



Serving all **Arabic Speaking** Communities



Arabic Welfare Annual Report

2019-2020

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Our Mission

To empower and foster the wellbeing of our community through education, capacity building, support services, advocacy and partnerships.

Our Vision

For all Arabic Speaking Victorians to be actively engaged and represented in Australian society.

Chairperson & Executive Manager's Report



Welcome to the 37th year of Arabic Welfare's operation which undoubtedly has been one of the most challenging for our staff and clients as a result of the unprecedented COVID 19 pandemic restrictions. Despite enormous difficulties, our commitment to assist our clients has remained unchanged. From March 2020 onwards, we were compelled to re-invent our operations and our method of service delivery with great resourcefulness.

Arabic Welfare moved to deliver our core services—case work, groupwork and counselling—through phone appointments and online. Our new way of delivering services was supported by new policies to clearly guide our staff and clients for digital engagement. The Multicultural Community Connections Program in response to COVID-19 allocated funding to our organisation so that we were able to access necessary IT equipment and software, build our technical skills and facilitate any practical supports to our clients.

Amid these changes to our service delivery mode, the issues faced by our clients were also changing rapidly as a result of COVID-19 social isolation rules. The increased prevalence and heightened complexity of family violence issues was met with community-based responses by Arabic Welfare with funding from the Victorian Government Multicultural COVID-19 Family Violence Program. This has allowed our organisation to increase our delivery of family violence awareness and early intervention work in these extremely difficult and unsafe circumstances.

Our ongoing work in our Settlement Support Programs has been supported through funding from the Commonwealth SETS Client Services and Capacity Building Programs. The Department of Home Affairs SETS grants to Arabic Welfare have reflected the continued settlement of humanitarian entrants to Melbourne from war torn Syria, Iraq and the broader Middle Eastern region.

Our gambling project, QOWEH, provided invaluable counselling support and community education to a growing number of community members, which has all been made possible by funding from the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation. Our other areas of growth have been in counselling services for family violence, for youth support and intergenerational relationships. Our expanding work with young people has led Arabic Welfare to dedicate our Youth Program Development Worker to design increased services that best respond to the needs of our young clients.

In 2019-20 Arabic Welfare undertook important work in governance and policy development: we developed our five-year Strategic Plan; we completed our Staff Survey with valuable guidance from Pathways Australia; we facilitated Governance Training for our Committee of Management; and we updated our policies and procedures. Our efforts for continuous improvement have also seen our new website finalised and the extension/renovation works completed to our Broadmeadows Office.

We thank all members of our Committee of Management for their dedicated support and direction and we especially commend Walid Hanna for his years of service, as 2019-20 marks his departure from our Committee. We gratefully acknowledge our funding bodies, who have entrusted Arabic Welfare to deliver our programs: the Department of Home Affairs, the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation and the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

In this extraordinarily difficult year, our staff have demonstrated exceptional agility with their capacity to adapt our service delivery modes in ways that continued to support and respond to our clients' needs. We are very grateful to our staff who have worked with such commitment and passion and we extend our thanks to Lyda Dankha and Nuha McMahon, who we farewelled this year after years of dedicated service to our Settlement Support Program.

Our resilient community members and our hardworking staff have afforded Arabic Welfare the pride of presenting our 2019-20 Annual Report. We welcome you to share in our collective successes as you read our year's highlights, program achievements and client stories.



Dr. Richard Abicair
PRESIDENT



Mrs Amal El Khoury
EXECUTIVE MANAGER



2019-20 Highlights

CASEWORK

- > Settlement case management support to over 1100+ recently arrived Arabic speaking refugees and migrants
- > Across 12 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 more than 110 clients
- > extensive client directed care to 100+ clients and their families with counselling and case management support to reduce the impact of gender based violence and provide safe homes



CAPACITY BUILDING

- > 195+ group sessions in our settlement service program
- > Group sessions provided information on: education pathways, employment, Australian history and culture, citizenship, the Australian school system, engaging with children's schools, driving, financial management & budgeting, health & well-being, housing, law enforcement, legal system and parenting
- > Dedicated group workshops for skill development in digital literacy, driving, job searching and citizenship applications
- > Therapeutic group programs to support individuals affected by problem gambling
- > Family violence prevention programs and education workshops with reach to 250+ community members
- > Through our Road Safety "Drive with Arabic Welfare" program, 37 participants were supported to acquire knowledge and skills and then to undertake their learner test with successful outcomes
- > Raising awareness on bowel cancer screening in education workshops with 40 participants





YOUTH SERVICES

- > Over 65 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 primary and secondary schools in the Northern Metropolitan Region
- > 60 young people were engaged and provided with 280 sessions for individual support to engage in education and employment pathways in our YTSP program
- > We explored themes of identity and belonging in Australia for young people of Arabic speaking backgrounds—with over 100 participants in our interactive workshops for our 'Who do you think you are?' project
- > Our Youth Outings supported over 50 young people explore life in Australia with active participation in Hard Rock Climbing, Sports & Aquatic Centre and Life Saving Victoria

Our Committee of Management

PRESIDENT

Dr Richard Abicair



VICE PRESIDENT

Monsignor
Joseph Takchi



TREASURER

Michael Mawal



ASSISTANT TREASURER

Antoine Freijah



SECRETARY, PUBLIC OFFICER

Walid Hanna



MEMBER

Dr Kamiran Abdouka



MEMBER

Elaine Hadj



MEMBER

Dr Ramzi Yousif
Razouk



MEMBER

Emeline Issa



Our Staff

MANAGEMENT TEAM

<i>Executive Manager</i>	Amal El-Khoury
<i>Settlement Services Program Co-ordinator</i>	Lyda Dankha
<i>Capacity Building Coordinator</i>	Abir Melhem

PROGRAM STAFF

<i>Settlement Service Worker</i>	Ahmad Al-Shaimari
<i>Community Development Worker</i>	Simar Amad
<i>Family Support Worker</i>	Roba El-Kadi
<i>Counsellor</i>	Feyrouz Khayat
<i>Migration Agent</i>	Nuha McMahon
<i>Settlement Worker</i>	Sihem Sayoud
<i>Settlement Worker</i>	Maha Yaqoo
<i>Program Development Officer</i>	Zeina Zogheib
<i>Youth Engagement Worker-Social Worker</i>	Dalia El-Sharnouby

OFFICE STAFF

<i>Operations Support Worker</i>	Suhaila Abdelquader
<i>Admin Worker</i>	Samer Albadin

Settlement Support Programs

SETTLEMENT SUPPORT PROGRAM CLIENT STATISTICS

Although 95% of our clients were born in Iraq or Syria they were of diverse ethnic backgrounds

Ancestry

Syrian	25%
Iraqi	24%
Assyrian	20%
Chaldean	12%
Armenian, Lebanese, Egyptian, Eritrean, Iranian, others	10%
Not stated	9%



SETTLEMENT ENGAGEMENT & TRANSITION SUPPORT — CLIENT SERVICES

The program addresses the needs of diverse Arabic-speaking background people who have been in Australia for less than 5 years. Through our Settlement Engagement & Transition Support (SETS) Client Services 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 aim of our program is to ensure that newly arrived residents are offered as much support as possible so that they can lay foundations for a new life in Australia, both for themselves and their families.

CASE MANAGEMENT

During one-on-one and family-based case management service, 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 linking them to mainstream services. Through our case management service, we provide both support and intensive services that reflect diverse client needs: some clients require basic information, others require advocacy and referrals, while others have complex issues and require intensive and/or long-term support.

During 2019 - 20 Arabic Welfare provided case management services to 1100 recently arrived refugees and migrants over 3500+ occasions of service.

Our clients received settlement support services across multiple locations, including:

- > Arabic Welfare's Brunswick office
- > Arabic Welfare's Broadmeadows Office
- > AMEP sites:
 - Melbourne Polytechnic Broadmeadows
 - Melbourne Polytechnic Epping
 - Melbourne Polytechnic Epping for Young Adult Migrant Education Course (YAMEC)
 - Kangan Institute Broadmeadows
 - Meadow Heights Education Centre
- > Bloom Business International
- > Hume Central Secondary College – Dimboola Campus
- > Hume Central Secondary College – Blair Street Campus
- > Coburg High School
- > Glenroy Secondary College

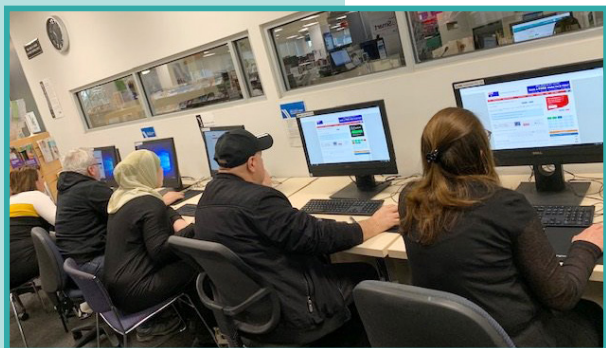
- > Mt Ridley College
- > Craigieburn Secondary College
- > Collingwood English Language School Craigieburn
- > Collingwood English Language School Broadmeadows

In 2019-20 our Settlement Services were:

- ✓ Accessed by a higher percentage of clients aged 35 to 44 years
- ✓ Utilised by a majority of clients from Syria and Iraq
- ✓ Affected by COVID-19 restrictions and delivered by phone or online from March onwards
- ✓ Referred to by mainstream services with significant increase since the COVID-19 pandemic for issues relating to family relationships, mental health, income and employment
- ✓ Accessed by a growing number of self-referrals
- ✓ Accessed with referrals from community and religious leaders for issues around family functioning and citizenship applications
- ✓ Delivered with strong focus on the Commonwealth's identified nine priority areas:
 - Language Services
 - Employment
 - Education and Training
 - Housing
 - Health and Well-being
 - Transport
 - Civic Participation
 - Family and Social Support
 - Justice



Settlement Support Programs



GROUP SESSIONS

Our group sessions are interactive and delivered in English and Arabic. Participants learn and benefit from information on citizenship, driver education, financial management, digital literacy, interviewing and job seeking, housing, legal services and health & wellbeing. As with our Settlement Service case management, our group sessions reflect the Commonwealth's identified nine priority areas.

During 2019-2020, we successfully facilitated over **195 group education and workshop sessions**, which have provided much needed information to new arrivals and are run as a series of education workshops at different locations. Our main workshop series and those that proved to be most popular, included:

'Settle Well'—in these sessions we provided participants with information and interactive learning to strengthen preparation for the Citizenship Test. Participants learnt about Australian culture, history, lifestyle and Australian systems, and built their knowledge and capacity through conversational English to understand citizenship requirements. The sessions raised awareness among newly arrived clients of local government services, as well as rights and responsibilities that come with civic life.

'Together We Learn' was facilitated in partnership with Kangan and was a tailored program for newly arrived adults that discussed the impact of war and migration, settlement experiences, understanding key services such as MyKi, MyGov, digital support, job search and interview skills.

'Drive with Arabic Welfare'—in partnership with the Department of Transport (under the Community Road Safety Grants), the project targeted recently arrived clients aged over 21 years. Our 37 participants were all Hume City Council residents from Iraq and Syria with less than one year in Australia and with low English proficiency and low digital literacy. Most participants were women who were motivated to get their drivers' licence as a means of supporting their children and strengthening their own independent mobility.

Civic Participation—group sessions have assisted community members to understand the process for lodgement of special humanitarian applications, including how to communicate with the Department of Home Affairs, how to set up an ImmiAccount, and how to proceed after refusal of visa. We also ran sessions to prepare community members for their citizenship test and found that many participants had already undertaken the test but were unsuccessful and required support. Community members often attended the AW sessions as a recommendation from friends who felt that our sessions had helped them pass the test.

Support was provided in areas of employment with our **'Start Your Small Business'** program that was run in partnership with the Meadow Heights Learning Centre. This program was designed for community members who were interested in self-employment and have level 3 English. The program covered a range of topics: requirements to set up a small business (business plan, acquisition of ABN, registering a business), finance, GST, OH&S, and Taxation.

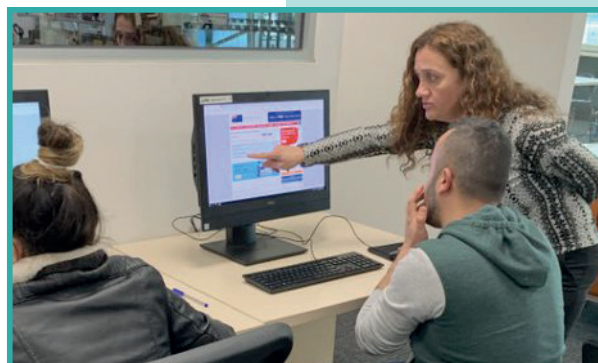
Additionally, Arabic Welfare's **Employment workshops** focused on interactive learning and skill development for job search skills, including resume writing, interview practice, applications for volunteer opportunities and other work experience. We facilitated 13 employment focused group sessions for our adult clients and in our Youth Services we facilitated similar such group sessions in our local schools.

Targeted **Digital Literacy** group sessions were facilitated to strengthen our clients' skills in utilising IT for their day to day activities. Through 14 sessions our clients learnt how to set up, navigate and use an email account, how to access and use mygov accounts and services, how to download and print documents, and how to complete online applications.

Our group sessions also facilitated workshops that focused on **Family and Social Support**. Family violence and its impact is another common issue experienced in our community and Arabic Welfare provides support through counselling, behavioural programs, and group sessions. In 2019-20 we delivered sessions for parents that cover topics such as positive communication, setting boundaries, behavioural concerns, gaming & screen time, and advocacy & access to NDIS to help address the number of concerns expressed by parents.

Other group workshop sessions were dedicated to **Health and Well-being** to address information and support on post-war trauma, financial struggles, settlement struggles, family relationships, mental health and stressors experienced by our participants regarding their family members who still remain overseas in dire circumstances.

Our series of group sessions that focused on **Housing** and those focused on **Transport** provided our participants with invaluable information on Australia's systems, rules, laws and consequences of breaches. Our Housing sessions were facilitated with Meadow Heights Education Centre and highlighted key issues, such as financial capacity, rental applications, tenant rules and housing maintenance; while our sessions on Transport focused on rights and responsibilities for use of public transport and motor vehicle use, as well as defining how these rights and responsibilities are enshrined in law.



Settlement Support Programs

Our Settlement Services program helps identify and address the needs of newly arrived communities and is often the gateway for managing other significant issues experienced by vulnerable clients. Our case examples highlight the complexity of client issues often addressed through the SETS program and beyond.

Independence through driver's license

Our client, Amira, was very worried about transport options for her children — she has three children in secondary school and two in primary school. She needed to be able to drive so that she could do school drop off and pick up, attend medical appointments and support her children's participation in school, sport and recreational activities.

She had never driven before and knew that she couldn't learn Australia's road rules and sit the Learner's Test without any help because of her low English language proficiency and her lack of confidence.

Amira attended all the 'Drive with Arabic Welfare' sessions and tried her best to absorb the information and participate in the practice test online. Through lots of encouragement, she engaged well with the group and made friends with everyone.

She successfully passed the Learner's Test and is now taking driving lessons. Amira is overwhelmed with her achievements. She feels that the course helped her achieve a dream that she felt was not possible before. She is also going to miss the group because she feels that everyone is like family now!

Mental health support

Arabic Welfare worked with three brothers who were all registered at Melbourne Polytechnic, however, all three had very poor attendance and struggled to engage.

Our case management and counselling services revealed that they suffered with mental health issues, depression, and feelings of isolation. Their issues were also those experienced by their parents. Our staff supported the family by addressing the needs of all family members, including how to access support payments through Centrelink and the importance of speaking with their GP. Referrals to their GP for mental health support were facilitated for the brothers. Support and encouragement were provided to continue with their participation in education.

The family are now better informed about services in Australia and about their legal obligations with regard to Centrelink. All three brothers are still engaged with their educational institution and have a clear understanding of their legal obligations regarding their attendance and Centrelink payments. They have also stated that things are getting better for their parents and they are adapting and coping much better now.

Visa application support

Wally is a 16-year old male who arrived in Australia with his uncle as a refugee under the Humanitarian Program. He was extremely concerned about his parents and sibling who were continuing to live in Iraq. He contacted Arabic Welfare and enquired about visa options for his family members to come to Australia.

Arabic Welfare assisted Wally with completing and lodging a visa application. Wally was constantly anxious, overwhelmed and his mental health was suffering. Apart from receiving practical assistance with the visa application process, Wally received counselling from Arabic Welfare.

The family were recently granted a visa... Wally and his uncle were very grateful for Arabic Welfare's support in helping them achieve this great outcome. The young man's mental health has taken a positive turn with his anxiety significantly improved now.

SETTLEMENT ENGAGEMENT & TRANSITION SUPPORT — CAPACITY BUILDING

Our 'Stronger Together' project is part of a new program funded by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services to build the capacity of small organisations and groups of recently arrived community members to respond to the needs of their members. Arabic Welfare's project aims to increase the social participation, economic and personal well-being of community members to ensure that positive settlement outcomes are sustained in the long term.

Over the past 12 months we have identified and consulted with community groups and leaders, representative of diverse Arabic speaking recently arrived community members. We have worked with them to clearly articulate the key areas for support. We have worked across Metropolitan Melbourne with key project activities in the municipalities of Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Dandenong and Whittlesea with the following organisations and groups:

- > Australian Chaldean Family Welfare
- > Plans of Hope
- > Australian Iraqi Forum
- > Egyptian Cultural Association Victoria Inc
- > Australian Sukalabyah Association Inc (AUSQA)
- > Preston Mosque
- > St George Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral
- > Mission of Ephrium
- > St Mary's Antiochian Orthodox Church
- > CRAMLI Wellbeing and Counselling service

Over the past 12 months our project has identified key areas for education and learning that will build the capacity among groups, which include:

- > Improved knowledge of possible funding sources
- > Skill development for effective grant applications
- > Strengthening administrative and project budget skills to implement activities
- > Understanding and implementing good governance processes and structures



Youth Support Programs



Our youth services address the needs of young people from diverse Arabic speaking countries aged 12–25 years. Over the past year, Arabic Welfare focused strongly on strengthening the capacity of young people to participate in education, employment and local activities. We have worked closely with our young community members to foster their sense of belonging and their confidence as they explore and better understand their own diverse identity.

Our work delivered outstanding achievements across our Youth Settlement Services, our partnerships in the Youth Transitions Support Program (YTSP), our RESP program, and in our Fostering Integration “Who Do You Think You Are?” Project.

YOUTH SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Our program has supported young newly arrived participants, aged 12–25 years, with a range of issues and challenges, including education, employment, language barriers, integration to a new culture, parental expectations, and emotional and social well-being. Our service offers case management, peer support, information sessions, sporting and recreational activities, and programs to foster positive social skills and mental health.

Our bilingual youth workers are out-posted at multiple locations in the Northern Metropolitan Region, where we aim to identify the needs and opportunities for young humanitarian entrants to thrive and participate in their new homeland. Most of our participants were from Iraq and Syria, and from diverse ethnicities—Iraqi, Syrian, Assyrian, Chaldean, Lebanese, Egyptian, Armenian.

Arabic Welfare facilitated over 65 group work sessions, with high numbers of participants actively involved in productive and engaging activities

Through all of our group work programs, there has been a consistent effort to engage young people in sports activities, as well as assisting families to directly engage with local sporting clubs. We facilitated nine **After School Sports** Sessions and actively engaged young people in soccer, volleyball and jiu jitsu.

At Hume Central Secondary College our **Settling Into Youth** Sessions also engaged participants in sport and in interactive group sessions that explored a range of issues, including legal issues alongside Victoria Police and gender specific issues in our dedicated girls' groups and boys' groups.

In our **Ya Hala** program we worked closely with Hume Central Secondary College Dimboola Road Campus to improve parent engagement with the school. Staff were supported with planning and family engagement strategies, as well as understanding some of the social and cultural barriers impacting newly arrived parents. Arabic Welfare provided support with parent workshops, English conversation classes, and

attendance at student orientation day to inform families of Arabic Welfare's support. Outcomes included increased family engagement and improved communication between parents and the school. Additionally, our program resulted in the school's recognition of the value of regular and consistent in-language communication with families.

Arabic Welfare ran workshops for year 9 and 10 students across four schools to raise awareness and support prevention of gendered violence. The **Love Bites** program was facilitated at Craigieburn Secondary College and Hume Central Secondary College Blair Street and Dimboola Road Campuses.

Our Youth Settlement program worked closely with Victoria Police on E-safety, bullying, violence amongst students and gendered violence. We also delivered sessions with Northern Community Legal Centre to educate and raise awareness of young people's employment rights and entitlements.

Our focus on **Health and Wellbeing** has been a consistent theme in our education and information sessions with young people. We have delivered sessions specifically on motivation, mental health, as well as physical health, which saw a group of young clients participate in a day outing to the Peter MacCallum Institute.

Our other area of intense work with young clients has been in **Education and Employment** participation. We facilitated 12 Study Hall sessions at Mt Ridley Secondary College and 6 STARS employment preparation sessions at Craigieburn Secondary College. These sessions provided skill development in online job search, employment rights and responsibilities, interview skills, cover letters, and resume writing.



Support for Education Engagement

Issa is a 16-year old male disengaged from school, who was displaying signs of trauma and at-risk behaviour. He has been in Australia for less than 3 years and left school in Syria when he was 10 years old to work and support his family. His father died when he was still living in Syria and he arrived in Australia in 2017 on a Humanitarian visa. He currently lives with his mother, grandfather, stepfather and two sisters. The family are known to Arabic Welfare because of previous contact for support with issues of family violence. Issa struggled with school attendance and was at risk of disengaging from education.

Arabic Welfare has provided counselling support and advocated on behalf of Issa with school staff. We involved him in all group activities, and ensured he always felt safe to participate in programs. We supported him to meet with Victoria Police after a group presentation to better understand his legal rights and responsibilities. Arabic Welfare continued to support Issa by working with him on his options for employment pathways and preparation.

Issa's confidence and self-esteem strengthened and he independently registered for a short course at a local TAFE. Despite many challenges, he has shown resilience, willingness, and determination to achieve and take hold of opportunities presented to him. His comprehension of English is now excellent, he is very mature and an advocate for his community, as he now often contacts Arabic Welfare for support for other newly arrived families.

Youth Support Programs



YOUTH TRANSITIONS SUPPORT PROGRAM

Arabic Welfare and the Brotherhood of St Laurence have worked in partnership to facilitate this program. The main focus of the program is to assist young people of refugee backgrounds, aged 16 to 25 years, with educational and employment pathways in the Hume City Council area.

Over 2019-20 Arabic Welfare's Youth Development Coach continued to engage participants through one-on-one coaching and experiential learning activities to achieve educational and employment outcomes based on individuals' goals and aspirations. Highlights of our Youth Transitions Support Program (YTSP) in this period were achieved in collaboration with our partners and employers.

Big Day Out to the Great Ocean Road — Volunteering opportunity

Young participants in the program expressed the need for social activities to support their health and wellbeing, while others were interested in gaining volunteering practical experience in Australia.

Arabic Welfare in collaboration with Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) and Spectrum facilitated a day out to the Great Ocean Road. The visit provided newly arrived young people with an opportunity to practice their English and develop networks, as well as build self-confidence and support for their ongoing engagement in the YTSP program. Additionally, our young participants were involved in volunteering at Jan Juc Park and gained increased knowledge on environmental issues that may equip them with enhanced landscaping employability skills.

Industry visit to Baron Rubber manufacturer — Campbellfield

In collaboration with Hume City Council (HCC), Arabic Welfare organised a group visit to Baron Rubber in Campbellfield to provide young people in our program with an opportunity to experience volunteering and work placement.

Our participants gained knowledge about manufacturing roles and insight into the step by step process of product/material handling. Our program worker coached participants to modify their resumes prior to the site visit and to prepare questions that they could ask on the day.

The company HR manager, who undertook the tour of the site for our group, provided information on the job application and recruitment process. Our young participants gained a lot more knowledge on different roles in a company, as well as new insights on the recruitment policies and procedures.

Volunteer Workshop and Humble Harry Cafe

Together with the 'Transition To Work' team, Arabic Welfare organised a visit to the Humble Harry Café and a workshop on volunteering opportunities. We were joined by a guest speaker from Hume City Council to provide information on the process of applying for volunteering opportunities in the local area.

Our participants gained very useful information on the value of volunteering, on the process through which to apply for such roles locally and on the various roles available in local businesses for both volunteering and employment.

Youth Networking Event

In collaboration with Banksia Gardens and the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Arabic Welfare organised an event to bring industries, businesses, employers to meet and network with YTSP participants. We supported our young participants' capacity to effectively engage with industry representatives in the event, by workshoping questions for participants to ask employers.

It was wonderful to see young participants speak with employers with confidence and engage in conversations that informed them on their pathways for future employment.



There is YTSP participant with previous studies in science in her country of origin, Syria. After arriving in Australia a few years ago, Therese undertook English language studies and then successfully completed a Certificate IV in Laboratory Technician.

When Arabic Welfare organised the site visit to Baron Rubber in Campbellfield, Therese was disinterested in joining the group for the day. She was reluctant because she thought that the visit and tour of the manufacturer's site was of no relevance to her field of study. Language barriers also impacted on the participant's decision to not attend the industry visit.

Through coaching and discussions about roles in this manufacturing industry, Therese shifted her position and felt encouraged to attend. During the tour, the HR Manager provided information on roles, sections and units in the factory including the laboratory testing room. This was important for Therese to learn more about. Our program worker encouraged her to speak to the HR manager about her interests, qualifications and job opportunity. The HR manager and Therese shared contact details and she was asked to email her resume!

Youth Support Programs



WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

Funded by the Commonwealth's Fostering Integration Grants, this new project focused on working with young people to explore issues of identity, belonging, participation, social cohesion, and ultimately, the embracing of Australian values through engagement in education, employment and broader community life.

We named our project "Who do you think you are?" because our aim was to help young people develop a greater and more nuanced understanding of their ethnic and religious cultures to better facilitate integration into wider Australian society and contribute to greater social cohesion. Through the delivery of 12 workshops, 4 outings, 3 cultural training sessions and a youth forum, our project made significant inroads to achieving our aim.

Workshops: Arabic Welfare's project facilitated workshops across four schools, with 91 youth and 14 school staff participating. Schools included: Glenroy College, Antonine College, Coburg High School, William Ruthven Secondary College and Gladstone Park Secondary College.

Of the 91 youth who participated in the school-based workshops, a third were from newly arrived refugee and migrant backgrounds with the remainder being second or third+ generation Australia born, but all were from diverse Arabic speaking countries. Both groups benefited from learning of Australia's settlement and migrant history. The newly arrived participants enjoyed learning more about indigenous history and connection to the land as they were able to identify with the sense of loss but also pride of culture and family connections. The experiences of early settlers and different waves of migration also helped them locate their identity and experiences as part of the Australian narrative of nationhood.

'I just wanted to touch base after today's session and thank you Abir, Zeina and the rest of the team for a great day. The students would agree that it was an invaluable experience and we are very fortunate to have been part of such a great program. It's also awesome and inspirational seeing two women from similar backgrounds being so good at what they do. Once again, on behalf of the school, thank you!'

Staff member of participating school

For youth participants, these workshops offered them opportunity to share their experience, their stories, their sense of truth and identity through their own words and their own voice. The "Who do you think you are?" project was the first time that participants were afforded the opportunity to reflect and immerse themselves in conversation about "Who they are".

Day Outings: In addition to the family outing to Darebin Parklands, Arabic Welfare workers facilitated 3 youth outings and activities, which engaged 47 participants. The objectives of the outings were to:

- > Increase understanding of the purpose and benefits of actively participating in Australian society
- > Embrace Australian values and broader communities
- > Develop social networks that cross ethnic and religious groups.

Our outings were to the Oak Park Sports and Aquatic Centre (fitness), to Life Saving Victoria (water safety beach program) and to Hardrock Climbing (rock climbing).

Cultural Training Sessions: Project Workers delivered three cultural training sessions, which were attended by 73 participants from different service providers and school staff. The sessions were delivered to: Melbourne Polytechnic Epping for Young Adult Migrant Education Course (YAMEC) teaching staff and Coordinator; Hume/Whittlesea Youth WRAP Network for service providers supporting young people; and to Coburg High School for all school staff.

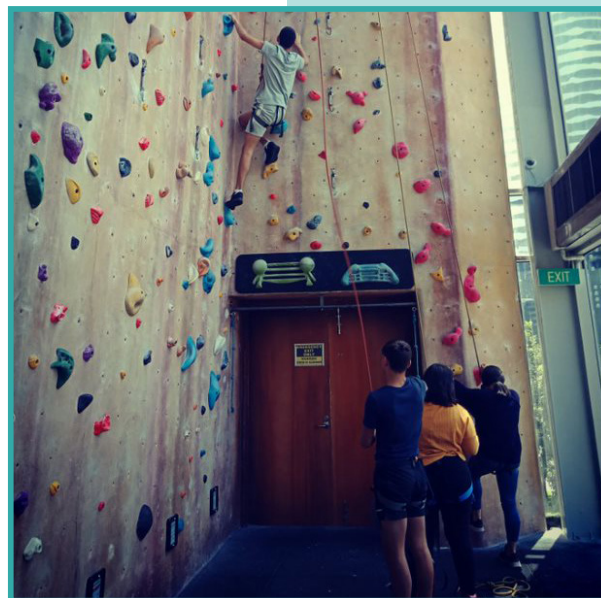
Feedback has been very positive from participants and we have received additional requests from other schools in the Northern Metropolitan Region to facilitate Cultural Training Sessions.

REFUGEE EDUCATION SUPPORT PROGRAM

Arabic Welfare's partnership with the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) continued in 2019 – 20 and delivered great outcomes for refugee students and families in the Refugee Education Support Program (RESP). Alongside CMY, we supported school staff and recently arrived students and parents of refugee backgrounds across three schools: the Collingwood English Language School, Mt Ridley College and Craigieburn Primary School.

At the **Collingwood English Language School**, Arabic Welfare staff facilitated sessions on: education/employment pathways; health and nutrition; learning support; and cyber safety and screen time. Sessions were also all well attended and overall, the project achieved key outcomes of:

- > Increasing student capacity to engage in learning at school
- > Increasing family engagement in their child's education and career pathways
- > Increasing family capacity to support their child's learning at home.



Youth Support Programs



At **Mt Ridley College**, our engagement sessions, tutoring sessions and sports session, we worked with Year 11 students who were all from Syrian and Iraqi refugee backgrounds. Although our work with the school highlighted major barriers faced by refugee youth, the school introduced strategies to improve communication with parents, such as, increasing the number of interpreters at information events and at parent teacher conferences, and providing an in-language phone line for parents to call and leave a message in their preferred language (Arabic/Assyrian; Turkish; Samoan).

We facilitated several 'Talk and Tea' sessions at **Craigieburn Primary School** which involved students and parents as participants to share and receive information on a range of topics, including:

- > Compass
- > Learning support
- > Cyber safety and online activity
- > Managing children's behaviour

In these sessions, students presented to parents on cyber safety topics which they learn at school, as well as on line programs and tools they utilise to help their learning. The students really valued their parents engagement with the school and they felt that they can share their strengths and skills with their parents and their peers.

Family Support Programs

QOWEH GAMBLING PROJECT

Through continued 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 2019–20, our project continued to build on the successes of previous years and implemented a range of intervention and prevention strategies, including:

- > Case management and counselling services to 114 clients facing multiple issues regarding their mental and physical health, family functioning (including family violence, conflict, breakdown), housing, debt, financial difficulties, grief and loss, experiences of trauma in their homelands, limited communication, increased dependency on screens and games, and their inability to cope with isolation and loneliness.
- > Facilitating two therapeutic programs, the first of which was delivered in partnership with Anglicare's Broadmeadows Women's House and the second program engaged participants from Arabic Welfare's other programs facing gambling related problems. Program content addressed themes such as dealing with stress, self-care, improving wellbeing, money management and healthy relationships.
- > By strategically partnering and collaboratively working together with service providers and community organisations, Arabic Welfare was able to deliver 11 sessions, programs and events to 330+ community members from diverse Arabic Speaking countries. These sessions, programs and events increased participants awareness of gambling harm, how to reduce it and where to seek help.
- > Open dialogue between Arabic Welfare, Salvation Army and Banyule Community Health Gambler's Help services have resulted in cultural competency training to Venue Support workers, ensuring that they are equipped to address the concerns of their Arabic Speaking patrons.

Arabic Welfare's Settlement Support Service refers clients with gambling related problems to our QOWEH service, but many referrals have been received from a broad range of other service providers. Our counsellor and social workers continue to liaise with the Gambler's Help financial counsellor to support clients experiencing financial hardship. The feedback we have received from our clients has been extremely positive, with many clients defining the changes they have implemented in their lives with the QOWEH program support



Family Support Programs



Support for debt management

Mona is a 48 year old woman who has suffered terrible financial hardship as a result of her son's gambling addiction. When Mona made contact with Arabic Welfare's QOWEH program, she was at the point where she was unable to pay any of her bills or medical expenses.

Our QOWEH counsellor provided Mona with one-on-one case management support and assisted her to identify her goals and plan effective ways in which to achieve these. After working closely with our worker she was assisted to address the issues which affected her greatly. With our support she was able to connect with her utility services and set up payment plans, whilst also gaining assistance with other concerns.

She expressed extreme gratitude to Arabic Welfare's worker for supporting her emotionally as well as practically: "you saved my life, my own family members didn't want to know about me, let alone help me, as they know that my son is a gambler. They consider that he brought shame to the family. Instead of supporting his mum financially, as expected in our culture, he ruined his life as well as mine."

"I feel comfortable talking to the worker about my chronic gambling problem because she understands me...she understands the issues that me and my family have been through because gambling, is seen as a 'taboo' topic. During our sessions I do not feel judged and I do not have to explain myself or my culture to her as she understands because she comes from the same culture. She continues to help me to think about moving forward and taking control of my life so that I can achieve something no matter what happens."

"The worker helped me to manage many debts and issues that I had because of my ex-husband's gambling and this has helped me to start to rebuild my life with my children."

"The worker is very supportive and listened to my needs. She helped me with many issues I was going through from debts, my parenting capacity and she helped me start to believe in myself."

'OUR FAMILY HONOUR' FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Arabic Welfare has continued to work in partnership with various services and community and faith organisations to deliver programs and workshops. Our family violence prevention program is funded by the Department of Premier and Cabinet Multicultural Affairs' Social Cohesion Division and in 2019-20, our funding required that our program focus more on prevention education and less on case management. We worked with 250 community members in our prevention programs and education sessions.

A key objective of Arabic Welfare was to work in partnership with various organisations and community/faith groups across the Northern Metropolitan Region, to build their and their community's capacity to identify and address concerns around domestic and family violence. Key program partners included:

- > Bloom Business International
- > Victorian Cooperative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups (VICSEG)
New Futures
- > Aitkens Creek Primary School
- > Anglicare's Broadmeadows Women's Community House
- > St George's Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral
- > Preston Mosque

Family violence prevention programs

These programs focused on creating dialogue around promoting messages of family violence intolerance, gender equality and healthy and respectful family relationships. Over 90 participants were engaged across seven prevention programs with the following themes: Seeds of Change; Culturally Inclusive Women's Support Group; Parenting Today; Parenting Matters; Healthy Families; Money and Me; Healthy Relationships.

Participants were actively engaged in the programs and their feedback was overwhelmingly positive:

'Showed me how gender roles and attitudes about role of a man and a woman is connected to violence against women'

'My children are watching how my husband and I communicate with each other, when we are respectful to each other; they are learning how to treat people with respect.'

Education Sessions

Over 150 participants were engaged across 10 education sessions that focused on assisting participants in understanding the value and key elements of healthy relationships within the home and community. Our sessions raised awareness of the



Family Support Programs



importance of creating healthy respectful and safe homes for all family/community members, whilst providing participants with tools and strategies that can support gender equality within their homes and community.

Community and Faith Leaders

Arabic Welfare has worked with community and faith leaders to design and deliver training workshops. These training workshops are designed to increase the understanding/knowledge of community/faith leaders regarding promoting messages of family violence intolerance, gender equality and healthy and respectful family relationships, which will support them in addressing and preventing family violence within their diverse faiths and communities.

The COVID-19 restrictions prevented the roll out of these workshops and we were only able to facilitate one workshop for St George's Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral parish council. Arabic Welfare looks forward to facilitating further workshops with other community and faith leaders once COVID restrictions are lifted.

Family violence intervention and support

Amira is a 24 year old woman who has two children – both Amira and the children are victims of family violence. Her issues are complex and both Amira and the children have multiple needs. She has mental health issues with symptoms of trauma, distress and mental instability. This has been further compounded by lack of permanent housing, her inability to afford any available housing, rent shortfalls and the long waiting lists for public housing. She has struggled to make ends meet and required support to be able to budget for the family's needs.

The children were facing barriers at school. The family have been in Australia for less than two years and with lack of English language proficiency, integration at the local school has been difficult. Amira found it difficult to communicate with the local school and to understand the Australian education system. Our approach to addressing the complex client issues involved:

- *Coordination of care across a range of health professionals and services, including, Child First, VincentCare, children's Primary School, ACT4KIDS, Tenancy Union, NDIS, Centrelink, Homework Club and others*
- *Addressing client barriers to engagement – often involving language and cultural understandings*
- *Provision of financial counselling, Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology, psychological and development support for the children, housing placement, trauma counselling, support information and education*

The strong coordination of services resulted in clear articulation of the care team's responsibilities, streamlining the process and minimising unnecessary client stress. This approach was paramount to addressing the instability of the client as she had clear information about her support. Importantly, a home has been secured via Community Housing (whilst awaiting permanent housing) and tenant rights and responsibilities explained, providing some stability for Amir and her children. The children receiving the multifaceted and much needed support has played a key role in their wellbeing and providing them with hope for a better future.

CANCER COUNCIL VICTORIA

Our established collaboration with the Cancer Council Victoria continued in 2019–20 with a focus on bowel cancer education to recently arrived Arabic speaking community members. The purpose of the project is to raise awareness of the bowel cancer screening program; to register for the national bowel cancer screening program (NBCSP) and to access and complete the kit test.

Our education sessions engaged 40 participants who received information on the values of participating in the bowel cancer screening program and the steps involved. Arabic Welfare supported each participant through the process by arranging individual appointments for the NBCSP.

Clients were also supported to update their residential address on the Medicare system, as well as how to use the kit once they received it. Participants gained increased confidence in contacting the NBCSP directly in the future and they gained new knowledge to educate their communities and promote the program to family and friends.

WEEK WITHOUT VIOLENCE

Arabic Welfare staff volunteered to participate in 'Week Without Violence' at Broadmeadows Shopping Centre, where community members were engaged to write messages of support and share their stories.

Many of our community members felt the importance of sharing their messages and they contributed to this valuable collective initiative. A selection of community quotes from this very important community event:

"I didn't know that other types of abuse constituted family violence" (financial, psychological)

"I had to stop and comment on the statements on the T-Shirt – this is me. I am one of these women" (statement written by participant read 'I am not your slave – I am a human being')

"I was told by a religious leader that as long as he doesn't hit you and you have no broken bones, and pays your bills and keeps a roof over your head, you should not complain."

"I am teaching my son how to treat women with respect and dignity"

"I realised I could look after myself and my 5 kids without him, because I was already doing it. I didn't need to put up with his abuse and still look after my family. I told him to piss off."



Funding Bodies

We are grateful for the funding and support we receive from federal, state and local governments. In 2019–20 our programs received funding from:

- > Department of Home Affairs
- > Department of Premier & Cabinet—Victorian Multicultural Commission
- > Department of Social Services
- > Department of Transport—Vic Roads
- > 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

- > AMES Employment
- > Brotherhood of St Laurence
- > Cancer Council
- > Centre for Multicultural Youth

COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

- > Alawite Association
- > Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation
- > Ambulance Victoria
- > AMES Settlement Services
- > AMES Employment
- > Anglicare
- > Australian Chaldean Family Welfare
- > Australian Iraqi Forum
- > Australian Lebanese Medical Association
- > Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights
- > Australian Sukalabya Association Victoria Inc.
- > Australian Taxation Office

- > Banksia Gardens
- > Banyule Community Health—Gamblers' Help
- > Baptcare
- > Berry St
- > Bouverie Centre
- > Broadmeadows Community Women's House and Parent Zone
- > Broadmeadows Health Centre
- > Broadmeadows Leisure Centre
- > Broadmeadows Magistrate's Court
- > Campbellfield Hub
- > Cancer Council Victoria
- > Child First
- > Civic Compliance Victoria
- > Cohealth
- > Commission for Children and Young People
- > Community Housing Ltd.
- > Consumer Affairs Victoria
- > Coolaroo Community Corrections
- > Craigieburn Shopping Centre, Lendlease
- > CRAMLI Counselling and Wellbeing Services

Affiliations and Acknowledgements

- > CVGT
- > Darebin City Council
- > Department of Education
- > Department of Health and Human Services: Housing
- > Department of Health and Human Services: Centrelink
- > Domestic Violence Resource Centre
- > DPV Health
- > Egyptian Cultural Association Victoria Inc
- > Essendon Football Club
- > Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria
- > Family Mediation Centre
- > Family Relationships Centre
- > Foundation House
- > Gambler's Help
- > Gateway
- > Haven Home Safe
- > Heidelberg Magistrate's Court
- > Hume City Council
- > In Touch
- > JobActive
- > Jack Brockhoff Child Health and Well-being program
- > Kids First
- > Kangan TAFE
- > Legal Aid
- > Lend Lease
- > Life Saving Victoria
- > Max Employment
- > Melbourne Polytechnic
- > Merri Health
- > Metropolitan Fire Brigade
- > MiCare
- > Migration Council Australia
- > Migration Institute of Australia
- > Mission of Ephrium
- > Moreland City Council
- > NDIS
- > NEAMI
- > Northern Community Legal Service
- > Northwest Migrant Resource Centre
- > Orygen Health Refugee Access
- > Overseas Qualifications Unit
- > Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre
- > Plans of Hope
- > Preston Mosque
- > Pronia
- > Refugee Health Nurse Service
- > Salvation Army
- > Sarina Russo
- > Shia Gathering Group
- > Spectrum Migrant Services
- > St George Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral
- > St Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church
- > St Vincent Care Housing Services
- > St Vincent de Paul
- > Syrian Charitable Organisation
- > MiCare
- > Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS)
- > The Bouverie Centre
- > Tullamarine Community House
- > Turning Point
- > Uniting Care Kildonan/Lentara
- > University of Melbourne
- > Upfield Soccer Club
- > VET Assess
- > Vic Health
- > Vic Roads
- > Victoria Police
- > Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal
- > Victorian Legal Aid
- > Victorian Transcultural Mental Health
- > VICSEG New Futures
- > Western Bulldogs
- > Whittlesea Community Connections
- > Wise Employment
- > Women's Health in the North
- > Women's Health in the West
- > Youth Activating Youth
- > Youth Justice

SCHOOLS

- > Aitkens Primary School
- > Antonine College
- > Brunswick Secondary School
- > Campbellfield Heights Primary School
- > Coburg High School
- > Craigieburn Secondary College
- > Craigieburn Primary School
- > East Reservoir Primary School
- > Gladstone Park Secondary College
- > Glenroy Secondary College
- > Hume Central Secondary College
- > John Fawcner College
- > Lalor Secondary College
- > Mt Ridley Secondary College
- > Roxburgh Park College
- > St Dominic Catholic Primary School
- > Thomastown Primary School
- > William Ruthven Secondary College

FORUMS, MEMBERSHIPS, NETWORKS, ADVISORY GROUPS

- > Alliance for Gambling Reform
- > Australian Association of Social Workers
- > Broadmeadows Community Youth Justice Alliance
- > BSL YTSP Program Governance meetings
- > 'Cradle to Kinder' Uniting Kildonan Network
- > Communities for Children Forum
- > 'Count Me In Too' Program Advisory Committee
- > "Faces of Unemployment" webinar, Australia Council of Social Service & Jobs Australia Ltd
- > Family Futures Program Steering Committee
- > Family Safety Victoria Roundtable Discussion
- > Gamblers' Help Provider Forum
- > Getting Equal Priority Inclusive Communities Through Gender Family Advisory Committee
- > Health West 'Reducing Gambling Frequency' Project Advisory Group
- > HMIFA Alliance Operations Group
- > Hume Early Years Partnership
- > Hume Family Violence Network
- > Hume Multicultural and Settlement Services Network
- > Hume Multicultural Workers' Network
- > Hume Youth Commitment
- > Kangan/Melbourne Polytechnic Wrap Meetings
- > Moreland Family Violence Network
- > Moreland Multicultural and Settlement Services Network
- > Multicultural Advisory Forum
- > National Cancer Council Advisory Board
- > Multicultural CEOs Network
- > Northern Metropolitan Region PVAW Committee
- > Outer Northern Refugee Health Network
- > Preventing Family Violence in Faith Communities Network
- > QOWEH Community of Practice
- > SETS Community of Practice
- > SETS COVID Best Practice
- > Settlement and Mental Health Network
- > 'Social Work, Telehealth and You' AASW webinar
- > St George's Family Connections Advisory Committee
- > Tangible Connections Network
- > 'Trauma-informed care for CALD and Muslim women affected by violence' Advisory Committee
- > Vic Local Government Association (VLGA): 'Transforming Spin to Community Win' Advisory Committee
- > Victoria Police Multicultural Portfolio Reference Group
- > Victorian Multicultural Advisory Forum
- > Victorian Transcultural Mental Health Seminars
- > Whittlesea Settlement Network
- > Whittlesea Multicultural Issues Network
- > Young Women and Family Violence Community of Practice



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OUTREACH SITES

Northern Adult Migrant English Program

(NAMEP) Cooperative Sites

Business Bloom International
Kangan TAFE Broadmeadows
Meadow Heights Education Centre
Melbourne Polytechnic Dallas
Melbourne Polytechnic Epping
Melbourne Polytechnic Epping for Young Adult Migrant
Education Course (YAMEC)

Schools in Northern Metropolitan Melbourne

Collingwood English Language School
Hume Central Language Centre Broadmeadows
Hume Central Secondary College – Dimboola Campus
Hume Central Secondary College – Blair Street Campus
Mt Ridley Secondary College