



# Community Connections

## Issue 2, 2023

### CEO Message



The long-term viability of not-for-profit organizations in Australia has been a concern that has persisted for years. Challenges such as funding stability, intense competition, staff and volunteer retention, and navigating a complex regulatory environment have made the journey even more demanding. However, we see these obstacles as opportunities for growth and transformation.

To overcome these concerns, we have embarked on a path of strategic planning, unlocking new avenues of funding, and forging deeper connections with our invaluable stakeholders. We understand that true success lies in building resilient organizational and governance capabilities that empower us to navigate any challenges that come our way.

And this is why in the pursuit of a brighter future, SydWest Multicultural Services and Participate Australia decided to unite their strengths through our recent merger. With a shared history spanning nearly eight decades, both organizations have always been guided by unwavering values and an unwavering commitment to our vibrant community.

Our collective vision and positive future vision became even more apparent during our recent gathering of office staff on the 6th of June. Despite the challenges and exhaustion that many of our team members faced in the wake of the pandemic, the prevailing sentiment about the

future was one of optimism and enthusiasm. We draw inspiration from our strengths as we continue to serve and support the diverse needs of Greater Sydney, while also exploring new avenues to expand our range of services.

I take immense pride in the overwhelmingly positive feedback we have received from the sector and our valued stakeholders. It fills me with great anticipation to continue working alongside an extraordinary group of individuals, as we chart an ambitious strategy for the future. Together, we will overcome any obstacles that arise, driven by our ongoing dedication to the community we serve.

Elfa Moraitakis  
Chief Executive Officer

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## SydWest and Participate Australia Unites Forces

SydWest is pleased by the positive sentiment in regard to our strategic vision for better serving the Western Sydney community.

"This merger will provide SydWest with more opportunities for a holistic approach in their service delivery, and reduce barriers and stress for people from CALD backgrounds in accessing NDIS support," said Blacktown MP and Parliamentary Secretary for Planning Stephen Bali.

"With the growing cost of living pressures faced by Australians, the merger will be able to manage the complex needs of people from all walks and stages of life,

"Congratulations for continuously supporting the needs of the Western Sydney community and believing in the true essence of access to equity."



SydWest Multicultural Services had a get-together session with Participate Australia, organised by Carmel Molloy of the Nonprofit Alliance, to learn about each other's shared values and beliefs after the merger was confirmed effective 1 May 2023.

Participate Australia is an organisation that specialises in the provision of support services to people living with disability and their carers, bringing deep knowledge, skills, and expertise in disability services to further the range of SydWest's operations.

This decision by both Boards marks a new chapter in our combined 80-year history and sends a strong message to our sector. Our strengths need to be celebrated and leveraged, with the community always at the heart of what we do. This partnership will provide continuity of front-line services along with the opportunity to improve the customer experience and grow the capabilities of our dedicated workforce.

Read the full media release [here](#).



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## Men and Women's Training Camp

SydWest organised a training camp from 28 to 30 April 2023 in Sydney Sport and Recreation Centre Narrabeen for 36 of our Afghani and Arabic-speaking clients. The camps were designed to provide training on Confidence building and Community development.

Read the full story [here](#).



## Homeless mum secures housing

### This is her story

After approaching us for help, a SydWest Homelessness case worker assisted Mrs. Shah\* with secure long-term accommodation and will move into Transitional Accommodation for 6 months with her 1-month-old baby boy. Mrs. Shah and her son have been in temporary accommodation since they came out of the hospital last month, and we have been supporting them to secure a rental or public housing property.

Read her full story [here](#).

\*Name changed for confidentiality.

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## Meeting mental health care needs for our seniors

Home Care recipient Mr. Scibilia, who was on 24-hour oxygen support, was suffering from depression due to his social isolation. This also put Mr. Scibilia's wife, Mrs. Scibilia, under a lot of carer stress, and they were looking for a solution that could help alleviate their situation.

SydWest arranged a nursing visit for the Scibilia family with our Clinical Care Manager, who identified their needs and organised a portable oxygen tank that enabled him to leave the house while still meeting his physical needs.

Read the full story [here](#).

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## Refugee Week

We hosted several events this year in Blacktown and Mt Druitt to celebrate Refugee Week with our clients. We also hosted *The Future of Settlement in Penrith* to reaffirm Penrith City Council's commitment towards being a refugee welcoming zone.

The Penrith Settlement strategy was initially put on hold due to the pandemic, but the vision and the focus to assist the region in becoming ready for refugee settlement remained alive. The event initiated an important conversation amongst state government, refugees, community, stakeholders, and service providers, and we are looking forward to maintaining that engagement and supporting humanitarian support in the area.

## CEO Elfa Moraitakis inducted into ZEST Hall of Fame

Congratulations to our CEO, [Elfa Moraitakis - Gonopoulos](#) whose name is now sitting proudly on the Hall of Fame! Last Friday, Elfa was awarded for her work and leadership in the community sector at the 2023 ZEST Awards. Elfa has always been a passionate advocate for multicultural communities and applies innovative best practice approaches to ensure the voices of our diverse communities are heard.

We are proud and blessed to be under her leadership, lighting the beacon for sector innovation and bridging the gaps for the communities we serve



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## Volunteer Week

We hosted a Volunteer Recognition Day on May 17 to acknowledge all the wonderful volunteers who've helped SydWest enrich the Western Sydney community. We'd like to thank our guest speaker, 2022 NSW Volunteer of the Year Clementine Hartson of Project Kindness, and Blacktown City Council for donating the wonderful seedlings that came with every gift package for our volunteers.

Special congratulations to Volunteer of the Year Mervat Kandaleft for her work with SydWest, where she has promoted settlement services and improved the lives of many new arrivals by organising outings, English classes, and information sessions to help them settle into Australia.



## International Women's Day

This year we hosted our annual International Women's Day (IWD) event in partnership with Tamil Valarchi Manram to celebrate and encourage women of all backgrounds to #embraceequity and grab their right to equality with both hands!



Expert speakers explored the intersections of the legal system and domestic violence through the dowry system.

Thank you to our attendees, panelists, and performers, and congratulations to all the women of Western Sydney for their contributions to their community.

Find the full list of award recipients [here](#) and click on the video below to watch a recap of everything that unfolded at our event.



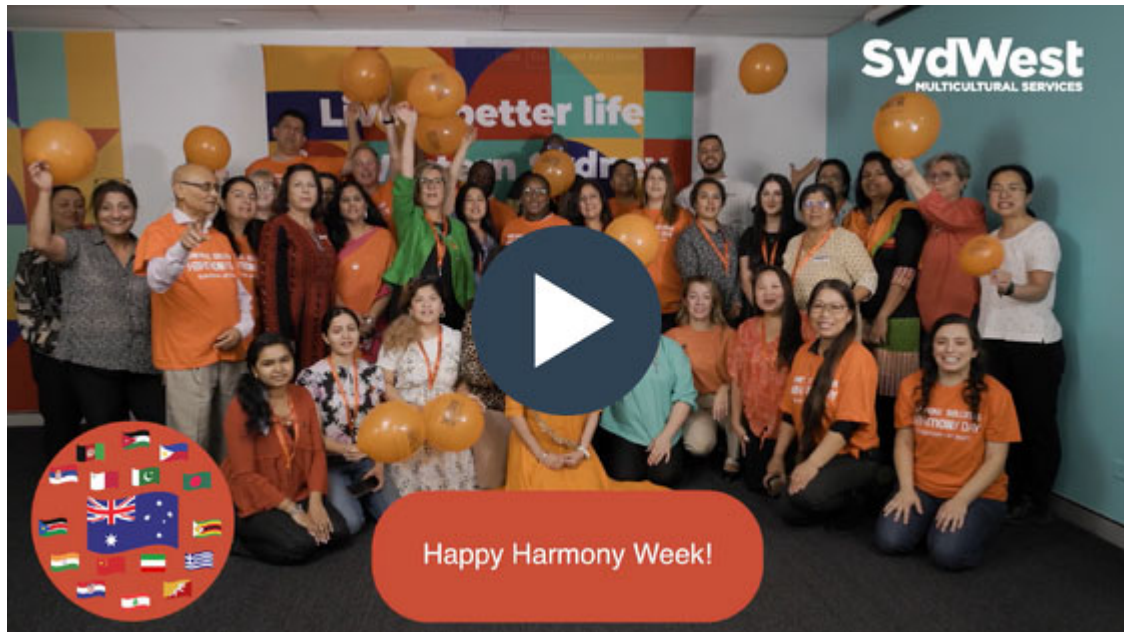
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## Harmony Day

Our annual Harmony Week celebration event on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was hosted on March 21 2023 in Blacktown.

We would like to thank our performers for sharing their cultural entertainment, and would also like to thank our special guest speakers, including the Deputy Mayor of Blacktown Julie Griffiths, and SydWest Youth representative Zahra Tokhi, who provided a wonderful youth perspective on Harmony Week.





## Iftar

SydWest hosted an Iftar event at the [Afghan Community Support Association of NSW Australia \(ACSA\)](#) Hall on April 12 in support of the Muslim members of the community who were observing Ramadan.

We would like to thank our speakers Nader Azamy (ACSA President), Dor Achiek ([Settlement Services International - SSI](#)), Abir Daher, Ahmad Jaber Chakari, and Fawziya Amiri, whose stories showcased the power that settlement service providers have and the connection we create with local communities through important cultural and religious events to enhance social cohesion and appreciation of one another.





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## BELA Graduation 2023

SydWest Multicultural Services would like to congratulate all the graduates for the latest group of our Blacktown Emerging Leaders & Advocates (BELA) program. Each participant was paired up with a mentor and participated in workshops to develop their leadership skills and confidence.

Well done to all the participants and we can't wait to see what you do in the future!



# Social Impact Summit: Register Now!

SydWest CEO Elfa Moraitakis will be speaking at the Social Impact Summit, on the importance of equipping the next generation of leaders to make a long-term, positive and sustainable impact on people and communities to come [#togetherforgood](#).

Please [register here](#) if you are interested in attending the event at UTS Sydney on July 3rd and 4th.



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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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