

[View in browser](#)

Community Connections Issue 2, 2022

CEO Message



The initial statistics published out of the 2021 Census, support what a lot of multicultural organisations like SydWest Multicultural Services have been advocating for, for several years now.

A strong national multicultural framework is needed to support Australia in advancing its multiculturalism. While Australia's diversity progressed, it is unfortunate that our policies fell short and that became evident during the pandemic.

While we will continue advocating, we welcome the announcement by the new Minister for Immigration and Citizenship the Hon. Andrew Giles, on the decision to commence collecting ethnicity data as part of measuring diversity in Australia.

The lack of such data has been a fundamental barrier to understanding the issues faced by diverse communities. The pandemic proved that having statistics on language and

background alone, does not assist in addressing issues impacting the community, especially during times of crisis.

We also welcome the announcement on the establishment of the Australian Multicultural Health Collaborative driven by FECCA. A timely initiative given the proven inequalities and barriers diverse communities face in accessing health services.

The Census also showed that one in twelve Australians have been diagnosed with a mental health issue and we hope that the collaborative will be able to also influence the development of relevant policies and services for our multicultural Australia.

And although we welcome the national voice on health and well-being there is a clear need for a national voice on the broader issues impacting our diverse communities. If this doesn't happen now that we are coming out of a pandemic and a bitter reality we all witnessed ... I am not sure we ever will.

Elfa Moraitakis
Chief Executive Officer

Over the last quarter, our SydWest family has made an active presence out in the communities to enrich the social connection we very much missed during the pandemic.

In this issue of Community Connections, we share with you our community engagement highlights as well as the latest of SydWest news and events.

Annual Youth Camp 12-14 April

The Youth team enjoyed their annual Youth Camp at Point Wolstoncroft Sport and Recreation Centre. The venue was on the edge of Lake Macquarie, which provided a wonderful backdrop for the group to enjoy activities including sailing, canoeing, bike riding and archery.

In the evenings, everyone shared smores around the campfire and enjoyed a trivia night. The camp was a great experience, as for many, it was their first time participating in water sport activities and eating western dishes such as roast chicken.

The focus of the camp lies in building the capacity and social connection of our young people. The programs of various activities and challenges were designed to build problem solving and teamwork skills amongst the youth, whilst improving their physical and mental well-being.



Activities such as this help to promote social inclusion and connection. By bringing young people who share the migration experience from varying backgrounds together in a group setting, it gives them the opportunity to connect and build friendships to help combat feelings of social isolation.

Some of the young people who attended are quite new to Australia and had not yet developed friendships. Through this program, they have built relationships that have extended beyond the camp into their day to day lives.

IFTAR Dinner with ACSA

On 19 April, in partnership with the [Afghan Community Support Association of NSW \(ACSA\)](#) SydWest hosted the IFTAR dinner.

Iftar literally means break fast, breaking their fast at the time of evening prayer – Iftar is the evening meal where Muslims end their daily Ramadan fast (which goes for 30 days), and is often held as a community, gathering together to break their fast together. Muslims believe that feeding someone Iftar is a form of charity.



This was a lovely community event, sharing an evening meal with our newly arrived clients from Syria, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan to share in free flowing conversation to identify challenges and issues - but also to acknowledge Muslim contributions to the community.

Minister's visit to SydWest

On 26 April, SydWest was delighted to host a visit in April from the Hon Karen Andrews MP, Minister for Home Affairs under the previous Federal Government and the new Liberal candidate for Greenway, Pradeep Pathi at our head office in Blacktown.

The ministerial visit was a great opportunity for our CEO, Elfa Moritakis, to share with the Minister the successes that SydWest has already enjoyed, as well as discuss the new Youth funding won by SydWest under the Safer Communities Fund Round 6 (Early Intervention).



This new program will support young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds in Blacktown City LGA who are, or are at high risk of, becoming involved with the criminal justice system.

As part of the visit, there was opportunity for the Minister and Mr Pathi to meet the SydWest Youth team and talk about the gaps that will be filled with this funding, looking forward to solid, long-term outcomes and success with the target youth.

ACU commences review of SydWest's training programs to assess impact

SydWest Multicultural Services is evaluating the employment services delivered through their Settlement Engagement and Transition Support program. The project will assess how the program helps their clients become more employable and will make recommendations for future program improvement.

Introducing the project team

Clement Meru, Community Engagement and Disability Services Manager
 Saurav Shrestha, Settlement Services Team Leader
 Dr Haydn Aarons, School of Arts
 Mrs Caroline Allen, ACU Engagement



Left to right: Caroline Allen, Puspaa Acharya, Haydn Aarons, Elfa Moraitakis, Vivien Cinque, Florrie Hessari, Saurav Shreshttha

SydWest at Blacktown Workers Club

Inaugural stall with Mo, Alyssa and Cristina went so well!

On 4 May and 29 June, SydWest's Aged Care team were out at Blacktown Workers Club to promote our services and respond to enquiries from the general public.

The team met people who even said they had been affiliated with SydWest before. So it was nice to re-enter back into their lives – one particular Filipino client, Edna, said she knew you personally from when she was with Sydwest, but at the time when she exited our programs and services, she was still below 65 for our social groups.

The team provided a step by step guide to access My Aged Care, and we hope to have her on board as a SydWest senior!

Edna was not alone when it came to having challenges understanding how to access My Aged Care. Many other seniors were also provided with this information. It has really proven to be a great opportunity to help seniors understand My Aged Care, and also introduce SydWest's programs and services as well.



Celebrating Mother's Day at Glenwood

The Women and Families team celebrated Mother's Day at Glenwood Community Hub, on 10 May, with more than 50 mothers and their children attending the event.

Our Women and Families Team also took the opportunity to present findings of the Community Consultation on 'Barriers to Employment for CALD Community' run in September 2021.

Clients from both the Women and Families Team as well as the Settlement team joined the celebrations. Group zumba dance was a great ice breaker, and everyone walked away with a gift of appreciation.



Celebrating National Volunteer Week, 18 May

This Volunteers Week, SydWest took the opportunity to acknowledge and thank our volunteers in their day to day contributions supporting our programs and services. It was lovely to hear from Dr Chandrika Subramaniyan and the opportunities volunteering can bring.



Mehdi Najafabad is the 2022 SydWest Volunteer of the Year. He has been an active volunteer with SydWest and always keen to help other newly arrived refugees. Mehdi is a dedicated and supportive volunteer with SydWest, assisting clients to obtain their learner and driver licenses, pass hazard perception and citizenship tests too.

SydWest is privileged to have such dedicated volunteers who make a world of difference to the programs and services we are able to offer the community. A big thank you to all our volunteers who invest their time and energy to a great cause!



SydWest marches the parade at Blacktown

On 28 May, SydWest staff, volunteers and clients came together to march the annual parade at Blacktown Festival. We raised our heads high and proud, chanting "SydWest, Best in the West," and greeted by some familiar faces along the way.



EWON and SydWest's

10 year partnership anniversary

In 2012, the Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW (EWON) approached SydWest Multicultural Services to propose a partnership aimed at teaching new refugees about managing their energy and water accounts. EWON delivered workshops for over 20 diverse customer groups with the assistance of interpreters and translated fact sheets.

The workshops were an immediate success and led to the first *Bring Your Bills Day in Blacktown*, an event that was so popular EWON began running it monthly. In 2015, the highly successful Bring Your Bills Day program was nominated for a Western Sydney Community Forum ZEST Award, reflecting its importance to the local community.

Customers brought their bills, raised concerns, and received free assistance including billing reviews, payment plan negotiation, and referrals to community agencies for payment assistance.

Over the past ten years, the partnership has and will continue to provide vital support to refugee and multicultural communities across the Greater Western Sydney region, and help people manage their energy and water consumption and bills.



African fashion, hair and beauty with SydWest Backswing

On June 10, SydWest's Backswing program headed to the streets again with a special one-day pop-up showcasing African fashion, hair and beauty.

Our participants engaged with the public to showcase their promotional and retail skills. Edmond Atalla MP, Member for Mt Druitt in NSW Parliament was our special guest for the day.

Click on the video link below to find out more about SydWest's Backswing program.



Did you know that SydWest now offers Centre-Based Respite (CBR) for Seniors?

The Centre-Based Respite program has been ramping up activities over the last couple of months, and our seniors have enjoyed a varied range of arts and craft, sporting activities like bowling as well as physio and mindfulness sessions - not to forget a visit to the Sydney Zoo at Bungarribee!



The bond between our seniors attending our fairly new day respite program has been growing significantly during the sessions and friendships are blooming. ❤️

Family outing to Sesame Street Circus Spectacular

As part of the Targeted Early Intervention [TEI] project, each year clients are invited to increase their participation in events happening within their local community.

This year, in partnership with Northcott Early Childhood Approach, the SydWest Women and Families team invited 47 clients to attend the Sesame Street Circus show at Blacktown Showground on Saturday, 11 June.

The show featured some of Sesame Street's most beloved characters including Elmo, Cookie Monster, Abby Cadabby and Bert and Ernie, as well as performers from Switzerland, Argentina, Colombia, Morocco, Brazil, Ethiopia and Australia.

Clients invited were some of our most regularly attending and actively involved families during COVID-19 lock downs. This outing provided an opportunity to participate in a community event, experience something new and enjoy the entertainment.



As you can see from some of the photos, it was a colourful outing and great to see some of our dads getting involved!

Women's multifaith perspectives on family violence

The Blacktown LGA has the highest reported rate of domestic violence in NSW, which affects all cultures and faith. SydWest Multicultural Services, Australian Catholic University and Harman Foundation partnered together to host a multi-faith event for women on Thursday, 16 June.



Attendees had the opportunity to hear from a panel of community leaders and professionals on the topic of domestic violence, and join in the discussions.

Hear from a panel of community leaders and professionals and actively take part in the discussions.



World Continece Week 20-26 June

SydWest hosted an informative and well-received special Continece Forum on Tuesday, 21 June. We had a fantastic turnout with almost 80 seniors from across SydWest’s Aged Care services and represented a great mix of cultures.

Everyone enjoyed a morning of information, practical exercise demonstrations and lots of useful give-aways. Sanda and Debbie from Kimberly-Clarke explained the benefits of disposable incontinence products.



Nathan from Night and Day showed us an extensive range of reusable incontinence garments, and Lalitha from World of Woman Physio had a very educational session on how the pelvic floor works, why we have issues and how we can improve our lifestyles.

Powerhouse Creative Studio

Powerhouse and TAFE NSW are collaborating on the development of new creative skills opportunities for young people in Western Sydney.

Creative Studio: Powerhouse + Space is a series of free hands-on workshops combining science, arts and play for children aged 4–12 and their families. With a focus on space to inspire young learners, join astrobiologist and science communicator Bonnie Teece in exploring a new theme each month until August.



Workshops are free, but bookings are essential as places are limited. All sessions are family workshops and parental supervision is required.

Please register tickets for children and at least one adult.

[Find out more](#)

Celebrating Refugee Week 2022

On 23 June, SydWest hosted a celebration of Refugee Week at the Blacktown Workers Club. We heard real stories of war, trauma, sacrifice, love and loss of everyday people who found themselves a refugee - who had no other choice but to leave their whole lives behind.



The stories of our guest speakers sharing their lived experience, shed insight of the struggles they faced.

It was powerful for those who share a refugee journey, to connect and heal as we celebrated their achievements, and triumph over the barriers they overcame as they started their lives afresh in Australia.

[Click to view booklet](#)



Sewing classes at Mt Druitt

This term's Sewing Class was based in our Mt Druitt office. Commencing in early March, our clients have attended 8 classes every Wednesday so far in this term and is ongoing until July.

As you can see from the photos, our clients are from different backgrounds and cultures (Arabic, Afghani, Turkish and another absent one from India). They are all happy working together in harmony and they are improving their social engagement and english skills.

They have learnt new sewing techniques, and putting their skills to the test, produced the below shirts and bags!



This initiative was very successful, and all participants received TAFE NSW's Statement in Education & Career Pathways CSO5555-V01. Sewing class is a wonderful opportunity to develop skills from a professional trainer and help our clients to run their own sewing business. Overall, these classes not only help to acquire new skills, it also provides regular opportunity to practice English conversation and social engagement skills.

Aged Care Client Story – Mrs Baluyot

Mrs Eduarda Baluyot is a Filipino background lady who lives with her husband. Mr and Mrs Baluyot do not have any children and Sydwest is their only support.

Mrs Baluyot suffers from progressive decline in her cognition. She is now fully dependent on her husband Virgilio and our care worker Nelly (who shares the same cultural

background), needing attendance to all aspects of instrumental activities of daily living and majority of her activities of daily living.



Mrs Baluyot does not respond much to external stimulation now, however, she smiles to Nelly whenever Nelly comes around. Nelly encourages her to sing and dance with karaoke and encourages her to go to her garden whenever she can.

With the support, Mr Baluyot can have a break from his caring role and Mrs Baluyot is supported to stay at her own home for as long as possible.

'Nelly is very caring - I can trust her and leave Eduarda to her care. To us, Nelly is like a part of our family' - Mr Baluyot

SydWest not only supports our seniors and their families with quality services to help our seniors to stay at their own home for as long as possible, but also provides care for their physical and mental well-being by engaging them in meaningful activities.

SydWest provides culturally appropriate services and caring staff. As a result, clients and families value our care workers as important as 'part of their families.'

Disability Connection Expo

On 1-2 July, SydWest Disability Services will be exhibiting at the International Convention Centre to promote our array of services. Introducing to you our team members who lent a helping hand with the expo preparations!



This brings us to the end of our second issue of Community Connections. We hope you enjoyed catching up on SydWest news, events and personal stories of our clients and customers.



SydWest Multicultural Services, Level 2 125 Main St, Blacktown, NSW 2148, Australia

[Unsubscribe](#) [Manage preferences](#)