



Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC) provides a range of services and programs designed to increase community participation, build community connections and address disadvantage in the City of Whittlesea

We have been a core service in the municipality for more than forty years, expanding our programs and services to meet the needs of our community. Our approach is based on the philosophy that communities should guide their own development. We provide a free, confidential, non-judgmental independent services that value self-determination and celebrate diversity.

We do this through a range of programs and services:

#### Client Services

- We provide a **community information, support and referral service** to connect our community to the people, services and organisations they need.
- Our **emergency relief and case management service** provides financial and other supports to those experiencing hardship. This includes our successful housing brokerage project which helps people access the private rental market through the provision of no-interest loans.
- **Whittlesea Connect Community Transport Service** provides transport for disadvantaged Whittlesea resident who have trouble getting to health appointments, social groups and other important commitments.
- **Whittlesea Volunteer Resource Service** connects individuals looking for volunteering opportunities with organisations seeking volunteers.

#### Settlement Support Programs for Refugees and New Arrivals

Our **settlement team** provides a range of programs and services to support Whittlesea's newly arrived migrants and refugees in order to achieve a better quality of life, confidence, and a sense of connection to the wider community.

- **Settlement casework**, funded by the Department of Social Services, provides intensive, proactive assistance, ensuring clients are supported holistically to overcome a range of barriers to effective re-settlement. We also provide **migration legal advice** service.
- **Settlement youth services** includes generalist casework, the DEWR funded **Youth Connections** program, supporting young people at risk of early school leaving and a range of holiday and group programs.

- With financial support from The Victorian Multicultural Commission and the Ward-Ambler Foundation, our four **learning support programs** provide essential educational and homework support for newly arrived students each week.
- A range of **social support** and group work programs provide opportunities for meaningful relationships to develop over time, increasing confidence and greater sense of community inclusion amongst emerging communities.
- **Women in Work** is a mobile childcare social enterprise Funded by Pam Usher via the Australian Communities Foundation which trains and employs qualified local women from migrant and refugee backgrounds to deliver on-site childcare services.
- Funded by Vic Roads, The **L2P** program assists disadvantaged young people to acquire 120 hours of driving practice in order to acquire their probationary license. Other **road safety programs** funded by RACV and focus on adult learner drivers.
- Other **community development** activities help to address and identify settlement needs.



### Whittlesea Community Legal Service

- Our **legal team** provides free legal information and casework to the Whittlesea community. Working to address the barriers that prevent people from accessing the justice system, the team also conducts community legal education and advocates for law reform.
- The **Whittlesea Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities Family Violence Project** brings together nine local, regional and state-wide services to support newly arrived migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to prevent and respond to family violence in Whittlesea.

## Other activities at WCC

### Eucalypt Community Market



In April WCC ran our first community market in partnership with Stockland and Third Place Café. The market will take place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of each month and is a great way for WCC to build links with our growth areas and generate independent income to support our programs and services.

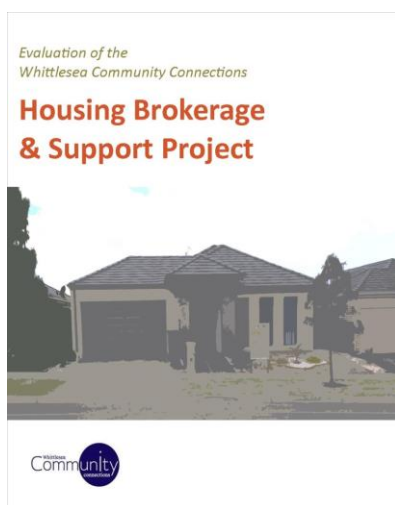
The market provides locals with access to fresh produce, arts and crafts and we look forward to growing the market over the coming months. Special thanks to Diamond Valley Community Support for their continued guidance in getting the market up and running. For more information on the market see <http://www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au/eucalypt-community-market.html> or visit <https://www.facebook.com/wccmarket>

## Family Violence Monitor

The Whittlesea municipality in Metropolitan Melbourne has one of the highest recorded incidences of family violence. In 2011, in response to the increasing incidence of individuals presenting to the agency with family violence disclosures, WCC established a data collection system to record and analyse all FV presentations to the agency. We wanted to know and measure the scale of the problem and measure the rate of increase in incidents over time.

A data collection template was developed to capture information about each time FV was reported to the agency. Guidelines for doing this were set so that each individual's case was only recorded once and not duplicated between internal referrals and each time they came to the agency. This form is under constant evaluation and is adapted to ensure that all relevant data is captured. The data maps the number of incidents reported, including the client's suburb, their cultural background, the type of violence being experienced, and the types of services they are accessing. This data will help to identify local experiences of FV and will assist our responses to the issue both at an individual level and through advocacy. You can view the most recent version of the Whittlesea FV monitor [here](#)

## Housing Brokerage and Support Project



In 2012/13, WCC established the Whittlesea Housing Brokerage and Support Project which provides no interest loans to support those at risk of homelessness to access the private rental market. Casework support is provided alongside this to ensure we can address other issues that may impact peoples' ability to sustain their tenancy (ie; family violence, mental health or unemployment). To date the project has been very successful in ensuring people at risk of homelessness have an opportunity to access long term, safe housing options in the private rental market. Many have reportedly stayed in their rental properties, feel more confident in accessing service and advocating for their needs and felt a sense of responsibility in re-paying their loans so that the next person can be assisted in the same way.

The Besen Family Foundation recently provided funding for WCC to have the first 12 months of the project evaluated and we were pleased to launch the evaluation last month. For more information on the project or to read the evaluation click [here](#)

## 2014 ER Survey

Every four years, WCC carries out a survey with Emergency Relief Clients across a four month period. The surveys give a more in depth snap shot of the reasons people access Emergency Relief and gives insight in to some of the challenges facing our local community. The first ER Survey Report was published in 2002 and we will shortly be releasing our fourth ER Survey Report.

The report will be launched in the coming month and will be available on our website. Previous reports can be accessed [here](#)

## WITOG

WCC is a founding member of the Whittlesea Interagency Taskforce on Gambling (WITOG) - a group of local agencies committed to reducing the impact of gambling harm. WITOG believes poker machines are dangerous products that are programmed to win and designed to addict. Like other products - tobacco, alcohol etc - stronger regulation is needed to make our community healthier.

In 2014 residents of the City of Whittlesea lost \$99 million at the pokies. Approximately \$40 million of that came from problem gamblers, and there are significant costs to individuals, families and the community.

WITOG aims to:

- Raise community awareness to highlight the risks and dangers associated with poker machines or electronic gaming machines (EGMs)
- Reduce gambling losses in the municipality to the Statewide average
- Promote a public health approach to reducing harm from gambling
- Support broader state and national campaigns for EGM reform

WITOG is really interested in sharing with other areas how to replicate this Taskforce model across the state - so please get in contact! Resources are scarce, and WITOG can help with templates and other resources. Check out [www.pokermachinesharmwhittlesea.org](http://www.pokermachinesharmwhittlesea.org) or <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Poker-Machines-Harm-Whittlesea/302345609905401> for more information and contact details or to organise a speaker for your agency.

For more information on our services and programs please visit [www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au](http://www.whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au) or contact us by phone: 94016666 or email: [admin@whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au](mailto:admin@whittleseacommunityconnections.org.au)

