



Community Connections

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From the CEO



As we have had time to digest news from the recent Federal Budget, we can see that it provided a mixed bag of measures. Some good initiatives for our community include energy rebates and higher rent assistance, but of course cost-of-living continues to hit hard.

We are pleased with the increased funds for domestic violence however the work ahead now is to push to have it allocated to areas like the Blacktown local government area, which has the second highest rates of reported domestic violence in NSW. We believe that under-reporting, particularly in culturally diverse communities like ours, remains high.

In other news, we have now closed our Rouse Hill office and will instead open a new office in Penrith, at 15-17 Castlereagh St. Our new office location takes advantage of population growth and will serve as a base for aged care, settlement and youth services initially.

Last month we celebrated National Volunteer Week, hosting a special morning tea for our 25 wonderful volunteers who contribute a range of skills to our organisation and community, from mentoring drivers and helping them get their licence, to teaching English and helping at our regular playgroups for mothers and their children. We are grateful for their contributions.

Finally, with the end-of-financial-year focus this month, please remember that SydWest is a registered charity and can accept donations, which supplements our work supporting refugees and other new arrivals, youth at risk and other key programs. All [donations](#) are tax deductible.

Warmest wishes,
Clement Meru
Acting CEO



Zest Award win for arts and culture project

We are thrilled to have won the Outstanding Community Arts and Culture category at last week's Zest Awards, hosted by Western Sydney Community Forum.

The award was for the innovative Intergenerational Art Program which pairs seniors with young people to create art and help address isolation. It was designed by Good Neighbours Australia, with SydWest hosting the art workshops with our local seniors and youth. The Aged Care team was there on the night to collect the award.

We were also nominated twice for our Employment Accelerator program. The competition was super tough with many, many worthy nominees, so while Zest didn't announce the Accelerator program a winner on the night, we know it was a huge win for the community.

Our congratulations go to all other winners and nominees from the awards evening.



Caption: Georgie (seated) and Hanna (standing) taking part in the video shoot.

Launch of sexuality videos for people with disability

We've created a series of educational videos for people with disability to support them with their relationships, sexuality, gender identity and expression.

The videos were co-designed with our disability participants who helped develop the scripts, film and act in the videos which were funded through a Council for Intellectual Disability My Rights Matter grant.

Georgie, one of our disability participants, said it was important that people with disability were seen as wanting the same things in life as everyone else. 'I really loved doing the videos, even though I was very nervous to begin with. It is good to see other people with disability talking about things that matter to us and I hope other members of the community see this too.'

The videos are discussion starters designed to be used by people with disability, their families, friends and networks, and as a training tool for our disability workers.

You can view three of the videos as follows:

- [Supported Decision Making and Consent](#)

- [Different Relationships and Relationship Goals](#)
 - [Gender Identity and providing good support](#)
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Preparing to welcome migrants from the Pacific

In July, 3000 migrants from across the Pacific and Timor-Leste will come to Australia through the Federal Government's new Pacific Engagement Visa. We expect many to settle in Blacktown and surrounding areas, where there is already a thriving Pasifika community.

Under the new visa program, arrivals will have access to settlement-related information, advice, advocacy and assistance.

So that we are prepared to welcome and work with new community members, our staff have completed 4 hours of Pasifika cultural training through the Pacific Islands Mt Drutt Action Network (PIMDAN). We've also employed two Pacific Islander staff to educate and guide us in culturally appropriate engagement.

This is a unique opportunity to build stronger ties to Pasifika communities in Western Sydney and welcome new families to our community.



Engineering students empower community to solve local challenges

A new partnership between SydWest Multicultural Services and RMIT University will see humanitarian engineering students working with our culturally diverse community to solve local issues, using local resources.

The *SydWest-RMIT Engagement Challenge* will focus specifically on ways young people and seniors can work together to address issues across health, energy, infrastructure and the environment.

Projects could include how to address climate change and heat stress and designing housing appropriate for larger families or seniors from culturally diverse backgrounds.

For more information [read our media release](#).



SydWest Board member Prof Peter Zelas OAM (left) with award winner Bashir Faiz and SydWest HR Manager Nicholette Bowen

Volunteer of the Year helps navigate road to driving success

Two hours every week, Bashir Faiz can be found in the passenger seat of the SydWest learner driver car, patiently instructing newly arrived refugees so that they can obtain a NSW drivers' licence.

The qualified driving instructor, who runs his own driving business, has been doing this for 7 years and was recently recognised with SydWest's Volunteer of the Year award.

Bashir's voluntary work with the Learner Driver Mentor Program helps alleviate the cost of driving lessons for new arrivals. Having a driver's licence means greater independence and self-confidence, and greater chances of getting a job. 'I am honoured to be making a small contribution to this fantastic organisation,' he said.

SydWest caseworker Khatol Ahmadzay said the type of people Bashir is helping include a sole parent from Afghanistan, who could not read or write, and was struggling to get her children to school, or to get to a job. With the dedicated help of Bashir, she was able to obtain her licence, opening up a world of opportunity for her and her family.

'His selfless commitment and positive impact on our organisation and community make him a truly deserving candidate for this year's award,' said Saurav Shrestha, Settlement Services Team Leader.

Anyone interested in volunteering can [find out more here](#).



Civics program helps educate new arrivals about our democracy

Members of the local community have been busy learning about democracy through visits to our Federal and NSW parliaments.

It's all part of a civics education program for emerging migrant and refugee leaders and those preparing to become Australian citizens.

Community leadership mentor Om Dhungel said the program was a collective effort to create an army of community champions.

'It's all about empowering communities and community leaders to build and enhance social capital through bonding, bridging and linking. This helps contribute to social cohesion and harmony and in turn, a thriving society,' he said.

Funding was provided by the NSW Government, following a nomination by Member for Blacktown Stephen Bali..



UNDSEM team I-r Mallory, Rebecca, and Tom

Gratitude for giving – thanks to our donors

Every year, selfless individuals and organisations donate money to SydWest that we use to supplement our work with new arrivals settling in Australia.

This year we continue to receive funds from a range of small donors and we would like to express our thanks to them.

Donors include staff at the Homebush West Harvey Norman Offices and students from the University of Notre Dame Society for Equity in Medicine (UNDSEM), who both raised funds as part of their Harmony Day celebrations.

UNDSEM Chair Rebecca Gleeson said: *'We chose to raise money for SydWest Multicultural Services because your mission really lines up with ours. We can see that you do amazing work helping people from diverse backgrounds integrate into the community.'*

Donations of \$2.00 or more are gratefully received and fully tax deductible. Anyone wishing to make an end of financial year donation can visit our website [here](#).

NDIS newly launched CALD strategy

We're pleased to see that the NDIS has released its [Cultural and Linguistic Diversity Strategy](#). Their priorities show they are keen to upskill their organisation and workforce as well as support all NDIS providers to meet the cultural needs of participants.

As a specialist in culturally and linguistically diverse service provision, SydWest is looking forward to being able to support and inform the NDIS into the future.

For the diary

- 16-22 June, Refugee Week
- 19 June, SydWest Refugee Week event at Bowman Hall, Blacktown
- 7-14 July, NAIDOC Week
- 2-3 August, Sydney Disability Expo, Sydney Olympic Park

[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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