



المنظمة العربية للخدمات الإجتماعية

Serving all Arabic Speaking Communities

Arabic Welfare Annual Report

2015-2016



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Our Mission

As a non-sectarian, non-political migrant welfare organisation, our mission is to influence and sensitize mainstream service providers to ensure that newly arrived migrants and refugees from Arabic-speaking backgrounds are included in Australian society. We strive to educate, support, advocate on behalf of, and encourage the autonomy of the Arabic-speaking community through offering a range of services, groups, workshops and programs, and we strive for the continual improvement in the delivery of our services.

Our Vision

Arabic Welfare aspires to lead by example in enacting an inclusive, multicultural Australian society by supporting the holistic health and well-being of migrants and humanitarian entrants from an Arabic-speaking background, and the broader community as a whole.

Chairperson's Report



"Our commitment to the provision of client focused services has seen our programs expand, our partnerships strengthened and our organisation grow."

It is with great pride that I present our Annual Report for 2015-2016. In our 33rd year of operation, Arabic Welfare has continued to provide programs and services to assist diverse Arabic speaking communities and clients to realise their aspirations and participate fully in Australia's multicultural society.

Our commitment to the provision of client focused services has seen our programs expand, our partnerships strengthened and our organisation grow. Our Annual Report is but a snapshot of all the services and support which we have provided to our clients and community groups in a 12 month period and we present these with enormous pride.

Settlement Service funding from the Department of Social Services (DSS), has strengthened our capacity to respond to the growing numbers of Arabic speaking migrants and refugees who continue to arrive in Victoria. Importantly, we welcome the Commonwealth's commitment to assist the re-settlement of thousands of Syrian and Iraqi refugees and we look forward to working collaboratively with the federal government to provide vital settlement support.

In October 2015, we proudly launched the [ArabiCare](#) website, which represents an invaluable resource to all service providers who work with Arabic speaking clients. The [ArabiCare](#) website offers a wealth of cultural information, resources and a directory of Arabic speaking health professionals and Arabic speaking organisations and community groups. We welcome all service providers to access the website and make use of all its resources.

Over 2015 -16 we continued to receive funding from a range of government and philanthropic bodies that support specific projects. We gratefully acknowledge the trust and commitment demonstrated to Arabic Welfare by our funding organisations: the Department of Social Services, the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, the Victorian Multicultural Commission, the Department of Justice (Community Safety Fund), the Department of Health and Human Services, the Cancer Council, Turning Point, the Ross Trust and the Helen MacPherson-Smith Trust.

I would like to thank our staff, who have consistently demonstrated their dedication to Arabic Welfare's mission and their commitment to outstanding service provision. I also thank my fellow Committee of Management members for providing ongoing support and invaluable contributions. And finally, my gratitude to Amal El-Khoury, Manager of Arabic Welfare, whose tireless efforts and dedicated leadership have fostered our organisation's growth and successes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Abicair'.

Dr. Richard Abicair
PRESIDENT

Manager's Report



"We never touch people so lightly that we do not leave a touch."

As the diversity and size of Arabic speaking communities continues to grow, Arabic Welfare continues to respond to client and community needs with flexible and innovative programs. Our major strength is that we have a community based focus and respond to changing needs of our clients and their communities. We continue to advocate on their behalf and continue to be involved with both new and well-established communities to ensure that their needs are met.

In recognition of growing needs for settlement services in the growth corridor of Northern Metropolitan Melbourne, Arabic Welfare has established a permanent additional office in Broadmeadows. Our new office has been refurbished over the past few months and is now well-equipped for clients and service providers to access our programs and staff at the new location.

Throughout 2015 -16, we have continued to strengthen our working relationship with multicultural providers, government departments and the community. We have focused strongly on youth engagement in our Diversity and Social Cohesion project and have facilitated partnerships to deliver youth specific projects. We have partnered with the Brotherhood of St Laurence on a youth engagement and transition project and we have also partnered with the Upfield Soccer Club to strengthen youth participation in local sports.

In the past year, we have undertaken many youth focused activities in our new Diversity and Social Cohesion Project. We have worked in collaboration with Victoria Police and developed joint youth programs and forums which have seen positive outcomes for young people of Arabic speaking backgrounds. With contributions from local schools, youth service providers and sporting clubs, our Diversity and Social Cohesion project has made significant inroads to young people's sense of belonging and active participation in their local community.

Once again, in 2015-16 Arabic Welfare worked diligently on our gambling project, QOWEH, with support and funding from the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. We explored innovative ways to engage our community to address problem gambling and we continued to provide individual and family counselling to support clients with complex and multiple issues.

Arabic Welfare has continued to explore opportunities for service delivery that reflects the changing needs of aged/ageing members of diverse Arabic speaking backgrounds. Arabic Welfare has worked collaboratively with Dutch Care and the New Hope Foundation to identify the growing needs of aged/ageing CALD community groups. Although the nature of our future service delivery for our elders is a work in progress, we look forward to a productive year ahead as we seek to more clearly address the needs of Arabic speaking elders.

I thank our dedicated staff, who demonstrate their commitment daily and work tirelessly for the best possible outcomes for our clients. I also thank our volunteers whose good will and continued support has provided invaluable assistance to our programs and events.

Finally, I wish to thank our Committee of Management for consistently demonstrating outstanding leadership and vision for the future of Arabic Welfare and for providing me with unflinching support and direction.



Mrs Amal El Khoury
MANAGER

2015-16 Highlights

CASEWORK

- > Settlement casework support to 412 recently arrived Arabic speaking refugees and migrants
- > Additional case work support to 40 clients across our services
- > Recently arrived clients supported over 870+ occasions of service
- > Across 9 sites, we assisted clients to identify their own goals, access available local services and become independent and empowered community members
- > QOWEH problem gambling project provided case management & counselling services to 36 clients across 120 sessions
- > Extension of services by offering outreach/home visits to vulnerable, isolated and disadvantage clients to receive support
- > Case work with 12 at risk young people, additional assessments and referrals to young people in our 'Engage the Youth' project

GROUP SESSIONS

- > 180 group sessions in our settlement service program
- > Settlement casework support to 412 recently arrived Arabic speaking Group sessions provided information and guidance on: education, employment, driving, financial management & budgeting, health & well-being, housing, law enforcement, legal system, parenting and Australian culture
- > Settlement casework support to 412 recently arrived Arabic speaking QOWEH problem gambling focus groups & education sessions to raise awareness of the effects of problem gambling – 200+ community members
- > Settlement casework support to 412 recently arrived Arabic speaking 200 Arabic speaking seniors engaged in education sessions focusing on available aged care services





YOUTH SERVICES

- > Youth group sessions to support the self-esteem and confidence of young Arabic-speaking refugees to address and resolve the complexities of biculturalism and intergenerational conflict
- > School based group workshops for recently arrived Arabic speaking youth, in collaboration with Roxburgh College, Hume Central Secondary College, Melbourne Polytechnic Epping & Broadmeadows, Hume Central Language Centre, Collingwood English Language School Broadmeadows Campus and the Holy Child School
- > Partnership with the Upfield Soccer Club to support increased participation of young people in recreational activities
- > Collaboration with Victoria Police to facilitate school based workshops exploring identity, belonging and connection for Middle Eastern youth
- > Through our Diversity & Social Cohesion Project, young people of Arabic speaking backgrounds participated in 50+ workshops with a focus on strengthening self-esteem, confidence, engagement and participation
- > Youth focused forums supporting understanding and engagement of young people in community life—125 youth participants

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

- > Collaborative work with Turning Point and mental health service providers in 3 mental health expos to Arabic speaking community members—up to 400 participants gaining understandings on available supports and services
- > Family violence project worked with Victoria Police and 90 community members to facilitate education sessions and increase community awareness
- > Engaging women in International Women's Day celebration, acknowledging the important and different roles of women in family and community life—45 women
- > Education workshops on cancer screening with 11 women trained to deliver information to community members
- > Collaborative work with the Alawi community for skill development in leadership, team building, values clarification, communication, conflict resolution and management skills
- > Harmony Day Event with over 50 participants who enjoyed the work of the Mesopotamia Artists' Association and were entertained by refugee youth showcasing their talents

Our Committee of Management

PRESIDENT

Dr Richard Abicair



PUBLIC OFFICER

Walid Hanna



VICE PRESIDENT

Monsignor
Joseph Takchi



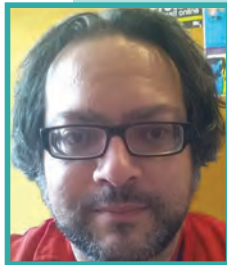
SECRETARY

Antoine Freijah



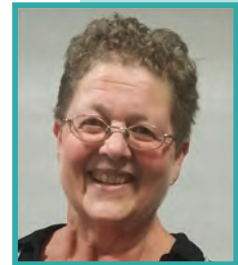
TREASURER

Michael Mawal



MEMBER

Meredith Lawrence



MEMBER

Catuscia Biuso



MEMBER

Wendy Khalil



MEMBER

Dr Kamiran
Abdouka



Our Staff

MANAGER

Amal El-Khoury

PROGRAM STAFF

Community Development Worker

Simar Amad

Settlement Services Program Coordinator

Lyda Dankha

Settlement Services Program Coordinator

Michelle Hage

Counsellor

Feyrouz Khayat

Social Worker

Abir Melhem

Senior Counsellor

Hoda Nahal

Settlement Worker

Sihem Sayoud

Settlement Worker

Angham Shmail

Settlement Worker

Mohamed Taibine

Youth Settlement Worker

Rita Toma

Settlement Worker

Maha Yaqo

Migration Agent

Latifa Al-Haouli

OFFICE STAFF

Administration Officer

Suhaila Abdelquader

Book Keeper

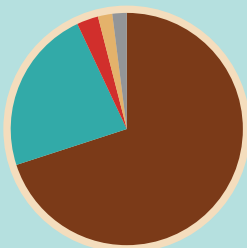
Samira Hanna

Settlement Support Program

SETTLEMENT SUPPORT PROGRAM CLIENT STATISTICS

Country of Origin

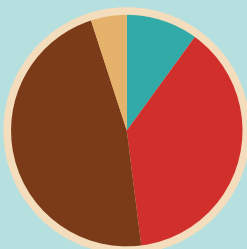
| | |
|---------|-----|
| Iraq | 70% |
| Syria | 23% |
| Egypt | 3% |
| Lebanon | 2% |
| Eritrea | 2% |



Although these are the countries of origin of our clients, the ethnicities represented include: Iraqi, Assyrian, Chaldean, Lebanese, Syrian, Egyptian, Eritrean, Palestinian, Kuwait, Jordanian, Algerian, Kurdish, Moroccan and others. At least 97% of our settlement support program clients indicated that their main language spoken at home was Arabic, smaller numbers indicated that they speak Chaldean Neo-Aramaic and Assyrian Neo-Aramaic as their main language. Arabic Welfare provides responsive services to diverse clients with our multilingual staff who reflect the linguistic diversity of our client group.

Age of Clients

| | |
|---------------------|-----|
| Under 19 years | 10% |
| From 20 to 39 years | 38% |
| From 40 to 64 years | 47% |
| Over 65 years | 5% |



Our settlement support services are provided through casework, peer support groups, outreach services at AMEP sites, group information sessions, on-going telephone contact, school holiday program, and after-school support groups.

The program is supported through Department of Social Services' funding and addresses the needs of diverse Arabic-speaking background people who have been in Australia for less than 5 years.

As well as working directly with our clients, we continue to advocate for newly arrived clients through a range of network meetings where we provide other organisations with information on current issues affecting our clients.

CASEWORK

Arabic Welfare supports newly-arrived humanitarian entrants to identify their own goals and enact their own strengths and values. During one-on-one and family-based casework, information is provided for humanitarian entrants about settling in Australia and accessing available local services, such as housing, financial assistance and public health care. Our multilingual staff play a critical role in building rapport with our clients and in bridging our clients to mainstream services.

During 2015-16 Arabic Welfare provided casework services to 412 clients over 872 contacts.

Our clients received services from AW staff who are work across various locations, including:

- > our Brunswick office
- > our new Broadmeadows Office
- > AMEP sites:
 - Melbourne Polytechnic Broadmeadows
 - Melbourne Polytechnic Epping
 - Kangan Broadmeadows
 - Meadow Heights Education Centre
- > Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre
- > Hume Central Language Centre
- > Hume Central Secondary College - Dimboola Campus
- > Roxburgh College
- > Collingwood English Language Centre

Our settlement casework service assisted clients by providing information, advice and referral on a broad range of issues as identified by clients during the assessment process.

Some of the most common issues included employment pathways, poor literacy and numeracy skills, continuation of English as a Second Language courses, life skills, household management, legal matters, housing issues, family relationships, intergenerational issues, physical and mental health issues, language barriers and social participation.

PEER-SUPPORT GROUPS

The groups aim to reduce isolation and enhance the social and emotional well-being of participants by providing opportunities for socialization, the development of friendships, and improvement of social skills through a range of educational information sessions and recreational activities.

Arabic Welfare's peer support groups for men, women and youth combine social, creative and physical activities with an emphasis on a safe, fun and non-judgmental group-based experience for our clients. Through our peer support groups, participants also have the opportunity to receive information on specific topics of interest, such as, women's health, youth law, parenting in a new culture.

INFORMATION GROUP SESSIONS

Our settlement team was very busy in 2015-16 and successfully facilitated 180 group information sessions in a structured calendar which is available on our website. We encourage service providers to refer Arabic speaking clients to our Group Information Sessions which cover a broad range of topics and include guest speakers.

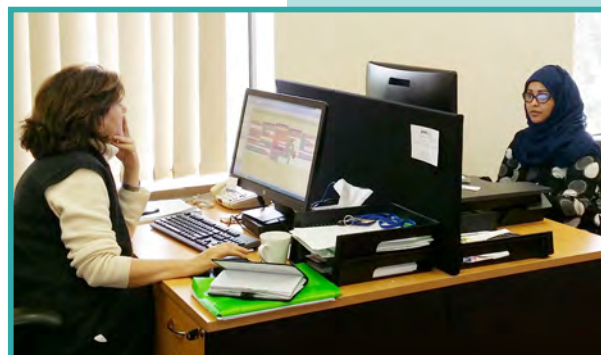
Our Group Information Sessions have been diverse in subject areas and have always received positive feedback from all participants. We have facilitated a series of workshops sessions under each subject area with detailed information provision and we have welcomed lively discussions amongst all our participants. Our sessions have covered the following themes:

General Settlement — Settlement Communication in English and “Settle Well” series

These introductory settlement sessions provide a basic overview of the myriad issues faced when settling in Australia, including information on Australian culture, communication norms and important celebrations.

“HELP” — Handling Emergencies Lessens Pain

Providing participants with vital information on how to: respond in an emergency, dial 000, recognise stroke, heart attack & allergies, communicate with Police, maintain personal safety and respond in incident of robbery.





“Family First”

A series of sessions providing information and facilitating discussion on the main concerns of new arrivals, that of housing and family—how to secure appropriate housing and ensure that parents are best equipped to understand their roles in a new culture.

“SOHAT” — Series On Health And Teenagers

These sessions were facilitated for Arabic speaking women and addressed a range of issues relevant to parenting and the family: health risks, healthy family relationships, communication skills, education, brain development, safety around water and healthy eating.

“Mind Your Money” — Financial Management and Budgeting

Over several sessions, participants were engaged in education, discussion and information provision on: opening a bank account, loans and NILS, budgeting, credit and bank cards, internet banking and financial counselling.

Parenting in a New Culture

Addressing the cultural differences, these information sessions explored the issues that arise from intergenerational gap and bicultural tensions; participants gained knowledge and skills in communication, stages/phases in children’s development and the value of social participation for their children.

Women’s Health

A series of sessions that assisted recently arrived Arabic speaking women with knowledge on: women’s health and well-being; family health and well-being; healthy eating and regular exercise; and understanding the importance of cancer screening.

“Starting From A” — Education and Career/Employment Pathways in Australia

These sessions provided participants with information on different education pathways available in Australia, including: pre vocational training pathways; job-skills development; preparing to study; financial assistance available to students; and recognition of pre-arrival qualifications and experience.

VIC Roads Licensing & Road Safety

Participants knowledge on road laws and regulations was strengthened through information provision by VIC Roads guest speaker on the following areas: road safety rules and regulations; upgrading a licence from a Learner’s to a Probationary Permit; licence renewal; regulations for buying and selling a car; fines and licence suspensions.

Housing Information

These sessions were of great interest to clients and covered a range of topics: how the rental market operates; tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities; connecting utilities; and legal mechanisms for redress in case of a tenancy or housing dispute.



MIGRATION ADVISORY SERVICES

Arabic Welfare's migration advisory service is a free and professional service offered by registered and fully trained migration agents. This service supports clients through the entire migration cycle, from providing general information as a first point of contact upon grant of a humanitarian entrant visa, to documentation support with family relocation visas for newly-arrived humanitarian entrants and their families.

In 2015-16, demand for migration agent services was once again significant and was supported through outreach services. Clients receiving migration agent services commonly reported needing advice on how to propose immediate family members, on partner applications and on passport and citizenship issues.

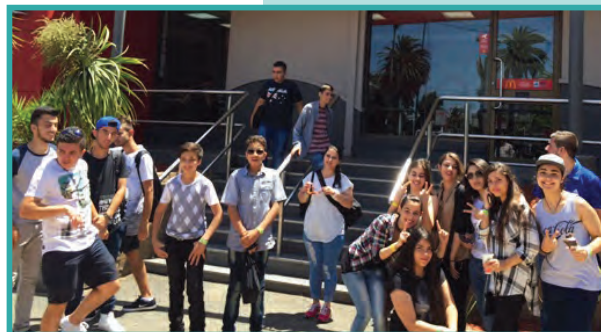
YOUTH SETTLEMENT SERVICES

In 2015–16 our youth settlement services provided a range of programs with individual case work support, peer support groups and capacity building activities. Our bilingual youth workers are out-posted at multiple locations in the Northern Metropolitan Region, where we aim to create a welcoming environment and identify the needs and opportunities for young humanitarian entrants to thrive and participate in their new homeland.

In 2015-16 our youth services worked closely with a large number of young clients at various locations on a weekly basis, including:

- > Arabic Welfare Broadmeadows Office
- > Arabic Welfare Brunswick Office
- > Hume Central Language Centre Broadmeadows
- > Hume Central Secondary College – Dimboola Campus
- > Kangan Broadmeadows
- > Melbourne Polytechnic Epping
- > Roxburgh College
- > Hume Youth Central – after school program
- > Collingwood English Language School
- > Holy Child School

We have also worked closely with school welfare services at local secondary schools to support the settlement needs of young migrant and refugee students. We run peer support groups across various locations and assist young people to navigate their way through the Australian mainstream education system and to develop skills that support their belonging and connection in their new community.





Apart from one-on-one casework services, our Youth Settlement Program has offered our young clients support, information and advocacy through: peer support groups, youth information sessions, community advocacy workshops, school holiday programmes and homework groups. In 2015-16, we worked closely with our youth and highlights include our “Youth Summer Program”, our “Young After School Program”, and the “Here I Am” program. Across these programs and our youth information sessions, the themes that we explored all reflected identified areas of need amongst our young clients and included:

- > rights and responsibilities
- > youth law
- > employment participation & resume writing
- > driving
- > social connectedness
- > study skills and social participation
- > intergenerational and intercultural issues
- > Australian lifestyle, customs and behaviours
- > Health and well being
- > family relationships
- > effective communication
- > self-esteem and self-control
- > transition to mainstream schools
- > education pathways – VCE/VCAL

Diversity and Social Cohesion Project

Recently funded by the Department of Social Services, Arabic Welfare's Diversity and Social Cohesion Project is titled "Trust and Safety: Connecting Middle Eastern Youth in Northern Metropolitan Melbourne". Through this project, we have established a collaborative relationship with Victoria Police with the aim of engaging young people of Middle Eastern backgrounds to strengthen their identity and sense of belonging in their local community and to strengthen their capacity to participate in educational and recreational activities.

The project has undertaken a range of community development activities to achieve engagement and participation of Middle Eastern youth in community life. Throughout 2015-16 our project has worked closely with Victoria Police, school-based groups, community youth groups, parents of adolescents, sporting clubs, local secondary schools, the Metropolitan Fire Brigade, the Whittlesea/Hume LLEN and local council youth services to run activities of interest and relevance to young people of diverse Middle Eastern backgrounds. Our project's achievements have been in the following areas:

- > Interactive weekly programs (26 workshops over several months) have been run out of Antonine College and Pascoe Vale Girls' College with a focus on building self-esteem, connection to local community services and rapport building with Victoria Police
- > Youth Forums with 130 participants have been facilitated in collaboration with Victoria Police at Ilim College and at the Hume Global Learning Centre; these Forums have offered the opportunity for young people to engage in information sharing and discussion with Victoria Police, Youth Law and Headspace on a range of issues of concern
- > Community based youth and parent consultations with the Upfield Soccer Club and the Alawite Community Association
- > Coordination of Harmony Day Event at the Campbellfield Community Centre with over 50 participants who enjoyed the work of the Mesopotamia Artists' Association and were entertained by young people showcasing their talents
- > Project participants' attendance in the Victoria Police 12th Iftar Dinner at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre

Victoria Police Officers and young people engaged in the Project have provided extremely positive feedback, highlighting key benefits as those of increased understanding and trust of both groups. Police Officers have felt that the Project has demonstrated important and valuable ways for them to better understand and engage with Middle Eastern young people, both in order to strengthen cultural awareness and to build communication and trust.



QOWEH Gambling Project



Through funding from the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, QOWEH supports the Arabic speaking community by providing knowledge, information, support and early intervention with issues of gambling in our community. In 2015–16, our project continued to build on the successes of the previous year. It is with great pride that we have been entrusted by the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation with funding to our project for an additional three years.

QOWEH is the Arabic word for strength and it is the name of our project on problem gambling. Through our project, we challenge our clients to work through 5 key areas in order to build strength, skills and confidence to address problem gambling:

- > Question ourselves and those around us, and being
- > Open to listening, learning and challenging ourselves while having the
- > Willingness to apply change and enable ourselves to reach our full potential; leading to
- > Empowerment by sharing experiences, which will
- > Heal the pain caused by problem gambling in our lives and the lives of our families and community.

Our project implemented a range of intervention and prevention strategies and has been responsible for the projects achievements, including:

- > The provision of counselling to 36 new clients over 146 counselling sessions; our counselling service supported individuals, couples and families; the strength of the counselling service has continued working with the whole family and in some cases we had grand parents involved as significant others
- > Extension of services by offering outreach/home visits to vulnerable, isolated and disadvantage clients to be able to receive support
- > The establishment of the “Boss of Gambling” support group, with 8 clients who participated in our support group program for five sessions
- > Community education sessions for 200 community members across six workshops in the municipalities of Hume, Moreland, Whittlesea and Brimbank, raising awareness of the effects of problem gambling & supporting community members to seek assistance
- > An Arabic language media strategy to promote project messages through SBS Radio’s Arabic Language Program and the ‘El Telegraph’ Arabic language newspaper
- > Facilitating a leadership program using the ‘Train the Trainer’ model for 15 community leaders who participated in 6 sessions to build expertise and take on the role of educating and raising awareness within their groups regarding the harm of gambling

As identified through our casework/counselling service and extensive community engagement activities in our QOWEH Project, issues related to problem gambling are complex and often involve family violence, drug and alcohol dependency, mental & physical health concerns, financial crisis, criminal/legal issues and relationship breakdown. Our dedicated staff and our work with the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation will continue to inform our project activities and bring much needed support to Arabic speaking community members affected by this growing public health issue.



Partnership Projects



HEALTHWEST PARTNERSHIP

In collaboration with HealthWest Partnership and with funding from the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Arabic Welfare has continued our project to work with Arabic speaking seniors in Melbourne's Northern Metropolitan Region.

One of the key factors in engaging CALD groups on the issue of gambling is the cultural stigma and shame associated with problem gambling. Our project worker initially encountered communication blocks with both community members and leaders who often denied that such problems exist among Arabic speaking communities. Consequently, our project strategy was to facilitate focus groups with community members who recreate at pokie venues.

These focus groups enabled a different approach which worked directly with community members with a view to develop leaders within their social groups who would promote alternative gaming options. All five groups raised the following key issues in their discussion of recreating at pokie venues:

- > there are not enough alternative activities in the Northern Suburbs of Melbourne
- > pokie venues seem to be accessible and available to all
- > pokie venues are a safe place for all genders to visit
- > social engagement at pokie venues is highly enjoyable and is seen as a social outing with friends
- > lack of awareness of harms associated with pokie machines
- > there is very little to do for people in the older age group

The project worked with venue support from Gamblers Help and venue managers to identify and offer alternative recreation options to our community members. We established a working relationship with Roxburgh Park Hotel whose staff assisted in the provision of a lunch event, attended by 40 participants, and through which we raised awareness of dangers associated with electronic gaming machines and we outlined alternative gaming options that do not cause harm or financial hardship. This group also participated in a social outing to Geelong, through which, once again alternative recreational activities were central to social engagement.

Arabic Welfare's project also contributed to broader HealthWest Partnership events, including the:

- > VLGA and Health West Forum 'Stay safe with your group – have fun without gambling'; 29 September 2015 at the Victorian Archives Centre, attended by over sixty workers from local governments, peak ethnic organisations, CALD communities, government departments and gambling researchers
- > Responsible Gambling Awareness Week Celebration on 12 October 2015, at which CALD senior groups enjoyed traditional games and dance at the Immigration Museum, celebrating a positive move away from gambling and the harm it has caused their community

We acknowledge the important contribution of the North West Region Migrant Resource Centre, whose staff assisted with our engagement of Arabic seniors in the Northern suburbs. Arabic Welfare will continue to work collaboratively with all project partners in 2016-17 along with Arabic speaking seniors who have made significant contributions to the growing shift away from gambling and pokie venues.

TURNING POINT — MY MIND'S JOURNEY

As part of our continued collaboration with Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre (Eastern Health), in 2015-16 we hosted Wellbeing and Health mini Expos in the Northern Metropolitan Region. The aim of the Expos was to promote the availability of mainstream services to Arabic speaking community members and to foster better connection between our client group and service providers.

This was the culmination of our work on producing the 'My Mind's Journey' booklet, which includes information about Mental Health, Dual Diagnosis, Alcohol & Other Drugs, and where to seek assistance. The "My Mind's Journey" booklet is now publicly available and was promoted at the Mini Expos, which were run across three locations:

- > Meadow Heights Learning Centre Mini Expo was held on 23 February 2016. There were approximately 150 participants across two expo sessions, with representation from Headspace Craigieburn, NEAMI, Mind Australia, BreakThru and Shireen (Mental Health registered Social Worker)
- > Melbourne Polytechnic Broadmeadows Mini Expo was held on 28 April 2016. There were approximately 50 participants across the two expo sessions, with representation from BreakThru and Mind Australia
- > Kangan TAFE Broadmeadows Mini Expo was held on 17 May 2016 with approximately 193 participants, with representation from BreakThru and NEAMI.

Overall the feedback was positive from host sites, participants and services involved. Some of the most common feedback received from participants was that they now feel encouraged to seek help and know where to attain it. Arabic Welfare has received funding to extend the partnership with Turning Point for another year, marking the fifth year of our collaboration and highlighting the value of access to mental health services for our community members.

CANCER COUNCIL ARABIC SPEAKING ACTION GROUP

The Cancer Council, Arabic Welfare and Spectrum, collaborated on a program that utilises evidence-based recruitment strategies to increase the knowledge, awareness and participation of cancer screening in Arabic speaking communities who have lower than average participation and show systematic differences in health outcomes compared to the rest of the population.

Through Arabic Welfare's existing community networks, 11 community members—women of diverse Middle Eastern countries and diverse religious backgrounds—were recruited to the program and participated in a series of six sessions. They were provided with information on all three cancer screening programs and were supported to build confidence and capacity to communicate key cancer screening messages to our target population.

The Action Group attended a familiarization visit to a local cancer screening service and were encouraged to discuss and identify relevant cancer screening messages by considering cultural enablers and barriers to cancer screening participation.

The positive outcomes from the work of the Action Group among their community had immediate results. Group members reported that following discussions with family and friends, they were able to convince individuals who have never had cancer screening before, to make a booking and attend the test with the help of the Action Group member.

Action Group members explored communication strategies to encourage increased cancer screening in the future. Importantly, the success of the project has resulted in further collaboration between the Cancer Council and Arabic Welfare to continue with the Action Group for work that increases awareness among greater numbers of people in the Arabic speaking community.

DALLAS NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE — COMPUTER COURSE

With the support and much welcomed contribution of the Dallas Neighbourhood House, 13 newly arrived clients from Arabic speaking backgrounds were able to participate in and complete an 8 week computer course. Having identified the need for basic computer skills amongst our clients, Arabic Welfare negotiated the delivery of a free 8 week course to be facilitated at the Neighbourhood House by an Arabic speaking tutor.

The main purpose was for students to learn how to create and send an email, use the internet, and type and format simple text. In turn, this would serve other purposes and assist clients with:

- > Computer skills that can improve their job search opportunities
- > Computer skills to search for services and activities to support engagement with, and participation in the Australian community.
- > Strengthened understanding of the roles of neighbourhood houses and the available services, including leisure activities

Participants were very satisfied with the outcomes of the course and felt that an Arabic speaking tutor made it much easier to engage and make progress in a short time. While some have already started using computers independently, all participants are very grateful for Arabic Welfare's initiative and are keen to have more classes in the future.

UPFIELD SOCCER CLUB

The Upfield Soccer Club is based in Dallas and offers club members the opportunity to participate in the sport of soccer as well as other relevant social and recreational activities.

In 2015–16 Arabic Welfare and the Upfield Soccer Club established a partnership to strengthen the capacity of current and future USC members to be active participants in the club. The partnership is based on the premise that participation of young people in sporting activities strengthens their identity, self-esteem, personal development and community engagement.

The partnership has intrinsic benefits to both Arabic Welfare and the Upfield Soccer Club and is based on the demographics of the Club location in Dallas, which has a high percentage of AS young people, many of whom face multiple barriers to participation and with whom Arabic Welfare has proven capacity to support. Our collaborative work with the Club has focused on:

- > Referrals to Arabic Welfare for direct support to families facing multiple issues
- > Consultations with parents and young people to assess and identify needs in order to progress with targeted program development
- > Assistance to the Club with the writing of funding grants to strengthen the Club's capacity to respond to its growing membership

Throughout 2015-16, the Club referred several families to Arabic Welfare for assistance with issues that impede young family members from active participation in the club and in broader community activities and services. 37 clients have been assisted to date with counselling, material aid and referrals to specialist service providers. Arabic Welfare's efforts in writing grants for the Club also saw successful outcomes with the Club receiving funds from the Victorian Multicultural Commission and the Department of Health & Human Services. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the Upfield Soccer Club in 2016.



Cultural Competence Projects



Arabic Welfare completed the development of valuable resources for culturally competent service delivery. Our [ArabiCare](#) website and our Cross Cultural Training resources have been designed to support all service providers and schools to respond to the needs of growing numbers of diverse Arabic speaking community members.

ARABICARE WEBSITE

The [ArabiCare](#) website was launched by DSS representative, Bernadette Ryan, on 29 October 2015 at a special event in the Brunswick Town Hall. Over 250 people attended the event and our guests represented both service providers and community representatives, all of whom strongly welcomed this much needed resource.

The [ArabiCare](#) website is now available to all service providers and the broader community. The website contains information and resources on a wide range of topics relevant to Arabic speaking community members, including:

- > History of the Arab world
- > Migration of Arabic speaking people to Australia
- > Community profiles
- > Language and communication
- > Culture and traditions
- > Diverse Religions
- > Diverse Ethnicities
- > Engaging with Arabic speaking clients

The website also offers directories of Arabic speaking health practitioners and Arabic speaking community organisations (places of worship, seniors groups, welfare organisations, etc.).

To date, website usage statistics inform that the website has been accessed by many thousands of users both in Victoria and in other states. We welcome you to visit the site and explore its information, links and resources that can support culturally responsive service provision.

CROSS CULTURAL TRAINING — HELEN MACPHERSON SMITH TRUST

In 2015-16 we completed the development of a range of cross cultural training resources to support service providers who work with Arabic speaking clients. Our staff completed training to facilitate training workshops and delivered several customised training sessions to service providers, including:

- > DHHS Child Protection Services
- > Headspace
- > The Bouverie Centre
- > Casual Relief Teachers' Conference
- > local secondary schools

With funding from the Helen MacPherson Smith Trust, we were able to utilise the knowledge and experience that we have gained over many years toward the development of training resources.

We have developed tip sheets and resource guides to assist services in their communication and engagement with clients of diverse Arabic speaking countries. We continue to work closely with agencies to provide training that is customised to the specific needs of workers across a range of services.



Small Projects



ENGAGE THE YOUTH—R.E. ROSS TRUST

This is a two year project funded by the R. E. Ross Trust to work with young people of Arabic speaking background, who are at risk of disengaging. The aim of the project is the development of confidence, skills and capacity to participate in education and broader community activities, especially youth focused programs.

In the first year of the project, we provided intensive case work to vulnerable young people with complex needs. Over the second year of the project in 2015-16, we continued with case work support to 12 young clients and addressed issues of:

- > Social interaction/isolation
- > Bullying
- > Anger management
- > Employment

However, our focus shifted to school based group work activities that built on the confidence of young people and strengthened their capacity to be engaged with their local community. Our project's school based component facilitated a program of 8 workshops, which was designed in collaboration with Antonine College and worked with their Year 10 students. Titled 'Myself + My Community = Identity', the workshops had 21 student participants who undertook a range of activities to:

- > Develop skills in communication and planning
- > Develop links to the community
- > Develop their sense of worth
- > Participate in team building exercises

Investigate and explore who in their local community can be assets to them or pockets of support in achieving positive wellbeing and better community connectedness

The Myself + My Community = Identity program culminated in field trips to community based organisations, which had been researched by program participants and at which they interviewed personnel. Students were tasked with the task of editing their interview into 3-5 minute clips which would then be showcased to their peers and their parents.

CALD SENIORS' PROJECT

With funding from the Department of Health and Human Services CALD Seniors Grant, Arabic Welfare worked with Arabic speaking seniors to strengthen their knowledge and access to available aged care services. Initially, we facilitated four community consultations attended by almost 100 participants across the municipalities of Hume, Moreland and Whittlesea. The consultations offered the project and seniors the opportunity to better identify areas in which improved understandings were required and how to best achieve these.

The project saw 200 seniors and their carers from diverse Arabic speaking communities participate across 6 education/information sessions. The three different groups engaged for the project were:

- > St Antony's senior group (Thomastown)
- > Brunswick woman group (Brunswick)
- > Mesopotamia Assyrian group (Coolaroo)

The focus of the education/information sessions were on Home and Community Care (HACC) and on housing services, which were identified as important areas by seniors during our consultation meetings. Guest speakers from local council HACC services and the ECCV 'Home at Last' program facilitated sessions and provided invaluable information to our project participants, many of whom had no prior knowledge of services & supports they were eligible to access.

Session information offered participants with details and resources on service options, eligibility criteria, how to access, waiting lists, and what seniors can expect from such services. The project concluded with an outing for the three different groups to support social interaction. Each group selected the following locations and thoroughly enjoyed themselves at:

- > Mt Macedon Cross Gallery for picnic lunch
- > A Restaurant in Bell Street Coburg for lunch
- > Port Arlington for picnic lunch

Our project participants' feedback highlighted the importance of such sessions, with many seniors emphasising how little prior knowledge they had on aged care services. Importantly for our seniors, the provision of such information in the Arabic language (with Arabic Welfare bilingual worker) allowed for access to information, as the majority of session participants had low English language proficiency.





HARMONY WITHIN THE FAMILY

Funded by the Department of Justice Community Safety Fund, the 'Harmony Within the Family' project is a family violence education project facilitated in the Hume municipality. Through a series of education workshops with a men's group and a women's group, the project aimed to raise awareness of the legal definitions of family violence in Australia and focused on the following themes:

- > Seeking alternatives to violence for family conflict resolution
- > Seeking alternatives to physical/violent measures in child discipline
- > Understanding the definitions and criminal implications of early/forced marriage in our community
- > Understanding the reporting requirements and implications for child abuse.
- > Available support services for men, women, children, families who are affected by family violence.

The 15 women and 13 men who participated in the series of education workshops benefited greatly from the project—some of them were courageous enough to share their stories about family violence. Importantly, some participants actively sought further support with two men expressing keen interest to join a Men's Behaviour Change Program and a female participant requesting referral support to a family violence service provider.

An additional two information sessions were delivered to AMEP students (women only) at Meadow Heights Education Centre. The sessions were delivered by a sergeant from Fawkner Police Station's Family Division and had a total of 62 women attending. Moreover, most participants from the education workshops and the information session will be engaged to participate in the upcoming 'Week without Violence' event in October 2016.

Engaging the Community

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

In 2016 Arabic Welfare celebrated International Women's Day with 45 women of diverse Arabic speaking backgrounds at the Cucina Café in Gladstone Park. On 8th March we hosted a fun filled day with quiz activities, lots of discussion and sharing of stories.

The aim of the day was to celebrate the special occasion and to educate Arabic speaking women on the history of the day, the achievements of women and the sacrifices they made in order to claim women's rights as we know them today.

Past and present Arabic Welfare clients were invited by our Community Development Worker to get together and celebrate this very important day. They participated in a fun quiz, which they enjoyed immensely as they discussed and disputed the questions and answers based on the history of International Women's Day.

We were entertained by the women who participated in the event's talent show! They shined as they showcased their many talents in art, craft and the much welcomed art of telling jokes!

The event was very successful, as the women enjoyed themselves and felt valued as important members of society with a dedicated day to especially honour those women that worked hard for equal rights and equal opportunity.



BRUNSWICK WOMEN'S SENIORS GROUP

The Brunswick Women's Seniors Group program offers social and therapeutic support to women of diverse Arabic speaking backgrounds, aged over 60 years. In 2015-16, up to 20 women met fortnightly in Brunswick and through educational workshops, they gained knowledge and skills across a range of areas that are of interest to them, including:

- > health and well-being
- > aged care services
- > housing options for the aged
- > stress management
- > self-esteem, and
- > leadership roles for women in the community

The educational workshops invited guest speakers from a range of organisations and offered participants detailed understanding of services that could access as they age: HACC officers from local council and services to assist with housing for seniors. Importantly, the group was also involved in leadership education for issues of gambling within the community and they participated in an Art Therapy program offered by the Moreland City Council.





The group participants are very enthusiastic about their education workshops and the number of active women in the group continues to grow, as they increasingly utilising their new skills to be leaders within their community. We look forward to the continued growth of the group in the next year.

MEN'S GROUP, BROADMEADOWS

In 2015 Arabic Welfare facilitated a Men's Group based at the Melbourne Polytechnic in Broadmeadows. The group met weekly and was comprised of 25 men across a range of ages and of diverse ethnic backgrounds, with the majority being newly arrived migrants and refugees from Iraq, Lebanon and Egypt.

A range of themes and topics of interest were discussed amongst group participants with a strong focus on settlement in a new country and in opportunities for successful education and employment pathways.

As a result of our needs assessment with the group participants, we identified their most common and immediate interest and commitment to improved English language proficiency. This lead to our collaboration with the Dallas Neighbourhood House to facilitate English Language Conversation classes with a qualified teacher over several sessions.

ALAWI COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

Arabic Welfare has established strong links with the Alawi community of Melbourne and in 2015 -16 we worked closely with community members to build their capacity as a community organisation. We facilitated six workshops with the Alawite Community Association in which we focused on key themes of: leadership; team building; values clarification; communication; conflict resolution; and management skills.

Feedback from workshop participants has been very positive with members of the Alawite Community Association identifying the key benefits as strengthened their skills and capacity to:

- > Co-ordinate day to day activities that improve the functions of their Association
- > Identify ways in which their Association can best respond to the needs of their youth and community members
- > Access Arabic Welfare for support in the implementation of future activities and joint projects

Following our workshop series, we have now engaged youth members of the Alawite Community Association to be active participants in our Diversity & Social Cohesion Project. We will progress our work with the youth of the Alawi community throughout 2016 -17 in the leadership development activities of our Diversity & Social Cohesion Project.

Funding Bodies

We are grateful for the funding we receive from federal, state and local governments, and from philanthropic bodies. In 2015 – 16 our programs received funding from:

- > Department of Social Services
- > Department of Health & Human Services
- > Department of Justice
- > Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation
- > Victorian Multicultural Commission, Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship
- > Moreland City Council
- > Helen MacPherson Smith Trust
- > Cancer Council of Victoria
- > R. E. Ross Trust

Affiliations and Acknowledgements

We thank the following agencies and networks, which provide us with support and with whom we work collaboratively to deliver the best possible outcomes for our clients.

- > AMES/HSS Local Area Coordination
- > Australian Childhood Foundation
- > Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights
- > Banyule Community Health Service
- > Bouverie Centre, La Trobe University
- > Broadmeadows Magistrate's Court
- > Centre for Multicultural Youth
- > Dutch Care
- > Fawkner Community House
- > Gamblers' Help Northern
- > Health West Partnership
- > Heart Foundation Victoria
- > Hume Central English Language Centre
- > Hume Domestic Violence Network
- > Hume Early Years Partnership Network
- > Hume Multicultural Settlement Network
- > Hume Multicultural Youth Working Group
- > Intergenerational Conflict in CALD Communities Network
- > in Touch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence
- > McCaughey Centre, University of Melbourne
- > Meadow Heights Education Centre
- > Merri Community Health Centre
- > Moreland Domestic Violence Network
- > Moreland Family & Children's Advisory Committee
- > Moreland Multicultural and Settlement Services Network
- > Moreland Youth Commitment Network
- > Multicultural Centre for Women's Health
- > New Hope Foundation
- > Northern Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP)
- > Turning Point Eastern Health
- > Victoria Police
- > Whittlesea Youth Network
- > Young Adult Migrant Education Centre



المنظمة العربية للخدمات الإجتماعية



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OUTREACH SITES

Northern Adult Migrant English Program
(NAMEP) Cooperative Sites

Melbourne Polytechnic Broadmeadows

Melbourne Polytechnic Epping

Kangan TAFE Broadmeadows

Meadow Heights Learning Centre/Visy Centre

Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre

Schools in Northern Metropolitan Melbourne

Hume Central Language Centre Broadmeadows

Hume Central Secondary College — Dimboola Campus

Collingwood English Language School — Broadmeadows

Roxburgh Park College

Holy Child School