



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

# Multicultural Monitor

April 2020

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## Message from CEO Dewani Bakkum

Since my last update, MARSS has quickly adapted to new ways of working, and I am proud of the support the MARSS team is providing to our clients in this time of great stress and uncertainty.

Clients are continuing to access our casework, advocacy and referral services over the phone. However, some of the essential work that we do cannot be done from home, including delivering food relief, and accommodation assistance. In these situations, we have implemented preventative health measures to ensure that we can continue to provide critical services while protecting the health and safety of our employees and clients.

We have experienced an increase in the number of people in the ACT and Southern Highlands accessing our Emergency Relief Program. The MARSS team has been able to provide timely assistance and meet urgent requests for food, household items and help with bills through this program. The team is also proactively reaching out to clients to ensure that no-one is left without essentials and other support. MARSS staff are delivering food boxes to those clients who are unable to arrange travel or leave their homes.

COVID-19 is beginning to impact housing affordability, with job losses affecting the ability of many vulnerable people to pay rent. We have helped a number of people with housing and tenancy issues over the past month through our housing programs.

In the upcoming months, MARSS will be working hard to move our English, education, employment, health and wellbeing programs online to continue supporting our clients to achieve positive outcomes and remain focused on long term education and employment goals.

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I was grateful to receive a call from our Patron, His Excellency Governor General the Honourable David Hurley recently, to find out how COVID-19 has impacted MARSS and our clients. He was very pleased to hear how MARSS had swiftly adjusted our service delivery to enable us to keep supporting clients and expressed gratitude for the dedication of our staff as frontline workers.

Most of my own time and thinking is now focused on COVID-19 and on how MARSS can best play its role. MARSS will remain a welcoming, reliable and consistent source of support for migrants, refugees, humanitarian entrants and asylum seekers in the ACT and region and we are committed to doing everything we can to help the Canberra community get through this crisis.

Stay safe and well.

**Dewani Bakkum**

**Chief Executive Officer**



MARSS Staff in a meeting preparing to work from home - while social distancing of course!

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# COVID-19 Resources

If you need any information on COVID-19 in any language, please visit the ACTHealth COVID-19 website by clicking the link below for the most up-to-date and relevant information about the coronavirus. The page can be translated to a number of languages by clicking the box in the top right.

**ACTHealth:** <https://www.covid19.act.gov.au/>

If you need translation services for any reason during this difficult time, please visit the Translating and Interpreting Services website by clicking the link below.

**TIS:** <https://www.tisnational.gov.au/>

If you are in need of food or household supplies, please visit the Canberra Relief Network (CRN) website by clicking the link below, or call them on 1800 43 11 43. Alternatively, you may call the MARSS office on (02) 6248 8577 and we can assist you.

**CRN:** <https://canberrarelief.com.au/>

For general information about the coronavirus and current affairs in any language, you can visit the SBS Online Multilingual Portal here:

**SBS:** <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/coronavirus>

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/dzdoe9hdh7lf38i/AABwqHZcMOVeG3qq44HwNqFga?dl=0>

The Department of Home Affairs has developed and released a new COVID-19 website, with key COVID-19 information available in 63 languages:

**DHA:** <https://covid19inlanguage.homeaffairs.gov.au/>

## SBS Health Advisory

This Ramadan, stay safe from the coronavirus

During the holy month of Ramadan...



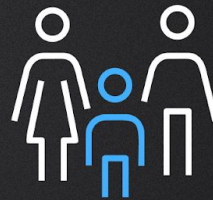
stay home



stay safe



stay connected



save lives.

For more information in your language go to  
[sbs.com.au/coronavirus](https://sbs.com.au/coronavirus) →





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## MARSS' COVID-19 Response

At MARSS, we are doing everything we can to help those in our community most affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Not only are we giving welfare calls to all of our past and present clients, we have also partnered with the Canberra Relief Network (CRN) among other organisations to help arrange the delivery or collection of food boxes.

If you or anyone you know is struggling financially or otherwise due to the coronavirus pandemic, don't hesitate to call us for relief on (02) 6248 8577. All assistance is free and can be collected at the MARSS office or delivered right to your door.



## MARSS' Team in Action

In the past weeks, a young student from Sweden was stuck in Canberra and unable to return home. In urgent need of accomodation and emergency relief, MARSS was able to provide these to her and make sure that she was safe and sound. Following, MARSS organised transport so that she could reach Sydney safely and be able to return home to Sweden.



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## News and Events

### International Women's Day

On the 6th of March, MARSS staff and clients joined together at our Belconnen office to celebrate International Women's Day. They enjoyed a delicious spread of food and took part in a wide range of activities in honour of women everywhere.



### Grant Writing Workshop

Following fantastic feedback from our first workshop in 2019, MARSS held its second grant writing workshop on February 25th. Learning effective grant writing techniques helps empower individuals and communities to secure funding for valuable projects and important causes. We hope that this workshop furthers our efforts to build resilient multicultural communities in Australia.



## Multicultural Festival

MARSS once again had a stall at Canberra's Multicultural Festival on the 21st and 22nd of February this year. We sold a variety of Indian curries and a Middle Eastern inspired skewer. The food proved to be a hit, netting us one of our youngest donors yet! We hope everyone who visited our stall and the Multicultural Festival had a great time and enjoyed the food and range of cultures. All proceeds from our stall went towards supporting communities affected by the bushfires.



## AMEP Roundtable

On the 22nd of January, MARSS, alongside the Settlement Council of Australia (SCOA), hosted a roundtable to discuss the structural barriers which migrants and refugees face when accessing the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). The feedback from this roundtable discussion will go a long way towards maximising the potential of AMEP.





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## Multicultural Leadership Development Program

Starting in February, MARSS together with David Simpson and his team from APIS, kicked off the Multicultural Leadership Development Program. Over 25 participants attended, working extremely hard to understand what makes a good leader and how they could use these skills to help others in their own lives and communities. All 25 participants graduated from the program, earning a certificate. MARSS is looking forward to what these participants will achieve from here in their future and would also like to thank everyone involved.





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## KAPA HAKA Festival

On the 13th of March, MARSS participated in the 8th Australian National Kapa Haka Festival, which sees song and dance groups compete over three days for the “best of the best” crown.

Working with the Nga KAPA Taumata Tei Tei Maori Performing Arts Australia INC, MARSS provided delish food and beverage for VIP's of the event which was enjoyed by all.



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## Testimonials



### Birnadet

Birnadet has been a MARSS client since she arrived in Australia in 2017. From picking her up at the airport to helping her claim centrelink and learn English, MARSS has been there at every step of her settlement journey.

As a carer for her mother, Birnadet found it hard to get her mum to appointments and do shopping for her. With the help of the MARSS Road Ready course, she got her learner's license, and went right into our Learn to Drive program.

In January 2020, she passed the test and got her license - congratulations Birnadet! We hope MARSS can continue to enrich you and your mum's life and settlement in Australia.

### Rami



Rami Malko first came to Canberra in 2016 from Iraq, arriving with his father, mother and sister. From his first day in Canberra, Rami has worked very hard with MARSS to set himself and his family up.

For the last two years Rami has volunteered at MARSS as an interpreter for Arabic speaking students in the Road Ready Course. Through MARSS, Rami has completed his certificate 4 in driving instruction and assessment to become a qualified Accredited Driving Instructor in the ACT.

Right now, Rami is on the frontline delivering food boxes to clients. In the future, Rami will be a driving instructor in the MARSS Learn to Drive Program, be sure to say hello to him as you see him driving all around Canberra!

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# ACTHealth Community Warning

## Do NOT touch, pick or eat any wild mushrooms!

Death Cap mushrooms are one of the world's deadliest mushrooms and can currently be found across the Canberra region. Since 2002, there have been four deaths and several poisonings in the ACT due to Death Cap mushrooms.

In Canberra, Death Cap mushrooms often grow near established oak trees in mild, moist weather. The Death Cap mushroom can easily be confused with edible varieties. This includes the Straw Mushroom, which is grown and eaten through a large part of Asia.

It is difficult, even for experienced collectors, to tell the difference between the Death Cap mushroom and edible wild mushrooms. For this reason, people are strongly advised not to touch, pick or eat any wild mushrooms, and to remind friends and family who are visiting or new to Canberra of the risks of Death Cap mushroom poisoning.

All parts of the Death Cap mushroom are poisonous and eating part of a mushroom can be fatal. Cooking the Death Cap mushroom does not make it safe.

If you suspect that you, or one of your family members or friends might have eaten Death Cap mushrooms, you should seek urgent medical attention at a hospital emergency department.

If you believe you have seen a Death Cap mushroom, do not touch the mushroom with your bare skin. If it is in your own yard, the best option is to leave it be and make sure others stay away from the area. The mushroom will die in a few days.

If you believe you have spotted a Death Cap mushroom growing in a public area, please contact Access Canberra on 13 22 81.

For further information on Death Cap mushrooms, download the fact sheet, poster or flyer online at:

<https://www.health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/population-health/fact-sheets>.

Flyers and posters are available in both English and non-English languages.

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## 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 [naresh.gunasekere@marss.org.au](mailto:naresh.gunasekere@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 [Naresh.Gunaskere@marss.org.au](mailto:Naresh.Gunaskere@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 [Richard.Bakkum@marss.org.au](mailto:Richard.Bakkum@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 [Asavari.Deonath@marss.org.au](mailto:Asavari.Deonath@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 [Denisa.Zezulka@marss.org.au](mailto:Denisa.Zezulka@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



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workplace. If you are interested in joining, contact Denisa Zezulka on [Denisa.Zezulka@marss.org.au](mailto:Denisa.Zezulka@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 [Lydia.Waddell@marss.org.au](mailto:Lydia.Waddell@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 Lydiar on [Lydia.Waddell@marss.org.au](mailto:Lydia.Waddell@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 Lydia on [Lydia.Waddell@marss.org.au](mailto:Lydia.Waddell@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 [Andrew.Kazar@marss.org.au](mailto:Andrew.Kazar@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 Basel and Rami on 6248 8577

### **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 Basel and Rami on 6248 8577.

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### 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 Andrew.Kazar@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. To get involved, please contact Lynne on 6248 8577

### JOB READY

This program assists migrants and refugees in obtaining jobs that are relevant to their qualifications. For more information contact Andrew Kazar on Andrew.Kazar@marss.org.au.



(02) 6248 8577



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