



Southern  
Migrant & Refugee  
Centre



2022-23

# Annual Report





The Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre (SMRC) is a for-purpose community-based agency in operation since 1993. We provide services to migrants and refugees living in the southern region of Melbourne, including the local government areas of City of Greater Dandenong, City of Casey, Shire of Cardinia, and surrounding suburbs.

Known for our understanding of diverse cultural groups and our advocacy to protect human rights, SMRC supports the settlement of newly arrived refugees with community-based services for migrants and refugees through in-language social, economic, and health and wellbeing programs.

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# Chair message

**It was pleasing to see us continue to deliver valuable settlement and community services to migrants and refugees, while also undertaking a number of important steps to reposition SMRC for the future. This was achieved against a backdrop of a challenging economic environment and the tail-end impacts of COVID-19.**

The COVID pandemic significantly changed our operating landscape, shifting our service delivery mode, working environment, and the needs of migrant and refugee communities. Working outside business-as-usual also put additional pressure on our operational budget.

In the midst of change and transition, we were pleased to welcome our new CEO Mr. Rakesh Sharma in November 2022. Rakesh is very familiar with SMRC and service delivery in the health sector, and he was able to quickly establish a vibrant and experienced management team. In parallel, we were able to constitute a full Board, bidding farewell to three Board members and welcoming seven new members including six women.

Together, management and the Board were able to drive a transformational SMRC agenda. Our goal was to ensure SMRC is fit for purpose, and our services are evidence-based, demand-driven and sustainable. We have focused on raising the visibility of SMRC, repairing the budget, establishing new strategic partnerships and networks, innovating service delivery, and creating a sustainable funding mechanism.

Along the way we have marked some major milestones, celebrating our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the Victorian Parliament house with our partners, volunteers, funding agencies and stakeholders. We are looking forward to continuing the celebrations with our Unity in Diversity Festival that will showcase and celebrate the vibrant and

multicultural community here in Melbourne's southeast. Operationally we have created more robust and transparent governance, systems, policies and processes; strengthened relationships between Board, management, staff and volunteers; and reviewed and rationalised existing service contracts. ISO 9001 accreditation has been renewed. Development of ICT Strategy and Resources Mobilization Strategy are in progress.

While much has been achieved this past year, our task is not complete. We are currently planning to undertake a comprehensive client survey and a programmatic review to keep our strategy evergreen and services needs-based. We are confident all of these efforts will contribute to the enhanced effectiveness, efficiency, impact, accountability, transparency and long-term sustainability of SMRC.

None of this would be possible without the support, dedication, commitment and hard work of individuals and partner organisations. This includes my fellow board members, funders, various government agencies, collaborators, and other stakeholders who have tirelessly supported SMRC. A very special thank you to the management team, staff and volunteers for their dedication and commitment to upholding our values and living our mission. With your continuous support, SMRC can face the future with confidence and march towards its vision - migrants and refugees enabled to achieve their goals and aspirations.



**Ponniah Anandajayasekeram**  
Chairperson



# CEO message

**It is a great pleasure to share the following report on SMRC's activities for the financial period 2022-23.**

The theme of this year's report is Unity in Diversity. Never has an organisation embodied this theme in my opinion more so than SMRC. With our 250+ staff and volunteers fluent in more than 55 languages and our clients hailing from across the globe, SMRC is an organisation truly reflective of the communities in which we work.

This year has brought with it much hope and optimism as we saw the tail-end of COVID-19 restrictions and in the most part the resumption of face-to-face service delivery and engagement with our partners and key stakeholders. It was great to get back out in the community and our teams made the most of the opportunity to connect, attending more than 20 events, festivals and expos held throughout the year. It was wonderful to see the many social group activities held across the region by our health and wellbeing team.

We resumed driving classes for our driving program participants, our holiday programs and homework club sessions are back to bursting at the seams, and our educators were pleased to be back face-to-face with students, with more than 230 participants in our training programs. SMRC continues its commitment to holistic service provision, and we've been pleased to be able to continue to meet a range of needs in the settlement, health and wellbeing and aged care space. Our committed teams delivered 134,000 + hours of service delivery across 31 programs and through our social enterprises over the course of the year.

This year has also marked SMRC's 30th year of operation. SMRC maintains at its core today the very same vision as that of the organisation's founders - *enabling refugees and migrants to achieve their goals and aspirations*. It's been a joy to reflect upon the many stories of the individuals who have moved through

this organisation as clients and staff over the years, and the achievements they have gone on to accomplish. Our 30th anniversary event at Victoria's Parliament House was a great success, and it was wonderful to meet face-to-face with our esteemed Members of Parliament and representatives from more than 50 service organisations.

Behind the service line at SMRC, our focus has remained on innovation and strengthening the organisation's foundation through systems and integration improvements, further enhancing our client management system to ensure robust data and an improved client journey, and strengthening our quality and risk frameworks, putting us in good stead to achieve excellence in our service delivery now and into the future.

We continue our commitment to putting the client voice at the centre of what we do at SMRC. We've revitalised consumer advisory groups, we're trialling improved client surveys across our programs, we have done much work to streamline and improve our enquiry and intake processes, we're learning and building from co-design activities, and we are actively engaging with agencies and services to enable the delivery of wrap around services that are relevant and impactful.

It has been a pleasure working with the SMRC Board and I thank them for their support. Thank you to our staff, volunteers, funders and partners for their continued commitment to delivering services that are innovative and inclusive. And finally, my heartfelt thanks to our clients for placing their trust in SMRC on their journey to a healthy and happy life.



**Rakesh Sharma**  
CEO





# Our snapshot



**151**  
staff



**130**  
volunteers




**57**  
languages spoken by staff and volunteers




**31**  
funded programs across five areas:

- community capacity building
- family support
- health and wellbeing
- settlement
- training and support

### Business improvements




Achieved ISO 9001 Accreditation




Completed suite of improvements to client data management system




Updated and improved client survey across all programs




Improved client experience through roll out of centralized call flow process across the business



Transitioned IT function in-house



Upgraded quality management system with a particular emphasis on Aged Care Standards



Expanded consumer advisory groups to support additional programs



Re-established regular newsletter to subscribers

# Our impact



**7,462 hrs**  
of support delivered to **252 carers and care recipients**



**112**  
participants received 290 hours of homework support from **16 volunteer tutors**



**1106**  
clients supported to settle in Australia



**68,465 hrs**  
of social activity and exercise support delivered to **593 people**



**2,683 hrs**  
of student contact hours across **8 training courses**



**145**  
people connected with a volunteer through more than **4,000 hours of face-to-face and virtual visits**



**91**  
people accessed family support services



**65**  
Diverse Care Workers provided **40,660 hours of in-home support**



**932**  
clients were better able to navigate aged care and general services with advocacy and support provided,  
**Under 65 years: 1,089 hours**    **Over 65 years: 1,374**



**2,845 hrs**  
of client attendance over **76 Learning Space classes**





# 30 years of celebrating diversity

**2023 marks 30 years of operations for the Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre. The Southeastern Region Migrant Resource Centre, later to be changed to Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre was born from an idea formed by a small group of migrants who felt strongly that the southeast area of Melbourne needed an organisation to advocate on behalf of and provide services to refugees and migrants.**

Over 30 years, SMRC has helped thousands of migrants and refugees from across the world successfully transition to life in Australia. Our

programs are designed to build confidence and self-esteem, gain independence, and establish a sense of belonging, whilst maintaining connection to culture and faith and gaining recognition for existing strengths, experience and skills.

Despite its growth, SMRC maintains at its core today the very same vision as that of the organisation's founders – enabling refugees and migrants to achieve their goals and aspirations.

SMRC delivers on this vision with support from its members, supporters, partners, service agencies and funding bodies.

Acknowledging 30 years of service this year has given us the opportunity to pause, reflect back on the past, and to celebrate our achievements as an organisation as well as the incredible achievements of the individuals who have trusted us to support them on their journey to a fulfilling life.

## Unity in Diversity Festival re-ignited

SMRC commenced planning its Unity in Diversity Festival, which will make a return in late 2023.

Previously held in 2018 and 2019, the festival promotes and celebrates diversity in all its forms, with a particular emphasis on the strengths and contributions that migrants and refugees have brought to the region. Providing a smorgasbord of customs, traditions, experiences, knowledge, skills and stories, the event will be held on Sunday 22 October and will feature music and performances on stage, sports demonstrations, art and craft activities, cultural food demonstrations, a cultural village to explore, and access to more than 50 local service providers and businesses.



## Marking 30 years through stories of freedom and hope

SMRC hosted an event at Victoria's Parliament House to both acknowledge and celebrate our achievements and the impact SMRC services have had within the community. We also used the opportunity to thank our many partners, funders and supporters who have walked the path alongside us. Held prior to and in line with this year's Refugee Week theme of Finding Freedom, the event featured and celebrated strength, resilience and pride through the sharing of stories of SMRC clients, staff and volunteers.

More than 115 people joined us on the day, with representation from both State and Federal Members of Parliament, and attendance from representatives of 54 organisations, in addition to SMRC clients, staff, Board members and volunteers.



## Fatima Saramed

This year's Annual Report design features commissioned paintings from Fatima Saramed. Fatima submitted an entry into the annual Youth Arts & Literature Prize and the team was immediately impressed by her talent.

SMRC is honoured to support young artists like Fatima to share their work and inspiration with the community. This beautiful acrylic paint on canvas is just a glimpse into her artistry and the different mediums and styles that Fatima explores to express herself.

"I started painting when I felt lonely. Painting gives me the feeling of being alive, and this work is my own creativity. For me, colour and painting mean calm, especially this work. I have painted this on behalf of all Afghan girls who cannot study."

– Fatima Saramed



'Nature', 2023





# Unity in Diversity

Difference enriches our human experience. Uniting to understand and celebrate our different cultures, traditions and language challenges our thinking, improves the connections we have with each other, and contributes to stronger and more peaceful communities.

Unity in Diversity is not a new theme for SMRC. Embracing difference across culture, language, custom and tradition is in our DNA.

With 2023 marking 30 years of operations for SMRC, it's the theme we've chosen to help us celebrate and showcase the rich experience, skills, strengths, and contributions that migrants and refugees have and continue to bring to our region.

And it's the theme of this year's annual report. Join with us in celebrating the richness of our diversity, and what we can achieve when we come together as one.

## Our services

### Community Capacity Building

Strategic Partnerships Program  
Multicultural Community Engagement Network

### Diverse Care™

#### Family Support

CALD Community Engagement Project (The Embrace Project)  
Chay Khana Men's Group  
Family Support Program  
Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)  
Homework Support Program (STAR Club)  
Learn and Grow Program

### Health and Wellbeing

Specialised Support Services  
Carers Respite  
Community Visitors Scheme

Dance Up!  
Domestic Assistance  
Exercise Programs  
Social Support Individual  
Hive Community Garden  
Centre-Based Respite  
Social Support Groups  
Support for Carers

### Settlement

Access Point and Settlement Casework  
Citizenship Classes  
Learning Space  
Youth Education, Case Management & Employment Support

### Training and Employment

Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE)  
Bicultural Worker Service  
Employment Xchange





# Family Support

Family support programs for 2022-23 focused on providing culturally appropriate and tailored services that were supportive and collaborative. Families and children were brought together to learn, and clients were empowered with information that was responsive to their needs, wellbeing and life goals.



**114**  
Homework Support  
Club sessions  
delivered



**37**  
Chay Khana  
sessions  
delivered to  
**24 clients**



**59**  
information  
workshops  
delivered to  
**100 women**



**60+**  
families received  
education  
support from  
**6 tutors**



**10**  
Holiday  
Programs  
delivered

## Suicide Prevention Podcast

The Suicide Prevention Capacity Building Initiative in partnership with Better Place Australia developed an in-language podcast named 'Healthy Mind, Healthy Life'. The podcast was designed to tackle mental health and wellbeing issues in a culturally-sensitive way for people from Afghanistan as they settle into life in Australia. The podcast's first six episodes were delivered in Dari and feature a wide spectrum of representatives from across the community, including community leaders and role models, psychologists, religious scholars and community workers.

## Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)



With the excitement of bringing back in-person family gatherings and graduation in full swing, a number of families graduated from the HIPPY program whilst some new families and trained tutors welcomed extra funding and a new curriculum. Family Gatherings at community locations provided an enriched environment for learning together and building the confidence of the child.



The Sister's Circle group at a Mother's Day outing.

## Learn and Grow

SMRC's Learn and Grow Program offered workshops, outings and information sessions designed to empower women by developing their knowledge of local support services in a safe and inclusive space through the Afghan Sister's Circle. Topics responded to the needs and interests of the women and covered financial literacy, health and wellbeing, emergency services, legal services and domestic family violence.

*"I feel more included and part of something, these group/classes provide me with an opportunity to get out of the house and also feel more in control of my life."*

– Learn and Grow program participant

## The Embrace Project

The Embrace Multicultural Mental Health Project is a CALD Community Engagement Project funded by Mental Health Australia. SMRC has been funded to deliver the Embrace Project with the aim of identifying and developing tailored responses to mental health issues within the Rohingya community in Melbourne. SMRC has worked closely with the Rohingya community to identify and co-design solutions addressing mental health issues affecting the community. The project aims to promote mental health awareness, build capacity and resilience, and decrease stigma through community engagement with stakeholders from the Rohingya community.



**2 Rohingya**  
bicultural workers  
recruited



**28 participants**  
across 3 focus  
groups



**7 agencies**  
engaged in an  
agency working  
group



**88 Rohingya**  
community members  
attended 2 visa  
and mental health  
information sessions



# Health and Wellbeing

SMRC provides a wide range of health and wellbeing activities to people from all ages and cultures. We apply a person-centred approach to our service delivery, with programs designed in a way that recognises an individual's strengths and ensures services are built on existing capabilities, in consultation with our clients.



**36**

languages spoken by clients



**358**

clients attended 18 social support groups



**75,000hrs+**

of health and wellbeing supports accessed by clients



**58**

countries of birth represented across our client groups



**145**

people connected with a volunteer through more than 4,000 hours of face-to-face and virtual visits



**932**

clients were better able to navigate aged care and health services through advocacy and support

## Chinese Social Support Group

We are a group of new migrants from different parts of China. With the management of Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre, every Monday we have safe and interesting activities in Springvale Community Centre. We do fitness exercise, mahjong, table tennis, playing cards and other games, as well as delicious food. Everyone loves to share happiness and help each other.

Every four weeks we go on an outing to Melbourne's major parks, famous scenic spots to visit and experience hundreds of years of customs and characteristics. The staff will always tell us; 'safety first'. We will also help other friends with walking frames.

Every Monday morning, everyone of us will get up early and wait at the door with eagerness and expectation. There is a special bus coming to pick us up to take us to the activity centre. We wait at the door every Monday, looking forward to the arrival of the driver. We all like these activities so much.

Some of us, after participating in activities, our legs become stronger than before. We have word games, which is called 'brain gym'.

Some of us are still in the pain of losing loved ones. The group always tries to send warmth, encourage them to quickly walk out of the shadows and start life again. We hope the program will make them feel better.

For Mother's Day, the men's group made a big painting for us. We were happy. There are many friends here who like to grow vegetables and flowers. We help each other exchange seedlings and seeds and share the experience of planting vegetables and flowers.

– Collectively written by participants of SMRC's Chinese Social Support Group



## SMRC STORIES:

### Jagdeep – the Hive Community Garden

Born and raised in India, Jagdeep migrated to Australia in 2008 at the age of 50. Having both children living in Australia meant regular visits by Jagdeep and his wife, during which they saw for themselves Australia's natural beauty, good lifestyle, clean environment, good government and a quality healthcare system. He was also taken by the Australian people.

"I admire the honesty and integrity of Australians and their willingness to abide by rules and regulations," Jagdeep says. "Australians also have a great empathy and respect for people from a different background."

A regular participant of SMRC's Hive Community Garden at Braeside, Jagdeep understands the important role maintaining strong social connections has for our health and wellbeing. He currently dedicates much of his time to Compassionate Hands, a program he established during COVID to address the sense of isolation many in his community were feeling. Established with 28 people in the group, Compassionate Hands now boasts a 225 person membership and includes outings, access to English classes and other activities for people newly arrived to Australia.

Jagdeep continues to enjoy life in Australia. "Melbourne is the most livable city in the world," he says. "There is ample opportunity here, the sky's the limit."





Creative Minds participant Quan-Hung taking part in still life drawing activities.

## Creative Minds

SMRC's Creative Minds Program is a fortnightly program delivered as part of SMRC's Social Support Group with funding from the Department of Health and Aged Care. The program saw 8 clients participating in 380 hours of service of a variety of art activities over the reporting period. Participants created impressive painted masterpieces with acrylic and watercolour paints, and intricate sketches with charcoal, pastels and pencil. Crafting activities are also popular with the group, with participants eager to take home and share their creations with loved ones.



## Positive Ageing

The Positive Ageing program is an 11-week program designed to support seniors over 65 within the Dandenong, Cardinia, Casey, and Kingston areas. The program offers strength training sessions with a fitness instructor, access to fully equipped gyms, and warm water exercise programs. These programs provide a variety of physical activities to suit the different needs of individuals. Participants can access an assessment with an exercise physiologist who creates tailored exercise care plans based on the needs and goals of the individual. Guided by wellness and reablement approaches, the exercise programs focus on creating opportunities for individuals to increase their independence and recover from injuries or illnesses, as well as providing preventative approaches to reducing risk of disease and improving mental health and wellbeing. SMRC supported 10 exercise groups over the year, with 235 clients supported to improve their fitness, health and wellbeing.

## Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme

SMRC was successful in its application for funding to deliver the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS), a new and revised version of the Community Visitors Scheme (CVS). SMRC has delivered the Community Visitors Scheme for more than a decade and we're thrilled to be able to provide even more meaningful social connections to older people at risk of social isolation in the community and aged care facilities. Funding from the Department of Health and Aged Care was announced in April 2023, with the ACVVS to launch 1 July 2023. The funding will support a larger program than our previous CVS program, and SMRC commenced the process of restructuring internally to form its new Aged Care Volunteer Resource Management (VRM) team, ready to recruit more bilingual volunteers than ever to support the demand for the service.



Volunteers and SMRC coordinator celebrating Christmas in July

## Supporting Carers

SMRC is a leading provider of carer support services for carers and care recipients from a culturally and linguistically diverse background. Our Support for Carers program and Centre-based Respite program are designed not only to assist carers to access the resources they need, but to enable them to enjoy their lives outside of their caring role. We do this by supporting carers to take a break from their caring role and connecting them with other carers to share their experiences and form supportive friendships. Additionally, SMRC has an aged care and carers consumer advisory group.

Throughout the year carers participated in information and education group sessions that focussed on self-care, living with dementia, Will writing, information about a Power of Attorney, and an information session delivered by a representative of Ethnic Cultural Communities Victoria, who spoke about Elder Abuse.

SMRC ran several group counselling and peer support sessions over the period, including the launch of an art therapy group, during which participants produced a colourful canvas.

**"During our counselling sessions I have learned so much, not only about myself, but also about boundaries, decision making and how to set up some health goals for myself."**

– Support for Carers program participant

Carers participated in 12 social outings ranging from a high tea celebration and lunch at a local hotel, to a visit to Melbourne Zoo, a visit to a berry farm for some berry picking, and a trip to Phillip Island to visit the Koala Conservatory.



**"What a wonderful day to be able to come with my mother. We enjoyed the walk and meeting other carers."**  
– Support for Carers program participant

## SMRC STORIES:

### Randa and Mona – Carer's Support Program



Randa and Mona have both been participants in SMRC's Carers Program and both are members of a local Arabic Women's Group.

Randa has been attending the program on and off since the 1990s. The Carer's program helped her through the illness of one of her children and she currently attends as a carer for her husband. Mona joined the program when she began caring for her husband.

Randa says she loves attending the program. "I love to come to see everyone here. They give us information that is beneficial to everyone."

"The best piece of advice I've received through the program is to think about myself before I think of others because I can't help anyone if I'm not ok."



**2,566hrs**  
of centre-based  
respite accessed by  
**22 care  
recipients**



**3,039hrs**  
of carer support  
accessed by  
**151 cares and  
79 care recipients**





# Settlement

Client Nusrat enjoying the Social Sewing class.

The demand for SMRC's settlement supports for newly arrived humanitarian entrants and other migrants continue to rise throughout the period. We saw a rise in case management and a need for wrap around supports as large numbers of individuals completed the Humanitarian Support Program and commenced their journey through the Settlement and Engagement Transition Support Program. By providing internal and external referral pathways, clients were supported through a needs-based approach during a critical settlement period.



**30**

clients worked toward achieving their drivers' licence through SMRC's driving programs



**17**

participants from SMRC's driving program gained their probationary licence



**2,485hrs**

of client attendance in SMRC's Learning Space



**16**

clients obtained their citizenship following citizenship classes



**260**

intake sessions held at Dandenong Head Office and Hampton Park Secondary College



**860**

people assisted with case management



**137**

clients acquired new skills through attendance at 2,485 hours of learning space classes



SMRC's Youth Advisory Group at a meeting.

## Youth Advisory Group

SMRC's Youth Advisory Group (YAG) brings together passionate young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who wish to develop their leadership skills, provide advice on SMRC programs impacting young people, and engage in community development projects. The YAG provides invaluable suggestions and advice that ensures SMRC youth programs are relevant, efficient and impactful. Guest speakers from a variety of organisations provide training and information on issues of importance to the young people such as storytelling for leadership, legal rights for young people and affirmative consent.

### SMRC STORIES:

#### Laila - Settlement Services

Laila has lived in Australia for a year following her family's move from Iran, where they spent 24 years after leaving Afghanistan due to war and the insecurity it brought for her husband and father. "When, I arrived here, I discovered many differences from what I had heard. We had heard different things, so I was surprised by how pleasant it is here. It is comfortable here, and the people are very kind, which is what surprised me."



Laila and her family have received support through the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support Program at SMRC. Laila has attended English classes, where she says she has gone from knowing no English to now knowing a little, she has been a part of SMRC's Afghan Sister's Circle and successfully achieved her Learner's Permit with the support of the SMRC Driving Program.



### SMRC STORIES:

#### Rahmat - STAR Homework Club

Rahmat was 12 when he moved with his family to Australia from Afghanistan via Pakistan. While life in Afghanistan with his family was simple, safety was a persistent concern. Rahmat's father travelled to Australia before the rest of the family. Whenever Rahmat spoke by phone to his father, he would ask a hundred different questions about Australia. His father's response was always the same. He'd smile and simply say, "It's better here than there".

"I wouldn't believe him," Rahmat says. "The place I grew up in, it was familiar. I knew it. But he would always say, 'you will like it here. You can do whatever you want here.' And I couldn't believe it."

Rahmat says his father was right. "It was safer. And I could study. I'm doing a double degree. My own sister is captain of her high school. I'm really proud of her. For a girl who wasn't allowed to be educated, to become captain of her school is quite an achievement. We've been able to achieve what my parents and ancestors only dreamed of."

Rahmat joined SMRC's Homework Club when he was in Year Eight for some extra support with his studies. Seven and a half years later Rahmat is studying a Bachelor of Business/Bachelor of Law at university. He continues to pop into the Homework Club to encourage the students studying there and remains connected with SMRC staff.





# Training and Employment

Students in an ACFE English class

SMRC's Training and Employment Services continued to support and build the capacity of migrants and refugees to gain and sustain employment. The team focused on empowering clients to achieve their goals and aspirations by listening to their needs and strengthening training and employment pathways and networks.



**10**  
industry employers engaged with 7 vacancies filled



**1,847hrs**  
of Bicultural Services contracted across 512 shifts



**22**  
Bicultural Workers employed



**71**  
clients received one-on-one employment support



**231**  
training course enrolments received



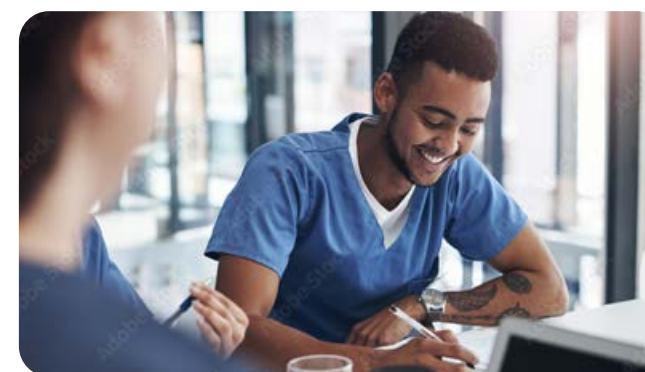
**2,683hrs**  
of training delivered across 8 courses



SMRC's Rohingya bicultural worker, Tin Tin May (left) with community members during a focus group

## Bicultural Services

Bicultural workers developed their consulting and co-designing skills through employment opportunities, and we saw an increased demand for bicultural worker support in the areas of mental health and family violence. Burmese, Chin, Afghan and Ukraine workers completed a Family Violence project model to be used for the innovative and culturally appropriate delivery of family violence information and resources.



## Employment Xchange

SMRC's Employment Xchange supported many clients with higher qualifications such as doctors, dentists and engineers to find suitable employment through recognition of their international qualifications in Australia. SMRC continued to engage with employers and organisations to build a base of referral pathways and relevant vacancies for our clients, which saw seven clients gain fulltime employment.



## Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Courses

ACFE courses continued to be informed by need and requests of clients to support their individual strengths and goals. Improving digital skills specifically to support education and employment prospects and everyday life skills grew in popularity. Courses also focused on improving reading and writing English and applying learned English skills to conversational settings out in community hotspots, such as supermarkets and libraries.



ACFE student Nika (centre) and ACFE tutor Roudaina (L) after an information session from The Water Well Project.





# Diverse Care

Diverse Care's Coordination Team

**Demand for culturally sensitive and in-language in-home support remained throughout the period despite a reduction in health and in-home care workers across the sector due to COVID-19.**

SMRC delivered a proactive recruitment campaign that assisted us to maintain our worker numbers and the languages required to meet the demand we receive through Diverse Care, our multicultural labour hire service.

We ensured our systems were fit for purpose to support the significant changes made to the Social, Community, Home care and Disability Services Award (SCHADs) within the period, and we continued to improve integration between finance and client management systems to ensure an improved experience for our clients.

Our dedicated Diverse Care workers assisted more than 340 clients on behalf of 51 Home Care Package Providers.



**20,210**

services delivered to 51 Home Care Package providers



**40,660hrs**

of home care provided



**26**

languages and dialects spoken



**341**

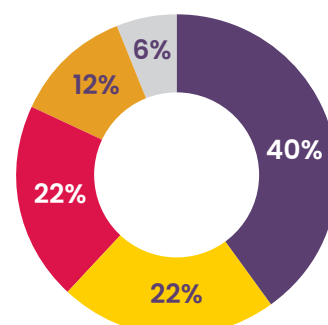
clients supported



**64**

suburbs received Diverse Care services

## Diverse Care services



- Personal care 40%
- Respite care 22%
- Home care 22%
- Personal Transport 12%
- Other 6%





SMRC staff with our smoothie bike at Anti-Poverty Week Event



# Out in the community

## Community Events

Teams attended more than 20 community events in the local areas of City of Greater Dandenong, City of Casey and Cardinia Shire through invitations from key stakeholders, partners and networks. Events included employment and education expos, multicultural celebrations, family fun days, networking events, health and wellbeing festivals, youth activities and volunteer expos. Staff always have a great time at these events, which offer the opportunity to connect with the community and share relevant SMRC support services through engaging stalls and activities such as our famous smoothie bike.

Top: The Health and Wellbeing team recruiting volunteers at an expo; Bottom left: SMRC staff member Mirweis speaking at the City of Greater Dandenong Refugee Week event; Circle: Be Well, Stay Well event with staff from The Hive Garden



## Strategic Partnerships Program

SMRC continued to deliver the Strategic Partnerships Program (SPP) in partnership with South East Community Links. A common theme for the program this year was support for health and wellbeing focused programs. Programs and events that addressed barriers to and provided opportunities for community members to be involved in social sport and physical activities featured heavily, with women's yoga, a multicultural dance group, social cricket tournaments, and a water safety-themed beach excursion receiving strong attendance.



**400+**  
attendees  
across 14 SMRC  
supported  
events



**19**  
community  
groups and  
organisations  
supported



**793**  
people supported  
through 19  
multicultural  
programs



# Our Strategy

## Our vision

**Migrants and refugees are enabled to achieve their goals and aspirations.**

## Our purpose

**We support and empower migrants and refugees through our delivery of programs that are innovative, inclusive and impactful.**

## Our values

### Integrity

We are open, honest and transparent and consistently strive to always do the right thing.

### Compassion

We are inclusive and employ empathy, kindness and a commitment to treating others as equals in all we do.

### Accountability

We are individually and collectively responsible and hold each other and ourselves to account for our decisions, actions, performance and behaviour.

### Respect

We embrace diversity, and we respect and value the rights, strengths, opinions and experiences of the individuals and communities with whom we work.

### Excellence

We set and achieve ambitious goals and we take pride in the delivery of high-quality services that have a positive impact.



## Progress against our Annual Plan

SMRC commenced work against its Strategy 2026 goals throughout the reporting period. Our annual plan priorities and key achievements against these priorities for FY23 are included below.

**Goal 1:**  
**Improve the lives of refugees and migrants by delivering evidence-based services that are measurable**

**Objective 1.1:** We are increasingly co-designing new programs with our clients to ensure fit for purpose solutions

- Consumer feedback mechanisms strengthened through enhanced supports for youth advisory group and re-establishment of aged care and carers advisory groups.
- Active engagement with community leaders to better identify and support identified needs.
- Enhanced co-design capability through delivery of Embrace mental health project alongside members of the Rohingya community.

**Objective 1.2:** Data and insights are guiding our programming decisions through formalized needs assessments and an organisation-wide impact framework that states and helps us to monitor the outcomes we are seeking

- Improvements made to settlement assessment process.
- Work continued on improving integrity of client data and use of data.

**Objective 1.3:** We have one fully integrated and effective intake, assessment and referral system (no wrong door) operating across the organisation

- Centralised call flow process rolled out across the organisation.
- Implemented automated visitor check in process.
- Work underway to better simplify and centralise intake process across teams.



### Goal 2:

**Deliver high standards of quality, safety and excellence in all areas of our work.**

**Objective 2.1:** We are meeting all measures of excellence as determined by people's experience of our services and programs and consumer-reported outcomes as part of our Impact Framework

- Updated cross-program consumer survey trial conducted.
- Improvements made to client feedback and complaints process.



### Goal 3:

**Maintain a sustainable and accountable organisation through strong and robust governance.**

**Objective 3.4:** Our systems are integrated, easy to use and efficient

- Significant improvements to client management system achieved through program fixes.
- Conducted review of finance, HR and quality systems.
- Achieved cost savings through transition of IT function in-house.



### Goal 4:

**Drive sustainable growth by anticipating and responding to opportunities that will deepen and extend our impact.**

**Objective 4.3:** We are leveraging opportunities for growth by proactively establishing formal strategic partnerships on the basis of our Stakeholder Engagement Plan

- New partnerships established to support impactful interventions within the mental health space.
- Partnership established to provide financial literacy supports to carers and carer recipients.
- Partnerships in development to further increase service delivery footprint.



# Acknowledgements

**SMRC wishes to thank the following organisations for their generous financial contributions that allow us to deliver our programs.**

**Funders**

Alcohol and Drug Foundation  
Australian Communities Foundation  
Better Place Australia  
Brotherhood of St. Lawrence  
City of Casey  
City of Greater Dandenong  
Department of Education and Training  
Department of Health and Aged Care  
Department of Home Affairs  
Department of Social Services  
Enliven Victoria  
Fairness Fund  
Federation of Ethnic Community Councils of Australia  
Mental Health Australia  
Reid Malley Foundation  
Street Smart Australia  
Sunning Hill Fund  
Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing  
Victorian Department of Health  
Victorian Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions  
Uniting (Victoria and Tasmania)

**Supporters**

Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE)  
Afghan Australian Initiative Incorporation  
African Women's & Families Network (AWAFN)  
Aged Care Assessment Services Kingston  
Alfred Health Aligned Leisure Cardinia  
Alkira Secondary College  
All Nations Social Sports Association (ANSSA)  
Ambulance Victoria  
AMES Australia  
Anglicare Parentzone  
Association of Hazaras in Victoria  
AtWork Employment Services  
Australian Childhood Foundation

Australian Vietnamese Women's Association  
Bakhtar Cultural Association  
Baran Club  
Berwick Secondary College  
Better Health Network  
Biserica Penticostala Romana Filadelfia  
Bk2 Basics Emergency Food Relief  
Cambodian Association of Victoria  
Cambodian Australian Christian Church  
Cambodian Buddhist Association of Victoria  
Cambodian Community Welfare Centre  
Campbell Page Careers Industry  
Catholic Care  
Council of Australia Carers of Africa  
Cardinia Interfaith Network  
Cardinia Shire Council  
Carer Gateway  
Carers Victoria  
Casey North Community Information  
Centre for Cultural Diversity & Ageing  
Centre for Multicultural Youth  
Child Wise  
Chisholm Institute  
City of Frankston  
City of Greater Dandenong  
Gamechange Project  
City of Knox  
City of Kingston  
City of Monash  
Compassionate Hands Inc  
Connections Art Space  
Courtenay Gardens Primary School  
Council of the Ageing Vic (COTA)  
Cranbourne West Community Hub  
Dandenong High School  
Dandenong Interfaith Network  
Dandenong Neighbourhood House  
Department of Justice and Community Safety  
Doveton Neighbourhood Learning Centre  
Doveton Secondary College  
EACH  
Ermha365 Dandenong  
Ermha365 Pakenham  
Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria  
Family Life  
Federation of South Sudanese in Victoria  
First Romanian Baptist Church  
Foundation House  
Fronditha Care  
Genesis Fitness Dandenong  
Good Shephard  
Greater Dandenong Volunteer Resource Service

Hallam Senior College  
Hampton Park Community House  
Hampton Park Secondary College  
Headspace  
Indonesian Women's Friendship Network  
Lao Buddhist Temple  
Like Our Own Mornington  
Living and Learning Pakenham  
Lyndhurst Secondary College  
Melbourne City Football Club  
Mental Health Association  
Migrant Information Centre  
Monash Health  
Monash Refugee Health Clinic  
Mt Eliza Aged Care Assessment Services  
Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship  
Multicultural Centre for Womens Health  
Mums Supporting Families in Need  
Muslim Women's Centre  
Myuna Farm  
Noble Park English Language School  
Noble Park Secondary College  
Omid Cultural Association  
Parks Victoria  
Refugee Council of Australia  
Refugee Health Clinic and Refugee Legal  
Regional Assessment Team - Cities of Dandenong, Casey, and Kingston Rowan Park House  
Relationships Australia Victoria  
Services Australia  
Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA)  
Shamama Hazara Association  
South East Community Links (SECL)  
South East Local Learning & Employment Network (SELLEN)  
South Eastern Melbourne Primary Network  
Springvale Neighbourhood Centre  
Springvale Services for Children  
St Francis Xavier College, Noble Park  
Strathaird Primary School  
The Orange Door  
Turkish Seniors Citizen Club - Hampton Park  
VicRoads  
Victorian Afghan Association Network  
Victorian Arabic Social Services  
Victorian Multicultural Commission  
Victoria Police  
Westall Secondary College  
Women's Health in the South East (WHISE)  
YMCA

Our  
governance



# Governance

## Board members

### Executive



**Dr. Ponniah Anandajayasekeram**  
Chairperson



**Abdullahi Aden Ibrahim**  
Secretary



**Jonathan Walker**  
Treasurer



**Wicki Wickiramasingham**  
Deputy Chairperson



**Ismail Demiri**  
Assistant Secretary



**Binita Hada Maskey**  
Assistant Treasurer

### Elected Members



**Abhishek Sharma**



**Hafez Abdul Wahab**



**Ivy Liu**



**Monina Morales**



**Dhileepan Amirthalingam**



**Sivanthi Gurumurothy**



**Dr. Bindiya Sethi**

### Appointed Members

### Outgoing Members

**Helen Horvath**  
**Malik Atif Mahmood**  
**Wudad Salim**  
**Gulghotai Bezhan**



## Management profile



**Rakesh Sharma**  
CEO



**Jacqui Pringle**  
Manager Strategy, Grants and  
Program Development



**Jay Jayashankar**  
Senior Manager  
Corporate Services



**Sylvia Wan**  
Senior Manager Aged Care,  
Carer Support and  
Diverse Care Operations



**Sharon Smith**  
Senior Manager Settlement  
and Diverse Care Contract  
Management



**Patricia Matthes**  
Manager People  
and Culture





# Our financials

# Officer's Report

**Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre Inc.**  
**Officers Declaration**  
**Financial year ended 30 June 2023**

In the officers' opinion:

- the attached financial statements and notes comply with the Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosures, the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 and Victorian legislation the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012;
- the attached financial statements and notes give a true and fair view of the Incorporated Association's financial position as at 30 June 2023 and of its performance for the financial year ended on that date; and
- there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Incorporated Association will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

On behalf of the officers

Dr. Ponniah Anandajayasekeram  
Chairperson

Jonathan Mario Dominic Walker  
Treasurer

Date: 30 October 2023

Dandenong, Victoria



# Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income

For the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
<b>Revenue</b>		
Revenue	\$8,350,484	\$8,918,836
	<b>\$8,350,484</b>	<b>\$8,918,836</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Program related expense	\$869,297	\$814,958
Occupancy expense	\$25,706	\$25,613
Travel and vehicle expense	\$112,468	\$89,316
Employee benefits expense	\$6,683,098	\$7,477,822
Depreciation and amortisation expense	\$208,557	\$232,492
Administration expense	\$413,918	\$415,968
	<b>\$8,313,045</b>	<b>\$9,056,169</b>
<b>(Deficit)/surplus for the year attributed to the members of Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre Inc.</b>	<b>\$37,439</b>	<b>\$(137,333)</b>
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-
<b>Total comprehensive (loss)/income for the year attributable to the members of Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre Inc.</b>	<b>\$37,439</b>	<b>\$(137,333)</b>

# Statement of financial position

For the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current assets</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$1,647,019	\$3,968,722
Trade and other receivables	\$423,059	\$676,222
Inventories	-	\$1,750
Other assets	\$75,691	\$57,134
Financial assets	\$2,500,000	-
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>\$4,645,769</b>	<b>\$4,703,828</b>
<b>Non-current assets</b>		
Right-of-use asset	\$184,275	\$52,870
Plant and equipment	\$47,110	\$122,966
Intangible assets	\$2,008	\$8,177
<b>Total non-current assets</b>	<b>\$233,393</b>	<b>\$184,013</b>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>\$4,879,162</b>	<b>\$4,887,841</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Trade and other payables	\$373,744	\$425,650
Employee benefits	\$867,213	\$944,960
Lease liabilities	\$130,906	\$61,377
Other liabilities	\$341,778	\$397,886
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>\$1,713,641</b>	<b>\$1,829,873</b>
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>		
Employee benefits	\$35,728	\$23,137
Lease liabilities	\$57,524	-
<b>Total non-current liabilities</b>	<b>\$93,252</b>	<b>\$23,137</b>
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>\$1,806,892</b>	<b>\$1,853,010</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>\$3,072,270</b>	<b>\$3,034,831</b>
<b>Equity</b>		
Retained surpluses	\$3,072,270	\$3,034,831
<b>Total equity</b>	<b>\$3,072,270</b>	<b>\$3,034,831</b>



# Statement of changes in equity

For the year ended 30 June 2023

	Retained surpluses	Total equity
<b>Balance at 1 July 2021</b>	\$3,172,164	\$3,172,164
Deficit for the year	\$(137,333)	\$(137,333)
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-
Total comprehensive loss for the year	\$(137,333)	\$(137,333)
<b>Balance at 30 June 2022</b>	<b>\$3,034,831</b>	<b>\$3,034,831</b>
<b>Balance at 1 July 2022</b>		
Surplus for the year	\$37,439	\$37,439
Other comprehensive income for the year	-	-
Total comprehensive loss for the year	\$37,439	\$37,439
<b>Balance at 30 June 2023</b>	<b>\$3,072,270</b>	<b>\$3,072,270</b>

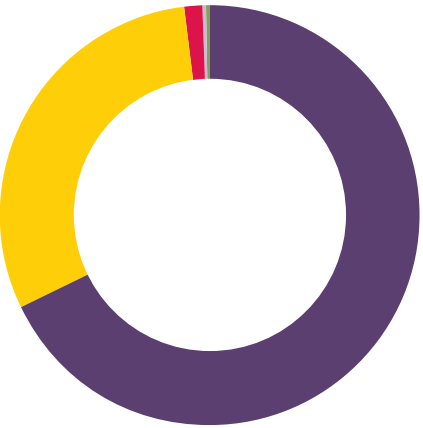
# Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 30 June 2023

	2023	2022
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Grants received (inclusive of GST)	\$9,206,590	\$8,847,835
Payments to suppliers and employees (inclusive of GST)	\$(9,023,654)	\$(9,963,561)
Interest received	\$117,790	\$4,835
Interest paid	\$(4,380)	\$(8,053)
Donations received	\$12,836	\$14,870
<b>Net cash (used in)/from operating activities</b>	<b>\$309,182</b>	<b>\$(1,104,074)</b>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Proceeds for plant and equipment	\$7,974	-
Payments for plant and equipment	\$(5,757)	\$(66)
Investment in other financial assets	(2,500,000)	-
<b>Net cash (used in) investing activities</b>	<b>\$(2,497,783)</b>	<b>\$(66)</b>
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>		
Repayment of lease liabilities	\$(133,102)	\$(129,406)
<b>Net cash used in financing activities</b>	<b>\$(133,102)</b>	<b>\$(129,406)</b>
<b>Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents</b>	<b>\$(2,321,703)</b>	<b>\$(1,233,546)</b>
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of the year	\$3,968,722	\$5,202,268
<b>Cash and cash equivalents at end of the year</b>	<b>\$1,647,019</b>	<b>\$3,968,722</b>

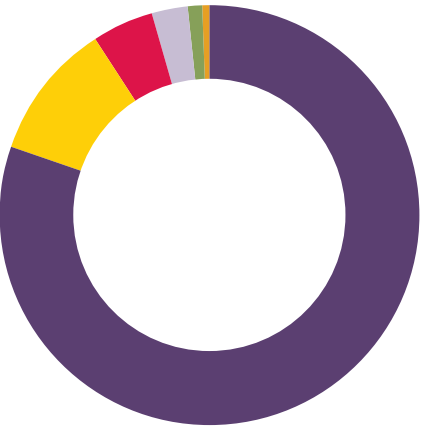


# Financial infographics



## Income

- Grants
- Home Care Services
- Interest
- Donations
- Other

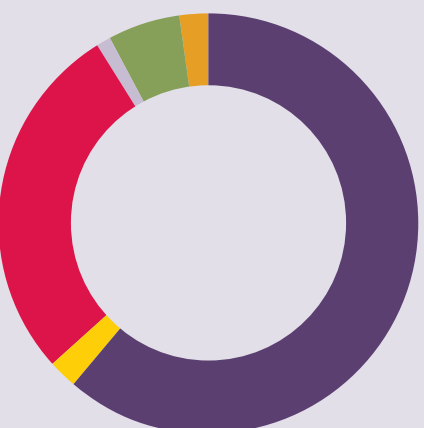


## Expenses

- Employee benefits expense
- Program related expense
- Administration expense
- Depreciation and amortisation expense
- Travel and vehicle expense
- Occupancy expense

## How we spent our grant funding

- Health and Wellbeing programs
- Community Capacity Building
- Settlement Services
- Training and Employment
- Family Support
- Mental Health Support



### RSM Australia Partners

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F +61 (0) 3 9286 8199

[www.rsm.com.au](http://www.rsm.com.au)

## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT To the Members of Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre Inc.

### Opinion

We have audited the financial report of Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre Inc., which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2023, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, the statement of changes in equity and the statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and the declaration by those charged with governance.

In our opinion, the financial report of Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre Inc. has been prepared in accordance with Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, including:

- giving a true and fair view of the registered entity's financial position as at 30 June 2023 and of its financial performance and cash flows for the year ended on that date; and
- complying with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures under AASB 1060 *General Purpose Financial Statements – Simplified Disclosures for For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Tier 2 Entities* and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2022*.

### Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre Inc. in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

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

### Other Information

Those charged with governance are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre Inc.'s annual report for the year ended 30 June 2023, but does not include the financial report and the auditor's report thereon.

Our opinion on the financial report does not cover the other information and accordingly we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial report, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial report or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

## THE POWER OF BEING UNDERSTOOD AUDIT | TAX | CONSULTING

RSM Australia Partners is a member of the RSM network and trades as RSM. RSM is the trading name used by the members of the RSM network. Each member of the RSM network is an independent accounting and consulting firm which practices in its own right. The RSM network is not itself a separate legal entity in any jurisdiction.

RSM Australia Partners ABN 36 965 185 036

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If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

#### Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Report

The Officers of the registered entity are responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures under AASB 1060 *General Purpose Financial Statements – Simplified Disclosures for For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Tier 2 Entities* and the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* (ACNC Act) and for such internal control as the Officers determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, Officers are responsible for assessing Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre Inc.'s ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre Inc. or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the entity's financial reporting process.

#### Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

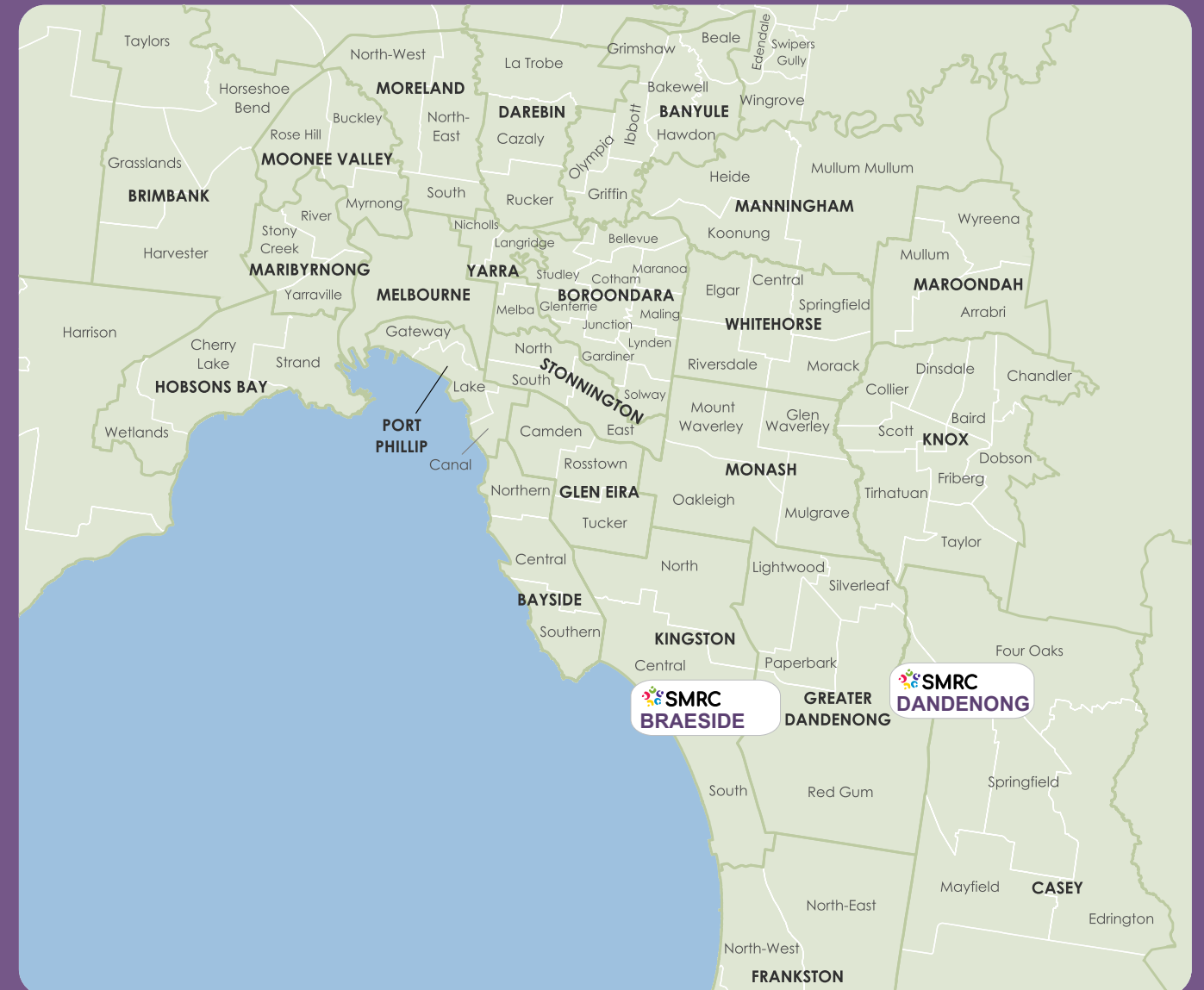
A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial report is located at the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board website at: [http://www.auasb.gov.au/auditors\\_responsibilities/ar4.pdf](http://www.auasb.gov.au/auditors_responsibilities/ar4.pdf). This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Rsm

RSM AUSTRALIA PARTNERS

**K J DUNDON**  
Partner

Dated: 30 October 2023  
Melbourne, Victoria



## Our locations

**SMRC Dandenong**  
39 Clow St  
Dandenong VIC 3175

**The HIVE**  
Braeside Park  
Lower Dandenong Rd  
Braeside VIC 3195





**Southern Migrant & Refugee Centre**

39 Clow St, Dandenong VIC 3175

Ph: (03) 9767 1900

Email: [smrc@smrc.org.au](mailto:smrc@smrc.org.au)

[www.smrc.org.au](http://www.smrc.org.au)

The Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet, and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.