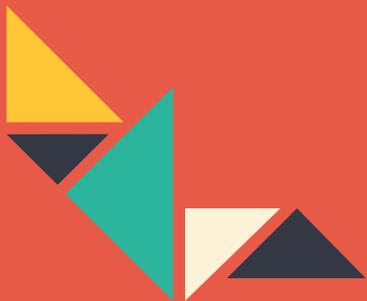




ANNUAL REPORT 2014



PART 1 - THE YEAR'S ACHIEVEMENTS



THE HIGHLIGHTS OF 2014

VICSEG New Futures continued to grow through 2014 – in both size and impact. The number of students choosing vocational courses with New Futures Training increased from 3,500 last year to over 4,000. Of those, close to 80% are on target to successful completion - a very positive outcome, given the multiple challenges many of our students face. Our new training venues have contributed significantly to this growth and have capacity to accommodate more students into the future. With the establishment of child care rooms in Braybrook and Epping this year, we have created an environment in each of our training venues where our students can demonstrate what they have learned through the new curriculum for early childhood education and care in a 'hands on' way.

The new venues are also becoming 'hubs' for our expanding New Futures Family Day Care Service, which is on target to achieve a cohort of 50 educators by the end of the year. The service received a great boost mid-year with the recruitment of a dozen, mainly Vietnamese educators from Maribyrnong, through an agreement with the Council. Each hub is focussed on recruiting educators from the ethnic communities that are common to the area, providing them with quality child care that is culturally responsive.

The Sudanese Student Engagement and Scholarship Program established early in the year in five secondary colleges in Melton has been taken up very enthusiastically by parents, teachers – and most importantly - by the participating students themselves. A number of philanthropic trusts have contributed financially to the program and the state government has funded the expansion of the model to schools in Wyndham in the coming year.

After more than a year of needs analysis and design, our cultural competence training for those working in the child and family services field commenced in May. *Culturally Responsive Practice with Vulnerable Families* has been delivered monthly since then to about 300 participants overall, with very positive feedback. The delivery has been a partnership with the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare and the success so far is due largely to the effort and capabilities of our trainers.

Asylum Seekers and their needs have continued to be a focus of our work this year. Local and state government grants have enabled our community programs staff to work with families and set up a number of playgroups to encourage children's interaction and development. New Futures Training has provided free vocational courses for those allowed to study and also English classes in Dandenong in partnership with the Tamil Association. These initiatives will give them a head start when, and if, they receive a permit to work.

The most recent highlight occurred at the Early Years Awards in October when the Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, the Hon Wendy Lovell, presented VICSEG New Futures with her special Minister's Award for the *Wyndham Refugee Family Mentoring and Resource Program*. The award acknowledged the unique value of an approach to supporting refugee families that our organization has developed over many years with the input of so many of our staff.

What we have outlined above are some of the highlights of another year when lots of positive work - creative, challenging and also routine - has been done by the 180 or so people who

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Board of directors: (clockwise from top left) Yusuf Sheikh Omar, John Zika (Executive Director), Phileas Lee, Lyn Beaumont, Ivana Csar (Secretary), Eva Wakim (Chair) & Hasan Acar (Treasurer). Absent: Nik Filips

make up VICSEG New Futures. We thank our partners, the many organizations, agencies and facilities with whom we have worked over the year. The roles played by many of these are noted in the following pages. The contribution of our funding bodies is listed and acknowledged in Part 2 of the Annual Report. A final word of thanks is extended to our Board Members, who oversee the management of VICSEG New Futures and ensure its proper governance and operation.

Eva Wakim **Chairperson**
John Zika **Executive Director**

NEW FUTURES TRAINING

The training organisation grows from strength to strength with increasing numbers of students and the development of innovative delivery and assessment methods. After determining to establish a new campus in Braybrook in 2013, we also decided

to consolidate the various training sites that we were using in and around Epping into one large facility – centrally located with ample parking, opposite the Epping plaza. It is a beautiful purpose built facility which provides a positive and enjoyable environment for our students.

July saw the introduction of the new curriculum for [early childhood studies](#), which has some welcome new aspects. Firstly there is a far greater emphasis on the practical skills to be acquired during early childhood training; while this has always been an integral part of our training – our students learn by doing not just reading and talking – we have taken steps to further integrate their learning. We have registered two further occasional childcare centres (one in each of the new campuses) where students can not only leave their children while they study but where they can also observe, model and demonstrate their skills in “real” settings. Large one-way viewing windows into each centre have been constructed, so that students have the opportunity to discretely observe and discuss activities

in the centres, as well as enter the space under the watchful eye of their trainer to demonstrate their skills. We extend our thanks to the staff and children of the centres for adapting to these changes.

The second significant change in the curriculum is the introduction of new core units on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, as well as cultural competence more generally. These are not only relevant in our multicultural community but have given us the opportunity to interface with Indigenous training providers and organisations.

These changes and adaptations have been integrated into our ongoing commitment to enabling migrants and refugees from around the world to reskill and enter the work force.

Our [aged care training program](#) continues to thrive with increasing numbers of students taking up the opportunity to become part of the much needed workforce caring for our elderly. The positive relationship that we have developed with large aged care facilities is testimony to the trust that they have in the quality of our training. Many students are taken into employment in these facilities once their placement is completed.

In 2014, we also began delivering training in [Certificate III and IV in Disability](#) in anticipation of the growth in demand for trained staff as a result of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. While numbers are still small, they are important and point to a rise in demand in the future.

With increasing student numbers it is often easy to overlook the significant amount of training, assessment and administration that is part of the smooth operation of New Futures Training. Our thanks are extended not only to all the training and assessing and compliance staff, but also to all the administration staff, from those on reception and intake right through to those who are processing files for storage and destruction. Without their efforts New Futures Training would not thrive and grow.

Acknowledgement of funding bodies:

New Futures Training acknowledges the availability of funding to students through the State Government’s Victorian Training Guarantee, which is of such enormous benefit not only to students, but to the childcare, aged care and disability sectors as well.



PROGRAMS FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

VICSEG has continued to deliver programs that welcome and connect families with their communities and provide links to services and information about parenting in Australia. Our playgroups, family mentoring programs, and youth support services have experienced significant growth across the northern and western suburbs of Melbourne.

Our Communities for Children programs in Hume and Melton continued to provide preventative and early intervention services to migrant and refugee families with children up to the age of 12, with funding support from the Department of Social Services.

Playgroups for Diverse Communities

In 2014, a total of 40 different playgroups operated in accessible community settings including neighbourhood houses, schools, leisure centres, child and family centres and community hubs. Each week, during school term an average of 1,000 parents and children participated from a range of cultural backgrounds including: Assyrian-Chaldean, Burmese, Indian, Iranian, Iraqi Shia, South Sudanese, Sri Lankan, Pakistani, Pacific Islander, Chinese, Turkish and Vietnamese communities.

We are grateful to the local Councils that continue to support our programs for families and children. Examples of new initiatives include two Iranian playgroups in Werribee and Sunshine, a Sri Lankan family violence support group in Whittlesea, a maternal and child health baby/toddler playgroup for Vietnamese mothers in St Albans and an expanding network of social support playgroups for vulnerable newly arrived families.

Many of our playgroups offer additional enrichment activities provided by specialist organisations such as The Song Room, a program which helps children and families develop literacy through the arts. West Side Circus also offered 8-week circus skills and physical development community engagement programs. Two new videos were produced this year which demonstrate how playgroups in diverse

communities actively encourage parents and grandparents to support children's bilingual language development through stories, songs and music.

The Mother and Child English Language Program delivered in partnership with NMIT in the City of Hume, is another example of a highly innovative application of the playgroup model. Preparatory work is underway to establish an additional eight new playgroups focussed on parent/child English language learning, supported by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Refugee Family Mentoring & Service Engagement Programs

The past year has seen an increase in the demand on the part of family services

advice to the Australian Psychological Association to develop culturally appropriate resources for a national children's mental health and well-being program. .

The family mentor teams were also engaged in a range of more local initiatives to support families and engage services with them. A partnership program with Maribyrnong Council was established to encourage better use of maternal and child health services by the Indian, Burmese and Vietnamese communities in Braybrook and Footscray. In Brimbank a support program for newly arrived Farsi speaking families was initiated with support from The Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust and the New Hope Foundation. A Horn of Africa mothers and daughters intergenerational program was introduced at Mackillop College in Werribee and in Melton a weekly African mothers and children's group was run at the new library, and two cross cultural playgroups were supported at Kurunjang Primary School and Caroline Springs Library. A cultural training session was also delivered to youth workers and local community services workers experiencing difficulty engaging with new and emerging communities



and community support networks for assistance to engage with recently settled families. A considerable part of our bicultural family mentors' role has been to support other community agencies to meet the needs of vulnerable families, whether they are refugees or asylum seekers. Some examples are: consultation with Murdoch Children's Research Institute to address the challenges experienced by migrant and refugee women during pregnancy and birth; practical assistance to Dental Health Victoria to trial culturally appropriate parent information resources; support to Co-Health to establish a mental health and wellbeing program for Burmese mothers; partnership with Victorian Parenting Research Centre to develop a state-wide program to help parents of babies and toddlers enhance their children's learning at home;

The cultural knowledge and community experience of the family mentors was used in a number of other cultural competence building activities. In Brimbank and Braybrook workshops were delivered to early childhood intervention practitioners on working with interpreters and bicultural workers. A further workshop explored understandings and cultural explanations of disability in diverse communities. Cross cultural training was also provided to Australian Red Cross caseworkers. In Hume a series of group information sessions were delivered to local agencies and schools interested in strategies to improve the delivery of culturally responsive services for refugee families. A seminar was also held to strengthen the capacity of the local service system to support women and children from migrant and refugee background experiencing family violence.

PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES

VICSEG has facilitated programs for young people of migrant and refugee backgrounds for more than 15 years. The primary focus of our youth work is towards more structured activities that encourage creative expression and provide mentoring and practical support to help young people remain actively engaged with sport, education and pathways that lead to vocational training and employment. Wherever possible this work with young people is integrated with the other programs we deliver to families and communities. A wonderful example of this holistic approach was the family excursion held at the Werribee Zoo during the Easter School holidays. It was attended by 250 adults, children and young people from the Melton and Wyndham South Sudanese Communities. Everyone had a great day.

Education & Pathways Support

The Melton Sudanese Student Engagement and Scholarship program has been a great success in its first year, with all 20 participants from five secondary schools achieving the goals they had set themselves regarding their schooling. In addition to the schools and students themselves, the program has involved youth work students from Victoria University as mentors, local agencies like Youth

Now, a number of Melton City Council services and the local South Sudanese community. Ten philanthropic trusts have contributed to the funding, along with contributions from state and local governments. A productive partnership! Preliminary work is underway to establish a similar program in Wyndham commencing term one 2015, using establishment funds provided by the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship.

Other programs to support students continuing at school or taking up pathways to training and employment include a soccer scholarship program for refugee students at the Mt Alexander Secondary College, in partnership with the Moonee Valley School Focussed Youth Service; a partnership with Collingwood Football Club and Headspace, supported by the Inner North Community Foundation that provides pathways to employment and career opportunities within the sporting industry; a program offering individual and class room support at the Braybrook Secondary College to assist refugee students through their transition from the Western English Language School into mainstream secondary school.

Youth Justice

VICSEG supports young people in the youth justice system to remain connected with their family, faith and community. As part of a Youth Justice Community Social Services consortium headed by Jesuit Social Services, our youth team provides intense casework support to young Muslim men of African background whilst in youth custody and on parole. This includes regular visits to the youth custody centres, support to families, assistance accessing housing, education and/ or employment, drug and alcohol treatment, living skills and any other supports required.

In addition to this individual support work, Youth Justice community education workshops were again held this year, this time in Melton. The youth team also helped plan and present a legal aid/sexual legislation forum in partnership with the Salvation Army. The purpose of the forum was to educate workers, community leaders and university students on the legal rights for young people, age of consent and the legal implications of sexting.

Community Arts

The arts are an excellent medium for encouraging cross-cultural communication among young people. A number of multimedia projects were undertaken by the youth team. Highlights include Krinkle Max funded by the Inner North Community Foundation which brought together a diverse group of young people. The project was supported by Youth Worx and resulted in an exhibition of photographs, video and audio recordings that provide an insight into how young refugees see the world.

During Reconciliation Week our youth team also co-sponsored the XKultural Fusion Youth Art Exhibition at the Blak Dot Gallery in Brunswick showcasing the work of twelve teenagers from diverse cultural and Indigenous backgrounds. Another initiative undertaken with Moreland Youth Services was a cyber-safety program for young refugee background people. It was designed to promote personal safety when on-line. The participants created a mural, which has become a permanent fixture at the Oxygen Youth Centre.





NEW FUTURES FAMILY DAY CARE



CULTURAL COMPETENCE TRAINING

Culturally Competent Practice with Vulnerable Families is an interactive training program for professionals working with families, children and young people. Delivered by a lead trainer with guest speakers from diverse cultural, religious and language groups, this program is focussed on building awareness, knowledge and personal confidence in responding to the service needs of vulnerable families from culturally diverse communities.

The training package was designed in response to an extensive training needs analysis that VICSEG undertook with child and family services practitioners in the north and west of Melbourne in 2012/13. The framework for the package was developed by leading cross-cultural consulting agency Diverse Werks and launched at last year's AGM. Since its roll out in May, more than 300 professionals have undertaken the two day training course, with very positive feedback.

Considerable resources have been allocated towards the evaluation of each training session and the ongoing review, development and customisation of content and training materials VICSEG is working closely with our industry partner, The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare to develop a marketing and communication strategy for 2015.

Information about upcoming training sessions is available on the VICSEG website.

In its second year of operation New Futures Family Day Care has expanded dramatically. From a service of nine educators caring for 47 children, it has grown to 41 educators and 234 children – on track to achieve the service licence of 60 educators by July 1st 2015. Twelve educators from the west joined us midyear, when Maribyrnong Council withdrew from providing Family Day Care.

The service is a very multicultural one, with educators and service staff from almost 20 different backgrounds. This diversity reflects the purposes for which the New Futures FDC was established: to model high quality, culturally responsive early education and care to recently-settled migrant and refugee families and to provide a career option for our New Futures Training graduates. Five educators were nominated by their families and recognised for their work in the spring edition of JIGSAW, The National Family Day Care publication.

As a not for profit service, New Futures FDC has to keep administrative fees low for educators/ parents and be able to support access to training, professional development, networking and other activities at no additional cost. Monthly network activities are organized out of the VICSEG New Futures regional centres and all educators are able to access free first aid, asthma and anaphylaxis sessions at New Futures Training as required.

During Children's Week, educators, staff, parents and children in each of the four service locations: Werribee, Epping, Braybrook and Coburg, joined together in local parks for games and sausage sizzles to meet as a group and celebrate New Futures FDC. It was also a chance to discuss any issues and ideas that could feed into planning for 2015.



Executive Director John Zika

FINANCE

Ralph Gray
Finance Manager
Harinder Mann
Accountant
Ellen Dimitrijevic
Senior Bookkeeper
Chanaka Rupasinghe
Accounts Officer
Lumina Fernando
Payroll Officer

HUMAN RESOURCES & COMMUNICATIONS

Joe Pennisi
Human Resources Manager
Angela Donato
HR Administrative Assistant
Kate Sandford
Special Projects Manager
Kimalee Reid
Communications Manager
Sheena Colquhoun
Resource & Design
Rabia Ali
Public Relations

FACILITIES & MAINTENANCE

Michael Rankin
Unit Manager
Gopal Kumar Shah Bhupinder Singh
Mohamed Dualle Manam De Silva

NEW FUTURES TRAINING MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION

Maree Raftis
General Manager
Caspar Zika
Operations Manager
Gen Pranatio
Assistant Operations Manager
Michelle Lynn
Manager: Braybrook Campus
Shailja Sharma
Manager: Epping Campus
Surajika De Silva
Aged Care Coordinator

COMPLIANCE

Pamela Edwards
Compliance Manager
Sara Jahanshiri
Klaudia Krysztofek
Fawad Usmani
Niranthary (Nira) Mahendra

IT & STUDENT DATA BASE

Jaya Panthi
Electronic Records Manager
Naima Hussein
Student Data Base Coordinator

STUDENT WELFARE & SUPPORT

Simran Udas
Student Welfare Coordinator
Bandana Thapa
Harinder Kaur
Sajana Shrestha

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT & MANAGEMENT

Sally Beaumont
Coordinator, Curriculum & Teaching Quality
Renee Jacobson
Curriculum Developer
Kiran Shah
Education Program Administrator

TRAINING AND ASSESSING

Ana Paula Bilezikjian
Nermine Boulos
Elham Jahanshiri
Hanadi Ahmed
Lina Slape
Muryam Ajmal
Monica Chai Fitzpatrick
Riccarda Zammit
Lara Nabbout
Judith Baltus
Anusha Jayasinghe
Sanela Colo
Debby Roberts
Sabrina Mohideen
Cara McCumber
Fritzie Marmita Vina
Aditi Ghosh
Janine Iannello
Asma Mohamed
Karen Buot
Asra Shah Khan
Lee Tan
Isabella (Bella) Furnari
Sovannara Suth
Mohammad Mehdi Salaran
Stella Jose
Joe Clancy
Carolyn Darcy
James O'Brien
Molly Bryson
Jennifer Megan Miller
Milos Zika
Trudi Morris

STUDENT ADMINISTRATION SERVICES

Andrew Slape
Team Leader
Christina Rangan
Morwynne Carlow
Manori Perera
Wendy Hickling
Ana Rico Castaneda
Pushpa Dolamullage
Imola Giusti
Thushari Jayasekera
Nicole Weening
Ibrahim Shah Khan
Jayanti Gupta
Brandon Lynn
Arlene Advincula
Jayani Jayasuriya
Mandeep Kaur
Jagjit Singh
Ruqiyah Hussein
Dilrukshi Balasuriya
Anna Lee Priovolous
Livi Clancy
Lina Nabbout
Parveen Usmani
Maha Matak
Peter Giliana
Babita Chhibber

STUDENT RECORDS

Gyanendra Thapa
Team Leader
Buddhak Baniya
Davinder (Prince) Nandha

OCCASIONAL CHILDCARE CENTRES

Coordination:
Shiralee Ayres
Nagwa Boles
Chandeepti Mukat
Rebekah Grundy

Staff:

Ahlam Saad
Natalee Ayres
Ritu Chopra
Komal Preet Kaur
Filiz Domenz
Rania Hamoui
Mika Yamasaki

NEW FUTURES FAMILY DAY CARE SERVICE

Pola Nadas
Program Manager
Elizabeth Mein
Carolyn Affleck
Zina Salman
Lulu De Rose
Hong Dinh
Victoria Jones
Cam Van Dao
Melissa Taranto

VICSEG COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Janet Elefsiniotis
Programs Manager
Judith Gray
Partnership & Service Development
Colleen Turner
Programs Coordinator (West)
Jacqueline McWilliam
Programs Coordinator (Inner West)
Suzy Pinchen
Programs Coordinator (North)
Jeanette Hourani
Playgroups Coordinator (North)
Surmeli Aydogan
Playgroups Coordinator (West)
Karen Diacono
Wyndham Programs Administrator
Abraham Jongroor
Melton Programs Coordinator
Uzay Ceylan
Special Programs
Ebony Simon
Office Coordinator
Sayanti Bhatta
Bi-Cultural Playgroup Facilitator
Karen Thomson
Wyndham Programs Coordinator (res)
Kathryn Gor
Cross Cultural Trainer
Nina Springle
Cross Cultural Trainer

FAMILY MENTORS

Anyieth Maan
Maria Toma
Chamindri Karunarathne
Maria Tuua
Duum Kunjok
Rehab Ayoubi
Durba Dhiman
Sheher Kurucu
Fatemeh Sobhani
Thi Diem Nguyen
Junthip (Waan) Tardif
Masoomah Jahanbakhsh

PLAYGROUP LEADERS & STAFF

Amandeep Amandeep
Shabnam Daliri
Ashay Baget
Suzan Yaman
Aylin Aras-Yardakul
Tiari Paulo
Harjinder Kaur Kamboj
Wen Ting Sun
Isha Mohammed
Za Tuah Ngur
Jocelyn Clare
Ninweh Younan
Monica Kanbang
Jacklin Shamoon
Bahire Karatas
Shameran Benyamin
Bushra Shamoon
Wadad Hassoun
Evelina Levae
Ghada Ibrahim
Grace Elikana
Songul Keles
Linda Younan
Marini Peiris
Nebiat Ogbamicael
Aysel Kilinc
Nhung Nguyen
Jennie Bakes
Salma Toma
Ni Can Van Uk

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Sue Paten
Team Leader
Yousif Mohamed
Youth Community Development
Mulugeta Abebe
Youth Justice Caseworker
Paula Forrester
Youth Projects Worker
Peter Makuei
Youth Projects Worker



“IN RECOGNITION OF THE QUALITY OF THE NOMINATIONS RECEIVED THIS YEAR, I WOULD LIKE TO CONFER AN ADDITIONAL AWARD TO AN INITIATIVE WHICH EXTENDS A WELCOMING HAND AND MUCH-NEEDED SUPPORT TO SOME OF THE MOST MARGINALISED PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY.”

“THESE ARE PEOPLE WHO FACE ALL THE SAME CHALLENGES WE DO WHEN RAISING OUR CHILDREN, BUT WITH THE ADDED STRAIN OF LIMITED INCOME, MINIMAL ENGLISH, PHYSICAL ISOLATION AND VERY OFTEN PSYCHOLOGICAL SCARRING.”

“THIS IS A PROGRAM THAT SIMPLIFIES THE OFTEN-COMPLICATED PROCESS THAT PARENTS GO THROUGH WHEN SEEKING REFERRALS TO SPECIALISED SERVICES FOR THEIR CHILDREN OR PICKING THEIR WAY THROUGH THE RANGE OF RESOURCES THAT ARE ALWAYS OUT THERE – BUT OFTEN SO HARD FOR SOME TO ACCESS.”

“THIS IS A PROGRAM THAT UNITES MANY AGENCIES AND DEMONSTRATES HOW MUCH CAN BE ACHIEVED WHEN DEDICATED GROUPS WORK EFFECTIVELY IN COLLABORATION.”

“IT IS FOR THESE REASONS THAT I’M DELIGHTED TO PRESENT THIS YEAR’S MINISTER’S AWARD TO VICSEG NEW FUTURES FOR THE WYNDHAM REFUGEE FAMILY RESOURCE AND MENTORING PROGRAM.”



- The Hon. Wendy Lovell MLC, Minister for Children & Early Childhood Development, on presenting the Minister’s Special Recognition Award to VICSEG New Futures for the Wyndham Refugee Family Resource and Mentoring Program at the Early Years Awards 2014



Head Office & Training Centre

11 Munro Street
Coburg VIC 3058
Australia

Ph: +61 3 9383 2533
Fax: +61 3 9383 2711

VICSEG Programs

2/398 Sydney Road
Coburg VIC 3058
Australia

Ph: +61 3 9353 5811
Fax: +61 3 9354 2313

Werribee Office & Training Centre

3 & 4 Watton Street
Werribee VIC 3030
Australia

Ph: +61 3 8754 0500
Fax: +61 3 8742 6231

Epping Office & Training Centre

1E/ 560 High Street
Epping VIC 3076
Australia

Ph: +61 3 8401 6700
Fax: +61 3 8401 6799

Braybrook Office & Training Centre

9 & 10/ 6-12 South Road
Braybrook VIC 3019
Australia

Ph: +61 3 8398 5000
Fax: +61 3 8398 5099

