



المنظمة العربية للخدمات الإجتماعية

Serving all Arabic Speaking Communities

Arabic Welfare Annual Report 2016-2017



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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 & Manager's Report



In reviewing Arabic Welfare's program reports, we are overwhelmed at the amount of work and commitment provided by our dedicated staff. In our 34th 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.

In the past year we have had an unprecedented growth in client services as the significant increase in refugee arrivals from Iraq and Syria has seen large numbers of families settle in Melbourne's Northern suburbs. Arabic Welfare's new office in Broadmeadows has seen growing numbers of recently arrived refugees receive case work services by our staff. Our staff's co-location at AMEP sites has resulted in more comprehensive and holistic services and has consolidated our work with Kangan TAFE and Melbourne Polytechnic.

Settlement Support Program funding from the Department of Social Services (DSS), has strengthened our capacity to respond to the significant increase in numbers of Arabic speaking migrants and refugees who continue to arrive in Victoria. Importantly, we welcome and acknowledge the Commonwealth's allocation of additional funds to Arabic Welfare, which has allowed our organisation to provide vital assistance to thousands of Syrian and Iraqi refugees. Our staff have worked tirelessly and with tremendous dedication and passion to deliver much needed support.

Throughout 2016-17, we have focused strongly on youth engagement in our Youth Settlement Services with innovative youth participation programs and in our Diversity and Social Cohesion project, with strong local engagement activities. We have also partnered with the Brotherhood of St Laurence to support education and employment pathways for young people of diverse Arabic speaking backgrounds.

We strongly value our collaboration with Victoria Police who have worked with us to facilitate youth programs and forums that have seen positive outcomes for young people of Arabic speaking backgrounds. With contributions from hardworking Victoria Police personnel, 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 building trust with Victoria Police.

Funding from the Victorian Multicultural Commission in 2016-17 has allowed Arabic Welfare to commence a critically important project to address issues of family violence in Arabic speaking communities. We have implemented important strategies to engage men and women in the prevention of family violence and we welcome the continued funding of this project.

Once again, in 2016 -17 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.

We gratefully acknowledge the trust and commitment demonstrated to Arabic Welfare by our funding bodies: the Department of Social Services, the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services.

We would like to thank our staff, who have consistently applied their dedication to Arabic Welfare's mission and their commitment to outstanding service provision. We also thank our Committee of Management for providing ongoing support and invaluable contributions to the growth of our organisation.

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. We proudly present our Annual Report for 2016-2017 and welcome you to immerse yourself in our achievements.



Dr. Richard Abicair
PRESIDENT



Mrs Amal El Khoury
MANAGER



2016-17 Highlights

CASEWORK

- > Settlement casework support to 790 recently arrived Arabic speaking refugees and migrants
- > Additional case work support to over 50 clients across our services
- > Recently arrived migrants and refugees supported over 1733 occasions of service
- > 240+ clients assisted by migration agent
- > Across 10 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 70+ clients
- > extensive client directed care to 20+ clients through one-on-one work and their children to reduce the impact of gender based violence and provide safe homes

GROUP SESSIONS

- > 170+ group sessions in our settlement service program with over 3,000 attendances
- > Group sessions provided information and guidance on: education pathways, employment, the Australian school system, engaging with children's schools, driving, financial management & budgeting, health & well-being, housing, law enforcement, legal system, parenting and Australian culture
- > QOWEH problem gambling Therapeutic Group in "Three Sides of the Coin" project and Arabic speaking Peer Support assisting individuals and family members affected by problem gambling
- > 5 community education sessions on problem gambling with over 100 participants
- > 57 Arabic speaking Seniors engaged in Peer Support Groups with education sessions focusing on available aged care services and local connections



YOUTH SERVICES

- > 120+ youth group sessions to support the self-esteem and confidence of young Arabic-speaking refugees to engage and participate in their new home
- > School based group workshops for recently arrived Arabic speaking youth, in collaboration with Roxburgh College, Hume Central Secondary College, Melbourne Polytechnic Broadmeadows, Hume Central Language Centre, Collingwood English Language School Broadmeadows Campus, Mt Riddley College
- > over 90 young people received individual support to engage in education and employment pathways
- > 45 newly arrived refugee students participated in school holiday outings to the beach, Botanical Gardens and Luna Park
- > Collaboration with Victoria Police to facilitate school and community based workshops exploring identity, belonging and connection for Middle Eastern youth
- > Youth focused forums and activities supporting understanding and engagement of young people in community life – 500+ youth participants

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

- > Hosting a 3 day “Well-being Camp” with educational workshops on mental health
- > Family violence project worked with Victoria Police and 30 community members to facilitate education sessions and increase community awareness
- > 35+ individuals experiencing family violence were provided with support or direct care
- > Engaging women and their families in International Women’s Day celebration at Fairfield Park – 80+ participants
- > 35 education workshops to strengthen the parenting skills of over 70 newly arrived migrants and refugees
- > Raising awareness on cancer screening with establishment of the Community Action Group, the development of digital tools and representation on the Cancer Council’s National Advisory Board
- > Harmony Day Event with over 80 participants who enjoyed a colourful, lively and entertaining day with Vic Police, MFB, headspace, Ambulance Victoria and Northern Community Legal Service

Our Committee of Management

PRESIDENT

Dr Richard Abicair



VICE PRESIDENT

Monsignor
Joseph Takchi



TREASURER

Michael Mawal



PUBLIC OFFICER

Walid Hanna



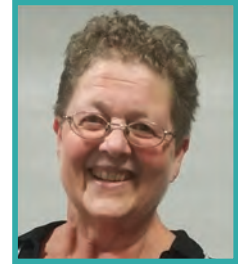
SECRETARY

Antoine Freijah



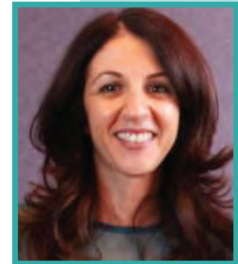
MEMBER

Meredith Lawrence



MEMBER

Catuscia Biuso



MEMBER

Dr Kamiran
Abdouka



Our Staff

MANAGEMENT TEAM

Manager

Settlement Services Program Co-ordinator

Programs Co-ordinator

Amal El-Khoury

Lyda Dankha

Wendy Khalil

PROGRAM STAFF

Settlement Worker

Community Development Worker

Family Support Worker/Social Worker

Counsellor

Migration Agent

Social Worker

Senior Counsellor

Youth Settlement Worker

Settlement Worker

Youth Settlement Worker

Settlement Worker

Ahmad Al-Shaimari

Simar Amad

Roba El-Kadi

Feyrouz Khayat

Nuha McMahon

Abir Melhem

Hoda Nahal

Fadi Qunqar

Sihem Sayoud

Rita Toma

Maha Yaqo



OFFICE STAFF

Administration Officer

Administration Officer

Book Keeper

Suhaila Abdelquader

Zeina Zogheib

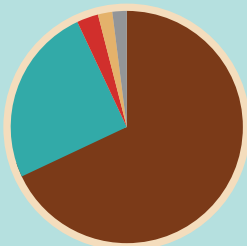
Samira Hanna

Settlement Support Program

SETTLEMENT SUPPORT PROGRAM CLIENT STATISTICS

Country of Origin

Iraq	63%
Syria	33%
Eritrea	2%
Egypt	1%
Lebanon	1%



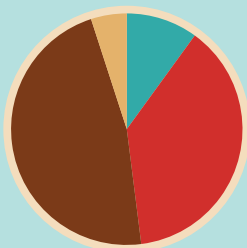
Although these are the countries of origin of our clients, the ethnicities represented include: Iraqi, Assyrian, Chaldean, Lebanese, Syrian, Egyptian, Eritrean, Palestinian, Kuwait, Jordanian, Algerian, Armenian and others. A diverse linguistic background was also represented by our program clients:

- 90 % speak Arabic as their first language, whilst
- 5 % speak Assyrian Neo-Aramaic
- 3 % speak Chaldean Neo-Aramaic
- 2 % speak minority languages: Armenian, Oromo, Tigru

Reflecting the linguistic diversity within Arabic speaking communities, Arabic Welfare's multilingual staff speak Arabic, Assyrian Neo-Aramaic and Chaldean Neo-Aramaic

Age of Clients

Under 19 years	10%
From 20 to 39 years	37%
From 40 to 64 years	50%
Over 65 years	3%



Our Settlement Support Program is funded by the Department of Social Services (DSS) and through this program we provide casework, outreach services at AMEP sites, group information sessions, on-going telephone contact, school holiday programs, and after-school support groups.

The program 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.

The 2016-17 increased number of refugees from Syria and Iraq, saw growing numbers of new arrivals in the Northern Metropolitan Region, in particular in the suburbs of Hume City LGA. Over the past year our program responded to ever increasing numbers of clients and to the complex needs of our clients, many of whom have experienced significant trauma before arriving in Australia.

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 2016-17 Arabic Welfare provided casework services to 790 recently arrived refugees and migrants over 1733 occasions of service.

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.

Our clients received services from Arabic Welfare staff who work across multiple locations, including:

- > our Brunswick office
- > our new Broadmeadows Office
- > AMEP sites:
 - Melbourne Polytechnic Broadmeadows
 - Melbourne Polytechnic Epping
 - Kangan Broadmeadows
 - Meadow Heights Education Centre

- > Hume Central Language Centre
- > Hume Central Secondary College - Dimboola Campus
- > Hume Central Secondary College – Blair Street Campus
- > Roxburgh College
- > Mt Riddley College
- > Craigieburn College
- > Collingwood English Language Centre

GROUP SESSIONS

During 2016-2017, our settlement team successfully facilitated over 170+ group information sessions, and an additional 120+ sessions in our Youth Settlement Support program across a range of subject areas that responded to identified need and information gaps among new arrival clients and families.

Topics included: financial literacy, consumer affairs, rights and responsibilities of tenants, driving and road rules, infringement notices, council services, Hume leisure centres, Vic Road services, family violence, gambling, accessing the utility relief grant and many others.

We facilitated more in-depth sessions on topics identified by clients as those of significance and we invited other agencies to collaborate with us.

Housing Forum

New arrivals attending AMEP and accessing Arabic Welfare services expressed strong interest in applying for public housing, despite their ineligibility. To address this information gap, our workers organised a housing forum with partner agencies: Tenants' Union, DHHS, HSS housing team, Private Real Estate and the Commonwealth Bank. The objective was to increase awareness of services and enhance referral of clients to appropriate services. The forum was attended by over 150 newly arrived Arabic speaking adults and youth students and was well received.

Census Support

The difficulty of completing the Census Form caused an influx of queries from newly arrived clients. Many were not aware of their obligations and how to complete an English form on-line or as a hard copy. Confusion heightened after hearing of infringement costs for lack of compliance.

In response to this issue and in partnership with AMEP, Arabic Welfare staff organised information sessions with access to computers. To facilitate the process, we provided clients with telephone numbers to contact ABS and request an interpreter to obtain forms; others were assisted via online lodgement.





Employment and Education Pathways

In 2016-17 there was an increased number of clients accessing Arabic Welfare services for employment and education pathways. In response to increased demand, "Believe In Your Skills" – an employment preparation program – was delivered to Syrian and Iraqi refugees, who had formal qualifications.

Seven targeted employment & education sessions were delivered to 13 participants. Guest Speakers from relevant services were invited to present on specific topics. Presenters from VETASSESS and Overseas Qualifications Unit provided an overview of services to enhance employment prospects and further education and training.

Parenting sessions

Through regular meetings with school staff, in particular school Well-being Teams, and consultations with parents, we facilitated the development, implementation and delivery of appropriate programs for parents.

Numerous sessions on various topics were delivered to newly arrived Arabic speaking parents. Topics ranged from understanding school systems, school reports, physical & mental health, anger management, communication skills, family relationships, and the importance of parental engagement with their children's school.

Settle Well

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.

The sessions are utilised as vehicles in raising awareness of newly arrived clients of Australian systems & cultures, orientation to level of government in particular services delivered by their local government, rights and responsibilities of residence: council laws, parking, permits, waste services, garbage collection, recycling services, children and youth services.

Conversational English

The program is a complementary service in addition to our clients' AMEP classes, strengthening practical use of every day English to communicate and request services or information.

Our bilingual worker uses plain English to facilitate opportunities for spoken English language usage and to build self-reliance in contacting services. Scenarios include: contacting emergency services, communicating with GP's, understanding consumer rights and shopping.

Given that children learn and use the English language at a quicker rate than their parents, these sessions are effective in building spoken language skills for many parents.

Driver Education Program “Get Your Ls”

We developed a program that assisted clients to gain their Learner's Permit. The program included information sessions by Vic Roads and High Way Patrol on: road rules, responsibilities of drivers, fines, vehicle registration, alcohol blood level and other related topics.

24 participants attended a session at the Vic Roads office and participated in a simulated practical test for their Learner's Permit. This gave them the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the process and to familiarize them with the test environment.

At the end of their participation in the course, 12 clients felt confident enough to book for their Learner's test. All 12 participants passed and it was extremely rewarding for all to see such positive outcomes.

The Use of Compass

Newly arrived parents had very limited information about the school system in Australia and the use of 'Compass' was particularly challenging. A series of sessions with experiential learning and practical demonstrations on 'Compass' included: how to register and access 'Compass' for children's school reports, progress, scheduled tasks, bookings for interviews and many more. Parents were shown how to download the app on their mobile and complete the registration.

Having being pleasantly surprised at what they could access, parents stated that they will support other parents to download the app. *“We will monitor our children's performance and attendance from now on. They will not be able to make up stories anymore! We can find out from compass what our children are doing”.*

Healthy & Positive Communication

Over a series of sessions, parents were provided with information on the importance of open and positive communication with children. Information and discussions focused on:

- > Information on social media, dangers of cyber bullying and its impact on children
- > Importance of positive and active listening with children
- > Talking to your children about their goals and aspirations
- > The value of good sleep, nutritional food for children, and its impact on school performance
- > The value of open communication with school staff on issues affecting children

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 2016–17, demand for migration agent services was much higher than in previous years. Many new arrivals requested support to sponsor children and/or other immediate family members.

Over 240 clients received migration agent services and an additional 140 clients received migration administration assistance from our settlement team.

Many clients commonly reported needing advice on how to propose immediate family members, on partner applications and on passport and citizenship issues. Significant stressors were identified for new arrivals from Iraq and Syria who have experienced separation from children and other immediate family members, who are now living in transit across European countries. Seven group sessions were organised to respond to high demand for information and processes to support these families to re-unite with separated family.

Youth Support Programs

Over the past year, Arabic Welfare focused strongly on strengthening the capacity of young people to participate in education, employment and local activities to foster their sense of belonging. Our work delivered outstanding achievements across: our Youth Settlement Services, our Diversity and Social Cohesion project, our partnership in the Youth Transitions Support Pilot Program, the “Girls Can Lead” project and the “Learn to Thrive” Youth Camp.

YOUTH SETTLEMENT SERVICES

In 2016–17 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.

Through collaboration with schools’ Well-being Teams, key themes are explored in the group sessions and reflect identified areas of need amongst our young clients. In 2016–17, these have included:

- > employment participation, resume writing, interview skills
- > transition to mainstream schools
- > education pathways – VCE/VCAL
- > study skills and social participation
- > Victoria Police services, contacting emergency services
- > health and well-being, mental health
- > effective communication and family relationships
- > respectful relationships and defining friendships
- > partying safe
- > engaging in sports
- > rights and responsibilities and youth law
- > public transport use and safety
- > family violence
- > early and forced marriage

Homework Support Programs

One of the major issues of newly arrived youth attending language school, or the newly transitioned students in secondary school, is the fear of not coping with secondary education due to their competency in literacy and numeracy. This can be exacerbated by parents/family’s expectation of completing VCE followed by entry in University degree courses.





This high expectation places enormous pressure on newly arrived students which can impact on their wellbeing. Some students were unable to complete required school tasks on time, and consequently many avoided attending schools.

In response to these issues and based on individual student needs, Arabic Welfare's youth worker in partnership with Roxburgh Secondary College supported over 10 homework program sessions to EAL students. Students were assisted with maths and science work, reading and pronunciation, and resume writing in preparation for applying for jobs when reaching the required age.

Many of these students expressed joy that they could just pick up a book and read to the worker without the fear of being embarrassed in case they mispronounced a word.

The homework club is a great place for students to drop in and ask a quick question that they may not have asked during class, or just to practice some reading in a safe quiet environment.

Girls' Group

Over 12 sessions were delivered to Arabic speaking girls attending Roxburgh College. Reflecting their identified interests, our sessions provided both information and facilitated discussion. Key topics covered in these sessions have ranged from youth law, to resume writing, readiness for employment and interview skills. Many of the participants expressed their keen interest to enter employment and felt much more equipped to enter employment by the end to these sessions.

Another area of interest and concern for both the students and school staff was that of early/forced marriage. An increased number of girls were leaving schools to be married overseas. The Girls' Group provided an opportunity for girls to discuss issues of earlier/forced marriage, defining relationships and marriage, family violence, youth law and child protection law associated with early marriages.

Soccer programs

The indoor soccer program commenced during the middle of Term 1 in 2017. Over 12 sessions were facilitated after school to provide young people a place to engage in sporting activities, to socialise, to learn skills of team work, respect and discipline.

Each session ran for 90 minutes with an average of 20 participants. Great enthusiasm was expressed by all with many requesting a second session per week and asking: "Can we make a team and join into a competition?"

The group have been able to develop team cohesion, as they all look out for each other and ensure that they all help when setting up and packing up the goals. In addition to this, the trust and rapport forged between young participants and Arabic Welfare's youth worker has resulted in some participants seeking case work support.

Additionally, Arabic Welfare's youth worker engaged a number of newly arrived girls and boys attending English Language Centres in sports sessions during their lunch breaks. Facilitated lunch time soccer, fitness and physical discipline sessions saw positive outcomes as students engaged in fun extra curricula activities that supported their social interaction, English language skills and sense of belonging.

School holiday program — “Safety at the Beach”

“Safety at the Beach” outing was held in January 2017 involving 21 youth from diverse Arabic speaking backgrounds. It was facilitated in partnership with Victoria Police who provided the transport for the day as well as Life Saving Victoria who ran the beach safety session on the day.

We explored safety at the beach as many of the youth had never been to a beach in their life. Life Saving Victoria covered topics such as the purpose of swimming between the flags, rips and currents and general beach and water safety.

Young participants had lots of fun and gained important knowledge on the importance of swimming between the flags. Many youth described how they were in awe of how big the beach was and how far out the water goes. They expressed that they would love to come back to the beach and felt more comfortable in the water because of this program.

School holiday program — Botanical Gardens

The Botanical Gardens and Shrine of Remembrance outing was held during the summer holidays of 2017 for 14 youth from diverse speaking Arabic backgrounds. The objectives were manifold:

- > develop skills to plan their journey to the city while using public transport
- > develop time management skills
- > explore the use of ‘journey planner’ and Myki card
- > explore Melbourne’s tourist sites and gain an understanding of their importance in Australia’s history

Participants worked in small groups to find the most time efficient and cost effective way to get around without help from the facilitator. Importantly, our young participants interacted with each other and their teamwork led to phone numbers being swapped and new friendships formed. They were all very impressed with the beautiful greenery at the Botanical Gardens and were amazed by the grand stature of the Shrine of Remembrance. On returning to our base, they were very excited to tell their parents to visit again on a family picnic!





School holiday program – Luna Park

The Luna Park Outing was during the first school holidays of 2017 for 10 students from Roxburgh College. The purpose of this outing was for the youth to develop skills in planning and organising outings to the city by using 'journey planner' and 'Myki', as well as to explore the city of Melbourne. Prior to this outing many of the youth had never used a train or bus, other than to and from school.

The youth thoroughly enjoyed this experience, as they were given the opportunity to explore Luna Park on their own and were given the responsibility of checking-in again at certain points of the day.

Their feedback was very positive, as they were happy to be given independent responsibility and felt that they grew in confidence. The outing was overall very successful with all the youth expressing a desire to return to Luna Park during the next holidays.



DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL COHESION PROJECT

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". In 2016–17, we marked our second year in this project and saw continued growth in our engagement of Middle Eastern youth to participate in a range of project activities.

We have established collaborative relationships with Victoria Police, Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Hume City Council Youth Services and local secondary schools, with the aim of engaging young people in activities to strengthen their identity and sense of belonging in their local community.

The project has undertaken a range of community development activities to achieve engagement and participation of Middle Eastern youth in community life. Throughout 2016 -17 our project's achievements have been in the following areas:

- > Youth Forum with 60+ participants at Pascoe Vale Girls' College; 15 students led the planning, coordination and facilitation of the "Empowering Women" forum, in which themes of racism, nationality, war and social media were explored in small group discussions. Arabic Welfare, Victoria Police and College staff contributed to discussion themes for what proved to be a very insightful and engaging day.
- > Providing direct support through casework and secondary consultations with 27 young people
- > Leadership training to young people over a two day intensive workshop



- > Facilitating parent workshops in Hume, Whittlesea and at Pascoe Vale Girls College –
 - 8 workshops for women in Hume focused on local connections
 - 6 workshops for women in Whittlesea focused on communication, self-exploration and conflict resolution
 - 4 workshops for men were facilitated in Whittlesea and focused on building resilience and confidence
 - smaller parent workshops at Pascoe Vale girls College had a therapeutic and educational focus
- > Coordination of Harmony Day Event at the home grounds of the Upfield Soccer Club in Dallas with over 80 participants
- > Community engagement events and forums, including: Western Bulldogs Clinic, Emergency Services Youth Safety Forums, outing to Maroondah Dam, cultural profile presentations at Hume Central Secondary College

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.

YOUTH TRANSITIONS SUPPORT PILOT PROGRAM

Arabic Welfare and the Brotherhood of St Laurence have worked in partnership to facilitate this pilot program. In 2016–17, Arabic Welfare engaged participants in the Youth Transitions Support Pilot (YTSP) program, which aims to provide early intervention assistance and address barriers to participation in education and employment to young humanitarian entrants and young migrants under 25 years. Through individualised support, young Arabic speaking people were supported in identifying their aspirations and goals.

Throughout the program, we engaged 82 young participants and we facilitated tailored 'Employment Preparation' sessions across different settings, including:

- > 14 sessions at Kangan TAFE's Level 3 English classes for 47 students
- > 8 sessions at our Marysville 'Learn to Thrive' Camp for 45 participants – young people and their parents





A key strength of our approach in this program is the capacity of Arabic Welfare's YTSP staff to support young participants with their settlement issues, which ultimately support them to realise their goals and aspirations to pursue education and entry to employment. Working with participants holistically and with cultural understandings of their pre-arrival experiences as well as their settlement journeys, offers stronger service responsiveness and effective program outcomes.

'LEARN TO THRIVE' YOUTH CAMP

"Learn to Thrive" youth camp was planned and delivered over 3 days on 18th, 19th & 20th January 2017 at Marysville. We had 45 people participate, comprised of young people and their parents.

Through an interactive method of delivery, camp activities and workshops focused on raising participants' awareness on Australian educational and employment systems. Activities and sessions delivered included:

- > Different Types of Work Experience
- > Small Business Enterprises
- > Soft Skills development
- > Australian Work Place Culture
- > Career interests

Outside these structured sessions, participants also enjoyed interactive activities, such as sports, canoeing, and bushwalking, which offered parents and young people the opportunity to spend time together in a relaxed environment and explore dynamics of open communication in healthy relationships.

'GIRLS CAN LEAD' PROJECT

Funded by the Victorian Multicultural Commission, the 'Girls Can Lead' Project was delivered at Pascoe Vale Girls College and worked with 33 young women in Years 10 and 11, aged 15 to 18 years. All participants were born in Australia, with either one or both parents born in an Arabic speaking country.

The project facilitated 11 sessions with Year 10 students and one session for Year 11 students, which was facilitated with the school's social worker. The aim of these sessions was to:

- > Better understand the girls' engagement with their school/education system
- > Encourage the girls to explore and identify their skills/talent that are transferable to their education

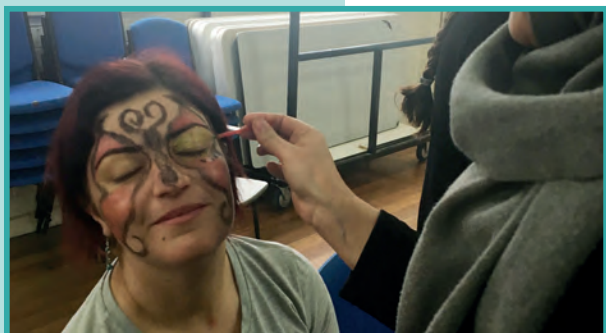
- > Explore the value of education in their homes and community
- > Identify the benefits of completing Year 12 and entering into tertiary education/training
- > Encourage the girls to be an inspiration to other young women who have faced similar challenges to education/training

Arabic Welfare collaborated with the Well-Being Staff and Year Level Coordinators at the school to recruit participants, facilitate and evaluate the project. The school has a very high percentage of students with Middle Eastern background, of which a large number are disengaging from formal education. The school is committed to supporting the continued education of all its students and consequently, was very enthusiastic about this project.

Year Level Coordinators provided assistance in identifying relevant participants, based on their academic results and degree of absenteeism. Common attributes amongst the students recruited for the project were: disconnected from the school; unmotivated to attend; no clear goals about the future; struggling with their identity; and considering marriage as a valuable alternative to education with an ideal age for marriage as 18 to 20 years. After exploring these issues, the project saw major shifts in attitudes and key achievements include:

- > Participant reconnection with education
- > better understanding of school's 'Wellbeing Team' and the types of support they provide
- > participants self-referring to the 'Wellbeing Team' for extra support to get through the year and continue their education.
- > Participants engaging the school with their parents regarding their educational pathways
- > opportunity for the girls to talk about the difficulties they have in class, the reasons behind their lack of school attendance and some of the pressures they are receiving from home.

Family Support Programs



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 2016–17, our project continued to build on the successes of the previous year and we received great support from the Foundation with 'Mindfulness' training to our staff. We were invited to contribute to the Foundation's e-mag during Cultural Diversity Week 2017. We showcased the challenging and rewarding work of our program and its effects in preventing and minimising the impact of gambling. A QOWEH client also shared his story and Arabic Welfare acknowledges his contribution and the inspiration that his story brings. The interview is available on-line:

Inside Gambling Edition 7- <http://www.insidegambling.com.au/editions/7/feature/five-minutes-with-arabic-counsellor-hoda-nahal>

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 clients across Hume and Moreland—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
- > Facilitated Therapeutic Group in "Three Sides of the Coin" project and an Arabic speaking Peer Support Group supporting individuals and family members affected by problem gambling
- > An Arabic language media strategy to promote project messages through SBS Radio's Arabic Language Program, 3ZZZ and the 'El Telegraph' Arabic language newspaper
- > Contribution to the Foundation's Gambling Awareness Week by hosting a series of activities with a Family Fun Day, that involved community members from Whittlesea, Hume and Moreland

- > Facilitated 5 community education sessions with over 100 participants

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.

'OUR FAMILY HONOUR' FAMILY VIOLENCE PROJECT

In 2016–17 we were funded by the Department of Premier & Cabinet — through the Victorian Multicultural Commission — to facilitate a two year family violence project, 'Our Family Honour'. The aims of the project are twofold:

- 1) To provide a case management service to individuals and families experiencing family violence
- 2) To implement community education strategies for community leaders and community groups to raise awareness on issues of, and prevention of, family violence

Our organisation is committed to implementing strategies to achieve the most effective and sustainable outcomes for our community members; responding to family violence is critical and strengthening our community's capacity to prevent family violence is a strong priority for the future well-being of all community members.

To date, our project has seen our own organisation's skill set strengthened with all of our staff having completed training in the Common Risk Assessment Framework tools and in the Napcan Love Bites training. Across all of our programs, our staff are now equipped to respond to cases of family violence and are equipped to deliver the Love Bites training to youth, parents and community leaders across Arabic speaking communities. Key achievements of our project's work in our first year include:

- > valuable secondary consultation with mainstream services at network meetings, one-on-one consultations over the phone or face to face for 15 clients and their families
- > the development and administering of an extensive psycho-social intake assessment document, the development of referral protocols and case management system at Arabic Welfare that provides an enhanced response to instances of Family Violence
- > extensive client directed care to 20+ clients through one-on-one work and their children to reduce the impact of gender based violence and provide safe homes



FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Family Support Program is a newly funded program which started in January 2017 and has enabled staff to provide extensive client directed care to clients from diverse Arabic Speaking communities with a focus on early intervention and prevention of family violence. Clients are provided with the necessary support, empowering them to achieve their set goals and build stronger and safer homes for their family.

We have facilitated groups to educate, strengthen and empower clients and topics have included: parenting, the promotion of healthy and respectful relationships, challenging social perceptions and attitudes of family violence and gender inequality.

One of the groups is a parenting group, Parents Building Solutions, facilitated in partnership with Anglicare through a co-design approach. The group is a strength-based group, through which parents and facilitators work together to build and enhance participants' parenting skills – 15 parents attended the group sessions and were able to share experiences with others in a safe and supportive environment.

“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. After conducting 2 focus groups to discuss and gauge participants’ understandings of family violence issues, we facilitated 6 education workshops with 15 men and 16 women. We engaged specialist services working in family violence prevention, early intervention, crisis response and recovery to co-facilitate the sessions.

The project aimed to raise awareness of the legal definitions of family violence in Australia and focused on the following themes:

- > definition of family violence within the Australian context
- > information about the criminal implications of early/forced marriage
- > cultural beliefs that impact on family violence
- > reporting requirements of child abuse
- > the role Victoria Police and response to family violence
- > Child Protection Service response to children affected by family violence
- > family violence prevention and early intervention; crisis response and recovery

An additional two information sessions were delivered to AMEP female students at Meadow Heights Education Centre. The sessions were delivered by a female guest speaker from Victoria Police and had a total of 60+ women attending. Moreover, most participants were engaged to participate in the ‘Week without Family Violence’ from 17th to 21st of October 2016, organised by the family violence community coordinator from Northern Community Legal Centre. The project received overwhelmingly positive feedback, with most participants describing the significant increase in their knowledge on family violence.

PARENTING GROUPS

“Ahala W Sahla” — Women’s parenting group at Roxburgh Park College

The “Welcome” women’s group was established at Roxburgh College and comprised of newly arrived Arabic speaking background women who have been in Australia for less than a year. The women expressed their feelings of being overwhelmed by their lack of understanding of the Australian education system. The group met weekly at the school and provided information through facilitated discussion on:

- > Navigating Compass as part of school’s communication
- > checking updates of children’s progress using their phone apps.
- > introduction to staff and their role at the school
- > support available at the school for parents and students
- > healthy & effective communication skills between parents & children
- > Cyber bullying, mental health & wellbeing
- > understanding food labelling & healthy eating

“Parenting in a New Culture” — Men’s Group

In partnership with Whittlesea Community Connections Arabic Welfare facilitated a series of information workshops to raise awareness among men on issues affecting their lives and their families. The men who participated in these workshops were from diverse Arabic speaking communities and many had suffered traumatic experiences in their country of origin.

Eight workshops were held and 14 men participated in each session and we covered themes on:

- > Expression of Feelings & Emotions
- > Mental Health & Wellbeing
- > Children’s behaviour
- > DHHS – housing
- > DHS Centrelink
- > Rights & responsibilities as tenants

Most of the participants were employed overseas and some ran their own business. However lack of employment opportunities impacted their adjustment in their new country and their role as providers for the family. The men found the sessions highly beneficial, as they were able to express issues of concerns with one another and found comfort and safety in sharing similar backgrounds and experiences. The most important issues for the men’s group were: family dynamics, adjustment to life in Australia, unemployment, intergenerational conflict, and changed roles in the family.



Capacity Building 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 facilitated group sessions with community members who recreate at pokie venues and specifically, worked with community leaders to promote alternative gaming options. Key issues arising from our work with community leaders revolved around poor alternatives to gaming venues and community perceptions of gaming venues:

- > 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

Our project worked with over 12 community leaders representing diverse Arabic speaking groups, those identifying as Assyrian, Egyptian, Syrian and Lebanese.

"CATCHING UP": SUPPORTING DUAL DIAGNOSIS RESPONSES IN CALD AND AOD SERVICES

As part of our continued collaboration with Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre (Eastern Health), in 2016–17 we contributed to the 'Catching Up' initiative, which also involved the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health. The aim of the initiative is to promote the mental health services to Arabic speaking community members and to foster connections between our clients and service providers.

Through the 'Catching Up' initiative we advertised and exhibited our recent publication, 'My Mind's Journey' booklet, which includes information about Mental Health, Dual Diagnosis, Alcohol & Other Drugs, and where to seek assistance.

"My Mind's Journey" booklet is publicly available and more than 1,200 copies have been distributed!

We also utilised Arabic language media outlets to promote messages of well-being and to raise awareness of mental health services. A highlight for 2016–17 was our 3 day “Well-being Camp” in which we facilitated 4 educational workshops on:

- > What is wellbeing?
- > AOD
- > Positive Communication
- > Positive Relationship

The camp also hosted social and recreational activities, fostering engagement and new friendships. Activities included dance sessions, canoeing, big tree and river exploration, soccer and volleyball games.

EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE

Concerns across organisations and schools have been identified with regard to patterns of school aged girls exiting education and with parental support, travelling to the Middle East to wed through a process of arranged marriage, to which girls as young as 16 years agree. Local secondary schools have raised this issue and explained that once girls marry overseas, they remain there until they reach 18 years, at which point they return to Australia and then sponsor their husband.

In collaboration with Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights and Northern Community Legal Centre (NCLC), Arabic Welfare staff delivered information about earlier and forced marriages and sessions on youth law. Some sessions were facilitated for young female participants and others were for mixed gender groups.

CANCER COUNCIL ARABIC SPEAKING COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP

In 2016–17 Arabic Welfare worked in collaboration with the Cancer Council to successfully establish an Arabic speaking Action Group that employed communication strategies to encourage increased cancer screening in the future. Our collaboration continued over 2016–17 as we jointly facilitated a project as part of the ‘Under Screened Recruitment Program’.

The Under Screened Recruitment Program aims to increase the knowledge, awareness and participation of cancer screening in communities with a lower participation rate. Arabic Welfare recruited 8 women to the Community Action Group and they became “the Champions” in communicating messages of cancer screening programs.





Members of the group discussed different strategies to spread messages on the importance of screening. One of the strategies was a cartoon cancer campaign that was scripted in Arabic and was screened via social media and television with outstanding results:

- > The Cartoon went viral on social media with more than 160,000 views in one week.
- > SBS world news interviewed Arabic Welfare's worker about the project and it was aired on television

Arabic Welfare's worker has been invited by Cancer Council Australia to participate on the National Advisory Board to support the development of a toolkit for engaging under screened and never screened women in the National Cervical Screening Program.

CALD SENIORS' PROJECT

Through engagement with the Arabic speaking community members and feedback from our staff, Arabic Welfare identified issues of social isolation and vulnerability of Arabic speaking seniors residing in Hume and Moreland. Through funding from the DHS 'Participation for CALD Seniors Grants' we facilitated the "Peer Support Program for Arabic speaking Seniors". Key objectives through the program were achieved with 57 participants and include:

- > Decreasing the isolation of seniors in Hume and Moreland through access to an accessible local venue
- > Bringing together seniors that have limited social connections, language skills and knowledge of their local community.
- > Providing information and building awareness of mainstream services about local, state and federal programs to better improve the knowledge, health and capacity of seniors. The sessions involved local Police, Centrelink, Health Information dissemination and local council recreational leisure centres in Fawkner and Broadmeadows.

- > Opportunities to build friendships sustained outside the running of the groups.
- > Facilitating connections between individuals and their local community facilities such as community hubs, neighbourhood houses, local council and local leisure centres.
- > Challenging participants to venture out of their local community and discover local parks in Victoria through an International Women's Day event in Fairfield Park
- > Strengthening knowledge and understanding of links between physical & mental health, social recreation & reduction of social isolation; this was achieved through the facilitation of sessions by Arabic Welfare's bicultural and bilingual Therapeutic Counsellors.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY EVENT

March was a highlight for Arabic Welfare this year with the coming together of the Programs' Team and Settlement Team to create a Family Outing that celebrated the wonderful and invaluable contribution of women in society during International Women's Day.

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.

The trip to Fairfield Park brought together Arabic Speaking women, children and men. It was a day filled with learning, fun and celebration enjoyed by all. Over 80 people attended and the day included information session with our local police, recreation boat activity and playtime for the children.



Cultural Competence Training

Arabic Welfare has developed valuable resources for culturally competent service delivery. Our [ArabiCare](#) website and our Cultural Competence 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 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.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE TRAINING

In 2016–17 our staff facilitated training through in-service sessions, consultation and workshops and delivered customised training sessions to service providers, including to Moreland City Council and CVGT.

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.

Funding Bodies

We are grateful for the funding and support we receive from federal, state and local governments. In 2016 – 17 our programs received funding from:

- > Department of Social Services
- > Department of Health & Human Services
- > Department of Justice
- > Department of Premier & Cabinet—Victorian Multicultural Commission
- > Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation

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.

PROJECT PARTNERS

- > Brotherhood of St Laurence
- > Cancer Council
- > Health West
- > Turning Point

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

- > Ambulance Victoria
- > AMES
- > Anglicare
- > Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights
- > Baptcare
- > Bouverie Centre
- > Broadmeadows Health Centre
- > Broadmeadows Leisure Centre
- > Campbellfield Hub
- > Centre for Multicultural Youth
- > Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria
- > Craigieburn Shopping Centre-Landlease
- > Whittlesea Community Connections
- > Northern Community Legal Centre
- > Department of Education
- > Centrelink
- > Child First
- > Cohealth
- > Consumer Affairs Victoria
- > Department of Housing
- > Dianella Community Health
- > Domestic Violence Resource Centre
- > Family Mediation Centre
- > Family Relationships Centre
- > Foundation House
- > Gambler's Help
- > Gateway

- > Haven Home Safe
- > headspace
- > Hume City Local Council
- > In Touch
- > Kangan TAFE
- > Legal Aid
- > Lend Lease
- > Magistrates Court Broadmeadows
- > Melbourne Polytechnic
- > Merri Health
- > Metropolitan Fire Brigade
- > Moreland City Council
- > NEAMI
- > Northern Community Legal Service
- > Orygen Youth Health
- > Overseas Qualifications Unit
- > Salvation Army
- > Spectrum Migrant Services
- > Syrian Charitable Organisation
- > Micare
- > Uniting Care Kildonan/Lentara
- > University of Melbourne
- > Upfield Soccer Club
- > VET Assess
- > Vic Health
- > Vic Roads
- > Victoria Police
- > Vincent Care
- > Western Bulldogs
- > Women's Health in the North

SCHOOLS

- > Bellevue Primary School
- > Craigieburn Secondary College
- > Hume Central Secondary College
- > Meadow Heights Learning Centre
- > Pascoe Vale Girls College
- > Roxburgh College

REPRESENTATION ON LOCAL NETWORKS & ADVISORY GROUPS

- > "Join the Dots", Pascoe Vale Girls College
- > AMES Australia Disability Action Group
- > Broadmeadows Community Youth Justice Alliance
- > Community Win Advisory Committee.
- > Roundtable on Adolescent-Perpetrated Family Violence in CALD Communities, Victorian Children's Council
- > Cultural Consultative Group Meeting, Family Relationship Centre
- > Family and Children's Services Network
- > Health West- Reducing Gambling Frequency Project Advisory Group
- > DIBP: Minister's Consultations on the 2017-18 Humanitarian Program
- > VRGF-"Many Ways to help" Conference 2016
- > Advisory Committee Meetings- Trauma-informed care for CALD and Muslim women affected by violence
- > Alliance for Gambling Reform
- > Reference Group Meeting - Muslim Women and Respectful Relationships Project
- > Gambler's Help Provider Forum
- > Healthy Ageing Forum by Commissioner for Seniors Victorians
- > Adolescent Family Violence Community of Practice Forum
- > VRGF: Community Engagement Forum
- > Health West Partnership: Reducing the Frequency of Gambling Project
- > Experts Advisory Group: PhD research project on Mental Health literacy in the
- > Arabic community in Victoria, RMIT University
- > Hume Early Years Partnership
- > Hume Family and Domestic Violence Network
- > Hume Multicultural Worker's Network
- > Hume Whittlesea Partnership Refugee Health Meeting
- > Hume Youth Commitment
- > Moreland Multicultural and Settlement Services Network
- > National Cancer Council Advisory Board
- > Settlement and Mental Health Network Meeting
- > Tangible Connections Network
- > Vic Police Multicultural Portfolio Reference Group
- > BSL- YTSP Program Governance meeting
- > "Count Me In" Advisory Committee, Sport Participation Program
- > Vic Local Governance Association (VLGA) - Transforming Spin to
- > Whittlesea Settlement Network Meeting



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 Education Centre
Glenroy Neighbourhood Learning Centre

Schools in Northern Metropolitan Melbourne

Hume Central Language Centre Broadmeadows
Hume Central Secondary College—Dimboola Campus
Hume Central Secondary College—Blair Street Campus
Collingwood English Language School—Broadmeadows
Roxburgh Park College