of over 200 people at SydWest's 2023 Harmony Day event, where she spoke about breaking free from the gender restrictions she felt living under the Taliban.

Her confidence has grown "Now I feel like a bird that can fly."

◀ Zahra, third from left, with the SydWest Youth Team at a Harmony Week event



Our settlement services

We work with refugees, humanitarian entrants and other newly arrived families to help them settle into the Australian way of life. We support our clients to access mainstream services such as housing or a job; address social isolation through support groups; and address any other barriers to ensure they are living independently and as part of the community.

Our Settlement Services continued to offer vital services to newly arrived refugees, humanitarian entrants and migrants in both the Blacktown and Penrith areas through person-centred and tailored support. As Australia received more international arrivals post COVID-19, we began to get more referrals for our Humanitarian Settlement Program – in particular from Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan.

We faced a high demand for legal services from the Afghan community, with large numbers of individuals and families arriving in Australia after fleeing the Taliban. Members of both the Afghan and Iraqi communities sought advice on sponsoring family members left behind, either in their country of origin, or in second countries of asylum. SydWest renewed its partnership with NSW Legal Aid, which had been offering clinics from its Mt Druitt office to meet the refugee demand for immigration assistance.

Another large part of our work involves working closely with grassroots communities and community organisations. For example, in partnership with the Afghan Community Support Agency, SydWest hosted the third Iftar dinner in the holy month of Ramadan, which attracted key stakeholders and representatives from diverse CALD communities.



All our community engagement strategies and service delivery is informed by our Community Leaders Forum. This is a group of leaders who represent a diverse range of communities in the Blacktown and Penrith local government areas. This regular and ongoing engagement with all communities, including new and emerging communities, was critical to SydWest's COVID-19 response. We hosted a consultation between community leaders and members of parliament prior to the 2023 election, providing an opportunity for the diverse voices and needs of western Sydney to be heard and better understood. SydWest also arranged visits for community leaders to Parliament House, Canberra and Blacktown City Council Chambers, to help acquaint them with Australia's federal and local government processes. Further training in community engagement and advocacy was arranged by SydWest in the form of a 2-day retreat at the Sydney Academy of Sport and Recreation.

As Australia prepares to receive an expected 1.5 million migrants over the next 5 years and the country responds to new world conflicts, SydWest partnered with Penrith City Council, Settlement Services International and Nepean Multicultural Access to host a Refugee Week Roundtable in June 2023 to promote Penrith as a settlement location. The event initiated important conversations around what factors would influence a positive settlement and provision of support through new programs like the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot.

The current infrastructure development in the region, including the Western Sydney Airport, is an excellent opportunity for new settlers through new businesses and jobs. In the new financial year, further conversations will be held with a wide range of stakeholders including business, housing providers and local community groups to ensure support for new settlers is well coordinated.

Finally, we welcomed the opportunity to participate in the Deloitte Access Economics review of the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support Program for the Department of Home Affairs. This evaluation will inform the future of the program and tender, to be announced late 2023. As a committed member of the New Settlement Partnership, SydWest highlighted the advantages of being part of the consortium and made recommendations to improve the program by adequately resourcing its capacity building component and accommodating individuals who were no longer eligible due to length of residence in Australia. SydWest welcomes the government's decision to allow the program to service this cohort and looks forward to an enhanced program.

Case study Settlement services help relieve social isolation

Rahmat Panah was in his late 60s when he left Iran for Australia with his wife and adult children.

He's had a tough time adjusting to life in a new country, grappling with the language barrier, social isolation and not knowing how to access basic services.

'It is such a satisfying part of the job to help migrants, and refugees like Mr Panah and his family, happily settle into Australia,' said caseworker Khatol Ahmadzay.

Through SydWest's ongoing support, he is now an active member of our community, regularly attending community and seniors events as well as classes such as digital literacy. Through these interactions he has made many new friends and now has a much more positive outlook on life.

'We've enjoyed seeing Mr Panah and his wife thrive and become active participants in their local community.'

There are a range of supports we have been able to offer Mr Panah. They include English language classes for him and his wife, referral to immigration services for help bringing other family members to Australia, support with accommodation, and help to pay basic bills like electricity.

We're very proud to report that Mr Panah is now learning to drive, with the help of the SydWest driving mentor program instructor who speaks Persian, and is waiting to be awarded Australian citizenship.





Our housing support

This program helps those at risk of becoming homeless by linking them with housing support, helping to find suitable accommodation, understand their rights as a tenant and addressing issues of mortgage stress.

With rising cost of living pressures, the demand for housing and financial support increased significantly over the year.

SydWest exceeded its annual target for housing support by a third as many CALD families on low incomes either could not cope with rent rises resulting from multiple interest rate hikes, or because domestic violence led to a greater need for crisis accommodation.

SydWest was able to achieve positive outcomes for CALD families and individuals by securing affordable and sustainable housing. With no near end to the housing crisis nationally, SydWest has and will continue to engage in important discussions to seek sustainable solutions for housing, especially for Western Sydney. We welcome the Federal Government's investment in housing through the Housing Australia Future Fund. This will help fund much needed affordable and social housing that we hope will cater for a range of different demographics. It is also important that the NSW Government introduce rent reforms, including a rent freeze, and ensure tenants have more negotiating power.

Also during the financial year, SydWest provided more than \$28,000 in electricity vouchers to Blacktown families. Many families were not aware of the rebates offered by the NSW Government to help with cost-of-living pressures, including the payment of utility bills.

SydWest will work closely with Service NSW and the Water and Electricity Ombudsman to ensure there is an increased understanding of energy consumption and the availability of government support, including rebates.



Our finances



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Independent Audit Report to the members of SydWest Multicultural Services Limited and its Controlled Entity

Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial report of SydWest Multicultural Services Limited and its Controlled Entity (the Group), which comprises the consolidated statement of financial position as at 30 June 2023, the consolidated statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, the consolidated statement of changes in funds and the consolidated statement of cash flows for the year then ended, notes to the consolidated financial statements and the Directors' Declaration.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report of the Group is in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, including:

1. giving a true and fair view of the Group's financial position as at 30 June 2023 and of its financial performance for the year ended; and
2. complying with Australian Accounting Standards and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2022*.



Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the Entity in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code)* that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

The Board's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The Board of the Group is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the ACNC Act, and such internal control as the reasonable entities determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, responsible entities are responsible for assessing the registered entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Board either intends to liquidate the Group or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Board is responsible for overseeing the Group's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.



- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Group's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by responsible entities.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Group's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the registered entity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the Directors regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

LUKE MALONE

Director

10 October 2023

PROSPERITY AUDIT SERVICES

SydWest Multicultural Services Limited and its Controlled Entity

ABN 70 963 234 638

Consolidated Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the Year Ended 30 June 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
Income			
Services	4	9,347,088	7,241,641
Grant funding	4	6,551,910	5,236,906
Other income	4	532,524	498,281
Expenditure			
Employee benefit expenses	5	11,366,295	9,280,998
Service delivery expense		3,965,581	2,601,900
Property and utilities expense		36,649	12,885
ROU asset - amortisation expense		533,134	370,851
Depreciation expenses		112,922	106,544
Interest lease expense		40,028	28,447
IT expense		297,391	235,305
Travel expenses		376,688	281,227
Loss on merger with Participate Australia Limited	20	326,584	-
Net (deficit)/surplus for the year		(623,750)	58,671

SydWest Multicultural Services Limited and its Controlled Entity

ABN 70 963 234 638

Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

As at 30 June 2023

	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
Assets			
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	6	10,316,197	9,668,306
Trade and other receivables	7	1,846,887	1,056,874
Total current assets		12,163,084	10,725,180
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	8	290,128	251,457
Right-of-use assets	9	1,173,764	1,440,504
Total non-current assets		1,463,892	1,691,961
Total assets		13,626,976	12,417,141
Liabilities			
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables	10	3,502,535	2,537,984
Provisions	11	1,174,555	708,330
Lease liabilities	9	487,299	390,150
Grants received in advance		576,963	403,823
Total current liabilities		5,741,352	4,040,287
Non-current liabilities			
Provisions	11	452,232	374,774
Lease liabilities	9	720,342	1,081,350
Total non-current liabilities		1,172,574	1,456,124
Total liabilities		6,913,926	5,496,411
Net assets		6,713,050	6,920,730
Equity			
Retained earnings		6,713,050	6,920,730

Our funding bodies

During 2022-2023, SydWest Multicultural Services and Participate Australia received its core funding from the following entities. We thank you for supporting our work.

These are the funding bodies and partners for the FY22/23 Year:

- Department of Health
- National Disability Insurance Scheme
- SSI
- Department of Industry, Science, Energy, and Resources
- Department of Communities and Justice
- Mission Australia
- Community Migrant Resource Centre
- Department of Social Services
- Wentworth Health Care
- Settlement Council of Australia
- Western Sydney University

We also rely on the generosity of individuals to do our important work. We are particularly grateful to three people who made significant personal donations to the work of PA last year.

Thank you to Penny Gerstle, and Tom and Heather Calma, who donated more than \$2,000.

We would also like to recognise the Town Hall Hotel in Newtown which has been an ongoing supporter.



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