



Ethnic Communities Council of
Western Australia

Equity Newsletter

2022 Edition



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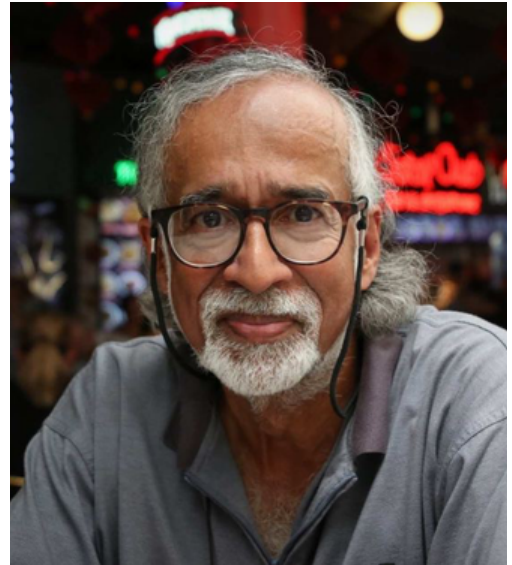
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I listened to the radio show host prosecute an argument that because we have, in Australia, a significant proportion (over 30%) of our population who were born overseas, then it was a poke in the eye of people (my note - such as myself) who have argued that there is a high level of racism in this country. The further fact that in the latest census people who were born in India were the second largest group added to the non-racist nature of our society.

It was at that point that I realised that there is a massive deficiency in the understanding of people around what racism is and what multiculturalism is. Let's be very clear about this. The composition of our immigration program is largely governed by our shortage of skills and where in the world those skills are available. In recent years some of that deficiency has been in the technology area. India has offered those skills in abundance and that has determined who has had the chance to come to this country. It is interesting that our main source of migration remains United Kingdom.

Racism is about access to the systems that we have in place to deal with that cultural diversity. All of our systems are built on a white Anglo Celtic paradigm. They do not take into account the cultural mores of the First Nations People. And they do not take into account those of the Non-English migration communities. There are some inherently racist policies that make life difficult for both of the communities mentioned above. So, irrespective of the Immigration composition, our society can still be inordinately racist in the way that it deals with the diversity.

Likewise, Multiculturalism is often confused with cultural diversity. With the lack of transnational borders these days, cultural diversity and difference is a given. Whether we like it or not, people are moving from country to country seeking greater economic returns. As such, we will always see the population being very diverse.



Multiculturalism however, is the adoption of government policy to deal with this diversity. Do our systems in government reflect that diversity? Are there people of South Asian descent at the upper echelons of government bureaucracies? Do our Parliaments reflect that diversity of our population? Do people of Islamic faith have a path to be elected here? Why is it that despite around 200 years of Muslim migration to Australia, it was only recently that Anne Aly became the first woman of Islamic faith to be elected to the Australian Federal parliament?

Unfortunately, whilst we may have the greatest diversity of population in the world, it is self-evident that we do not have the government policies to accommodate that diversity. This is the constant work of the advocacy agencies such as ECCWA. We have steadfastly and strongly advocated for these policies to be adopted. And in my experience of over 20 years in this area, I believe that the ONLY WA Minister who has understood the issues herein has been Dr Geoff Gallop. All of the policies that were created by Dr Gallop (with our input via the Anti-Racism steering committee) are still in place and continue to be accepted as government policy.

We hope that this will change with the diversity of the population continuing to increase. And we will continue to advocate to that end.

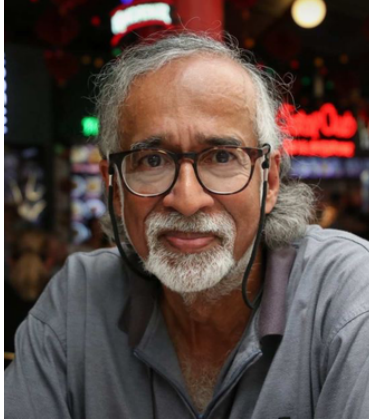
Suresh Rajan
President



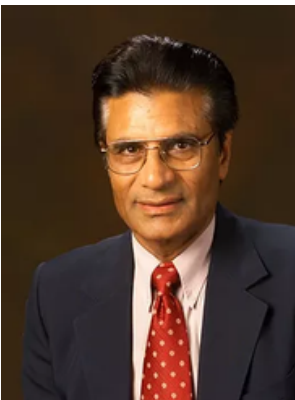
"A fair and just society, one in which all people are encouraged to participate fully in the life of the community and are supported to reach their full potential, where diversity is valued and people live in harmony."

BOARD MEMBERS

OFFICE BEARERS



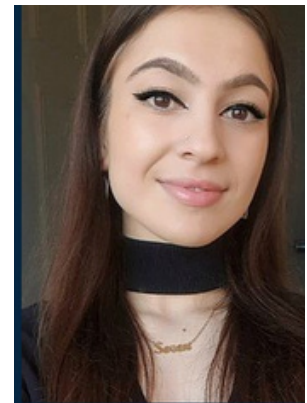
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Vice President of Women's interests



SEREN ULUSOY
Vice President of Youth



BAILLY FERNANDEZ
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Muslim Women's Business Association

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Umbrella Multicultural Community Care Services (Inc.)

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Chung Wah Association

Paul Kyaw

Karen Welfare Association

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Kitwek Association Inc

Ranjit Ratnayake

Burgher Welfare of WA

Tarek Chamkhi

Islamic Museum of Australia

Satish Nair

Indian Society of WA

SUBMISSIONS



REFORMS OF THE ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAWS (WA)

Response from the Ethnic Communities Council of WA (ECCWA)

The Ethnic Communities Council of WA has canvassed our member organisations and communities for their responses to the request from the Attorney General for suggestions for amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Act. Our suggestions are written below in bold type and is accompanied by the rationale for each suggestion.

They do not conform specifically to the questions raised by the Law Reform Commission (LRC), nevertheless they range across a number of areas significant for our members.

In WA there are laws and regulations and rules surrounding all of the entitlements of the WA citizens. In our western liberal democracy, we have a nominally equitable society, underpinned by a raft of supporting regulations, practices and literature. In WA (Western Australian Disability Services Act 1993, [amended 2004], Equal Opportunity Act 1984 [WA]) they are designed to ensure that all public authorities make provision for and maintain basic standards for disadvantaged people who experience inequity. These acts make it unlawful for people to discriminate against or provide lesser services for anyone.

Furthermore, every government department has a section devoted to explaining how it meets the prevailing values of the 21st century in the western world. These can be found by people searching through each department's site. On the WA government website, there are links to no less than 24 departments, each of which will take the user to a vast number of links to services provided by each department. This is a practical guide to the supports the government gives to the people. Each of these services has its origin in convenience and custom, arising from regulation and further back, from legislation. Should there be a complaint, it would be dealt with by the established procedures of the work area, with a very infrequent recourse up the line to the head of department or even the minister.

However, if a person, at a disadvantage due to an inequity, were to appeal for a change in the rules, or a redressing of disadvantage, there are too many confusing paths to follow which may lead down the wrong rabbit holes. For example, within the WA government website, under Community Services, there exists a section called Social Justice and Equity which provides an alphabetical list of 15 services for all Western Australians to provide them with the services that will enhance their lives. But this is not about discrimination or disadvantage, but relates more to matters like an application for a driver's license. So where do people go? Therefore, we would like an authoritative section inserted into a principal piece of legislation (the Anti-Discrimination Act) that defines discrimination, making the definition absolutely clear to be in tandem with the United Nations Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPWD), The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

ECCWA launched a 'Racism matters' website in view of widespread racist vilification following the start of the Covid epidemic. In light of the nature of the complaints we received and our discussions with the complainants,

we came to a view that many of our members suffered widespread discrimination in many areas covered by the Act (mainly in employment and in the provision of services) but had little faith in the protections offered by it. Many of our complainants considered the Act a 'toothless tiger' which was of little benefit to them, if indeed they were aware of it.

Discrimination on the basis of race is illegal under the WA Criminal Code (Criminal Code Amendment (Racial Vilification) Act 2004) and penalties apply, however, CaLD people are not using it because:

- They consider the process hard to bring about a criminal charge
- People do not know if they can get adequate support to undertake the process and don't know where to go for help
- The system of getting justice is too expensive and this demoralises CaLD people to lodge complaints.
- There is fear and victimisation of community backlash.

Therefore, it is important to provide targeted information on government websites and in significant legislation (Anti-Discrimination Act) that is easily accessible to CaLD communities; to create delegated regulations to advance resource empowerment.

Education should be mandated under the Anti-Discrimination Act to make reasonable accommodation to allow students to carry out their religious practices during school hours.

There must be an updating of the language that refers to people of disadvantage through gender, race, colour, ethnicity, age, marital or parental status, sexual preference, disability or religious belief or political conviction(our addition).

Old fashioned language is imbued with stigma and disadvantage and carries a set of memories and misunderstandings with it. When the language has evolved to reflect greater awareness and understanding, it is far more acceptable, and it is important that a significant piece of legislation reflect current community values.

The current protections in the Act be amended or clarified based on employment status.

People with disability from non-English speaking population face deeper forms of marginalisation, discrimination and experience multiple barriers to full participations in the society. The Act must prohibit, and stipulate the consequences in cases where a person or persons are treated less favourably than others on a number of grounds in a number of circumstances. In accordance with its mandate the Equal Opportunity Commission states its mission as: "To lead in the elimination of discrimination and build a community that reflects and promotes equality of opportunity and human rights" (Annual Report 2018-2019).

Systemic discrimination is entrenched in institutions, policies and practices which creates and perpetuates disadvantage for whole groups of people and is not effectively addressed through individual complaints. Subsequently, laws alone do not end intolerance, prejudice and discrimination in our community.

The implementation of the Substantive Equality Policy Framework has been a valuable tool to help address these issues in promoting equitable actions that result in equal outcomes for people with disability from CaLD backgrounds.

The strengthening of the principles of Substantive Equality within the Act is significant for supporting, advocating and implementing culturally sensitive programs; it needs a strong legislative framework for its efficient operation.

How would He judge us on refugees?

In his Easter message to faith adherents, the Archbishop of Canterbury was scathing in his criticism of the British Government's position in respect of refugees coming to their shores.

The Government there has decided that tens of thousands of people who are fleeing from persecution would not be sent to Rwanda to be housed there.

No doubt there would also have been some monetary inducement given to the struggling African republic to "sweeten the deal".

Archbishop Justin Welby indicated that the policy does not "stand the judgment of God".

One wonders how the Archbishop would view the various Australian governments and their continued use of the Pacific Solution.

This solution sees our Government bully our neighbours into housing refugees and asylum seekers for inordinate and often indefinite periods of time rather than to allow them onshore into this country.

This same Government, in its various hues, has even excised, for immigration purposes, a number of Australian territories, so as to declare that these people seeking solace and refuge from persecution had never landed on our lands and were therefore never our responsibility.

Surely these actions are against the very basic principles of godliness and humanity and pretty much every religious doctrine around?

And yet our Government has escaped the wrath of the international human rights authorities for many years.

Depressingly, neither major



Archbishop Justin Welby

party has resiled from this traditional position at the coming election.

Policy costing us friends

For decades Australia has been the go-to country for the Pacific.

But in recent years we have let that relationship slip and China is waiting in the wings.

Foreign aid has fallen, we send only junior ministers to meet them and we have not taken their concerns on climate change seriously.

To rub salt into the wound, on at least one occasion senior ministers have been caught out making fun of them on the climate issue.

For my friends in the region this is no laughing matter.

They have seen their coral reefs bleach and die in warming waters and their fish disappear, their fruit trees shrivel in drought, increasing storms destroy their houses and crops, and their freshwater aquifers turn salty with rising seas and destroy their vegetable gardens.

These rising seas are also washing away their coastlines to the point where whole villages must move inland.

Watching their graveyards disappear under the waves has been the hardest thing for some people.

How would He judge us on refugees?

I worked on fruit farms with Solomon Islanders, and they have contributed enormously to our agriculture in our country. You will have to go a long way to find a more cheerful, hardworking, and most generous group of people.

They are also very solid friends. They are also deeply connected to their families and their homeland.

What Pacific Islanders are facing if the temperature rises 1.5 degrees is total annihilation of low-lying islands. They will lose everything.

To stop this, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says we the world must act this decade to restore and increase forest cover, and reduce coal by 90 per cent, oil by 60 per cent and gas by 45 per cent.

With Australia providing more than \$11 billion in fossil fuel subsidies each year and calling for more coal mines and other fossil fuel projects, it is no wonder that the Pacific has lost confidence in Australian leadership in the region.

Even the Secretary-General of the UN referred to Australia's efforts as "lying" on climate action.

China may prove to be no better than us, and from their record in other developing countries we may soon see their control growing through financial dependence to the point where they are soon holding governments they are helping on a short rein.

To see the Solomons choose China over us shows how far we have fallen and we must work harder than ever to prove we are good friends and not a big brother government in the wings.

Most importantly, we must take them seriously on climate change.

Paddy Cullen, Gosnells

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Scribbles can mess up handwriting

According to Bethany Hiatt's article (*News*, 18/4), students today are unable to write legibly. Apart from the reasons

be connected to pencils are ineffective, and they simply become another toy for children to fidget with and

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SAVE YOUR HOMES

BELOW 3% FOR 5 YEARS

Australia Party

FEATURE

SPORT

Australian

in future mining vision

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SAVE YOUR HOMES

BELOW 3% FOR 5 YEARS

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SAVE YOUR HOMES

BELOW 3% FOR 5 YEARS

Liberal Party

TIME RIGHT TO SHOW WE CARE

Published in the **Sunday Times on 3/01/22**

With the federal government falling over itself to clear the decks, of asylum seekers and humanitarian entrants to this country before the election, I raise yet again why it is unable to extend the largesse to the family that has now come to be known as the “Biloela family”.

Thus far, the government has released a number of people from detention in the Immigration centre in Melbourne, and agreed to send about 450 others to New Zealand over the next three years. The cruelty of this government and its blatant disregard for humanity and human rights can be gauged by the fact that it agreed to release the 450 to New Zealand as part of an offer that Jacinda Ardern made 9 years ago. In that interim period they preferred to incarcerate these people needlessly.

The Biloela family are now resident here in Perth. Nades, Priya, Tharnicaa and Kopika (below) are here. All they want to do is go to Biloela, a place where the children were born. Surely, we can allow these Aussie kids the right to go to their place of birth.

Suresh Rajan



The Biloela Family

SUPPORT THE MARGINALISED

Published in the **West Australian 31/01/22**

"Haneen Zreika has thrown me a curved ball at a far more rapid pace than most others I usually receive. On the one hand I disagree with her stance on LGBTIQ and Pride. On the other I support her right to practise her religion in the way she wishes to.

A number of Muslims that I have spoken to, disagree with the stance she has taken. They indicate that there are a number of other aspects of Islam that call on them to support the marginalised groups. There is no question that the LGBTIQ community has been marginalised purely on the basis of their sexual orientation.

So let Haneen practice her religion in the way she sees as appropriate but she has to accept the consequences which could include being dropped from the team. Australia is still a diverse and multicultural society.

Suresh Rajan
President Ethnic Communities Council of WA
20 View Street
North Perth WA 6006



MINISTER'S POWER RAISES CONCERN

Published in **The West Australian 18/01/22**

I greeted the decision of the Full Federal Court in the Novak Djokovic case with equal measures of joy and trepidation. The joy emanates from the fact that the Federal Court chose to apply the law equally between the privileged and entitled Tennis Champion and the refugees and asylum seekers that come to our shores seeking refuge from persecution and the likelihood of torture and ultimately death.

The trepidation that I have is that this decision reaffirms the supreme power that the Minister has in these cases. During the last few years I have dealt with over twenty cases where the Minister has exercised his sole discretion to deny people with disabilities the right to permanent residency in this country. The argument in every one of those cases has been that they represented a "burden" to the taxpayers of Australia. In a number of those cases I have been able to get the Minister to overturn the decision in favour of the applicant. Unfortunately in a number of other cases the applicant has had to leave the country and return to a life of exclusion and discrimination in other countries.

Entrenching this immense amount of power to influence the lives of innocent people is frightening at best and highlights the fact that there is a need for us to develop a culture of human rights in this country. Let us work to achieve that aim.

And let me emphasise that in Mr Djokovic's case I support the Minister refusing an anti vaxxer the right to come to this country to spread his message."

Suresh Rajan

Letters to Editor are one of the ways you can raise issues relating to the CaLD Community and have them published in mainstream media. If you have a matter that you wish to raise in the media, through the Letters to the Editor page, we can assist.

Email admin@eccwa.org.au and we will get back to you.

UKRANIAN APPEAL LAUNCHED

The Multicultural Services Centre of WA (MSC) is very concerned about more than 2.3 million people having been forced to flee Ukraine and at least 1 million more having been internally displaced by the military hostilities.

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, the humanitarian consequences of this emergency will be devastating, with countless lives torn apart. "I have worked in refugee crises for almost 40 years and I have rarely seen such an incredibly fast-rising exodus of people," said Mr. Grandi.

As the fighting intensifies and spreads across the country, hundreds of thousands are on the move and families are becoming separated. According to UNICEF, "Children and families in eastern Ukraine have suffered the effects of conflict for the past eight years. In less than two weeks, at least 37 children have been killed and 50 injured. Life for 7.5 million children caught up in the crisis in Ukraine is deteriorating by the minute. Children have been killed. Children have been wounded. More than 1 million children have been forced to flee their homes, finding safety in neighbouring countries".

MSC has the licence to collect money and goods, under the Charitable Collections Act 1946 for such purposes. One of MSC's objects is to undertake initiatives to respond to natural and other disasters and humanitarian causes and so we are very pleased to offer our services", said Sheila Rajan, MSC's Chairperson.

"For electronic banking purposes those transferring money can do so using the following details. Account Name: Multicultural Services Centre of WA - Natural Disasters, BSB: 633000; Account Number: 1606 45594 and Reference: Ukraine Appeal. Donations of \$2 and above are tax deductible and receipts will be issued."

"All funds raised will be forwarded to an appropriate agency in Ukraine, Poland or Moldova currently involved in providing urgent protection and aid for those forced to flee. Just as we did in the case of several Relief Appeals we organised in recent years, All costs relating to administration, accounting, audit etc. will be borne by MSC. I am confident that this initiative will be just as successful," added Ms. Rajan.

Hon. Nick Catania, the Chairman of The Bendigo Bank, North Perth, said he "was delighted to be associated with this Appeal s it was with Appeals that MSC had organised to address other humanitarian causes and natural disasters. Our bank makes significant investments by way of corporate social responsibility and will promote this appeal as best we can, he added."

Ethnic Communities Council of WA President, Mr. Suresh Rajan commended MSC which is a founding member of the Council for leading the way in supporting those fleeing the humanitarian crisis and seeking refuge in neighbouring countries and in Australia. "I call upon the Prime Minster to substantially increase the number of Humanitarian places he has currently nominated in our Immigration program, as a matter of urgency," said Mr. Rajan.

For media enquiries please contact Mr. Sankaran on 0418275786, or Mr. Rajan on 0403276960.



PARTNERSHIP WITH AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

ECCWA works with many people and communities to address disadvantage and discrimination. Amnesty International is also well-known for its work with disadvantaged people who are in difficult situations

Our Board has recently completed the documentation to partner with Amnesty International Australia. Henceforth, our logo will be printed alongside Amnesty's logo on materials that reflect our joint initiatives in the field of Human Rights.

PRE-ELECTION FORUM

On Wednesday May 11th, ECCWA held a pre-Election forum at the North Perth office at 20 View St.

The forum was chaired by our President Suresh Rajan and the members of the panel were the Hon Dr Anne Aly (ALP) MHR, Senator Jordon Steele-John (Greens WA).

The forum was attended by approximately 30 people in the room and 8 online.

The plan was that each MP would be given 7 minutes to speak to their party's policy on matters concerning multicultural communities and then have a further 3 minutes to respond to the other MPs present. Then questions would be put to the panel by interested people who were either present in the room or online.

Unfortunately, Greens MP Senator Jordan Steele-John was unable to attend due to a COVID-19 diagnosis, which came too late in the day for him to find a replacement. Liberal MP Senator Dean Smith was also unable to attend and unable to send a replacement. This meant that only ALP MP Dr Anne Aly was present at the forum to answer questions.

Despite this, the night was well-attended and everyone was able to receive answers to their questions.



COMMUNITY NEWS



LABOR PARTY'S POLICIES FOR 2022



**Prime Minister of Australia
The Honourable Anthony Albanese**

- **Strengthen Medicare** by making it easier to see the doctor.
- **Create secure local jobs** by investing in Fee-Free TAFE and more university places, and make your job more secure with better pay and conditions.
- **Make child care cheaper** so that it's easier for working families to get ahead.
- **Make more things here in Australia** by working with business to invest in manufacturing and renewables to create more Australian jobs.
- **Lower taxes**
- **Safer and more affordable housing** to help more Australians into home ownership
- Provide the national leadership and investment needed to **help end family, domestic and sexual violence**
- **Better support for people living with disability** by Protecting the NDIS and getting it back on track.



FECCA: Labor's anti-racism funding an important move for multicultural Australia

16 May 2022

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) welcomes the announcement by the Australian Labor Party committing \$7.5 million towards an anti-racism strategy.

FECCA has long called for a federal anti-racism strategy, and this recommendation is a key plank of the organisation's recently released Policy Platform.

FECCA's CEO, Mohammad Al-Khafaji, said, "Everybody in Australia deserves to live in a society that is free from racism and discrimination. Unfortunately, interpersonal and systemic racism continues to be a reality for many multicultural and First Nations people across our country. This has terrible consequences, including for people's wellbeing, sense of belonging, and their connection to society.

"FECCA congratulates the Australian Labor Party on this announcement and calls on the Coalition to also commit to adequately funding an anti-racism strategy. Regardless of the outcome of the election, a bipartisan commitment to a federal anti-racism framework is urgently needed to safeguard Australia's future as a multicultural nation where everyone is included equally.

"FECCA acknowledges the work of the Australian Human Rights Commission in its initial work in this area. We look forward to continuing to work together to ensure Australia has a robust anti-racism strategy," said Mr Al-Khafaji

As a priority, FECCA calls for an anti-racism strategy that is grounded in the experience and knowledge of people who experience racism in Australia – multicultural and First Nations people. Adequate resourcing is essential to ensure it can be designed and implemented in partnership with affected individuals and communities.

FECCA is the national peak body representing people from multicultural communities and their organisations across Australia.

ISSUES OF CONCERN



Reminder – Seniors have become a bigger target of scammers

Kim McDonald 02/05/22
The West Australian

WA seniors bunkering down at home to mitigate the risk of contracting COVID-19 have become increasingly vulnerable to online scams, with new data revealing nearly 70 per cent more victims in older age groups.

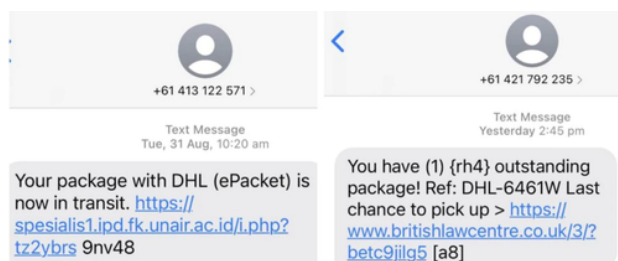
Bankwest and the Council on the Ageing say the rise is partly the result of the increased use of online services, such as shopping and banking, which has left seniors who are less familiar with digital options exposed and vulnerable to scammers. The bank revealed there had been a 67 per cent increase in the number of reported IT scams between January and March compared with the last three months of 2021.

The tricks usually involve criminals posing as technical support to access a victim's PC then installing malware to enable ongoing access.

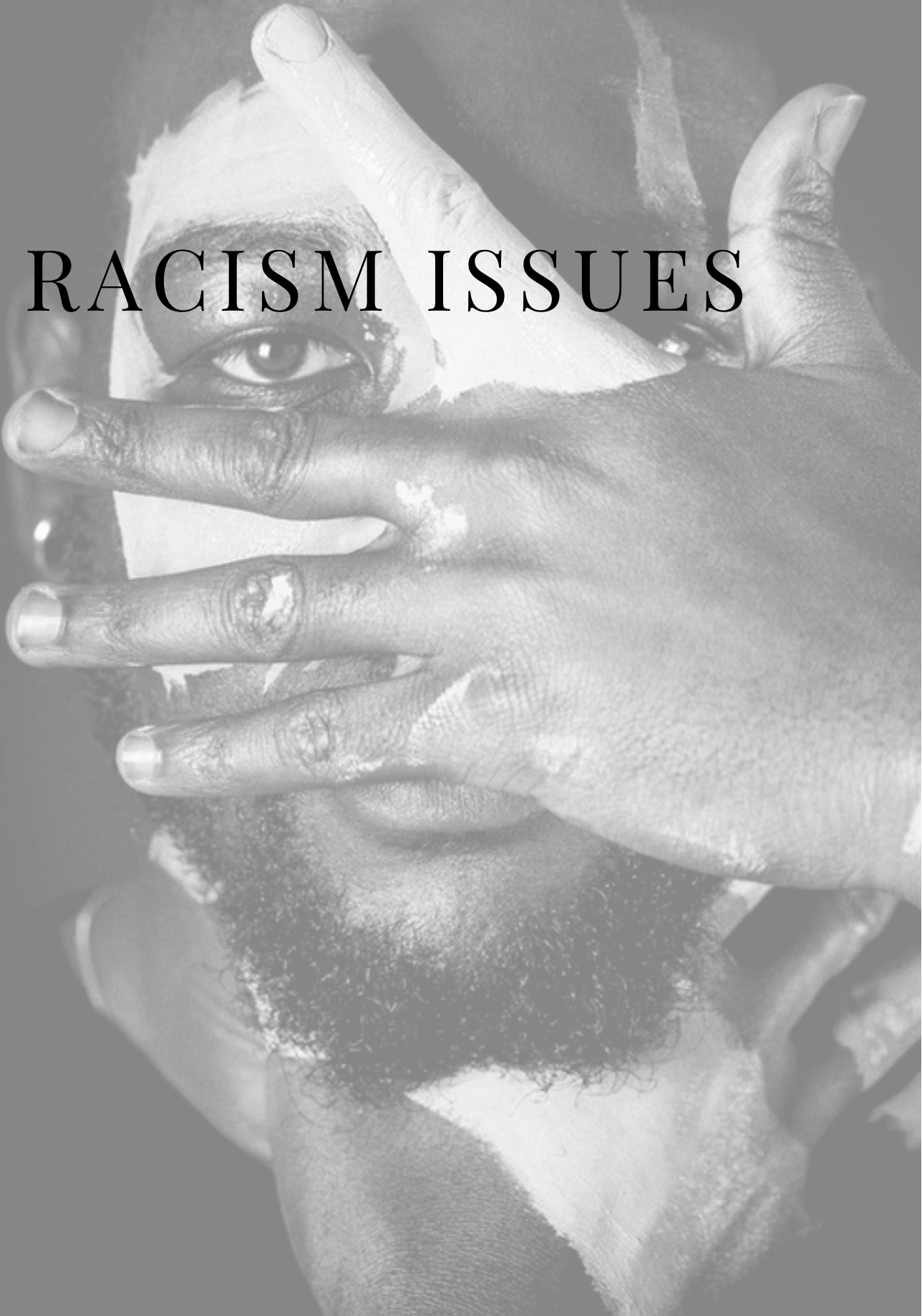
There was also a 60 per cent increase in threat and penalty scams, which pressure people into making seemingly legitimate payments. This can include a demand to pay a false fine, or a text requesting the recipient's bank details to stop a high-value fake purchase. A recent scam doing the rounds involves a text falsely claiming to come from Australia Post, requesting credit card details for a small redelivery fee for an online purchase.

How can you protect yourself?

- Do not accept calls from people claiming to be from companies or agencies. Hang up and ring that company direct. If the call is legitimate, the original query could be handled. If not, you have saved yourself.
- Do not click any links sent to your phone number from unknown numbers. They might lead you to a website that steals your personal information. Companies and Government departments will likely send you an email or a letter.
- Do not open suspicious texts, pop-up windows or click on links or attachments in emails – delete them
- Never provide your personal information or credit card details to anyone you don't know or trust
- Report a scam on www.scamwatch.gov.au/report-a-scam
- If you noticed that money has been taken from your bank account without your authorisation, call your bank immediately and request for a new credit or debit card to be sent to you.



RACISM ISSUES



RACISM MATTERS

After the launch of the Racism Matters website and the reporting page for racist and discriminatory behaviours, the Racism Matters team created and delivered workshops to provide tools to empower targets or witnesses of racist or discriminatory behaviour. From these we saw the need for additional training to be provided to support communities in Perth. Therefore, we developed a series of plans for workshops and training sessions on training for Cultural Responsivity, Understanding Multiculturalism and Healthy Relationships.

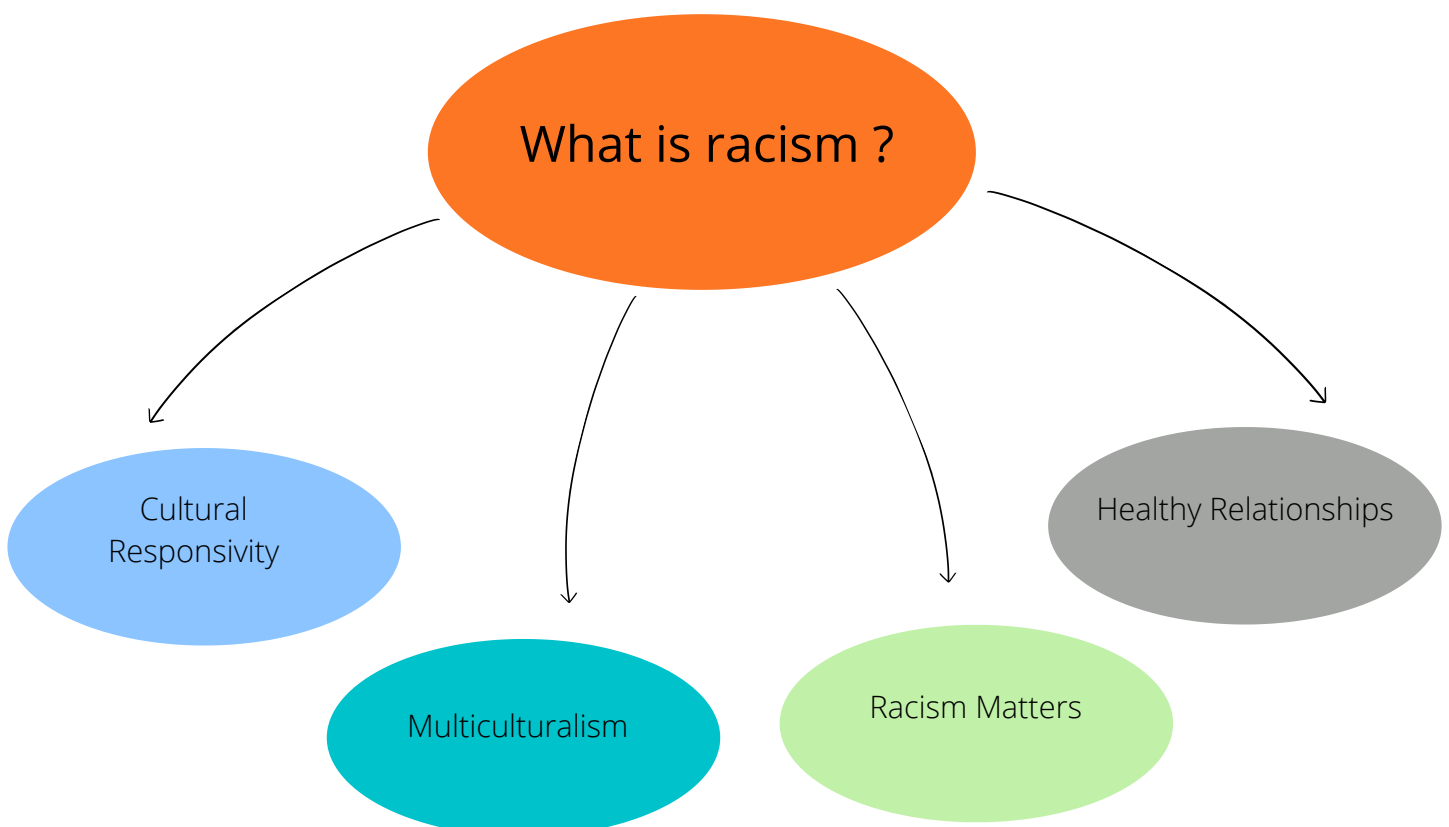
The plan is to offer them to organisations whose workforce and/or whose clients are from multicultural backgrounds and who see the need for some kind of refresher training. We aim to make the sessions as flexible and accessible as possible.

For example, we have Lunch and Learn workshops that we can tailor to suit your needs. We also offer longer and more flexible training/workshop sessions on any of your needs in the areas of Cultural Responsivity, Understanding Multiculturalism and Healthy Relationships, either in your premises or ours.

If you come to a session in our North Perth or Cannington office, we will provide a generalised training session. If, however, you have a specific set of needs for your business, we can tailor the training to suit your precise needs.

Call Sharan 92275322 or email ECCWAUser03@eccwa.org.au for details

Fees are nominal



A close-up photograph of a person's face, partially obscured by their hands. The person is covering their eyes and nose with their hands, suggesting distress or emotional pain. The lighting is dramatic, with a strong blue/cyan hue on the left side and a darker, reddish-brown hue on the right. The background is dark and out of focus.

MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING



South Sudan former child soldier Philip Lako shares story to inspire other WA migrants

ABC Goldfield by Asha Couch
Mon 4 Apr 2022 at 6:59am

Storytelling is said to be the oldest form of education.

Throughout history, storytelling has bridged the gap between generations, often delivering both entertainment and a lesson.

Even when the subject matter is painful, communicating lived experience to others is something that people are drawn to; storytelling is healing for both the speaker and listener.

Public speaker, advocate and author Philip Lako has spent recent years sharing his story in the hope it will help people better understand the experience of migrants to Australia.

From child soldier to migrant advocate

Philip spent his early childhood living with his family in a small village in South Sudan. At the age of 10, he was taken by rebels under the guise of receiving an education.

Instead, he was kept and trained as a child soldier; for a decade, Philip was subjected to starvation and abuse at the hands of the adults who were supposed to be his caregivers.

Philip finally managed to escape to Kenya as a refugee, the beginning of what was to be an incredibly difficult four-year journey that eventually brought him to Australia.

In the years that followed, Philip went through a process many migrants to Australia are familiar with, and starting from scratch but motivated by hope, he set about building a life in a foreign country.

When asked why he now dedicates his energy to sharing such a difficult story, Philip says, "It's definitely not easy ... but of course we have to make some sacrifices."

"[It's] more about the people that are listening; the people that are going to hear this story."



Taonga Sendama

Stories a reminder of shared experience

Zambian-Australian poet Taonga Sendama is a Perth-based writer and storytelling mentor who has performed all over Australia.

Taonga has also run workshops through Perth Poetry Festival, and for students in schools and university clubs.

Much of her work is centred around identity, and why sharing stories of identity is so important.

Taonga describes storytelling as "how we continue our cultures; how we communicate and ... how we hold each other in the communities that we build".

The reason she shares her work, Taonga explains, is so those in migrant communities are reminded that other people have been through similar experiences and that they are far from alone.

"I tell stories for the sake of other people like me who might not have heard these stories," she says.
An antidote to trauma

Taonga says there is an unfair expectation of migrant folks to tell stories that adhere to "certain tropes and narratives".

"There's no stories about love or nostalgia ... you have to fit into very specific boxes," she says.

"We are such multifaceted people that I feel like it's impossible ... to expect us to fit into such small things

"[In my mentoring] I reassure people that no, you don't have to get up onto this platform and bleed onto a stage to be listened to or recognised, you can just talk about your love life, your friends and how much you love them."

Taonga speaks to the healing power of storytelling for minority communities and how vital it is to stop intergenerational trauma being handed down.

"If we don't talk about these things, we are just going to pass it on to the next generation who, honestly, deserves to just live their lives freely and live with as much joy and rest as we can give them," she says.

"Storytelling is healing for both the listener and the person sharing ... I think we really have to keep doing it, even though it hurts."

Philip explains that in sharing his story he hopes to bridge a gap between migrants and listeners who had not lived his experience.

"These are stories worth telling to remind those people, people that have never seen the other side of life ... how other people live in those countries," he says.

"Developed countries have [lived] comfortably for very long, and sometimes people easily get removed from the reality of life."

Philip says he believes anyone who calls Australia home should make the effort to get to know people from other communities better.

"We are all human. We might look different, but every single person has the intent to have a good life, to have security, to be able to wake up and not have to worry about being bombarded," he says.

Philip says compassion is key to making Australia a place people from all backgrounds can call home.

"This is the life circle, people go through these hurdles but the reality is everyone wants to get out of that, to get a better life," he says.

"We need to give people a second chance."

Despite being a society that outwardly prides itself on its multiculturalism, migrant stories have long been marginalised in Australia, but the push for migrant voices to be heard is gaining momentum.

Surging COVID numbers haven't increased deaths, but people like Irene are still suffering with long COVID

By Emily Bourke and Sam Hawley for ABC News Daily

Posted Fri 1 Apr 2022 at 2:58am Friday 1 Apr 2022 at 2:58am, updated Fri 1 Apr 2022 at 4:21am

Melbourne woman Irene Tey had so little energy after a bout of COVID-19 she couldn't even lift her arms to wash her hair.

"Things that you normally take for granted, like having a shower, at one point felt like climbing a mountain," she said.

"I had to resort to asking my partner to wash my hair for me because I literally had no energy to lift my arms up."

Ms Tey, a 36-year-old emergency department nurse, has long COVID.

She first contracted the virus in July 2020, and spent five days in hospital before recovering from her initial infection. But she still can't exercise or work a full day.

"It's not just the pure tiredness, it's as if I've run a marathon and my body's like jelly, my body has got no energy and walking feels like I'm wading through a pool of gel," she told the ABC News Daily podcast.

Irene describes "rollercoaster" symptoms that have meant she has had to adapt her daily expectations.

"Basic tasks at home, like vacuuming the whole house has become unachievable, even if I vacuum one room it will drain me of my energy for a long time," she said.

"Same thing with work, I haven't been able to go back to work at my previous capacity."

Key points:

- Over 487 million people worldwide have contracted COVID
- David Putrino, an Australian physiotherapist in the US, says patients typically develop long COVID symptoms a few weeks after their acute symptoms end
- He says research has been unable to determine risk factors for developing long COVID



Dr David Putrino

From her own account, Irene was fit and active before she contracted COVID-19 at work. She'd exercise six days a week, and trained in karate.

"I also deal with damages in my nerves, on my right hand — and I'm right-handed."

Many long COVID patients are physically fit, says expert Dr David Putrino, an Australian researching long COVID in the United States, said cases like Irene's were common.

The majority of the 2,000 patients he is treating at a clinic at the Mt Sinai Hospital in New York were previously fit and healthy.

"Many were actively involved in recreational sport and engaging in incredible athletic feats like running marathons and exercising regularly, every single day," he said.

The physiotherapist, who has a PhD in neuroscience, said the average age of his patients was 42.

"Now, as a result of their long COVID symptoms, all of that has been taken away from them to the point where they're really struggling just to manage their daily life on a regular basis."

Dr Putrino has been recognised globally as a leading expert in the assessment, treatment and underlying physiology of long COVID.

He said the link between extremely fit people and long COVID was being found across the world.

"Many of the patients who are coming to us for care with long COVID symptoms did not report a severe course of acute COVID infection," he said.

"Then a few weeks after their last acute COVID-like symptoms resolved, all of a sudden these long COVID symptoms emerge."

Only a few studies have hinted at underlying risk factors

It's estimated that between 10 to 30 per cent of people infected with the coronavirus may develop long-term symptoms.

The condition bundles up a wide range of conditions, and not all of them are fully understood yet.

Crippling fatigue, brain fog, headaches, loss of smell and hair loss, along with other physically debilitating symptoms like vertigo, pain and numbness, and scarring of the lungs, are among the enduring symptoms.

"Of our most severe patients, we have individuals who are now bed-bound, meaning they're not really able to get out of bed without assistance," Dr Putrino said.

The phenomenon of long COVID is continuing to baffle the medical profession, and while fit people appear more at risk, it remains unclear who will and who won't end up with it.

"There have been a few studies that have hinted at maybe some underlying physiology, but they're not really too convincing at present, so we really don't have any risk factors for who's going to get long COVID and who isn't," Dr Putrino said.

"What we do know is that people who have long COVID are starting to show signs and symptoms that are consistent with people with autoimmune disorders, and so we do think that the immune system is at play here.



Irene Tey

Dr Putrino described long COVID as an insidious condition that takes away a lot of an individual's life. In the United States, the Biden administration has acknowledged long COVID as a recognised disability that is covered under the Americans With Disabilities Act.

St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney has this week launched a new long COVID clinic to treat Australians.

For now the treatment revolves around relieving patients' symptoms.

"We have found strategies for rehabilitation that help ease some of the more severe symptoms, and many of our patients gain significant function back, but many others even with aggressive rehabilitation do not fully recover, which tells us that there is still something going on below the surface that we need to address," Dr Putrino said.

His advice is to do everything to avoid contracting the illness, including getting vaccinated and keeping up to date with recommended booster shots.

"There is no telling who is going to go on to get long COVID after an acute COVID infection, and so all of us should take acute COVID prevention extremely seriously."

There have been more than 487 million known COVID infections worldwide.

Irene Tey's symptoms have improved slightly, but she says the mental toll of having such long-term symptoms is difficult to grapple with.

"I felt lost, devastating loss.
"What can I do with my life?"



Wise Well Women fighting vaccine misinformation in CALD communities, one chat at a time

A group of women sits in a semicircle, their voices filling the air in a colourful chorus of accents and languages.

Key points:

- A group of 12 women is working to educate Shepparton's multicultural communities about COVID-19
- They have seen more community members taking up the COVID-19 vaccine since their education sessions
- There is no solid data from state-run vaccination hubs to show exactly what impact they are having

It's question time at a COVID-19 education session, and the queries are coming thick and fast.

Many of these women have struggled to find accurate information in their native tongue since the pandemic hit.

Now they're working to separate fact from fiction.

The session is hosted by Wise Well Women, a grassroots initiative aimed at increasing health literacy in Shepparton's culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Sujeevika Kumuduni, a community health educator with the group and member of Shepparton's large Sri Lankan community, is helping run today's session.

"I brought all my friends," she says.

"I had a health degree in Sri Lanka, so I think I can work with that for the community."

Breaking down vaccine barriers

Wise Well Women is run by 12 women who represent Shepparton's Afghan, Syrian, Sudanese, South Sudanese, Congolese, Sri Lankan and Filipino communities.

Health literacy is already low in mainstream communities, but it is even lower for people from non-English speaking and refugee backgrounds.

But Wise Well Women hopes to change this.

Formed earlier this year, the group covers everything from mental and women's health to parenting and family violence.

Passionate about change

Zahraa Taher is a Wise Well Women community educator working with Shepparton's Afghan and Syrian communities.

She just had a baby, but her passion saw her back on deck two weeks after giving birth. Her eyes light up as she describes the impact the sessions are already having in her circles.

"At every gathering and meeting, vaccination comes up," she said.

"Everywhere I go, I hear them saying, 'Did you have your vaccination?'"

Before the sessions, it was a vastly different picture. Many women still resorted to gathering their information from friends, social media, and news sources back in their homeland.

Ms Taher feared this left them open to misinformation. "Most women were taking guard, saying, 'We don't want to have the vaccine,'" she said.

"But after we have a session, and everything is explained, and their questions are answered ... they become more comfortable.

"Now, I'm hearing from them that they are booking, and some of them ask me to book for them."

Need for solid data

It is now mandatory for Victorian vaccination hubs to record the ethnicity information of patients. But it was not at the start of the program, so any data health services now have is incomplete. And hospitals do not have permission to share this data anyway.

Ethnic Council of Shepparton manager Chris Hazelman said there could be benefits to this.

"It might provide an indication of where you need to put a bit more effort," he said.

"But also, provide the basis for some communities to be targeted."

But it is leaving organisations like Wise Well Women in the dark.

"We would really like to get data from the vaccination hub about the increase in numbers from the communities that we've spoken to," co-convener Chris Nunn said.

"Then we'd know what impact we're having." Change will take time

While there may not be data, Ms Taher is certain each interaction is making a difference.

"Our role is not just to make a session," she said. "We need to give awareness to the people whenever we find an opportunity.

"Even when we are gathering, or we see them shopping or someone asks our opinion."

But she knows change won't happen overnight. "We cannot say, we did a session, boom, they will come," she said.

"It's not happening in a moment, but one conversation at a time."

ECCWA's role in COVID-19 vaccine education

In 2021, ECCWA successfully applied for the FECCA (Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia) COVID-19 Small Grants- an initiative to address barriers to accessing information on COVID-19 and the vaccination program amongst CaLD communities.

Our goal was to hold in-person information sessions in different Community organisations and CaLD service providers in Western Australia to 300 people.

Here is a question for you.....

Do you think that there is still a need for vaccine education in Perth?

**We are happy to come and talk to your group.
Phone 9227 5322 or email admin@eccwa.org.au**

It is not too late to come along to one of our workshops at the Hill View Hub in Bentley.
We still have sessions on Self-Care, Jewellery Making and Dancing in May and June



CALD

Women's
workshop



Meet like-minded women from CaLD backgrounds at the new Hillview Hub every two weeks starting from the 15 Feb until the end of June 2022.



Do you want to overcome your shyness and get to know more people?

Join our free social sessions at the Hillview Hub, where women of all ages can meet and participate in activities or informative talks in a safe environment.

We will be hosting classes each fortnight, sometimes on important topics such as Women's health, and sometimes fun workshops where you can make handicrafts. Morning tea will also be provided.

Come to as many sessions as you like! It is free.

Dates: 7th June & 21 June.

Time: 10 am - 12 pm

Location; Hillview Intercultural Community Centre, 1-3 Hill View Place, Bentley WA, Australia

Contact Sharan on 9227 5322 or ECCWAUser03@eccwa.org.au for more information or to register.

**ETHNIC COMMUNITIES COUNCIL
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