



**MARSS Australia Inc.**  
Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services

# Multicultural Monitor

March 2020

---

## CEO'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the first edition of MARSS' Multicultural Monitor newsletter for 2020. The devastating bushfires at the start of this year impacted many Australians, and the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to affect all of our lives for the foreseeable future. Like any organisation, our recent priority has been to adapt our services and ways of working to protect the health and safety of our clients and staff.

In light of the coronavirus outbreak, our Belconnen and Queanbeyan office are temporarily closed. We have also paused all classes, sessions, meetings, and events; this is in line with government advice to avoid group gatherings where possible. All staff will be working from our main office in Civic - please call us on (02) 6248 8577 or on your caseworker's number if you need assistance and we will help you with anything you need over the phone. In this difficult time we know that many people will need help with food and essential items - please do not hesitate to contact us as we will be able to support clients through our emergency relief program.

If you need urgent in-person assistance, our case workers will advise you over the phone before you can come to the office. We also ask all our clients and stakeholders not to visit our office if you are showing symptoms as identified by the health authorities.

If you are attending our office, please keep a distance of at least 1.5 metres from people, and continue to practice good hand hygiene. Rest assured that we are practising these measures at our office as well, and that staff are continually directed to stay at home if they are feeling unwell.

---

We are taking these precautions to ensure that we can minimise transmission now as much as possible in order to protect our clients and staff, while continuing to deliver assistance and support to migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in the region during this tough time.

The last few months have also seen many positive highlights for MARSS, including the launch of our new organisation name (MARSS Australia), a new board, the launch of a new office in Belconnen, and continuing to deliver a holistic set of services to facilitate the settlement of migrants and refugees through our settlement hub service model. Please read on for more information about these recent events and our programs and services.

On behalf of MARSS I would like to encourage everyone to stay safe, adhere to social distancing and hygiene measures, and to continue to support our most vulnerable community members through these hard times.

**Dewani Bakkum**

**Chief Executive Officer**

## New Brand Launch





## New Brand Launch

On Tuesday the 29th of October, MARSS Australia Inc. officially launched its new name, logo and branding. Nggunawal Elder, Mrs Jannette Phillips presented a Welcome to Country, and our MC, ABC's Adrienne Francis, commenced the proceedings.

We also had addresses from the Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd); Chairperson of the Board of Management, Andrew Alwast; and Chief Executive Officer, Dewani Bakkum.



---

## News and Events

### Parliament House Tour

Children and families were taken on a tour of Parliament House. The tour was run by the APH education manager and was a great opportunity to learn about Australia's parliamentary democracy. The tour included visiting and discovering the two chambers, the Senate and the House of Representatives, and an explanation about the Australian Government, opposition and the people who help the Parliament do its work. The education program also included a play conducted by the participants about the process of how to legislate a law in Australia.



### Old Parliament House and Museum of Australian Democracy Visit

Children and families were invited to a tour of Old Parliament House and the Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD). Participants found out how Australia has become a vibrant, multicultural democratic nation, and how citizens can participate in determining its future. There were innovative exhibitions, tours of the Senate and the House of Representatives, and children's activities in the Senate garden, as well as the spaces such as PlayUP, DressUP, Use Your Voice Zine Lounge, and Superhero museum trail.





## Government House Open Day Stall

MARSS held a stall at the Government House Open Day. The public had the opportunity to meet and learn about the work of the 30+ charities and community groups that are supported by the patronage of the Governor General of Australia and Mrs Hurley. This includes MARSS Australia Inc. whose patron is His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd). Guests could also meet their Excellencies Governor General and Mrs Hurley, explore their residences - which are some of Australia's most historic properties, and tour their gardens.



## Annual General Meeting

MARSS held our Annual General Meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October in the ACT Legislative Assembly. Newly elected were Chairperson - David Ng; Deputy Chair - Andrew Alwast OAM; Treasurer- Mithun Alexander; Secretary - Andrew Ng; Public Officer - Borhan Uddin Ahmed; and Committee Members - Simon Kwan Kit Ng, Raewyn Bastion JP, Syed As-Sayeed, Isaac Te Ao Cotter, and Steve Taskovski.



## Annual Christmas Party

MARSS hosted our Annual Christmas Party again on Wednesday the 18th of December. Around 300 MARSS clients joined us for a delicious dinner and watched the gracious MARSS dancing group and Maneerat's choir perform some classic Christmas carols. This was followed by Santa himself coming for a visit, bringing with him gifts for all the kids. Overall it was a fun and successful event and MARSS thanks everyone for attending and all the donors for the much appreciated gifts they provided.



## Multicultural Matters Meetings (MuMaMe)

On Wednesday the 20th of November, MARSS had their seasonal Multicultural Matters Meeting (MuMaMe). Superintendent Mick Calatzis from ACT Policing's North District spoke about the current challenges associated with cultural diversity and law enforcement in the Gungahlin District. MARSS Chief Executive Officer, Dewani Bakkum gave an overview of Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement in Geneva, Switzerland, on the theme "25 Years of the ATCR: Celebrating the positive impact of resettlement and providing inspiration for the future."



[See more at our website](#)

---

## Program Information

### SETTLEMENT ENGAGEMENT AND TRANSITION SUPPORT (SETS)

Under SETS MARSS provides casework, advocacy and referral services to eligible migrants and refugees in the ACT. A SETS caseworker can help you access local services, look for accommodation, provide information, and help you on your settlement journey. Call 6248 8577 or email [info@marss.org.au](mailto:info@marss.org.au) for more information.

### HOMELESSNESS SERVICE FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS & FAMILIES WITH UNCERTAIN IMMIGRATION STATUS

MARSS will provide housing maintenance, tenancy support and wrap-around services to assist asylum seeker women and families in finding homes and settling into Australia. To access this service please contact Naresh Gunaskere at [manager@marss.org.au](mailto:manager@marss.org.au).

### PROGRAM FOR AFTER SCHOOL STUDIES (PASS)

PASS helps clients between the ages of 8 and 25 who are from non-English speaking backgrounds with homework, reading, writing, and speaking skills, acquiring study skills, as well as using resources provided by MARSS. PASS operates from MARSS' Civic Office on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 3:30pm to 6:30pm, in Belconnen Churches Centre from 4pm to 5:30pm on Mondays, and at Dickson College on Thursdays 3pm-4pm for the Secondary Introductory English College (SIEC).

For more information contact Richard Bakkum on [pass@marss.org.au](mailto:pass@marss.org.au).

### HEALTHY EATING AND ACTIVE LIVING

This new free program includes activities tailored to 3 different groups: Women, Men and Youths (15 - 25 years old) over 10 weeks. Men and women will get tailored Gym/Physio and outdoor Soccer classes. Youths will get to try a variety of dancing and wrestling activities. All participants will find information on how to eat well in Healthy Eating Information sessions and an in-language handbook for you to take home. Contact Asavari Deonath on [ea@marss.org.au](mailto:ea@marss.org.au).

### FOUNDATION WORKPLACE ENGLISH AND COMMUNICATION PROGRAM

Participants will develop: workplace English language vocabulary and expression, conversation skills, and confidence speaking in a group. Participants will learn how to follow and give basic instructions, complete simple employment paperwork, and how to give and receive feedback. If you are interested in participating, please contact Denisa Zezulka on [rto@marss.org.au](mailto:rto@marss.org.au).

### ENGLISH FOR WORK ENTRY PROGRAM

Participants will increase their understanding of their situation relative to the opportunities available and pathway options, develop the skills to find and apply for jobs, and increase their understanding of the Australian



workplace. If you are interested in joining, contact Denisa Zezulka on [rto@marss.org.au](mailto:rto@marss.org.au).

### **ENGLISH FOR EMPLOYMENT**

The English for Employment Program is designed to assist migrants and refugees and asylum seekers in building their English language skills to a level where they can successfully gain meaningful employment, or pursue their vocational education and training goals. For more information contact Andrew Kazar on [cdp@marss.org.au](mailto:cdp@marss.org.au).

### **ENGLISH FOR LIVING**

This program offers free English classes to clients of all ages from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who are not attending CIT or Navitas. Our clients are provided with the opportunity to learn English in an informal and friendly setting. Our volunteer English teachers dedicate their time and expertise to allow for successful and positive learning. For more information please contact Andrew Kazar on [cdp@marss.org.au](mailto:cdp@marss.org.au).

### **HOME TUTOR PROGRAM (HTP)**

This program matches volunteer English language tutors with migrants and refugees who are unable to attend our regular English classes. Our tutors help our clients to improve their English skills within their homes. For more information contact Andrew Kazar on [cdp@marss.org.au](mailto:cdp@marss.org.au).

### **MEN'S OUTREACH WORKSHOP**

In the Men's Outreach Workshops (MOW) Men can learn about the importance of positive family relationships and receive information about how to prevent and combat domestic and family violence through community awareness and education. To be part of the next session contact Andrew Kazar at [cdp@marss.org.au](mailto:cdp@marss.org.au).

### **ROAD READY PROGRAM**

This 6 week course teaches its clients the essential knowledge required for students to start driving safely on roads in the ACT and the surrounding region. Clients then undertake the Learner's Knowledge test and upon successful completion they are able to get their Learner's license and start driving lessons. We have had numerous participants successfully complete the course in the past few terms. To join contact Eman Basheer on [pass@marss.org.au](mailto:pass@marss.org.au).

### **LEARN TO DRIVE**

This program assists eligible migrants and refugees who are on their learner's licence work towards their provisional licence. We offer discounted driving lessons to these clients, and have recently partnered with Road Smart driving school to provide these services. For more information contact Eman Basheer on [sets4@marss.org.au](mailto:sets4@marss.org.au).



### COMPUTER CLASS

The six-week course offers clients one-on-one training to improve their computer literacy with the help of volunteers from ANU. The course teaches clients basic and essential skills such as accessing and browsing the internet, using word processing, sending and checking emails, using Facebook, and downloading photos. For more information please contact Andrew Kazar on [cdp@marss.org.au](mailto:cdp@marss.org.au).

### HARMONY SPORTS PROGRAM

The Harmony Players program provides migrants and refugees the opportunity to play men's futsal. This program gives new migrants the opportunity to make new friends and learn new skills while settling in Australia. Games are played on a weekly basis and new players are always welcome to join. For more

information contact Andrew Kazar on [pass@marss.org.au](mailto:pass@marss.org.au).

### SEWING AND CRAFT CLASS

Through the program, participants gain knowledge and become proficient in the use of sewing machines, over-lockers, construction techniques, and how to start and run small businesses. Their creations are displayed for purchase at the in the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre.

### JOB READY

This program assists migrants and refugees in obtaining jobs that are relevant to their qualifications. For more information contact Andrew Kazar on [cdp@marss.org.au](mailto:cdp@marss.org.au).



(02) 6248 8577



[info@marss.org.au](mailto:info@marss.org.au)



Level 2, 180 London Circuit, Civic