



ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

LODDON CAMPASPE



**MULTICULTURAL
SERVICES**

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ABOUT US

Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services (Multicultural Services) is the Ethnic Communities Council and peak body for multicultural communities in central Victoria.

Multicultural Services is a welcoming not-for-profit organisation that empowers people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to participate fully in Australian society.

By focusing on people's strengths we are able to develop stronger communities, support other service providers and influence decision makers at local, state and national levels.

Multicultural Services' work sits within three program areas: Education, Employment and Training, Community Programs and Arts and Events.

EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

- Employment
- Housing
- English
- Pathways, Social enterprise

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

- Settlement, Engagement and Transition Support (SETS)
- Capacity building with multicultural communities
- Activities to support social cohesion
- Cultural competency training
- Regional development
- COVID relief and recovery

ARTS AND EVENTS

- Zinda Festival
- Art-based projects
- Community cultural events to support social cohesion

OUR MISSION

SUPPORTING MULTICULTURAL
COMMUNITIES, CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

OUR VISION

A VIBRANT, THRIVING AND
MULTICULTURAL CENTRAL VICTORIA



WELCOME FROM OUR CHAIR

Jennifer Lay



I am pleased to present our Annual Report for the financial year ending 2020.

I begin by acknowledging and thanking each Multicultural Services employee, board member, members and volunteers for their invaluable contributions over the last 12 months. Without their efforts and support, we would not be able to assist and empower the culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds we serve in the Loddon Campaspe region.

As the Chair of Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services, I reflect on the amazing progress the organisation has made in 2020, which has included but is not limited to:

- An ongoing responsiveness to the needs of our multicultural community
- Our quick and innovative measures in adapting to a COVID-19 environment
- Creating and deepening partnerships on a local and state level
- Our progressive strategies in communication lines for CALD communities

The work of Multicultural Services would not be possible without the financial assistance of the Federal, State and local governments and generous contributions from a range of organisations.

Also, the staff, volunteers and communities are why this organisation exists. Their dedication and passion are what drives our programs and brings our initiatives to life and what makes me so proud to be a part of Multicultural Services. Our Board are elected members who volunteer their time; our deepest thanks to all for their ongoing time, commitment and support.

I thank outgoing Board members for their commitment and support throughout 2019-20. Particularly, I thank outgoing Chair, Abhishek Awasthi, for his high level of leadership and commitment for the last couple of years. Moustafa Al-Rawi, Khayshie Tilak-Ramesh and Shankar Kasynathan all made valuable contributions over many years and will remain key advocates of Multicultural Services and our endeavours going forward. I sincerely thank you.

On that note, we extend further thanks to the outgoing Executive Officer, Kate McInnes, and Rosita Vincent for her role as Interim Executive Officer. Both should be proud of their contributions in having Multicultural Services grow to deliver the services it does today.

While 2020 has had its changes and challenges with trying to find a COVID-normal, I am so excited for what 2020-21 and beyond holds for Multicultural Services.

Our newly appointed Chief Executive Officer, Sonia Di Mezza, commences in December 2020 and will bring a wealth of human rights, advocacy, settlement and not-for-profit experience with her. We are also delighted to welcome five new Directors to our Board from August 2020, all boasting diverse cultural backgrounds and lived experiences combined with professional expertise. This puts us in a strong position with our strategic vision.

Good governance requires boards to review their strategic plans regularly. In February 2021, the Board along with staff, will develop our next three-year plan for 2021/2024.

I am also pleased to announce that the Board have created a Community Reference Group, with representation by local community leaders, to directly influence and work with the Multicultural Services Board. The aim of the group is to provide community input to the organisational culture, strategic thinking and decision making of Multicultural Services. The reference group enables specific communities to ensure its needs and cultural norms are considered and addressed. It also provides a bridge among the various cultural communities to help integrate their efforts in making the region a more welcoming, inclusive and supportive place for all.

This is the reason Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services exists. We are making headway as a proud peak body in the Loddon Campaspe region for the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria. We are and will keep working until all migrants and refugees feel welcome and empowered to participate fully in Australian society.

Warmest regards,

Jennifer Lay



INTERIM EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Rosita Vincent

This year marked Multicultural Services' 21st birthday, and working to support multicultural communities through the COVID-19 pandemic has made it one of the most challenging years for the organisation, and our communities, so far.

It has been such a privilege to work for Multicultural Services over the last four years, and see our organisation grow with, and learn from, the many thousands of people from migrant and refugee backgrounds who have walked through our doors. As a Mexican Australian, who arrived in Australia at the age of four and grew up in outback Australia, I am deeply committed to supporting migrant and refugee communities to be included, be heard and determine for themselves what they need to thrive in their new home.

The 2019-20 year has been one of change, adaptation and growth. We said goodbye to our much-loved Executive Officer, Kate McInnes, in April 2020, after six years of working for our organisation. Under her leadership, the organisation grew by over 80 per cent, but more importantly, began offering a range of new, vital services to our communities, including the federally-funded settlement program (SETS) and our state-funded employment program (JVEN).

While I will be leaving Multicultural Services at the end of the year, I am deeply proud of the work I, our staff and our volunteer team have undertaken over the last four years and will remain as committed and connected to multicultural communities as always.

From March, our focus has been supporting communities through the COVID-19 pandemic, which has required a huge amount of innovation, adaptation and hard work. This was especially critical during Bendigo's "second wave", which disproportionately effected migrant and refugee communities. Some highlights of this work have included:

- Producing over 49 video and voice messages in nine community languages
- Providing 871 hours of COVID-19 isolation crisis support for people waiting for test results
- Being nominated for a Victorian Multicultural Commission award for our contribution to the management of the COVID-19 outbreak in Bendigo

Despite the challenges we've faced in the 2019-20 year, we have also remained on track to meet our strategic priorities as set out in our Strategic Plan (2018-2021). Key work towards our strategic priorities has included:

- **Working towards financial sustainability:**

In 2019-20 we recorded our highest profit in seven years, as well as securing a number of new funding streams that will mean we will see our highest ever income in the 2020-21 year.

- **Strengthen partnerships and collaborations that support multicultural communities:**

We brokered and developed a number of significant new partnerships, including the Working for Victoria Multicultural Consortium, with 13 partner multicultural organisations and the Care and Food Exchange Partnership with four regional ethnic communities councils.

- **Establish a Multicultural Hub with infrastructure for community cultural expression:**

This year we secured funding for a feasibility study into a multicultural hub, engage Welcoming Australia to lead the study and established a steering committee to oversee this work.

- **Increase our regional footprint across the Loddon Campaspe region:**

During the COVID-19 pandemic we extended critical material aid, food relief and casework support across Loddon, Campaspe and Mount Alexander Shires (in addition to City of Greater Bendigo).

As I reflect on the year that has been, I want to extend my deep gratitude to our partners, staff, and volunteers, as well as the multicultural community leaders we have worked with, particularly throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Your passion, dedication and hard work are transforming our regional and rural communities and it's been an absolute pleasure to contribute my bit to this community centred effort.

Warm regards,

Rosita

MEET OUR TEAM



Rosita Vincent

Interim Executive Officer

Rosita holds a Graduate Diploma of Community Planning and Development from La Trobe University and a Bachelor of Arts from New England University. She has over 12 years' experience working with people from refugee backgrounds, and over 20 years' experience in community development roles. Rosita has worked at Multicultural Services since 2017 as Manager of Community Programs prior to stepping into the Interim Executive Officer role in April 2020. Outside of this role, she is the co-founder of the Old Church on the Hill – a volunteer role. Rose is Mexican-Australian and grew up in Mexico and outback Australia.



Linto Thomas

Interim Manager Community Programs and Community Development Coordinator

Linto holds a Masters Degree in Social Work from Nagpur University, India. He has over 12 years' experience in community development and social work and has spent the last five years specialising in working with asylum seekers and newly arrived refugees, working for some of the leaders in this field including Red Cross and AMES Australia. Linto has worked at Multicultural Services since 2016 and was Coordinator of Settlement Services prior to stepping into the Interim Manager of Community Programs role in April 2020. Linto is originally from India and speaks Malayalee, Hindi and Tamil.



Sylvia Phan

Senior Coordinator Education and Employment Pathways

Sylvia Phan has a Bachelor of Arts and a Masters of Human Resources from the University of New South Wales. Sylvia has worked all over South East Asia and China and started her career as a Human Resource Manager in a publicly listed company overseeing the welfare of 800 workers. Born in Malaysia, she moved to Australia in 2014. Sylvia has worked with Multicultural Services for the past six years as Coordinator of Employment. Sylvia has recently completed a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, and leads the way in delivering significant employment outcomes for multicultural communities in this region.



Bu Gay Pah Thei

Community Development Worker

Bu Gay is a trusted Karen community connector and influencer, and is a valuable part of the Multicultural Services settlement team. Bu Gay has worked at Multicultural Services as a bilingual Community Development Worker with a focus on capacity building, healthy families and employment for the past three years. Prior to this Bu Gay has voluntarily supported her community to settle in Bendigo, completed her schooling and studied a diploma of nursing. Bu Gay is secretary for the Karen Organisation of Bendigo and is currently part of a state wide Open Futures Emerging Leaders program, a six-month program for early career leaders from CALD backgrounds.



Robyn Matthews

English Language Teacher

Robyn has over 15 years' experience teaching English as an Additional Language in Japan, China and Taiwan. She has a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) focusing on linguistics and a TESOL qualification. Robyn is fluent in Japanese where she lived, studied and worked for 11 years. Robyn has been teaching English at Multicultural Services, creating opportunities to bring her experience in gardening, craft and yoga into her lessons. Robyn is passionate about employment pathways for multicultural communities.



Jason Newton

Catering Coordinator

Jase is a qualified chef with over 20 years' experience in the Melbourne hospitality industry. He has experience as a head chef and has worked extensively in both daily service and catering. Jase specialises in locally sourced produce and seasonal cooking, he loves to cook with people from multicultural communities. Jase is our Catering Coordinator and has been developing the Food Safari social enterprise, playing a significant part in our Care and Food Exchange program during COVID-19.



Kelly Phan

Youth Facilitator

Kelly is a Chinese-Malaysian young person who is passionate about engaging young people in community initiatives and decision-making processes. Kelly is currently studying a Bachelor of Laws (Hon) and Arts (Human Rights/International Relations) at Monash University. She hosts her own podcast, The Good Morning Podcast, and is the Marketing and Communications Director for the Young Diplomats Society. In her role at Multicultural Services, Kelly is building the Multicultural Youth Network in Bendigo and is a significant part of our communications team.



Andrea Wolf

Community Development Officer

Andrea is passionate about understanding the lived implications of decision-making and has over seven years' experience in community engagement and customer service roles. Andrea has qualifications in textiles design, environmental humanities and trauma-informed yoga, and is currently undertaking a Fellowship with Democracy in Colour and a Master of Public Policy at RMIT University. Andrea joined Multicultural Services in August and is supporting the regional expansion of our Care and Food Exchange Program and is a vital part of our communications team. Andrea is first generation Australian, whose parents migrated from Mauritius and Germany.



Ahmed Kheradyar

Community Development Officer

Ahmed holds a Doctor of Medicine (MD) degree from Kabul Medical University. With his MD degree verified by Australian Medical Council (AMC), Ahmed is on track to get his full Australian medical registration. He previously worked in the position of Population Health Coordinator for Murray Primary Health Network, conducting research on the health needs of refugee communities across the region. Ahmed joined Multicultural Services in August as part of the settlement support and capacity building programs, working on long-term vision planning for refugee communities which he is strongly connected with. With lived experience from a refugee background, he understands the needs and aspirations of refugee communities, and is fluent in Hazaragi, Dari, and Persian as well as English.



Elisangela Couto

Community Development Officer

Elisangela migrated recently from Mozambique and has a Masters in Community Planning and Development from La Trobe University, with a BA in Tourism Planning and Management. She has worked with communities at various levels for more than 11 years in Mozambique. Elisangela is currently reaching out to grass roots ethnic communities in our region, growing our membership base and supporting our community capacity building program. Elisangela is particularly passionate about community resilience and gender balance, and loves cooking and teaching African dancing.



Leah Macdonald

Office Administrator

Leah holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Bradford and a Masters of Image Studies from the University of Kent and has recently joined Multicultural Services to coordinate our busy office, bringing with her extensive experience in communications and administration. Having been born in Lesotho, raised in the UK and migrated to Australia over 20 years ago, Leah is keen to learn more about the challenges faced by migrants and refugees settling into a new country and to get to know more people from emerging communities in Central Victoria.

Casual staff

We also employ a number of casual staff including:

- Dave Hale
- Farwa Batool
- Dabora Dout
- Maha Sein

HIGHLIGHTS

416

CARE AND FOOD EXCHANGE BOXES

Weekly boxes of fresh produce as well as in-language information resources, delivered to vulnerable community members

26

COVID-19 VIDEOS AND VOICE MESSAGES

In Karen, Hazaragi and Dinka languages, delivered to community members

100

MEALS PREPARED EACH WEEK

During first COVID-19 lockdown, over 650 meals were donated to those in need

20

COMMUNITY MEMBERS GRADUATED FROM OUR HOSPITALITY PRE TRAINING PROGRAM

Plus gained experience in our social enterprise

7

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS WITH KAREN, HAZARA AND SOUTH SUDANESE COMMUNITIES

Including three sessions with young people to understand specific settlement needs

167

COMMUNITY MEMBERS RECEIVED SETTLEMENT SUPPORT

Delivered through 252 casework sessions

10+

10+ PARTICIPANTS OF REGIONAL READY PROGRAM

Enabling and attracting refugees with recognised skills to take up employment in the Loddon Campaspe region

15

KAREN YOUTH ASSISTED IN PRE-APPRENTICESHIP ENGINEERING

Applied Numeracy and Literacy classes taught parallel to TAFE Certificate 2 in Engineering with in language support

37

COMMUNITY MEMBERS RECEIVED TAX-HELP SUPPORT

Assistance to create a MyGov ID and submit free tax returns

22

ONLINE ENGLISH CLASSES

Beginner, intermediate and pre-employment English programs with 20+ lessons to support home learning

585

'STUDY AT HOME' PACKS

Activities and resources sent to over 65 families from migrant and refugee backgrounds supporting intergenerational learning during lockdown

11

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS FOR OUR 'VOICES' ANTI-RACISM CAMPAIGN

Capturing positive stories of the Bendigo refugee experience

16

KAREN FAMILIES ATTENDED A FAMILY CAMP

Including a series of workshops on parenting, connecting to culture and a Dja Dja Wurrung cultural knowledge session

4

LGAS BENEFITED FROM OUR PROGRAMS

Campaspe Shire, Loddon Shire, Mount Alexander Shire and the City of Greater Bendigo

15

YOUNG COMMUNITY LEADERS TRAINED

Understanding challenges in supporting their communities during COVID-19

8

INTERACTIVE WORKSHOPS DELIVERED TO 24 KAREN MOTHERS AND FATHERS

Using our new facilitator's guide, 'Parenting in a New Community: Healthy Parents, Healthy Kids'*

22

MULTICULTURAL SUPPORTED PLAYGROUP SESSIONS

Average of 23 families each week

8

FEAST OF STORIES COMMUNITY DINNERS

Average of 92 participants at each dinner

*with our partners, the Centre for Non-Violence and CCS Family Services

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our 2018-2021 Strategic Plan outlines the three strategic focus areas for Multicultural Services' work over a three year period. Our Strategic Plan will be updated for the following three year period in February 2021.



STRATEGIC GOAL 1

MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES PARTICIPATE, BELONG AND CONTRIBUTE

We will support multicultural communities to settle in our regional communities. We will work to increase their capacity to participate and contribute to all aspects of community life, including employment, education and social participation.



STRATEGIC GOAL 2

MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES ARE UNDERSTOOD, VALUED AND INCLUDED

We will work to encourage everyone to value and celebrate cultural diversity. We will support the whole community to understand that diversity benefits everyone. We will work with community to establish a Multicultural Hub with infrastructure for community cultural expression.



STRATEGIC GOAL 3

LODDON CAMPASPE MULTICULTURAL SERVICES IS A TRUSTED AND CAPABLE LEADER AND COLLABORATOR

We will ensure financial sustainability, strong organisational capability and partnerships to achieve the best outcomes for our communities.



COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN



COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

"Thank you for all you are doing at Multicultural Services. I was very confused about what I wanted to do when I came to Australia. I don't have any qualification or ideas for job career. I have lots of experience working in the kitchen, but I didn't know where to put the skill into. I was very lucky that Multicultural Services has given me the opportunity to work as a food services assistant at the hospital. I am now confident in myself and have found my purpose and work in Australia."

Employment program participant

"I would like to thank the team at Multicultural Services for all their assistance that they have provided to my household during the past month. It has been a difficult period for us all being under self-isolation at our home and hotels, however the meals and foods provided have made it somewhat easier. I also appreciate the calls to check on our welfare and to see whether we needed any assistance. I am grateful and very appreciative for everything the team at Multicultural Services has done for us."

COVID-19 wellbeing support recipient

"I just got the new package today!! Thank you very much, I enjoy doing the activities and my daughter loves the crafts as well! I appreciate it very much."

Mums and Bubs group, Home Learning Support Pack recipient

"All the action and response from Multicultural Services is greatly appreciated. We hope your organisation will continue to thrive and be successful in bettering all interaction with refugee communities in Bendigo."

Malaysian community feedback on COVID-19 response

"Multicultural Services has improved the way they interact with the migrant community of Bendigo through collaboration, having members of the ethnic group being part of their team, either through volunteering or being a staff member. They are also goal orientated, meaning they do their best to improve the lives of all members of the community despite difficult circumstances. For example, during the tough times of Covid 19 restrictions, they are able to continue to work for the benefits of the community to receive help by providing them essential items such as food, advice and connecting members to organisations for job opportunities for when the restrictions are lifted. They are always preparing to benefit all members of the community. The staff members are inclusive, knowledgeable and very passionate in what they want to achieve."

Settlement Program participant

"Compared to when I started working with them, the Engineering students have come so far, they are becoming more and more independent and their understanding of the course has improved a lot."

Bilingual Support Worker for the pre-APP engineering program

"We would like to thank you wholeheartedly for your support. I understand it is your work, but during our stay in Australia we have seen many different people. Practically all of them treated us formally not trying to understand our situation. It was all the same for them what would happen to us. But you were nice, sympathetic and responsive."

An elderly couple on temporary visas

"I want to thank everyone at Multicultural services for doing their best to support the community during COVID-19 and producing video in different languages."

COVID-19 messaging

"The support services offered by Multicultural Services have been an invaluable lifeline for my family and I during this difficult time. As an international student, not being able to access jobkeeper, jobseeker and other forms of support from the government has made the impact of the job crisis and lockdown due to COVID-19 extremely severe on my family."

Care and Food Exchange program recipient - international student

"The information helped to put our minds at ease, helped us to understand and feel more in control. We are thankful that Multicultural Services will still be open for online learning, food share and other support."

COVID-19 information session participant

"I just wanted to say a BIG "thank you" to you for organising assistance from one of the Tax Help Volunteers in completing her tax return. She was more than grateful and very happy as the Tax Help Volunteer was very patient taking her through the online Tax process, step by step. Again, I cannot thank you enough and more than appreciate your help in making this happen."

Relative of Tax Help (Settlement Program) participant

"Local multicultural services have been working incredibly hard throughout this pandemic to provide daily briefings in a variety of ways and languages. While the pandemic challenges us, we need to all be aware of the additional challenges and experiences that some groups face and be responsive to these."

Rebecca Cornish, CEO of Lifeline Central Victoria and Mallee

"The support we had from this program was great... I finally got a job at an architectural firm and am now a member of the Australian Institute of Architects, working on assessing my qualifications, practicing my career and getting my licence. My husband managed to get a job at ANZ bank. We really encourage other migrants to relocate to Bendigo. Although everything seemed very hard in the beginning but with determination and hard work all barriers started to vanish. Being a refugee is not shameful."

Regional Ready employment program participant

LAILA'S STORY

Laila is a youth leader and face of our 2020 Zinda Festival. She advises Multicultural Services and the Multicultural Youth Network on issues that affect young, multicultural Victorians and with the Hazara community, has produced in-language videos and livestreams relating to COVID-19 updates. On September 15, 2020, Laila became an Australian citizen and shared her story about the importance of citizenship to community members from refugee backgrounds.

Laila Hashimi, 25

My name is Laila Hashimi and I am from Afghanistan. I have been in Australia since 2014. I lived in Sydney, Melbourne and then I came to Bendigo last year. When I came here, at first I applied for my permanent residency and then last year, I applied for my citizenship. I took my citizenship test in May this year.

I passed it the first time and then was waiting and waiting and I received the email last week and they said on the 15th of this month, you have a ceremony. I had the ceremony and I was so excited.

When I have the citizenship, I feel comfortable. I am happy and I can study. If you don't have permanent residency, it's difficult to apply and to do courses. Now I have my citizenship, if I want, I can go to uni.

Now I am so excited. I have lots of dreams and lots of dream jobs to do. I feel I'm very close to doing this. I have my citizenship and now I am Australian. When I was a child, I wanted to be a policewoman. I played this game with my friends and still it didn't change my mind. In my country, it is very difficult for women to be police.

When I get my dream job, it will be difficult. English is my second language and I still try to improve my English. I am doing Certificate IV in English.

It is important for every refugee to have citizenship and they feel happy and they feel now they are forever in Australia. They are not worried. Especially for our community, Hazara community, life is difficult for them in Afghanistan. Especially for women. When we live in Australia and we get the citizenship of Australia, we feel very happy. We are safe. No one will tell us to go back to your country. When they get their citizenship like me, they feel happy.



OUR PROGRAMS



Settlement

This year, we provided settlement support through two programs. Our Settlement, Engagement and Transition Support (Settlement Program) provided settlement support to eligible visa holders from refugee and migrant backgrounds. We are delivering the Settlement Program as part of the Regional Multicultural Consortium, made up of Multicultural Services, Ballarat Regional Ethnic Communities Council, Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council and Diversitat. Complementing the Settlement Program, we have continued to provide casework support to asylum seekers and temporary protection visa holders (generally SHEV holders), who are not eligible for this federal support. During the pandemic, we continue to offer casework support over the phone and on other online platforms. The main areas community members are seeking assistance in are COVID-19 information, employment support, completing Centrelink forms, home-based schooling and accessing the health system.

This year we have:

- Provided Settlement support to 167 community members through 252 case work sessions
- Organised seven community consultations with Karen, Hazara and South Sudanese communities. Three consultations were organised with young people to understand their settlement needs
- Provided Tax-Help support to 37 community members to create MyGov ID and submit free tax returns
- Facilitated eight training opportunities in the hospitality industry, reproductive health, gambling awareness and preventing family violence. 87 community members attended these sessions
- Community consultation and COVID-19 response survey: a phone in survey to consult the community about the effects of COVID-19. 25 Community members from three major refugee communities were surveyed
- Casework and COVID-19 crisis support to 47 temporary visa holders. This includes community members seeking asylum, international students, partner visa holders, SHEV holders and community members on other temporary work visas

Care and Food Exchange

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, we have been in the forefront of responding to the needs of migrant and refugee communities. Working closely with volunteers and small migrant and refugee associations, we began the 'Care and Food Exchange', a grass-roots initiative providing in-language and culturally responsive information, support, referrals, welfare checks, online mental health sessions, food relief, and material aid. The Care and Food Exchange became a critical local project during Bendigo's second wave of COVID-19 in July and August 2020, when an outbreak occurred across several migrant and refugee communities linked to local food processing businesses.

This wrap-around service provided:

- 416 Care and food exchange boxes delivered to vulnerable community members. Weekly boxes of fresh produce as well as in-language information resources
- 26 COVID-19 videos and voice messages delivered to community members. In Karen, Hazaragi, and Dinki languages in various social media platforms used by the communities. 11033 views and 123 shares on Facebook.
- 38 community referrals to the settlement program for ongoing case work support
- 323 culturally inclusive meals delivered to temporary visa holders who are not eligible for government payments

Employment

Our Employment Program is made possible through partnerships and collaboration with Jobs Victoria (JVEN) and Regional Ready. Access Australia Group and Multicultural Services continue to have a strong and fruitful relationship. Multicultural Services was given an additional 70 per cent increase on the original outcome and placement targets for the JVEN contract, and has met all targets.

Notable achievements from those placed at work include:

- Moving from casual employment to full time permanent positions
- Recognised as valuable members of staff
- Starting conversations around a career path and in particular the prospects of undertaking a traineeship/apprenticeship with the support of the employer in the area of catering/building

Pre-App Engineering program

This pilot program involved many of our JVEN participants from Karen backgrounds and was a major effort in collaboration involving at least 10 stakeholders, taking six months to plan. The program started in February 2020 and will conclude in December 2020 and includes industry visits. In spite of COVID-19, the program continued via Zoom and we managed to keep participants engaged so that when it was time to return to face-to-face teaching, the transition was smooth. Employers are keen to interview this group of young students when they graduate and to employ those suitable for the manufacturing industry.

Through this program we have assisted 15 Karen youth to study a Certificate 2 in Engineering studies. Numeracy and Literacy classes have been taught in parallel to the regular TAFE classes and student outcome has been overwhelmingly positive.



Regional Ready pilot program

This program piloted and established pathway processes and systems to enable and encourage regional settlement across the Loddon Campaspe region. This project was led and auspiced by Multicultural Services. Partner organisations are the Department of Premier and Cabinet, City of Greater Bendigo, Refugee Talent, Talent Beyond Boundaries, Bendigo Community Health Services, Regional Development Victoria and Spectrum. Closed international borders have impacted the scope of this program.

Key outcomes of the Regional Ready program:

- Four skilled job placements made
- Eight people relocating to Bendigo
- Wrap-around settlement support provided

Families and Youth

This year Multicultural Services continued work with families and youth across a number of projects and programs. This included work around parenting, youth resilience and family violence intervention and prevention.

Highlights this year were:

- Hosting 16 Karen families over a family camp. The camp included a series of workshops on parenting and connecting to culture, as well as a Welcome to Country and cultural knowledge session delivered by Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation
- Using our new facilitator's guide, 'Parenting in a New Community: Healthy Parents, Healthy Kids,' and working with our partners, the Centre for Non-Violence and CCS Family Services, we delivered 8 interactive workshops to 24 Karen mothers and fathers
- Excursion visit to Melbourne Zoo in partnership with CCS Family Services. Attended by 36 Karen and South Sudanese Families



Education

Our English Programs provide flexible, community-based education for individuals who are learning English. We partner with various community organisations and Job Active providers to deliver English classes relevant to students' needs. Classes are pre-accredited and provide pathways for students to achieve their goals: whether that be finding employment, furthering their education or gaining more independence in their daily activities.

At the end of 2019 our White Nile women's group was honoured to be featured in the Woman's Weekly Christmas special!

Due to COVID-19, in March we had to completely redesign the way our English classes were taught. Since that time, every two weeks students have received a 'study at home' pack which contains new vocabulary, worksheets, a reading book, colouring and craft activities. Packs are designed to not only help students retain and build upon their English knowledge, but to also help them keep their children engaged during remote learning. The packs have been well received by the community and families eagerly await the next delivery.

This year we:

- Taught 220 hours of face to face classes
- Delivered 585 'study at home' packs to more than 65 families
- Taught more than 50 hours of online classes
- Created more than 20 videos to help students learn from home
- Facilitated seven different classes



Social Inclusion

This year Multicultural Services has implemented a range of activities to support new arrivals to increase social inclusion and participation in community social life, with a focus on those at risk of isolation. Addressing increased social isolation during the restrictions was one of significant challenge during the pandemic. With the cancellation of the social inclusion activities during the lockdown, the Friday Food Safari take away meals program was re-designed as an opportunity to reach out to connect with community members in isolation. Community dinners were replaced with weekly virtual Friday Food Safari community lunches. Meals are pre ordered for a Friday pick up with pay it forward options to support vulnerable community members.

This year, we facilitated:

- 22 Multicultural Supported Playgroup sessions with an average of 23 families each week
- 8 Feast of Stories Community Dinners with an average of 92 participants each dinner
- 16 sessions of Junior Soccer Clinics attended by an average of 18 young people
- 8 Women's Swimming Space sessions attended by an average of 17 women each week
- A Refugee week women's luncheon attended by 60 women
- Refugee week youth lunch and 'Voices' exhibition attended by 15 young people

Friday Food Safari

For the past financial year, Food Safari has been running as a traineeship, building capacity for participants of migrant and refugee backgrounds. The course covered many aspects of kitchen training including gardening, resume assistance, accredited food handling certificate, first aid training and knife sharpening. In addition, participants enjoyed peripheral benefits such as building on their linguistic skills, gaining a sense of empowerment, provision of current/local work references and social inclusion.

Before COVID-19 we:

- Delivered over 1200 meals to local businesses of Bendigo, covering a total of seven different cuisines
- Graduated 20 community members from the Karen and South Sudanese communities through our training program
- Worked closely with the Gravel Hill community market garden, using seasonal fresh produce grown on the same grounds as the kitchen we were cooking in. These organic farming and soil rejuvenation practices, with very low food miles, made our cooking super sustainable. We were also able to exclusively grow hard to source ingredients for particular cuisines
- Organised four independent food vendor stalls each from South Sudanese, Karen, Hazara and Malayalam communities to run their own food stall at Zinda Festival, with prepped meals including up to 450 items for each vendor. Unfortunately the festival was cancelled due to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic saw the fast-thinking Food Safari team pivot our business model to launch a ready-to-heat, ready-to-eat concept, with meals available for pick up from The Old Church on the Hill.



The revised program focused on food relief for those who had lost employment, been displaced, were unable to receive government subsidies or were just doing it tough. We looked to the public for love, support and generosity, and were humbled by Bendigo's response to our new 'pay it forward' model.

During COVID-19 we:

- Delivered more than 650 meals donated to those who were in need
- Assisted international students, CALD families, and new- and soon-to-be-expecting mothers
- Prepared an average of 100 meals each week, 25 of which were given to those in need



Capacity building and participation

Our capacity building and participation program works with multicultural community groups and organisations to ensure that emerging communities are given the opportunity to build the knowledge and skills needed to fully participate and contribute to everyday life in central Victoria. During the pandemic, we provided training and ongoing support to community leaders to reach out to the communities through various social media platforms.

This year we:

- Delivered five workshops on topics including COVID-19 messaging, food handling, community gardening, governance and grant writing
- Provided support to eight community groups, through means of grant applications, assistance to organise community events and much more
- Supported 7 ethnic community groups to create and deliver COVID-19 video and voice message through various social media groups
- Supported 20 women to complete Friday Food Safari Social Enterprise Training
- 'VOICES' anti-racism campaign: 11 social media posts capturing positive stories of the Bendigo refugee experience. This campaign aimed to amplify refugee and migrant voices and provide a platform for people with lived experience to be heard—Facebook engagement: 2821
- Consultation and training for 15 young community leaders to understand challenges in supporting their communities during COVID-19. This included increased responsibilities family and community expectations to support the household members during COVID-19
- Worked across four LGAs: Campaspe Shire, Loddon Shire, Mount Alexander Shire and the City of Greater Bendigo

The Capacity Building and Participation Program is funded by the Department of Premier and Cabinet run in partnership with City of Greater Bendigo and Bendigo Community Health Services.



Arts and Events

This year Multicultural Services in partnership with Multicultural Arts Victoria (MAV) delivered a range of arts initiatives and events focused on increasing cross-cultural connection, increasing understanding of cultural diversity and increasing positive attitudes about multicultural communities. A lot of our work in this space was in preparation for the Zinda Festival in March.

Zinda Festival was our major project in this domain this year and promised to be our biggest and best. Unfortunately, 24 hours before the festival was due to start, while marquees were being set up in Rosalind Park, food was cooking in community kitchens across town, and musicians and dancers were traveling from across the region, politicians were meeting about COVID-19 restrictions. The difficult decision was made to cancel the festival.

Additionally, we undertook a range of fee-for-service cross cultural competency training workshops and training sessions with local service providers, schools and employers. Over 300 participants from education, not-for-profit and whole-of-community sectors attended a range of trainings, including Cultural Responsiveness Training, Enacting Allyship, Understanding Islam and Antiracism Bystander Training. 98 per cent of participants strongly agreed or agreed that training was useful for their daily lives.



Our Home, Our Future

The Our Home, Our Future project explored ideas of home, connection and inclusiveness, focusing on investigating the need for a regional Multicultural Community Hub.

This process involved:

- Engaging communities in conversations and storytelling to build our shared future
- Exchanging shared lessons about the kinds of spaces we need to share and connect cross-culturally
- Building a strong evidence-base of the benefits of a new Multicultural Community Hub
- Building a region-wide network of local residents and organisations that can support the establishment of a Multicultural Community Hub
- Creating an inclusive and vibrant future for our community

During this process we established that there is strong support for a Multicultural Community Hub which would allow us to:

- Help resettle people in the region
- Increase our ability to share culture and connect interculturally
- More deeply link with empathetic local residents
- Highlight how welcoming migrants and refugees builds stronger and more resilient communities for the future



Following the Our Home, Our Future community consultation project, Multicultural Services successfully secured funding for a feasibility study into a Multicultural Community Hub.

This study currently includes 14 community organisations from across the region. Welcoming Australia are leading this independent study and are chairing the community committee.

We look forward to learning the results of this feasibility study upon completion, and wholeheartedly support the development of an inclusive and welcoming space where people can come together to share culture and connect.



GOVERNANCE

Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services is an incorporated association governed by a voluntary Board of Directors, which is formed of ordinary members and office bearers. Our local Directors come from an array of ethnicities and lived experiences and bring a wide variety of expertise and skills, in areas including community engagement and development, business management, finance, risk, legal, HR and people management, education, communications, and governance.

The Board is driven to ensure strategy is carried out to align with the organisation's purpose whilst overseeing a framework for how the organisation works with and empowers the multicultural community in the region.

Together they are deeply committed to improving the lives of migrants and refugees settling in thriving Central Victoria.

BOARD MEETINGS AND SUBCOMMITTEES

Name	# eligible to attend	# attended	Sub-committee participation and/or office bearer positions
Jennifer Lay	12	7	Chair from April 20, Risk and Finance Subcommittee
Tim Hoogwerf	12	12	Vice Chair, Acting Chair February-April 20, People and Culture Subcommittee
Esther Ryan	12	12	Treasurer, People and Culture Subcommittee, Risk and Finance Subcommittee
Shannon Burdeu	12	9	Secretary, People and Culture Subcommittee, Risk and Finance Subcommittee
John Murphy	12	10	Chair Strategy Subcommittee
Khayshie Tilak-Ramesh	12	10	Strategy Subcommittee
Moustafa Al-Rawi	2	1	Board member until August 19
Abhishek Awasthi	9	6	Chair, July 19-February 20
Shankar Kasynathan	11	8	Board member until May 20, Strategy Subcommittee



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services saw a significant change to the delivery of activities due to the global coronavirus pandemic. More than ever the work Multicultural Services provides to our communities cannot be understated as the peak body in our sector for the region. We have survived 2020, from Friday 13th March, the day before ZINDA and the difficult decision to cancel the region's largest celebration of diversity, through to the present day operations.

The annual revenue was \$657,791, approximately \$10,000 less than the previous year, but overall income was our highest ever at \$739,302. The year ending 30th June 2020 saw Multicultural Services with a surplus of \$17,875. This is in part due to the adjustments to day to day operations in the new COVID safe world. Retained earnings are strong at \$191,984.

Thank you to the former Executive Officer Kate McInnes, Interim Executive Officer Rose Vincent, Multicultural Services team, Brett and Lorelee at LEAD Advisory and the Auditors AFS for their work during the year.

EXTRACT FROM FINANCIAL REPORTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2020

Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services Inc. Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

For the Year Ended 30 June 2020

	Notes	2020 \$	2019 \$
Revenue		657,791	667,987
Other income		81,511	4,042
Employee benefits expense		(568,700)	(511,408)
Program expenses		(95,979)	(106,823)
Occupancy expenses		(18,758)	(23,240)
Depreciation and amortisation expenses		(3,122)	(989)
Finance expenses		(14,060)	(12,097)
Repairs and maintenance expenses		(933)	(10,963)
Administration expenses		(14,392)	(5,084)
Other expenses		(5,483)	(11,286)
Surplus / (deficit) before income tax credit		17,875	(9,861)
Income tax credit		-	-
Surplus / (deficit) after income tax credit		17,875	(9,861)
Other comprehensive income		-	-
Total comprehensive income attributable to members of the entity		17,875	(9,861)

Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services Inc.

Statement of Financial Position

As at 30 June 2020

	Notes	2020 \$	2019 \$
Current assets			
Cash and cash equivalents		402,348	306,570
Trade and other receivables		25,144	61,245
Total current assets		427,492	367,815
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment		9,129	10,343
Total non-current assets		9,129	10,343
Total assets		436,621	378,158
Current liabilities			
Trade and other payables		42,139	37,670
Grants in advance		163,285	112,003
Employee benefits		29,104	36,669
Total current liabilities		234,528	186,342
Non-current liabilities			
Employee benefits		10,109	17,707
Total non-current liabilities		10,109	17,707
Total liabilities		244,637	204,049
Net assets		191,984	174,109
Equity			
Retained surplus		191,984	174,109
Total equity		191,984	174,109

**FULL AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT AVAILABLE BY
CONTACTING LCMS AT 03 5441 6644 OR INFO@LCMS.ORG.AU**



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Australian Tax Office
Department of Social Affairs
Department of Home Affairs

VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT

Department of Education and Training
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
Department of Premier and Cabinet
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Campaspe Shire Council
City of Greater Bendigo
Loddon Shire Council
Mount Alexander Shire Council

PHILANTHROPIC INSTITUTIONS

Gandel Philanthropy
Sidney Myer Foundation

BUSINESS SPONSORS

Bart 'n' Print
Bendigo Advertiser
Bendigo Asian Grocery
Coliban Water
First Grammar Early Education
Hazeldene's
Lead Advisory (Formally RSD Chartered Accountants)
Raven Air
Share Media
Tech Bender
Win TV

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Access Australia Group
Australian Centre of Further Education
Amnesty International
Annie North
Axis Employment
Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council
Believe in Bendigo
Bendigo Art Gallery
Bendigo Chinese Association
Bendigo City Football Club
Bendigo Community Health Services
Bendigo Filipino Foundation
Bendigo Friends and Mentors
Bendigo Interfaith Council
Bendigo Islamic Association
Bendigo Islamic Community Centre
Bendigo Malayalee Association
Bendigo Senior Secondary College
Bendigo Regional Food Alliance
Bendigo South East College
Bendigo Kangan Institute
Boort Resource & Information Centre
CatholicCare Sandhurst
Castlemaine Community House
Central Goldfields Library
Centre Against Sexual Assault

COMMUNITY PARTNERS CONT.

Crusoe College
Corporation Dutch – Australian Friends
Country Women's Association
Diversitat
Dja Dja Wurrung Clans
Eaglehawk Secondary College
East Bendigo Pool
Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria
Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District
Federation of the Ethnic Communities Council of Australia
Golden Square Primary School
Golden Square Pool
Goldfields Library Corporation
Grandmothers ADRC
Hare Krishna Bendigo
Kangaroo Flat Primary School
Karen Organisation of Bendigo
Kennington Primary School
La Trobe University
Lifeline Central Victoria and Mallee
MatchWorks
Multicultural Arts Victoria
Multicultural Centre for Women's Health
The Old Church on the Hill
People Plus
Punctum Inc
Pyramid Hill Neighbourhood House
Refugee Council of Australia
Refugee Talent
Regional Multicultural Consortium
Rural Australians for Refugees Bendigo and Castlemaine
Salvation Army Church, Bendigo
Settlement Services International
Settlement Council of Australia
Seventh Day Adventist Church, Bendigo
Sisterworks
St Paul's Cathedral, Bendigo
Skills and Job Centre
Spectrum
Sri Guru Singh Sabha Bendigo
Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council
Talent Beyond Boundaries
The Great Stupa of Universal Compassion
United Filipino Association Pyramid Hill
Victoria Police - Bendigo Station
Victorian Inclusion Agency
Violet St Primary School
Welcoming Australia
Whetayoukyouk
White Hills Primary School
Women's Health Loddon Mallee
WorkSafe