



Rebuilding
Communities
Together

METRO ASSIST
2022
ANNUAL REPORT



metro assist

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO COUNTRY

Metro Assist would like to acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and celebrate the diversity of First Nations people and their ongoing cultures and connections to our lands and waters.

Metro Assist was established in 1986 as a Migrant Resource Centre. We have an extensive history delivering services to vulnerable individuals, families, and communities in the Canterbury Bankstown, Inner West and broader Sydney area. We have specialist knowledge of the experiences and needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. We are committed to the promotion of diversity and social inclusion through our services and collaborative sector advocacy work.

Our Vision



A just society that respects diversity and enables everyone to reach their full potential.

Chairperson's Report



Scott Machin
CHAIR

The uncertainty of the last year again tested the resilience of the Metro Assist leadership team, team members and Board. I'm proud to report that the organisation again rose to the challenge and continued to deliver high quality services to our vulnerable clients. Throughout the year the team stayed true to the Metro Assist vision and values, focusing on the wellbeing of our clients and their community, and each other.

COVID-19 had a significant impact on our clients during the year and led to an increased demand for our services. New client and community needs have emerged, and the team has been quick to adapt our services to meet these changes. The longer-term health and financial impacts of COVID-19 are still being felt and will continue to drive demand for our services over the year ahead.

Our supporters across all levels of government, and in the corporate sector, have continued to provide much needed funds to assist the organisation to provide these key services. Their support through this period and flexibility in working with us to reshape how our services were provided has been greatly appreciated.

The organisation's leaders went above and beyond what was expected of them to guide the organisation through this period, while at the same time turning around its financial performance. The organisation is in a strong financial position and is ready to take advantage of new opportunities and partnerships.

In April 2022, Jemma Hollonds resigned from the Board after four and a half years to take on other challenges. Jemma made an enormous contribution to the Board during her time with us and her vast range of skills and expertise, and genuine care for vulnerable people, will be missed.

It is a privilege to lead such a skilled and dedicated Board. Each director brings their expertise, individual experiences, and perspectives which come together to deliver strong collective decision making. All directors volunteer their time, many of them with their own full-time jobs and family commitments. All are passionate about the organisation, staff and clients, and this dedication shines through in everything they do.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank the leadership team and all Metro Assist team members for their efforts. You have been fantastic in continuing to provide high quality services to our vulnerable clients.

The Board is looking forward to the year ahead (hopefully with COVID-19 behind us!) and the opportunity to continue to successfully grow our services and expand our positive impact on the community.

The year 2021-22 was a year of learning, reflection, and adaptation for Metro Assist as the organisation successfully navigated the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the economy, employment, and wellbeing of our communities.

In the first half of 2021-22, communities in our service area, particularly in the Inner South-West and Inner Sydney, faced long and strict lockdowns, affecting many vulnerable individuals and households. Communities in some of our areas were also impacted heavily by storm and flood damage in the latter part of the year. Due to our long-term connections with the diverse communities in our region, we were able to play a pivotal role in supporting and communicating with those communities during these crises, in collaboration with government, peak bodies and other community services.

I would like to acknowledge our funding bodies, particularly the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Office of Fair Trading, Multicultural NSW and the Commonwealth Department of Social Services for promptly disbursing supplementary emergency funding and resources, which not only enabled us to support communities directly, but also helped us in adapting our operations to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our workers during the height of the pandemic.

As we began to live with COVID-19 in the second half of the year, easing restrictions and the opening of international borders restored some hope to our communities desperately waiting for a level of normality, and to us as a service provider. However, our communities now face the challenges of a downturn in the economy, with higher interest rates and an increase to the cost of living, which is pushing vulnerable and marginalised people to the edge, resulting into heightened demand for our services. Our front-line staff have kept pace with the jump in demand and continue to support the community with utmost resilience and agility.

The organisation ended the year in a strong financial position, which has allowed us to invest in vital organisational infrastructure including an intranet project and automation of our systems and processes aimed at achieving greater productivity and efficiencies across our operations, and to redirect more resources to direct client services.

I am incredibly grateful to all our staff for their work this year and for what we have been able to achieve for our clients and constituents. I would like to acknowledge their dedication to serving the most vulnerable members of the community. Despite the challenges this year, our team delivered key innovative projects addressing pertinent issues impacting our communities; building CALD community responsiveness to climate change, COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy, and a cross-sectoral gambling forum, to name a few.

I would like to extend our gratitude to all our funding bodies, sector allies, collaborators, corporate partners, and stakeholders for your ongoing support to us in 2021-22.

I am grateful to our Board of Directors for their leadership, guidance and support to the management team and the organisation throughout the year, and for volunteering significant time and energy to help chart the organisation's strategic direction towards sustainability and growth.

CEO's Report



Nina Shahi
ACTING CEO

Metro Assist

Services and Impact

2021-2022

People directly supported by Metro Assist services

12,856

Metro Assist provides a range of essential services to vulnerable people and communities, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, migrants and refugees, and families.

Our programs offer support that puts client dignity and quality of life first, helping them to rebuild and thrive.

15,632

People engaged through campaigns and forums

WHO ARE OUR CLIENTS?

60%
from CALD backgrounds

35%
male

64%
female

3%
identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Top 3 languages spoken

Arabic
Chinese
English



Financial inclusion

In 2021-22, our Financial Inclusion services supported low-income earners impacted by COVID-19, mostly through job loss and the inability to pay their rent or mortgage, and their utility bills.

The demand for Emergency Relief (ER) and access to basic essential items, was particularly high, as was access to our No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) and Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) system, all of which provide quick support to clients experiencing financial stress.

Emergency Relief supports people experiencing financial crisis by offering one-off immediate assistance with food, transport, phone or chemist vouchers, part-payment of utility account/s and referrals to other services that help address underlying causes of financial crisis. The NILS program offers low-income earners safe and affordable loans of up to \$1,500 for essential goods and services.

Our Financial Counsellors supported clients who presented with credit over-commitment and with complex issues, such as unemployment, problem gambling, tax default, business failure, or bankruptcy. Our counsellors were able to guide them towards positive outcomes by providing information and support to deal with financial issues, managing debts and alleviate the stress of financial hardship.

We supported

373

households with 1916 counselling sessions to help manage their debts

867 households

in financial crisis supported through 1068 count of emergency relief assistance

165

households accessed NILS loans

\$55,400

worth of EAPA Assistance provided



Financial Counselling



JOHN is 60 years old and presented as a self-referral for Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) as he was unable to pay his electricity bill. He is a single parent of four children aged 21, 19, 16 and 11 years. His 16-year-old son has a disability and John was facing many issues, including the cancellation of his 16-year-old son and 19-year-old daughter's Centrelink payments. He worked closely with a Financial Counsellor to address the situation of his unpaid bills and rent arrears of over \$8,000 and the fact that he was facing eviction. John was struggling to pay for the necessities and his youngest children frequently missed school.

The Financial Inclusion team provided arrears relief payments and advocated on John's behalf to restore Centrelink payments and prevent the family's eviction. John was also referred to other areas of Metro Assist and to external organisations to ensure that he and his family would have long-term support towards secure housing, receive mental health support and prioritise his children's education.

"John first reached out to Metro Assist requesting short-term payment assistance but was in fact facing a high number of financial stressors that were impacting his mental health and his family's safety. Metro Assist Financial Counselling was able to work in collaboration with our Tenancy services, Centrelink and the Department of Justice and Communities to address his financial issues and help him to find longer-term stability." – METRO ASSIST FINANCIAL COUNSELLOR

MABLE is a First Nations woman living in public housing with her daughter and receiving the age pension from Centrelink. Mable attended an appointment with a No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) worker and requested a loan to purchase a new washing machine to replace her broken one. The NILS worker helped Mable prepare and complete the application for the loan, including preparing documents and expense details. The loan was approved by Norwest Loans, the loan provider, and Mable was happy with the service and is interested in accessing NILS again after the current loan has been paid.

"When Mable came to Metro Assist for her NILS appointment, she had no money to spend on a new washing machine and was quite distressed about not being able to wash her clothes, and those of her daughter. Thanks to Mable's organisational skills, we were able to write up the loan quickly and then get it approved. Mable feels supported and reassured by the knowing that she can apply for NILS in the future." – METRO ASSIST NILS CASEWORKER

No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS)



NOTE: NAMES MAY HAVE BEEN CHANGED

Family Services

During the year, our Family and Community Development team continued to respond rapidly to the changing needs and impacts of COVID-19 on families. We saw an increase in the number of clients experiencing family and domestic violence seeking our service.

Our Targeted Early Intervention program provided case management support to families suffering the impacts of COVID-19, mental illness, addiction, domestic violence, financial and parenting issues.

Our Community Development team worked hard to keep families and vulnerable communities connected, supported and engaged through a combination of virtual and in-person parenting programs including 1-2-3 Magic and in-language Emotion Coaching, Parenting Teens Webinar in collaboration with Rainbow Families, and Trauma-informed parenting programs for women in rehabilitation and a range of activities for families.

The Family Preservation Service worked with parents expecting a child, or raising children aged 0-8 years who are experiencing domestic and family violence, drug and alcohol misuse, mental health issues and other challenges which might threaten the child's wellbeing. Caseworkers conducted home visits and provided psychological support, parenting education, assistance with accessing quality childcare and other local networks and services.

The demand for our Psychological Support Service soared as families grappled with COVID-19 impacting their mental health. Our psychologists supported children, adolescents and their parents, enabling them to access critical counselling services that are difficult to acquire, especially during the pandemic.

We supported

741

children, young people and families supported to manage their difficult life situations before problems escalate

106
families
received
psychologist
service

61

children at risk from 47 families were prevented from entering out-of-home care through intensive family support

3,399
people

supported in building positive parenting skills, social connectedness, and life skills

186

women experiencing violence or relationship breakdown supported to access relevant services and build their resilience

Outcomes

29%

reported to have better family functioning

17%

improved mental health or have access to mental health service

11%

built social networks outside of their immediate family

11%

reported to have enhanced personal and family safety



Psychologist Service



DANIA was referred to Metro Assist’s Targeted Earlier Intervention program after experiencing domestic violence and having been left by her husband in a vulnerable position. She is a single mother of three children, unable to drive and living with very limited financial support.

“When I was pregnant with my third baby my husband started controlling everything financially and I was totally dependent on him. After the baby was born, I was emotionally and physically very down. I had no friends during these whole 10 years as he didn’t want me to go anywhere. As soon as he got his citizenship approval he left again and sent me an Islamic divorce the next day. I was referred to Metro Assist where the Targeted Earlier Intervention caseworker helped me a lot to start everything from scratch. She helped me to remove my waiting period of four years so I can get payment for the rent and groceries. I was able to gain help with kids clothing, toys, Legal Aid, and Metro Assist also helped me apply for Victims Services payment, Escaping Violence payment and also Start Safely through housing. This was a big help from them. It was again a very hard time for me as I was again emotionally, financially and mentally very down and wasn’t sure what to do, but with the ongoing support from Metro Assist I was finally able to start a safe life with my kids. I am now free from this abusive relationship and able to manage everything by myself as Metro Assist has given me enough support and confidence.” – DANIA

ALMA, a single mother of four children, who had recently relocated to Sydney to escape severe family violence, was referred to the Family Preservation Service due to ongoing mental and physical health issues related to trauma. Alma’s two youngest children have severe physical and cognitive disabilities and were receiving NDIS support. Alma remained in the program for almost two years, due to ongoing concerns for her health and the impact on her coping and parenting skills, as well as limited family and financial support and child behavioural issues. She faced ongoing hardships during this time, including housing displacement due to major floods, interruption to NDIS services and further health issues.

Throughout the program, Alma received consistent support through intensive weekly case management, financial counselling, referrals to other support services and advocacy support with mental health services, housing and schools. Towards the end of Alma’s time in the program, she had found ongoing support from community services, established family and peer networks and felt more empowered to address and future hardships.

“Family Preservation Services have supported us greatly and made a huge impact in our lives. Your kindness, care and compassion will not be easily forgotten. Thank you”. – ALMA

Family Preservation Service



Targeted Earlier Intervention



BEATRIX is a single parent of three children who has lived in Australia for 10 years and experienced domestic violence in her marriage. She was referred to Metro Assist’s psychologist who helped her to create strategies to recover from her trauma, develop positive coping skills and improve her parenting skills. Beatrix has since reported that developing a positive parenting style helped her with her own self-care and that she feels confident now to make her own decisions and ask for support when needed. Importantly, she has grown in confidence and is motivated to build on future progress.

“Beatrix was suffering with the impact of domestic violence and trauma, which was having a significant effect on her mental health and ability to manage parenting her 3 children. Her caseworker referred her to Metro Assist for a psychological intervention and together, we were able to address her trauma and her coping skills with evidence-based intervention strategies. Moving forward with these strategies, Beatrix now feels confident and motivated to build on long-term progress.” – METRO ASSIST PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELLOR

Employment Support

Our Dress for Work (DFW) program provided online employment workshops for jobseekers during the lockdown, with the support of volunteers and corporate partners. In March 2022, we reopened the service for face-to-face support with a fresh new brand, expanded services, and a spacious new boutique showroom in Bankstown. We resumed workwear fitting sessions, both remotely and in person, providing suits, accessories and trade wear to men preparing to embark on their employment journey.

We resumed 'employment ready' workshops and one-on-one job readiness training to high school groups and young men and boys, under a partnership with the NSW Department of Education.

ParentsNext (PNX) supported parents preparing to re-enter the workforce after fulltime care of their children. Participants engaged in training and employment related activities to improve their prospects for employment.

PowerMe delivered intensive mentoring, appropriate employability skills training and internships and we were able to assist over 100 overseas qualified migrants and refugees to overcome barriers and find sustainable, long-term employment in their preferred profession. Similarly, through our Women's Leadership Program we mentored and supported women who aspire to become leaders in their profession and community.

Throughout the year, we worked collaboratively with various training organisations, English language providers, employers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and other community organisations to support our participants' work ready journey.

We supported

Over
885

parents with young children supported with their education and employment aspirations

117
overseas qualified

refugees and migrants received employment support to overcome barriers

Fitting services for

90

boys and men

128
school leavers

supported through employment support sessions



Dress for Work



OSHODI came to Dress for Work with big dreams of working in men’s fashion but felt disheartened after no job success. Oshodi’s English was limited but he had the work ethic and drive to succeed for himself and his family. Oshodi worked with a Dress for Work mentor who helped him set goals and work on his confidence and speaking skills. He subsequently gained work as a waiter and assisted with Dress for Work events to help improve his skills and confidence. By September of this year, Oshodi’s was ready to pursue his passions and began to apply and interview for men’s clothing companies.

“Dress For Work has been a blessing for my personal growth. I had all these dreams and when they weren’t possible it was affecting my mental health. Saleh taught me the importance of seeing this journey as more of a long-term plan and now I am closer to my dreams and goals.

When I was close to quitting a few times, I chatted with Saleh and he helped me through those moments and now I’m ready to find my next career path with the skills and confidence I’ve never had since my arrival in Australia.”

– OSHODI DAMILOLA, 20-YEAR-OLD RECENT MIGRANT FROM NIGERIA

YUKTI, a parent with young children, joined ParentsNext with a certificate in childcare but did not feel that that career path was suitable for her. After working with the ParentsNext facilitator, Yukti realised that she had a passion for working with the elderly but lacked the qualifications to do so. The facilitator helped Yukti enrol in an aged care certificate and financially assisted her with the enrolment fee. Having obtained her Certificate IV in Aged Care, Yukti has now found employment working for an age care provider, close to her home.

“Thank you [to Metro Assist] for supporting me to pursue the course that I always wanted to study. I am working [in the age care industry] now and really enjoying my job.” – YUKTI, CLIENT OF PARENTSNEXT

ParentsNext



NOTE: NAMES MAY HAVE BEEN CHANGED

Settlement Services

Settlement Engagement and Transition Support

The Settlement Engagement Transition Support Program (SETS) helps recently arrived migrants and refugees to establish a new life in Australian society. Metro Assist has been providing settlement services as one of its core programs since its inception in 1986.

New migrants and refugees faced disproportionate difficulties due to the impact of COVID-19 this year. We helped over 1,000 clients access education, housing, health services, training, employment, language services and knowledge on navigating and accessing essential services.

We provided a range of community education and capacity building activities to help communities develop their skills and capabilities with over 100 online and in-person group sessions. We have also extended our SETS services with two specialist programs this year – a youth program and a program focusing on supporting survivors of domestic and family violence and those who are at risk. These programs helped youth and women who are new to the country and needed targeted support.

We supported

1,647

newly arrived migrants and refugees supported to settle into Australia

89

built new social connections

74

assisted with language, education and employment

308

received advocacy support for housing, NDIS, and various matters

33

supported with child/youth issues

400

attended settlement service workshops



**Settlement
Engagement
and Transition
Support
(SETS)**



MS PAN is an elderly person with limited English. By accessing Metro Assist Settlement Services this year, she was able to connect with other members of her community, participated in activities and worked with a caseworker to deal with paperwork and access her Commonwealth Seniors Health Card. With multiple health conditions, she now has access to reduced cost medicine and feels more settled in Sydney than before.

"It was tough to deal with my daily life after I migrated to Australia. I participated in many community activities and online Zoom information sessions, organised by the SETS team, which gradually integrated me into the local community. My caseworker kindly helped me with [Commonwealth Seniors Health Card application] formalities, such as filling out forms. I have a lot of health issues, like diabetes and severe allergies, and it is much cheaper to buy medicine now with the card. This reduced living expenses and let me return to the feeling of being back at home." – **MS PAN**, CLIENT OF SETTLEMENT ENGAGEMENT AND TRANSITION SUPPORT (SETS)



**Settlement
Youth**



JAMSHID is a 17-year-old student and school captain at Chester Hill High School. He arrived in 2017 with his family, from Afghanistan and was determined to learn and improve his English. He enrolled at Chester Hill Intensive English Centre and the following year moved into mainstream high school and embraced Australian life, showing dedication, skill and ambition at school. He has a particular interest in community work and is passionate about advocating for young people and giving back to the community. Jamshid spoke about his journey at the Metro Assist 2022 Refugee Week Gala Dinner and frequently joins cultural and academic events including school ANZAC days, the Aspire Program, Australian Thinking Competition, and the Helmsman project. Metro Assist has supported his nomination for the NSW Youth Advisory Council, and he has been shortlisted. Jamshid participated in Metro Assist's Driving Program, and he has obtained his provisional license. He has also been supported in applying for scholarships and is planning to go to university.

"Australia is the place that gave me the chance to achieve my goals, to be who I want to be, to make my family proud, my community. To young people in high school, use the opportunities available to you and be who you want to be." – **JAMSHID**

Tenancy Services

The Southern Sydney Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service (SSTAAS), funded by NSW Fair Trading, provides information, advice, and assistance to private and public housing tenants, including communicating with landlords and real estate agents and preparing for, and attending, consumer tribunal hearings.

During the year, our SSTAAS Service has kept pace with growing demand of the service from the renters dealing with rental increases, arrears, evictions and tenancy disputes. Our tenant advocates supported over 2,500 renters with the information and advice on their rights and obligations, and assisted many clients who were facing homelessness or financial loss, including loss of bonds.

COVID-19 exacerbated the needs of many vulnerable and disadvantaged tenants living in public or private tenancies including those from CALD and First Nations, people having mental health issues, disabilities and people identified as LGBTQIA+. The tenancy team continued to provide services remotely, including virtual NCAT (tribunal) representation. The team resumed duty advocacy and outreach services as restrictions were eased.

We supported

2,534

tenants supported in protecting their tenancy rights

2,988
cases and closed
2,579

2,583
counts of information provided

863
tenants were provided Duty Advocacy service

710
tenants supported with NCAT application and representation

Outcomes

5%
tenants protected from being evicted and homeless

67%
improved understanding of tenancy law

37%
negotiated positive outcome

49%
presenting issue resolved



CLIENT STORY



In March 2022, a 65-year-old divorced refugee woman from Egypt, Akila sought the support of Metro Assist's Tenancy Services. Having divorced after experiencing domestic violence, she was unemployed, surviving on Centrelink payments and unable to communicate fully in English without an Arabic interpreter. When her lease ended, she received a rent arrears and damage compensation claim of \$4,800 from her former landlord. Metro Assist's tenant advocates represented the client during conciliation at the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) hearing. By June, Akila was able to reduce the amount she owed to only \$838, to be paid in instalments.

AKILA came to Metro Assist Tenancy Services in a vulnerable position, with limited family support, past experiences of domestic violence, very limited English and an income limited to Centrelink. Metro Assist Tenancy was able to advocate for her as she faced rental arrears and reduce the amount to a manageable number to allow her to get back on her feet and secure new housing." – METRO ASSIST TENANCY WORKER



TONY, a long-term schizophrenia sufferer from culturally and linguistically diverse background had his tenancy terminated based on allegations, and police charges, of serious criminal offences against an employee of his social housing provider, including sexual harassment. Tenant advocates from our Southern Sydney Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service (SSTAAS) liaised with his Legal Aid NSW solicitor in the related Local Court prosecution matters, to assist the client to defend the civil proceedings in NCAT against terminating his long-term social housing tenancy.

"We were successful in having the Tribunal stay proceedings for approximately two years. Because he lacked the capacity to defend himself, Metro Assist acted for the Public Guardian, who exercised power over the tenant's financial affairs, eventually succeeding in having the social housing provider's application dismissed. The tenant advocates assisted the client in preparing and leading evidence of his participation and treatment with the mental health centre and engagement with work and training programs. They also presented the likely impact and undue hardship if termination orders resulted in likely homelessness. The solicitor from the Public Trustee commented that the result achieved by the tenant advocates in this case, was remarkable." – METRO ASSIST TENANCY WORKER



NOTE: NAMES MAY HAVE BEEN CHANGED

Our Impact: Community Engagement and Capacity Building

Metro Assist has always applied community capacity building in its service strategies to empower vulnerable communities to better engage in wider social, environmental, and economic activities and bolster their sense of belonging. In 2021-22, we undertook several innovative capacity-building programs and activities and supported our diverse communities to develop their skills, knowledge, and capacity to establish their own initiatives and address problems.

Communities Adapting to Climate Change

Small changes, big impact. This is the message Metro Assist delivered migrant and refugee communities across NSW to better adapt to climate change and build resilience through its 'Building Responsiveness to Climate Change among Migrant and Refugee Communities' project. Funded by Adapt NSW, this project was initiated in response to limited access to in-language information on climate impacts including heatwaves, bushfires, floods, and other climate emergencies. We produced video and information sheets in six community languages with simple and practical information needed for the communities to navigate the challenges of climate change. With COVID-19 restrictions in place for part of the project duration, the campaign was primarily delivered online, with over 7,000 organic engagements. Resources were further disseminated through over 500 community organisations and online groups.

FEEDBACK

"By watching this video, I have learnt that we are heavily impacted by flood, drought, bushfire, temperature rising and other natural disasters due to climate change. If we are conscious about our water, energy, and other natural resource uses, reduce the carbon footprint, recycle, and reuse material, we can minimize the impact of climate change and we can make a sustainable world."

Let's show our planet some extra love today!



Turn off the tap



Australia is already experiencing the impacts of climate change



Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy

As the COVID-19 vaccine became available at the peak of pandemic in 2021, Metro Assist worked to address vaccine hesitancy and build resilience in CALD communities by engaging nearly 8,500 community members across 32 ethnic groups in 10 geographical regions. Metro Assist built awareness across multiple channels, contacting 508 households by phone, 2,956 people by WhatsApp or WeChat, 56 people via Zoom meeting and 2,461 social media users with 35 pieces of content published. Of the individuals contacted, 35% had not been vaccinated or booked a vaccination. Three weeks later, a sample of that group showed a 59% success rate in participants who had since booked, intended to book, or received the vaccine.

Mobile Speech Clinic: Increasing Access to Allied Health Services

In response to health service delays due to COVID-19, the Community Development Team partnered with Nash Speech Pathology and Connect Marrickville to deliver a Mobile Speech Clinic aimed at early identification and intervention in speech and language development. The assessment sessions consisted of both formal and informal assessment tasks to evaluate the child's communication skills, including speech, language, fluency and voice. Summary reports outlining results and recommendations were provided to each family. The majority of children assessed were identified with moderate to severe delays. Parents were referred to health centres and speech clinics for ongoing support. The project also delivered a parent information session at Marrickville West Public School and provided an overview of speech and language development.

Celebrating Refugee and their Contributions

After two years of lockdown restrictions, Metro Assist returned to celebrate Refugee Week in person with partners, stakeholders, and community members. The 24 June 2021 event was attended by over 80 people and described as "entertaining, inspirational and uplifting". Attendees heard stories from young Afghan women and a Syrian refugee about how they overcame the barriers in both their country of origin and in Australia, and left the horrendous situation behind and turned opportunities into successes through their resilience, hard work and determination. We celebrated the contributions and achievements of all the refugees who made Australia home and who continue to inspire others. We also brought together a group of young people from refugee backgrounds to enjoy a day of soccer and sports fun and build the social connections, which was a big hit among the youth.





Our Impact: Partnership, Sector Collaboration and Advocacy

Tackling problem gambling together

Problem gambling is prevalent in communities across our service areas, including people from CALD backgrounds. Metro Assist brought together 13 professionals from The Office of Responsible Gambling, University of Sydney, Multicultural Services, Gambling Impact Society (NSW) and Alliance for Gambling Reform, in a forum aimed at 'Identifying and Responding to Gambling Harm'.

The forum initiated a robust discussion on how to 'unmake gambling harms' and how multi-level shared responsibility approach at the environmental, personal and the agent level will be required to tackle both systemic issues and individual behaviours. Forum participants included practitioners and professionals from Sydney, rural NSW, Queensland and Victoria.

FEEDBACK

'The forum was very useful. I learnt theory of winning, gambling losses from poker machines and relationship between gaming, loot boxes and gambling. I would want to receive further sessions to enhance my understanding about complex context in which problem festers.'



NSP Partnership

As a member of New South Wales Settlement Partnership (NSP) consortium, Metro Assist continues to play an active role in contributing to the collective efforts of all partners, led by the lead organisation, Settlement Service International, to address settlement issues and needs across NSW. As a group, we achieved positive settlement outcomes for many migrants and refugees through high-quality integrated services and by sharing of knowledge and best practice among the membership and continuous service improvements.

Collaborations at the local level

Metro Assist has been the co-convenor of Canterbury Bankstown Multicultural Interagency (CBMIA) for over 15 years. The interagency is a platform for local services to collaborate, share information and advocate together on important community issues. We have been a leader in our local area in sector capacity building and advocacy, leading projects and initiatives within the interagency to bring services together, provide better client services and to advocate jointly. In 2021-22, we led the Interagency's Refugee Week celebration and we coordinated a Poverty Week Service Forum, which was attended by 150 workers from service providers across the network.

In March 2022, the NSW Parliament's Legislative Assembly Committee on Community Services held a public inquiry on improving crisis communications to culturally and linguistically diverse communities, reflecting on practices during NSW's second wave of COVID lockdown. We led CBMIA submission and were subsequently invited to participate in the public hearing. We attended on behalf of the Interagency and raised several important recommendations, including the use and quality of translated materials, communication approaches, and racial stereotypes and unconscious bias in communication.

Corporate Partnership

In 2021-22, we worked closely with corporate partners in our employment services space including our flagship program Dress for Work. Our corporate partners included LinkedIn, Commonwealth Bank, Salesforce, Virgin Australia, and many other businesses. The partnership allowed us to work on the areas of common social and community interest and helped us to access some resources and skills that the corporate world can offer to the NFPs like us.



Metro Assist
Financial Report
June 21 to July 2022



Metro Assist's operations during the 2021-22 financial year resulted in a profit of \$580,567. This was a big turnaround from the previous year's loss of \$273,733. Our organisation is in a much stronger financial position now, having benefited from the restructuring process that we have undertaken in the last two years.

METRO ASSIST LIMITED

Profit and Loss Statement

	YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2022	YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2021
Total Revenue	6,684,275	6,080,527
Less Expenses:		
Employees benefits expense	4,307,547	5,030,279
Program expense	565,841	481,784
Depreciation and amortisation expense	247,792	260,586
Other operating expense	982,528	581,611
	6,103,708	6,354,260
Total profit/(loss) for the year attributable to the members	580,567	(273,733)

The reported financial performance for 2021-2022 was positively affected by additional COVID19-related funding from the Department of Communities and Justice NSW, the Department of Customer Service NSW, and the Department of Social Services Australia. These one-off grants, on top of our ongoing contracted revenue stream, enabled Metro Assist to meet the increased demand for our services, especially from clients directly and indirectly affected by COVID-19 including people who were in self-isolation, individuals at increased risk of unemployment and homelessness, tenants at risk of eviction, and women, youth, and children at risk.

As of 30 June 2022, Metro Assist Limited had accumulated Equity of \$1,930,097, which is a 43% increase on the previous year-end. We reported a very strong Liquidity Ratio of 2.85 at year-end. Please refer to the Balance Sheet overleaf for details.

The Auditors of Metro Assist Limited are:

ESV Business Advice and Accounting
Level 13, 68 York St
Sydney NSW 2000

Metro Assist is grateful for funding and stakeholder support from the following organisations and agencies during 2021-2022:

- > Settlement Services International
- > Department of Social Services Australia
- > Department of Communities and Justice NSW
- > Department of Customer Service - NSW Fair Trading
- > Multicultural NSW
- > Settlement Council of Australia
- > Transport for NSW
- > Cancer Institute NSW
- > Department of Customer Service - Office of Responsible Gambling NSW
- > Department of Planning, Industry and Environment NSW
- > State Insurance Regulatory Authority
- > Financial Counselling Australia
- > Good Shepherd Microfinance
- > CommBank and CommBank Staff Foundation
- > Local Councils - Burwood, Canterbury-Bankstown, City of Canada Bay, Inner West
- > Local Clubs through Clubs NSW

Metro Assist Limited

Statement of financial position

AS AT 30 JUNE 2022		
	30 JUN 2022 \$	30 JUN 2021 \$
Assets		
Current Assets		
Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	2,739,110	2,343,799
Total Trade and Other Receivables	381,273	196,656
Other Current Assets	48,331	43,903
Total Current Assets	3,168,714	2,584,358
Non-currents Assets		
Property, Plant & Equipment	5,150	78,942
Intangible Assets	1,800	57,837
Total Right-of-Use Assets	15,217	187,070
Total Non-Current Assets	22,167	323,849
Total Assets	3,190,881	2,908,207
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Total Trade and Other Payables	323,649	415,901
Total Lease Liabilities – Current	7,761	201,576
Total Employee Benefits – Current	545,063	677,327
Total Contract Liabilities	235,647	91,426
Total Current Liabilities	1,112,120	1,386,230
Non-Current Liabilities		
Total Lease Liabilities – Non-Current	7,671	—
Total Employee Benefits – Non-Current	140,993	172,447
Total Non-Current Liabilities	148,664	172,447
Total Liabilities	1,260,784	1,558,677
Net Assets	1,930,097	1,349,530
Equity		
Reserves	—	309,575
Retained Earnings	1,930,097	1,039,955
Total Equity	1,930,097	1,349,530





Metro Assist Ltd.

(Formerly Metro Migrant Resources Centre)

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metro assist

