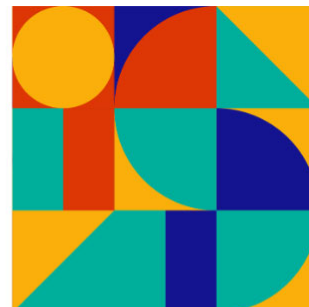


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Community Connections

CEO Message

From crisis response to nation-building: Rethinking social cohesion in Australia

In recent months we have once again been reminded of how fragile our social cohesion can be when fear and divisive narratives are allowed to take control. Across Australia, we have witnessed incidents that have caused real hurt and anxiety for communities.



This is a reminder that we cannot take our multicultural success story for granted. We all have a responsibility to challenge these narratives that seek to divide us or diminish the contributions of any group to our national story.

As community leaders, service providers and citizens, we must move beyond simply responding to moments of crisis. We need a proactive vision for the country we want to build; one that recognises that belonging, participation and inclusion are fundamental to a strong and resilient society. Social cohesion is not achieved through compliance or uniformity; it is built through meaningful connections, mutual respect and a shared commitment to our democratic values.

This month, I thought I will share some thoughts from a group of civil society advocates including myself, which was published by Dr Andrew Jakubowicz, Emeritus Professor, as a contribution to the national conversation on social cohesion and multicultural nation-building. The paper argues that Australia must move beyond viewing social cohesion as simply the absence of conflict and instead focus on building social resilience. A society where diverse communities are recognised, valued and connected through shared purpose.

The paper highlights three essential pillars for Australia's future: strong settlement

also identifies three foundational principles, recognition, mutuality and reciprocity, which remind us that when one community is harmed, all Australians are affected, and when communities work together, everyone benefits.

Importantly, the paper calls for practical action: stronger national leadership on multicultural affairs, meaningful investment in intercultural engagement, greater community voice in decision-making, and sustained efforts to combat racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia and all forms of discrimination. These should not be perceived simply as policy considerations. They are nation-building priorities.

Australia has already demonstrated that people from different cultures, faiths and backgrounds can build strong communities together but how prepared are we to strengthen that legacy for future generations? At SydWest, we remain committed to building a more inclusive, connected and resilient society. A society where every person feels they belong and where no community is left to face discrimination or exclusion alone.

Elfa Moraitakis

CEO

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Riverlink and SydWest. A New Chapter

Nearly 40 years ago, **Riverlink Disability Services** began with a group of parents who wanted better support for their children. It grew into a trusted, community-focused service known for treating people “like family.”

From 1 July 2026, Riverlink Disability Services and SydWest Multicultural Services officially come together as one unified organisation, **SydWest**.

This is a meaningful step forward, allowing our organisation to support even more communities across a wider region, including Nepean, Greater Western Sydney, and the Inner West.

[Read our FAQs here](#)

[Read our statement 16th July](#)



SydWest Marks Refugee Week 2026

celebrated Refugee Week 2026 (14–21 June) under the theme *"A Million Stories."* Community members, partners and stakeholders came together across Western Sydney to recognise the strength, resilience and contributions of people from refugee backgrounds.

Highlights included community events in Blacktown and Penrith, showcasing the region's rich cultural diversity and celebrating local leaders and program participants.

SydWest CEO Elfa Moraitakis said, "Refugee Week is both a celebration and an opportunity to recognise the courage of people rebuilding their lives in Australia." Ms Moraitakis reaffirmed SydWest's commitment to supporting pathways to employment, education and social inclusion, helping people from refugee backgrounds thrive and contribute to their communities.

Watch Blacktown Highlights



Kassem's Story: From Arrival to Independence

Kassem arrived in Australia from Syria in 2025, alone and with limited English, determined to build a new life. Facing financial constraints and housing challenges, he sought support from SydWest to help navigate settlement.

Through targeted support, Kassem quickly began rebuilding his life. He started volunteering with Blacktown City Council, contributing to local bushland conservation and developing confidence, skills, and community connections.

With further guidance, Kassem completed an Asbestos Awareness Course, obtained

opportunities and additional income through private work.

Today, Kassem is living independently, has his Learner Driver Licence, and is working towards expanding his employment opportunities. He is now financially stable and able to support his family overseas while saving to start his own business.

Kassem's journey highlights the powerful impact of early support, determination, and access to opportunities in achieving successful settlement.

Kassem says: **"When I arrived, everything felt difficult and uncertain. With support and hard work, especially from Mervat at SydWest, I've been able to build a stable life. Now I can support my family and work towards my own business and I'm proud of how far I've come."**

Walking together in Western Sydney

SydWest is proud to partner with UNSW Business School as part of this year's [ImpactMaker program](#). Now in its second year, ImpactMaker connects community organisations and local councils across Greater Western Sydney with UNSW Business School academics to develop collaborative responses to local challenges.

SydWest's project, *Walking Together in Western Sydney: Strengthening CALD–First Nations Connections*, will explore culturally safe, community-led and sustainable ways to strengthen relationships and shared understanding between culturally and linguistically diverse communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Western Sydney.

This project represents an important step in SydWest's Reconciliation journey and hope it will provide practical guidance on how we can demonstrate solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities while strengthening our commitment to truth-telling, reconciliation and healing.

To learn more about the project or opportunities to get involved, please email thom.calma@sydwestms.org.au.



Aged Care workers — Serbian, Croatian & Bosnian

At 81, Mira's English was enough for the basics but not enough for the things that mattered.

Then her new care worker greeted her in Serbian. That morning, they laughed, they talked, and for the first time in months, Mira felt truly at home.

Good care is more than assistance. It's being *heard*.

SydWest is recruiting **Aged Care Workers** and we urgently need speakers of **Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian** to support our Western Sydney seniors community.

Know someone perfect for this role? We'd love to hear from you.

Tel: **02 9621-6633** | Em: **info@sydwest.org.au**



Cost of living pressures hit charities and communities

Cost of living pressures are taking a toll on both charities and the communities they support, according to new data from the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

Commissioner Sue Woodward AM said the [12th edition of the Australian Charities Report](#) shows charity sector expenses surpassed significant revenue growth, based on analysis of 53,641 Annual Information Statements submitted by charities for the 2024 reporting period.

Read more in the [12th edition of the Australian Charities Report](#).

SydWest welcomes NSW State Budget

The NSW Government's 2026–27 State Budget delivers a historic \$184 million investment over four years for domestic and family violence programs, transitioning to longer-term contracts to ensure continuity of care. SydWest welcomed the funding yet emphasised that culturally responsive care must be deliberately embedded across all initiatives to effectively support Western Sydney's diverse communities.

[Read SydWest's comments here](#)



Appointment of new Head of Disability Support

We are delighted to welcome **Nazia Ahmed** to the team as Head of Disability Support, based in our Croydon office. This appointment reinforces the SydWest's leadership capability and ongoing commitment to delivering high-quality, person-centred disability services. Nazia brings more than 16 years of experience in the disability sector, with extensive expertise in service delivery, operational leadership and quality improvement. [Click here to read our full media release.](#)

Dates in the Diary

5-12 Jul - NAIDOC Week

7 Aug - Aged Care Employee Day

24 Oct - Africultures Festival

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