

Annual Report 2023-24



**migrant
resource
centre**

TASMANIA

Everyone Belongs

Acknowledgement of Country

Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania acknowledges the palawa/pakana people as traditional custodians of the lands throughout lutruwita/Tasmania on which we live and work. We pay respect to elders past and present and recognise their continuing connection with country and community.

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Our Patron: Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Barbara Baker AC, Governor of Tasmania.



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About Us

Who we are

Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania (MRC Tas) is a not-for-profit organisation that works alongside people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. We provide effective, targeted and meaningful services throughout the State from offices in the South, North and North West.

Since its establishment in 1979, MRC Tas has been part of the landscape of cultural diversity in lutruwita/Tasmania. More than four decades later, the organisation reflects both our history and the changing and evolving needs of our community.

Our vision:

A vibrant and diverse lutruwita/Tasmania where everyone is included and everyone belongs.

Our mission:

To work alongside people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, so individuals and communities throughout lutruwita/Tasmania thrive.

Our values:

Respect
Inclusion
Compassion
Integrity
Innovation
Collaboration

What we do

MRC Tas offers a wide range of specialised services and projects to build the skills, knowledge and capacity of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community members so they can live well and thrive in Tasmanian society. These include:

- Humanitarian and migrant settlement
- Capacity building
- Community development
- Counselling and mental health support
- Employment and education support
- Individual and group case management
- Health and life skills programs and services
- Support for older people and people with a disability and their carers
- Support for young people
- Accommodation

Chair Report

I want to begin my report by sincerely thanking my highly skilled board members for their support, our CEO Gillian Long, her executive team and our hard-working staff and volunteers for their fabulous efforts this year.

What a year it has been. As an organisation we have diligently worked towards the strategic objectives in our strategic plan as well as taking on additional tasks which, while unplanned, have been very successful.

However there have been challenges and unfortunately whilst Tasmania is generally an inclusive and respectful place, at times we have been let down by some in our community as a number of incidents of racism have been reported. I am proud of how our organisation has responded and supported those we represent. We have been successful in advocacy for more assistance from Government and have been agile and responsive in supporting and working with our communities to introduce new programs including additional counselling and group supports.

In response to these issues we also embarked on a major initiative called The Walk: Step Up Together to begin a statewide conversation about the positive contribution that Tasmanians from migrant and refugee backgrounds make to the State and how we are 'simply better when we are together'.

This initiative involved a statewide Walk from Burnie to Hobart which provided a platform for positive stories of contribution both socially and economically by Tasmanians from migrant and refugee backgrounds to be heard.

The Walk was also a successful fundraiser and these funds are enabling the positive conversations to continue and importantly for more cultural awareness training to occur. Already we have presented to new industry sectors and local governments as well as service clubs and associations in regards to being culturally aware and supportive of the skills, benefits and opportunities that a diverse workforce can bring.



As Chair I am so thankful for the entire organisation's efforts in this space and I am confident that our increased engagement will over time lead to a more inclusive and respectful Tasmania that will improve the lives of not only Tasmanians from a migrant or refugee background but the lives of all Tasmanians as well.

As an organisation we also ended the year in line with our financial budget targets and importantly continued to build our financial strength to ensure that we remain a growing and sustainable entity. This year for audit purposes we have reported as revenue under AASB 1058 those agreements that are not sufficiently specific to be carried forward as a liability and these changes are reflected in our financial statements and explained in the accompanying notes.

I want to finish where I began and thank everyone who has been involved with the Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania over the course of the year, but especially our hard working CEO Gillian Long, her executive team and our broader staff and volunteers who really work hard to improve the lives of those Tasmanians from migrant and refugee backgrounds that we are here to serve.

The Hon Peter Gutwein
Chair

CEO Report

It is a great pleasure to present the Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania's 2023-2024 Annual Report.

This report reflects a snapshot of our work, with some significant achievements not able to be squeezed into these pages. The year saw us deliver on key projects aligned to our strategic plan, with some significant projects confirming our ability to be agile and responsive to needs and deliver impactful services. The organisation also continued to enjoy a high level of support from Tasmanian migrant and refugee background communities, our partners, funders, Tasmanian businesses and other key stakeholders.

Our work is guided by an understanding of the needs of migrant and refugee communities. Consultations with individuals and communities, including our involvement in the Multicultural Action Plan consultation report, highlighted the value of our existing services, as well as making it clear that more needs to be done to address community safety and housing.

Disheartened by repeated reports of racism and discrimination, we implemented strategies to support victims and increase capacity to respond to incidents, and as well as strategies to raise awareness of the value those from migrant and refugee backgrounds bring to Tasmania.

Undoubtedly, one of those strategies was our year's highlight- The Walk, Step up Together. This initiative saw our Chair, the Hon Peter Gutwein, complete a high-profile walk from our Burnie office to Glenorchy, raising funds and highlighting the positive contribution people from migrant and refugee backgrounds make to Tasmania. Hugely successful, The Walk played an important role in increasing the broader community's awareness of the importance of supporting Tasmanian multiculturalism. The Walk attracted interest across the State and interstate and will form the basis of ongoing fundraising and awareness-raising activities.

New services and projects, including providing counselling and group support for victims of



racism, and a community safety project, have been important strategies to help respond to racism, including overcoming its psychological impact on individuals and communities.

Our accommodation services have expanded, and we are thrilled that in addition to our Goodwood accommodation site, we are now able to provide a home to skilled migrant workers in the South, as well as additional on-arrival accommodation for people arriving through the humanitarian program in the North.

Our Statewide presence has grown, with additional activities being delivered in the Northwest to meet the needs of growing migrant communities in the region. Expansion of service delivery from our Launceston office made a move to larger premises necessary and staff and clients have welcomed the benefits the new office brings.

The expert strategic guidance of the MRC Tas Board, the work of our dedicated, skilled staff and volunteers, along with the support of our funders and partners, underpins all our achievements. Thank you. I would particularly like to express my sincere thanks to the Board and staff for their passion, skills and good humour. You make each day worthwhile.

Dr Gillian Long
Chief Executive Officer



Impact

People achieve their goals. Individuals and families can thrive.
Communities are engaged and everyone belongs

Outcomes

Employment & Training, independence & self-sufficiency, wellbeing, connection & belonging

Activities

Individual support, groups and programs, as well as counselling, events, training & advocacy

Input

Staff, Volunteers, Clients, Community, Stakeholders, Donors & Funding

Approach

Fostering collaboration and partnership through co-design and client voice. Strengths-based, outcomes-focused and grounded by evidence

Values

inclusion

compassion

collaborative

innovation

integrity

Theory of Change

Vision

A vibrant and diverse
lutruwita/Tasmania where
everyone is included and
everyone belongs



Society

Settlement locations are
welcoming and all
members of society live
freely from racism and
discrimination



Communities

Multicultural communities
have autonomy and can
represent their views at
local and state levels



Stakeholders

All Tasmanian services and organisations are
culturally responsive and inclusive. Settlement
services and multicultural peak bodies work
together to support Multicultural communities
and individuals to live fulfilling lives



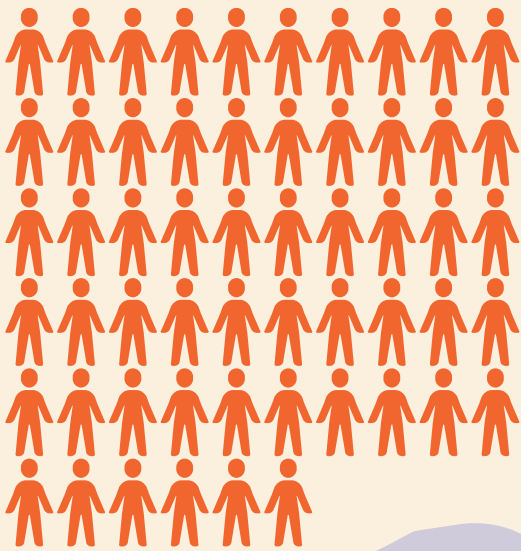
Mission

Work alongside people from refugee
and migrant backgrounds so individuals
and communities throughout
lutruwita/Tasmania thrive



respect

on



44 Multicultural Youth drop-in sessions, and 56 individual young people receiving low intensity case management support

178 Clients housed at our multicultural accommodation



350 people participated in Cultural Competency Training

1399 Learners driver hours +25 people getting their P1 licenses



37 Clients secured employment through our Settlement services



329 People participated in structured therapeutic groupwork



The Aged and Community services team supported 269 older people to live independently

Vietnam
Eritrea
Mexico
China
Bhutan
Iran
Afghanistan
Nepal
Syrian Arab Rep.
Sri Lanka
South Sudan
Somalia
Australia
Kenya
Thailand
India
Nigeria
Hong Kong
Mauritius
Ethiopia
Italy
France
Burundi
Albania
Pakistan
Malaysia
Myanmar
Estonia
Sudan
Peru
Papua New Guinea
Guinea
El Salvador
Singapore
Croatia
Poland
Finland
Philippines
Iraq
Bosnia & Herzegovina

Greece
Germany
Netherlands
Chile
Rwanda
Macau
Colombia
Turkey
Congo, DR
Brazil
Tonga
United Kingdom
Honduras
Indonesia
Jordan
Japan
Algeria
Ukraine
Jamaica
Cyprus
Canada
Egypt
Uganda
Bangladesh
Saudi Arabia
Tanzania
South Korea
Argentina
Belgium
Congo
Ecuador

Our clients originate from over 70 countries



11,045

Individual Client Sessions

Languages spoken by clients

43

Clients Served

1045

Over 500 community members consulted for the Multicultural Action Plan



Phoenix Centre counselling services provided over 1500 counselling and related support sessions to individuals



Everyone Belongs

Our Community My Future:

Empowering youth and promoting social cohesion.

Multicultural Youth Tasmania Team (MYT)

Our Community My Future was an ambitious project designed to support at-risk young people to thrive within their local communities. Over the life of the project, 120 young people took part across the state, with the program delivered in both our Glenorchy and Launceston offices, and in collaboration with The Link Youth Health Services in the South and Cornerstone Youth Services in the North.

The program aimed to improve participants' resilience, wellbeing and social participation, through a focus on foundational life skills to help overcome challenges and provide a sense of belonging. The program was designed around a needs and strengths-based model, offering intensive support and case management. Participants received help with their individual needs and goals, ranging from obtaining a driver's licence, a white card and finding work to enrolling at college, joining a sports team or receiving help completing Centrelink paperwork.

In Spring, the MYT team ran "Foundations for Life" skills workshops structured as fun and recreational group activities. These initiatives aimed to increase social participation and inclusion for vulnerable youth, providing opportunities for them to connect and build positive relationships with their peers.

Activities included: hip hop song-writing and music productions with facilitators such as Pulse Studios and Tasmanian Young Achiever People's Choice Award winner Grace Chia; Aboriginal cultural awareness at Garden Island Creek facilitated by



Nita Education; workshops on self-esteem, social confidence, social skills, team building and creative conflict resolution facilitated by the Alternatives to Violence Project; and a session in Leadership and Project Management from the Centre For Multicultural Youth (CMY) Positive Change Makers training. These workshops were followed by a community project, where participants worked together to transform a wooden boat into a playground for young kids from refugee and migrant backgrounds. As well as giving participants practical skills in woodworking, the community project provided opportunities for positive social interactions and fostered a sense of achievement in building something practical for the broader community to enjoy.

Feedback from the young participants showed that the needs- and strengths-based support model was highly valued and made a significant impact on the young people's lives.



The program's success culminated in a graduation ceremony held at Launceston Library in May, celebrating the young participants' achievements. The program not only empowered young people but also reinforced the importance of community support and collaboration in fostering a safe, inclusive environment where everyone belongs.

"The program helped me find somewhere to belong."

Program participant

"When [my case worker] told me it was for young kids, it made me happy to work on it, to make this boat for communities."

Program participant

Case workers observed reduction of risk-taking behaviour in 84% of participants.

100% of participants found that they were more resilient because of this program.

83% of participants experienced improved social participation.

91% of participants experienced improved wellbeing.

This project was funded by a grant from the Australian Government, Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.

Employment and Learning

Hospitality Gateway

Providing support to people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to gain employment or further training in the Australian hospitality sector.

Settlement Services

Running over the course of a year, the Hospitality Gateway program was designed to provide multicultural women with little to no English proficiency with skills and literacy to gain employment or undertake further training in hospitality. Focusing primarily on women from humanitarian backgrounds, the program recognised that many of our female clients bring existing skills in cooking and catering but have difficulty transferring those skills into the Australian hospitality environment due to caring responsibilities and literacy challenges.

The program provided participants with 40-70 hours of training in a range of topics, including table and customer service, coffee making, food safety and hygiene training, food preparation, stocktake and storage procedures, workplace health and safety procedures, vocational English and effective communication, as well as providing participants with the experience of cooking in a commercial kitchen. All training was supported by bicultural workers and incorporated a range of tools and other resources to overcome language barriers and improve understanding.

Seven participants undertook extensive paid work experience through our partner Loaves and Fishes, helping prepare culturally diverse meals distributed as food relief. One participant also got the opportunity to work alongside other trainees at the Loaves and Fishes central kitchen in Rokeby.



Completion of the training was celebrated with a sumptuous feast including injera with kika (yellow split pea stew), Misr wat (spicy red lentils) and Doro Wat (Ethiopian chicken stew), and Aushak and Mantu (different types of Afghan dumplings). Participants were enthusiastic in their appreciation of the training Supervisor, Phoebe Trang, and our external hospitality trainer, Peter Handy, presenting them with gifts at the final lunch.

Following the training, participants received comprehensive support as a group and individuals through the MRC Tas Employment officer to access employment and further training opportunities, increasing their chances of gaining employment, job security and financial stability.

Job coaching sessions included support for job searches, application writing and interviewing, assistance with enrolling into additional programs relevant to industry needs, and help accessing government funding to purchase industry relevant and required equipment.



"It's great at creating confidence and improved my skills in hospitality."

Program participant

The project received invaluable support from Tasmanian businesses and organisations, including Tasmanian Hospitality Association, Grand Chancellor Hotel, Tasmania Football Association, Cresent Hotel, Glenorchy Job Hub and Searson Buck.

Program evaluation found that participants saw improvements in skills, knowledge and confidence across all areas. The program quickly outgrew its initial target of 14, as enthusiasm about the project spread among clients and participants brought friends along.

This program was assistend by a grant from the Tasmanian Department of State Growth.

84% of participants reported a positive impact on their understanding, skills, and competencies relevant to the hospitality sector.

90% of participants had increased confidence to work in the hospitality sector.

90% of participants reported improved knowledge of Australian workplace culture and rights.

38 participants were engaged in training and coaching.

12 participants secured employment.

Health and Wellbeing

Multicultural Mums: Parenting and Learning Support Groups (MuM PALS)

Strengthening Early Years through connecting multicultural parents to increasingly culturally competent early childhood services.

Phoenix Centre

The MuM PALS program ran as a multicultural parent's group for parents of children aged 0-2 years, aimed at providing them with support to improve their children's physical and mental health and wellbeing, and connecting parents to early childhood, women's health and perinatal services in Tasmania. The challenges of settlement, trauma experience of refugees, different cultural practices around parenting, and barriers to access Australian services and systems leave young children and babies from refugee and migrant backgrounds vulnerable to developmental delays that can impact early schooling.

The MuM PALS program addressed these barriers by building knowledge and confidence for multicultural families, and by strengthening the cultural competency of mainstream services to better cater for culturally diverse families and their young children.

Starting in November, the MuM PALS groups ran for 20 sessions in the North and the South, providing a safe space to explore parenting practices, childhood development and early childhood education and services in Tasmania.



The program format and content were co-designed with participants, and included topics around child development stages, emotion coaching, play in parenting, immunisation, oral health, children first aid, parent self-care and family planning. The group also went on excursions, visiting family friendly places and activities, for example Rock and Rhyme at Libraries Tas, Botanical Gardens, TMAG, Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary and Government House.

The program also established an early childhood exchange network, comprised of members working in the early childhood service sector across the state. Members undertook training in cultural awareness and working with interpreters and participated in networking sessions. Network members also visited the parent's group to introduce their services and connect with participants. Program evaluation showed that 94% of members learned skills or knowledge they could implement in their work with CALD families, 75% felt better placed to identify socio-economic factors in CALD families that are detrimental to health outcomes and 75% had gained a better understanding of different parenting and caregiving practices in multicultural families.



“The sessions about parenting, about food, and social and legal information about [domestic violence], who we need to contact about schooling, about childcare, lots of lots of information which is very good, because for us it is totally new and also because we are immigrants we don’t know how they do things in Australia, how to contact people, I even didn’t know that there is a lot of things that are free of costs.”

MuM PALS participant

The program achieved positive medium-term outcomes for parents, including increased parental confidence and capacity; improved responses to child’s behaviour; improved social and emotional wellbeing of parents; improved peer relationships of children; and improved trust in services. These outcomes are an encouraging foundation for longer-term positive impact on early childhood development, parent-child relationships, and wellbeing in children and families.

78% of participants felt more confident as a parent.

78% had gained a better understanding of available services and supports.

67% felt more confident in accessing Early Childhood services.

89% developed a better understanding of what good health, wellbeing and communication skills look like in a child of their age.

This program was funded by a grant from the Paul Ramsay Foundation. We thank the staff of the Foundation for their support and encouragement throughout the project.

Connection and Inclusion

Our Community Safety

Building mutual trust and understanding between migrants and the legal and civic systems in Tasmania.

Settlement Services

The Our Community Safety project was directed at improving understanding, resilience, and integration of multicultural communities in Tasmania, especially in relation to violent extremism, including racism and prejudice-motivated crimes. Prejudice-motivated crimes and incidents are under-reported in Tasmania, which makes it difficult for police to monitor trends and provide preventative strategies, and for legislative action in the area.

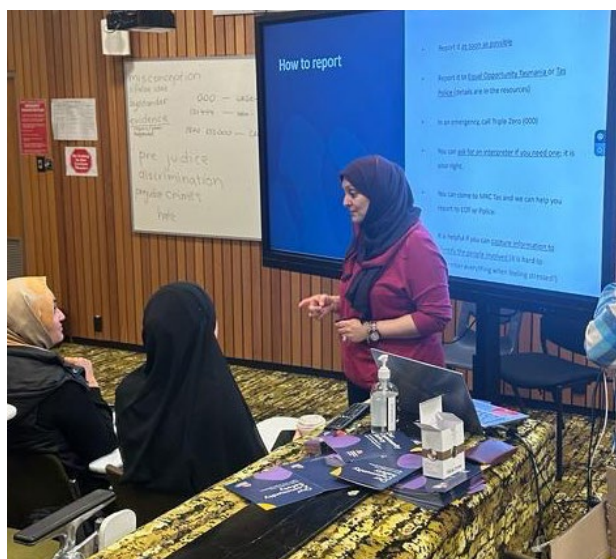
The program supported communities to increase their legal literacy and trust in civic and legal institutions in Tasmania; developed community safety resources; and supported the legal system to build its cultural competency.

The project was informed by widespread community consultations involving more than 75 people across stakeholders, community leaders and community members. Conversations revolved around experiences of prejudice-motivated crimes, communities' perspective of the police before and after coming to Tasmania, why people do not want to report, their knowledge of Equal Opportunity Tasmania, and what they would need from the police.

These conversations showed that while basic concepts of prejudice-motivated crime, harassment and abuse are understood, there is a lack of knowledge about what exactly constitutes a prejudice incident or crime, what can and should be reported, what help community members can receive, widespread fear, mistrust and resentment of the police and government authorities, and concerns about visa implications.



"I like to try and create wow moments in my job, simple moments that make an impact in people's life. Every day I bring that passion to work and look forward to making a difference and bringing a smile to someone's face. I wish to support new Tasmanians to embrace their sense of belonging because Tasmania is home."
Aimen Jafri





These consultations informed the development of community safety resources to provide information and address myths and fears. The resources consisted of a booklet and a wallet card, provided in six languages and available in both digital and print format. The resources were distributed to stakeholders and community leaders involved in the consultation, and to community members more broadly. The resources were also distributed as part of community information sessions on prejudice-motivated crimes or incidents.

- The project was highly effective in increasing awareness and understanding of violent extremism in all forms, including prejudice-motivated incidents and crimes.
- The resources were highly effective in increasing understanding of the importance of victims or bystanders reporting prejudice motivated crimes.
- Community members were more likely to report prejudice motivated crimes.

The Our Community Safety project was a successful first step in creating a bridge between migrants and the legal and civic system in Tasmania and demonstrated a strong impact in many of the intended outcomes.

This project was funded by a grant from the Australian Government, Department of Home Affairs.

Capacity Building and Advocacy

Suicide Prevention and Community Capacity Building: Equipping Communities

Phoenix Centre

MRC Tas has a strong focus on building the capacity of other organisations, individuals and communities. We know that every cultural community faces unique challenges when it comes to suicide prevention. This year, we delivered several programs and events focused on increasing the capacity of communities to respond to suicide risk. Through these initiatives, MRC Tas empower communities, providing community members with relevant tools and the confidence to strengthen their suicide prevention response.

SafeTALK

The Phoenix Centre has accredited SafeTALK training facilitators and provides community and workforce training.

In June, 18 clients from Bhutanese background participated in SafeTALK training in Launceston. The participants were equipped with skills and knowledge to recognise and engage with people who may be having thoughts of suicide and connect them to suicide first aid resources. One of the main topics covered during the training was *Suicide is everyone's business*.

The training highlighted that most people with thoughts of suicide don't truly want to die but are struggling with the pain in their lives. Through their words and actions, they invite help to stay alive. SafeTALK-trained helpers can recognise these invitations for help and take action by supporting people to connect with life-saving resources, supports and services.

Participants said they *developed confidence to talk to someone who they are worried about*. Participants also shared they would like all members in the communities to attend this kind of workshop.



"The most fulfilling aspect of my work as a counsellor is being able to walk alongside individuals during some of their most challenging and transformative moments. It is incredibly rewarding to be able to support my clients to navigate through their difficulties and see their progress. In my role, I hope to keep creating safe and supportive spaces where individuals feel heard, understood, and empowered to take steps toward positive change."

Mary Atoyebi

This project was funded by a grant from Primary Health Tasmania.



R U OK? Day

R U OK? Day contributes to suicide prevention efforts by encouraging people to invest more time in their personal relationships and building the capacity of informal support networks. Last September we held R U OK? Day events in Launceston and Glenorchy. Community members from Bhutanese, Karen, Farsi, Tigrinya, Oromo, Burmese, Vietnamese, and Nepali communities attended the events. The Phoenix team had a great morning with the community members discussing how to have an “R U OK?” conversation with someone in their life who may be struggling. *The team acknowledged that although the conversations might feel awkward at first, they can be life changing.*

The participants had informative sessions and gained knowledge on several topics such as: *Knowing how to ask someone “R U OK?”; How to care, show love and respect to other people; The importance of being kind and helping others around us; and Being mindful of the things that cause one to be depressed and keeping away from the situations.*

Overall, participants said they enjoyed having mental health conversation practice together and got information about where to get help.

The main takeaway was that we all have a role to play in looking out for those we care about at home, work or in our community. Asking, ‘are you OK?’ could lead to a conversation that could change a life.

At the end of the sessions, surveys found that over 90% of the participants said they felt prepared to support someone in the community struggling with mental health issues.

“I learnt steps to ask others if they are okay and to follow that up”

This project was funded by Primary Health Tasmania and the Australian Government’s Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (PASTT).

The Walk - Step Up Together



In June, MRC Tas Chair, the Hon Peter Gutwein completed a challenging seven-day, 350 km walk from Burnie to Glenorchy. The Walk aimed to raise awareness and funds for a more inclusive and compassionate lutruwita/Tasmania.

Motivated by reports of racism in the State, *The Walk, Step Up Together* showcased the strength of diversity and the important contribution of Tasmania's migrant and refugee communities to the State's social and economic wellbeing. Each leg of *The Walk* saw members of Tasmania's migrant community join in and share their stories.

The Walk was a huge success. It raised awareness of the positive contributions and achievements of people from migrant and refugee backgrounds and raised over \$60,000. The initiative received overwhelmingly positive media attention, with multiple interviews each day, stories in local newspapers, and people seeking us out along the route. Over 200 people attended the celebratory barbecue at the end of *The Walk*.

Reflecting on his journey, Peter shared, "When I first announced *The Walk*, I knew it would be challenging, but it pales in comparison to the challenges many of our migrants and refugees face just to arrive here and establish a new life. Walking 350 kilometers has taught me a lot—blisters won't kill you, and toenails are overrated—but what stood out most was the overwhelming compassion and kindness from Tasmanians. Businesses and individuals rallied behind *The Walk*, joining me and donating funds to support a more inclusive Tasmania.



There were incredible stories shared along the way by migrants working in fields such as medicine, dentistry, construction, hospitality, and retail. Diversity and inclusion bring new ways of thinking, understanding, and innovating."

"We truly are better together and can achieve great things when united under a common purpose."

Funds raised through The Walk will go towards developing and delivering Cultural Conversations programs, to help build the cultural awareness and competency of Tasmanian organisations, community members and businesses.

We will continue to build on the momentum created by The Walk, with a range of other Walk-related activities planned to continue to promote the benefits people from migrant and refugee backgrounds bring to our society.



"The main thing of The Walk is to show that racism is not okay... Yes we are different, we're from different countries, we have a different background, but we're human and we're equal." Zahra

Training & Engagement

Cultural Awareness and Competency Training

For over 20 years, MRC Tas has been delivering training to help support the cultural responsiveness of mainstream services and organisations. Our mission is to build capacity across all Tasmanian sectors, enabling them to deliver culturally sensitive and inclusive services while fostering cultural competence at both individual and organisational levels. As well as our regular offerings of Cultural Competency and Working with Interpreter training at our Glenorchy and Launceston offices, we provide bespoke training solutions for government agencies, service providers, health services, not for profits, and community groups, as well as corporate and business sectors.

Our training sessions are grounded in lived experience and informed by Tasmanian-specific data and research, drawing on our deep understanding of Tasmanian migration and settlement stories. Our role in helping new arrivals to settle in Tasmania means we understand the local challenges faced by people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. This year we welcomed a new lead trainer, Aimen Jafri, who brings a wealth of lived experience as a skilled migrant, community leader and multicultural advocate.

We are constantly revising our training and looking for new ways to have cultural conversations in our communities and with organisations. In response to growing demand, we have expanded our offerings to include workplace cultural competency training, addressing the needs of an increasingly diverse workforce and helping teams work better together by understanding intercultural communication.



Organisations we have delivered to this year include:

Department of Premier and Cabinet
Department of State Growth
Primary Health Tasmania
Department of Education, Children and Young People
Commission for Children and Young People
Tasmanian Medical School
Perinatal Mental Health
Postgraduate Medical Education Council of Tasmania
University of Tasmania, Centre for Legal Studies
The Association for Children With Disability (TAS) Inc.
HIPPI Burnie
Corumbene Care
Hesperi
The Link
THE 20
Lifeline Tasmania
Statewide Independent Wholesalers Limited
Hazell Bros



The Multicultural Action Plan Consultation Project

Providing strategic directions for the Tasmanian Government's next Multicultural Action Plan.

Commissioned by: Tasmanian State Government.

MRC Tas along with the Multicultural Council of Tasmania (MCOT) and the Migrant Resource Centre North (now Welcome Cultural Services) were commissioned by the Tasmania State Government to provide a Strategic Directions Report to inform the development of the next Multicultural Action Plan. The collaborative consultation project collected data through an online survey, community forums, round table discussions and written submissions, and engaged with more than 1,000 individuals from Tasmania's multicultural communities.

MRC Tas provided community members with language support to complete the survey and facilitated participatory community sessions in-language, informing community members about the preliminary findings of the survey and engaging them in discussions of potential solutions to identified challenges.

The Strategic Directions Report was accepted by Department of Premier and Cabinet in October, and the full report can be found on the MRC Tas website.



Humanitarian Settlement Program

MRC Tas delivers the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) in Tasmania under a subcontracting agreement with AMES Australia. The HSP supports humanitarian entrants and other eligible visa holders to integrate into Australian life, by helping new arrivals build the skills and knowledge they need to become self-reliant and active members of the community.

The HSP team work closely with the MRC Tas Accommodation Services and Settlement programs to provide holistic support and connect newly arrived Tasmanians to education, employment and English language support as well as social and wellbeing programs. MRC Tas delivers support to clients using an individualised case management approach tailored to their needs, strengths and goals.

Strengths and contribution of newly arrived Tasmanians

HSP clients come with many talents and skills and ready to contribute to the Tasmania community. A young woman who arrived in 2023 was supported by the HSP team to showcase her artistic talents by entering the Multicultural Youth Tasmania (MYT) Art competition and winning first prize. She has gone on to continue her arts practice in College and is thriving.

Another client arrived in Launceston in November 2022 as a Humanitarian Entrant and demonstrated remarkable adaptability throughout the settlement process. By April 2023, they had secured employment as an interpreter with Amigos, showcasing their linguistic proficiency and commitment to the community. In March 2024, the client advanced further by obtaining a position with the Red Cross as a Bi-cultural Worker, exemplifying their contribution to humanitarian work.

Hawa arrived in Hobart as a Humanitarian Entrant in 2024. Her English skills and previous international work experience enabled a smooth start to their settlement journey. When the opportunity for a Teaching Assistant position arose at Clarence High School, the HSP team provided the necessary support, and Hawa successfully secured the role due to her enthusiasm and dedication. Hawa is now pursuing a Certificate III in Aged Care, an impressive accomplishment for someone new to Australia, reflecting their commitment to both personal and professional growth.



I arrived in Tasmania, Australia, in April 2023 and initially became a client of the Humanitarian Settlement Program. I was fortunate to later join the HSP team as a Housing Support Worker in February 2024. I am truly grateful to be part of this team and really enjoy working with diverse individuals from various backgrounds and cultures. It brings me great happiness to support and assist them in any way I can. *Yahya Jafari*

HSP is funded by the Australian Government's Department of Home Affairs.



From HSP client to support worker

My name is Julian Cangmah. I was born in Chin State of Myanmar. I arrived with my family in Tasmania in December 2022 and received support from MRC Tas's HSP Team. Having gone through this process both myself and with my family, I became very familiar with MRC Tas and its initiatives.

Before I came to Tasmania, I managed a school for underprivileged children in Malaysia, where I was living with refugee status. These children had nowhere to get an education as they were not allowed to enter mainstream school in Malaysia. As a refugee myself living in the country, the community entrusted me to lead the school, and I coordinated with donors, volunteers and other philanthropists to ensure the school had adequate funding and support to be able to take care of approximately 100 vulnerable children.

When I learnt of the opportunity to become a support worker with MRC Tas's HSP Team, I was delighted to have the chance to join MRC Tas. This gave me the opportunity to support diverse people from refugee backgrounds who have settled in Tasmania, and I am enjoying every task that I am doing now.

I am currently studying Community Services at TasTAFE so that I can learn more about working in Community Services in Australia. In the future, I would like to work as a social worker so I can help more people to the best of my ability. I hope to progress in my career at MRC Tas.

I have always been a person who wanted to help others and I've always believed that helping others is the rent I pay for my room here on earth.

I am very grateful to have this opportunity for me and my family to re-settle in Australia and we are blessed when there are so many others who are waiting to be re-settled and have a peaceful and stable future.

Aged and Community Services

MRC Tas Aged and Community Services connects older people and their carers with social activities and supports to help them live at home, be part of the community and access services. Our services have a focus on cultural needs, wellness and independence and aim to help people to live independently and to maintain or gain new skills and live a good life.

Our services include Home Care Packages (HCP), Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) Home and Community Care (HACC). Under CHSP funding we have 3 social support groups, social support for shopping assistance, domestic assistance, and Social Work. Home care packages provide multiple service types such as domestic assistance, social support, equipment, allied health and clinical care and includes case management by our very experienced staff.

Understanding and Addressing Elder Abuse

This year Aged and Community Services delivered training to support communities to understand Elder Abuse in the Australian context. Six Bicultural/Bilingual workers undertook a Train the Trainer program to understand what elder abuse is, its legal context in Tasmania, how to recognise signs and respond, and the services that people can reach out to for support.

The workers who participated in the program were then supported to deliver information sessions to their communities. 82 members of Eritrean, Nepalese, Afghan, and Chinese communities participated in these information sessions.



Most participants reported that they previously understood abuse to be only physical abuse that can be seen, but now had a more holistic understanding of what elder abuse can entail. 100% of Bicultural Workers and participants in community information sessions reported improved awareness and knowledge.

“very important for everybody to know where to get help when they need to.”
“this type of information session should be on more often.”

As part of this program, our Social Worker supported older people to understand their rights and options for safety and how to access other help including legal support. The program also worked with Elder Abuse support services to strengthen their understanding of cultural considerations.

This program was funded by grants from the Australian Government, Department of Health and Aged Care.



Supporting and celebrating older people: Senior's week

Over 130 community members came together to celebrate Seniors Week in October 2023 in a joyful celebration that brought our community together in the most heartwarming way. Our dedicated team curated a series of engaging events and activities that highlighted the vibrant spirit and invaluable contributions of our senior members.

We had lively social gatherings, inspiring workshops and performances, all designed to honour their rich life experiences and foster a strong sense of camaraderie. The enthusiasm and appreciation shared throughout the week underscored the importance of celebrating and uplifting our seniors.

This event was funded by a grant from the Commonwealth Home Support Program (CHSP) and Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care (PICAC).



“What I love most about working in aged care is the chance to make a positive difference in our clients’ lives, helping them retain their independence and quality of life while staying in their own homes and communities with their loved ones. My aim is to continuously enhance our services to better support our community, ensuring every client feels valued and cared for.” *Sagar Maharjan*

Settlement Services

MRC Tas Settlement Services equip clients with the skills and confidence needed to address their settlement needs and thrive as active members of the Tasmanian community. Services include direct client work as well as sector development in the youth, education, and community space. The Settlement team collaborate with mainstream services, advocating for the needs and rights of new Tasmanians. Programs focus on health and wellbeing, education, employment, civic participation support, driving and wellbeing, and aim to develop opportunities to build a sense of belonging in Tasmania and Australia.

Program Highlight

School Holiday Excursions

Each school holiday, MRC Tas offers holiday activities for our clients and families from humanitarian and refugee backgrounds. In January, a group of 15 clients visited Mt Field National Park and in April, we organised a special outing to Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary, attended by 26 clients from various backgrounds. Bicultural Workers provided language support to ensure that all participants could fully engage with the activities.

The purpose of these excursions is to provide days of fun, education and memorable experiences for clients and to allow them to connect with nature and learn about the place they now call home. They also foster a sense of belonging through shared moments of discovery and joy that helps strengthen social bonds and encourages a sense of inclusion in their new lives.



These outings were a resounding success, with smiles on every face and clients taking countless photos and videos to capture the memories. They highlight the importance of organising inclusive, engaging activities that cater to the diverse needs of our clients, helping to create positive and lasting impacts in their lives.

Excursions were funded by the SETS program, provided by the Australian Government, Department of Home Affairs.



Migrant Employment Programs: Addressing barriers to financial participation

MRC Tas employment programs are designed to help participants overcome barriers to securing stable employment. Digital access, reliable internet, transportation, language barriers, hidden biases and discrimination based on diverse backgrounds often pose significant challenges.

Our programs follow a tailored, strengths-based approach, creating personalised support plans. We conduct thorough assessments, evaluate industry certifications, and offer flexible training schedules to accommodate diverse participant needs and commitments. Adaptability is key. As participants progress, interests and goals may shift, requiring our team to be responsive and supportive throughout their journey.

Our programs provide transportation assistance and work to bridge the digital divide, ensuring every participant has an equal opportunity to succeed. We offer industry-specific English classes and bilingual support to build necessary language skills and facilitate engagement. We also equip participants with skills to stand out to employers and advocate for fair and inclusive hiring practices across the community.

This year, our employment programs have achieved remarkable success, supporting over 80 employment cases, engaging 80 participants in industry training, securing jobs for 37 individuals, and providing vital resources such as work clothes, PPE, and tools to 22 participants through our partnership with the Job Ready Fund.

The participants found the programs beneficial with one saying staff were “supportive, caring and understanding” and another that the program was “valuable, great and highly recommend”.

These achievements highlight the resilience of our participants and the dedication of our team. By addressing unique challenges, we help participants secure meaningful employment and empower them to build brighter futures.

“Employment makes participants’ settlement journey successful because they feel confident and are independent.”
Employment officer



I joined MRC Tas in 2021 and I am currently working in Case Management. I’m passionate about my role and enjoy the ability to interact and learn from different cultural perspectives, whilst doing my part in creating a more positive impact in one’s resettlement journey. My clients help me instill the values of resilience and strength each day. MRC Tas is my family here in Hobart.
Sweta Sharma

Multicultural Youth Tasmania

The Multicultural Youth Tasmania (MYT) program provides targeted services and projects to support young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds to thrive as active members of the Tasmanian community. Services include direct client work as well as sector development in the youth, education, and community space.

MYT services and programs focus on sport and recreation, education, employment, and wellbeing, providing an opportunity for young people to develop a strong sense of belonging and resilience during settlement and beyond.



Engaging youth through Creative Expression

Our Youth Drop-in sessions, hosted every Wednesday after school in Glenorchy and Launceston provide a supportive and enriching environment for young people from multicultural backgrounds. These sessions offer a unique opportunity to make friends, receive homework assistance, work on job applications, refine resumes, and plan future pathways. Additionally, they can simply relax and chat with a youth worker while enjoying a snack.

From March to April this year, we held an Arts and Culture competition during drop in. Participants submitted diverse artistic expressions, including paintings, posters, stories, music, crafts, and sculptures. In May, we proudly announced the winner, who received a \$150 gift voucher for their stunning painting depicting a night in a coastal region.



Youth Drop-in was funded by the SETS program, provided by the Australian Government, Department of Home Affairs.



Program Highlight

Bridging Cultures through Sport: AFL Culture Day at Aurora Stadium

Together with AFL Tasmania, MRC Tas held an AFL Culture Day in February at the University of Tasmania's Aurora Stadium in Launceston. The day featured information on the history, culture, and rules of the game, followed by a practical session where young people took to the playing field. Over 20 young people participated and were supported by representatives of the North Melbourne Football Club and AFL Tas.

Many of the participants had previously visited Aurora Stadium, and on the day, they were shown the facilities and taken for a drill session with the players. We hope to continue introducing our clients to the game as a means of bridging cultures.



This event was funded by grants from the Australian Government, Department of Home Affairs.

The Phoenix Centre

The Phoenix Centre provides therapeutic mental health and wellbeing support to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The Centre focuses on mental health promotion, prevention, early intervention and capacity building activities. It provides specialist support to survivors of torture and other traumatic experiences and their communities, funded by the Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma. Services are delivered statewide and include counselling, group psychoeducation work, capacity building, social connection programs and community development activities. The Phoenix Centre also provides training and support to services and is the host agency for the Tasmanian Transcultural Mental Health Network.

Program Highlight

Supporting Fathers

In October, the Phoenix team held a Men's Wellbeing Picnic and Consultation to talk about matters relating to men. The attendees expressed an interest in wanting to connect more and support each other around significant issues that mattered to them such as fatherhood. Fathers were struggling with the different cultural and generational perspectives on the roles and expectations of fathers, which was negatively impacting on their mental health and relationships with others. This led to the creation of Phoenix Fathers' Group for fathers from Farsi, Bhutanese and Punjabi backgrounds.



The Phoenix team consulted the fathers to identify their support needs and underwent training by Relationships Australia to support fathers to be able to shift between roles as needed, including the traditional bread winner/protector, the nurturing dad and the interactive dad. Six Fathers Group workshops were held, and participants reported that they found the Fathers Group workshops highly effective.

One of the participants reflected that they had been overly focused on their children's wellbeing and had neglected their own. They now realised that by taking better care of themselves, they can be a positive role model, demonstrating to their children that personal wellbeing matters.

Another participant reflected that their past method of parenting their teenagers involved limiting mobile phone use or some other activities. After attending the sessions, their perspective shifted to focus on building trust and fostering positive relationships with their children. The participant now aims to support their kids by encouraging healthy phone use while educating them about the potential risks of social media and technology, rather than trying to control their use.



Another participant admitted that they hadn't realised the importance of learning English and how it affected their relationship with their children. The sessions highlighted how their children's ability to navigate a new environment and language would benefit from their active effort to bridge the language gap. The participant expressed a commitment to actively participate in Adult English classes to improve their language skills, aiming to better connect with their children and support their development.



"This group changed our perspectives and helped our family solve problems and network with each other."

"I'd forgotten how important my role was. It pushed me to remind myself what I can do to care for my children."

"This is a good program. We need programs like this."

"I enjoy my role as Program Officer for Health and Wellbeing as each day is unique and exciting. It is fulfilling to witness even small positive changes in the lives of our program participants. Through my program, Amplify Ability, I have supported clients in enhancing their confidence, finding volunteer opportunities, and feeling more connected to society. *Marziyeh Riazi*

This project was funded by a grant from the Australian Government's Program of Assistance for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (PASTT) and Primary Health Tasmania.

Multicultural Accommodation and Learning Centre

MRC Tas's Accommodation Program supports migrants and refugees from diverse backgrounds to find suitable accommodation and helps them to settle comfortably in Tasmania. We deliver support to people from CALD communities through a range of accommodation options.

Multicultural Accommodation Centre at Goodwood

This site caters to recently arrived humanitarian entrants and offers a community-style living environment. It is a gated facility where residents engage in activities like gardening and resident gatherings. The primary goal is to provide new arrivals with the fundamentals of maintaining a rental home, understanding their rights and responsibilities, and building a strong rental history to help secure longer-term housing. We are grateful for the support of the community in transforming the accommodation centre into a vibrant and welcoming space. This year, volunteer groups from MONA, Welcome Gardeners, and C3 South Hobart helped by building a playground, revitalizing the vegetable gardens for residents to grow their own food, and renovating the sewing room into a creative hub.

The accommodation centre at Goodwood also hosted the Multicultural Learning Centre, supported by the Tasmanian Community Fund, until its conclusion in December 2023. The Multicultural Learning Centre provided digital learning, community engagement activities, and pathways to employment programs for over 350 participants.



Accommodation for Skilled Workers

MRC Tas manages a site dedicated to providing accommodation for skilled workers, ensuring their housing needs are met while preserving local housing stock. In collaboration with Incat, MRC Tas has secured accommodation for 30-40 skilled welders, whose skills are vital to Tasmania's thriving shipbuilding industry. This partnership not only supports these skilled workers but also contributes significantly to the Tasmanian economy.



Homestay Program

Our recently concluded trial Homestay Program successfully matched migrants with generous hosts who were open to sharing their home. The program supported both clients and hosts on establishing healthy boundaries and sustainable processes. Many guests and hosts have chosen to continue living together, indicating the program's effectiveness and strong engagement.

Ethiopian migrants find hope and support in Tasmania

Two humanitarian entrants from Ethiopia arrived separately in Tasmania in the beginning of 2024. After their initial short-term accommodation, they each faced challenges in finding an affordable rental unit, especially as individuals. Realising that a shared accommodation was their only viable option, they were concerned about potential language barriers and cultural misunderstandings.

They were referred to the Homestay Program, hoping to find a host who could offer them each a safe room, guidance, and understanding. Fortunately, they were introduced to a Homestay host who was more than willing to provide the extra support they needed.

Over the next few months, their host played an important role in helping them settle, connecting one of them to a mosque where their community members gather and the other to a church that serves the Christian Ethiopian community. He also took them shopping and showed them around, boosting their confidence in navigating the city.

The clients are both deeply grateful to their host, who has acted like a big brother to them. Likewise, the host appreciated the opportunity to learn about their culture and gain a deeper understanding of the challenges migrants face.

This project was funded by a grant from the Tasmanian Government, Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Volunteer Program

The MRC Tas Volunteer Program supports volunteer involvement across the organisation, including recruitment, induction and ongoing support. MRC Tas provides different opportunities for people to volunteer. Volunteering at MRC Tas gives people the opportunity to work in a diverse environment that exposes them to people, culture, languages and experiences.

Karla's connection to MRC Tas began as a participant in the MRC Tas Hospitality Gateway program to learn about the hospitality industry as a potential career pathway. Karla says, "That experience changed my perspective on life, cooking and talking with refugee and migrant women gave me a new sense of the possibility of being reborn." With extensive experience in community services in her home country of Mexico, Karla was very interested to find out about volunteering opportunities and how she could support the organisation.

"I studied anthropology and started my career as a project officer and community worker from a very young age." When Karla migrated to Australia in 2018 with little English, she realised that job opportunities were limited and worked in kitchen and factory jobs. She missed working in the community sector.

"When I learned about all the programs at MRC Tas, I decided to volunteer. From the first day, it was incredible. I loved returning to an office where community work and hope are real. I couldn't contain my joy when I started supporting the Driving Program in an administration role. Curiosity also led me to participate in the Women's group and youth drop-in."



This experience gave Karla the opportunity to reconnect with her passion for community services and look for paid work in the sector.

"My volunteering gave me so much strength that I have regained my wings to fly. Being a volunteer also helped with my confidence, motivation, and professional career. At MRC Tas, I have always been welcomed and motivated to continue my projects. I believe in the power of people and in the multiple abilities of those who migrate."

Our Staff

We value our diverse workforce, which represents a range of perspectives, experiences, cultures, genders, and ages. 88% percent of MRC Tas employees are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and there are approximately 38 different ethnicities represented by staff. MRC Tas staff are deeply connected to the organisation's purpose.

Many staff originally started out as volunteers, students, and even clients. We value diversity in ourselves and others. Our unique environment fosters creative people, with innovative solutions to address challenging issues.



I enjoy helping my community, meeting new people and supporting them with their daily needs and challenges. I hope I'll be able to solve as many problems as possible for them and make their life easier and happier. I love cooking and enjoy sharing my recipes with my clients and that gives them a lot of joy.

Nagham Al-Khani

Many staff originally started out as volunteers, students, and even clients. We value diversity in ourselves and others. Our unique environment fosters creative people, with innovative solutions to address challenging issues.

What we enjoy most about our role is witnessing the life stages of our client from the moment they arrived here with the HSP team to successfully navigating their life. We see their struggles, their journey in a new country with a new culture and customs here in Tasmania.

Lulu Badiola & Dian Lesmana



Our Board

MRC Tas is governed by an experienced Board of Management which includes expertise and qualifications in politics, law, commerce, business administration, development and governance, and community services.

Full details of our board are published on our website: <https://mrctas.org.au/our-board/>



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(Past Member)

Our Funders

We thank the following for their support during the 2023-2024 financial year:

Australian Government:

- Department of Health and Ageing
- Department of Home Affairs
- Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources
- Department of Social Services

Tasmanian Government

- Department of Education Children and Young People
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Department of State Growth
- Libraries Tas

AMES Australia

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Tasmanian Community Fund

MRC Tas would also like to thank the many organisations, businesses, and individuals who supported and donated time, expertise, and financial resources to us.

We are grateful for the philanthropic support received from private donors, as well as donations from the Tasmanian community.

Thank you to Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Barbara Baker AC, Governor of Tasmania for her support as patron of MRC Tas.





Donate

Donate today and you will make a difference in the lives of refugees and migrants. Our clients often face challenges as they settle into a new community and our capacity to provide assistance where it's needed most is greatly enriched by the generous financial support of others.

Funds from donors are used to provide resources, activities and opportunities which we would otherwise be unable to provide.

As a registered charity all donations \$2 and over are tax deductible.

If you would like to discuss donating to MRC Tas please get in touch.

Phone: 03 6221 0999

Email: reception@mrctas.org.au

mrctas.org.au/donate

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