

ANNUAL REPORT

2022 - 2023



Contents

Contents	1
Committee of Management	2
Staff.....	2
Volunteers – Administrative	2
REPORTS	4
Chairpersons Report.....	5
General Manager’s Report	6
Operations / HR Management Report	7
Staffing.....	7
Volunteer Management Report	7
Volunteering – Supporting Our Communities	8
Supporting Communities Volunteering and Targeted Groups.....	9
VMA5 Volunteering Victoria 2022-2026	9
Targeted Groups.....	9
Training & Project Coordinator Report.....	10
Training Milestones	10
Project Highlights.....	10
Digital Skills – Basic Computer and Beyond.....	11
Online Training and Information Sessions.....	11
Coffee in the Hood Program.....	12
Cultural Exchange Programs.....	15
Homework Help.....	15
Conversations in English	16
Coffee and Cards	16
Tertiary Tips	16
Multicultural Exercise Class	17
Volunteers	17
Community Collaborations	18
Multicultural Community Lunch Program	18
Highlights	20
Good News Stories	21

Committee of Management

Chairperson	Debra Hargreave
Secretary	Pam McCorriston
Treasurer	Fiona Livermore
General Committee Member	Robyn Bryant
General Committee Member	Rosalind Scott
General Committee Member	Steven McKewan

Staff

General Manager	Renee Wilson
Operations Manager	Sharon Pellas
Training & Project Coordinator	Megs Osborne / Wade Leonard
VMA Project Manager	Wade Leonard
Team Leader SETS	Diana Elliott
Senior Settlement Case Worker	Edwina Bugge / Leanne Huxley
Multicultural Case Worker	Anne Musubao
Multicultural Case Worker	Adrienne Petty
Multicultural Case Worker	Kedar Sapkota
Bilingual Support Workers	Andrew Ndayishmiye / Aline Nyiragichiro
Cultural Exchange Project Coordinator	Lou Newman
Coffee in The Hood Project Worker	Adrienne Petty
Cultural Exchange Support Worker	Radha Guragai
Volunteer & IT Support Worker	Stephanie Dodd

Volunteers – Administrative

Pam Hewitt, Shirley Schubach, Karen Phillips, Tracey Forge, Beverley Campbell, and Rowan Bougoure. (Handy Person and Bus Driver Volunteer).

Funding and support provided by:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| ★ Department of Social Services – Volunteering, CVS | ★ ACFE Learn Local (VIC) |
| ★ Volunteering Victoria – Volunteering | ★ Border Trust (Local) |
| ★ Department of Home Affairs – SETS | ★ Multicultural NSW |
| ★ Department of Health | ★ Be Connected |
| ★ Department of Communities and Justice (NSW) | ★ Australian Communities Foundation |
| ★ Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (VIC) | ★ Albury City – Local |
| ★ TAFE NSW - Local | ★ City of Wodonga – Local |
| | ★ Wodonga TAFE – Local |



REPORTS



Chairpersons Report



Welcome to the Annual General Meeting of the Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau and Multicultural Services. Over the past year, our organisation has undergone significant transformations in our programs and staffing, to align with our new funding initiatives.

The establishment of our new Wodonga Office has been warmly embraced by our border community, facilitating the provision of services to organisations, volunteers, and clients on both sides of the border. This move has made it convenient for those in Wodonga to access our services.

Our Lavington office at Mirambeena continues to play a vital role in supporting the local community. We are also delighted to report the continued success of our additional programs, including the monthly multicultural lunch and the popular Coffee in the Hood initiative.

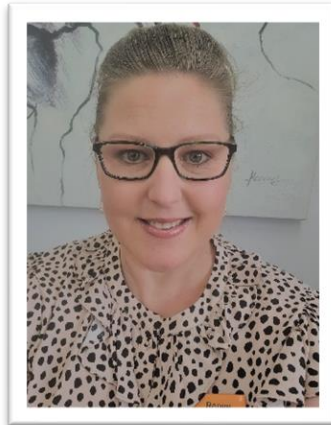
We extend our gratitude to Albury Council for their unwavering support, providing the opportunity to offer our Cultural Exchange programs. Their ongoing partnership has been instrumental in our achievements, and we genuinely thank them for their continued support.

Under the capable leadership of Renee, our General Manager, we have secured additional funding opportunities that have allowed us to expand our services to the CALD community, SETS, and the realm of volunteering. The Coffee in the Hood program, which spans both sides of the border, is just one example of the positive impact of these initiatives. We are also fortunate to have Sharon, who manages the governance and operational aspects of our organisation, providing invaluable support to Renee. I would like to thank our dedicated Committee of Management members.

Together, we have achieved remarkable milestones over the past year. It is indeed a privilege to collaborate with such a dynamic and committed group. Your collective efforts have made a substantial difference, and we look forward to continuing this journey together.

Debra Hargreave
Chairperson

General Manager's Report



Hello and welcome to our Annual General Meeting for 2023. It has been an eventful and rewarding year for Albury Wodonga Volunteer Resource Bureau (AWVRB), and I would like to take this opportunity to highlight several of our achievements over the past year. AWVRB has achieved remarkable success in securing funding from local, state, and federal government. These vital funds have not only sustained our ongoing programs but have also facilitated the introduction of new initiatives within our organisation.

Among these achievements, a standout highlight is the amazing success of our Coffee in the Hood (CiTH) Program. With the opportunity to secure additional funding, we have expanded this program, leading to great outcomes and positive impacts within our community. Moving forward, we hope to transition to a social enterprise model with CiTH, that will allow us to continue providing employment opportunities to participants that have been a part of this program.

AWVRB have formed valuable partnerships with local community organisations, resulting in successful programs, that have delivered excellent outcomes within our local community. These partnerships have included organisations such as Wodonga TAFE, Albury TAFE, Gateway Health, Red Cross, AWECC, and STARTTS. AWVRB maintains a strong and positive working relationship with both Albury and Wodonga Councils.

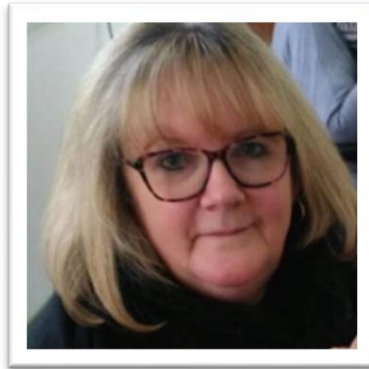
In January, AWVRB made the decision to expand our services by securing an office space in Wodonga. This was a decision prompted by our commitment to better serve clients and programs located on the Victorian side of the border. This expansion provides AWVRB with the capacity to accommodate additional staff to allow for growth. While we maintain our operations in Lavington, we wish to express our gratitude and recognition to Albury Council for their support in continuing to provide an office space at Mirambeena Community Centre. Our Wodonga Office is located at Southside Terrace in central Wodonga.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to our committee members, our dedicated team, our tireless volunteers and every member who contributes to our organisation. Your commitment and passion, drive our organisation's success.

I am proud of what we have accomplished in the past year. As we look forward, we remain committed to our mission and are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead.

Renee Wilson
General Manager

Operations / HR Management Report



We successfully streamlined all operational aspects of our programs in our new Wodonga location, effectively serving both sides of the border. I extend my heartfelt thanks to our entire team for their dedication and hard work in the challenging yet fulfilling endeavour of establishing our new offices in Wodonga.

Regarding the administrative team in the volunteer office, I express my gratitude for their unwavering support and dedication. This team has been instrumental in assisting in various office tasks, including reception duties and database maintenance, consistently demonstrating a positive attitude even during challenging moments, such as the recent office relocation.

Throughout the past year, we have actively recruited volunteers for all the programs funded by AWVRB. The dedication and commitment of our volunteers have been truly remarkable, and I extend my warmest appreciation to them for their outstanding contributions. Their positive influence has been felt across all our programs, and I believe leaving a lasting impact.

- **Community Visitor Scheme:** This program, which involved volunteers visiting isolated elderly members of the community in their homes, concluded on June 30, 2023.
- **Cultural Exchange Programs:** Currently, there are over 60 volunteers actively supporting various programs such as Homework Help, Cards and Coffee, Tertiary tips, Community Lunches, and Exercise classes.
- **Administrative Support for SETS Team:** An administrative volunteer has been contributing by inputting data into the client management system for the SETS team.
- **Volunteer Bus Drivers:** We have been successful in both retaining our existing volunteer bus drivers and recruiting new ones.

Staffing

We are truly fortunate to have such a dedicated and hardworking team at the AWVRB. Over the past year, we've had the privilege of having 12 permanent and part-time team members. In the year 2022 / 2023, we warmly welcomed new team members while also bidding farewell to some of our valued colleagues.

Volunteer Management Report

Late last year, our SKILLS Bank lost its support, necessitating the adoption of a new database for our volunteer management. Following thorough research, our organization decided to transition to VIKTOR, a state-of-the-art volunteer database.

VIKTOR is a nationally recognized database and volunteer referral system developed by Volunteering WA, designed to connect volunteers, referral centres, and organizations involved in volunteering.

With VIKTOR, we gain comprehensive control over volunteer-related operations, allowing us to effectively manage our member organizations and access the national database for listing volunteer roles on behalf of these organizations. Moreover, it seamlessly integrates with our website, enabling volunteers to directly choose roles from our site.

What's even more remarkable is that VIKTOR serves as the database powering the GoVolunteer and SEEK volunteer websites. This innovative feature ensures that once we list our member organizations and volunteer roles on VIKTOR, they automatically become visible and accessible across all these platforms, amplifying our reach and impact.

Volunteering – Supporting Our Communities

Some statical data from VIKTOR – over the past 12 months we have assisted 1,449 women with 313 choosing Community services and 566 males with 148 identifying with voluntary work in the Community services sector.

Males - Number assisted who self-identify as:									
Indigenous	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	1	10	50	48	24	6	4	17	160
Disability	0	1	4	3	1	4	3	0	16

Females - Number assisted who self-identify as:									
Indigenous	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	5	25	91	57	35	52	7	49	321
Disability	1	11	3	4	3	6	2	0	30

Our ongoing efforts involve deploying volunteers to various organisations across the following categories:

Opportunity Shops

- Assisting drivers with the collection of donation bins.
- Sorting and engaging in shop and retail tasks.

Aged Care Programs

- Community visitors.
- Activity assistants and support volunteers.
- Drivers.

Health and Wellbeing Services

- Participation in disability service programs.
- Serving as activity assistants.

Community Support Group Volunteers

- Volunteers for the Committee of Management.
- Involvement with Neighbourhood Centres.
- Providing transportation services, including drivers and bus drivers.

Supporting Communities Volunteering and Targeted Groups

VMA5 Volunteering Victoria 2022-2026

The VMA Program comprises two distinct yet complementary components: the Breaking Down Barriers Program and the Online Volunteer Management Program. Together, this program is purposefully designed to nurture a vibrant volunteering culture that addresses the evolving needs of communities across Australia. Our focus is clearly on Victoria, in particular Hume Region. The core objectives of the VMA are to amplify opportunities for individuals to actively participate in their broader communities through volunteering. For the Hume Region our mission will be achieved by:

- Cultivating effective volunteering practices and opportunities within organizations and communities.
- Expanding the diversity of volunteers.
- Enhancing access to volunteering-related information.
- Offering training, resources, and support to both volunteers and Volunteer Involving Organizations (VIOs).

Targeted Groups

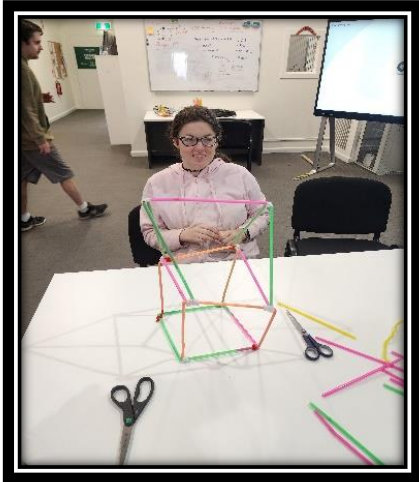
The primary services offered by AWVRB are designed to empower Volunteer Involving Organizations (VIOs) to eliminate barriers to volunteering for specific priority groups. When deemed the most effective approach, these services include providing in-person assistance to facilitate the involvement of these groups in volunteering. The priority groups encompass Individuals with Disabilities, First Nation Peoples, and Newly Arrived Migrants.

Sharon Pellas
Operations / HR Manager

Training & Project Coordinator Report

Training Milestones

Pathways to Volunteering and Employment at Wodonga TAFE (May): Our journey began with a commitment to working with students with disabilities. This marked the path towards empowerment and inclusivity.



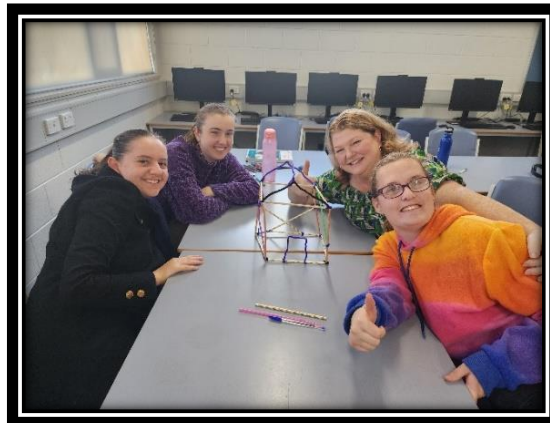
Omnia Disability Services: (March): We successfully completed the Pathways to Volunteering and Employment program through Omnia disability services. This achievement reflects dedication to personal and professional growth.

Digital Literacy at Wodonga TAFE (March): Staying at the forefront of digital skills is essential, and our accomplishment in digital literacy at Wodonga TAFE demonstrates readiness for the evolving landscape.

Personnel Group: Pathways to Volunteering and (June): Completing the Pathways to Volunteering and Employment program with the Personnel Group reinforces our dedication to fostering opportunities and networking opportunities.

Digital Literacy Training (July): Our continuous pursuit of knowledge was evident in our participation in digital literacy training at Wodonga TAFE in July. This demonstrates our adaptability and readiness for the digital age.

Business Relationship Establishment: We have established a valuable business relationship with the Personnel Group to conduct Pathways to Volunteering and Employment programs across NSW and Victoria.



Project Highlights

First Nations Forum (March): We organized and successfully conducted a forum gathering personnel from First Nations organisations. This forum provided a platform for the exchange of ideas on volunteering opportunities, aligning with the VMA activity workplan.

People with Disabilities Forum (June): We hosted a forum on VMA-5, with 22 representatives in attendance. The Border Mail recognised our efforts by promoting the program.

VMA-5 - AWP Reporting (Midyear): Our commitment to transparency and accountability was evident in our mid-year reporting for VMA-5 - AWP. Remaining dedicated to project goals.

Mitchell Shire Council Guest Speaker (July): Being invited as a guest speaker at the Mitchell Shire Council is a testament to our expertise. Our discussion on VMA priority groups resonated with the council and marked a significant milestone.



Community Visitor's Scheme: We successfully administered the Community Visitor's Scheme, contributing to the conclusion of the project. Our commitment to seeing projects through to completion.

Digital Skills – Basic Computer and Beyond

This year the training program was updated and was run in partnership with Wodonga TAFE Reconnect. The sessions were held in the computer lab at TAFE and were smaller groups. The program successfully supported 25 people to learn basic skills and gain confidence in using a computer. The aim of the program was to help people gain skills that would help with a pathway to further education or to employment.

Online Training and Information Sessions

It has been a mixed year for online training and information sessions as we have seen a move from predominantly online requests for service to moving back to face-to-face information and training sessions as restrictions from COVID19 changed. There have been several opportunities to speak about volunteering and to deliver training sessions as requested.

Wade Leonard
Projects & Training Manager

Coffee in the Hood Program

Coffee in the Hood (CiTH) is an initiative that aims to empower the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Community through barista skills training and paid work experience. It also aims to bring the community together in a relaxed environment, whilst sharing stories and experiences over a 'cuppa' in a post-covid world. The program supports people who have struggled leaving their home for various reasons, to reduce the feelings of isolation and to improve mental health and wellbeing. The program has been supported by the NSW Reconstruction Authority's COVID Community Connection & Wellbeing Program Grant. The Victorian Department of Health has also funded part of the program under a COVID-19 Community Grants Program.



AWVRB's Food Trailer (formerly used for a previous program called "Kitchen in the Hood"), has been fitted with an industrial coffee machine to allow the barista trainees to practice their skills whilst making coffee for the community. Participants have undertaken initial coffee training with Platform 9 Coffee Roasters in Albury and have also undertaken further coffee training with Wodonga TAFE. At Wodonga TAFE participants have additionally gained certification in food safety, responsible service of alcohol, customer service and processing financial transactions.

Some participants have been supported in finding additional work, two in hospitality, one in customer service and one in hotel services. The program has attracted participants from a range of backgrounds including Bhutan, The Congo, Iran, Japan, Ukraine and Zimbabwe.

It has been heart-warming to see the wonderful relationships form between the participants as well as the many conversations between participants and those attending the events. It has been a very enjoyable program to run and there is definite ongoing demand from both participants and the public to keep it going.



By the end of 2023 Coffee in the Hood will have served coffee at over 70 events (since January 2023). This has been no mean feat and we have learned a lot along the way! Some of those events include:



- Multicultural Exercise Class + Food Share, Glenecho Community Centre (multiple events).
- Playgroup and Exercise Class, Thurgoona Community Centre (multiple events).
- Harmony Week at Charles Sturt University Community Garden.
- Wodonga Auskick – Wodonga Racecourse and Showground (multiple events).
- Wodonga Police – Coffee with a Cop.
- Talgarno Tennis Club – Bushfire affected club re-opening.
- Albury Parkrun.
- Jobs Expo, Exhibition Centre.
- Gateway Health Multicultural Women's Health Day.
- Bhutanese Hindu event – Scouts Club.
- R U OK Day and Mungabareena, Sumsion Gardens.
- Seniors Week - Trudewind Community Centre.
- Our Native Garden Nursery.
- Be connected internet over 50s, Trudewind Community Centre
- Wodonga Health (multiple events).
- The CSU Occupational Therapy 4th Year Student's conference.
- Sunday breakfast event, Felldtimber Community Centre.
- Omnia disability inclusive services.
- Women's Shed, Thurgoona.
- Seniors Festival, Mirambeena Community Centre.
- Multicultural Interagency Network Meeting, Mirambeena Community Centre (multiple events).
- Playgroup and Exercise Class, Thurgoona Community Centre (multiple events).
- Legal Aid Refugee Service Information Session + Legal Aid Refugee NSW outreach, Mirambeena Community Centre (multiple events).

- Multicultural Lunches, Mirambeena Community Centre (multiple events).
- Dance Exchange, Mirambeena Community Centre (multiple events).
- Embroiderers Guild, Mirambeena Community Centre (multiple events).
- Citizenship Ceremony, Mirambeena Community Centre.
- Albury City Multicultural Plan Day, Mirambeena Community Centre.
- Refugee Week Celebrations, Mirambeena.
- 'Neil's Story' (Sri Lankan Asylum Seeker raising awareness of Asylum Seeker's plight), Mirambeena Community Centre.
- Arts and Crafts group, Mirambeena Community Centre (multiple events).
- Teej Festival, Mirambeena Community Centre.
- Dementia Australia, Mirambeena Community Centre.

Adrienne Petty
Project Manager - Coffee in the Hood

Cultural Exchange Programs

The Cultural Exchange Program delivers programs and projects within the local community that support members of the CALD community. In addition, the program provides opportunities for the broader community to gain an understanding and appreciation of our diverse multicultural community.

Funding for this reporting period was largely provided by Albury City Council, as part of the 2021 / 2022 – 2023 / 2024 Financial Assistance Funding Agreement.

Albury City Council provides funding for the delivery of the following programs, in the Lavington and Albury Libraries:

- Homework Help.
- Conversations in English.
- Coffee and Cards.
- Tertiary Tips.

Multicultural Exercise Program Albury – Funding for this program in this financial period was provided by Border Trust.

Wodonga Homework Help – Funding was received from the Australian Communities Foundation to fund the Wodonga Homework Help program for 2023.

The Multicultural Community Lunch Program was funded in this period predominantly by Albury City Community and Cultural Grant, with one lunch with new funding from Border Trust and the Scanlon Foundation.

Total participant and volunteer program attendance totaled 3854 (last year 2464). This resulted in a 56% increase on last year. This does not include engagement numbers with the Multicultural Community Lunch program or one-off programs done in collaboration with other organisations. Programs were delivered to community members from India, Nepal, Bhutan, Congo, Burundi, Vietnam, Syria, Iraq, El Salvador and Peru.

Homework Help

The Homework Help program is delivered at the Lavington Library and at Hyphen in Wodonga. Students are from Vietnam, Nepal, Bhutan, India and the Congo.



The Homework Help program relies heavily on volunteers with the aim of having a ratio of one volunteer to one / two students. End of term activities included Easter craft, magic shows, a circus performance, jewelry / beading workshop and art class. In September 2022 we were awarded runners up in the OSHLSP of the year – Regional / Rural by the Centre for Multicultural Youth.

Quote from parents:

“I am very thankful for your help for the improvement of my child's learning well, you have helped Vietnamese children can integrate into the new culture. Hope you continue to help us. Thank you so much.”

“My children really love studying with volunteers there and thanks to them their English ability is improved week by week. Thank you and the volunteers so much.”

Conversations in English

Conversations in English is held at Hyphen Wodonga Library, Albury Library, Lavington Library and Albury TAFE library at a time that suits the student and the volunteer. Sessions generally go for one hour and are not structured.



Participants wishing to practice their English are often but not always studying English at TAFE. Nationalities include Vietnam, Bhutan, Congo, Barundi, Nepal, India, Peru and El Salvador, Syria and Iraq.

A quote from a participant who receives help from a volunteer in the Conversation in English program:

"My volunteer has helped me practice a lot. He has also helped me practice the citizenship questions."

Coffee and Cards



Coffee and Cards is held in the Albury and Lavington Library. Participants in this program are senior Bhutanese community members from Albury and Wodonga. Two mini-buses, generously donated by Albury City Council transport participants to and from the program. This program relies on volunteer bus drivers and volunteer assistants. Participants enjoyed end of term excursions to Albury Botanic Gardens, Farm visit at Bowna, Men's Shed, Wodonga Cattle sales, Sumsion Gardens.

Quote from a Coffee and Cards participant:

"It's the best way of self-engagement during the cards and coffee days!"

Tertiary Tips

This program is aimed at assisting members of the CALD community who are undertaking tertiary study or who may wish to enroll in tertiary study. This is a small program whereby volunteers help the student usually on a short-term basis as required.

Quote from a Tertiary Tips student studying Cert IV in Disability to their volunteer:

"I really appreciate your encouragement and assistance with my studies."

Multicultural Exercise Class

The exercise class is provided once a week at Glenecho Community Centre by a qualified trainer for multicultural community members. Participants are predominantly in the 50+ age bracket, however it is open to any age group. Participants are mainly from Bhutan, Nepal, India and the Congo. Participants who require transport are picked up in the VRB minibus by a volunteer.



Quote from an exercise program participant:

"Before I started this program, I could not lift my arms and now I can."

Volunteers

The Cultural Exchange program currently has 55 active volunteers ranging in age from 17–84 years. All Cultural Exchange programs rely heavily on the generosity of the dedicated and reliable VRB volunteers. VRB and the multicultural participants are truly grateful for their ongoing assistance.

The Cultural Exchange volunteers enjoyed a chance to get to know each other and celebrate their efforts with a "Let's Catch up"– Cheese, Bubbles and Art Class at MAMA in November 2022.

We now have volunteers in the Cultural Exchange program who are themselves migrants or refugees.



Quote from a VRB volunteer who themselves recently settled in Australia:

"I love helping other people get integrated into Australian society."

Community Collaborations



- ABC Radio's Alice Walker volunteering and interviewing participants of the Multicultural Exercise Class for the 90 for 90 Campaign.
- 21 March LLLS Harmony Day lunch – delivered a talk on the Cultural Exchange program. Aline also attended and spoke.
- Two weeks around Harmony Day – Haft Sin Table at Albury Library for Nowruz – Persian New Year.
- 22 March Persian New Year egg painting after school program.
- 26 March Multicultural Community Garden Open Day in partnership with Charles Sturt University and Albury Wodonga Local Food Network.
- Working with the Albury and Wodonga Libraries – four story times for Refugee Week.
- Education session on recycling by Halve Waste (ACC) with Exercise participants.

Multicultural Community Lunch Program



The Multicultural Community Lunches have continued on a monthly basis. This is the programs third, the lunches are very popular and book out quickly.

Participants from the following cultures cooked at the community lunches:

Kenya, France, Solomon Islands, Italy, Iran, Nepal, Ukraine

This program was financed by Albury City Councils Community and Cultural Grant except for the Ukrainian lunch which was the start of new funding provided by Border Trust and the Scanlon Foundation. The program is run in partnership with Mirambeena Community Centre.

The Solomon Island Multicultural Community Lunch was filmed as part of a Food Mapping Project coordinated by Megan Hunt, North East Local Food Strategy Steering Committee along-side Sustain Australia, RMIT and Alpine Valleys Leadership Program.



The lunches are usually capped at 40 guests with two paid cooks and approximately two volunteers. In the reporting period a total of 319 people were involved in the Multicultural Community Lunches.

Quote from a guest attending a multicultural community lunch:

"As a first-time visitor I enjoyed meeting a broad cross section of people and impressed by the warm welcome. The lunch is a special way of introducing different tastes, the talk about the meal and family background of the ladies presenting the meal was excellent- another way of introducing cultural diversity and understanding. Thank you to everyone involved in making this possible."

Quote from guest cook at the Multicultural Community lunch:

"It gives me encouragement that I can do this. It gives me encouragement not to put myself down."

Lou Newman and Radha Guragai
Cultural Exchange Program

Settlement Services

Our Settlement Engagement Transition Support (SETS) program is funded by Department of Home Affairs, and we work with clients from humanitarian and refugee backgrounds in Albury and Wodonga within five years of their arrival in Australia.

Over the past year our SETS team has seen some changes in staffing due to people moving on to other positions and relocating to study. Diana Elliott is the Team Leader, and we have three wonderful caseworkers: Leanne Huxley, Anne Musubao and Kedar Sapkota along with our Bi-Lingual Support Worker, Aline Nyiragichiro.

The SETS team is located across our new Wodonga office and existing office at Mirambeena Community Centre in Lavington with caseworkers also providing outreach services at Albury and Wodonga TAFEs. We are very thankful COVID-19 restrictions were lifted and we were able to resume our face-to-face work with less disruptions. We continue to connect with clients and other service providers on platforms such as WhatsApp, email, Teams and Zoom when required.

Our SETS team coordinates a Multicultural Interagency Network (MIN) and holds quarterly meetings. Over the past few years with COVID-19 restrictions, our quarterly meetings took place via Zoom. After returning to face-to-face meetings, we continually average 30–40 attendees per meeting from over 25 different organisations which include representatives from the settlement sector, medical, employment, education, and other community service organisations. The Department of Home Affairs Settlement Network Officers support the meetings by attending via Teams. The attendees of these meetings have really valued being able to meet face to face and can network, build relationships, and look at future collaborations with others.

The housing crisis in Albury (NSW) and Wodonga (VIC) over the past few years continued to have a significant impact on the local market and our clients. Notices to Vacate, rental and electricity increases have continued to impact families and we have seen clients relocate to other towns to secure tenancies. Tenancy Advice and Advocacy agencies continue to support our caseworkers and clients when required.

Highlights

- Group information sessions and workshops on topics ranging from Keeping Your Family Safe Cultural Training with Police from NSW and VIC, Legal Aid, Tax Help, and Buying a Used Car sessions.
- Celebrating Womanhood Event in conjunction with Gateway Health (Multicultural and Family Safety and Prevention program)
- Employment Information Sessions regarding work opportunities at Kirinari Community Services, Rivalea and Woolworths Distribution Centre – run in conjunction with RedCross and Uniting Jobs Victoria.
- Youth Leadership programs with Youth Albury Wodonga and The Mandala Project
- Our weekly Citizenship Program started in May with sessions being held on Wednesday evenings and Friday mornings. We are collaborating with Albury TAFE to run the program along with funding from Multicultural NSW. The aim of the program is to work with SETS clients to learn and understand the information to be able to pass their Citizenship test to become Australia Citizens.

Good News Stories

SETS Community of Practice (CoP) National Forum in Canberra – August 2022

SETS Team Leader Diana Elliott with The Hon Andrew Giles MP, Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs at the SETS CoP National Forum in Canberra. The Forum brought together SETS practitioners from across the country to learn, network and discuss solutions for some of the key issues faced in the delivery of settlement services across Australia.



Drive to Connect Program

The Drive to Connect program is funded through Border Trust with the aim to provide driving lessons for CALD women to be able to obtain their Driver Licence. Five women obtained their Provisional Driver Licence's in this financial year.

Drive to Connect afternoon tea with caseworkers, Border Trust and participants.



**Diana Elliott – Team Leader
Settlement Engagement Transition Support (SETS) Program**