



Community Connections

Issue 3, 2024

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From the CEO



I am excited to announce the formation of our *Western Sydney Region Settlement Consortium* (WSRSC), led by SydWest, in collaboration with our partners: Community Migrant Resource Centre, Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, and Accessible Diversity Services Initiative Ltd.

This new consortium marks the beginning of a dynamic and impactful partnership as we continue the nine year legacy of the NSW Settlement Partnership, previously led by SSI, which was a model of innovation and collaboration in settlement services.

The WSRSC will be officially launched on September 27th by the Assistant Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon. Julian Hill. This consortium brings together a wealth of expertise and experience in supporting humanitarian entrants across Greater Western Sydney, fostering an environment where we can efficiently share best practices and elevate the outcomes for newly arrived refugees and emerging communities.

With a holistic, person-centred approach, the WSRSC funded by the Department of Home Affairs, will work in alignment with the national Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Settlement and Integration Outcomes framework and the National Settlement Outcomes. We will focus on key areas such as language and digital literacy, economic participation, health and well-being, education, housing and transport, community connections, and fostering a strong sense of belonging, safety, and security.

As we move in a new chapter, we are eager to strengthen existing local partnerships and build new ones. Our mission is clear: to improve the lives of individuals and families across Greater Western Sydney through collaborative, innovative, and compassionate support. Whether you're working with refugees in Parramatta, Blacktown, Auburn, Liverpool, the Outer West and the Mountains, the Hills, North Sydney, Campbelltown, part of the Inner Southwest or beyond, we welcome your partnership in making a meaningful difference.

We look forward to continuing to do what we do best; help people live a better life in Western Sydney. If you're interested in collaborating or want to know more about how you can contribute to this important work, please get in touch!

Elfa Moraitakis
CEO



L-R: CEOs Maeve Brown, WSMRC, Joanna Mathew, ADSI, Elfa Moraitakis, SydWest, and Melissa Monteiro, CMRC.

SydWest leads new settlement partnership

A new settlement partnership has been announced for Western Sydney which will provide services to support newly arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants through the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program.

65% of all new refugee and humanitarian entrants arriving into NSW settle in Western Sydney. Western Sydney receives 25% of the total national refugee and vulnerable humanitarian intake (excluding Fairfield).

Led by SydWest Multicultural Services,

the Western Sydney Region Settlement Consortium (WSRSC) is a newly established group of 4 Migrant Resource Centres and multicultural community organisations who have significant expertise supporting new arrivals become self-reliant and a part of the broader Australia community.

The official launch of the consortium will be held later this month.

Read more here [link to our media release - <https://sydwestms.org.au/latest-news/sydwest-leads-new-settlement-partnership/>]



Report recommends changes to citizenship test

Nour, a humanitarian entrant to Australia from Syria, failed her citizenship test 10 times before reaching out to SydWest for assistance.

As the test can only be taken in English, Nour struggled to understand more complex concepts that were explained in English, like legislative jargon.

It is the experience of people like Nour that has prompted the authors of the recently released Multicultural Framework Review report, *Towards fairness: A multicultural Australia for all*, to recommend changes to the citizenship test.

The report found that while English language skills are vital for promoting understanding and connection between Australia's communities, the high English language requirement of the current citizenship test was creating a significant barrier for many, with certain groups, particularly women in refugee communities with limited literacy opportunities, finding the test excessively hard.

This recommendation is welcomed by SydWest, along with other critical ones such as a dedicated Department of Multicultural Affairs and a Multicultural Australia Commission to lead implementation of the framework. You can find the detailed report and all the recommendations which you can read here - <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/our-portfolios/multicultural-framework-review/towards-fairness>

Nour's persistence eventually paid off and with the support of assistance in her native Arabic, she finally passed the test. She's now applying for an Australian passport and looking forward to travelling to Syria to see her parents after 12 years.



Two of our Aged Care team now working from our new Penrith office

SydWest now operates from Penrith

Since the fire that destroyed our Penrith office we have struggled to find a suitable location in the area. We are pleased to advise that SydWest has officially opened a new office in Penrith to make it easier for our community in this part of Western Sydney to meet with us in person.

The office at 15-17 Castlereagh Street, Penrith opened on 1 August and will have staff from our aged care, community engagement and corporate services teams.

Drop by and see us during office hours!

Help us help culturally diverse seniors understand decisions around end of life

No-one wants to talk about death or dying but as we age, there may come a time when we are not capable of communicating our wishes to family or medical professionals.

That's where Advance Care Planning comes in – it helps people think through their values, beliefs and wishes about the health care they may like to have, or to refuse, if they could not make their own decisions.

In an innovative new program, SydWest's Clinical Care Managers have designed a version of the Advance Care Plan specifically for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

Managers Inka Patel and Phoebe McLaren presented their work, which is part of the [ELDAC Linkages Project](#), at a recent conference in Canberra, receiving widespread acclaim from health professionals.

Inka says the idea came about when they discovered none of their aged care clients had an Advance Care Plan in place, prompting them to investigate the cultural barriers and misconceptions around these discussions. Through comprehensive research and community engagement, they crafted a prototype Plan that directly addresses these unique challenges.

However, to successfully complete this project, we are currently seeking support and funding for translation services and the development of an online resource. For more information or to offer assistance, please contact us at clinicalteam@sydwestms.org.au.



Contributing to safer streets in Blacktown CBD

Our Women and Families Team Leader has been taking part in the Safer Cities: Her Way program – a partnership between Blacktown Council and Transport for NSW.

The aim is to help make our local streets and transport hubs safer for everyone, especially women, girls and gender-diverse people.

Sonia Kalsi, our Women and Families Team Leader, is one of over 160 people who provided ideas to council including provision of better lighting, cleaner spaces and more vibrancy and colour through artwork. Sonia was then invited to take part in the art initiative, and now her photo is one of many featured on banners throughout the area.



Congratulations! Disability services participant wins art award

Our disability services participant Georgina Evans has won Willoughby Council's *Connect, Collaborate, Celebrate* art competition.

This annual event is for artists aged 18 + living with disability. Entrants can submit drawings, graphic art or paintings.

Georgina is a multi-modal artist who lives in the Inner West and attends activities at Croydon run by Participate Australia, which runs SydWest's disability services. Georgina weaves and explores textiles, paints and draws in ink on canvas, rice paper and eco-dyed fabric.

Her artworks have been on display at the Dougherty Community Centre, Chatswood.



SydWest welcomes new Board member

SydWest Multicultural Services has welcomed Brent Pitts to its Board of Directors.

Brent is the current Chief Financial Officer and Executive General Manager Corporate Services at the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia.

A chartered accountant, Brent has more than 25 years' experience across a range of business and human services sectors and organisational cultures. For the past 10 years, he has excelled in leading change and building sustainable delivery models while achieving robust financial results.

He is particularly skilled in supporting organisations maintain and grow their services in the face of industry changes.

Read our media release <https://sydwestms.org.au/latest-news/sydwest-welcomes-new-board-member> for more information.



Mark your diary for the Africultures 2024 festival

Africultures, an annual festival that showcases the rich heritage and culture of Africa in Sydney, will be held on Saturday 28 September at Cathy Freeman Park, Sydney Olympic Park.

Now in its 15th year, the all-day festival is an exciting mix of bustling market stalls with arts and fashion for sale, vibrant lineups of dancers and musicians, and plenty of delicious food from across the African continent. It is a great day out for the whole family.

SydWest Multicultural Services is a proud sponsor of Africultures and will be onsite with a stall to promote our services and meet new people.

For more information, visit <https://africultures.com.au/africultures-2024/>

For the diary

- Sept 27 – Western Sydney Region Settlement Consortium Launch
- Sept 28 – Africultures 2024 festival
- Dec 3 - International Day of People with Disability

- Dec 5 - International Volunteer Day

Submit email enquiry

We hope you enjoyed catching up on SydWest news, events and personal success stories of our clients and customers.



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