

## SETSCoP

### Communique: VIC COVID-19 and Best Practice Meeting

#### Videoconference – 29 September 2021

On 29 September 2021, the SETS Community of Practice (SETSCoP) held a videoconference for CoP members in Victoria to share their best practice and innovative service delivery, along with challenges faced through the recent lockdown period due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **Helpful tools for engaging with clients**

Providers shared that Zoom continues to be a helpful tool; however, some people are tired of many Zoom calls and some clients are disadvantaged because they have low tech literacy skills, making engagement over Zoom difficult. One provider shared that they had used Zoom to deliver and record information sessions regarding visa applications for Afghan clients and more than 550 people have accessed these sessions either live or through the online recordings.

Another tool mentioned was a closed Facebook group for clients who previously attended a friendship group, which had a messenger group attached, allowing clients to continue communicating throughout the lockdown. Clients used this to make a video call to check on each other soon after the recent earthquake.

A number of members reported that Whatsapp has been useful to allow fast information sharing, including through audio messages. Many providers have also been making phone calls to check in and provide support to individuals.

Partnerships with local community groups continue to be important, with local volunteers from charities and churches assisting with food delivery and transportation for clients.

#### **Supporting the vaccine rollout**

Members continue to provide outreach to communities and share information on the vaccine rollout and COVID-19, including targeted support and information to clients and communities most in need. Some providers have employed bilingual workers to assist at vaccination clinics and supported the delivery of multicultural clinics at certain times. In-house vaccination clinics have also been highly effective and have allowed providers to refer, remind and check in with people post-vaccination.

Providers are also actively promoting vaccination through schools, health providers and other means. One provider used funding to engage an Iraqi wedding singer to write a song promoting vaccinations, which has been widely shared.

Providers reported that some clients are having difficulty using the online vaccination booking system. A number of providers have supported clients one-on-one to make vaccination bookings.

They have also continued to update their online Corona Hub with up-to-date videos for communities.

### **Other challenges and issues raised**

SETSCoP members raised concerns about clients who are in their final year of eligibility for SETS support and have experienced a long period of time in lockdown, therefore impacting on their ability to complete some settlement activities. In particular, many people have applied for citizenship and the delay in processing their application means they have not received confirmation of their approval to complete the citizenship test until they are no longer eligible to receive support from SETS providers. This means the usual support for preparation for the citizenship test cannot be provided. Several providers commented on the recent extension to eligibility for AMEP and HSP services and believe that extending SETS eligibility would align with this.

A number of members raised the challenge of clients who have recently arrived approaching SETS providers for assistance, rather than their HSP provider. They suggested a collaboration meeting between SETS and HSP providers in their region to share information. Providers discussed the confusion for some clients who had been exited from HSP and then relinked due to the changes to eligibility for some temporary visa types. SETSCoP is soon starting an “Afghan Support” subgroup and will invite AMES and other HSP providers to share information in this meeting, providing a space for collaboration and clarification to occur.

Providers requested additional information about plans for a future intake from Afghanistan, particularly given the large volume of applications to sponsor family members that have been submitted and delays in receiving a response from the Department. Providers noted they would like guidance about how best to support clients and what information they should provide about the application process.

Providers raised concerns about the increase in citizenship application fees, which is impacting the number of people who are able to apply for citizenship. This is impacting some individuals’ sense of belonging and community cohesion.

Attendees mentioned that they are receiving requests for settlement support from people stuck in Australia on a tourist visa, due to the pandemic. Provider requested advice on who can provide support to these clients.

### **Shared resources**

Corona Hub information which can be found at:

<https://www.bchs.com.au/blog/613-coronavirus-bendigo-refugee-resource-information-in-karen>

Bye Bye Corona Song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okJ84uFg3kk>