



Empowering communities
Creating positive impact

METRO ASSIST
2023
ANNUAL REPORT



Our Vision

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

Mission

To empower individuals, families and communities of diverse backgrounds through professional person-centred services.

Acknowledgement of Country

Metro Assist would like to acknowledge 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.





About Metro Assist

Metro Assist was established in 1986 as a Migrant Resource Centre. We have a 38-year history of delivering services to vulnerable individuals, families and communities, providing migrant and refugee settlement assistance, family and early intervention services, financial hardship support, tenant advocacy, community development and capacity building initiatives.

Our primary service area includes Canterbury-Bankstown, Inner West, Burwood, Canada Bay and Strathfield Local Government Areas (LGA) with some services extending to support people across the broader Sydney region.

A key strength of our organisation is specialist knowledge of the experiences and needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. We are committed to promoting diversity and social inclusion through the delivery of our holistic and inclusive services, and through our collaborations with a range of partners and stakeholders, including all levels of government, relevant community organisations and services, peak bodies, mainstream services, and corporate entities that share our core values.

Contents

Chairperson's Report	4
CEO's Report	5
Services and Impact	
Overview	6
Financial Inclusion	8
Family Services	10
Employment Support	12
Settlement Services	14
Tenancy Services	16
Our Impact:	
Community Engagement and Capacity Building	18
Our Impact:	
Partnership, Sector Collaboration and Advocacy	20
Financial Report	22

Chairperson's Report



Scott Machin
CHAIRPERSON

The role Metro Assist plays in the lives of individuals, families and communities in the Canterbury-Bankstown, Inner West and broader Sydney area has never been more important than over the last 12 months. Migrant numbers have increased since the pandemic while at the same time challenging economic conditions are making it increasingly difficult for the newly arrived to survive and thrive.

Refugees and migrants are at their most vulnerable when they first come to the country. Our clients either have no or limited networks of friends and family to draw upon. This is where Metro Assist provides an invaluable role, supporting migrants both emotionally and physically through a diverse range of services, to help them find their feet in their new homeland and to start their work and life journey.

Demand for our services in assisting these vulnerable people continues to expand but at the same time, the quality of these services and our care for our clients remains high. This quality was recognised recently by the renewal of our Southern Sydney Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service and Inner West Financial Counselling services for the next five years.

Without the support of a range of contributors, we simply couldn't continue to provide our highly valued services. To that end, I extend my thanks to our funders in Federal, State and Local Government, along with our private sector partners for their continued financial support and endorsement.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to acknowledge the great work of our CEO Nina Shahi, her leadership team, and all the Metro Assist team members and volunteers. The team is not just valued for the services for which we are funded but for the extra mile they go to engage our clients within the community. This ranges from inviting them to local events, helping them to make new friends and putting them in touch with other complementary services. Every week I hear stories of the Metro Assist team finding new and meaningful ways of making a positive difference to the lives of our clients and their families.

Our directors also volunteer their time selflessly, in addition to their existing family and work commitments. Each director brings their diverse sets of skills, expertise, and perspective to well informed collective decision making. They are passionate about the work the organisation does and importantly the outcomes it achieves.

I'd like to acknowledge the efforts of Philippa Scott who will be retiring in December at the completion of her six years on the board. Philippa has contributed enormously to the organisation during her time, and the team will miss her professionalism, warmth and care for clients and staff alike. Philippa continues to serve the community in her capacity on the Inner West Council.

This is my last report as chair before I also retire from the board in December. It been a privilege to have been a board member, including the last five years as chair. When I reflect upon this time, I am most proud of the organisations ability to provide vital services through the two years of COVID when our clients were at their most vulnerable, and we emerged in a strong financial position ready for the next challenge. While my formal role is coming to an end, I will remain on hand to provide support and encouragement as needed and look forward to watching the organisation go from strength to strength.

CEO's Report



Nina Shahi
CEO

In 2022-23, Metro Assist persistently strived to adapt and thrive in an environment significantly affected by the aftermath of the pandemic. As the year unfolded, increasing interest rates, a surge in the cost of living, and a housing crisis affected the most vulnerable and marginalised individuals and families in our service areas, amplifying the demand for our services. Amidst the acute sector-wide skill shortage, Metro Assist also grappled with a shortage of skilled staff in some areas. Nevertheless, our dedicated team exhibited remarkable resilience and agility, steadfastly meeting the escalating needs of our community.

The year saw a change in government leadership, leading to reforms in multicultural, settlement, and employment services. As a multicultural organisation, we are committed to remaining flexible and adaptable in serving the evolving needs of our communities and steering the organisation through the transition in the public policy landscape.

We secured funding for our Southern Sydney Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service and Inner West Financial Counselling services for the next five years. The funding enabled us to continue supporting renters, individuals, and families experiencing financial hardship during this turbulent time. We also secured Commonwealth funding that enabled us to expand financial counselling services in the Bankstown LGA, further extending our vital assistance to those in need.

In fostering partnerships between the for-purpose and corporate sectors, we collaborated with our Corporate Partner, LinkedIn, under their Global Refugee Fund Program to advance our shared goal of creating equitable employment opportunities for refugees. We revamped our flagship program, Dress for Work, with a new website and remodelled showroom. Additionally, we have introduced a fee-for-service model, all contributing to our holistic approach to assisting clients and ensuring the sustainability of our service. Despite the changes and challenges faced, our team were able to lead several innovative programs and activities addressing emerging community needs. These initiatives focused on health education and awareness among multicultural communities, refugee employment support, and domestic and family violence support, in addition to our core services.

To promote well-being of our diverse workforce and increase employee belonging, connection and recognition, Metro Assist co-designed and implemented a culturally appropriate mental health and well-being action plan for our employees.

On the financial front, Metro Assist retained a healthy financial surplus in 2022-23, crucial for long-term sustainability and strengthening our capacity to invest in future service delivery and to optimise our backend operations.

On behalf of the organisation, I would like to express gratitude to our funding bodies, notably the Department of Home Affairs, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Office of Fair Trading, Multicultural NSW, the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, and other government agencies. The continuity of funding has been instrumental in our ability to continue servicing communities in need.

Likewise, our sincere thanks go to the local Councils, partner organisations, ethno-specific groups, peak bodies, and corporate partners for their ongoing support and collaboration during 2022-23.

I extend my sincere appreciation to our dedicated leadership team, staff, and volunteers across the organisation for their commitment and invaluable contributions throughout the year. Their collective passion, energy, professionalism, and tireless efforts have been instrumental in furthering our mission to empower our clients and communities.

Finally, I thank our Board of Directors for their voluntary contribution to the organisation as well as for providing ongoing guidance and unflinching support to the management team. I am grateful to outgoing Chairperson, Scott Machin, and Board Director, Philippa Scott, for their leadership and whose contribution have played a pivotal role in the remarkable performance and success of the organisation over the last six years.

Metro Assist

Services and Impact

Overview

In the 2022-23 reporting period, Metro Assist has continued to provide a range of services to vulnerable people and communities, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, migrants and refugees and families, with the aim of promoting resilience and making positive impacts on the lives of those engaging with our services. Our programs are designed to deliver holistic support to empower people so they can achieve long-term outcomes. Critical to this engagement is the preservation of the clients' dignity and working to their strengths and aspirations.

We supported

13,094

People directly supported by Metro Assist services

WHO OUR CLIENTS ARE:

60%

from diverse backgrounds

61%

identified as female

36%

identified as male

2%

identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

Top 4 languages spoken

Arabic
Mandarin
Bangali
Vietnamese



Staff and service providers and children at International Women's day event March 2023



Financial inclusion

The burden of rising living costs has had a profound effect on both individuals and entire communities in the regions we serve, which are predominantly comprised of a low socio-economic demographic. In 2022-23, our Financial Inclusion services supported people who experienced a multitude of challenges in maintaining everyday expenses such as rental or mortgage repayments, paying utility bills, credit card repayments and other living expenses.

Demand for the No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) was particularly high this year. NILS offers low-income earners interest and fee free loans of up to \$2,000 for essential goods and services, or \$3000 for recovery from a natural disaster.

Relief Assistance provided direct and immediate support for basic essential items including food, transport, chemist vouchers, and part-payment of phone bills. This was supported by the Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA) program to provide assistance to clients in paying their outstanding utility bills.

Our Financial Counsellors supported people in addressing underlying causes of financial hardship. Clients often faced challenges stemming from issues like inadequate money management skills, limited financial literacy, unemployment, illness, or relationship breakdowns. Our counsellors were able to guide them on creating budgets, understanding financial services, and managing loans and debts. Financial counsellors also intervened on behalf of clients to negotiate relief from financial institutions, such as seeking flexibility with mortgage repayments and credit card debts.

We supported

466
households
accessed financial
assistance

2,452
financial
counselling
sessions

401
clients were
provided with
emergency relief

241
households
accessed
No Interest Loans

The main
languages
spoken were:

Arabic
English
Vietnamese
Urdu
Bengali
Amharic

37%
identified
as men
63%
identified
as women

CLIENT STORIES

Financial Counselling

JOHN, aged 61, had been working as a limousine driver and was \$7,000 in arrears on a loan used to purchase a limousine. He was evicted three weeks prior to coming to Metro Assist and couldn't access his belongings from the rental. The client and his wife had stayed in shelters and a local motel, paid for by one of his four sons. Their eldest son had been hospitalised due to diabetes and mental health problems, and the client needed to find permanent accommodation so his son could be released into their care. Metro Assist provided the client with food vouchers while he was assisted by Tenancy Advocates to gain access to his rental property to retrieve his personal belongings.

Caseworkers at Metro Assist's Bankstown office were able to fast-track his Centrelink Job Seeker application due to the client's homelessness as well as secure community housing. Financial counsellors intervened on his behalf with the loan company, and at the client's decision, the limousine was sold and a payment plan was established for the shortfall.

No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS)

ALICE, a 30-year-old Australian citizen, was living in public housing and receiving the Disability Support Pension. She had experienced domestic violence and was pregnant with her first child. The baby was due in a few weeks' time and Alice was hoping that she could receive some support with baby goods and stroller through a No Interest Loan. Metro Assist worked through the application with Alice, including a household budget and a repayment plan. The application was submitted and approved by the loan provider within 24 hours.

Alice was also referred to Metro Assist's Emergency Relief team for support with food vouchers and the Electricity Assistance program for support with utility bills. Alice also reached out to engage with our Family Services team for additional support around her circumstances.

Alice was overjoyed with the outcome knowing that a baby stroller and baby goods was available to her in her time of need. She was grateful for the support received from her NILS worker and the Metro Assist team, and glad she reached out for support.



Information desk,
Multicultural Street
Meet, Harmony Day
March 2022

Family Services

During the year, our Family and Community Development team continued to respond to the needs of families seeking our services. The Family Preservation Service worked with parents who were expecting a child or raising children (under 18 years) who were at risk and experiencing domestic and family violence, drug and alcohol misuse, mental health, or money issues. Caseworkers conducted home visits, provided psychological support, parenting education, and assisted parents in accessing quality childcare as well as making referrals to other Metro Assist services and local agencies.

Our Targeted Early Intervention program provided case management support focusing on short, medium, and long-term outcomes for children, young people and families. The team developed individual family support plans with their clients to address mental wellbeing, housing, employment, domestic and family violence, family functioning, as well as education and skills training.

The Family and Community Support program delivered parenting support activities focussed on skills development for parents, children and young people to increase participants' life skills, improve their wellbeing and connect them with other social, health and service networks in the community. Accredited parenting programs included 1-2-3 Magic, Emotion Coaching (in-language), Bringing Up Great Kids, Trauma-Informed Parenting programs for women in rehabilitation; as well as education and skills development programs such as Circus Art Skills, First Aid Training, Forklift and Traffic Controller licence workshops.

Our psychologist provided family therapy support to parents and carers to help manage child and adolescents' social, emotional, and behavioural challenges.

We supported



Outcomes



Art and Music Therapy workshop
January 2023

CLIENT STORIES

Psychological Service

JANE is a single parent of primary school age children and had experienced significant domestic violence and trauma that impacted her and her children's lives. Exhibiting symptoms of chronic depression, anxiety and low self-worth, Jane was referred for psychological intervention by her social worker, where she attended counselling for six months. Jane reported that she had made progress and has made sustainable long-term changes that benefited her and her children.

"Jane expressed that she felt more determined and inspired to maintain her progress and learn new skills. The new strategies have her confidence to ask for support for herself and her children. She gained a more realistic perspective which assisted her to persist. Jane understands the benefits of early intervention as a means of prevention and is glad that she sought out assistance to reach her goals." – METRO ASSIST PSYCHOLOGIST

Targeted Early Intervention

NAHEED is a mother of children aged three and ten years, who experienced physical and verbal abuse as well as extreme coercive and financial control in her marriage. When she came to the Family Team, it became evident that there were also child abuse allegations filed against her husband. After successful applications to the Victim Services and Escaping Violence Program (EVP), money was deposited into Naheed's first-ever bank account. She also received vouchers for furniture to assist with setting up her new home. Naheed moved out into a private rental and receives Centrelink payments giving her financial freedom. She has commenced driving lessons and an early education course through TAFE NSW and is now feeling more empowered than ever.

"Although we are a short-term service, this case study is a testimony to the amount of work and effort that family support caseworkers will invest in their clients to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved before they are referred on or have met the end of their assisted journey towards a life free from violence."

– METRO ASSIST TARGETED EARLY INTERVENTION WORKER

Family Preservation Service

AISHA AND OMAR, have four children and were referred to the Metro Assist Family Preservation Program to support them in managing their child's behavioural issues, mental health well-being, low school attendance, bullying, and high risk of absconding from home and school. Aisha and Omar received consistent support with psycho-education, parenting strategies, accessing mental health services and alleviating financial stress on the family through utility vouchers and additional Child Care Subsidy. The family decided to relocate to a new area after their children were exposed to a violent incident and our family workers connected the parents to family services in their new location, including the children's new school, a psychologist and youth services.

The family reported that the younger children are happy with their new home and school. Their teenager was positive about their future and developed hobbies such as fishing and cooking meals for the family. The parents felt empowered and confident in dealing with any future hardships that might emerge and had a more positive outlook on life.

"Thank you for everything you have helped us with. We appreciate your support and being always beside us." – CLIENT TO THE CASEWORKER

Employment Support

A cornerstone of Dress for Work this year has been the collaboration with multiple high schools and employment agencies around New South Wales. By partnering with education and employment programs, Dress for Work has reached a wider audience of students and men who are either building or rebuilding their lives. The Empowerment Program has guided these men in setting goals, writing resumes and cover letters, honing their interview skills, and presenting themselves professionally.

ParentsNext is a program supporting parents and carers, with children under the age of six to prepare for career pathways through education and employment. In May 2023, the program was no longer compulsory for Parenting Payment recipients to attend. Metro Assist helped participants identify their strengths, address challenges and build resilience and independence by the time their youngest child starts school.

SkillME is an employment support program initiated by Metro Assist to assist migrants and refugees with overseas skills and qualifications in finding meaningful employment by reducing intersectional barriers experienced when trying to access employment. SkillME focuses on connecting migrants and refugees with opportunities, gaining local work experience and training to further enhance their employability and interpersonal skills.



We supported

450

men/young people fitted and supported through the Dress for Work program

750

parents with young children supported

Of 110 skilled migrants who received employment support:

41%

found employment while participating in the program

39%

enrolled in further education and training

61%

participated in multiple skills building workshops

22%

received industry specific mentoring

100%

surveyed were satisfied with our service

61%

received ongoing personalised mentoring with a facilitator

100%

surveyed stated the program helped improve their employability and interpersonal skills.

CLIENT STORIES

Dress for Work Supporting youth at schools

Throughout the school year, students from South Sydney High School in Maroubra, engaged in Dress for Work programs to enhance and develop their employability skills. Each term, ten students visited our Bankstown showroom for a complete fitting and styling session. The experience of wearing new suits transformed their demeanour and instilled newfound confidence in many of these boys. One of the remarkable aspects of this program is witnessing the boys coming together as a team.

“Leaving school and trying to find that first job is a daunting experience and one that saps the confidence of a lot of young people – this is worse when they feel alone. By going through the Dress for Work program together, they leave with a greater sense of purpose and belonging, to steer their lives in a positive direction.”

– METRO ASSIST’S DRESS FOR WORK CO-ORDINATOR

ParentsNext

ROSIE, a single mother with three children came to ParentsNext without a clear direction of what she wanted to do. Our facilitator worked with her to plan small, achievable goals, including finding a preschool service for her youngest child to give Rosie some free time from parenting duties and focus on her personal development and career goals. Rosie received support with work related tickets, such as Responsible Serving of Alcohol and Responsible Gambling as she expressed an interest in working in hospitality and received training in marketing for customer service positions. In March 2023, Rosie was successful in her application for a Customer Service position with the Westpac Bank.

“In June 2023, Rosie was invited to Metro Assist’s Annual Refugee Gala Dinner and could not be happier as she mentioned it was the first time, in a long time, she was able to go out and enjoy herself since she became a parent. Rosie gave positive feedback to the ParentsNext team for the encouragement and motivational support she received as she is now working full time and is financially independent” – PARENTSNEXT FACILITATOR



SkillME

SOGOL was an engineer when she migrated to Australia and had been looking to secure a job for more than two months, when she heard about the SkillMe program.

“The SkillMe project really helped me to get to know the Australian market and secure a job in a busy and skilled-based market as a new migrant. I want to thank the SkillMe facilitator for all their support and helpful suggestions since the first day I tried to apply for jobs. It is worth noting that the Premium LinkedIn Account that the SkillMe facilitator granted me was a big help in the process as I had the chance to talk to job advertisers directly which secured my current position eventually. I wish the best for all those who are joining the SkillME program.” –SOGOL

Settlement Services

Settlement Engagement and Transition Support

The Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program is dedicated to empowering humanitarian entrants and other eligible permanent migrants and their communities to facilitate meaningful integration. At Metro Assist, we focus on empowering our clients to enhance their social participation, economic well-being, independence, personal wellness, and community connectedness. We achieve this through community capacity building, direct services and group activities.

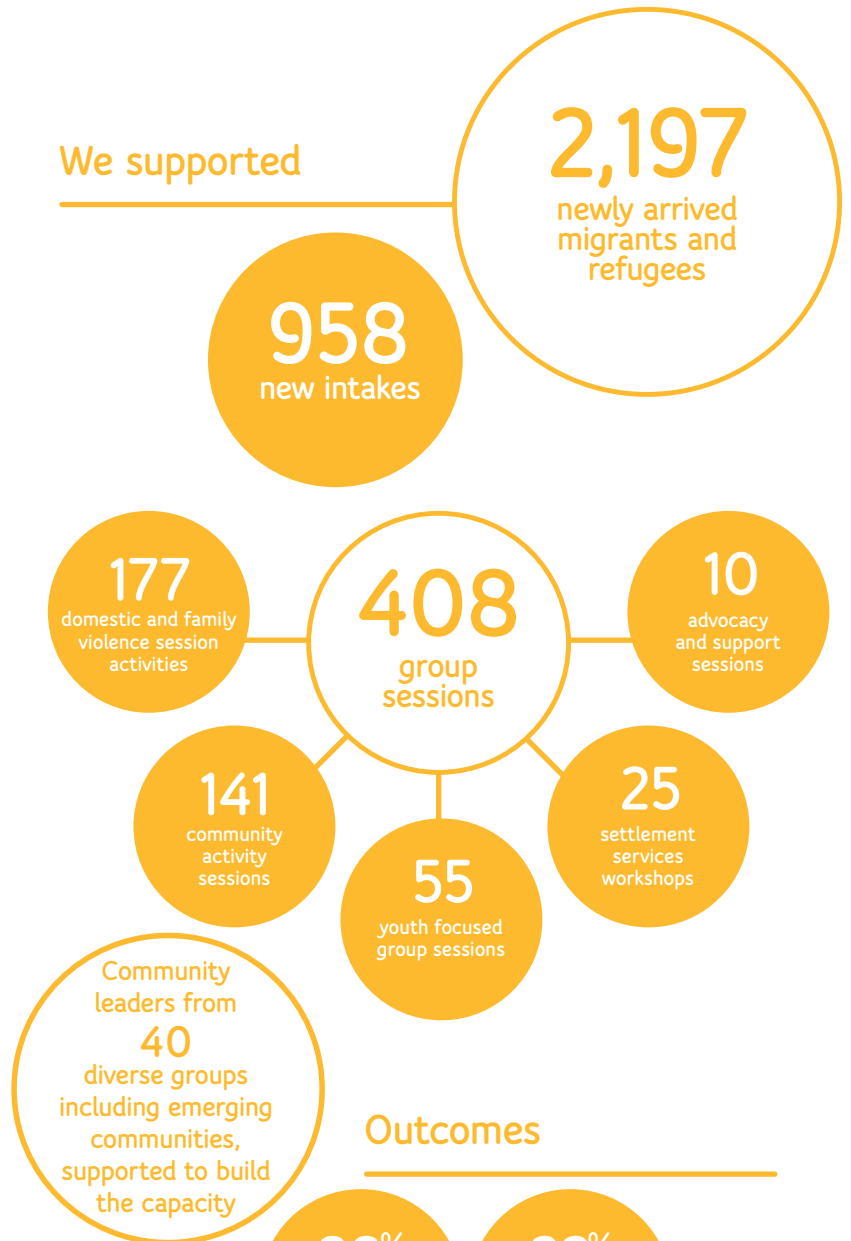
The SETS team is a vibrant and diverse group, consisting of staff from eight different cultural backgrounds. Key focus areas of the SETS program are: education and training, facilitating English acquisition and access to language services, employment, housing, health and wellbeing, family and social support, transport, civic participation, justice and financial independence.

In our quest to build resilient and stronger communities, we maintain close collaborations with our local communities. We provide specialised initiatives, including programs tailored to youth, domestic and family violence and employment.

In 2022-23 we continued to strengthen our partnerships with service providers, government agencies and businesses. We also continued to advocate and represent the issues facing our clients and local communities at all levels of government.

We remain committed to our mission of empowering individuals and communities for successful integration and meaningful engagement in Australian society.

We supported



Outcomes



CLIENT STORIES

Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS), Domestic and Family Violence

NELLY was referred to SETS Domestic and Family Violence service after she was told to leave her home by her husband without her valuable belongings. Nelly had dreamt of a beautiful life when she gave up on her career and came to Australia, only to find herself trapped in an abusive relationship. She suffered a loss of self-worth and confidence. The SETS worker provided her with comprehensive case management and advice around her safety, but she did not want to get the police involved. When checking her visa status, it was found that her husband had cancelled his sponsorship application and Nelly risked having to leave Australia. After months of hard work gathering evidence of the relationship and less than 6 months later, Nelly was granted her new visa. She is now a permanent resident in Australia!

"Unfortunately, these client stories are not a one-off! Every day, women from different backgrounds with similar stories reach out to our services for assistance. At Metro Assist, we are committed to changing this sad narrative into a happier one! We are passionate about empowering these women, increasing their independence and self-reliance, and helping them regain control of their lives."

– METRO ASSIST'S SETS DFV WORKER

Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS), Settlement Youth

NOOR was 16-years-old when she arrived in Australia from Afghanistan in June 2022. She was referred to Metro Assist as a post Humanitarian Settlement Program referral. Noor was struggling to make meaningful friendships and needed support in understanding how to apply for jobs in Australia. A SETS youth worker met with Noor to understand her needs, set goals, and assist her in applying for jobs. Noor is now working at Kmart, she attended Metro Assist's Soccer Gala Day, and undertaken a first aid and driving course.

"By attending these courses and events Noor has made new friendships. She has taken the initiative to invite them to her cultural events to encourage sharing in each other's cultures. Noor will also attend an event for emerging leaders in the community and go to parliament house to learn how she can best advocate for her community." – METRO ASSIST'S SETS YOUTH WORKER



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 returned to face-to-face client contact and providing in-person NCAT (tribunal) representation. The rental crisis saw demand for the service grow exponentially from the previous year in matters of rental increases, arrears, evictions, and other tenancy disputes. Our tenant advocates supported over 3,800 renters (a 51% increase on the previous year) with information and advice on rights and obligations, and assisted many clients who were facing homelessness or financial loss, including loss of bonds.

SSTAAS continues to service the needs of many vulnerable and disadvantaged tenants living in public or private tenancies including those from CALD and First Nations people and people with mental health issues, disability and people identifying as LGBTQIA+.

We supported

3,827

tenants supported in protecting their tenancy rights

4,338

cases were opened and 5,158 were closed

4,362

counts of information provided

2,467

tenants were provided Duty Advocacy service

6%

tenants supported reported to have disability

1,863

tenants supported with NCAT application and representation

Outcomes

26%

of tenants were protected from eviction and homelessness

71%

reported an improved understanding of tenancy law

37%

had negotiated a positive outcome

46%

had their presenting issues resolved

12%

of clients obtained payment

CLIENT STORY

An elderly tenant from Blakehurst, NSW reached out to SSTAAS for advice on several repair issues in their rented property including mould, leaking shower, broken blinds, damaged garage door and issues with the guttering, among other things. SSTAAS assisted the tenant in filing an application with the Tribunal for a repair order, a rent reduction order, and a compensation order. In retaliation, the landlord issued a notice of termination.

After a lengthy process of negotiation and mediation, with the support of a tenant advocate, the landlord agreed to terminate the lease and give vacant possession. The landlord also agreed to offer a rental decrease, and backdated four months. The landlord further agreed to postpone major renovation work until the vacant possession date. In exchange, the tenant accepted to withdraw their NCAT application.

“The outcome has brought the tenant happiness and satisfaction. The tenant is content to give testimony about the work that SSTAAS did to help him achieve a favourable outcome.” – METRO ASSIST TENANCY WORKER



Community Engagement and Capacity Building



Sally Sitou MP,
Member for Reid,
at Dumpling
Making event



Parenting Across Generations (PAG)

Parenting Across Generations (PAG) is a targeted early intervention program developed and led by Metro Assist to raise awareness surrounding family conflicts within multigenerational migrant households, within the Chinese community. The program consisted of a one-day workshop addressing conflict between parents and grandparents, and ways to utilise consistent parenting strategies at home. As a result of the overwhelming community members requests for ongoing engagement and capacity building programs among the Chinese community, Metro Assist delivered Stage 2 of the PAG program in September 2022. Designed around Grandparents Day, this consisted of a follow-up symposium and a dumpling making event to bring the families together. Both the one-day symposium and the dumpling making event brought together over 70 Chinese participants and among them, the current Federal Member for Reid, Sally Sitou. The broadcasting station SBS China, was also present to highlight and share the liveliness of the event.

SOME OF THE FEEDBACK RECEIVED INCLUDED:

"I've been to many community events, and this was the best!" and "I've been in Australia for many years, and this is the first time I've felt considered"

The Big Day Out

The COVID-19 lockdown has impacted many families across NSW, especially those from CALD communities. Issues of isolation, disconnection from local services and community groups were identified among families post lockdown. As part of an initiative to increase community engagement among families, the Canterbury Child and Family Interagency (CCFI), which the Community Development team is a part of, hosted the Big Day Out event. The event was a huge success and has become an annual event due to high demands among attendees. On 7 July 2022, the Big Day Out event took place at Lakemba where over 300 families attended. There were multiple interactive activities for children including Zumba, mosaicking and painting, and information stalls for families seeking assistance from local services. There was also a mobile vaccination hub that provided free COVID-19 and flu vaccines. Metro Assist conducted surveys and collected 64 responses which nearly all provided positive feedback regarding the event.



Big Day
July 22

16 Days of Activism 'Let's Be the Change - Born to Shine'

In our commitment to ongoing advocacy against family and domestic violence, Metro Assist organised the 'Let's Be the Change - Born to Shine' event on November 29, 2022, as part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. Aligned with the global campaign, it aimed to raise awareness about family and domestic violence in multicultural communities.

Mayor Khal Asfour, Councillor Bilal Hayek, and MP Jihad Dib actively participated in a moving roses and candles ceremony, paying tribute to women affected by domestic violence. The event featured a women's glass painting workshop, fostering community and creativity, followed by an impactful forum with a diverse panel. This platform provided a crucial opportunity for individuals to stand united against gendered violence, contributing to the collective effort to address this pressing issue in Australia.

Working with the community leaders

As a part of our settlement services, we are dedicated to closely collaborating with ethno-specific and emerging community groups. In the fiscal year 2022-23, we took a significant step by establishing the Emerging Communities Network (ECN), bringing together 23 community leaders who represent diverse groups such as Chinese, Nepalese, Arabic, Korean, Indonesian, Bangladeshi, Rohingya, Vietnamese, Afghani, Ukrainian, Yemeni, Mandaean, as well as ethno-specific LGBTQA+ and youth groups. Our service delivery strategies and priorities are shaped by insights from the Community Leaders Forum and the continuous dialogue ensures that our services remain responsive and tailored to the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

Community
Capacity Building
workshop



Refugee Week - 'Finding Freedom'

Metro Assist celebrated Refugee Week with partners, stakeholders, and community members between 18 - 24th June 2023. The theme, "Finding Freedom" highlighted the dangerous journeys undertaken by millions of people across the world to find safety and freedom. Metro Assist kicked off celebrations with a Soccer Gala Day. Young people from different cultural backgrounds came together to play in a friendly tournament and make new friendships.

Attended by the Mayor of Burwood, Cr John Faker, Metro Assist hosted a special cultural gathering of women, 'Feminine Vibes', to honour their remarkable journeys and achievements by showcasing their culture with a fashion parade and relaying stories of "findingfreedom" through painting.

On Friday evening, Metro Assist staff and volunteers organised an entertaining and hugely successful dinner at the Bellevue, Bankstown. The event brought together 250 people, representing government, councils, funding bodies, service partners, community leaders, clients and Metro Assist directors to rejoice in support of refugees and to celebrate their resilience through panel discussions and storytelling from people with lived refugee experiences. The festivities included food, music, and our very own Dress For Work fashion show.

Let's be the
change - Born to
Shine, November
2022



Panel, Refugee
Week, Gala Dinner,
June 2023



Partnership, Sector Collaboration and Advocacy

The Hon. Joanna Elizabeth Haylen, MP, and Deputy CEO of the Refugee Council of Australia Adama Kamara, International Human Rights Day Forum December 2022



2022 International Human Rights Day Forum - 'Dignity, Freedom, and Justice for All'

Metro Assist brought together eighty representatives from first nations groups, refugees, community organisations, academia, government representatives and grassroots advocates at the Human Rights Day forum on 9th December 2022. Held in partnership with Addison Road Community Organisation, the forum initiated dialogues about human rights among communities, government, and civil society by sharing experiences, stories, and insights.

The forum deliberated on how first nations, refugees and disadvantaged communities have demonstrated incredible resiliency despite the hardships they face. They shared insights into how community members and frontline organisations are actively playing their parts by supporting vulnerable groups in their healing process and assisting them to overcome barriers such as support in finding employment or accommodation, therefore advocating for their human rights, and enabling them to live their lives with dignity.

Partnership and Collaboration

Interagency collaboration plays an important role within Metro Assist's Family and Community Support Program. The team attends Child and Family Interagency meetings working in collaboration with a range of organisations across the Canterbury, Inner West and Burwood local government areas to pool resources and knowledge, aiming to improve outcomes for vulnerable communities and families.

The program's collaboration with Burwood Council and community members during Harmony Week in March 2023, celebrated diversity and inclusiveness. This event, supported by cross-agency referrals, brought community members together through food, music, and cultural entertainment.

Partnerships also extended to youth engagement, with involvement in the Inner West Youth Alliance. The 'Sky is the Limit' initiative, in collaboration with Deadly Connections, Headspace, Inner West Council, and Co.As.It., empowers at-risk girls aged 12-16 years through creative activities, dance, movement, and yoga workshops.



Community Development team collaboration for Halloween event

NSP Partnership

As a member of New South Wales Settlement Partnership (NSP) consortium, Metro Assist contributes to the collective efforts of all consortium partners, and the lead agency 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 knowledge and best practices among the membership.

Government Engagement

In the year 2022-23, we proactively engaged with government representatives within our service areas at the local, state, and federal levels through our events and meet-and-greet opportunities. These interactions served as pivotal platforms for disseminating information about our initiatives aimed at supporting vulnerable communities, raising emerging community issues and needs to policymakers, and fostering collaboration between the community, service providers like us, and government bodies.

We continued co-convening the Canterbury Bankstown Multicultural Interagency (CBMIA). The interagency brings together local services, representatives from council, local, state, and federal agencies committed to supporting culturally diverse communities. CBMIA's primary objective is to serve as a hub for exchanging information, fostering collaboration, jointly advocating for community needs, and devising regional strategic initiatives to address the needs and service gaps. In 2022-23 we partnered with CBMIA members in organising a joint Refugee Week event, Anti-Poverty Week event and various other joint activities.

Corporate Partnership

Metro Assist became the proud recipient of LinkedIn's Global Refugee Fund as part of their financial commitment to help job-ready refugees access the networks, skills and knowledge they need to re-enter the workforce. Through this funding, our organisation continued to deliver job readiness programs for those displaced from their country of origin by providing access to career training, mentoring and connecting employers to refugee talent. The program enabled us to strengthen our partnerships with corporate sectors to tackle the ongoing challenges and barriers faced by refugees in securing meaningful jobs.

We received clothing donations from several corporate partners, including Qantas, Virgin Australia, Eastern Prudential Insurance, Channel 9, Channel 7, SKY Management, CBRE, Bigpond, and numerous other businesses throughout the year. As part of our Dress for Work program, clients were invited to take a tour of Channel 7, providing them with an opportunity to gain insights into the behind the scenes of the television industry and learn about the job prospects. These partnerships allowed us to collaborate on areas of shared social interests and enabled us to tap into the valuable skills and resources that the corporate world can offer to non-profit organisations like ours, enhancing our ability to make a positive impact in our community.



SkillME clients at LinkedIn Head office, Sydney

Metro Assist staff with Hon. Sophie Cotsis, Member for Canterbury



Michael Usher with Birrong and Chester Hill High School students and the Dress for Work team during their Channel 7 visit.



Metro Assist staff with Jason Yat-sen Li, Member for Strathfield

Metro Assist
Financial Report
June 2022 to July 2023

The operations of Metro Assist Limited during the 2022-23 financial year resulted in a surplus of \$721,164. This is the second consecutive year that we have reported a sizable surplus and this has produced accumulated equity at 30 June 2023 of \$2.65m. Metro Assist Limited continues to operate debt-free and we reported a very strong Liquidity Ratio of 2.99 at 30 June 2023, as shown in the Balance Sheet overleaf.



Profit and Loss Statement

	YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023	YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2022
Total Revenue	6,820,149	6,684,275
Less Expenses:		
Employees benefits expense	4,453,741	4,307,547
Program expense	499,539	565,841
Office lease incl. utilities & cleaning	362,832	316,610
IT support, software & ISO certification costs	269,020	311,092
	<u>6,098,985</u>	<u>6,103,708</u>
Total profit/(loss) for the year attributable to the members	721,164	580,567

The reported financial performance of Metro Assist Limited for 2022-2023 was positively affected by \$94,008 of ad-hoc COVID19-related funding from the Department of Communities and Justice NSW and the Department of Social Services Australia. This was less than the \$272,468 of similar grants received in 2021-22. In 2022-23 we also benefited from a grant of over \$262,000 received from Silicon Valley Community Foundation USA, which we will use to fund our SkillME program until 2025. Unfortunately, the required accounting treatment will create a timing difference between recognition of this revenue in 2022-23 and recognition of the expenses associated with the use of these funds over the next two financial years.

In early 2023, the Department of Customer Service - NSW Fair Trading confirmed our success in their tenders to maintain our current level of funding until at least 2027 for our Tenancy Advice and Advocacy program in Southern Sydney and our Financial Counselling program in Inner Western Sydney. Metro Assist Limited will continue to maintain our core programs in Family Services, Settlement Services and Financial Inclusion, all funded by block grants in advance, whilst reducing our use of small one-off grants. We aim to build our Fee For Service programs, including our rapidly growing Dress For Work service, which is a wrap-around service that prepares men for employment.

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 2022-2023:

- > Settlement Services International
- > Department of Communities and Justice NSW
- > Department of Social Services Australia
- > Department of Customer Service - NSW Fair Trading
- > Silicon Valley Community Foundation
- > Department of Home Affairs Australia
- > Multicultural NSW
- > Settlement Council of Australia
- > State Insurance Regulatory Authority
- > Cancer Institute NSW
- > Good Shepherd Microfinance
- > Transport for NSW
- > Local Councils - Inner West, Burwood, Canterbury-Bankstown & City of Canada Bay
- > Australian Chinese Charity Foundation
- > Responsible Gambling Fund NSW

Metro Assist Limited

Statement of financial position

AS AT 30 JUNE 2023		
	30 JUN 2023 \$	30 JUN 2022 \$
Assets		
Current Assets		
Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	1,880,022	139,110
Total Term Deposits	2,000,000	2,600,000
Total Trade and Other Receivables	278,430	381,273
Other Current Assets	4,217,963	3,168,714
Non-currents Assets		
Property, Plant & Equipment	5,101	5,150
Intangible Assets	1,800	1,800
Total Right-of-Use Assets	7,913	15,217
Total Non-Current Assets	14,814	22,167
Total Assets	4,232,777	3,190,881
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
Total Trade and Other Payables	401,314	323,649
Total Lease Liabilities – Current	7,532	7,761
Total Employee Benefits – Current	607,136	545,063
Total Contract Liabilities	425,030	235,647
Total Current Liabilities	1,441,012	1,112,120
Non-Current Liabilities		
Total Lease Liabilities – Non-Current	637	7,671
Total Employee Benefits – Non-Current	139,867	140,993
Total Non-Current Liabilities	140,504	148,664
Total Liabilities	1,581,516	1,260,784
Net Assets	2,651,261	1,930,097
Equity		
Retained Surplus	1,930,097	1,930,097
Total Equity	1,930,097	1,930,097



Empowering communities
Creating positive impact



Metro Assist Ltd.

(Formerly Metro Migrant Resources Centre)

Lvl 2, 59-63 Evaline St, Campsie NSW 2194

02 9789 3744

info@metroassist.org.au

www.metroassist.org.au



metro assist