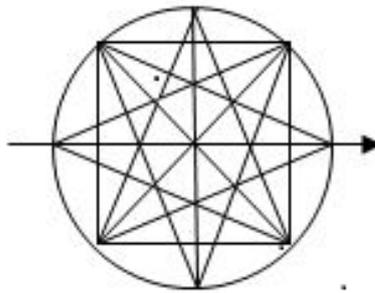


**Chairs:**

Sam Navarria: Mob: 0432 975 558  
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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 – Friday February 04, 2022.

Zoom meeting – 9:30 am – 11:00 am

**1. Acknowledgement of Country – Chris Cosgriff (CCOEI and MMIGP)**

**2. Welcome – Ken Pang (Chair)**

**3. Attendance**

**Presenters**

- Jawad Ahmad Shirzai AMES Orientation Guide
- Merylyn Spratling EACH – Refugee Health Nurse Coordinator
- Claudia Thoms Foundation House, Project Leader
- Vicki Selimi Services Australia, Multicultural Services Officer
- Joan Pepi Knox City Council
- Dr Wilfred Wang Knox Multicultural Advisory Committee, Melbourne University,  
Lecturer, Media and Society, Culture and Communication.

**Present**

- Daniele Noel CCOEI President
- Chris Cosgriff CCOEI and MMIGP
- Heather Cosgriff CCOEI and MMIGP
- Con Pagonis CCOEE eNews Editor
- Cynthia Shaw CCOEI Committee of Management Member
- Ken Pang Migrant Settlement Committee -Meeting Convenor
- Jess Ness Central Ringwood Community Centre
- Iresha Buthgamuwa Eastern Community Legal Centre
- Mervat Dahdoule MIC (Eastern Melbourne)
- Krishani Dassanayake CCOEI, Community member
- Dilnaz Billimoria CCOEI, Whitehorse Interfaith Network
- Helen Jurcevic OAM Women's Friendship Group Manningham President
- Sarah Martinelli City of Whitehorse, Community Development Officer - Diversity
- Saarah Ozeer Bounce
- Carole Pondevie-Lay Melbourne Polytechnic Community Liaison, Engagmt. Manager
- Malcolm Hill Melbourne AMEP VTS
- Bec Patterson Foundation House
- Thong Za Tawng Foundation House
- Emma Wilkinson Boroondara City Council
- Katrine Gabb Manningham City Council
- Liz Shield Hume City Council
- Tamika O'Brien Neami National

Zabi Mazoori	Foundation House
Gitta Clayton	CHBC
Gina Etienne	Eastern Health
Paul Croft	Eastern Regional Libraries, TL Digital Literacies
Tina Andriotis	Box Hill Institute
Madeleine Parker	Department of Education and Training
Sameera Abdeen	Yarra Valley Water
Vincent Hu	CCSSCI

#### **Apologies**

Sam Navarria CCOEI and MSC

**Acknowledgement of Country.** Chris Cosgriff acknowledged all the lands of those attending the MSC meeting. He acknowledged all their elders past present and emerging.

#### **Minutes - MSC 03 December 2021**

Moved Cynthia Shaw, Seconded Chris Cosgriff.

**Business Arising** – incorporated in the meeting agenda when required

**Correspondence** – circulated via email to members of the MSC (often on a daily basis)

**MSC 2022 Calendar** (see attached calendar). The Calendar was fully endorsed at the December Review and Planning meeting.

#### **Next events:**

- **4 March 2022:** Migrant Information Centre (Eastern Melbourne) – Sally Brooks and Mervat Dahdoule
- **1 April 2022:** Boroondara City Council – Emma Wilkinson

#### **COOEE! eNews:**

Con said that during the past 2 years editions of the newsletter were published at different intervals such as weekly during lockdowns etc. Currently editions are published monthly. Contributions need to be received by the Friday before the Monday of publication. Contributions to the newsletter are welcomed from MSC members. He said that it was pleasing to see the reach of the newspaper increasing locally and nationally to several hundred readers.

#### **Introduction to the new CCOEI President Daniele Noel**

Daniele said that the first Committee of Management meeting in January identified strategies for connecting with stakeholders. She was looking forward to getting to know everyone during the year and was planning to make regular contact with MSC members. Daniele highlighted an important event being planned with the help of MSC members - Refugee Week Event booked for 23 June 2022.

#### **MEETING FOCUS:**

**A. Settlement of Afghan refugees .** *(Please note: PowerPoint presentations were circulated by Ken Pang on 16 Feb. 2022)*

#### **Speakers**

1. **Jawad Shirzai – AMES Settlement.** Orientation Guide. He thanked the Australian government and Australian people for helping him and his family with a Visa and for assisting their departure from Afghanistan. Jawad spoke of his experiences leaving Afghanistan and arriving with his family in Melbourne. He said that no one was expecting the last few days to be as they were in Kabul. The scenarios he had in his mind would not leave him for the rest of his life! The vision of Afghans running behind aeroplanes – he said that no one would normally act in this way, people did this because they were in deep shock. He said that like many other Afghani he was grateful for being able to come to

Melbourne. He chose Melbourne because many of his colleagues were here and he was keen for his family to join his community here. He faced many challenges after arrival as an educated English speaking Afghani. He said he didn't understand the system, how to find long term accommodation etc. There were barriers to overcome such as not having a credit history. With help from friends and settlement services and he is now working as an Orientation Guide for AMES. Jawad finds his work very rewarding, he is able to help fellow Afghans having been through the same challenges himself.

2. **Merilyn Spratling – EACH Refugee Health Nurse (RHN) Coordinator.**

EACH was responsible for one of the hotels where people arrived in Australia and were isolating. Vaccination was able to be undertaken at the hotel where the refugees lived. This work was undertaken through engagement with key partners such as AMES and Foundation House. With many cases to see in a short timeframe, a triage system was set up in short term accommodation. Urgent case referrals were facilitated through the kindness and generosity of local GPs. Pregnant women were prioritised especially as some were close to giving birth. There were many people with dental issues and the team were able to organise dentistry through local referrals. Some unusual presentations challenged the RHN such as a person with a bullet in their leg! When refugees arrived in long term accommodation a comprehensive health assessment was then undertaken. A distressing part of the work was dealing with young people arriving in Australia who were separated from their families during the chaos of leaving Afghanistan.

3. **Claudia Thoms – Foundation House, Project Leader.**

Claudia recognised AMES as well as amazing work of Refugee Health Nurses. She recognised the difficulties faced by people like Jawad as no one was prepared for the chaos resulting from the forces leaving Afghanistan. Claudia said that Foundation House support the Afghan community in the eastern region, those experiencing or recovering from traumatic experiences. She spoke about mental health impact for those Afghans who have been living here for a number of years, seeing what was happening in Afghanistan on the news and on social media. Trying to get visas for family members stranded in Afghanistan caused a lot of stress. They observed clients with a high degree of grief and loss experienced through separation of families. There were a number of family reunions, where men were finally able to get their wives out of Afghanistan. However it was chaotic as they were unprepared in not having the right accommodation etc.

**Foundation House *Integrated Trauma Recovery Service Model*** concentrates on community engagement and partnerships to help the community deal with trauma and to settle in Australia.

*Note: For more information please refer to Claudia's PowerPoint presentation which was emailed to members on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022 .pptx doc named "ACR Presentation MSC"* For information about when to refer to Foundation House please go to this link: <https://foundationhouse.org.au/for-clients/make-a-referral/>

4. **Vicki Selimi – Services Australia, Multicultural Services Officer.**

The Services Australia Refugee service offer – in Victoria there are 2 teams providing assistance to refugees and asylum seekers. They are responsible for components such as payment applications, Medicare, Tax File Numbers, and general liaison with settlement providers. Recent arrivals have generally come under the 449 Visa. The role of Multicultural Service Officers is to deliver information sessions. Normally that would be done in a face-to-face environment with interpreters. However with COVID-19 restrictions it has been done on the phone with individuals or with family groups resulting in hundreds and hundreds of phone sessions. For many people, trying to understand the information has been very difficult. Information such as the Special Benefit and Family Tax benefit is difficult to comprehend normally let alone for people traumatised and still in temporary accommodation. The government have allowed a 12 month exemption from mutual obligation. Their Special Benefit payment is less than the Job Seeker payment and there are impacts on their payments if they are working. They are however eligible for Medicare and the Health Care Card etc.

Due to redeployment of some MSOs to assist with Pandemic Leave payments, Vicki is the only MSO doing information sessions in that zone. Vicki acknowledged Services Australia front of line staff and all the settlement services such as AMES for the work they are doing. She also commended Jawad for his resourcefulness and his ability to pivot into his current position assisting fellow Afghans. Cynthia thanked Vicki for introducing MSC members to Jawad Shirzai.

## B. How not to engage with migrant communities – lessons learnt. Research findings on communicating and engaging with migrant communities.

### Speakers

1. **Joan Pepi - Knox City Council**, Community Dev. Officer, Access and Equity. Joan said that she chose the title as although she is preaching to the converted she said this was a reminder about the need to communicate well.

**Contributors to poor communication:** Joan said we need to challenge barriers. We are all responsible for communicating effectively. We should ensure that we can reach into community organisations at all times not only during a pandemic. There has been an over reliance on community leaders without finding out if they have the capacity, skills or tools to communicate information to their own groups.

**Lessons learnt during COVID.** In 2020 in partnership with the Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre managed a project called “*Response Relief Recovery for multicultural communities project 2020*” They engaged with a number of groups and identified important points.

**Priority response for the Iranian and Zomi communities during COVID in 2021** learnings: Seek out bi-lingual, bi-cultural workers whenever possible. When using translations check and check again.

**Future Directions.** Strengthen engagement, create opportunities for partnerships with key stakeholders, embed best practice principles in the organisations communication strategy and community engagement strategy, increase understanding and respect for CALD communities.

*For more information please refer to Joan’s PowerPoint presentation which was emailed to members on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022 .pptx doc named “How not to communicate with multicultural communities”*

2. **Dr Wilfred Wang – Knox Multicultural Advisory Committee, University of Melbourne.** Dr Wang said he the focus his presentation is on *structural issues* of implementation – health, aged care etc.

**Mono-cultural approach - assumption and stereotypes:** He quoted from his research of a worker, providing spiritual (Buddhism) support to older Chinese clients in palliative care through a pastoral care program, found they did not believe in Buddhism, nor did they have any religious belief. They just wanted to have someone to talk to. So those chats sometimes resulted in no discussion of Buddhist belief. The hospital incorrectly assumed that everyone had religious belief and needed pastoral care during their final moments of life. In fact, many Chinese just need basic social and emotional support. There was surprise during his project where people thought that all Chinese chose their grave plot with feng shui in mind!

#### **Framing is important**

- End-of-life communication: “I don’t mind cremation or full body burial as long as I can find a resting place that is convenient for travel for my children/grandchildren to visit”.
- Older Chinese wish to improve their digital skills so they would not need to ‘bother’ their children. It is viewed as a new parental duty not to trouble your children with smart phone or digital issues.

#### **Integration as co-existence**

This all goes back to developing the migrant sense of belonging in Australia. His research made an interesting discovery that becoming Australian means that they are free to continue to observe their cultural heritage and traditions, speak their language etc. So the fact that they can be different whilst living in a co-existing manner with others actually develops a very strong sense of belonging.

Dr Wang said that we need to think about not avoiding differences but how we can understand and appreciate diversity for us to create more effective and coherent communication and engagement.

*For more information please refer to Dr. Wang’s PowerPoint presentation which was emailed to members on the 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022 .pdf doc named “Wilfred MSC presentation”*

**Next meeting:** 04 March 2022:

**Meeting Focus:** MIC Employment Program and Community Visitors Scheme.

**Chair:** Sally Brooks