



Southern  
Migrant & Refugee Centre

## Annual Report 2014–2015



## SMRC gratefully acknowledges donations from:

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SICMAA

# Contents

Donations .....	2
Organisational Charter .....	4
Chairperson's Report .....	5
Chief Executive Officer's Report .....	6
Staff.....	9
Volunteers .....	10
Co-Located Organisations.....	10
Partners and Supporters .....	11
Highlights .....	12
Client Stories .....	21
Diverse Care™ .....	27
Media Coverage .....	28
SMRC Funding Sources .....	30
SMRC by Numbers .....	30
SMRC Programs .....	31
Statement by Members .....	33
Independent Auditor's Report .....	34
Income and Expenditure.....	35

# Organisational Charter

## Our Vision

Inclusive and caring communities that value cultural diversity and support each person to experience a sense of belonging and to realise their aspirations.

## Our Values

**Diversity**   **Respect**   **Empowerment**   **Participation**   **Resilience**

**Diversity:** as a strength: we recognise and promote the potential of multiculturalism to enrich communities and build understanding.

**Respect:** for individuals and communities with whom we work, valuing their strengths, opinions and experience: we aim to foster this sense of respect within our communities.

**Empowerment:** of individuals and communities to achieve their own aspirations.

**Participation:** as a right which offers a sense of connection and purpose to people of all ages and from all cultures: we actively seek to increase opportunities for culturally diverse communities to contribute to economic, civic and social life.

**Resilience:** in the management of our human, physical and financial resources to ensure our organisation is responsive, adaptable and sustainable.

As an organisation we aim to mirror and consistently embody these values in our ways of working.

## Our Strategic Priorities

- Enhance opportunities for participation of the broadest range of migrant and refugee communities in the Shire of Cardinia, the cities of Greater Dandenong and Casey and surrounding areas.
- Advocate with and for migrant and refugee communities to ensure their voices are heard and the strengths of multiculturalism are recognised and celebrated.
- Work in effective partnership to enhance the local service system and improve capacity to meet the needs of migrants and refugees.
- Ensure excellence – responsiveness, quality and timeliness – in program and service delivery.
- Increase the difference we make to the lives of migrants and refugees through program expansion and business development.
- Continue to develop our organisation in ways that best support the achievement of our strategic priorities and foster a dynamic and positive work place culture.

# Chairperson's Report

Thank you to all members and supporters who are reading this and continuing to travel with the SMRC. This year has been an eventful one again for us. You will recall that a year ago we were all enthusiastic about the possibility of a merge with two other organisations in the area. As you would be aware, that didn't eventuate for the SMRC in mid-year, though the other two organisations still propose to merge. The merge project was a lot of work and we all learnt a great deal from the experience. I think it brought people from the three organisations closer together than we would have otherwise become. We wish all the people involved in SCAAB and DCAB well in their future together and will keep our options open.

The highlight of the year was, of course, moving into our new premises, courtesy of the City of Greater Dandenong. It was a great privilege to welcome Cr. Sean O'Reilly, Mayor of the City, as keynote speaker at our opening ceremony in April. Many thanks to all the SMRC staff. Everyone worked so well in the move and we have all settled in now in a much better location.

The SMRC was looking at a restructure earlier in the year to better place us to move away from a deficit position this financial year. That restructure has been enacted with minimal disruption to staff. I understand that everyone is feeling very positive about the future. Congratulations to Jenny and the Management team in making that transition such a smooth and positive activity.

Also as the SMRC Strategic Plan was concluding, the Board extended the plan until our future was clearer. Now we will develop a new SMRC Strategic Plan for the next four years. We are confident that the next Strategic Plan will position us for a sound and prosperous future and our clients will enjoy the benefits of this planning.

I couldn't let this report go by without mentioning the situation for migrants and refugees at present. There have always been refugees but we are now seeing unprecedented numbers searching for a safe haven, not seen since the Second World War, with extremes of reaction from governments around the world. In Australia it has been difficult to judge where government policy will go on the issue, as other countries lead the way in making people welcome. It appears more leaders are now looking at the cause of the displacement rather than obsessing about the results. That can only be a good thing.

On behalf of the SMRC Board I welcome new members who joined us during the past year. To date we haven't been successful in our search for suitable accommodation within City of Casey, however we will continue to pursue this matter as it is a priority for the SMRC. Casey is home to the largest number of people who need our services.

At this year's AGM, all Board positions will be declared vacant, so some members, me included, may not be with the Board after that event.

On behalf of the Board, I'd like to thank Jenny Semple for her efforts, vision and drive during the past year and for her leadership of the organisation. Jenny is always aware of the different opportunities that present for the SMRC. I thank the SMRC management team and all the staff and volunteers who work tirelessly to provide a great range of services to our clients. A big thank you to the SMRC members who come to our AGM and support the work we do. We look forward to continuing to provide support and assistance to the growing numbers of migrants and refugees who choose to call this place home.



Brian Oates JP  
Chairperson, Board of Directors

# Chief Executive Officer's Report

This year we celebrated 21 years of service, a remarkable milestone and a great time to reflect on what we have achieved; the many thousands of people we have worked with, hundreds of staff and volunteers that have worked at the SMRC; the dedicated board members, and SMRC members who have supported the agency over 21 years. It was a wonderful celebration with 2 birthday cakes and past CEOs, staff, volunteers and board members present along with our current supporters, board, staff and friends.

We produced a wonderful and moving tribute to the 21 years past which is available on Youtube and on our website.



Some internal changes have been instigated to keep pace with the external changes that occurred locally and in the sector. The federal and state governments are now working towards a service model with clients owning their funding packages and making decisions about who they obtain services from and what services they actually choose. This model is being implemented in aged care, disability and other types of services.

Our restructure commenced in late 2014 to ensure we are better positioned as an agency and that staff are more able to assist and work with our clients. This is also to ensure we are more efficient and effective. However, this restructure was put on hold due to discussions on merging with SCAAB and DCAB. The SMRC decided not to go ahead with the merge. We wish SCAAB and DCAB all the best with their merge and look forward to continuing our positive working relationship with them.

This year we moved our office to Clow Street, Dandenong. I would like to thank the City of Greater Dandenong for being considerate, understanding and flexible with our move. It is great to be in a City where the Council appreciates our role as an MRC and understand the importance of our presence in the area for the local residents. I look forward to continuing our very positive and professional relationship with Councillors and staff at the Council.

A few programs ended this year, one being the fee for service migration advice that has been operating for 7 years. Due to policy changes and other factors we decided to close this service. Unfortunately we were not successful in maintaining our FRSHE program (Family Relationship Services for Humanitarian Entrants), which is a great loss, as we received mainstream agency referrals and self-referrals to this program. No one else provides this unique service in the region. Funding was removed from the program across the state, which is not a positive sign when we are all working towards reducing family violence in our community. We will aim to look for other means to provide this vital service.

Asylum seekers have continued to settle in this region and we have maintained our work with these clients. We have attended meetings and committees focussing on the coordination of services within the region.

I thank the Board for their support and work over the past year. I also thank the managers for their hard work and commitment to the SMRC; to the staff for their continued dedication and passion to for their work and clients, and for moving with the ever changing sector and the changing SMRC. I thank the volunteers for their work and passion in many of our programs. You have all been a pleasure work with and I am so proud of our work. And last but not least I thank the funding bodies for their commitment to multicultural services and the SMRC, all levels of government, local councils and Councillors, State and Federal MPS for all their support. And to all our partners, supporters, SMRC members, and local agencies, whom we work with on a daily basis, thank you for your support, collaboration and commitment to refugees, migrants and asylum seekers in this region and this country.



I hope that in the next 12 months we see some stability in our community and that we move forward with our new staff structure so we are able to meet the challenges ahead. I also look forward to developing a new strategic plan to work with in the future.

It has been a busy year, with our relocation, anniversary celebrations and other opportunities however, I continue with my commitment to the SMRC, staff and clients, and look forward with new ideas and a vision for a positive future for our clients in this region.



Jenny Semple  
CEO



SMRC Management group: Bill Collopy (Client Services), Sue Sharma (HR), Despina Haralambopoulos (Settlement Services), Jacob Lee (Resources), Jenny Semple (CEO).

# Board of Directors



Mr Brian Oates JP  
**Chairperson**



Mr Ismail Demiri JP  
**Member**



Mr Hafez Abdul Wahab  
**Member**



Amy Cunningham  
**Member**



Mr Phil Dalling  
**Secretary**



Mr Stephen Ward  
**Vice Chairperson**



Mr Ray Jopling  
**Treasurer**



Mr Timothy Dionyssopoulos  
**Member**



Mr Costa Azzam  
**Assistant Treasurer**



Ms Virginia Simmons  
**Member**



Ms Helen Cester  
**Member**



Ms Kerry Boland  
**Member**



Ms Michelle Blyth  
**Member**



Ms Carol Fountain  
**Member**

Members of the SMRC Board had the opportunity to attend the NFP Board C21 conference hosted by Leadership Victoria. We joined with other not-for-profit organisations to learn more about the new world in which we work. Adapting to meet changing community needs, using different approaches to fund our work, building new partnerships, and making sure the Board's performance compares well with current standards were some of the topics we explored. It was a chance to hear from leaders with vast experience and knowledge as well as share ideas and issues with other Board members. One important requirement today is for brave and creative leadership. As we prepare the SMRC's next strategic plan, the conference provided many examples for us to consider for our development and growth.



Board Development course attendees: (standing) Phil Dalling, Ray Jopling, Tim Dionyssopoulos (sitting) Jenny Semple, Helen Cester.



# Staff

## Chief Executive Officer

Jenny Semple

## Managers

Client Services

Bill Collopy

Resources

Jacob Lee

Settlement Services

Despina Haralambopoulos

Human Resources

Sue Sharma, Aman Bindra

## Team Leaders

### Aged Care:

HACC Planning and Projects

Anne Jones

Diverse Care

Penny Taramides

Planned Activity Groups

Sylvia Wan

### Settlement:

Access and Information

Sharon Smith, Peter Jarrett

Case Management & Counselling

Marilyn Greeff, Jenni Dunne

Communities

Wendy Fox

## Finance

Hemy Murugesan, Genie Shum

## Staff

Alice Watson

Kathryn Wood

Sadiqa Mohammadi

Ali Hussain

Kaya Celik

Sandra D'Souza

Ashleigh Newnham

Laura Wilks

Sanja Grahovac

Carmen Ingles

Linh Tran

Saseedaran Devaraja

Champa Wattegamage

Liz Currie

Sean Palensky

Courtney Dunn

Margaret Eoe

Sharon Rousselin

Cynthia Thomas

Maryann Desa

Sitara Samaranayake

Danuta Kussowski

Marina Savron

Tatjana Krneta

Elena Phelan

Marzia Wardak

Trish Matthes

Felicita Sivasudasan

Merina Perera

Vesna Stevcic

Gloria Kiri

Nabila Buhary

Vilma Maruzza

Godette McGregor

Natalia Micsunescu

Vivian Yong

Hany Boulous

Nazira Maleab

Yembeh Forna

Hayatullah Rahimi

Noreen O'Brien

Yoke Pink Chang

Helen Plakidis

Perla Mazie

Zlatica Bukarica

Iman Allaf

Pooja Kurian

Jacqueline Rice

Ramkumar Sekharan

## Casual Staff

Amena Tawakkoly

Margaret Choul

Sam Caldera

Bosco Khamis Alex

Nadia Abu-Duhou

Shiba Ali Shah

Charlene Grimwood

Nidhi Sirohi

Sue Akali

Hahn Tran

Nimeh Awad

Than Thong

Iria Aruzo

Nizra Haniffa

Vanja Fleet

Kai Chung Lin

Noela Gregson

Ziba Faizo

Kaushar Fathima Khader

Nyadang Ayul

118 Personal Care Workers – *Diverse Care Program*

# Volunteers

## Aged Care

Amalia Hatzemihelakis  
Angelita Arriagada  
Anna Giummarra  
Antonia Legaie  
Antonio De Vito  
Branka Racunica  
Connie Scata  
Craig Gibbs  
Edgardo Senese  
Edwin Morales  
Eleonora Brasacchio  
Eva Campos  
Eva Kulic  
Evelyn Lopez  
Fatah Mohmand  
Feliza Beal  
Gaetana Aidone  
Girlye Niduelean  
Golafranz Kowsar  
Hakima Mohammadi  
Hanan Captan  
Helen Barbajo  
Helen Hor  
Hoeung Mok  
Istvan Hangodi  
Jean Zhang  
Jessica Scott

Josephine Delange  
Kim Quang  
Kim Warren  
Kingsley Thiagarajah  
Linda Miller  
Loretto DeCruze  
Luz Aquino Philip  
Marcos Mensur  
Margaret Champion  
Maria Erdeg  
Maria Jordanou  
Marjot Kaur  
Maureen Pyritz  
Mauricette Clair  
Meera Manicker  
Meg Cornell  
Mehtab Khan  
Melvonne Anthony  
Muna Elamin  
Mustafa Rezaie  
Nagase Tezera  
Neda Rezakhani  
Nenang Castillo  
Nenet Banki  
Nilofar Khorasi  
Nita Ivancic  
Pashtoon Rahmani  
Phanny Soeur

Pina Lidonnici  
Pina Russo  
Radovan Pajic  
Rahima Razai  
Raouf Youssef  
Romaine Todd  
Roula Theodorakis  
Sanaa Salib  
Sharneez Backhouse  
Shereena Rajesh  
Shougal Safdari  
Souria Youssef  
Tamainetutai Nooroa  
Tamara Porublev  
Tammy Nguyen  
Thi Cam Nhung Pham  
Tong Huynh  
Tonka Balog  
Ursula Girstun  
Vivienne Salvatore  
Vo Ly  
XiXi Sun

## Homework Support

Chan Sokleap Mong (Layla)  
Cheng Heng  
Cheri Doan

Cheun Kang  
Geoffrey Smith  
John Taylor  
Kathika Gangula  
Mary-Anne Camp  
Max Waugh  
Satha Selvarajah

## Refugee Action Program

Mohammed Afshar

## Settlement Reception & Intake

Abdul Nasrat  
Alia Sultana  
Nishamani Vannitamby  
Reza Ahmadi  
Ziba Faizo

## Fit Fun Families

Harlin Gandhok

## Job Club Mentoring

Megan Boschetti  
Sanuki Tissera

# Co-Located Organisations

Afghan Australian Women's Friendship Network  
Hope and Care for All  
Logomua Fono Samoa  
Lopit Community Association of Australia  
Nasir Community Association  
South Eastern Region Melbourne Oromo

Community Association in Victoria  
Sudanese Disability Action Group in Victoria  
Union of the Greater Upper Nile States  
Upper Nile Community in Australia  
Ventana Hispana (Spanish Window)  
Victorian Arabic Social Services (VASS)

# Partners and Supporters

Advise & Educate	Connections	Foundation House	Sheriff's Office Victoria
African Women's Association	Consumer Affairs Victoria	Gleneagles Secondary College	Shire of Cardinia
AMES	Council of the Ageing (COTA)	Greater Dandenong Community Health	South East Melbourne Medicare Local
Association of Hazaras in Victoria	Dandenong Community Advice Bureau	Hampton Park Community House	South East Palliative Care
Australian Filipino Community Services	Dandenong High School	Hampton Park Secondary College	South Eastern Region Melbourne
Australian Hazara Women's Friendly Network	Dandenong Neighbourhood House	Keysborough Primary School	Oromo Community Association in Victoria
Australian Tax Office	Dandenong Polish-Australian Seventh-day Adventist Church	Lifesaving Victoria	SE Chinese Senior Citizens Assoc.
Baptcare	Dandenong South Primary School	Living & Learning Pakenham	Springvale Community Aid & Advice Bureau
Berwick Nazareth Baptist Church	Dandenong West Primary School	Maramba Primary School	Springvale Community Health Centre
Blanchard's Customised Training	Department of Education & Early Childhood Development	Maurice Blackburn solicitors	Springvale Indo-Chinese Mutual Assistance Association
Brotherhood of St Laurence	Department of Health & Human Services (formerly Department of Health)	MECWACare	Springvale Rise Primary School
Burmese Women's Alliance	Department of Immigration & Citizenship	Migrant Information Centre	St Anthony's Primary, Noble Park
Cambodian Association of Victoria	Department of Justice	Mission Australia	St Mary's Primary School
Cambodian Australian Christian Church	Department of Social Services	Monash Health	The Smith Family
Cambodian Community Welfare Centre	DHS/ Child Protection	Monash Refugee Health Clinic	TLC Aged Care – Noble Manor
Cardinia-Casey Community Health	Doveton College	Narre Warren Baptist Church	Union of Greater Upper Nile States
Casey Multi-Faith Network	Doveton Neighbourhood Learning Ctr	Nasir Community Association	Uniting AgeWell
Casey North Community Information & Support Service	Enliven	New Hope Foundation	VASS
Centre for Multicultural Youth	ERMHA Eastern Region Mental Health Association	Noble Park Secondary College	Ventana Hispana
Centrelink	Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria	OMAC (Office of Multicultural Affairs & Citizenship)	Vic Roads
Chisholm Institute	Family Life	Omid Cultural Association	Victoria Leisure
City of Casey		RACV Insurance	Victoria Police
City of Greater Dandenong		Refugee Council of Australia	Victorian Arabic Social Services
City of Kingston		Rotary International, Noble Park	Victorian Sherriff's Office
		SCOA	WAYSS
		SELLEN	Windermere
			Youthlinks

# Highlights

## Launch of the Buddha of Banyam

Who would have thought a group of Muslim men would be keen to carve a Buddha on the grounds of a Catholic Church in Keysborough? The Buddhas of Bamyam were two 6th century monuments carved into cliff-sides in a valley of the Hazarajat region of Afghanistan. These statues represented the classic blended style of Gandhara art. They were destroyed in 2001 by the Taliban, who declared them idols, despite international condemnation. Early in 2014, in a project funded by Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship under the Refugee Action Program, SMRC partnering with ERMHA, supported by the Association of Hazaras in Victoria and Keysborough Learning Centre, a group of Hazara men decided to carve their own Buddha of Bamyam. 6 months later we celebrated the unveiling: a great day in Dandenong, with a celebration including participants and project partners. As one participant said: "It is not about religion. It is about honouring our cultural heritage, by showing people we have something to offer this community." This project was developed to address isolation and hopelessness for asylum seekers by providing opportunities to improve health and wellbeing. The group learned about health and mental health from professionals, each week covering a different topic. Among the group, we've seen a significant reduction in the stigma attached to mental health. We've been able to identify and empower group leaders, who take responsibility for running the group, including cooking, catering, cleaning and woodwork.



*Pictured: Ramazan, Liaqat Behaduri, SMRC project worker Ashleigh Newnham, CEO Jenny Semple, Ali Amiri, Settlement Manager Despina Haralambopoulos, Reza Bakhshi.*

## Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Project

SMRC developed an ICT Plan in mid-2014 for utilising compatible IT support for our strategic goals. ICT Project Manager, Saseedaran Devaraja, commenced in August 2014 to implement the recommendations from this plan. There were 3 main areas:

- IT roll-out of a common database across all program areas, including HR.
- Implement the software SharePoint as a primary document management tool.
- Prepare SMRC to become a fully mobile workforce by migrating to Office365.

In addition, we have upgraded our network server and prepared for a full move to cloud computing. This project is expected to complete in November 2015.

# Highlights

## Working with Diversity Forum

SMRC held a Working with Diversity Forum, bringing together 25 service providers from across the Home and Community Care (HACC) sector. The aim of the forum was to better equip local professionals in working more effectively with Afghani older people. This forum was the culmination of a project focusing on this community, in particular the Hazaras. Each year SMRC engages in a project to strengthen relationships with a community considered new and emerging in aged care, to educate community members about HACC services and link them to service providers. Until recently, members of the Hazara community have generally not been active in their own groups but as part of mixed groups of people from Afghanistan. Staff involved in the project gained an improved understanding of people from Afghanistan and the needs of older members of their community. So we decided to share some of this knowledge with other providers. At the forum, SMRC project worker Iman Allaf described the aims of the project and how it was conducted. Forum participants then heard from our main guest speaker, Gula Bezhan, who is both an Afghani community leader and also a settlement worker at Catholic Care. She explained how older Afghani people have been adapting to settling in Australia and how aspects of their culture have often created barriers for them in getting the help they need. A panel of community members, President of Afghan Hazaras Women's Friendship Group, Zakia Baig, family carer Malika Atai, and Social Work student Zakir Alami, expanded on Gula's presentation by sharing their personal insights. A lively and informative discussion followed, in which issues around cultural tendencies, settlement challenges and gender roles were explored. Providers shared the ways in which their own agencies have exercised flexibility to cater for cultural differences.



*Pictured: Enayat Zara (interpreter), Iman Allaf (SMRC Access and Support Worker), Malika Atai (family carer), Gula Bezhan and Zakia Baig (Afghan community leaders) and Zakir Alami (SMRC Community Development student).*



# Highlights

## Twenty-First Birthday Party

We celebrated our 21st in style on 15th October with a crowded house of SMRC members, distinguished guests, past and present staff, volunteers and friends, cultural entertainment and afternoon tea. A feature of the event was our celebratory audio-visual presentation of the 21 years. This short film was produced by Jack Currie and Jackson Strafford of Oneheart Studio and is now available on the SMRC website, or can access the link by scanning the code below.



*Pictured: Hafez Abdul Wahab, Deputy Chairperson; Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services; Brian Oates JP, SMRC Chairperson; Jenny Semple, current CEO; Melissa Afentoulis, founding CEO; Ross Barnett, former CEO and now Executive Officer of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria.*



*Keynote speaker Senator Hon. Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Services*

Oneheart Studio  
audio-visual  
presentation



# Highlights

## Multicultural Recipe Book

This year SMRC celebrated Carers Week in a rather special way. We launched a multicultural recipe book entitled *Food around the World*, a collection of traditional family recipes provided by our SMRC Carers. These carers have demonstrated wonderful talents in cooking and they have provided delicious food on so many occasions. Often we have said “We should write a cookbook!” So we have. We all know there are many cookbooks and countless recipes on offer around us but how many multicultural recipes books are written by carers? Not many, we believe. So here it is, our carers’ recipe book. We launch the book in October, with a wonderful speech by the book’s editor, our own Alice Watson, a woman of many talents. In addition we heard from Lien Phan, one of our carers, who said: “I became a carer in 1997 when my father had a stroke. At that time, I decided to dedicate my life to care for my parents and my son, who is autistic and has an intellectual disability. In 2002, a friend of mine introduced SMRC to me. I joined and met new people and made many friends who could understand and relate to my situation. Through the years I’ve learnt a lot of new things from SMRC’s meetings. Everyone has the opportunity to share ideas, grieve, celebrate joyful times and walk this carer journey together.” The recipe book is on sale for \$10.00. See the SMRC website.

## Refugee Week

This year SMRC entered into a partnership with Monash Health and South East Melbourne Medicare Local to host the 4th annual youth refugee soccer tournament at Springers Leisure Centre, Keysborough, during Refugee Week. Our combined efforts provided family-friendly activities, including children’s activities, soccer and warm up drills. This year we had 4 female teams and 12 male teams – a record number for both! The games were fiercely competitive, but played with a great spirit of friendship. We also provided gifts for the children, including balls, Frisbees and refreshments. The soccer teams were composed of asylum seekers and newly arrived refugees, mainly from Afghan backgrounds. Our Master of Ceremonies was Rob Koch from Monash Health, and we were ably supported by Monash Health volunteers, who helped to distribute fruit, which was eagerly devoured. We helped to keep the teams energised, with water bottles promoting ‘fill from the tap’. We now have perpetual trophies, to be engraved annually with the winning teams. One example illustrates the qualitative success of such an event; two young women who didn’t have a team to play in still wanted to participate. Even though they were novice players, another team welcomed them into their team. They made the finals and both young women were able to participate, made to feel a part of the team and engage in this valuable experience. We eagerly look forward to next year’s tournament.



# Highlights

## Nauru Delegation Visit

SMRC was privileged to welcome a visiting delegation from the government of Nauru recently. Lionel Aingimea, Secretary, Department of Justice and Border Control, accompanied Susie Scotty, the Manager of Settlement, Bervena Adeang, the Operations Manager and Roqous Aingimea, a Paralegal Public Defender, along with refugee settlement assistants. The delegates visiting us to learn about our Settlement programs. We presented an overview of services in Australia and what deliver in the Settlement Grants Program and Family services, including the major concerns of our clients. We also learned about the government's work in Nauru and we offered advice based on our experience. We enjoyed a stimulating discussion and we shared the respective challenges for staff in Nauru to Australia, especially in this region.



*Pictured: Jenny Semple CEO, Settlement Services Manager Despina Haralambopoulos, and Case management and Counselling Team Leader Marilyn Greeff, with delegates of the Nauru government: Lionel Aingimea, Secretary, Department of Justice and Border Control, Marcus Tom, Deputy Operation Manager, Philomena Quadina, Deputy Operations Manager, Tricia Roland, Deputy Manager Settlement, Susie Scotty, Manager Settlement, Bervena Adeang, Operations Manager, Fulton Amram, Refugee Settlement Assistant, Roqous Aingimea, Paralegal Public Defender, Junior Olsson, Refugee Settlement Assistant, Khemindra Amram, Refugee Settlement Assistant*

## Let's Talk Life

At the start of 2015, SMRC collaborated with Kim Welch of 'Let's Talk Life' to offer a lifestyle modification program to complement existing physical exercise programs. We aim to reduce individuals' risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes, heart disease and stroke by providing clients with tools, knowledge and support to make lifestyle changes to reduce the risk of developing chronic diseases. We have delivered the program to a group of mainly Sri Lanka seniors so far. The group has embarked on a journey of lifestyle modification and healthy eating. There has been a lot of fun on the way, as participants have enjoyed healthy meals and adopted healthier cooking habits, using less oil, salt and fat. A highlight of the program has been a shopping tour and label-reading in the supermarket, providing each client with \$10 to buy ingredients for meals using healthy choices criteria. Another highlight has been recipe modification, as clients substitute ingredients of favourite recipes with small changes to make them healthier.



# Highlights

## Seniors Leadership Forum

SMRC and Monash Health conducted an ethnic seniors leadership forum where a large range of seniors clubs were represented. We acknowledged the contribution that leaders make to the health and wellbeing of seniors. Certificates of appreciation were awarded to community leaders by Marion Lau, Deputy Chair of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria. Further presentations examined changes to Aged Care and a new resource on Elder Abuse. The event provided us with an opportunity to consult with the leaders on what's working well in their clubs and what issues were being faced by older members of their communities.



*Pictured: (bottom right) Marion Lau, Deputy Chair, ECCV (top left) Linda Stewart-Wynd, DHHS; Anne Jones, SMRC; Kerry Moor, City of Greater Dandenong; Emily Murian, City of Casey.*

## Volunteers Week

This year SMRC chose to celebrate National Volunteer Week by combining all of our volunteer participants from our various programs and activities into one big celebration. After speeches and acknowledgements thanking all our volunteer for their work and commitment to the organisation and the clients, staff and volunteers were delighted to participate in a combined Latin dance group, a fun activity for all ages that in our case involved a lot of laughter and some strange moves, followed by a sumptuous morning tea. A fun way to thank our volunteers from Social Support, Homework Support, Community Volunteers Scheme and Settlement services.



*Pictured: Tong Huynh (volunteer), Trish Matthes (Volunteer Coordinator for Aged Care), Thi LeThuy and Thi Cam Nhung (volunteers), Godette McGregor (Community Visitors Scheme Coordinator)*



*SMRC staff and volunteers attempting a Latin dance.*

# Highlights

## Men's Planned Activity Group

SMRC has developed a men's Planned Activity Group, funded by City of Casey via Department of Health under the Home and Community Care program, and facilitated by us. It is a social program for men and is currently based in Cranbourne. Our target clients are socially isolated men from Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. In the first 6 months, some of the more socially-engaged women accompanied their husbands to the program to support their access, participation and engagement. With this support the men became more confident and relaxed about participating on their own. Initially the program focused on exercise, including strength-training and Tai Chi, a healthy morning tea, and culturally appropriate lunches. Then we purchased Carom boards and chess sets. The men became were soon captivated by these games, which most them used to play in their home countries. To increase the number of clients, we approached the local Sikh temple. For the last six months we have catered to different needs to satisfy the many Sikh men who have now joined the program. Maintaining everyone's preference may occasionally be a challenge but everyone is respectful and appreciative of one another. Then men are aware of the importance and sensitivities of traditions, including culinary traditions. They very respectful of accepting differences. Our participants all enjoy their outings, particularly the seaside, the art exhibitions, visiting gardens and nature, and photography. These photographs were taken by one of our clients. We are very proud of this new initiative and we see it as part of the evolving nature of the Planned Activity Groups in our highly diverse community.



## Refugee Youth Camp

SMRC's Case Management and Counselling Support Team in July accompanied 14 Afghan boys to Camp Jungai in Thornton, near Lake Eildon. The camp provided our young people with many experiences, such as preparing Australian foods, canoeing and high rope work. Uncle Roy, an Aboriginal Elder, delighted the boys with cultural information, providing them with a greater understanding of Aboriginal culture and experiencing the use of plants for soap-making, food and bush medicine. Uncle Roy regaled stories while he allowed the boys to handle age-old tools and weapons. The boys were also given permission to play the didgeridoo. The outdoor activities provided a new set of experiences and brought not only enjoyment but also a greater sense of confidence, self-esteem and teamwork. For most of the boys, this was not only their first camp in Australia but their first camp ever. The majority who attended met for the first time and they are keen to continue their new friendships.





# Highlights

## Official Opening of our New Office

The SMRC welcomed a large gathering of guests at the official opening of our new office, 39 Clow Street Dandenong. Distinguished visitors included: Hon. Luke Donnellan MP, Member for Narre Warren North, Minister for Roads and Road Safety and Minister for Ports; Hon. Alan Griffin MP, Member for Bruce; Inga Peulich MP, Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Member for South-Eastern Metropolitan; Gabrielle Williams MP, Member for Dandenong; Hong Lim MP, Member for Clarinda; Cr Mick Morland, City of Casey, Cr Angela Long, City of Greater Dandenong; Assistant Commissioner Luke Cornelius, Victoria Police; The keynote address was delivered by Cr Sean O'Reilly, Mayor of Greater Dandenong, who officially opened the new office. Other guests included several life members of SMRC, including founding member Anton Nadarajah.

In recognition of a significant community in the region who are represented in both the refugee settlement and aged care sectors, SMRC invited guest performers to play Tamil music on traditional instruments.



An excerpt of the performance can be seen on YouTube by scanning this link:



# Highlights

## Healthy Ageing Project

This project was funded by Department of Health and Ageing (now DSS) for SMRC to work with two residential facilities by assisting them to improve their capacity for providing culturally appropriate care and to maintain this responsiveness into the future.

The project has been highly successful engaging with facilities and developing productive relationships that enhance cultural responsiveness. The project provided the following,

- Assistance to aged care facilities to develop a continuous improvement plan
- Cooking demonstration for 10 catering staff from Aged Care facilities outside the project target
- Developing a Cultural Resource Booklet to accompany our Multifaith calendar
- Developing a resource kit for partner facilities
- Arranging for other ethnic agencies to attend the Noble Manor and Springvale Aged Care facilities to provide links between the facility and ethnic agencies
- Preparation and presentation at Melbourne Better Practice Conference 2015, hosted by the Australian Aged Care Quality and Standards Agency.

This project targeted Sri Lankan and Cambodian communities to deliver education about aged care and to develop links between the community and residential facilities. SMRC were able to identify the Sri Lankan community as benefiting more than the Cambodian community due to a different state of readiness. SMRC identified the need to engage better with the Cambodian community. So, with the involvement of older Cambodian community members, leaders and representatives of local providers, the Cambodian Broadcasting Network helped us to develop a culturally appropriate online resource to educate the community about aged care services, especially respite and residential care. This resource was launched in July by Cr. Youhorn Chea of Greater Dandenong. This dual English and Khmer DVD is the first of its kind, produced with the community for the community.



*Pictured: Anne Jones, Team Leader of Home and Community Care Team, with Cr. Youhorn Chea at the launch.*

## We Have Moved

After 15 years in Thomas Street, in late January 2015 the SMRC moved to new premises. We were very excited about this move. The address is 39 Clow Street Dandenong, the building formerly housing the sum of the staff of City of Greater Dandenong.

# Client Stories

Names have been changed for privacy purposes

## Parenting and Support

A family had been referred to SMRC. The family came from Cambodia over 10 years ago, and had settled in the south-east with their children, daughter (7) and son (4). After asking if the parents needed extra support with parenting and health issues, a staff member at the daughter's school made a referral to the Child FIRST team, who then referred to the SMRC family support worker. This worker explained her role to the father, who stated that the family didn't need help, though he agreed to pass on the details to his wife, who later told our worker she would like to discuss the children. On her first visit, she found the parents happy to discuss their situation through a Khmer interpreter. The mother described how the daughter's work and behaviour were excellent at school but at home she threw tantrums lasting for hours and hit her brother. The SMRC worker knew that the daughter was on waiting lists for an ear operation and paediatric appointments. The parents told our worker that their daughter had seen a psychologist but wasn't able or willing to express what she was going through. The psychologist referred the family back to paediatrics.

The parents talked about their own experiences as children growing up in Cambodia, with little food and lots of hard work. Our worker agreed that children in Australia have many choices of food and toys, which sometimes result in fussy or demanding behaviour. She asked the parents if they would try some parenting strategies during the lengthy time the paediatric assessment would take. They responded well to using brightly-coloured behaviour charts. They chatted with their daughter about the rewards and incentives for her calm behaviour, e.g. (inviting a friend over to play and taking her to the library to borrow books she likes). On our worker's return, the mother showed her how the daughter was marking off days on a chart without any tantrum or hitting episode. The daughter then successfully had her ear operation and is undergoing monitoring by the paediatrics department. The mother is happier with her daughter's behaviour and is now seeking help with the son, due to attend 4-year-old kindergarten next year.

The SMRC worker has also reassured the mother of her rights and responsibilities. She encouraged her to liaise with the Cambodian-speaking GP and other professionals.

## English-Khmer Dictionary

Parenting n. ការចិញ្ចឹមបីបាច់ថែរក្សា

សព្វានុក្រម ឧបសគ្គក្រម  
អង់គ្លេស - ខ្មែរ

# Client Stories

## Men's Planned Activity Group

Abdul G. Samadi is a member of this group, run by SMRC and subcontracted from the City of Casey on behalf of the Department of Health.

24 years ago, at the time when ruinous and fearful war was burning the existence of people, with deafening sounds of the bombs and other heavy weapons, I left my beloved country. Afghanistan is my home and is inextricably linked with who I am. I left my nation in despair and with no hope for the survival of myself and family members and migrated to our southern neighbouring country (Pakistan). Four years of migration had not passed when a car accident occurred which changed my life, the life of a hardworking energetic person. As a result I was disabled and bedridden. I lost my ability to stand. I thought everything was over but I did not lose hope, thanks to my strong beliefs and determination. Surgical operations of my spinal cord made a small impact but couldn't revive the energy and strength in my legs. Fortunately 18 years ago, due to the efforts and help of my brother, the Australian government granted us resettlement visas. This improved my hopes, and I gradually adapted to a new environment and culture. For the sake of relief and getting rid of depression, I initiated arrangements of activities inside the house; improving English language skills, reading and social activity with family and friends. This facilitated and eased my life. It is now more than a year since I joined the newly established male community group that initially consisted of 3 people. Gradually the numbers increased and created a friendly, loving environment. Everyone feels part of this family. It is interesting for me that new friends have a background of diverse culture, custom and traditions; improved English skills also helped me a lot. Thoughts and plans for establishing community groups are transparent human and ethical ideals. In the direction of ethnic and nationality with diverse backgrounds, relationships and links play outstanding and creative role. I believe these communities are a bridge between nationalities, based on human and moral values. As a member of this community I have found that community activities will open locked doors and venues. Each member on the basis of their knowledge and awareness, during the course of contacts, exchange of ideas and meetings; would disclose many issues with the process of social history and traditions, believes and ethic in particular. They will obtain information, and learn new ideas from each other; and in respect to social values in the course of multicultural aims, which are the genuine strategy of these communities they can achieve a prestigious and credible status in the Australian society.



*Men's PAG group participants: Salim Mohammad Sahil, Abdul Samadi, Abdul Quarbanzada and Naimat Rahim*



# Client Stories

Names have been changed for privacy purposes

## Youth Program

A young Afghan male initially contacted SMRC regarding a couple of fines for drinking in a public place. He was 18 at the time. He was concerned about payments and upset, as he thought he was being treated discriminatorily by police. Later he disclosed that he did not have a good relationship with his family, especially his father. The SMRC youth worker learned that the young person stayed at home all the time and that he appeared to suffer from anxiety and depression, with signs of paranoia, as well as a concern about the overuse of drugs and alcohol.

The young person had lost his full time job, was behind in his rent and financially struggling after Centrelink cancelled his payments because he had not kept up with reporting requirements. The young person wanted to move out of the area, away from his family and his community, as he felt that he was stigmatised, and believed that everyone was talking about him. He was spending most of his time inside his room. On one occasion the young person's mother approached the SMRC's youth worker as she was extremely worried. She disclosed that the young person did not sleep at night and talked with himself often in a loud voice in his room. the young person had become increasingly alienated from friends. The youth worker became his only contact at this point.

The young person and the youth worker built a trusting relationship at this time. Over a period of 2 months the youth worker often had contact with the young person 2-3 times a week. The youth worker raised his concerns about the young person's mental health and suggested talking to his GP, but the young person was focussed on moving out of the area and felt this would solve his problems.

The worker helped him to find a vacancy in a youth refuge, located in another suburb. The youth refuge was a supportive environment where the young person was allocated a worker who liaised regularly with the SMRC youth worker for long term-planning. The young person was linked with educational opportunities and English language classes. However, some of the issues that the SMRC youth worker had noted about mental health became apparent again. The young person was later diagnosed with drug-induced psychosis and put on medication. Through medication and ongoing support via mental health specialists, the young person has reduced his drug and alcohol abuse significantly, while his depression and anxiety are being managed.

The young person has since returned to his family. He is working part-time in the construction industry and undertaking a course at Chisholm TAFE. He states that he no longer feels scared to go out and socialise with friends. The SMRC youth worker still checks in with the young person on occasion, but now this involvement has significantly reduced compared to the initial intervention.



# Client Stories

Names have been changed for privacy purposes

## Refugee Action Program

*Reza is a participant in this program, funded by OMAC (Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship). He is also an SMRC volunteer.*

I was born in Afghanistan, when the Russian army was there. There was a lot of fighting between different Afghan groups. Between brothers and communities, killing each other for nothing. When I was 6, one cold night we left our home and went to a safe place in the mountains. We were refugees in our own country with nowhere to stay. We found distant relations and stayed with them around 1 year, because our area Sangjoy Loman was not safe. My father went ahead to Iran to find work so he could send us money to survive. After a while we went to my uncle's house. My cousin, my uncle and I fled to Iran. I was 9 years old. It was so dangerous in Afghanistan, my father could not see any hope for the future. We went to Iran to survive. I remember saying goodbye to my mother. She was crying so loudly. We could not afford to all go. I went with my uncle because I was the oldest so I had to go. Travelling was expensive and dangerous as well. When I left my mother said 'Please be a good boy, don't forget your mother and brothers and sisters'. She cried as we left the house. On the way to Iran, I saw many soldiers carrying guns. I was so scared and I hugged my uncle. I could not understand their language. I did not like the sight of so many guns. We stayed in a hotel, where the owner told us we had to pay extra for food even if we didn't eat anything. We couldn't afford it but they forced us to pay money, pulling it out of my uncle's hands. Remember being amazed at all the cars and buses and lights of the city. I had never seen that before. We had to get entry documents for Iran. My uncle sent me in ahead because we heard it was easier for family groups to enter Iran. I went with a family I did not know across the border. I was scared without my uncle. I heard a song about mothers on the radio and I remember crying as I crossed the border. Finally I met my father and I started going to a religious boarding school. My mother's family was living in Iran and my father was working with them. I really missed my siblings and my mother. My father worked far away from my school and I didn't get to see him much. I was happy to be safe and getting an education. I had a different accent and I was worried I didn't fit in with my classmates. I was good at martial arts and I loved drama and film. I loved movies about families because I dreamed about being all together as one family. I also watched movies about refugees and it made me stronger, knowing other people were going through this kind of situation. I wanted to join the Afghan national team for martial arts, Taekwondo. I joined the Iranian team and I represented



# Client Stories

Names have been changed for privacy purposes

Afghanistan in international competitions. I won a silver medal! It was getting more and more difficult for Afghan refugees in Iran. Afghan people were not allowed to do much education, work or business, so after a while my father left Iran to go back to our family. We heard that Afghanistan was settling down and becoming more peaceful so we thought it would be worth going back home. After 10 years I saw my mother again. I was so happy to see all my family. It was like no time had passed. I remembered everything about them. They had gotten older and one of my uncles had died. So I was happy but there was a lot of sadness as well. My aunty hugged me and I cried on her shoulder because I missed my uncle. I stayed in Afghanistan for about 3 years, and I worked as a social worker in my village and as a librarian. I taught students writing and poetry. It was a nice time however the Taliban was all around, and we were always scared. Maybe we would have to face the Taliban because of what we were doing. They never let girls have an education and we always let girls participate in our programs. Bombs were going off, people were dying and we were scared. Hazara people were always targeted because of our religion. When I was working in the public library, on my way home from work, I saw a huge fire on the roads. Traffic was backed up and trucks were parked all around. The Taliban had lit a petrol truck on fire. I was with friends in the car and all of a sudden we heard gunfire around us. We drove through the fire because we were terrified they would shoot us. Another time near my village there was a place called Dashte Kareboh, where I was stopped by the Taliban. There were about 13 cars all stopped and they asked us to get out of the car. They shoved us onto the ground and they took all our money and belongings. Two of them were holding guns towards us and two of them searched us. They had head-scarves and long hair. I thought me and my friends could overpower them. There were a lot of ricks nearby and I thought maybe I could attack them. I was a black belt in martial arts! We thought they would kill us. I was shaking with anger and fear. However the older men near me told me not to. In my culture we respect the decision of our elders so I didn't do anything. We begged for our lives, saying 'we are poor villagers, not supporting the government, we are just working in the village! Please let us go. You have our money and our phones and valuables, just let us go!' I lied and did not tell them I was a social worker and a librarian for a public university. Because they would kill me because they think I am supporting the government. I told them 'I am a farmer'! Finally they let us go and I was so relieved. I heard stories about this happening to other people, and finally it happened to me. I was lucky to be alive as many people don't survive an encounter with the Taliban. I was sick of constantly being terrorised by the Taliban. My heart was like a stone, crying but not alive, not able to live fully. I heard so many stories of people being killed who are teaching girls to read. As a librarian at a public university in Kabul, I was terrified every time I went to my village. The Taliban were everywhere, and if they found out I was working for a public institution, they would kill me. I heard that Australia was a country that helped refugees and wanted to support people who had suffered in Afghanistan. I decided that it was time to leave Australia and become a refugee again. The boat journey was traumatic, and finally I arrived at Christmas Island. I still feel like my heart is stone, because my life is so hard in Australia. I miss my family and my community. Now I am waiting to find out about my situation, without a visa, and lucky not to be in an offshore detention camp. I am volunteering at SMRC because I want to become a community worker here like I was in Afghanistan, my beloved home country. I am studying English and looking for part-time work while I study.

# Client Stories

Names have been changed for privacy purposes

## Driver Education Program

A 30 year old Afghan woman who grew up in Pakistan attended the SMRC driving program. She now has her driving licence and she is also working.

"I came to SMRC for the driving program, a friend told me about the driving program in SMRC and I came straight away and registered myself. I was struggling to get help with practise driving, because I was desperately wanting to drive, without being able to drive here you won't be able to do most of the things you want to do.

The driving program helped me greatly, after my registration I attended all the six weeks information sessions and I was offered discount driving lessons and through those driving lessons I was able to go for my drive test and I successfully passed the test. The six weeks information sessions helped me understand my rights and responsibilities in my new country and it helped me understand many things that I thought are very useful. Now I have more opportunities, I am driving my kids to and from school, working, visiting friends and family and even picking up relatives from Melbourne airport. Initially I thought all these things would be impossible, but here I am today I can drive to anywhere in Melbourne and anywhere I want to go to. The information sessions also helped me greatly to understand my right and responsibilities as a road user.

I am very grateful to SMRC, you guys are doing great work for the community. Your program made my resettlement much easier than expected and I hope you will continue to do this great work for the community. I have been recommending the program to most of my relatives, friends and my community and I have been also sharing the things I learnt from the evening session with others."

## Co-Located Organisations

*Australian Hazara Women's Friendship Network is a not-for-profit organization established with the support of other women organizations in March 2013.*

The mission is: (1) Women empowerment through capacity building and friendship networks (2) Bridge migrant and refugee women to the wider community of Australia (3) Connect local, national and international organizations to achieve our goal (4) Reduce isolation and promote endurance and multiculturalism (5) Help young women to embark on the same journey to achieve our goal.

Zakia Baig, president of AHWFN writes: Establishing a not for profit organization is one thing and sustainability of it is another. We were left struggling when our supporting organization had to move from the building where we were accommodated for free of charge. There we came to know about the SMRC in Dandenong. We found a home there and from late 2013 to today we are co-located with them under the refugee settlement program. We run English classes, Learner driving test preparation, citizenship test preparation, intake for refugees on bridging visa and others. We take ladies on excursions and visit other groups. We provide them info sessions from other supporting services. AHWFN would not survive without the help of SMRC. This organization is our home and we get all services and use the equipment and the rooms without any charges. We are working together to achieve our mutual goal of women and community empowerment. Challenges: the need for such skill centre is high and resources are very limited. We can work more effectively if supported by funding organizations. We are successfully achieving our goal and gaining strength with the community's trust, and we have received leadership award from Dandenong council on the Australia day this year. We can work for a better tomorrow together.



# Diverse Care

## Diverse Care™

For over 13 years, SMRC has been growing a social enterprise, a business within our not-for-profit organisation. This enterprise is now a thriving labour hire service, with an annual turnover that provides almost one third of SMRC's income.

We employ 118 workers to provide personal care, home care and in-home respite, in more than 40 languages, to older migrants and former refugees in the southern and eastern regions of Melbourne.

Our workers are all qualified in Aged Care or Home and Community Care, delivering culturally appropriate help to CALD older residents.

We assist more than 50 service providers by supplying workers to assist their case management needs. As well, we provide services direct to clients and their families in accordance with consumer-directed-care principles.

Diverse Care™ is our trading name and our brand. We are always on the lookout for new opportunities to provide assistance. We welcome any enquiries from prospective clients, families or service providers. Please contact us direct on (03) 9767 1909 or email us at [diversecare@smrc.org.au](mailto:diversecare@smrc.org.au)



# SMRC Media Coverage



## Buddha of Dandenong

PERSECUTED IN THEIR HOMELAND, SEPARATED BY OCEANS FROM THEIR FAMILIES AND DENIED SUPPORT FROM OFFICIALDOM, A GROUP OF AFGHANIS HAS FOUND A WAY TO CREATE A SENSE OF PEACE AND PERMANENCE.



A GROUP of four men, known as the *four men*, are visiting the Herlings Hill gardens in the outer Malborough suburb of Dorchester. They stand in the rain admiring their handiwork. Beside them is community mental health worker, Nadine Hamlin, who is working on the wooden carving. "When I first got made one of the guys said it looked a bit like Tony Abbott," she laughs. "Because of the big nose."

But he, the wooden Buddha that the men helped carve, stands before him, nestled between bamboo trees. At 1.20, the carving really is just a fraction shorter than Anan, who, considerably older, "He needs a roof or something, otherwise he'll get drenched by the rain."

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## Bang for their buck

By CASEY NEHL

It's been 21 years since a handful of people decided that refugees needed more support and advocacy in Greater Danderburg, Casey and Cardiff.

Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre (SMRC) will celebrate the milestone birthday this Wednesday, 15 October.

CEO Jenny Temple said the not-for-profit community-based agency formed with \$200,000 from the then-Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs.

"We started with about seven staff and a contractor of management and from that point we really grew and grew based on the demands," she said.

"We've worked with all the waves of refugees and migrants that have come through."

EMRC is based in Walker Street, Dunelm, offering settlement services.

It's expanded into aged care and added a youth worker, employment programs, driver education, counseling and family support, home nursing and more.

The organization is now based in Thomas Street, Dartmouth, and has about 64 office-based staff, 33 casual workers and 90 volunteers.

"We would be looking to move in the near future to something a bit bigger... and where the community would come in and have events and dancing and music," Mr. Sample said.



Jaqueline, CEO Jenny Sengle, Natalia, Zlata, Sharon, Jacob, Tatjana and Berla celebrate SMRC's 21st birthday. **GETTY**  
Picture: GARY NISSON

SMRC's greatest demand is from alpha workers who are ineligible for many government services.

"Those fanned to provide for asylum seekers, they do a good job but it's with very limited funding and within very limited scope," Mc Donnell said.

"What they can't deliver moves the need onto other agencies that aren't funded to support them."

"A lot of people want to help anyone who's in need but they haven't got the resources to do it."

She said volunteer groups stepped up to meet the demand but services were "a bit down-south."

"So they might be addressing a need that's already being met in

instead of looking at what the paper says," she said.

"When you've got limited resources you want to make sure what you've got goes as far as it can and can help as much as possible."

Ms Scarpello said technology was also a struggle for many migrants and refugees trying to access advice on housing, migration and other issues.

\*A lot of service providers and governments assume that everyone has a laptop and an e-mail.

"A lot of our clients don't have laptops or iPads or emails," she said.

"You set the program up and you

go everything established and you become very well experienced, people know about you and then suddenly the funding stops," she said.

"You have staff, you have the program, you have the confidence of clients."

"It's difficult to plan ahead and have a strategic plan of what processes and where you want to go."

But Mr. Sample said KABC was realistic.

"I think we have a very good culture of assessing what the client's needs are and always looking to meet those needs," she said.

These needs include supporting the aging migrant population through planned activity groups and through Diverse Care.

"We find that people as they get older revert back to their original language," Mo Schemle said.

Diverse Care is a large pool of about 110 bilingual qualified personal care workers who we match with clients from other aged care

agencies to provide personal care and other services to a person who speaks their language.

"That's been really successful. That's been operating for over 10 years and is continuing to grow as the population ages."

Another successful EMHC initiative is providing community profiles and cultural training.

"I think it's good that people are willing to learn and learn about how they can improve, and not just think that they're all doing it right," she said.



# SMRC Media Coverage

DANDENONG JOURNAL Connecting people and communities

## GIVE US A HAND



Some of the men who created Salsal unveil the sculpture.

### Muslims give gift of Buddha

AFGHANI men carving a Buddha statue at a Keysborough Catholic Church seems an unlikely occurrence.

But a predominantly Islamic group of Hazara men from Afghanistan have done just that.

They last Wednesday unveiled a replica of one of the famous Buddhas of Bamiyan - called Salsal - created at the Keysborough Men's Shed over five months.

"To us, it is not about religion, it is about honouring our cultural heritage, and showing people that we have something to offer this community," one participant said.

The original Buddha, one of two that were carved into the cliffs in Afghanistan between the second and sixth centuries, was destroyed by the Taliban in 2001.

Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre (SMRC) ran the project in partnership with Errol, with support from the Association of Hazaras in Victoria and the Keysborough Learning Centre.

The Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship funded the project under its Refugee Action Program.

It was developed to address isolation and hopelessness for asylum seekers in the community, and to provide an opportunity to improve their health and well-being.

SMRC settlement services manager Despina Haralambopoulou said the result was stunning.

"The men have recreated their history here, bringing a piece of Afghan culture into Dandenong," she said.

The Salsal will be on display at Heritage Hill Museum and Historic Gardens, 66 McCrae Street, Dandenong, for the rest of the year thanks to the City of Greater Dandenong.

Call Ashleigh Newsham at SMRC on 9767 1900 for more information about the project.

Page 22 Thursday, 23 October, 2014

News | starcommunity.com.au

## New home for 21st party

By CASEY NEILL

SOUTHERN Migrant and Refugee Centre (SMRC) celebrated its 21st birthday last week only to learn it would soon have a new home.

City of Greater Dandenong councillors approved plans to lease part of the council's vacant 39 Clow Street offices to the support agency.

SMRC will move from its current Thomas Street space by February to start a five-year lease with an option of a further five years.

It's been 21 years since a handful of people decided that refugees needed more support and advocacy in Greater Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia.

CEO Jenny Semple said the not-for-profit community-based agency formed with \$200,000 from the then-Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs.

"We started with about seven staff and a committee of management and from that point we really grew and grew based on the demands," she said.

"We've worked with all the waves of refugees and migrants that have come through."

SMRC started out in Walker Street,

Dandenong, offering settlement services.

It's expanded into aged care and added a youth worker, employment programs, driver education, counselling and family support, home tutoring and more.

The organisation is now based in Thomas Street, Dandenong, and has about 64 office-based staff, 93 casual workers and 90 volunteers.

SMRC's greatest demand is from asylum seekers who are ineligible for many government services.

"Those funded to provide for asylum seekers, they do a good job but it's with very limited funding and within very limited scope," Ms Semple said.

"What they can't deliver moves the need onto other agencies that aren't funded to support them."

"A lot of people want to help asylum seekers but they haven't got the resources to do it."

She said volunteer groups stepped up to meet the demand but services were "a bit dis-coordinated".

"So they might be addressing a need that's already being met instead of look-



SMRC CEO Jenny Semple, board chairman Brian Oates and Senator Concetta Fieravanti-Wells cut the birthday cake. 12/10/14

Pictures: GARY SISSONS

ing at what the gaps are," she said.

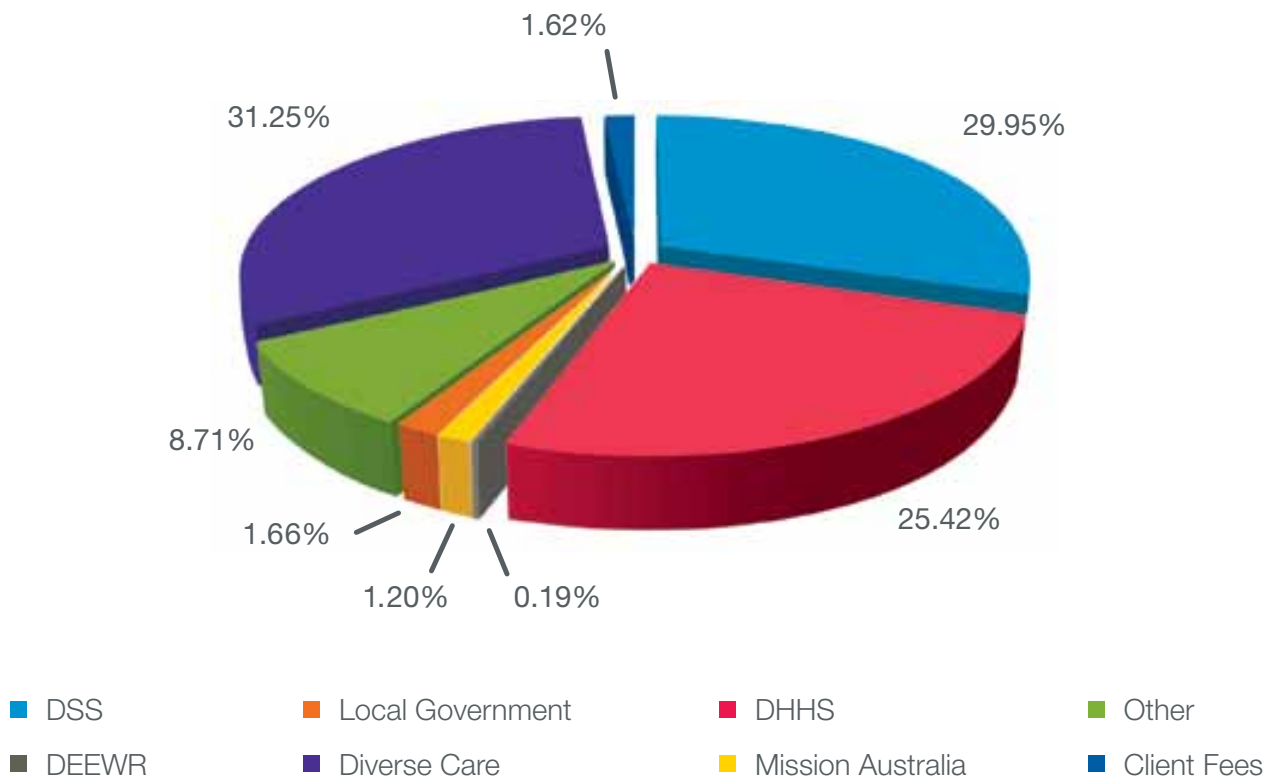
"When you've got limited resources you want to make sure what you've got goes as far as it can and can help as much as possible."

Ms Semple said technology was also

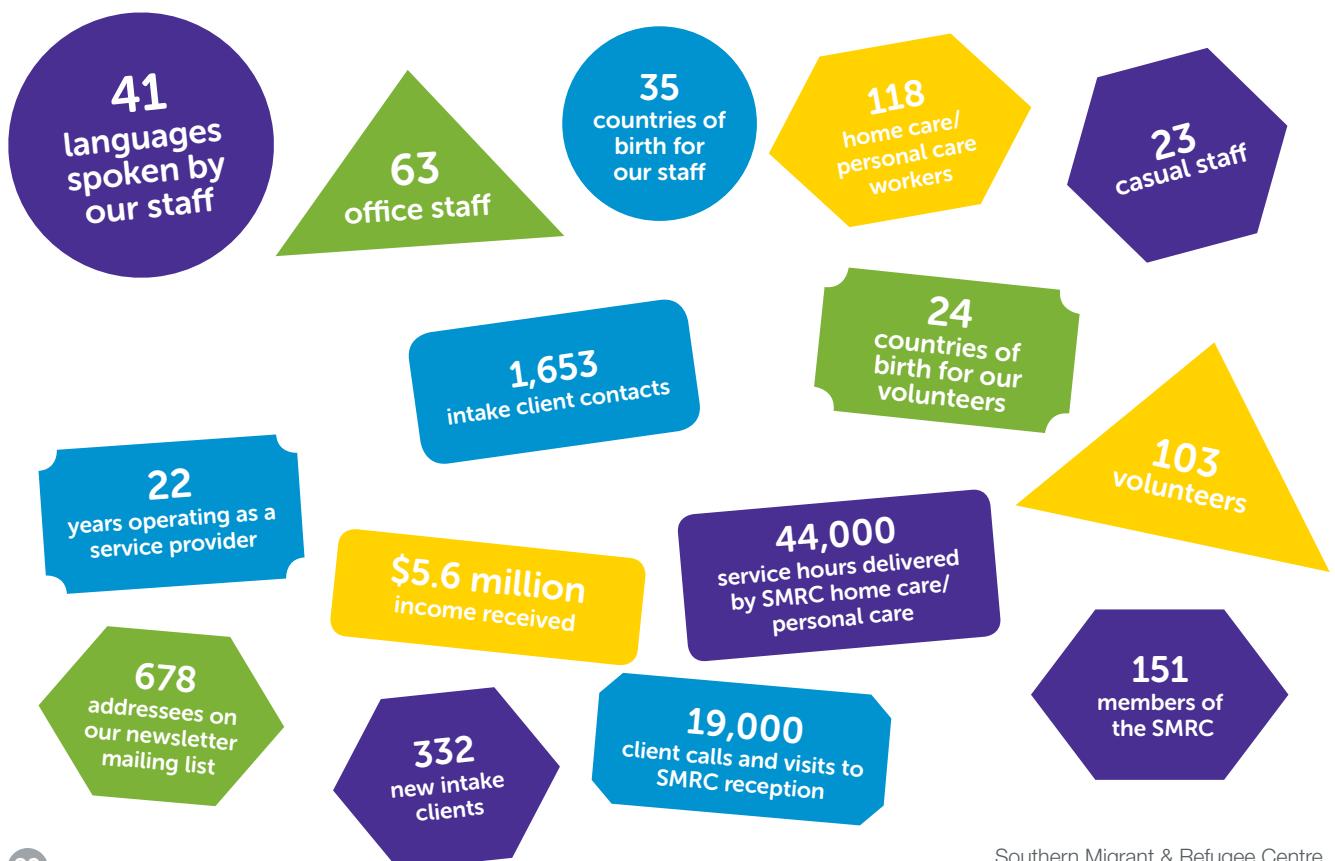
a struggle for many migrants and refugees trying to access advice on housing, migration and other issues.

"A lot of service providers and government assume that everyone has a laptop and an email."

# MRC Funding Sources



## SMRC by Numbers



# SMRC Programs

Settlement Services	Funding Body
Settlement Program provides information and referral, casework for and group information sessions for refugees and humanitarian entrants within the 5 years of their arrival. The program also assists community groups, communities and associations with better access to services.	Department of Social Services
Refugee Minor Program provides short term casework for minors who are transitioning out of the DHS Refugee Minor program into independent living family conferencing meetings with minors, their families and DHS to ensure smooth transition for families and minors.	Department of Social Services
Driver Education provides information for refugees on driving, road rules, the role of police and other driving-related matters, plus driving and limited subsidised driving lessons.	Department of Social Services
Youth Settlement provides information and referral for refugee youth, providing activities and recreation, and work with schools and other youth agencies.	Department of Social Services
Homework Support Program provides young people with volunteer tutors to assist in homework after school, and social activities for young people.	Department of Social Services
Complex Case Support Program is an intensive short term case management program for refugees and humanitarian entrants within 5 years of arrival	Department of Social Services
Family Relationships for Humanitarian Entrants Program provides family counselling, parent support and parenting across cultures sessions.	Department of Social Services
Active Children and Families project strengthens family relationships through sport and activities at local schools.	Mission Australia. Communities for Children, (DSS)
Refugee Action Program provides community development activities for refugees	SCAAB (OMAC)
Migration Advice provides free advice limited to SGP-eligible refugee and humanitarian entrants in this region	Department of Social Services
Tax Help program provides assistance via trained volunteers for migrants to complete their taxation papers for the year.	ATO
Casey Playgroup provides the opportunity for parents and children to access playgroup experiences and to increase their parenting skills and social networks	City of Casey
HIPPY Program is a 2-year home-based parenting and early childhood enrichment program targeting families with young children	BSL/Department of Social Services
Connections Family Support Services is a partnership between Connections UnitigCare and SMRC. This program provides family support services to newly arrived and CALD families referred through the Connections Child First Program.	Connections Uniting Care (DHS)
SHINE is a partnership program between Family Life and SMRC. The early intervention program aims to improve the mental health of children, youth and their families through the delivery of integrated support and information.	Family Life/DSS

# SMRC Programs

Aged Care Services	Funding Body
Access and Support Program provides short-term support to seniors to help them access culturally appropriate HACC services.	Department of Health and Human Services
Home and Community Care (HACC) Community Development Program educates ethnic seniors about HACC services and supports the sustainability of seniors clubs.	Department of Health and Human Services
Volunteer Coordination Program provides a friendly visiting program to visit elderly CALD clients to prevent social isolation.	Department of Health and Human Services
Community Volunteer Scheme provides volunteers for Commonwealth-funded aged care clients to assist and support	Department of Social Services
Service Improvement and Healthy Ageing Program links aged care facilities, Cambodian and Sri Lankan communities and SMRC, and improves access to culturally appropriate aged care services.	Department of Health and Ageing/ Department of Social Services
Planned Activity Groups provide centre-based recreational activities and meals for CALD clients, and provide transport for 10 groups of these clients	Department of Health and Human Services
Support for Carers Program provides support and activities for carers, facilitate a support group, and arrange respite when required.	Department of Health and Human Services

# Statement by Members

## Statement by Board of Directors

In the opinion of the board the financial report as set out on page 35.

1. Presents a true and fair view of the financial position of Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre Inc. as at 30 June 2015 and its performance for the year ended on that date in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards (including Australian Accounting Interpretations) of the Australian Accounting Standards Board.
2. At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre Inc. will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

This statement is made in accordance with a resolution of the Board and is signed for and on behalf of the Board by:

**Chairperson:**



Brian Oates JP

**Treasurer:**



Ray Jopling CPA

Dated this 30th day of September 2015



# Independent Auditor's Report

## Independent auditor's report to the members of Southern Migrant & Refugee Centre Incorporated

### Report on the Financial Report

We have audited the accompanying financial report of Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre Inc. (the association) which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2015 and the statement of comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year ended on that date, a summary of significant accounting policies, other explanatory information and the statement by members of the committee.

### Committee's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The committee of the association is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards (including the Australian Accounting Interpretations) and the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 and for such internal control as the committee determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

### Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on the financial report based on our audit. We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. These Auditing Standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditors' judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditors consider internal control relevant to the entity's preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the committee, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

### Auditor's Opinion

In our opinion:

The financial report of Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre inc. is in accordance with the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012 including:

- (i) giving a true and fair view of the Association's financial position as at 30 June 2015 and of their performance and cash flows for the year ended on that date; and
- (ii) complying with the Australian Accounting Standards.

**Name of Firm:**

MORTON WATSON & YOUNG AUDIT PTY LTD  
Chartered Accountants

**Name of Director:**

KERPALL S HARNAM  
Registered Company Auditor

**Address:**

51 Robinson St, Dandenong Vic 3175

**Dated this:**

1st day of October 2015

# Income & Expenditure

## Income Statement for the year ended 30th June 2015

	Note	2015 \$	2014 \$
Revenue	3	5,606,086.53	5,837,582.55
Other revenues	3	22,708.63	26,037.74
Administration expenses		(157,054.98)	(298,114.53)
Communication expenses		(15,789.43)	(3,494.93)
Depreciation expenses	4	(36,068.06)	(41,743.39)
Employment expenses	4	(4,585,784.25)	(4,570,657.09)
Occupancy expenses		(300,661.49)	(397,846.61)
Program related expenses		(426,862.17)	(508,016.33)
Travel and vehicle expenses		(229,587.03)	(146,509.61)
<b>Total comprehensive deficit for the year</b>	3	<b>(123,012.25)</b>	<b>(102,762.20)</b>

## Statement of Changes in Equity

for the year ended 30th June 2015

	Retained Earnings \$	Total \$
<b>Balance at 1st of July 2013</b>	1,363,620	1,363,620
Profit/(Loss) attributable to members	(102,762)	(102,762)
<b>Balance at 30th of June 2014</b>	1,260,858	1,260,858
Profit/(Loss) attributable to members	(123,012)	(123,012)
<b>Balance at 30th of June 2015</b>	<b>1,137,846</b>	<b>1,137,846</b>

## Balance Sheet as at 30th June 2015

<b>ASSETS</b>			
	Note	2015 \$	2014 \$
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents	5	792,584.87	829,185.76
Trade and other receivables	6	331,262.56	637,882.94
Financial assets	7	1,330,620.66	1,288,489.69
Other assets	8	62,377.20	36,862.80
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>2,516,845.29</b>	<b>2,792,421.19</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Property, plant and equipment	9	68,846.07	95,299.88
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>68,846.07</b>	<b>95,299.88</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>2,585,691.36</b>	<b>2,887,721.07</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Trade and other payables	10	173,449.71	254,079.44
Short-term provisions	11	505,023.04	485,038.72
Other current liabilities	12	579,833.41	714,531.36
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>1,258,306.16</b>	<b>1,453,649.52</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Long-term provisions	11	189,539.62	173,213.72
<b>TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>189,539.62</b>	<b>173,213.72</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>1,447,845.78</b>	<b>1,626,863.24</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>1,137,845.58</b>	<b>1,260,857.83</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>			
Retained earnings	13	1,137,845.58	1,260,857.83
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>		<b>1,137,845.58</b>	<b>1,260,857.83</b>

## Cash Flow Statement for the year ended 30th June 2015

	2015 \$	2014 \$
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Grants & income	5,837,499.00	5,725,948.00
Payments to suppliers and employees	(5,894,755.00)	(5,906,689.00)
Interest received	60,306.00	58,242.00
Other income	1,840.00	15,039.00
Donations received	18,413	3,969
Profit on sale of assets	9,619.00	18,413.00
<b>Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities</b>	<b>14,509.00</b>	<b>(89,047.00)</b>
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>		
Proceeds from sale of plant and equipment	22,709.00	37,318.00
Payments for plant and equipment	(9,615.00)	(17,814.00)
Payments for investments	(42,131.00)	(47,892.00)
Payments for other current assets	(22,071.00)	-
<b>Net cash used in investing activities</b>	<b>(51,108.00)</b>	<b>(28,388.00)</b>
Net increase (decrease) in cash held	(36,599.00)	(117,435.00)
Cash at beginning of financial year	829,185.00	946,620.00
<b>Cash at end of financial year</b>	<b>792,586.00</b>	<b>829,185.00</b>

A complete set of accounts is available on request at the SMRC.



Southern  
Migrant & Refugee Centre

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