

Dress for Work

Dress for Work continues to go from strength to strength in terms of referrals and awareness of the program grows. We're very happy to report that Sydney Water has committed to providing financial contributions to the service over the next three years. This is a great fit for the MRC because of Sydney Water's current support for the No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) and both programs form part of Metro's commitment to poverty alleviation.

Dress for Work convenor, Ms Sera Kumeroa, says there are plans to expand the service's operating hours and scope. Referrals are growing strongly, as are the referring agencies. The biggest constraint is finding enough volunteers to operate the service on a more regular basis. We are also receiving stock from donors such as clothing company, Hot Springs, and through clothing drives including Centrelink and Immigration offices.

The service has received resounding endorsements from services and clients. We recently kitted out a group of Aboriginal men, former boys from the Kinchela Boys Home at the launch of a photographic exhibition on the home. The photographer sent us an email saying the men were so happy with their suits and the way they were treated at Dress for Work. One of them liked his suit so much that he didn't want to take it off, even at bed time.



Kinchela boys in their finery.



What is Metro Assist?

Metro Assist is a recently formed arm of Metro MRC. After 25 years of operating as a migrant resource centre, it's time that our name better reflected the variety and increasing number of generalist programs we offer. Metro Assist is a more accurate reflection of our 'whole of community' approach and a more outward looking platform for the organisation's growth.

The opportunity to change our name arose with our ATO application for charitable status. Gaining *public benevolent institution (PBI)* and *deductible gift recipient (DGR)* status has put the organisation on a new and more dynamic footing where we can fundraise and support innovative initiatives such as *Dress for Work*.

We will be co-branding the organisation for a while so that people can get used to Metro Assist and know where it stems from, and until our projects are transitioned to the new entity.

Metro Assist will take us into the future and we look forward to your continued support.

Income management to impact on Bankstown

A campaign has been launched by around forty organisations opposed to the Commonwealth's plan to introduce income management in Bankstown. An open letter was recently published in local papers addressed to Federal Ministers Jenny Macklin and Tanya Plibersek, and local federal MPs for Banks, Blaxland and Watson, voicing concerns about the devastating impact such an intervention would have on the Bankstown community.



The Say No to Government Income Management campaign brings together churches, community organisations, unions, advocacy groups and peaks such as the Combined Pensioners and Superannuants of NSW, which are outraged at the idea. An article in the Sun Herald (Justin Norrie, 7 August) labels the plan as apartheid, with welfare recipients forced to spend half their money at government-approved retailers.

A 5-year trial in income management will start in July 2012 with between 50 and 70 per cent of welfare payments to be quarantined among people considered by Centrelink to be financially vulnerable, or who have been referred into the scheme by child protection authorities. Those forced onto the scheme will have their money quarantined onto a BasicsCard which can only be used at certain retailers to buy essential items and train and bus fares. Bankstown is one of five trial sites around Australia for the introduction of income management similar to that operating in the Northern Territory.

A spokesperson for Jenny Macklin, the Federal Minister for Community services, said the regions have been chosen because they have high unemployment and skills gaps, and many of their residents rely on welfare payments as their main source of income. But community organisations are concerned that welfare recipients will be further stigmatised and that the move will play on existing prejudices that people have towards youth, people with disabilities, the unemployed and migrants. President of the National Welfare Rights Network, Maree O'Hallaran, says that the move is counter-productive and does nothing to help people learn the financial management skills that are necessary to achieve self-reliance.

Executive Director of Metro MRC, Violet Roumeliotis, says the move won't stop people with drug or alcohol problems from getting access to those things elsewhere. There are real concerns among the business community that the move will drive business away from small retailers and food outlets and into the big conglomerates. "This means that people won't have access to their traditional foods and ingredients, or buy produce at markets where they can make some real saving," added Ms Roumeliotis.

Many locals feel that their rights are being subverted by their own government, in a first-world democracy and in the twenty-first century. Opponents point to the failure of income management in the Northern Territory where Aboriginal communities have not seen any real improvements to their housing, employment and social circumstances. Gambling, grog and violence are still present.

"People cannot remain complacent about this and they need to act urgently. There are many unanswered questions and the government has failed to consult and explain its thinking. It is a poorly thought out policy which is doomed to fail, at the cost of local communities", Ms Roumeliotis said.

More information on the campaign can be accessed at www.sayno2gim.info

Download the media release and petition from our website www.metroarc.org.au

A petition is being circulated throughout the community calling for a moratorium on income management and to redirect funding into constructive measures such as employment creation and improved social services. Income management will impact badly on our communities. **Download the petition, sign up supporters and return it to the campaign address on the petition.**

Sydney Alliance Founding Assembly

Several editions ago we reported on the Sydney Alliance, a network of community and religious organisations, and unions. The Sydney Alliance **Founding Assembly will take place at Sydney Town Hall, 6.30pm for a 7pm start, on Thursday 15 September.**

The Founding Assembly will be the first public show of the Sydney Alliance as a voice for civil society and the launch of an Agenda for the Common Good. In attendance will be leaders from politics, media, business and communities who are in a position to influence and shape the lives of people who live in Sydney.

The Alliance has already grown to around two thousand members from all walks of life and with diverse interests who have come together to work on achievable and common goals. Already, thousands of people from partner organisations have been skilled up for the work of the Alliance, and thousands of one on one meetings and listening campaigns have taken place across the geographic spread of Sydney. This has built connections with around six thousand people from diverse ethnic, socio-economic and religious backgrounds.

Earlier this year, a discernment conference was held at which three key issues were adopted as key areas for the Alliance to focus on. These were public transport, social inclusion, and community care and health.

Since its establishment in 2007, the Sydney Alliance has been building the breadth and depth of the network. Metro MRC is a member organisation of Sydney Alliance and has been engaged in the process of running listening campaigns across and is actively involved in organising the effort around the Founding Assembly.

You can be part of this historic and significant event, but you must [register](#) your attendance.



Building Community Harmony:
Social Inclusion



Community Care, Health & Support

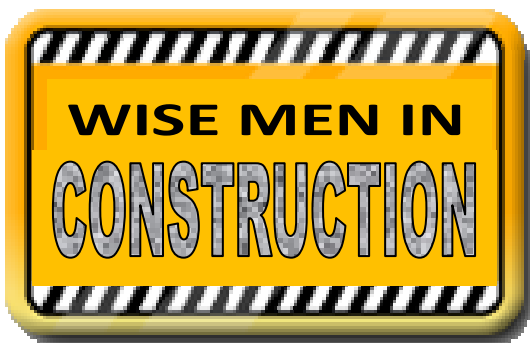


Transport

Construction skills for refugee men

A partnership between Metro MRC, the Canterbury City Community Centre and Petersham TAFE is proving a real winner for refugee men who have been unemployed for some time. The project brings together the Men's Shed in Campsie as a venue for practical and theory classes run on-site by Petersham TAFE. Metro MRC recruited participants and provides other social support.

Eleven participants are involved in the 16-week project and they will emerge with a 'White Card' as a basic entry into the construction industry and Certificate 2 in Construction. The project also involves users of the Men's Shed as mentors to the younger refugee men, sharing their experiences and guidance. For more information, call Atef Hamie on 9789 3744 or email atef.hamie@metromrc.org.au





Southern Sydney Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service (SSTAAS) has been a project of Metro MRC since 1996, funded by the NSW Office of Fair Trading. We provide a telephone information service to tenants in southern Sydney, which covers the local government areas of Bankstown, Canterbury, Rockdale, Kogarah, Hurstville and Sutherland. That is quite a bite out of the Sydney metropolitan area. The population of southern Sydney at June 2010 is estimated at 798,500. According to the 2006 census this is made up of around 283,000 households, and of these over 70,000 rent.

Over the last two years the demand on our service has increased exponentially, with the number of enquiries increasing to around 2000 per year. Advices however, have soared from around 3,000 in a year to over 7,000. Most of the enquiries have been about terminations. Although many involve tenants who are in arrears, there are many more are evicted for no reason at all. Many tenants have experienced great difficulty in finding new homes to rent because of the low vacancy rate, causing extreme hardship for many people.

Although the number of tenants needing assistance is huge, the number of staff who can help is only small. SSTAAS has two full-time and one part-time tenant advocates, plus a team leader who does some intake and advocacy and a little funding for administration and management.

Through this newsletter we intend to deliver information about the rights and obligations of tenants to as many community organisations as possible, and let as many of you know what services we provide. It will also help us deliver information about the new *Residential Tenancies Act 2010*, keep you informed about the review of caravan parks that is due in 2012 and help create links with other tenancy organisations such as the Tenants' Union of NSW. One area that the Tenants' Union and TAAP Services are active is that of marginal renters, including boarders and lodgers. The NSW Ombudsman has just released a report into licensed boarding houses, and that will be highlighted in the next issue of our newsletter.

If you have any questions or comments we look forward to hearing from you.

Rita Wilkinson

Team Leader

Tel (02) 9789 3744 or email rita.wilkinson@metromrc.org.au

Warning! Children and high rise

According to the NSW Department of Health website, around 50 children fall from a window or balcony every year. Some of those falls are serious, and in a few cases children have died from those falls. The number of tenants living in high rise apartments increases every year in southern Sydney and it is anticipated that calls concerning windows will increase. Currently there are no requirements that windows meet special standards to prevent children falling, which means tenants cannot take action to make a landlord install safety features. So what can you do to keep you and your family safe?

- Keep children's beds and bunks away from windows.
- Keep any furniture or objects that children can stand or climb on away from windows.
- Remember flyscreens are not window guards. **Flyscreens do not protect against falls from windows.**

According to the website below, falls are more prevalent in summer. If any organisation is interested in pursuing this safety issue then you could contact your local State Members of Parliament, and NSW Health Department. It may be worthwhile keeping case studies if it is of major concern for your clients. There are some websites you can visit for further information: www.health.nsw.gov.au and www.kidsafensw.org

What's up doc ... is it something in the new Act?

In January this year the NSW Parliament passed the Bill that gave rise to the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010*, replacing the 1987 Act. In each issue we will outline any changes that have been introduced which are relevant to the sector.

The first concerns **selling premises**. Under the new Act landlords have obligations to tenants when they sell the property. Under Section 53 of the 2010 Act, a landlord must give the tenant 14 days written notice of the intention to sell before the premises are first made available to show prospective purchasers. This means if the tenant does not get written notice they do not have to let people through. Once the landlord has given written notice, the tenant must provide access. The tenant is not required to allow access more than twice a week. Remember if a tenant refuses to give a landlord access for selling the premises, the landlord can seek orders from the Consumer Trader and Tenancy Tribunal. Remember if a tenant refuses to give a landlord access for selling the premises, the landlord can seek orders from the Consumer Trader and Tenancy Tribunal.

This does not apply to **on-site auctions**. If the landlord or real estate agent wants to hold an auction on the premises they need permission from the tenant. The tenant is not obliged to give permission. But if the tenant does give permission, the tenant may request a reduction in rent for that day.

Landlords also have obligations about disclosing their **intention to sell**. If a landlord has signed a contract of sale with an agent they must inform any person intending to sign a residential tenancy agreement. This will not apply if the landlord signs a contract of sale after the tenancy agreement was signed.

Duty advocate now available at Hurstville Tribunal

Do you have clients who have received a notice to attend the Consumer Trader and Tenancy Tribunal and they are nervous, worried that their story won't be heard or anxious about talking in public? It is important that anyone who receives a notice of hearing should attend because the CTTT can make orders in a person's absence and those orders can have an enormous effect, especially if they concern evictions or paying money. Conciliation can be daunting, sometimes involving very detailed information and making quick decisions. This is often made harder because tenants and landlords are in dispute and sometimes don't want to talk with each other. To assist tenants in the CTTT, we provide a weekly duty advocacy service at Hurstville CTTT every Wednesday. We have provided this service for over a year, and have assisted many tenants to settle their matters on the day. Our Service has two experienced tenant advocates, Paul Ahearn and Mukesh Mahajan. The service is available to any tenant whether they live in the private rental, Department of housing, community housing, caravan parks, holidays homes and retirement villages.

Our Duty Advocate has experience in residential tenancies and can provide on –the –spot advice and assistance to tenants. The sorts of assistance we can provide include:

- Helping tenants to understand the Tribunal will work on the day
- Helping tenants to keep focused on the real issues in the dispute;
- Helping tenants to identify what factual matters are relevant and what are not;
- Checking and verifying the validity of the landlords' and tenants' documents – which documents are relevant, which ones might be red herrings.
- Does the application need amending;
- Advising on the prospect of success and the quantum of damages;
- In complex matters represent the client under their instructions;
- Assist the tenants in the conciliation process; and
- Helping tenants in getting an adjournment or in getting the directional hearing

We provide information to tenants when they need it most. The service is of benefit to tenants and to the Tribunal. It does help to settle matters so that tenants can walk away and live with any decision made on that day.

Out and about

Midnight in Paris - Advance Screening

A romantic comedy about a family travelling to the French capital for business. The party includes a young engaged couple forced to confront the illusion that a life different from their own is better.

Directed by Woody Allen, starring Owen Wilson, Rachel McAdams and Kathy Bates. Rated PG

We have been very lucky to secure this advance screening as a fundraiser for Dress for Work and it will be an excellent networking opportunity. There will; be lots raffles, lucky door prize and a goodies bag.

An email invitation will be sent closer to the date with details on booking and payment arrangements.

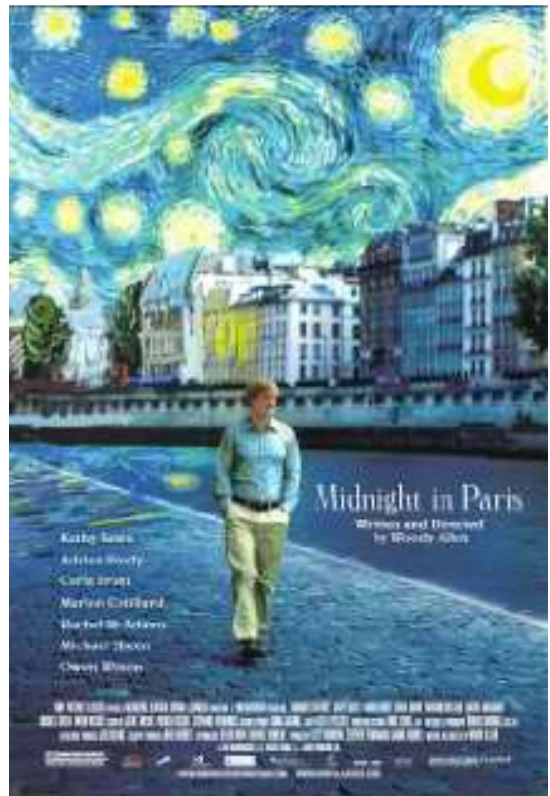
Please diarise this date

Thursday 6 October

5.30pm – pre-movie drinks

6.30pm – Movie commences

Dendy Cinema, 251-263 King Street Newtown



The Human Library

If you have a story to tell and you'd like to share your experiences with others, here is an opportunity for you!

Metro MRC is looking for people to volunteer as Living Books for our next Human Library in September.

The Human Library brings people together in one-to-one conversation, to encourage understanding, challenge negative stereotypes and reduce prejudice.

It's like a normal library, but the 'books' in the Human Library are people from groups who may have experienced prejudice or negative stereotypes, or who are at risk of social exclusion. The 'readers' of the Human Library are members of the community who have the opportunity to borrow a 'living book' for an informal, half-hour conversation.



The Human Library creates a safe environment where people who may not normally meet can engage in constructive conversation. If you are interested in being part of this exciting program please contact Losena Fuko at Metro MRC, on Tel: 9789 3744 or email Losena.fuko@metromrc.org.au

From Bethlehem to Marrickville

Metro MRC's Marrickville office recently hosted a lunch for a very important overseas guest. As part of a sister-city relationship with Marrickville, Ms Dina Nassar is from the Council of Bethlehem and currently visiting Australia. She provided an opportunity for Metro MRC to present its services and operating models which Ms Nassar found very interesting.

Ms Nassar is delighted with the demeanour of Australians and their friendliness. She also explained how the Council is elected by the people, with 15 councillors in all. There is a balance of religious and political affiliations with Muslim and Christian representatives; and Hamas, Fatah and independents on council.



Left to right: Dina Petrakis, Fatmata Bangura, Dina Nassar, Esta Paschalidis-Chilas, Marie Mooney, Moushumi Martin.

Bethlehem Council operates under significant restrictions and its business and community is burdened by Israeli army check-points in various parts of the city. "It is impossible to travel just 10 kilometres without being stopped and checked, and often permission is denied", Ms Nassar said. Ms Nassar reminded people that the United Nations will be taking a very important vote in September on the status of Palestine as a state.

Bankstown Children's Festival

The Bankstown Children's Festival is a major event on the local calendar, attracting thousands of children, families and supporters. This year's event takes place on **Saturday 24 September at Bankstown City Paceway** at 178 Eldridge Rd, from 9am to 7pm. Over 30 stalls will be serving delicious food, activities and information. Highlights will be cultural dancers, drumming workshops and the Taronga Zoomobile will be there too. There will be children in traditional costumes, lantern competitions and marching bands, culminating in fireworks at the end of the day. A free shuttle bus will operate every 15 minutes from the Bankstown Bus Interchange and there is free all-day parking on site. The festival promises to be bigger with the new and more spacious venue at the Paceway.

Metro MRC is a sponsor and will have an information stand at the festival.

Spring is in the air – Food4Everyone

And what better way is there to de-clutter your home and provide sustenance to children and people in Cambodia. Food4Everyone is encouraging people to hold garage sales and donate the funds to help feed the people of Cambodia. Convert your junk into money which will help buy food for people who are in desperate need. Get together with neighbours and friends and help raise some much needed funds. For more information, email food4everyone@hotmail.com

Make a difference - volunteers needed

We currently need of volunteers to help with our Dress for Work project, Food Bank and in the orientation of refugees and humanitarian settlers. Volunteering holds benefits such as learn something about your community, gaining experience for re-entry to the workforce, satisfaction in knowing that you are helping someone, building a network of contacts, sharing ideas and a vision and gaining some unique cultural insights. If you have some time to spare or know of someone who might, contact us and we can get you involved in exciting and meaningful work. Telephone 9789 3744 or email metromrc@metromrc.org.au

Eat Around the World

Pasta al forno (baked pasta)

Here is a recipe that ticks all the boxes in terms of tantalising the taste buds, relative simplicity and a hit with all the family. Very few people dislike pasta dishes, in fact pasta is now our national Australian dish. This is a variation on a theme which gives it that extra special treatment. The dish is a construction of various components.

Sauce:

2 tablespoons of olive oil
1 large onion, finely diced
4-6 cloves of garlic, diced
1 carrot finely diced
Half a cup of rosemary, finely chopped
500 grams beef mince
500 grams pork mince
1 bottle of tomato 'passata'
2 tablespoons of tomato paste
1 cup of frozen peas
Seasoning – salt & pepper to taste

Layers:

4 hard-boiled eggs
Mozzarella cheese, shredded or thinly sliced
Grated parmesan
1 large eggplant
4 boiled eggs
Olive oil
750 grams (about one and a half packets of quality penne noodles - this is no dish to hold back on quality)

In a heavy saucepan, add olive oil and fry the onion and garlic until transparent, add the diced carrot and rosemary and continue to fry – avoid burning the garlic. Add the beef and pork mince and simmer until the mince is browned throughout, and then add salt and pepper. Add the passata and tomato paste and simmer for around 45 minutes. Add peas and cook for a further 15 minutes until sauce has thickened. To avoid it drying out, add water as it cooks. It should be to the same consistency as a bolognese sauce for spaghetti.

While the sauce is cooking, peel and cut eggplant into thin slices, and lightly dry-fry them in a heavy based frypan and set aside. Hard-boil the eggs, peel and quarter them lengthways. Add the penne noodles in a large saucepan of boiling salted water. Once cooked, strain the pasta in a colander and then return the pasta to the empty pot. Combine half the sauce and stir through the pasta.

In a sizable baking dish, construct the layers starting with a scoop of sauce, add a layer of pasta, then layer slices of eggplant, mozzarella, sprinkle parmesan and a few of the egg quarters. Use the sauce sparingly as you repeat the layers so that you have enough to top off the dish. Finish with some mozzarella on top and a drizzle of olive oil. Bake in a moderate oven at around 175 degrees for about 20-30 minutes until it is cooked through and the surface is crispy. Serve in generous portions (serves 6-8 people).

