



Annual Report 2022-23



**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.

In 2022-2023 we set out to shape the next stage of our essential service to the Tasmanian community by developing a plan that demonstrates our commitment to impact, supported by a strong strategic framework.

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
- Social enterprise
- Support for older people and people with a disability and their carers
- Support for young people
- Accommodation



Chair Report

It has been a privilege to serve as Chair of the MRC Tas Board over the last 12 months.

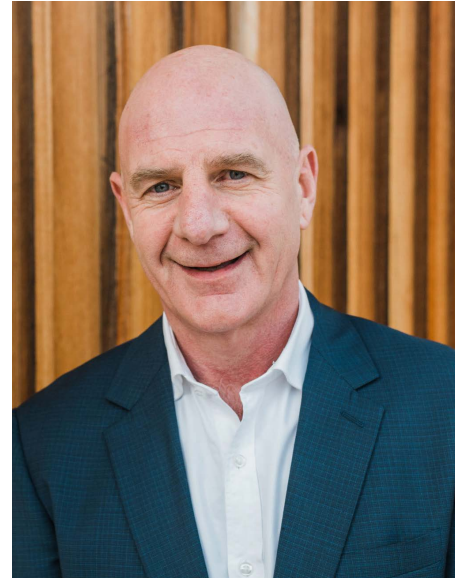
I am very thankful for the dedication and commitment of the Board, CEO Gillian Long, the senior leadership team, and all our hardworking staff and volunteers who support migrants and refugees across lutruwita/Tasmania.

What has been most satisfying is knowing that our organisation is changing lives for the better. This has been made possible thanks to our staff and volunteers, many of them migrants themselves, who go the extra yard every day to ensure that everyone is included and everyone belongs.

We have been able to continue building a robust financial position, despite ongoing funding pressures, which will enable us to improve and enhance the support and services that we offer across the State. Importantly, our organisation is sustainable and our growth trajectory clearly defined and achievable.

In 2023, the organisation rebranded. In a collaborative process involving all MRC Tas staff and the Board, we reviewed our values, vision, mission and strategic plan. Our strategic priorities over the next three years will focus on our impact on the communities we work with, our influence and identity, our people and our sustainability.

We have significantly increased our services to Tasmania's migrant community and have seen growth across all the programs that we deliver, especially in the employment, youth and health areas.



In partnership with the Burnie City Council, we have established a presence on the North West Coast, which has historically been an underserved region. This will ensure that the growing migrant community in this area has improved access to services and a point of contact to support them and their families. With further support from government and other funding partners, we aim to build on this most needed presence and become a pillar of support for migrants and refugees living in North West Tasmania.

I want to thank our volunteers who freely give their time to support MRC Tas programs. Without them, our organisation could not deliver the breadth of services we do. Their efforts enhance the lives of new Tasmanians across the State as they face the challenges that come with settling in a new country.

And finally, along with the Board, I want to mention our CEO Gillian Long and her executive team. Their dedication and commitment to MRC Tas, our staff and the broader migrant community has been exemplary. Their hard work throughout a year that has seen so much positive strategic change occur has been vital to the organisation finding itself in such a robust and positive position.

Thank you.

The Hon Peter Gutwein
Board Chair

CEO Report

I am pleased to present the 2022-2023 annual report for Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania.

I reflect on the organisation's achievements over the past year with great pride. Our mission, values and commitment to making a positive difference for people from migrant and refugee backgrounds in lutruwita/Tasmania have guided all aspects of the work we do, from our strategic planning to service delivery. This is very evident in the outcomes we've achieved and the impact we've made.

Over the past year, we have continued to respond to identified needs throughout the State. In addition to the delivery of services in specific locations within Tasmania, the number of programs funded for delivery statewide has increased, and the scope of existing statewide programs has expanded. This aligns with the growing number of migrants living in North West Tasmania, which has resulted in a greater need for a range of our services to be delivered in this region, particularly our youth, mental health and wellbeing programs.

Through our comprehensive programs, advocacy and collaborative partnerships, we have made significant gains in fostering cultural understanding and promoting inclusivity and belonging. It is clear that MRC Tas continues to play an increasingly critical role in supporting migrant and refugee communities throughout the State.



Some of the highlights of the last year include:

- **Expansion of our accommodation portfolio.** With accommodation and housing previously being one of our greatest challenges, we've secured a range of accommodation options to support new arrivals, enabling us to increase our capacity to support humanitarian arrivals and skilled migrants. We have expanded our accommodation options both in the North and South of the State.
- **Development of a new strategic plan.** Our new strategic plan will further strengthen the organisation's position within the sector and ensure it is well placed to meet the anticipated changes new policy and program environments bring.
- **Greater diversity within our workforce.** Increased cultural diversity with the organisation has ensured first-hand experience of migration and/or the refugee journey is incorporated into the design, delivery and management of our client and community services, advocacy and training.
- **Rebranding.** Throughout the year we worked on the development of new branding to ensure the organisation's visual representation is consistent with our current strategic focus. Our new branding reflects our values and our vibrant, supportive and collaborative approach with a distinctive, modern design. It brings together our range of sub-brands, including the Phoenix Centre, Multicultural Youth Tasmania and Origins Kitchen – each having a distinct but interconnected look.



With numerous other achievements, we've had an overwhelmingly successful year. The organisation looks very different to that of 12 months ago and is ready for future challenges. In the everchanging policy environment in which we work, we are in an excellent position to continue to be agile, innovative and adaptable. Our achievements over the last year have set us up for this and we look forward to supporting the implementation of recommendations current policy reviews will bring.

Looking ahead, MRC Tas remains committed to further embedding our range of statewide services, ensuring those who need support are able to access our services, regardless of location. We will enhance our programs, form new partnerships and continue to play a pivotal role in shaping culturally inclusive policies and practice at a state and national level.

Our accomplishments have been achieved through the unwavering dedication of our staff, the commitment of our volunteers, generosity of our funders and donors, and the expert guidance of

our Board. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our partners, community members and supporters, who have been integral to our pursuit of a Tasmania where people from migrant and refugee backgrounds thrive.

I would like to thank the MRC Tas staff and volunteer teams who demonstrate their commitment to our clients, as well as the alignment of their values with those of the organisation, in everything they do. I feel honoured to work with such a dedicated team of people who work hard, while also making the workplace environment enjoyable, friendly and supportive.

Our expert Board has guided the MRC Tas journey during 2022-2023 to ensure the year has been one of positive impact. As we step into the new financial year, we do so with a deep sense of purpose, commitment to our values, and confidence in our part in contributing to a State where everyone feels they belong.

Thank you for being a part of our journey.

Dr Gillian Long
Chief Executive Officer

Our Impact



10,388 individual client sessions

**We work with more than
1,000** clients from **66** countries
who speak **46** languages

Client countries of origin: Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Croatia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Macau, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Türkiye, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Venezuela, Vietnam, Zimbabwe.

**Learner drivers completed
1,693** hours of on-road driving
with volunteer driver mentors

25 people got their P1
driver licence

83 clients were housed at the
**Multicultural Accommodation
and Learning Centre**



62 individuals or families received
support from MRC Tas in securing
or transitioning to long-term
accommodation

**Settlement Services hosted
49** weekly Women's Groups and
37 weekly Men's Groups

**Multicultural Youth Tasmania
held 61 Youth Drop-in sessions
and 121 young people attended
throughout the year**

Youth Drop-in is held every Wednesday afternoon at MRC Tas's Glenorchy and Launceston offices during the school term. It's a place for young people aged up to 25 to get support with homework, job applications, resume writing and pathway planning, as well as socialise or have a chat with a youth worker.

**The Phoenix Centre provided
1,365** counselling services to
individuals

341 people participated in the
**Phoenix Centre's structured
therapeutic groupwork**

The Phoenix Centre provides mental health and wellbeing support to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.



The Aged and Community Services team supported over 250 older people to live independently

52 people secured employment with the support of MRC Tas programs

MRC Tas runs various programs supporting individuals to secure work, including workplace English, interview practice, resume building, work experience and networking events.

The Tasmanian Migrant Network supported 733 members on LinkedIn and 560 members on Facebook

The Migrant Network supports skilled migrants in both the North and South of the State to connect with each other, develop their professional networks, and learn from one another. Through a combination of monthly meet ups, social media networking and reference group projects, the Migrant Network aims to help migrants reach their potential in Tasmania.

We delivered 43 training sessions reaching 35 organisations

Cultural Awareness Training participants said their cultural awareness increased from a 6 to an 8 (on a scale of 0-10 with 0 being poor and 10 being excellent)

Our Cultural Awareness Training provides the foundational knowledge and understanding needed to work effectively with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.



Our social enterprise Origins Kitchen delivered 144 catering orders

1,966 meals were served at Dark Mofo's Winter Feast over eight days and 1,500 meals were served over three days for attendees of ChangeFest23, a national movement for place-based change

8 participants successfully completed the Hospitality Grow program

6 Hospitality Grow participants secured employment after completing the program

Hospitality Grow provided participants with paid practical work experience at Origins Kitchen to set them up for further training and employment opportunities in the hospitality industry. Some program graduates have joined Origins Kitchen's employed staff, and there's now a strong team of employees and program participants who cook side by side.

Theory of Change



INPUT:

Staff | Clients | Volunteers | Stakeholders
Fundors | Communities | Donors

Individuals

- Individual support
- Counselling
- Programs
- Groups

People are engaged in employment, training, wellbeing and social activities

People are connected with services and can navigate the systems they need

Communities

- Information sessions
- Events

Multicultural communities are supported to achieve community goals and take part in community consultations and events

Stakeholders

- Networking
- Training

Organisations and services undertake cultural competency audits and training

Society

- Advocacy

People live free from racism and discrimination

APPROACH:

- Evidence-based, outcomes focussed
- Strengths-based, co-design, client voice
- Partnerships and collaborations

IMPACTS:

- People achieve their goals for employment training, wellbeing and belonging
- Families access the services they need
- Independent and autonomous multicultural communities
- Culturally inclusive services
- Welcoming settlement locations

Everyone Belongs

Community picnic: Everyone belongs

In October, the Phoenix Centre, MRC Tas's specialised mental health service, facilitated a Mental Health Week event for clients at Tolosa Park in Glenorchy.

When staff arrived, members of the Nepali community had already started preparing a traditional Nepali snack and tea for the group. Within an hour, more than 100 people of all ages from the many communities MRC Tas works with had come together to enjoy a barbecue and play games under a sunny blue sky.

Clients participated in three group activities which were designed around the 2022 Mental Health Week themes of awareness, belonging,

and connection. For the first activity, participants each took a piece of paper and wrote down what made them feel "well" and stuck them to a big collaborative cardboard poster.

For the second activity, clients took it in turns calling out their name and the rest of the group responded by shouting out: "belongs here."

For the final activity, participants sang a song from their country of origin for the group. The day finished with everyone dancing. It was a beautiful celebration of connection and inclusion, and ensuring everyone felt they belonged in Tasmania.



Everyone Belongs

Refugee Week: Sharing stories through art

For Refugee Week 2023, MRC Tas partnered with the City of Hobart to present an exhibition of artworks by clients and staff members from refugee backgrounds at Waterside Pavilion. Clients and staff were invited to contribute their expressions of creativity, including painting, drawing, singing and dance. Many of these art pieces were reflections on the 2023 Refugee Week theme “Finding Freedom.”

The project focussed on art as a mode of self-expression and promoting wellbeing. In the lead up to the exhibition, clients participated in workshops at MRC Tas’s Multicultural Learning Centre, which gave them pause from the challenging tasks migrants are often faced with when arriving in Tasmania: adapting to a new culture, learning English, learning to drive, finding housing, and building their employability, just to name a few.

The exhibition opened on World Refugee Day and clients, staff, communities, friends and stakeholders came together for a night of honouring new Tasmanians who now call this island state home.

“Through art, we bring together their journey of survival, language learning, employment, education, and integration, creating a space that embodies strength and unity.” Mae Shell De Sesto, Manager of Community Programs and the Learning Centre

The atmosphere at Waterside Pavilion captured the spirit of MRC Tas. It was full of joy, celebration and a sense of community between dozens of different cultures.



Special performances included a mother and son duo who sang an Afghan song about finding home, traditional Uzbek and Ukrainian dances, and the brilliant voices of Hobart’s Karen Choir.

“It was a great opportunity for me to showcase my artwork at the Refugee Week exhibition. Being able to share my paintings with others and express my journey as a refugee through art was a truly meaningful experience. I am thankful for the platform it provided me to raise awareness about the challenges faced by refugees.” Sakina Parsa, former MRC Tas client and MRC Tas Bi-cultural Worker

Everyone Belongs

Fostering connection through culture and food

In June, the Settlement program's Women's Group and the Multicultural Learning Centre (MLC) partnered with the charity Be Hers to host a Cultural Lunch and Healthy Eating Workshop at MRC Tas. Be Hers runs programs, events and campaigns to fight for the freedom of vulnerable women and children, end human trafficking, and help empower women.

Attended by 40 women from refugee backgrounds, this event celebrated cooking from around the world. Four women from the MLC provided catering and worked together to design a healthy menu featuring Afghan and Eritrean dishes.

Be Hers provided information about their mentoring program and a taster workshop looking at the therapeutic benefits of vegetable and herb gardening, as well as an activity where participants decorated seed packets.

Participants were provided with beautiful gift bags from Be Hers featuring gardening tools and other personal gifts, as well as free local seeds, provided by volunteer group Welcome Gardeners, to take home in their personalised packets.

MRC Tas looks forward to continuing working alongside Be Hers to provide support for women from refugee backgrounds and help them access employment opportunities, including at Be Hers' sewing centre and through accessing their specialised business mentors.

This event was run in partnership with Relationships Australia Tasmania and was made possible by funding from the Healthy Tasmania Fund through the Tasmanian Government.



Everyone Belongs

Seniors Week: A celebration and intergenerational exchange

In October 2022, the Aged and Community Services team marked Seniors Week with an afternoon of connection, performances and fun. This was an opportunity to honour and celebrate older people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, many of whom moved to Australia later in life. This comes with its own set of unique challenges, and it was a privilege to host this heartwarming tribute to our cherished senior members. It was an occasion of joy, unity and shared experiences.

The week-long celebration resonated with the community, spreading smiles and fostering intergenerational connections. Our seniors revelled in a series of engaging activities, from cultural exhibitions to storytelling sessions, igniting their enthusiasm for life, and reminding younger generations of the wealth of experience and knowledge older people have to offer.

We embraced diversity and inclusivity, ensuring every senior felt valued and celebrated. Our commitment to accessibility, with facilities and support for all abilities, made the event truly special.

The event served as a catalyst for strengthening community bonds. Seniors shared their wisdom with younger generations, passing down traditions, while younger members listened and showed their respect and appreciation.

The 2022 Seniors Week celebration was more than an event, it was a testament to the enduring spirit of our senior community members. It rekindled memories, created new friendships, and left a mark of joy in our hearts.

As we reflect on this heartening celebration, we look forward to celebrating older people in the migrant community again in 2023, and ensuring our senior community members know how valued they are in Tasmania.



Everyone Belongs

The Ramadan Cup: Sharing culture through sport

Multicultural Youth Tasmania (MYT) held its third annual Ramadan Cup in May. This has become an increasingly popular event amongst Tasmania's migrant youth. The competition takes place during Ramadan, the month of fasting in the Islamic calendar. During this spiritual month, Muslims fast from dawn to sunset. Ramadan is a time for self-reflection, spiritual and personal growth, connection to God, empathy, compassion and self-discipline.

"In a month of fasting, being able to fast and play a full game is a big deal. It shows how sport can bring people together even if they are fasting for a whole day." *Futsal participant*

During the futsal tournament, the games began after players had broken their fasts. The Ramadan Cup was held in Launceston and eight teams participated in the tournament.

"We organise these sorts of events to bring all these young people together, to help them be themselves, and most importantly for them to be able to share their culture." *Yousef Mohammadi, MYT Senior Settlement Officer*

MYT is hoping to deliver this event annually and get more teams to participate and celebrate this holy month in the Islamic calendar. The Ramadan Cup is traditionally played in countries including Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

"It was a fun program. It showcased our culture and at the same time we are enjoying being ourselves. People come and learn about our culture – there is no racism within this space, everyone is there to enjoy the game." *Futsal participant*



Employment and Learning

Migrant Employment Energiser Program

The Migrant Employment Energiser Program (MEEP) was delivered in partnership with employers from the building, construction and manufacturing industries. Funded by Skills Tasmania, MEEP provided tailored training that was industry specific and improved literacy around safety language relevant to the workplace, while completing a period of paid work experience with labour hire company Integrate Workforce. The paid work experience facilitated through the provision of a small wage subsidy provided a springboard to transition into apprenticeship or long-term work opportunities. Of the 27 participants in the program, 20 people were employed beyond the work experience period.

The Migrant Network: Connecting employees and employers

Migrants who seek to establish a career in Tasmania to secure a pathway to permanent residency are unemployed for too long or underemployed too often. This leaves the talent of Tasmania's skilled migrants untapped and, with secondary migration away from Tasmania, results in a loss of economic benefits for the Tasmanian community. The Migrant Employment Program, also known as the Migrant Network, supports skilled migrant jobseekers to utilise and build on their existing skills and experience. Through industry networking sessions, career coaching, individual employment support, and workplace tours, the Migrant Employment Program works with industry and migrants to build social capital and connection for migrants establishing a career in Tasmania.



"Today's tour was very informative. They explained each and every part clearly. I'm happy to know the role and responsibility of each job. If I get an opportunity, it's a good place for my professional growth as well. I appreciate and am thankful to MRC Tas for today's tour." *Employment tour participant*

Settlement Employment

Settlement Employment provides support for newly arrived Tasmanians who are studying English full-time at TasTAFE and are interested in working in their free time. In cooperation with The Olive Grove Domestic Cleaning, 17 clients have received training regarding the cleaning process, information on cleaning products to use, and options for car and equipment loans so they can start working as cleaners. Three clients have undergone paid training at clients' houses through The Olive Grove Cleaning. The employer has advertised and promoted these services and has confirmed its commitment to providing jobs for all 17 clients.



Multicultural Learning Program

The Multicultural Learning Program is an engaging initiative that equips clients with valuable vocational and conversational English skills, bolstered by essential digital literacy skills. Here, clients don't just learn, they embark on a journey tailored to their passions. From learning culinary English while whipping up delicious dishes to unleashing creativity through crafts and sewing, they immerse themselves in activities they love. The Multicultural Learning Program empowers clients to apply these newfound skills in real-world situations: whether it's navigating housing websites with ease or confidently using online maps, our approach revolves around individual motivation, ensuring that learning becomes a fulfilling and enduring adventure.

Gaining the confidence to apply for a dream job

Alberto came to Tasmania in July 2022. Originally from Colombia, he lived in Victoria for a few years as a student. While studying in Melbourne, Alberto mainly worked remotely for international companies while building his own small digital business. When he arrived in Tasmania, he was determined to find a full-time professional job. He took upper-intermediate English classes with the Multicultural Learning Program to improve his pronunciation and build on his language skills.

Alberto also worked with an employment officer to learn how to answer selection criteria and practice job interviews. This gave him the confidence to apply for the job of his dreams and Alberto has been working as a Digital Development Manager at a large digital organisation since January.

Health and Wellbeing

Amplify Ability

Amplify Ability is a 10-week program for anyone from a migrant or refugee background who is looking to make new connections, set and achieve goals and improve their emotional health and wellbeing. The program runs in both Launceston and Hobart.

"I get the opportunity to engage with people from different cultural backgrounds. We talked to one another and shared our previous happiness and sorrows. We also shared our current problems, challenges and sought a solution." Amplify Ability participant

In the first half of 2023, two Amplify Ability groups were run in Launceston with 32 participants and 19 carers. The sessions supported clients with job seeking, digital literacy, resume writing, citizenship test preparation and learning driving-specific English.

How Amplify Ability gave Fatima confidence

Fatima* arrived in Australia on a humanitarian visa with her husband at the end of 2022. As with many newly arrived Tasmanians, language and low confidence often held Fatima back from participating in the community and carrying out everyday tasks.

Fatima and her husband joined the Phoenix Centre's 10-week Amplify Ability program in Launceston at the beginning of this year. As a part of the program's co-design process, Fatima and other group members expressed their wish to spend some of the sessions learning the Tasmanian road rules and the English necessary to sit their learner licence test.

Fatima and the other participants fully embraced these sessions. They asked many questions, had many laughs, and benefited from the support of their peers and program staff.



In week eight of the program, Fatima came to the session bursting with excitement and told the group she had finally developed the confidence to sit her learner licence test and passed. This was a proud and inspiring moment for Fatima and the rest of the group, and everyone gave her a round of applause.

Fatima directly attributed this achievement to the information, support and encouragement she had gained through the Amplify Ability program.

"My confidence has risen - to speak for myself and speak with others." *Fatima*

Following Fatima's success, three other participants developed the confidence to sit their test too – and all passed. Of the 29 participants who participated in the program's evaluation survey, 86% felt their skills had improved, 86% had improved social connection and wellbeing, 89% were more motivated to achieve their goals, and 93% felt they had made progress in achieving their personal goals.



Women's Group

The Friday Women's Group provides opportunities for women from refugee and migrant backgrounds to connect with other multicultural women and learn about services, supports and key issues relating to health and wellbeing. The group sessions include lots of fun activities and shared meals as well as information from visiting experts and speakers. Over the year, the women's group had visits from Women's Health Tasmania, Moonah Arts Centre, YMCA, Tasmania Police and many others. Information sessions included breast cancer screening, healthy relationships and family safety, and participants took part in a range of activities, such as picnics, beach water safety, bowling, gym visits, yoga, swimming and table tennis.

"It's very educative with lots of information around women's health and wellbeing. It gives us information about organisation that can support us. It's also an avenue for socialisation." *Zakieh*

"The women's group has built my confidence in Tasmania. It's given me an opportunity to make new friends and find new community members, and empowers me to build up my skills." *Farhat*

"Women's Group enables me to get more information around my health. It's also a space where I feel comfortable to speak or ask questions. It gives me the opportunity to learn new things." *Masomeh*



Swimming lessons

Swimming is a big part of Australian culture, but many people from refugee and migrant backgrounds don't know how to swim when they arrive in Tasmania. Multicultural Youth Tasmania's women's swimming program has been very successful and popular, with many women requesting swimming lessons. Women from multicultural backgrounds are keen to learn, but some may not have the confidence or skills to go swimming on their own yet. To address this, MYT established a swimming lesson program with Reclink Tasmania just for women. In addition to the water safety and swimming lessons, this program creates a safe and inclusive space for women to discuss other topics they are interested in.

"I love learning to swim so that I can take my children swimming on my own when I am confident enough." *Program participant*

Connection and Inclusion

Game Changer: Embracing cultural diversity in sports

Multicultural Youth Tasmania's Game Changer Training provides sport and recreation clubs and organisations with practical advice and tools to embrace cultural diversity and build a welcoming environment for all. The Game Changer project not only aims to increase diversity within sporting clubs but also to encourage the broader community to "think differently" when building their sporting community.

Sport is a big part of Australian culture, but there are many barriers that hinder the participation of people from CALD communities in sports. Game Changer Training aims to address barriers to engagement and help sporting clubs develop strategies to support inclusiveness and diversity.

The training is co-designed and delivered by young people from multicultural backgrounds. Topics covered include the demographics of multicultural youth in Tasmania, barriers to engagement, strategies to support inclusiveness in sporting clubs, and strategies for developing networks for young people, their families and communities to promote involvement with organised sports.

"Sport has the power to bring people together and foster a sense of unity among individuals from different cultures. When diverse people come together to play sports or even support sports, it promotes social cohesion as well as breaks down barriers that might have otherwise divided the community."

Brutukan Melkamu, MYT Case Manager and Game Changer Trainer



Bridging the gap between clients and aged care services

Over the past two years, the EnCOMPASS Care Connector program has been a catalyst for transformation in the lives of more than 200 culturally diverse clients within the communities MRC Tas works with.

Delivered in partnership with the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia, the primary mission of this program was to bridge the accessibility gap between CALD individuals and the aged care system. MRC Tas provided tailored support, empowering clients to efficiently access essential resources and services.

Beyond the barriers presented by language, the EnCOMPASS program tackled discrimination, cultural insensitivity and disparities faced by CALD communities. The provision of cultural competency training, language access services and specialised support fostered inclusivity.

The dedication of staff and unwavering support from project partners and stakeholders ensured this successful program had a positive impact on the lives of older members of Tasmania's culturally diverse communities and their families.

Mrs. S, a program participant, found solace and empowerment in the information sessions and co-design activities. Today, she continues to share what she learnt about the available vital services with people in her community.

With services working together, a more inclusive and equitable future for older people in culturally diverse communities has been forged.

Meet MRC Tas volunteer Simon

Simon has been volunteering with MRC Tas volunteer for about five years. From picking people up at the airport when they first arrive in Tasmania to supporting people to get their driver licence, Simon has first-hand of experience of how volunteers can help new Tasmanians settle into their new home.

"It's fantastic being a volunteer. You get great rewards, you meet very interesting people, and you see them integrate into our community and their new home.

I think the main avenue of change, in terms of migrants and refugees, is teaching them skills so they can transition into their new home, their new community, their new society.

These people bring with them a variety of skills and talents – they have a lot to offer.



But because of their status in terms of speaking English and knowing how our society works, they find it difficult to transition.

And all they need to know is the little things we take for granted.

They need to know how to catch a bus. They need to know how to access the health system. They need to know how to access social security. They need to know how to access the education system. They need to learn that police aren't to be feared, police are there to help them. They need to learn the political system is a just one, not a corrupt one.

It's little things like teaching them to drive, whereby they can make their way to their own mosque or church, whereby they can make their way to drop their children at school, whereby they can go shopping and mix with the rest of the community and not become confined to their own home."

Capacity Building and Advocacy

MRC Tas has a strong focus on advocacy and building the capacity of other organisations and services to meet the needs of culturally diverse clients.

Our staff both participate in and hold executive roles on a range of national and state bodies, including the Settlement Council of Australia, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma and the Embrace Multicultural Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum.

As representatives on forums and networks, MRC Tas staff across all levels of the organisation advocate for our clients and the broader multicultural community.

MRC Tas also contributes to national and state policy discussions and enquiries through submissions to consultations such as the State Growth Population Strategy discussion paper and the Tasmanian Housing Strategy Discussion.

Advocating for change with lived experience

Phoenix Centre Program Officer Thir Thapa represents the CALD carer community at the Embrace Multicultural Mental Health Consumer and Carer Forum. Thir is one of two consumer and carer representatives from Tasmania in this national project. The Embrace Project provides a national focus on mental health and suicide prevention for people from CALD backgrounds. The Embrace Project has developed the Framework for Mental Health in Multicultural Australia, which is a free and nationally available online resource that allows organisations and individual practitioners to evaluate and enhance their cultural responsiveness.



"I am so proud of this opportunity where I represent Tasmania and I am able to contribute to the development of national mental health support strategies for CALD populations. I have the privilege of raising issues and sharing opportunities in Tasmania at a national level. I also get the opportunity to learn from representatives from other states and territories during meetings that occur either face-to-face or online. My involvement in this project has been great for my professional growth and has helped me to better support CALD clients who are experiencing mental health issues." *Thir Thapa, Program Officer, MRC Tas Phoenix Centre / Tasmanian representative for The Embrace Project Consumer and Carer Forum*



Farah (far right) with Seat at the Table participants.

Meet MYT Peer Worker Farah

Multicultural Youth Tasmania aims to build the capacity of young people from multicultural backgrounds so they can develop their skills and gain opportunities in the workforce.

"My name is Farah and I am 23 years old. I was born in Iraq and moved to Tasmania in 2012. I have completed an Associate Degree in Health and Community Support and I'm currently in my third year of a Bachelor in Psychological Science. I began my peer worker role at MRC Tas in March 2023, working as a Tasmanian youth trainee for the Seat at the Table program. Seat at the Table aims to offer participants leadership and governance information and knowledge to address the underrepresentation of young women from refugee and migrant backgrounds in formal leadership roles.

My responsibilities include co-coordinating monthly workshops, facilitating taster sessions, and maintaining regular communication with participants to offer assistance. I am also co-chair of the MYT Youth Advisory Group, which is dedicated to empowering young individuals, ensuring their

voices are heard, and connecting them with opportunities to improve their leadership and advocacy skills. The program's main objective is to elevate the voices of multicultural youth in impactful ways, providing them with valuable experiences and a platform for growth.

In my role at MRC Tas, particularly with the Seat at the Table program and co-leading the MYT Advisory Group, I have seen a huge enhancement in my professionalism and leadership capabilities. The dynamic nature of my job keeps it engaging and the consistent support from my team has significantly boosted my confidence in the workplace. This experience has deeply ingrained a sense of purpose, driving my determination to continually advocate for multicultural youth and effect positive change in their lives.

This journey has been incredibly rewarding, fuelling both personal growth and self-discovery."

Training

Cultural Competency Training

MRC Tas has been providing cultural awareness and competency training for over 20 years. The trainings we provide include cultural competency, working with interpreters, trauma-informed practice, and working with people from a refugee background, including young people.

This year a new suite of trainings was developed in response to requests from organisations to provide sessions on how to build a supportive workplace culture for diverse companies and organisations. Our training builds on our staff's deep experience working with clients, as well as research and current data about migration and settlement. Our training is delivered by trainers and co-presenters who all have lived experience, including bi-cultural workers who contribute their unique experience of working with clients and community members.

Staff from different programs, including counsellors from the Phoenix Centre and social workers and case managers from Aged and Community Services and the Youth and Settlement teams, provide specialised training in their areas to support services to work more effectively with people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Throughout the year, staff delivered training all over the State to community groups, organisations, services and government departments, including the Department of Education, Children and Young People, Catholic Education, TasTAFE, the Magistrates Court of Tasmania, the Department of Justice, Advocacy Tasmania, WorkSafe Tasmania, Anglicare, Relationships Australia, Women's Health Tasmania, Shelter Tasmania, Engender Equality, and DairyTas.



SafeTALK: Suicide prevention

As part of the strategy to prevent suicide among CALD communities, the Phoenix Centre's accredited Living Works trainers have been delivering SafeTALK workshops to MCR Tas staff and the broader community.

SafeTALK is an alertness training that prepares anyone aged 15 or older to become a suicide-alert helper, regardless of prior experience or training. Most people with thoughts of suicide don't truly want to die but are struggling with the pain in their lives. The training teaches four basic steps to help a person recognise when someone may be having thoughts of suicide, prepares the individual to help others by using the TALK method (Tell, Ask, Listen and Keep Safe) and provides guidance on how to get help for someone, including useful contacts.



Over the last year, the Phoenix Centre delivered five SafeTALK trainings. Participants included MRC Tas staff from the Aged Care and Community Services team, bi-cultural workers, volunteers and members of the Ethiopian, Eritrean and Nepali communities.

Understanding palliative care needs of CALD communities

Earlier this year, MRC Tas spoke to people from CALD communities to investigate palliative care needs and norms within these groups and to raise awareness and increase familiarity with palliative care services. For this project, funded by Primary Health Tasmania, MRC Tas consulted with and delivered information to around 150 community members.

The research and interviews were used to develop training that was accessed by 12 organisations providing services and care to CALD clients and their families.

“In this training, participants gained an understanding of how accessing and meaningfully using palliative care can differ when viewed through the lenses of culture and intersectionality.” *Barsha Thapa, Allied Health Project Officer*

The training looked at factors like migration status and experiences, religion, family systems, age, literacy and more. Tools to help organisations and individuals be culturally responsive to the increasing diversity of clients, and subsequently, care needs in the community, were also included in this training.

This project aimed to enable community access through building community members’ capacity to access and advocate for meaningful palliative care support. It also aimed to ensure that palliative care services are aware of the care needs of diverse groups of people and can facilitate their requirements.

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. It does this by helping new arrivals build the skills and knowledge they need to become self-reliant and active members of the community.

The program has a strong focus on helping clients to learn English, gain employment and access education and training. MRC Tas delivers support to clients using an individualised case management approach tailored to their needs, strengths and goals.

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



Case study: Supporting a new arrival from Eritrea to find long-term accommodation

Ahmed*, a 25-year-old man from Eritrea, arrived in Tasmania in April 2023. He was reunited with his family who he had not seen for many years. The transition to living with his mother and her young children after so much time had passed wasn't easy, and he was forced to seek alternative accommodation. It was an incredibly difficult time for Ahmed. HSP supported him by referring him to the Phoenix Centre, MRC Tas's specialist mental health and wellbeing service for people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, where he was able to receive the care he needed. HSP supported him to find long-term accommodation and he is now living in a share house with another client who has since become a good friend.

"It's not perfect, but I am grateful that I could find a rental accommodation so I could focus on other things."

Ahmed has been working on obtaining his learner driver licence and has been completing his learner hours with the support of a volunteer driver mentor through MRC Tas's Learner Driver Program. He is also doing English classes at TasTAFE four days a week.

"I understand that language is very important for me to settle down in this country, so I have been focussing on learning English by reading and self-studying as well."

Ahmed's goals are to get his driver licence, complete his English studies and enrol in a TasTAFE course that he is both interested in and will help set him up for a job in the future.



Meet Feven: A Josef Chromy Migrant Scholarship recipient

Feven, a 28-year-old Eritrean woman, arrived in Tasmania in November 2022. In Eritrea, she had completed a Bachelor of Computer Science – she was the first person in her family to go to university. Unfortunately, her degree wasn't recognised as an equivalent bachelor's degree in Australia. The difficulty of transferring her credentials, obtaining licences and certifications, and limited recognition of her former employment resulted in Feven enrolling in a Bachelor of Information and Communication Technology at the University of Tasmania. This would enable her to align her qualifications with Australian standards.

As a new Tasmanian with no family support, Feven faced significant financial difficulties. With the help of her Humanitarian Settlement Program Case Manager Michelle, Feven submitted an application for the Josef Chromy Migrant Scholarship.

"My Case Worker Michelle supported me with everything she could do. As a newcomer, she was the only one I knew in Launceston, and she did her best to help me with all the assistance I needed."

Feven's application was successful and she received her scholarship at a ceremony during Harmony Week. Now, Feven is looking forward to continuing her studies and getting a summer job to help support herself.

"I'm hoping for a bright future where I can settle and live a good life."

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 sport and recreation, education, employment, citizenship support, driving and wellbeing, and aim to develop opportunities to build a sense of belonging in Tasmania and Australia.

Confidence leads to independence

Farhat, a 33-year-old single mother from Afghanistan, arrived in Tasmania in 2022 with dreams of a better life. Despite facing language barriers and an unfamiliar environment, Farhat has attended English classes at TasTAFE and actively participated in various learning programs, including the weekly Women's Group. This group provides an environment where women from different cultures can share experiences, socialise and support each other.

In March, Farhat catered for an International Women's Day event at the MRC Tas Multicultural Learning Centre, where she cooked a number of cultural dishes and demonstrated her refined culinary skills. This was a significant event with prominent members of the community in attendance, including Glenorchy Mayor Bec Thomas.



After a few successful events, Farhat continues to be asked to provide catering for different groups and community organisations. Initially she needed the support of a bi-cultural worker. Now, Farhat is attending these events independently and managing the catering on her own. This work shows how Farhat's confidence has grown over the last few months. These community events not only provide her with a form of income but foster a sense of purpose and belonging in her newfound Tasmanian community.

Farhat's journey highlights the power of determination and what can be achieved when someone has the right support. Farhat's story serves as an inspiration to those facing challenges, demonstrating that with courage and perseverance, one can craft a meaningful life even in unfamiliar circumstances.

"I am grateful for the support and love I have received from MRC Tas. I feel more independent and my passion for cooking and art has been acknowledged. I am learning and starting to feel proud of myself."

Aged and Community Services

MRC Tas Aged and Community Services connects older people, and people with a disability and their carers, with social activities and provides support to help them live at home, be part of the community and access services. MRC Tas also provides cultural education to aged care service providers and to other community organisations. Services have a focus on cultural needs, wellness and independence.

A letter of appreciation to the Aged Care team

"Around a year ago, I came to know about MRC Tas through Aged Care Case Manager Kim. At that time, I was going through an incredibly challenging and despairing phase in my life. Balancing a full-time job while taking care of my newborn baby and an elderly mother had become overwhelming. I felt like I was juggling too many responsibilities, and I was at a loss.

When Kim learned about my situation, she went out of her way to assist me. She helped me explore the various government programs and support options available to me. Her guidance was invaluable during this difficult period.

Claudia and Melissa, members of the MRC Tas Aged and Community Services team, even took the time to visit my home and help me fill out various application forms. Their dedicated efforts ensured that my mother and I could access as much support as possible, easing a significant burden from my life.



MRC Tas made exceptional efforts to find carers who could communicate in Chinese to assist me in taking care of my mother. This was a tremendous relief as it ensured that my mother received the care she needed while enabling me to manage my responsibilities effectively.

Although my mother has since passed away due to her illness, Rachel and Frank, her carers arranged by MRC Tas, played an instrumental role during her final days. Their emotional support and practical assistance made my mother feel more comfortable.

I am deeply grateful for the unwavering support and assistance provided by MRC Tas during one of the most challenging times in my life. Their compassion, dedication and genuine care made a significant difference for me and my family. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Kim, Claudia, Melissa, Rachel, Frank, and the entire MRC Tas team for their invaluable help and support. Your kindness will forever be remembered in my heart."

Maggie Zhang, daughter of Shuying Man

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.



Our Community MY Future

In December 2022, MRC Tas launched Our Community MY Future (OCMF), an Australian Government-funded program to support social cohesion among at-risk youth from refugee, migrant and Australian-born backgrounds.

Approximately 60 clients were enrolled in the program, and in May the group commenced their life skills workshops.

Two music workshops were facilitated by musicians and youth workers Matthew Fargher, Grace Chia, Alex Harvey and Lachy Hamill at Pulse Studio Youth Crew. The first workshop covered music production and songwriting with a focus on hip-hop music. Three songs were recorded throughout the course of the four-hour workshop. In the second workshop, clients explored playing guitar, drums and keys. A photography scavenger hunt was also incorporated into the workshop in recognition of the importance of the visuals associated with music releases.





A basketball tournament leads to a partnership

In partnership with Reclink Tasmania, MRC Tas's Launceston office threw a big basketball tournament for youth in early 2023.

This tournament was an exciting opportunity for those who had some basketball skills but never had the chance to participate in something more official. In the lead up to the event, weekly training sessions were held to allow participants to create teams.

The great response from young people in Launceston lead to the MYT team securing a partnership with the Launceston Basketball Association (LBA). As part of this partnership, LBA will be providing MRC Tas with a space to run weekly programs for young people. The MYT team is hoping to establish a proper social game with referees from LBA on weekly basis and connect talented basketball players with local clubs.



Youth Drop-in

Youth Drop-in is held in both Glenorchy and Launceston every Wednesday after school during the school term. It's a chance for young people to make friends, get support with homework, job applications, resume writing and pathway planning, or just come and have a snack and chat with a youth worker. Here's what young people had to say about why they come to Youth Drop-in:

"I enjoy coming for homework and English support, I'm glad that it exists!"

"I love coming to Drop-in because it's fun and I like to play with my friends."

"I get to have fun, I get to eat food, I get to play games, I get to meet my friends... I come to Drop-in because I like it and I get to learn about stuff."

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.

Youth Empowerment Drumming Circle

In April, the Phoenix Centre ran a six-week Youth Empowerment Drumming Circle with clients from Eritrean, Nepali and Afghan communities with refugee backgrounds. Fifteen people registered for the group and a core group of six regularly attended.

Over the course of the program, the drumming circle evolved into a "values driven sound machine." The group explored layering percussion, rhythm, movement and voice over the top of a spontaneous beat inspired by a particular value such as "kindness." At the end of the program, the group celebrated by sharing pizza and laughs over what they had achieved during their time together.

"When I arrived for our workshop today, I was feeling angry and stressed from a visit to Centrelink.



I would have taken this home to my family, but by the end of the workshop my mood had lifted. I'm so glad I came." *Program participant*

In between playing, participants explored the importance of various human values such as kindness and respect in their lives. In addition to the values exploration, the experience of listening, leading and attuning to one another in a musical ensemble provided a healing and empowering experience for those who have experienced significant trauma in their past.

Mothers Circle

The Mothers Circle program is an early intervention support for mothers from migrant and refugee backgrounds with children aged 10 - 18 in Northern and Southern Tasmania. The aim of the program is to reduce cases of domestic and family violence by empowering mothers with knowledge about the development of their children in the context of raising children across multiple cultures.

The program started in January 2023, with group sessions running in the North. Eighteen women aged 23 - 50 from the Burmese, Nepali and Afghan communities participated in the closed group sessions.

The group's meetings cover eight topics that take a strengths-based approach that centres mothers as key educators in their families. This model focuses on preventing and eradicating extremism and violence among young people by equipping mothers with the skills and knowledge to recognise at-risk behaviour in their own children.



Photo by Hannah Busing on Unsplash

The topics included: Identity, Culture, Building Healthy Relationships, Values and Setting Boundaries, Parenting Skills, At-Risk Behaviours, Cyber Safety and Local Resources.

The session on parenting skills and understanding child rights helped mothers to understand why physical discipline is not accepted in Australia.

“I now know I cannot hit my child and will have to use other ways to discipline.”

Program participant

In the following session, the facilitator took time to explain to participants that their children have the same human rights they are entitled to. This meant that just as they were not allowed to hit their children, no one was also allowed to hit or use violence against them. This helped the women to understand that domestic violence was not to be tolerated. After this session, the women said they now felt more empowered.

At the end of the program, participants attended a graduation ceremony, where they received certificates of participation and wore graduation hats. This was to motivate some of the women who had never had the opportunity to graduate from a course before.

The Phoenix Centre collaborated with various services to deliver the Mothers Circle sessions, including Launceston Library's 26TEN program, Tasmania Legal Aid, Launceston Christian School, Launceston Library's Community Engagement program, Cancer Screening Tasmania, and Tasmania Police.

More Mothers Circle programs will be run in the North and South of the State towards the end of 2023 and in early 2024.

Multicultural Accommodation and Learning Centre

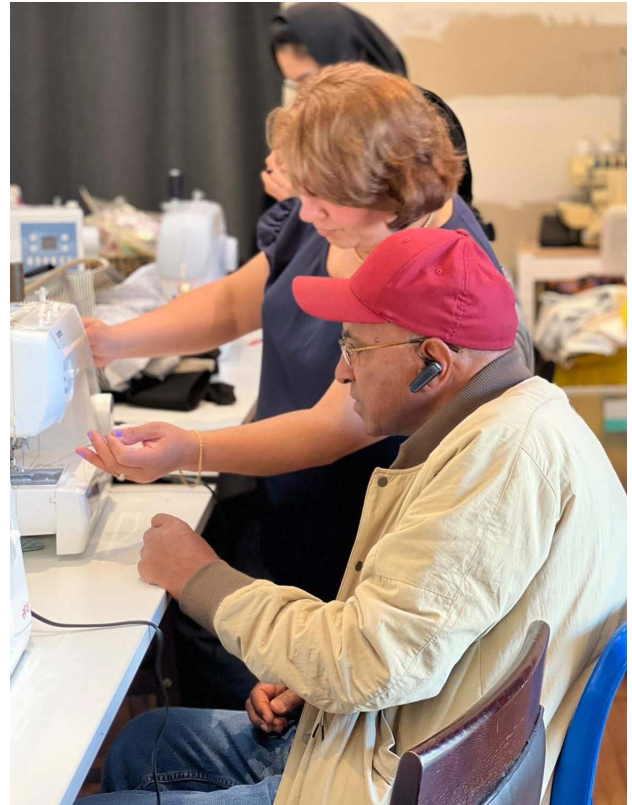
The Multicultural Accommodation and Learning Centre provides programs for people from a refugee and migrant background. The Centre was officially opened by Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs Andrew Giles in 2023. The Centre provides accommodation and learning, engagement and support programs.

Language classes lead to first jobs in Tasmania

Four young Eritrean women who arrived in Tasmania on humanitarian visas in late 2022 have achieved great success in building their employability. When they arrived in Hobart, they started attending the Multicultural Learning Program's English classes and community activities. In February, they undertook a work experience placement as housekeepers at the Hotel Grand Chancellor with language support provided through the Multicultural Learning Program.

Their positive attitude and great skills helped them to gain casual employment at the hotel straight after their work experience.

Because their level of English was still low, a learning plan was developed for them to learn vocational housekeeping vocabulary and practise relevant dialogue. They have been employed with the Hotel Grand Chancellor ever since.



How Anastasiia went from artist to teacher

The Women's Empowerment Fund is a program that supports and motivates women from refugee and migrant backgrounds to learn new skills and create greater community connections.

In 2022, three women submitted proposals to the program, undertook project management training and went on to deliver their projects in the community.

Our first participant, Anastasiia, arrived in Tasmania in July 2022 after fleeing the war in Ukraine. Anastasiia was one of the Multicultural Accommodation Centre's residents and participated in various Multicultural Learning Program activities.

Anastasiia is passionate about art and graphic design and believes in the therapeutic power of art and its ability to create connections.



During her series of acrylic painting workshops, Anastasiia shared her own story with the participants. Her journey with art began from denying her own talent to pursue a more respected and practical career in bookkeeping. However, Anastasiia eventually came back to her passion and after many years of dedication, she made art her job.

In addition to learning new skills, the participants had a chance to reflect and discuss their motivation for joining the program, and what inspires each of them to create art.

"I have dedicated my whole life to someone else, my parents, my relatives, my children, my husband. Now I feel it's the time to do something for myself."

Hanna, program participant

Starting a career in a new field in a new country wasn't easy for Anastasiia. Having support, encouragement and her first paid hours as an artist through the Women's Empowerment Fund gave her the confidence to pursue her dream. Anastasiia started applying for grant opportunities for artists and taking up freelance design work and volunteering opportunities. Recently she landed a part-time job with Reconciliation Tasmania, working as a graphic designer.

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.

Volunteer Awards 2023

MRC Tas was very successful at the 2023 Tasmanian Volunteer Awards. Mavis Sayer won the Education, Science and Technology Award and Sweta Sharma won the Community Care and Health Volunteer Award. Since volunteering with MRC Tas, Sweta has since gone on to become a staff member with the Settlement team.

Congratulations also went to Peter Jones who was a finalist in the Education, Science and Technology Award.

It was a proud moment to watch our volunteers be presented with their finalist certificates, and for Mavis and Sweta to be announced as winners and receive trophies at a ceremony at Government House.

"I've been volunteering at MRC Tas for about six and a half years in different roles including assisting with humanitarian visa applications, Conversation Club and school holiday programs for Settlement, and more recently with the Humanitarian Settlement Program preparing on-arrival paperwork. I'm a very small part of the team which prepares for and looks after new arrivals, and I find it very rewarding. I love working at MRC Tas because the staff are such wonderful and caring people, which makes for a really good working environment and friendly atmosphere." *Mavis Sayer, Volunteer Award Winner*



Why Kirsten volunteers with MRC Tas

Kirsten is a volunteer with the Settlement team.

"Social justice has always been a very strong interest in my life. Personally, I think everybody should volunteer at some point in their lives and it should be encouraged from childhood right through. I've always volunteered and I want to serve my community. MRC Tas has created a warm and happy place personally for me. I learn new skills, so I'm upskilling, and it's actually inspired me to go back and study and to become employed in community services as well. I think MRC Tas is a great place to volunteer and I encourage anybody to come and check us out because there's something for everybody at MRC Tas."

Origins Kitchen

The MRC Tas social enterprise Origins Kitchen offers authentic and delicious multicultural food for catered events. As well as serving incredible cuisines from around the world, Origins Kitchen provides employment pathways for people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

In 2022-23 Origins Kitchen successfully hosted the Hospitality Grow program, funded by Skills Tasmania, which provided hospitality training and paid work experience for people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Many of our trainees went on to secure work at restaurants and hotels in Hobart, and some were employed long term by Origins Kitchen.

Origins Kitchen was invited to participate in a number of exciting events and catering opportunities, including a food stall at the Government House Open Day, a stall at Franko's Street Eats, catering for the Tasmanian Media Awards and catering for the three-day ChangeFest 23. One of the highlights of the year was being invited to take part in the Winter Feast, thanks to the support of Dark Lab. This was the biggest service challenge the Kitchen has taken on, and all our staff and volunteers learnt so much from participating in this wonderful event and helping to support the valuable work we do.

Meet Hospitality Grow participant Bertukan

Bertukan successfully completed the Hospitality Grow program in 2022. With more than 10 years of experience in the hospitality industry, Bertukan brought her outstanding skills to the café's customers and supporters as a kitchen all-rounder in our Social Enterprise Kitchen.



Bertukan had her own restaurant in Uganda and has a love for cooking and catering. Bertukan participated in the Hospitality Grow program to assist her in practicing English and interacting with others.

"The program has helped me meet a lot of people from different backgrounds and I have enjoyed working with everyone."

Bertukan studied English at TasTAFE to help overcome language barriers and as part of the GROW program, she completed a hospitality-focused intermediate English short course and two days of training with the Tasmanian Hospitality Association.

Bertukan was keen to get back into the hospitality sector after some time off work. The Hospitality Grow program was an enjoyable way to get back into the workforce. She is now employed as a kitchen hand with Origins Kitchen.

Bertukan loves how food brings people together and she has shared some of her delicious Ethiopian recipes with the other Origins Kitchen staff.

"People from different cultures come together and prepare their cultural meals, which has helped me realise the different ways of preparing food. The program has helped me understand and appreciate everyone's culture and food preferences."

Our Board



Peter Gutwein, Chair

Peter is the former Tasmanian Premier and Treasurer. He has over 20 years' experience in the Parliament of Tasmania representing the needs of Tasmanians.

A former migrant himself, he arrived in Tasmania with his parents at four years of age and understands the richness that diverse backgrounds and different cultures bring to our State, as well as the challenges that new arrivals face.



George Elkhair, Vice Chair

George holds a Bachelor of Commerce and is a Fellow of CPA Australia with over 35 years of commerce and business experience. George migrated from Egypt to Australia with his family when he was young and is bi-lingual.



Fahim Chowdhury, Treasurer

Fahim is a senior executive at a government business enterprise. He has experience as a non-executive director across a number of community-based organisations and is currently on the board of a bank as an intern director. Originally from Bangladesh, he has a keen interest in Tasmania's multicultural society.



Dr Tania Lado Insua, Secretary

Tania is from Galicia (Spain). She is a doctor in ocean engineering with several years of experience in management. Tania has extensive experience in business development, finance and corporate operations, risk and change management. She has worked in academic, industry and not-for-profit strategic leadership roles in Australia, USA, Spain, and Canada.



Nicola Cox, Board Member

Nicola has an extensive professional background in ICT executive roles. Nicola is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and a recipient of Tasmanian Premier's Board Diversity Scholarship.



Victor Stojcevski, Board Member

Victor has a Macedonian background and has a Bachelor of Laws (Hons) and Bachelor of Arts (Hons). Victor's varied background includes leadership roles within the justice sector, particularly in court and law reform and therapeutic jurisprudence, and in suicide prevention. Victor is a member of the Law Society of Tasmania and the Asia Pacific Coroners' Society.



Daniela Ruiz, Board Member

Daniela is from Patagonia, Chile, and has lived in Australia since 2012. She has a master's degree in International Sustainable Tourism Management and eight years of experience in communications, marketing, and tourism. As a recent migrant herself, Daniela is committed to supporting the migrant community in Tasmania.



Fiona Le Gassick, Board Member

Fiona has led a rich career across a number of organisations and sectors and is currently employed as the Director of Future Students and Industry with TasTAFE. Fiona is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and has qualifications in marketing, social work, psychology and sociology.

Our Funders

We thank the following for their support during the 2022-2023 financial year:

Australian Government:

- Department of Health and Aged Care
- Department of Home Affairs
- Department of Social Services
- Department of Industry Science and Resources

Tasmanian Government:

- Department for Education, Children and Young People
- Department of Health
- Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Department of State Growth

AMES Australia

Australian Communities Foundation

Care 2 Serve

Centre for Multicultural Youth

City of Hobart

Federation of Ethnic Communities
Councils of Australia

Jetty Foundation

Paul Ramsey Foundation

Pride Foundation Australia

Primary Health Tasmania

Scanlon Foundation

Sidney Myer Foundation

TasCOSS

Tasmanian Building and Construction
Industry Training Board (Keystone)

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.

Everyone Belongs