



MARCH NEWSLETTER

HARVEST LABOUR

The annual fruit harvest is in full swing and labour shortages are a significant problem. Notwithstanding the urgency of getting fruit picked there is still a requirement for all seasonal labour to be double vaccinated to be able to work on farms or in packing sheds.

The Ethnic Council is using some state government funding from the Vaccine Ambassador Program to form a partnership with Fruit Growers Victoria to promote vaccination on orchards and in packing sheds. Goulburn Valley Health have committed to Jabba the Bus visiting orchards and packing sheds over the course of the season.

FECCA 2022: ADVANCING MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA

FECCA 2022: Advancing Multicultural Australia is the premier conference on multiculturalism, diversity & inclusion, and migration. The conference will host multicultural communities, policy makers, service providers, academics and many more, over two big days of interesting presentations, speakers and topics.

Co-hosted by The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA), and the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV). The conference was scheduled for March but Covid concerns forced the postponement to June 16 & 17. Information about the conference program and registration can be accessed at <https://www.fecca2022.org.au/>

COVID RESTRICTIONS EASING WILL CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FRIENDSHIP CAFÉ PROGRAM

As restrictions continue to ease the Ethnic Council is planning the transition of programs and services from an online medium to more face to face events.

This will particularly help the Friendship Café program a popular series of events designed for women who may be experiencing social isolation.

The Friendship Café concept is very simple. An organisation agrees to host the event and provide a guest speaker. Pre Covid, events were held all over Shepparton and proved to be very popular with new arrival women.

If you are interested in being part of the Friendship Café program please contact Aleena Qazikhil on 58312395

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 58312395 or info@ethniccouncil.com.au

‘Where is the humanity?’ Fears for Ukraine



(Source: Shepparton News)

Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District president Maria Brown-Shepherd has helped welcome and settle refugees from war-torn countries, but she didn't expect to be facing a crisis in her father's homeland of Ukraine.

Aleski and Halina Czerkaskyj fled Ukraine after World War II and settled in Australia in 1949.

The family came from Lutsk and Lviv near the Polish border, cities that have been bombarded by invading Russian forces in recent days.

"I don't think people realise how bad things are, people are fearful," she said.

"The last message we got they were enduring air raids and they were all in bomb shelters.

"Where is the humanity, people don't want war, it is a tragedy."

Mr Czerkaskyj was a founding member of the Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District.

He worked as a labourer initially after arriving, despite having studied at the Polish University as an agronomist, but eventually worked in agricultural science, including development of fruit varieties.

"My parents came out in 1949 to get away from the hardship, unless you have been through it you can't really understand," Ms Brown-Shepherd said.

The family still cherishes Ukrainian tradition, especially at Easter and Christmas, and Ms Brown-Shepherd hung a Ukrainian flag on her front gate in solidarity when Russia launched attacks across the country.

"As kids we got to know a lot of families in Ukraine," she said.

"We never thought what is happening at the moment could happen, we were brought up not to be racists, regardless of religion, culture of country of origin.

“Dad always emphasised that.”

Ms Brown-Shepherd had planned to visit Ukraine with her sisters to trace their father’s roots and his journey as a refugee through Austria and eventually Australia.

The pandemic intervened and now they don’t know when, or if, it will be possible to visit Ukraine.

Despite an insensitive billboard appearing outside a Shepparton hospitality venue, Ms Brown-Shepherd said the sense is that the people of Ukraine have overwhelming support.

“Ukraine should get more help from the world, my concern is the children, what future do they have?”

Improving access to RATs for Shepparton’s multicultural communities

By [Anna McGuinness](#)



Improving access: Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District, St Paul’s African House and Shepparton Central Rotary Club representatives from left to right, Susan Johnston, Chris Parnell, Kate Radevski, Chris Hazelman, David Hardiment, Sam Atukorala and Les Mitchell. Photo by Anna McGuinness

Free rapid antigen tests and hand sanitiser will be distributed to vulnerable members of Shepparton’s multicultural communities to address barriers to access.

About 1500 rapid antigen tests have been provided by the Victorian Health Department through the Goulburn Valley Public Health Unit to local multicultural organisations.

“For a lot of people in multicultural communities their language prevents them from getting the level of information they need,” Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District manager Chris Hazelman said.

“Our principle is that someone’s language skills shouldn’t prevent them from getting access to both information and services most of us take for granted.”

He said the RATs would be distributed through community groups, and the Ethnic Council would continue to inform and connect to communities through existing communication channels in their language.

St Paul’s African House partnerships and programs manager Kate Radevski said barriers for accessing RATs included supply and cost.

“For a number of families it’s not uncommon to have six people and upwards in the house — a box of tests comes in five so it doesn’t go very far in larger households,” she said.

“The RATs will be available in places people feel safe and where they can access language support as well.

“If you’re going to purchase one from a chemist the chances of someone speaking your language may be slim.”

Ethnic Council Shepparton COVID consortium co-ordinator Susan Johnston agreed the price of RATs was too high for a family to absorb and said lack of access may have led to more transmission of COVID-19.

“It’s not like you just have to do it once a month, for a lot of people it was doing it regularly,” she said.

“Because of reluctance of the cost — they might have had a tickle in their throat, thought it was nothing and went about their business, and meanwhile they were contagious at that time.”

The Ethnic Council has also been going out into community hubs with a translator to show people how to use the RATs.

A large donation of 2000 hand sanitiser bottles came from a personal connection of the Ethnic Council’s strategic engagement co-ordinator Sam Atukorala.

Mr Atukorala said the donation came “unasked” for, from Tony and Sharon Rechtman of the Total Beauty Network, and would be distributed by Shepparton Central Rotary Club to multicultural groups, schools and places of worship.



Purpose

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.

Values

The Ethnic Council acts with the following values:

- * Respect for Diversity
- * Valuing Equality
- * Acting with Integrity
- * Acting Sustainably
- * Striving for Excellence
- * Harmony and Unity
- * Leadership

Vision

A community for all communities



The Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land where we deliver our services and we pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.