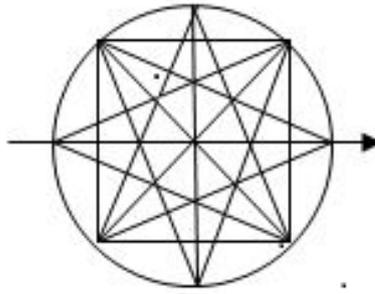


**Chairs:**

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**MIGRANT SETTLEMENT COMMITTEE (Eastern Region)**

Standing Committee of the Communities' Council on Ethnic Issues (Eastern Region) Inc.

Reg. No. A0017562S

**Minutes**

**June 4, 2021**

**Zoom 9:30 am – 11:00 am**

**Chair: Ken Pang and Sam Navarria**

1. **Welcome – Ken Pang** welcomed members and guests of the MSC.
2. **Acknowledgement of Country – Chris Cosgriff.** Acknowledged the traditional custodians of the lands on which MSC participants are meeting, and paid respect to their leaders past present and emerging.

**3. Attendance**

**Present**

Tina Andriotis	BH Institute
Donna Askew	ECLC
Sally Brooks	MIC
Iresha Butthgamuwa	ECLC, Community Development Coordinator
Chris Cosgriff	CCOEI, Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place Ambassador
Heather Cosgriff	CCOEI, Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place Ambassador
Katrine Gabb	Manningham Council, Community Development Officer, Access and Inclusion
Gulsoom Jaghuri	AMES
Helen Jurcevic OAM	Women's Friendship Group Manningham, President
Sophie McKenzie	MIC youth settlement worker
Jenny Mitchell	Whitehorse Manningham Libraries, CALD Branch Manager
Sam Navarria	MSC/CCOEI
Tamika O'Brien	NEAMI National, Peer Support Worker
Saarah Ozeer	Bounce
Con Pagonis	CCOEI, ECCV Senior Volunteer
Ken Pang	CCOEI
Madeleine Parker	DET Senior Project Officer EAL
Carole Pondevie-Lay	Melbourne Polytechnic Community Liaison and Engagement Manager
Vicki Selimi	Services Australia Multicultural Services Officer
Cynthia Shaw	CCOEI, MSC
Sui Ting Tse	CCOEI President
Wenyu	EDVOS
Emma Wilkinson	Boroondara Council, Social Inclusion Projects and Policy Officer

**Apologies**

Dilnaz Billimoria	Whitehorse Interfaith Network
Krishiani Dassanayake	CCOEI, Community member
Helen Forbes-Mewett	Monash University, Associate Professor Sociology
Robin Steward	ATO, Migrant Education
Varvara Yoannou	Food for Thought Network, Founder and Chair

**Guests**

Maria Loupetis  
Ruth Bignell

Refugee Health Nurse (RHN) program  
Foundation House

**4. Minutes - MSC May 7 2021 meeting**

Moved Sui Ting Tse, seconded Chris Cosgriff. Minutes accepted.

**5. Business Arising** – incorporated in the meeting agenda.

**6. Correspondence** – The Australian Human Rights Commission has accepted CCOEI's membership of the *Racism Stops With Us* campaign. CCOEI is now an official supporter of the campaign, and will acknowledge and badge relevant events.

*Amplifying Community Voices in the East* – ECLC & partners Anti-Racism Grant (State Government). Ken has circulated correspondence that has come to the MSC desk.

**7. MSC 2021 Calendar** (Sam Navarria) Calendar on track.**MSC Calendar 2021**

MSC meeting dates	Focus, organisation(s) and speaker(s)	Host organisation and chair	Forums/events convenors and working groups
04 Jan	No meeting		
05 Feb	Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) in Eastern Melbourne. • MIC – Settlement in the EMR, Trends and MIC Program highlights - Judy McDougall, Senior Project Officer • AMES – Impact of COVID 19 on the HSP and Australian refugee intake – Christina Shi, AMES HSP Team Leader	Migrant Information Centre (MIC). Chair: Jessica Bishop, MIC Manager.	
05 March	Indigenous cultural traditions and history: Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place (MMIGP): a cultural perspective through art and craft. Presenter: Aunty Irene Norman, Elder and Artist	MMIGP. Chair: Chris Cosgriff	Harmony Day event – CCOEI and MMIGP. Event postponed to a later month Covid-19 restrictions permitting. Convenor: Chris; working group: Heather, Cynthia, Gitta, Dan, Howard Tankie (Whitehorse Friends for Reconciliation), Tom (Maroondah Movement for Reconciliation) Thong Tawng (Foundation House)
02 April	No meeting (Easter)		
07 May	Education, training, employment pathways and community engagement: a collaborative approach. Melbourne Polytechnic and Melbourne AMEP providers: Carole Pondevie-Lay, Barbara Reeckman.	Melbourne Polytechnic. Chair: Carole Pondevie-Lay	
04 June	Mental Health, CALD youth and families – the impact of Covid-19 on families, recovery and support: Ruth Bignell, Foundation House, and Maria Loupetis, Refugee Health Nurse (RHN) program - shared presentation.	Chair: Ken Pang and Sam Navarria	
02 July	NO MEETING		
06 August	<b>LGA's engaging CALD communities.</b> Speakers: Welcoming Australia CEO Aleem Ali on <i>Welcoming Cities, and Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA) Inclusion and Diversity Lead Deborah Wu.</i>	Chair: Ken Pang and Sam Navarria	
03 Sept	Opening Doors. Speakers/presenters Alex Mills and Opening Doors graduates (TBC)	TBA	

	The Orange Door – Victorian Government family violence services initiative in the East. Brendan Wilson (TBC)	TBA	
01 Oct	Covid-19 Recovery and CALD communities ECCV – Chris Christoforou Executive Officer (TBC); VMC - Hakan Akyol, Director (TBC)	ECCV (TBA)	
05 Nov	Digital Literacy: a human rights issue. Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission. Australian Digital Inclusion Index. CCOEI AGM (TBC)		
03 Dec	Review of MSC Calendar 2021 and planning 2022. End of year celebration		

**8. Meeting Focus: Mental Health, CALD youth and families – the impact of Covid-19 on families, recovery and support:** Ruth Bignell, Counsellor-Advocate, Foundation House, and Maria Loupetis, Refugee Health Nurse (RHN) program.

**Note:** Ruth's and Maria's PowerPoint presentations have been circulated to MSC members post meeting. These notes are based on the presentations.

In introducing Ruth and Maria, Sam referred to the injection of budget for mental health by the Federal Government 2.3 B, and State Government 3.8 B. This indicates a strong recognition of a crucial area of health that has been very much under resourced.

Ruth: **Foundation House**, politically independent and non-profit organisation was established in 1987, with offices in all regions of Melbourne. Its mission is to advance the health, wellbeing and human rights of people from refugee backgrounds who have experienced torture or other traumatic events. FH is not a crisis/acute mental health service nor a case management service. Its work: counselling and advocacy, mental health clinics, policy and research, schools programs, therapy. Access and eligibility for services is not limited to date of arrival in Australia. Services are free.

Eastern Region clients: 232 active clients, mostly adult refugees from Iran and Myanmar. Data of refugee categories and settlement in specific LGAs will be circulated to the MSC.

Clients present with traumatic stress and grief, depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation. Engagement can be weekly, fortnightly or monthly and can be short, medium or long term depending on individual need.

FH Integrated Trauma Recovery model covers advocacy, building capacity and service delivery with a focus on safety and control, connections and belonging, meaning identity and justice, dignity and value.

During Covid in 2020 FH addressed areas impacting mental health - social isolation, family violence, self-harm, lethargy, depression and anxiety, and regressive behaviours in children. Covid 19 increased depressive and anxious presentations especially when refugee trauma and persecution is evoked. Counselling and advocacy were provided by phone, video conferencing, and face to face when urgent and safe. Appointments were held outdoors, by telehealth, direct messaging, and sending materials by post. Therapeutic advocacy for young people was very important during restrictions.

Systemic observations of the impact of Covid 19: loss of income, reduced access to resources and lack of resources for remote learning, food scarcity, and issues for children reintegrating to school. FH is running a Mental Health project from all FH sites, which seeks to normalise and destigmatize mental health symptoms that might be emerging in the context of Covid 19.

Referral to FH services is centralised in the Brunswick office, through the following process

<https://foundationhouse.org.au/for-clients/make-a-referral/>

The referral form should be emailed or faxed on (03) 9277 7871.

Maria: the RHN program sees all Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) clients settling in the east of Melbourne referred by AMES Settlement. Asylum seekers and refugees post arrival are also referred by other agencies. RHN is responsible for the initial health assessment, completes a health report and arranges the first visit to GPs. Referrals are to EACH's health services and to external services, e.g. optometry, audiology. Mental health and wellbeing are part of the services. Important to build rapport and trust with the client right from the start. Interpreters are used when needed.

EACH's RHP also provides health assessment of refugees and asylum seekers post settlement referred by various agencies. Other services include Mantoux skin testing, catch up immunisation clinics, health education, support for the outreach RCH clinic, and support for refugee health GP clinics. It facilitates the Eastern Region Refugee Health Network.

Top client languages in 2020-2021: Chin Hakka, Zomi, Farsi, Burmese and Tibetan. Data of visas 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, and 866 settlement in the east, and by LGAs across the state over the last 10 years has Maroondah 8 and Yarra Ranges 13 out of 15. People seeking asylum data: the lodgement numbers are high compared to the granting of PPVs, and impact mental health.

**Impact of Covid-19:** Border closure has stopped referrals; support via telehealth; anxiety brought on by Covid; cooperative relationship with FH and MIC; main referrals are asylum seekers through AMES, Red Cross, ASRC, Cabrini; increase in referrals for mental health services for existing and new clients. Mental health issues: depression, anxiety, isolation, unsure of virus, etc. issues of remote learning; family violence. Loss of Status Resolution Support Services (SRSS) supports for those seeking asylum. Important note: people seeking asylum who do not have a Medicare card have access to hospitals for medical care including: emergency, elective, pathology and radiology, mental health. [Hospital access for people seeking asylum - health.vic](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/hospital-access-for-people-seeking-asylum) ambulance cover not provided.

The Royal Commission report on Victoria's Mental Health System found that the service is inequitable, uncoordinated, not well integrated, access issues etc. The Victorian Refugee Health Network will be focusing on the mental health budget services and initiatives.

Referral pathways for mental health: FH, EACH and other service providers cover various aspects. At times wait lists are long.

Covid Vaccination for asylum seekers available in Ringwood and Lilydale – Contact Maria for details on 9837 3900 or [mloupetis@each.com.au](mailto:mloupetis@each.com.au) and [Refugee Health Program - EACH](#)

On behalf of the MSC Sam thanked Ruth and Maria for their excellent presentations. Agencies and organisations can contact Ruth and Maria for further information.

**9. “Cooee!” (Con Pagonis):** The monthly publication has been reviewed and the newsletter is going to be published twice a month, on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month. Contribution deadline is on the Friday before publication date. Next issue number 45. Newsletter read by 300-400 readers. Read across the state and nationally.

## **10. Agency reports and information**

**10.1 Manningham Council (Katrine Gabb)** Council is holding a forum on 28 June *Strength through Connections*. The purpose is to better link the Council with multicultural communities and how they can engage with Council on an ongoing basis.

## **10.2 Services Australia (Vicki Selimi)**

Face-2-Face Transformation: *Appointment based service*

- We're transforming face to face services for our customers

- Service by appointment is becoming the standard way we offer face-to-face Centrelink services to customers Australia-wide.
- Customers can skip the queue and visit a service centre at a time that suits them.
- *To book an appointment*, customers can:
  - call their regular Centrelink payment line
  - call 131 202 to speak to us in their language
  - speak to a service officer at a service centre
- If the customer needs an interpreter, we'll book one to join the appointment.
- Customers should arrive about 10 minutes before their appointment time to check-in. They won't need to wait in a queue.

For more information go to [servicessaustralia.gov.au/appointments](https://servicessaustralia.gov.au/appointments)

#### **COVID19 Disaster Payment:**

To get it you must meet all of the following:

- you're an [Australian resident](#) or hold an eligible working visa
- you're 17 years or older
- you don't get an [income support payment](#), the [Pandemic Leave Disaster Payment](#), a state or territory pandemic payment or a state small business payment for the same period
- you live or work in a COVID-19 hotspot
- you had paid employment and because of the lockdown you can't attend work on or after day 8 of lockdown
- you've lost income on or after day 8 of lockdown and don't have any appropriate paid leave entitlements
- you have liquid assets of less than \$10,000.

Liquid assets are any funds readily available to you in cash or savings, or assets that can easily be changed into cash quickly. For example, money loaned to other people.

If you're a [member of a couple](#), you can both claim this payment. You and your partner will need to make separate claims.

#### **How to claim:**

Australian residents need to claim online.

To claim online you need a [myGov](#) account linked to a [Centrelink online account](#). If you don't have a myGov account, you can [create one](#).

If your myGov account isn't linked to Centrelink, you can prove who you are through myGov to link to Centrelink.

Eligible visa holders need to call us on 180 22 66 where we can take your claim.

**10.3 ECLC (Donna Askew):** ECLC in partnership with CCOEI, Indian Care and Centre for Holistic Health have been successful in a State Government anti-racism grant *Amplifying Community Voices in the East*. Thanks to all involved in supporting and partnering in the grant.

Scam prevention information in various languages (following on from booklet developed by ECLC in 2020).

**10.4 MIC (Sally Brooks)** Various items including: mental health literacy program in partnership with NEAMI; coordinating Covid information sessions; during lockdown MIC using online platforms; employment program for people not eligible for employment support; supporting people on temporary visas, citizenship;

continuing programs for asylum seekers, e.g. emergency relief; working with refugee background youth during lockdown and will continue the outreach service beyond lockdown. Volleyball or soccer competition or Sports clinic 28/6. Supporting individuals with their remote learning and their settlement needs.

**10.5 Melbourne Polytechnic (Carole Pondevie-Lay):** AMEP classes are remote during lockdown and many have gone online. Students have been contacted by providers. Childcare available only for face to face classes as per AMEP contract and so a number of clients, mainly women could not participate. Volunteer tutors have been vital to engage with parents with children who cannot access childcare and some online activities have included songs and rhymes, Zoom break out rooms, etc. Volunteers have been good connecting with VTS students online. Online does not replace the class but has been a good option during this time.

**11. Next MSC Meeting Friday August 6: LGAs engaging CALD communities.**

Speakers: Welcoming Australia CEO Aleem Ali on the *Welcoming Cities* initiative, and Victorian Local Government Association (VLGA) Inclusion and Diversity Lead Deborah Wu.

**NOTE:** To contact Ken Pang or Sam Navarria use [chair.msc@gmail.com](mailto:chair.msc@gmail.com)