

# Case study: Sharing stories of inclusion

## National Volunteer Week Celebration

**On Friday 19 May 2023, Volunteer West (a division of Australian Multicultural Community Services) and Yarraville Community Centre came together to mark National Volunteer Week with a simple yet meaningful celebration – a thank you lunch recognising the incredible work of their volunteers.**

On the day, over 40 staff and volunteers from both organisations were in attendance and were treated to a guest speaker from the local Footscray State Emergency Services Unit as well as an amazing lunch.

### **Background**

In the months prior to the event, Volunteer West had connected with Yarraville Community Centre during one of our Volunteer Engagement Network meetings. The community centre has a lot of newly arrived migrants participate in their programs, many of whom go onto volunteer at the centre. Their volunteer manager spoke of the need for additional support in her role and wanted some suggestions on how she could better recognise all the great work completed by her volunteers. We suggested putting on a lunch as many of their volunteers do a lot of cooking at the centre, and a lunch would be a nice way to return the favour. As National Volunteer Week was only two months away, we thought that would be an ideal time to host the event and we offered to support Yarraville Community Centre in their efforts.

Yarraville Community Centre agreed to host the event and set up the space for the lunch, while Volunteer West took care of the catering, speakers, and presentation.

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### **The Event's Success**

The event kicked off with speakers from each organisation: the CEO of Yarraville Community Centre and the Manager of Volunteer Programs at Australian Multicultural Community Services. Both expressed their gratitude for the contributions made by their volunteers and they took the time to highlight the work of a couple of outstanding volunteers who had contributed a considerable amount of hours over the past 12 months.

Following those two speakers was a volunteer at the local Footscray State Emergency Services Unit with decades of experience serving her community. She shared with the audience her personal journey as a volunteer, and what her experiences were like at the State Emergency Services. Through these stories she highlighted the importance of diversity in volunteering and how volunteer organisations should strive to be representative of their communities. It left a strong impression on the audience, and she rounded out her speech in praise of the profound impact volunteers have on their community.

Before lunch was served a photo montage presentation was played for all those in attendance. It captured moments over the past 12 months of volunteers engaging with the community and thanked them for all their efforts. It brought smiles all around and had an added impact on the volunteers, some of whom didn't speak English as a first language. At times they found it hard to stay engaged during the speeches but when they saw photos of themselves being recognised for their achievements their eyes lit up.

Then it was time for lunch. A delicious spread of Syrian food was served buffet style to everyone. It gave volunteers and staff alike the opportunity to get up out of their seats, mingle, and share their experiences of volunteering with one another. The environment was very relaxed and informal, and the way Yarraville Community Centre had arranged the room allowed the conversations to flow freely.

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### **Fostering Stronger Connections**

The event was a great success and Volunteer West and Yarraville Community Centre were extremely proud of their efforts along with the contribution of their volunteers. Both organisations found that the lunch was a great way to recognise their volunteers, especially the newly arrived migrants among them who may not have been aware of their impact in the community.

The collaboration between the organisations was a very productive one too. It has led to Volunteer West participating in some outreach at a Yarraville Community Centre festival in June and both organisations look forward to working together on events in the future.

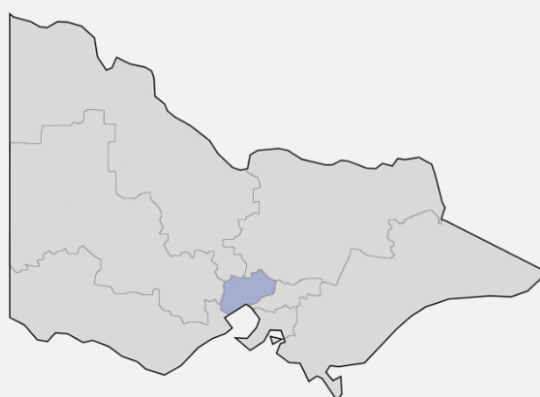
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**Author:** Volunteer West

**Consortium region:** North West Metro

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<https://www.volunteeringvictoria.org.au/leading-volunteers/vma-2022-2026/>



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*Volunteering Victoria acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.*