



Community Connections

Issue 1, 2024

Table of contents

- CEO message
- Disability participants learn about advocacy
- Accelerating job opportunities in Home Care
- What will you do to inspire inclusion this International Women's Day?
- SydWest welcomes two new board members
- Intergenerational art project gets thumbs up from participants
- Help our Arabic and Hindi-speaking community have a say on cancer care

CEO message



March is the month when our community comes together to celebrate our cultural diversity, our achievements as women, and the knowledge and experience of our elders. We do this through Harmony Day, International Women's Day and Seniors Week.

Various conversations have taken place over the years

about the approach to these special dates, the true meaning behind these days and the marketing of them.

For example, in 1966 the UN proclaimed 'International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination' but in 1999 Prime Minister John Howard changed the name of the

commemoration in Australia to Harmony Day.

The UN has a theme for 2024 International Women's Day that is 'Count her in: Invest in women, accelerate progress' however the NSW Government is going with the theme Inspire Inclusion.

NSW Seniors Week has a festival theme, Reach Beyond, but the UN's International Day of Older Persons theme has not yet been released, and is celebrated in October.

My point is, while there have been changes over time about more positive framing and debate about which is the 'right' theme to commemorate, I'd prefer to move beyond this and reflect – how inclusive is today's society? How far have we progressed as women? How are we treating our older citizens? [Read the full editorial here](#)

Elfa Moraitakis
Chief Executive Officer



Disability participants learn about advocacy

Earlier this year we supported 5 disability participants to attend the Have A Say conference for people with intellectual disability to learn self-advocacy skills, and to celebrate ability and achievement.

At the Victorian event they learned about their rights, took part in various workshops and got to hear and share different views, opinions and experiences.

Included in the day were a range of 'come and try' activities designed to push participants out of their comfort zone – fancy a ride on a Harley Davidson anyone?

One attendee, Genny, said she learned “how to make a complaint and how to have a voice, choice and control about decisions in my life”. Another, Tara, said that while being away from family was hard, making new friends was her best memory of the trip.

The conference, the largest for people with disability in Australia, is an important event in the disability team’s calendar. It provides our disability participants a chance to practice independent living skills and build confidence and self-esteem.

Photo caption:

Front row: Diana, Charlene, Tara, Genny

Back row: Izabela, Rohan, Margaret.



Accelerating job opportunities in Home Care

A series of events which match local job seekers with roles in Home Care is proving a boon for employees and employers alike.

SydWest has been funded to host 5 Employment Accelerator events in Western Sydney before the end of March in a bid to alleviate skills shortages in Home Care and introduce more people to a meaningful career looking after seniors in their own homes.

So far events have been held in Blacktown, Mt Druitt and St Marys, with two more to come in Parramatta and Blacktown that target Home Care as well as other industries.

SydWest Settlement and Community Programs Manager Clement Meru said the in-person events are about fast-tracking people into jobs.

“Job seekers can connect directly with employers, learn about the roles available, and the training and qualifications needed – some fee free. They can be interviewed and get a job on the same day.”

Riddhi, from Blacktown, has been studying a Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing) because she wanted a job where she could help people.

She attended the first Employment Accelerator event in January, saying it was a great timesaver as she could get information about a range of organisations and job opportunities in the one place.

SSI provided the funding under its Home Care Workforce Support Program. Details about the next events are [available here](#).



What will you do to inspire inclusion this International Women's Day?

Take a sneak peak at one of the International Women's Day (IWD) videos we're planning to run across our social media channels and play at our special IWD lunch this week.

<https://youtu.be/2dZL82GmLOc>

We're so proud of our clients and staff who took part in this celebration of women and inclusion, and helped pose a challenge to us all - what actions could we take as individuals and organisations to inspire inclusion?

I hope you can follow our social media posts this week, comment and share all of your ideas.



SydWest welcomes two new board members

SydWest Multicultural Services has welcomed Sandra Casinader and Kim Heng to its Board of Directors.

Sandra is the Group Head of Enterprise Learning and Capability for the Westpac Group where she is accountable for the organisation's learning strategy, capability frameworks and learning governance as well as enterprise-wide data and digital programs.

Her background spans strategy, culture change, transformation and customer-facing roles, and she has more than 25 years' experience in financial services. She is also a former Board Member of Participate Australia, which merged with SydWest last year.

Kim Heng brings to the board expertise in technology and operations with an extensive background in leading business transformations.

Currently the Chief Operating Officer of Wilson Asset management, Kim's career spans both the private and government sectors where she has helped drive modern practices to organisations to boost efficiency and effectiveness.

SydWest CEO Elfa Moraitakis has welcomed the new appointees while thanking outgoing board members Naveen Jayavarapu and Matt Pancino for their service.

You can read the rest of our media release [here](#).



Intergenerational art project gets thumbs up from participants

An intergenerational art program which aims to boost community connection has been given the thumbs up by everyone who took part!

The Connection through Creativity initiative brings together young adults and older members of multicultural communities to create one half of a complementary artwork each.

Good Neighbour Australia, who designed and ran the program last year, found almost 90% of those who took part were 'very satisfied' with the art sessions, with every participant describing their interactions as excellent (67%) or good (33%).

SydWest supported the program by hosting the art sessions at our Blacktown premises. They were designed to address loneliness and social isolation among seniors, help develop new skills and confidence among all participants, and bridge the generational divide!

The program was funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice. Other supporters included Inner West Library, Australian Catholic University and the Philippine Australian Society for Senior Citizens.

Help our Arabic and Hindi-speaking community have a say on cancer care

We're recruiting people from Arabic and Hindi-speaking communities who have experiences of cancer to take part in a NSW Cancer Council survey.

The information provided could help save lives through improvements to care. Can you help us spread the word to people in this cohort? They must be:

- Aged 18 plus
- Living in Greater Western Sydney
- Have experienced a cancer diagnosis, recovered from cancer or currently a caregiver for someone affected by cancer.

We're asking people to share their experiences through a simple survey. They'll receive a \$25 Woolworths Gift Card in appreciation. The survey can be completed online, on paper, or in person.

People can express interest [here](#), then our staff will be in touch. Or contact SydWest if you require more information.

How to get involved

Use the QR code, or contact SydWest Multicultural Services:

Monica Youssif (Arabic spoken)
02 8825 3763

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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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