

Annual Report

2011



MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS: 2010 - 2011

Dr.Vincent Ogu	Chairperson
Fr.Allan Hornery	Deputy Chairperson
Haidar Abdalla	Treasurer
Blanca Arely Espinoza	Secretary
Doris Athanasio	Member
Dr.Amad Mtashar	Member
Denise Moses	Member
Najla Turk	Member
Abdul Wahab Talabani	Member
Amer Yousif	Member
Cllr. Ned Mannoun	Ex-Officio Liverpool City Council
Simon Fox	Ex-Officio Liverpool City Council

Staff:

Kamalle Dabboussy	Centre Manager
Ayman Al Haboub	Caseworker
Rassem (Sam) Asmar	Caseworker
Shabnam Bhana	Youth Worker (till 1/4/2011)
Mariam Dabboussy	Information Officer
Alcina Desouza	Administration Team Leader
Mesfin Desalegn	Ethiopian Support Worker (till 31/3/2011)
Behrooz Gouniai	Caseworker (till 31/3/2011)
Pietty Greenwood	Multicultural Families Resource Co-ordinator
Anke Kotte	Senior Caseworker
Michael Kwiatkowski	Caseworker (till 10/6/2011)
Elham Mandwee	Bi-lingual Receptionist
Maria Karameli Manoussou	Family Support Clerical Worker
Jimmy Mtashar	Casework Team Leader
Linah Merdawi	Caseworker (Iraqi) / Community Visitor Scheme Co-ordinator
Salem Naja	Infra-structure and Development Officer
Maria Pereira	Community Support Worker
Sandra Romanelli	Family Support Worker
Natalie Taha	Senior Caseworker
Mariëtte van der Meer	Community Projects Officer
Dr.Ali White	Research & Policy Officer
Cai (Bing) Xiaobing	Caseworker

Child Care Workers:

Xuan Thi Bui
Julie Grime
Saja Haidar
Charandit Kaur
Megumi Mamome
Kelly Nugent
Jennifer Joy Plat
Lynette Pressman
Nawal Salman

Student Work-Placements and Volunteers:

Anmar Abed	Hala Dishar	Jean Manella
Elham Ahmed	Preethi Evgene	Mary Pushparaj
Alhlam Almarachli	Rajaa Fulfliel	Gazal Sabbagh
Nisreen Andulrahm	Heifaa Gatea	Badegül Sag
Nang Seng Arm	Zena Al Khamis	Joe Asfoura
Maria Louise Sagayamar	Laye Sesay	Biljana Baljak
Thi Xuan Hong Pham	Kim Chi Le	Daly Bolongo
Margaret Tofaeono	Maria Nguyen	Ljuba Trajkovska
Maria Theresa di Corrado	Thi Nga Nguyen	Sahar Yousif

Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre is a community-based non-profit organisation established to actively and directly relieve the situation of immigrants and refugees whose social condition renders them disadvantaged.

On behalf of the Management Committee and the growing team at the Liverpool MRC, I take pleasure in presenting my Annual Report for 2011.

The past year has seen the MRC heavily involved in enhancing the capacities of refugee and migrant individuals and communities. In addition to core activities of providing new arrivals with increased capacity with tools and resources, we have been working feverishly to develop innovative strategies to assist clients. The Sudanese Men's Art Group and the Mandaean Women's Art and Craft group have given opportunities to people to be creative, provide something back to the community whilst providing therapeutic programs to address trauma. These projects success is only possible with our partners.

The MRC rather always looks for the 'big picture', by seeing individual problems in a holistic context. We have developed submissions such as to NSW Parliament on the 'Inquiry into the Transition Support for Students with Additional or Complex Needs and their Families' advocating the needs of refugee families - Liverpool MRC has now been invited to give evidence at a Public Hearing. This is an important exercise in promoting the needs of our local communities.

A major development this year has been the establishment and implementation of the Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (HSS) administered by Settlement Services International (SSI). SSI is a body that represents all MRCs at State Level. This intensive on-arrival support for refugees in the early time of their settlement is a major program and, with very little development time, this project has been up and running successfully at 400% of expected capacity - and I am without doubt that without the talent and expertise of the MRC movement that this service would not have been successful. This now complements the services offered by Liverpool MRC with HSS, Settlement Grants Program and Complex Case Support all offered under one roof.

Liverpool is fast becoming the major settlement area for refugee arrivals in NSW. This increase of clients without the appropriate community infrastructure has meant that the Liverpool MRC has had to take on more duties and services to support clients. It has long been reported that clients are attending all services with complex needs and this complexity is growing still. What challenges this will bring to the centre in the future is currently being studied.

As part of this planning and development we also have been able to obtain a new Project from the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department: Domestic and Family Violence Education and Support Project as we advocated for the need for support for new and frequently traumatised refugees with settlement issues.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank our funding bodies and other organisations for their continuing support and the team at the Liverpool MRC for their hard and committed work – there are too many to name here. I would also like to take time to thank my colleagues on the Management Committee, whose valuable contribution has made the experience a very enjoyable one. I would also like to take the opportunity to note the departure of one our long standing staff members whose contribution was highly appreciated and is now missed – we wish Ms Shabnum Bhana all the success in her future as we know she will go on to further develop herself and contribute greatly.

I wish the team and the organisation continued success in 2012!

Vincent Ogu
Chairperson

LIVERPOOL MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE ACTIVITIES AT A GLANCE -

1st July 2010 to 30th June 2011

- 4843 Clients were served at the Front-desk
- 19 Clients were serviced through Complex Case Support
- 815 Clients were registered for Casework

184 Students attended:

- 4 English Classes - Beginners and Intermediate Level
 - 2 Introduction to Computing Classes - English
 - 1 Introduction to Computing Classes - Vietnamese
 - 2 Introductions to Floristry Classes
 - 2 Introductions to Pattern making / Sewing Classes
- 55 Clients were assisted with the Tax Help Program
- 27 Student and Volunteer Placements
- 22 Ethnic community groups used our meeting-rooms facility on a regular basis
- 6 Playgroups operating in Liverpool CBD, Heckenburg, Hinchinbrook
- Families NSW: 3 Multicultural and 1 Language Specific (Vietnamese) playgroup/s
 - 2 Additional playgroups in partnership with Liverpool TAFE Outreach and Miller TAFE Early Childhood Studies

CVS continued for its 18th consecutive year, currently with 25 places

Outreach services to:

- Lurnea and Miller Intensive English language Centres (IECs)

Discovery Tours:

- Liverpool Hospital Emergency Department
- Liverpool CBD

Information sessions:

- Centrelink
- Education Tax Refund
- NSW Education system
- Electoral Roll and Elections
- Employment
- Financial management
- Health system
- Housing
- Inter-generational conflict
- Legal Aid
- Mental Health
- Support for Carers
- TAFE and further training
- Taxation system, e.g. Family Tax Benefits

Forums and Expo:

- Cultural Awareness Forum (for service providers)
- Housing Forum
- Refugee Week Forum (service providers)
- Training & Employment Expo

Community Leaders and/or community representatives' events:

- 3 'Meet the Pollies' Evenings - pending upcoming Elections: 2 Federal and 1 NSW State events
- 'Meet & Greet' with the new Police Commander

Supporting community events:

- Ethiopian community consultation
- Kurdish Newrooz and New Year
- Sudanese Eid celebration
- Sudanese radio program

In partnership with other community organisations undertake various social activities:

- Afghan Women's Group
- Federation of the Congolese Association
- Igbo Community Australia
- Liverpool Australian Sudanese Community
- Liverpool Sudanese Australian Union
- Mandaean Australian Community Cultural Club
- United Kurdish Community

Co-convened and/or supported the following inter-agencies or networks:

- Liverpool Refugee & Migrant Inter- agency (LRMI)
- Community Sector Management Forum (CSMF)
- Human Services Planning Group (HSPG)
- Local Ethnic Affairs Priority Statement (LEAPS) Taskforce
- Liverpool Family & Children's Services Network (LFCSN)
- Liverpool Youth Workers Network (LYWN)
- Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA)
- Settlement Services International (SSI)
- Warwick Farm Inter-agency
- 2168 Inter-agency & Network

With Thanks to our Funding Bodies Commonwealth:

- Department of Immigration And Citizenship (DIAC)
- Department of Family and Housing, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA)
- Department of Health & Ageing (DoHA)

NSW:

- Department of Human Services (DoHS) NSW – Community Services
 - ◆ Community Building Partnership Program
 - ◆ Better Futures
 - ◆ Families NSW - Cultural Connect
- Community Relations Commission (CRC) of NSW

Local Government:

- Liverpool City Council

ESTABLISHMENT AND DELIVERY OF HUMANITARIAN SETTLEMENT STRATEGY PROGRAM AT LIVERPOOL MRC

This year Liverpool MRC experienced a major change in its operational staffing and service structures. We began delivery of the intensive Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (HSS) service as a subcontractor to Settlement Services International (SSI) who was successful in acquiring the new HSS tender. HSS is a DIAC program designed to deliver on-arrival intensive settlement service to newly arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants (replacing the familiar IHSS).

More than simply 'a subcontractor', LMRC along with other SSI members contributed assiduously to the entire tender process and modelling of the proposal. Leveraging the 30+ years of experience in service delivery to migrants and refugees as well as their infrastructural strength, the new HSS program is managed by SSI and delivered on the ground by MRCs/MSAs in the relevant regions within NSW.

Liverpool MRC's major programs deliver settlement services to refugees and humanitarian arrivals in the area under the Immigration Department's Settlement Grants Program (SGP). This is, generally, a 5-year program available for relevant arrivals. It is the longer-term settlement assistance available when clients 'exit' the intensive IHSS program (now HSS). The period leading up to the announcement of the new tender was an intense and uncertain period. To have the infrastructure and level of staff ready to deliver service to clients on arrival is not an overnight process; however SSI and the MRC network had direct prior experience in operating this program immediately prior to the recent IHSS provider.

The period between November 2010 and March 2011 meant that we were working with the previous provider (that is, under the old IHSS) — who was unsure of contract continuation — needing to exit large numbers of clients to our SGP programs, while simultaneously planning for transitional arrangements, in anticipation of the new tender announcement. Will the same provider continue? Would the service model change? Will there be a new provider?

This period kept the management and executive on constant vigilance, as it was superimposed by continual political debates surrounding refugee policies and constant media barrage surrounding the issue.

The expectations were that IHSS clients will be exiting the program at a faster rate and therefore in greater numbers than usual — adding pressure on the Centre's SGP and administrative staff. At the same time, new HSS clients would also be arriving and requiring intensive case management service!

In anticipation, meanwhile, LMRC decided to dedicate a team of staff to implement an organisational planning and infrastructural re-thinks, to house the HSS program delivery for the region. The strategy to conduct the HSS program alongside the SGP program delivery is both sound and makes perfect sense. To this end, LMRC was adamant that such service will run within the same space and develop a synergy between the programs, providing seamless transition and service to clients as they move from one program to the other. It also provides closer relationships and communication between the case managers to better understand the clients' needs and plan for meaningful service.

A number of internal process changes were prioritised in the past year to better equip LMRC with the onset of expected changes, highlighted by the clear complex and deepened needs of new client arrivals. This is seen as another value-added contribution to the establishment and resourcing of the HSS program.

Two main tools that were pushed high on the agenda included Information Management policies and processes and, among other policies, a Risk Management policy revisit. The Information Management processes identified a number of sub-topics including a design and implementation of an LMRC Database tool. A database was already on the boil and in its infancy. New approaches needed to be added, however, to develop and design the database — not only for taking case notes, but also as client management tool, appointment management system and a source for anecdotal information, research, and data mining. This can place LMRC as a reference organisation for information, report writing and submissions, information for government departments, and local residents and students.

Another priority was Case Management policy reform. The entire organisational client interaction process is being revisited for this purpose. A holistic 'Community of Practice' approach was, and continues to be, played out over a series of meetings, training and workshops to develop quality service by the entire organization — from front desk officers to executives. Also, an overhaul of the entire Policy and Procedures Manual, which was made easier with a Research and Policy Officer.

On announcement LMRC was ready. Despite the fact that the HSS program began so close to the Easter break, which saw a deluge of referrals come through, existing experienced LMRC senior caseworkers were immediately appointed to receive newly-arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants, to be managed internally by an LMRC team leader, while physical infrastructure work began to accommodate up to four HSS staff (which soon became six!). This gave SSI the chance to prepare its structures, and to set up headquarters, recruitments and contractual arrangements with the department and contractors.

LMRC office space was rearranged to accommodate up to six HSS Case Managers and a Co-ordinator as well as access to dedicated client contact case rooms, meeting rooms, and administrative support. All in all, Liverpool MRC provided crucial management, supervision and administrative start-up to the program. Liverpool MRC continues to provide this value-added co-ordination to the HSS program and is in the process of acquiring further office and training space in anticipation of growth.

The co-operation by all team members and efforts by SSI contributed to the thought development of such a complex and intense program. All attempts put into its establishment meant this HSS program is on a strong foundation to continue and grow for successful settlement of humanitarian entrants. LMRC will remain heavily involved in this project at both the Management level and daily operational implementation of the service.

CASEWORK

Some of the major issues are:

- **Accommodation;**
- **Settlement issues;**
- **Mental health issues;**
- **Domestic and family violence;**
- **Education and training** (interrupted);
- **Employment;**
- **Food security;**
- **Poverty;**
- **Consumer credit issues;**
- **Homelessness.**

Humanitarian project

Through 2010-2011, the humanitarian project continued to support the successful settlement of recently arrived refugees. The core of the project is providing casework and direct support to our clients to improve their personal capacity. We have been able to deliver a range of other services (including information about different services) and also link our clients with other services, as well as increasing their access to health services and other essential services.

Humanitarian Case Work

The majority of clients came from China, Iraq, Iran and Sudan with nearly all the clients from humanitarian and other protection visas. In addition to the issues listed above, nearly all clients attending the service have had a high degree of trauma resulting from events in the country of origin and from issues from the country of first asylum. Clients were appropriately referred and advocacy was done as needed.

In the financial year 2010 – 2011 the Liverpool MRC had nine (9) caseworkers, some of whom had temporary contracts, seeing 815 new clients. As the year progressed and new influx of clients came to the Liverpool MRC, there was a significant increase in the variety and especially the complexity of issues.

Information sessions

A unique Health Tour jointly organised by Liverpool MRC, Multicultural Health at Liverpool Hospital and Emergency Department (ED) was conducted. Different community groups participated and they found opportunities to speak to the doctors and nurses at the ED. It was very useful for them to understand how the emergency health system works in Australia, starting from how to call an ambulance and what is behind the waiting rooms in the EDs. From participants' feedback it is clear that this session had great positive impact, as it helped our clients to increase their capacity to better access health services in our Liverpool LGA.

Providing information about private rental housing and how to access it was another important information session we delivered to clients in two different languages.

Financial budgeting is still one of the most areas need to be look at. We organised a special Helping you Manage Your Finances info-session about for the Congolese Community. It was clear from this that a need for more sessions regarding financial help and management is needed.

'How to Vote' in Australia and NSW is an information session held in Liverpool MRC to different community groups, to explain the political process for new arrivals from CALD groups. The session was of great impact and important for newly arrived communities, who obtained an increased understanding of the democratic process in our country through this info-session.

IRAQI CASEWORK



Liverpool MRC has been flagged as the Centre of support and advocacy for a great number of Iraqi migrants and refugees in Liverpool LGA. The MRC provides services to people of Iraqi ethnic backgrounds — including Mandaeans, Assyrians, Kurds, Chaldeans and Muslims.

The Iraqi Support Worker provided regular support and advocacy to the clients in issues related to financial assistance, document help, accommodation, general household management, support for single parents and help in accessing mainstream services so they can take advantage of their availability.

The Liverpool MRC held information sessions for newly arrived migrants and refugees coming from Iraq and to orientate clients to settlement and mainstream services. The sessions were provided in Arabic for better understanding of the information delivered and to encourage clients' participation and engagement. Session topics were prominent issues relating to Australian elections, the Education Tax Refund and the taxation system, TAFE and education, the health system and mental health, employment, support for carers, Centrelink, housing and financial management.

The MRC organised a Cultural Awareness Forum on Liverpool's Iraqi Community, in order to increase local service providers' awareness of the community. The session recorded a positive impact with

other services in the area, allowing them to better network and liaise with the MRC Iraqi worker and to deliver better service to their clients.

The Liverpool MRC support worker continues to network and build strong relationships with mainstream agencies, promoting and representing client needs through participation at interagency forums. The forums highlight the major issues that need to be carried out to the relevant stakeholders, so they may provide assistance and support to new migrants and refugees.

Media Coverage

This role was significant for lifting the image of newly arrived migrants living in the Liverpool area. That was achieved in 2 local paper articles, where a small group of migrants of different backgrounds were interviewed by the Liverpool Leader, speaking about their experience, and how they are trying to successfully settle in the new country.

The second interview also was with clients — an Iraqi Tarmidah (Mandaean Priest) and his wife — who spoke about their experience living in Liverpool. These two interviews by local papers contribute positively to making the humanitarian entrants' presence felt by our local communities, and to showcase their inputs to local business and local communities.

CHINESE COMMUNITY

With the demise of support directly to the Chinese Community, the Liverpool MRC undertook to assist service to the community through a specialist Chinese Community Worker. In the year, the total client contacts number was 168, with main issues relating to language barriers, financial and income support, housing and rent issues; health and Medicare access; employment, education and training and social isolation.

Apart from referrals, the worker also provided information relevant to clients' issues to empower and encourage them to access mainstream services. There was a Liverpool hospital tour on 25 August 2010. Positive feedback was received spontaneously from individuals.

The worker ran an employment support information session on 28 September 2010 in partnership with Liverpool Centrelink, to help new migrants to get more effective information to look for a job.



This was particularly helpful for people who came on skilled immigration visas, who now know more about how to assess their overseas qualification for their job seeking purposes.

An ongoing basic computer class ran every Wednesday from 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm. There was a volunteer teaching the class and average of 10 participants every time.

The worker became involved with the South-Western Sydney Chinese Community and Health Workers Network, attending its quarterly meeting and promoting its services and activities in LMRC.

Women's Project

The women's project has primarily Women on Visa 204 'Women at Risk' as its focus, which are single women with or without children or women who have a similar family composition. They might have entered on a Visa 202/200 or found themselves single soon afterwards.

Without a male family 'figure head' many are not accepted in their own community, further exacerbating their isolation and/or opportunities for support.

Orientation to Australia

The project aimed to provide increase support over the normal clientele of the organisation, however the total number was still higher than originally expected. Some 121 clients were serviced with main issues centred around: financial assistance; education, training and employment and household management.

Developing communities

This is a therapeutic program to support women and their families to cope with the effects of trauma — to enable them to identify issues and attendant stresses they face, build their capacity and empower them to access relevant mainstream services independently. Topics included: anxiety, depression and communication. Other topics dealt with children's behaviour and the importance of giving children both attention and quality time.

The sessions reduced isolation of the targeted women and enabled them to go out in the wider community with more confidence. The women learned about support among each other to strengthen themselves and about support services that could assist them.

The gain in confidence increased personal capacity and independence to either solve issues as they arise and/or seek out assistance as needed.

ACTIVITIES IN FOCUS

1. Transition from Primary to High School.

Parent information sessions on the Australian education system to promote better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of schools, teachers parents and guardians, were held to inform women of options in the Australian school system.

An education forum with two separate sessions addressing the Australian Public School System and Tax in Australia and five sessions on the Education Tax Refund. Sessions were well attended; bi-lingual facilitators and/or TIS Interpreters were provided.

Feedback from the various sessions indicated participants learned or had a better understanding of:

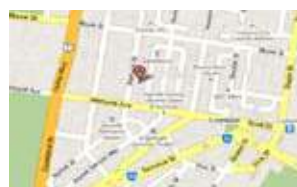
- **Enrolling children in school;**
- **Zoning and school boundaries;**
- **The differences between private and public schools;**
- **School fees;**
- **The differences between TAFE and Universities;**
- **The Tax system: obtaining and using Tax File Numbers, ways of claiming tax;**
- **The differences between Family Tax Benefit Part A and/or Part B.**



2. 'Taking Care of Oneself and Discovering what Liverpool offers'

This program was conducted over eight weeks and involved women from Afghanistan. Sessions included:

- **Visit to Liverpool Street University;**
- **Visit to Liverpool Anglicare;**
- **Information session presented by Transcultural Mental Health Centre (TMHC), facilitated by a Dari-speaking psychologist;**
- **Information session about personal grooming presented by a TAFE Teacher;**
- **Information session on the 'Walking Program' provided by Liverpool Hospital on behalf of the Heart Foundation;**
- **Aqua aerobics (two sessions);**
- **Discovery Tour of Liverpool provided by Liverpool City Council.**



Settlement support group for women

The SGP worker recruited Mandaean women who were linked with other Liverpool MRC projects in order to enhance knowledge of opportunities beyond 'home duties', reduce isolation and venture into activities with other women, while learning new skills, sharing experiences, and building confidence and resilience.

COMPLEX CASE SUPPORT

As a member of the Humanitarian Service Panel of the Complex Case Support (CCS) Program, the LMRC has delivered specialised and intensive case management services to refugee and humanitarian entrants for the third year since commencement of the program.

The CCS Program funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship targets the needs of individuals and families who may experience specific difficulties that place themselves and their families at risk, who cannot access appropriate support via mainstream services and who require time-intensive case management.

The program has provided case co-ordination, advocacy, referral and the overseeing of issues experienced by the client and their family. This program has worked in collaboration with other existing service providers to maintain relationships and to holistically address the needs of all family members.

In the timeframe from July 2010 to June 2011 we have been able to successfully work with 19 clients and their families, for durations of 2 to 8 months per approved Case Management Plan (CMP), depending on the circumstances and needs of the family or individuals.

Referrals were made by LMRC Staff, schools, Housing NSW, women's refuges etc.

Working with each family and individual requires a holistic assessment of individual circumstances, history, barriers, needs, motivations and goals. The individually tailored CMP aims to address all aspects of the families and individual needs, options and possible outcomes.

Issues presented by Complex Case Support clients have included family violence, mental health issues, physical health, financial mismanagement, child protection issues, legal issues concerning employment, lack of social/family support, high level of dependency on others, poor access to health services, and clients with a pre-migration history of torture and trauma.

We are looking forward to assisting more individuals through this program in the years ahead. We thank the Team at the LMRC and the Complex Case Support Team at DIAC NSW and Canberra for their continued support.

**TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT
EXPO: Pathways to Work
at Casula Powerhouse:
31 March 2011**



The issue of training and employment — apart from education itself — is paramount, next to the myriad of other issues for new arrivals. A working party with representatives from Centrelink, CatholicCare, Melkite Welfare Association, University of Western Sydney and Liverpool MRC organised the Training and Employment Expo with presentations from

the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for Human Services, Minister for Social Inclusion, Mr. Laurie Ferguson MP, Member for Werriwa, Ms. Wendy Waller, Mayor of Liverpool and Mr. Harry Hunt, Chairperson of the Chamber of Commerce.

*There were at least
400 participants, at
least double the number
aimed at.*



YOUTH

The youth worker has provided casework provision to 67 clients providing 130 referrals. Through the delivery of casework provision, clients have increased their knowledge of services available and acquired greater confidence and capacity to access these services. Casework provision has built clients' independence and personal capacity and as a result clients are more aware of mainstream services.



A number of sessions have been held in a range of topic areas including Budgeting, Rights and Responsibilities, Time Management and Goal Setting and Positive Decision-Making, which have assisted clients to build self-esteem and confidence in their settlement process. The sessions have provided the target group with resourceful contacts and the capacity to access mainstream support services. Clients have been provided with decision-making skills and conflict resolution training to help promote independence and problem solving skills.

A study skills program was held with a drama teacher and facilitator from Lurnea IEC to use this medium to promote classroom and broader school engagement. The sessions looked at script writing, reading and writing, as well as acting and dance as ways of promoting literacy outcomes. Students were provided with a variety of activities through the sessions focusing on literacy and building independence.

A performance was held at refugee week on 25 June 2011 at Macquarie Street Mall, Liverpool. Participants were from Iraqi, Iranian, Lebanese, Sudanese, Sierra Leonean, Bosnian, Filipino, Pakistani and Columbian cultural groups.

The after-school soccer program run in partnership with Football United was highly successful in providing students from Miller and Lurnea IECs a chance to experience sport without the associated cost of mainstream sport. The program helped build confidence and self-esteem amongst participants as well as promoting the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

This education and employment pathways program has assisted some of the most disadvantaged students in Miller IEC. Students have been identified as struggling to meet the demands of schooling but are not engaged with services to access available educational and employment opportunities. Participants were provided with a range of educational opportunities, which cater to their particular interests. They were also consulted and surveyed on their workplace preferences and accordingly a taster course was identified, to give participants a preview of what it would be like to work in their self-identified occupation.

+ News Liverpool City Champion ~ 29 June 2011

Students share refugee stories

Shery Demian

STUDENTS from Lurnea High School celebrated Refugee Week last week.

Issraa Hashem was one of the students involved in a presentation who told her story about arriving in Australia.

The 14-year-old said she arrived in Australia about a year ago as a refugee.

"I was about nine years old when I left Iraq," she said.

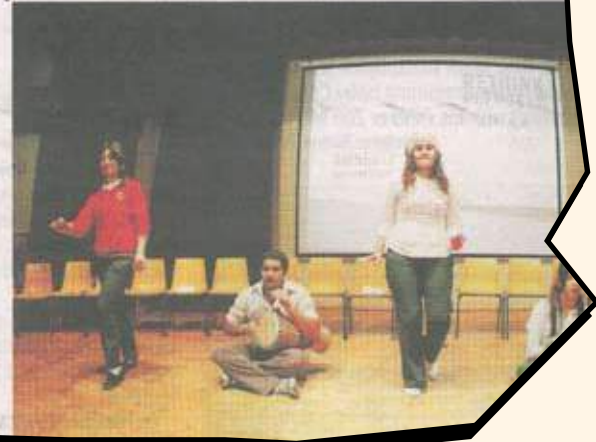
"In 2006 we went to Syria and we

about my father. I told them that I came to Australia but I'm still waiting for him to come and he still isn't here."

Her story was one of many told at the presentation, which will be made into a DVD.

After receiving \$250 from the Refugee Council of NSW and \$500 from the Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre, the school was able to run story-telling workshops before the event.

A professional story-teller work



Young Women's Leadership

The youth worker conducted a young women's leadership program with outstanding outcomes. Various personalised sessions were held to build leadership skills through a variety of activities. Some of the sessions held included Relaxation through Dance, Public Speaking through Drama, Health/Wellbeing through make-up and skin care, Careers and Sewing, Self Confidence through Drama and Team-building through Art.

Participants gained knowledge around the concept of leadership skills and about being positive role models in their communities. The young women learned how to take care of their emotions and ways to deal with stressful moments. It also provided encouragement for young women to be more engaged in community activities and support groups, as well as direction in future planning, various study options and employment readiness skills. Participants were able to work in groups and teams and produce a conjoint quilt.

The sessions assisted the young women greatly in building of confidence and self-esteem to undertake initiative and had less fear in public speaking, thus contributing to the communities and society. This program defiantly succeeded in raising the self-confidence and self-esteem of the participants. The program has potentially created new young women leaders with the proficiency and abilities to educate and model the various skills they have developed.



The Liverpool MRC takes great pride in assisting individuals through providing casework, and assisting newly established community groups and agencies with guidance and support or auspicings, to enhance community development.

This also means that individuals and communities are provided with the opportunity to meet with significant others in Australian society, such as local Federal and State MPs, or Local City Councillors, as well as obtaining knowledge of the various Federal and State Departments, what they represent and the respective responsible Ministers.

Government representation can be daunting, especially for those whom government has persecuted, and it is therefore essential that a good understanding is given about Government in Australia and NSW.

Auspicing, assisting existing-new emerging communities and Community Development

Consultations to assist in gaining a better understanding of the specific settlement issues in newly arrived communities were conducted with the Congolese and the Ethiopian communities. The material compiled from surveys, meetings, as well as casework, informs the type of activities, information sessions and programs for the respective communities and serves as back-up evidence in the process of applications.

By modelling and advice, assistance is also provided to the respective communities, showing them how to open and manage a bank account, how to approve and spend funds and how to keep records.

One of the additional achievements for the Ethiopian community has been the setting up of Amharic language classes.

Funding applications for and with communities

The Liverpool MRC continued to support newly established community agencies through its brokerage funds, which provide small amounts to communities to enable them to engage and set up their own specific activities.

Communities supported were:

- **Tongan Community;**
- **Federation of the Congolese Association;**
- **United Kurdish Community;**
- **Congolese Community of NSW;**
- **Afghan Women's group;**
- **Igbo Community Australia (ICA);**
- **Liverpool Australian Sudanese Community;**
- **Liverpool Sudanese Australian Union.**

In addition, appropriate other funding sources were sought and applications prepared with newly arrived communities to assist them in addressing identified need and in settling in Liverpool. Both these last initiatives have shown an increase in communities looking for funding sources to set up their own community activities.

'Meet the Pollies Nights'

The past financial year was a busy election period: first the Federal Election late in 2010 and then the NSW State Election in March 2011. To enhance the opportunity for new refugees and migrants to increase engagement in the parliamentary process, two sets of 'Meet the Pollies Nights' were offered.

Federal Election

On 12 and 16 August 2010 two 'Meet the Pollies Nights' were held for both the Labor and Liberal Parties respectively. Some 29 Community members from fourteen community groups meet with candidates from the Hughes, Werriwa and Fowler Electorates.

A lively discussion was held at both events. Participants raised issues around discrimination in looking for employment, support for recognition of qualifications, accommodation and housing support, and support for culturally appropriate domestic and family violence initiatives.

Participants also stated the need to continue engagement with local politicians.

NSW State Election

Again two events were organised for 10 and 17 March 2011 for the Labor and Liberal Parties respectively. Some 20 People attended and meet candidates the Hon. Paul Lynch and the Hon. Dr. Andrew McDonald.



Information and Education Sessions

Information Sessions were organised according to needs identified through casework or, as mentioned before, through consultations. These sessions aim to provide newly arrived refugees and migrants a better understanding about the types of services available, what the services can and cannot do, as well as life skills in order to negotiate the various settlement issues.

Promotion of and Advocacy for Access & Equity issues to mainstream service providers

The Liverpool MRC continued to promote and highlight access and equity issues to mainstream service providers through convening, chairing and participating in its various networks, forums and other appropriate venues.

CONFERENCES, FORUMS, INTER AGENCIES AND NETWORKING

Liverpool Community Services Conference: 'Making a difference for tomorrow'
Organised by the Liverpool City Council and held at Casula Powerhouse

The Manager presented a session at the Conference on 'Working with Diverse Populations' to key services in the Liverpool LGA, addressing issues affecting recently arrived migrants with a specific focus on refugees. The presentation focussed on current trends, issues of concern, high-risk indicators, etc.



Liverpool Refugee and Migrant Inter-agency

As Co-Convenor of the Liverpool Refugee and Migrant Inter-agency (LRMI), the Liverpool MRC has contributed to the inter-agency, which functions as a reference point for information exchange and issues related to refugees and migrants and, where possible, advocacy.

Participation in other inter-agencies also promotes the services of Liverpool MRC and raises the inescapable fact of influx of refugees in Liverpool and attendant issues affecting newly-arrived refugees and migrants. Below are inter-agencies in which the Liverpool MRC participates regularly:

- Human Services Planning Group (HSGP), an offshoot from the Community Services Management Forum;
- 2168 Community Management Committee and 2168 Community Inter-agency;
- Warwick Farm Inter-Agency;
- Liverpool Community Safety and Crime Prevention Plan Working Group;
- Other Inter-agencies and/or networks in respective Projects.

Harmony Day: 21 March 2011

The Liverpool MRC in conjunction with Liverpool City Council, Centrelink, Green Valley LAC Police, Liverpool TAFE, Neighbourhood Connections, Cancer Council and University of Western Sydney, a Harmony Day was organised and held on 21 March 2011 at the Macquarie Mall.

Though initially the weather appeared to play havoc, the day turned out quite successfully with plenty of entertainment and stalls with information. Presentations were by a representative of Liverpool City Council, Prof. Kevin Dunn, as well as various cultural entertainment activities.





REFUGEE WEEK
19 JUNE -25 JUNE 2011

The primary movers in the Refugee Working Party involved Liverpool City Council, Liverpool MRC, Centrelink, Liverpool Green Valley local Area Command, MTC Training Solutions, Neighbourhood Connections, New Horizons, TAFE Liverpool, Outer Liverpool Community Services and Burnside.

Forum at Liverpool Library, 20th June

Pino Migliorino, Chairperson of the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia (FECCA) accorded us the favour of being the Master of Ceremonies (MC).

Most impressive was the entertainment brought by students from Lurnea IEC telling of their own experiences in song, dance and music.

To put the refugees issue in perspective internationally, regionally and in Australia, and ultimately focussed on local impact at Liverpool, presentations were made by:

- Graham Thorn, Refugee Co-ordinator, Amnesty International — Australia.
- Lucy Morgan, Information Officer, Refugee Council of Australia.
- Kamalle Dabboussy, Manager, Liverpool MRC, who provided a local picture of new developments in the refugee influx and the impact on the Liverpool MRC and local services.



Four workshops were organised along the following issues:

- Family Relationships;
- Health and Well-being;
- Children’s Services;
- Education.

Outcomes and Recommendations of the workshops will be compiled for presentation and potential use at the LRMI, as well as for its planning session.

Street Festival at Macquarie Mall: 24 June

A lively day was held at the Macquarie Mall that included a presentation by Ms. Wendy Waller, Mayor of Liverpool and Mr. Paul Lynch MP.

Various community groups and individuals contributed to the Festival. There was an exposition/display by the Sudanese Men Arts Group, which gave the day a most lively aspect. In addition, the opportunity was provided by Ghasan Saaid to participate in a communal painting to which respective dignitaries were invited and participated.

THERAPEUTIC ARTS PROGRAM

Art and Craft Workshop — Women's Knitting Group

It was observed that initially there was hesitation and/or reluctance from some of the participants to be involved in activities, which looked at past experiences, especially where trauma was concerned. Many of the women were also isolated, not going out on their own.

Facilitators created an environment that was non-threatening and comfortable for the group and provided opportunities to speak one-on-one. Some information and support sessions were provided.

As the group got into learning the skill of knitting the group bonded further, producing a huge range of articles, which the women decided they wanted to donate to a local charity.



Mandaeen Refugee Women's Support Group

A partnership was established with Liverpool Hospital. In consultation with participants and the specialist from Liverpool Hospital, a program was developed in order to deliver outcomes that were meaningful and significant to participants, that is, by encouraging changes in behavioural patterns. Participants were connected to relevant staff in Liverpool Hospital, to enhance continuation of support after completion of the program.

After more intensive support, single mums or women at risk were encouraged to participate in other support activities to build skills, confidence and resilience, including involvement in the family programs of the Liverpool MRC.

Visual Art Stories for Sudanese Men

Through the medium of paint, mixture of colour and application, use of both natural and other media, Sudanese men found a different way of expressing themselves on sensitive issues, such as a new way of life, family relationships and/or mental health issues, that are not always easily able to be expressed through words as in the Western way. Natural elements such as bark, flowers, grasses, etc. provided added depth and symbolism.

Partnering with the Transcultural Mental Health Centre (TMHC) allowed and provided additional support sessions.

Works of the Sudanese Men group were proudly displayed at the Refugee Week Street Festival.

Afghan and Iranian Women Support Group

The Women's Support Group was a mix of nine Afghan (Dari-speaking) and Iranian (Farsi-speaking) women who are isolated with support of a Professional Counsellor. However, due to local cultural and socio-economic situations, it was at times necessary for some of the sessions to separate the groups to enable sharing of similar experiences thus to better facilitate the sessions.

Iraqi Women

A parenting program was held for a small group of eight Iraqi women needing an intense level of support in dealing with children who have challenging behaviours. The rapport and trust that already existed with Liverpool MRC staff allowed involvement in all of the relevant sessions. Referring staff members facilitated interaction with a mainstream specialist service. Women were provided with further support and options after the program.

Community Visitor Scheme (CVS)



Since 1993 Liverpool MRC has hosted the Community Visitor Scheme (CVS) project funded by the Department of Health and Ageing. CVS aims to engage the residents at aged care hostels and nursing homes who have been identified as being lonely or socially isolated due to Non English-Speaking Backgrounds. Volunteers from the same background engage with residents through one-to-one visits.

The CVS Co-ordinator at Liverpool MRC recruited and co-ordinated a team of volunteers from Arabic and Spanish-speaking backgrounds, matching each volunteer visitor with a resident at aged care services in South West/South Coast Sydney. The Co-ordinator provided training and support to the volunteers through a monthly meeting, which was supplemented by a counselling session when required.

Liverpool MRC volunteers contributed a couple of hours from their time every fortnight, to make a social visit to the seniors at nursing homes. Our volunteers look on this as a rewarding experience for them, as well as something that makes someone else's day a little brighter.

The volunteers witnessed the difference on the residents' quality of life after they started their visits to them. They observed the positive impact through the way the resident chatted back and welcomed them each time they went for their special visit.

Between July 2010 and June 2011 the CVS Co-ordinator recruited 21 volunteer visitors from both Arabic and Spanish-speaking backgrounds, who made more than 350 visits to different nursing homes around Liverpool, Fairfield and Bankstown areas.

Special thanks go to the CVS volunteer visitors for the year of 2011.

Spanish Speaking Background Volunteers:
Zunilda Navarro, Sandra Virga, Francisca Murillo, Guadalupe Alvarez, Amanda Orellano, Clara Bucarey, Rosalia Moreno, Eva Alvila, Ana Gloria Beltran

Arabic Speaking Background Volunteers:
Abir Lotfi, Mervat Benyamin, Admon Yokhana, Roslin Laki, Ranin Farjo, Dhamyaa Al Bayati, Afaf Adlouni, Nadia Shlaimon, Dalila Gorgis, Juliet Warda, Blendine Shlaimon.

FAMILY SUPPORT

Families NSW funds the Cultural Connect Project, with additional one-off funding by Liverpool City Council to complement service delivery. The Cultural Connect Project Team had a very successful year and achieved great results for both families and children with 115 families and 134 children enrolled. By the end of this reporting period the Cultural Connect Project facilitated six playgroups from funds received from:



- Families NSW four playgroups — three Multicultural Playgroups and a Language Specific Playgroup (Vietnamese) which operates in partnership with Miller TAFE Outreach.
- Two additional playgroups complemented with funds received from the Liverpool MRC and held in partnership with Liverpool TAFE Outreach and Miller TAFE Early Childhood Studies.

Support for families — Parenting Programs

Miller TAFE Outreach facilitated a Behaviour Guidance Course. This nine-week course culminated in families addressing individual concerns they each had with their children and learning to set up boundaries. Participants received a Statement of Attainment. This acknowledgment was very meaningful to many families who had never previously gained access to tertiary education overseas or in Australia.

An Early Intervention Parenting Program for Iraqi families was run in partnership with Liverpool Hospital. This program grew out of requests from families from the playgroups to help address immediate needs. These families met key staff at Liverpool Hospital: social workers, a psychologist and a paediatrician. This unique program helped families to gain an entry point to services in a confident and competent manner. Key achievements included a child receiving a diagnosis of autism and referrals to appropriate services.

Support for families - Exposure to tertiary education

There was an increase in families from the playgroups who enrolled at TAFE to study. This process was aided by current partnerships with Liverpool and Miller TAFEs. Three TAFE Teachers worked closely with families and children across three of the playgroups. Course outlines and enrolment dates were displayed to promote access to courses.

Social Capital

The Cultural Connect Project continues to assist families to decrease their level of isolation as in the case with families who are going through a settlement process upon arrival in Australia. We have linked families to other families from their own culture, language or religion. Through friendships and feelings of connectedness, families gradually move to use other LMRC services and mainstream services.

Support for children — Early Intervention

During the reported period we have successfully referred and supported children that were identified as requiring early intervention to local services such as Miller Preschool, Learning Links and the Liverpool Hospital/Rainbow Cottage Screening Clinic.

The children continued to be supported through an early childhood program based on play. The school readiness program is an integral component of the Multicultural Playgroups. Fourteen children graduated in 2010. Twenty children are eligible to start school in 2012.

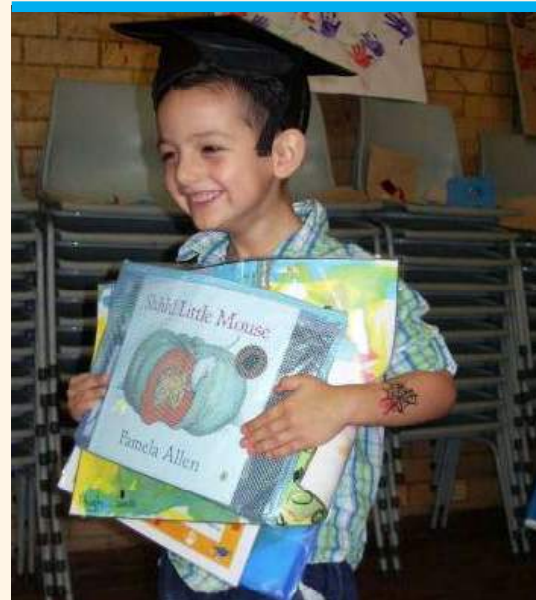
Supporting the local community Vietnamese Playgroup



Six children from the Vietnamese Playgroup, with the support of their families, performed at the Centrelink Office Liverpool during the 'Families Week event'. Five families and their children from the Vietnamese Playgroup visited a nursing home during Seniors Week to perform Vietnamese songs for their residents.

Innovative programs to address needs of children

The 'Active Play' @ Playgroup Program commenced mid-June 2011 at two of our playgroups. The first stage consisted of surveying parents. As the importance of early play has been highlighted in the National Recommendations for physical activity for children aged 0-5 years, the Cultural Connect Project Staff are committed to learn from this program and to instigate more active play programming ideas in order to pass clear messages to families. The motivation to undertake this program stems from concerns we have with many of the playgroup participants, who primarily live in high-rise buildings and are fearful of accessing local recreational facilities.



Complementary one off Funding

Liverpool City Council provided funding for the 'Developing Happy Families Project'. Forty-four families and sixty-one children took part in excursions to local parks and an excursion to the Power House Museum. In addition, funds were used to support the Behaviour Management Course at the Playgroups. A small resource library for families and children was developed with relevant books to reinforce concepts learned.

Following the LMRC's successful attainment of PBI status by the Tax Office, an application to Barnardos-Max E Grants was successful. This grant assisted two siblings with educational expenses.





Developing Happy Families Project

The Liverpool MRC received funding under the Community Donations Program for the Developing Happy Families Project.

Activities:

1. Parenting Program - Behaviour Management Program

A nine week program, two hours per week during Term 1 and 2, 2011, was facilitated by an Early Childhood TAFE Teacher.

An average nineteen participants from Hinchinbrook Multicultural playgroup attended. The course was tailored to practical outcomes, where the participants had the opportunity to:

- **Explore causes of their children's inappropriate behavior;**
- **Learn strategies to modify their children's behavior;**
- **Explore parenting styles and learn how a parent's reaction can affect children's behaviour.**

2. **Planned excursions encouraging positive parent/child interaction**
 - **Two excursions were held in the local Liverpool LGA, i.e. Chipping Norton Lakes;**
 - **One excursion was held outside Liverpool, i.e. to the Powerhouse Museum.**

Ethiopian Community Access Project

An Ethiopian worker was employed for one day each week.

A consultation was held on 9 October 2010 with 33 participants. There was a follow-up after the event and compilation of results.

The consultation informed activities for the Ethiopian community, which were planned accordingly and implemented in the given time.

Information sessions included:

- **Financial Management;**
- **Stress management;**
- **Discovery Tour of Sydney CBD and Harbour with a social/picnic event.**

ADMINISTRATION TEAM REPORT

A total of 4,843 clients were serviced through the Front Desk alone.

This project is funded by Department of Immigration and Citizenship, to provide direct service based on client needs through the front counter. And what a year it has been! With the introduction of the Humanitarian Settlement Program in the second half of last year, we saw an increase in clients and in the complexity of client issues that led to a very busy and interesting year.

A total of 4,843 clients were serviced through the Front Desk alone, providing direct information, appropriate appointments with caseworkers; certifying documents, enrolling for courses and providing answers to general queries.

The partnership with Liverpool TAFE is proving a continuing success and provides valuable education and skills to our clients. The administration team was actively involved in organising classes by liaising with students, teachers and providing administration support.

A total of 184 students attended the following classes:

- **4 English Classes/ Beginners and Intermediate Level;**
- **2 Introduction to Computing Classes — English;**
- **1 Introduction to Computing Classes — Vietnamese ;**
- **2 Introduction to Floristry Classes;**
- **2 Introduction to Sewing Classes/ Pattern Making.**

55 Clients were assisted with lodging of Tax Returns through ATO's tax help program. The Administration team promoted the program and managed the appointments for the program.

27 students and volunteers were supervised by the Administration Team — providing them with valuable local work experience with various projects of the MRC and training in developing a portfolio, preparing a resume and a covering letter, preparing for a job interview and marketing themselves effectively.

22 community groups were resourced by Liverpool MRC with meeting room facilities and equipment. The Administration Team assisted groups during hours and on weekends with allocation of meeting rooms and other resources.

145 service flyers and audio/video information was displayed at the reception area. The front desk maintains a 'Bilingual Information Hub', whereby information on various services in Liverpool and Sydney are collected, displayed and updated at the reception area.

The Administration team has also been involved in the promotion and orientation of the Centre to newly arrived migrants and refugees through Information Sessions, Workshops and Information Stalls at Community Events.

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