

SETSCoP

Communique: Third meeting of the Regional Settlement sub-group

Videoconference – 25 March 2021

On 25 March 2021, SETSCoP held its third meeting for members of the Regional Settlement sub-group. The meeting focused on the sharing of best practice to support vulnerable women and build social cohesion in regional areas.

Support to vulnerable women

Service providers mentioned that during COVID-19 they saw an increase in women trying to access domestic and family violence (DFV) support services. One provider noted the significant challenge that restrictions created as many vulnerable women lost support networks and struggled to access services remotely. In regional areas it is often the case that SETS providers are the main support service for women to seek assistance and support from them.

Some examples of safety nets provided by SETS services to support vulnerable women and women experiencing DFV, during the pandemic include:

- Emergency relief programs
- Two-way referrals between DFV services and SETS providers
- Strengthening relationships and referrals to specialist legal services
- Setting up broader support networks

Some attendees have started developed programs in collaboration with legal services to provide in-depth support. One provider shared that they are working closely with a women's legal service, with co-location at the SETS organisation to enhance referrals and can support clients with a range of legal issues.

Attendees noted the importance of cross-sector partnerships for awareness raising. For example, multiple providers have run information sessions TAFE classes to reach a broader audience.

All attendees agreed that trust is an important factor in delivering successful programs for vulnerable clients. Additionally, participants emphasised the importance of being mindful of possibility of re-traumatisation by conducting a thorough assessment and engaging staff with experience who understand the sensitivities around topics discussed.

Building social cohesion

Participants noted the importance of increasing an understanding of the journey of refugees and migrants to Australia for local community. Attendees gave examples of their programs

that focus on increasing understanding, acceptance and unity through virtual presentations, partnerships with sporting clubs and targeted information sessions for community.

Additionally, attendees noted the value of community groups showcasing their culture through events and creating opportunities for greater interactions between local community and their clients.

Finally, some participants spoke of the challenges to building social cohesion. The most common barrier is English language proficiency and ability to maintain a conversation. Many providers are supporting English language development through cross-cultural conversation and social groups.