



**ETHNIC COUNCIL
OF SHEPPARTON AND DISTRICT Inc.**

Reg. No. A6321

158 Welsford St
Shepparton 3630
5831 2395

<https://ethniccouncilshepparton.com.au/>

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OCTOBER NEWSLETTER

Every community stood tall during outbreak



For most of us the COVID-19 outbreak has passed and finally our lives are returning to whatever normal looks like; however, for many in our community the pain continues, and the memory will be of a loved one, hospitalised and placed on a ventilator in the ICU of a remote Melbourne hospital. Families unable to visit in

what are truly tragic and distressing circumstances.

Our multicultural community members will need all our support and friendship over the coming months to help them overcome a burden they carry purely by chance. The medicos say the virus does not discriminate, which is cold comfort to a community almost exclusively impacted. Shepparton has a unique demographic profile for a provincial Australian city and our cultural diversity is often the feature by which we are known.

In recent weeks all parts of our community have been impacted and tested by COVID and they have responded as we would expect. It has been unprecedented for a regional city to have almost a third of its population suddenly forced into mandatory isolation with little or no time to plan for groceries and household items.

Food supply was an immediate problem and groups such as Foodshare, GV Cares, Red Cross and People Helping People stepped up, supported by hundreds of volunteers, to ensure food was provided to those most in need. In some communities there was anxiety about emergency food being culturally appropriate, which in the main it was, but nevertheless concerned people out of their own pockets purchased halal food to be transported to Shepparton and distributed among impacted families.

ETHNIC COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Applications are now available for community members to become members of the Ethnic Council. Members get the opportunity to influence the strategic direction of the Ethnic Council, can nominate to become a Board Member and vote for membership of the Board.

For an application form please contact Rhonda on 5831 2395 or info@ethniccouncil.com.au

The Shepparton outbreak was a tale of two pandemic impacts — the first affecting food supply across our community and the second a medical incident almost 100 per cent impacting our multicultural community. While various messaging may have been confusing in the mainstream community it was doubly so in the multicultural one, where poor English skills and an initial lack of translated materials created issues around accessing relief, financial support, testing requirements and understanding the tier structures and the appropriate response.

A lesson for the future is that someone's language skills should not exclude them from important information and the opportunity to find and access the levels of support and assistance that many in the mainstream would take for granted.

The level of volunteerism in our multicultural communities was outstanding. People who themselves were isolating used existing social media channels to directly inform their communities with the latest available information, they translated material into first languages and were a valuable community resource — in many cases becoming the link between communities and responding pandemic authorities. In one instance volunteers using scripts prepared by the state Department of Health translated material into 10 different languages overnight and distributed the audio files across their respective communities.

Family groups and neighbours supported those isolating with food supply and Point of Difference Studio became a major referral point for multicultural communities seeking support, whether it be food or information.

In many ways we owe those community members a debt of gratitude because their compliance with isolation rules, coming forward for testing and supporting one another significantly helped the contact tracers track down and contain this outbreak.

Ethnic Council Membership

Ethnic Council President Maria Brown-Shepherd is encouraging people to join the Ethnic Council and become members. Due to Covid restrictions the Annual General Meeting has been rescheduled to late November with the approval of Consumer Affairs Victoria.

“The deferral of the Annual General Meeting from its usual September time spot provides an opportunity for current Members to renew their Memberships and also allows new Members to be considered” said Mrs Brown-Shepherd. Maria added that “Membership falls into two categories, the first being a person endorsed by their community and the second is an individual with skills of benefit to the Ethnic Council”.

The Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District Inc. is a peak body whose mission is to promote and represent the social, cultural, and economic well-being of ethnic communities in the Goulburn Valley Region through the provision of quality and innovative settlement, refugee support, community development and information and advocacy services.



The Ethnic Council acknowledges the traditional owners of the land where we deliver our services and their continuing connection to Country and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to the elders both past, and present and emerging.



The Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA) is working with the Federal Government and other organisations to administer the CALD COVID-19 Health Small Grants Fund. This Fund will help multicultural community groups to lead grassroots communication activities around COVID-19 and the vaccination rollout, targeting CALD communities.

This is funded by the Federal Department of Health and will be implemented in collaboration with The Settlement Council of Australia, Migration Council Australia, and The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network. The Fund is to ensure that all Australians, including those from CALD backgrounds, have access to information on the COVID-19 vaccination. Together we need to combat COVID-19 in Australia. You can make a difference by providing accurate and useful information in your communities.

The CALD COVID-19 Health Small Grants Fund

FECCA will administer grants of \$2500, \$3500 or \$5000 to groups or organisations to fund short-term, one-off, communication and outreach projects that aim to achieve the following objectives:

- Address barriers to accessing information on COVID-19 and the vaccination program
- Provide the opportunity for communities to identify and respond to issues and concerns surrounding COVID-19 and the vaccination program
- Provide accurate and culturally relevant information on the COVID-19 Vaccination Program
- Foster community involvement and participation
- Encourage partnerships among community organisations

Applications are open now!

FECCA will accept applications until the end of January 2022. All projects must be completed by 31 March 2022.

FECCA is the peak, national body representing Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

FECCA's role is to advocate and promote issues on behalf of its constituency to government, business and the broader community.

FECCA strives to ensure that the needs and aspirations of Australians from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are given proper recognition in public policy.

We work to promote fairness and responsiveness to our constituency in the delivery and design of government policies and programs.

We promote multiculturalism as a core value that defines what it means to be Australian in the 21st century.

ECCV leading coordinated regional emergency management response



The Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) is working with the Victorian Multicultural Commission and regional Ethnic Councils and peak bodies to ensure the emergency response in regional areas effectively engages with local migrant and refugee communities.

The collaboration follows the recent COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown in Shepparton, where The Ethnic Council of Shepparton was brought in to work with the Incident Management Team and Local Public Health Unit to support local communities, which provided greater access to those in need and the necessary support services to enable them to understand and adhere to public health directions.

Ethnic Councils and key multicultural organisations in Geelong, Ballarat and Gippsland have since been working with Victoria Multicultural Commission and the State Government during the recent outbreaks in their region and hope to use the Shepparton experience to develop a consistent response model.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of engaging the community quickly and effectively, and tailoring communications and engagement strategies to the specific needs, including through trusted community leaders, influencers and community and faith-based organisations and service providers.

This initiative builds on ECCV's Multicultural Emergency Management Project, which is being delivered in partnership with VCOSS and the Department of Health. The Project supports emergency preparedness and resilience among migrant and refugee communities, with a focus on the current COVID-19 pandemic.

This project is supporting and strengthening the work of migrant and refugee community leaders, via the delivery of Masterclass training and building meaningful community partnerships with Emergency Services.

Embedding the engagement of the multicultural sector within the regional local emergency management response and strengthening and supporting the vital work of community leaders will deliver better outcomes for all and mitigate the risks considerably; not only in a pandemic context but also in any emergency management response such as floods, bushfires and any other natural disaster