

CALD Community Connections

Newsletter



February 2010

Background

Upcoming Events:

- Project Launch
- Bi Cultural Training
- Community Workshops

Australia is an extremely diverse country with 30% of people identifying as having a CALD background. In Tasmania the last census showed that 46,000 people were born overseas, coming from more than 50 countries and speaking over 85 languages.

Migrants and refugees face many settlement issues and challenges, e.g., learning a new language, finding employment and housing, accessing services, stress in fitting into a new culture etc. These issues and challenges are compounded by the physical, emotional and psychological impacts of torture and trauma.

In the last decade, over 110,000 refugees and migrants suffering trauma have come to Australia. In the 3 years to Oct. 2008 over 800 humanitarian entrants arrived in Tasmania. Many have suffered severe losses and multiple traumatic events. Refugees especially have significant risk factors for mental health problems, and while there is little data available, it is thought that suicide rates as well as mental health problems amongst refugees are higher than the general Australian population.



CALD Community Connections

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The two year 'CALD Community Connections' project has been developed by the Phoenix Centre, the Tasmanian member of the Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma located within the Migrant Resource Centre (Southern Tas) Inc.

It will deliver workshops, information packages and activities which aim to reduce stigma associated with mental illness, to reduce suicide risk and increase capacity to respond to suicide crises within selected CALD communities in Hobart and Launceston.

To do this the project will:

- Train and support bicultural community trainers to work with adults and young people from selected CALD communities in Hobart

(Farsi, Amharic and Mandarin speaking communities) and Launceston (Sierra Leone and Liberian and Mizo speaking community who are refugees from Myanmar) and CALD individuals.

- Deepen relationships with service providers to strengthen their understanding of the needs of the CALD community and awareness of referral pathways.
- Work in partnership with other organisations and service providers to achieve its objectives.

The Phoenix Centre gratefully acknowledges the funding provided under the Australian Government National Suicide Prevention Program.

Key Issues

Service Providers

- CALD consumers under-utilise GP's and mental health services
- that there is under-diagnosing of trauma issues
- a lack of culturally appropriate mental health assessment tools
- greater emphasis on medication than counseling or psychotherapy

CALD Consumers

- The lack of information about services, e.g., "I don't understand as nothing is explained"
- Inadequacy of interpreter services re mental health issues, e.g., "I requested an interpreter and she couldn't translate it to me so she made it up"
- Interpreter service themselves have perceived that health/medical services response is too often "a quick fix, they give you a tablet instead of address the whole issue of you as a person."

Stigma is a key issue stopping CALD consumers accessing services, e.g., "We come from cultures and countries where if you have a mental illness you end up being locked up and the keys thrown away."

Mental health providers and consumers face access barriers to services and practitioners need knowledge, information and competence to ensure culturally appropriate services and programs that take into account diverse cultural beliefs about mental health and suicide. We do not yet have a culturally competent mental health workforce.

Due to our high level of cultural diversity and the experiences of trauma of refugees and migrants, we need;

- Specialized mental health services that recognize, understand and respond to the needs of CALD communities and individuals
- culturally competent mainstream service providers
- CALD communities and individuals who are informed, knowledgeable and confident to access mental health services.

It is in response to these needs that the Phoenix Centre developed this project. We will work together with CALD communities, and community based and government service providers to strengthen our capacity to offer culturally responsive and appropriate mental health services.



“ Practitioners need knowledge, information and competence to ensure culturally appropriate services”



Steering Committee

Name	Organisation
Cedric Manen	General Manager, MRC South
Janette Papps	Suicide Prevention Strategy Officer Mental Health Services Department of Health and Human Services
Michelle Swallow	Executive Officer, Mental Health Council of Tasmania
Connie Alomes	Stand by Coordinator, Lifeline
Dr. Martin Harris	Lecturer in Rural Health University Department of Rural Health, Tasmania University of Tasmania
Jennifer Houston	General Manager, MRC North
Natalie Casten	Manager, Italian Day Centre
Wayne Frost	Area Co-ordinator for North and West Tasmania Aspire

Project Activities

Training - Bicultural Community Trainers & Community Participants

On February 11 and 12, nine members of CALD communities will be trained as bicultural community trainers. The training they receive will enable them to run workshops with members of their communities to reduce stigma associated with mental illness and to increase awareness of suicide prevention and intervention strategies. The training the bicultural community trainers will receive will be delivered by our 'expert trainers' - Renée Valentino and Marianne Potma from the MRC (South) and Mario Amaya-Bonilla from Aspire. Renée, Marianne and Mario were trained by Multi-cultural Mental Health Australia, using their *Stepping Out of the Shadows: Reducing Stigma in Multicultural Communities* training package, to enable them to train the bicultural community trainers. Connie Alomes and Steve Barker from Lifeline Tasmania will join the training to deliver a component on responding to suicide.

Our bicultural community trainers are:

Hobart **Mandarin Speaking** - Helen Quian and Maggie Chung
Amharic Speaking - Ibrahaim Sissay Ayele and Tsige Kiflay
Farsi Speaking - Mohsen Borazjani and Sima Niakansafy

Launceston **Myanmar – Kachin-** Sui Hlei Par
Sierra Leone - Amira Reindorf
Sudan - John Lenga

In the next newsletter our bicultural trainers will tell you about themselves and why they wanted to be part of this project.



Working with Service Providers

The project will initiate activities and participate with other service providers in running a range of activities promoting mental health well being to CALD young people, women and men.

On the drawing board at the moment are;

- Introducing the project and its purpose to school and college personnel
- liaising with the 'Pulse Youth Centre' Glenorchy to share information, discuss issues and identify and follow-up young people at risk
- supporting the 'MY (Multi-cultural Youth) Schools Voice Group's monthly forum, linking in with the Youth Network of Tasmania to run discussions and activities, and next summer we will run camps for CALD youth.

A significant part of our work will be supporting service providers to improve our capacity to respond to CALD clients, e.g., we will work with the Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council of Tasmania in holding workshops for government and non-government service providers in this sector.

Project Staff



Dr Gillian Long

My name is Gillian Long and I have been the manager of the Phoenix Centre since 2008. I joined the Phoenix Centre after completing a PhD in Psychology and being involved in a range of research projects at the University of Tasmania. I'm enjoying working in a multicultural environment and appreciate the opportunity to learn and share information about Tasmania's CALD communities, as well as seeing the positive impact we have on clients. Addressing the mental health needs of CALD communities is a key concern for me and I am committed to ensuring Tasmania's CALD communities have improved access to culturally appropriate mental health care.

Lynn Lee

My name is Lynn Lee and I am a Project Coordinator and Counsellor/ Advocate at the Phoenix Centre. I have Masters degrees in Education and in Counselling. As well as extensive experience with development, women's and community sector organisations in Asia and Australia, I have worked for the United Nations (UN) in Cambodia as a Country Program Manager, for the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and Policy Advocacy and Gender Adviser for the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), and program evaluator for the UN Development Program (UNDP) in Nepal. Most recently I have worked with the equity section in Skills Tasmania.



Marianne Potma

Hello, my name is Marianne Potma. I emigrated to Australia with my family as a child from the Netherlands. I have worked at the Migrant Resource Centre for 14 years primarily in aged care, where I manage a range of programs covering direct in-home care, systemic advocacy, training and community development. My background is in education, particularly adult and vocational education. This has helped me to bring together a holistic approach towards promoting and providing community and culturally inclusive services for older migrants and refugees.





Renée Valentino

My name is Renée Valentino. I am a counsellor and project officer at the Phoenix Centre in Hobart. I have been working as a mental health worker for over six years, in Tasmania and in the United States of America. While living in the USA, I worked with many people of African-American and Latin-American heritage. I became very interested in sharing and learning cross-culturally. I am a registered music therapist and provisional psychologist, and in my work I combine playing instruments, writing songs and analysing lyrics as well as talking as part of the healing process.

Ute Gonsior

My name is Ute Gonsior. I am a Project Officer at the Phoenix Centre in Hobart for the CALD Communities Connections Project and for the Families in Cultural Transition Program. For the past 15 years I have lived in many different countries and in cultures very different from my own. As a development worker I worked with communities in Africa, particularly Ethiopia, Chad, Mozambique and Niger, and with Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia. Being a migrant to Australia myself I am very aware of the difficulties and challenges of settling in a foreign country.



Darisha McKnight

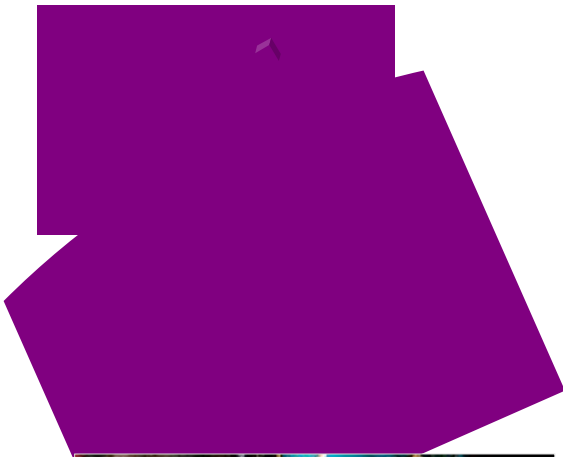
My name is Darisha McKnight. I'm based in the Launceston office of the Phoenix Centre which is located in the Migrant Resource Centre (Northern Tas) Inc. I am a project officer for the Suicide Prevention Project and the Phoenix Centre's Early Intervention Project. I am also a Counsellor/ Advocate for clients in the North of the state. I have a degree in Social Work and I enjoy working with all people and strongly believe that respect, empathy and empowerment are the key to healthy relationships and successful interventions.



Mario Amaya– Bonilla

My name is Mario Amaya-Bonilla. I am a Rehabilitation & Support Worker at Aspire in Launceston. In my work Rehabilitation means to increase an individual's valued role, satisfaction and success in an environment of his or her choice, such as employment or learning, despite the presence of mental disorders. As a Social Worker I aim to empower individuals and communities, especially those most disadvantaged by socio-economic and cultural exclusion, to access the tools for their own health maintenance, with the least amount of professional intervention.





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What is the Phoenix Centre?

The Phoenix Centre provides support for adults and children from any country who have fled persecution, torture and war-related trauma to find safety in Australia.

The Phoenix Centre is the Tasmanian member of the Forum of Australia Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (FASSTT), a national peak body which seeks to ensure that services provided to sufferers of torture and trauma meet international standards of best practice.

The Phoenix Centre is a complimentary service within the Migrant Resource Centre, a politically independent, non-profit community organisation.

For questions or queries about the CALD Community Connections Project please contact the Phoenix Centre in Hobart.

Telephone: (03) 6221 0999

Email: phoenix@mrchobart.org.au

Useful Websites



Phoenix Centre www.mrchobart.org.au/p_about.shtml

Migrant Resource Centre Hobart www.mrchobart.org.au

Migrant Resource Centre – Launceston www.mrcltn.org.au

Forum of Australian Services for Survivors of Torture and Trauma www.fasstt.org.au

Multicultural Mental Health Australia www.mmha.org.au

Life: living is for everyone www.livingisforeveryone.com.au

Beyond blue www.BeyondBlue.org.au

Aspire www.aspire.org.au

NSW Service for the treatment and rehabilitation of torture and trauma survivors (STARTTS) www.startts.org.au

Foundation House www.foundationhouse.org.au