

SETSCoP

Communique: ACT & NSW COVID-19 and Best Practice Meeting

Videoconference – 15 June 2022

On 15 June 2022, the SETS Community of Practice (SETSCoP) held a videoconference for CoP members in Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales to share their best practice and innovative service delivery, along with challenges faced through the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

MyAus

Information was shared about MyAus app and the 12 languages currently available with more upcoming. The MyAus app has a user focus, with information in-language which summarises in more simple language important topics relevant to settlement. The app brings government information together in one place and encourages clients to self-navigate services. It includes links to some state-based services in some topics, such as SETS providers and mental health service providers.

Information categories covered include:

- Housing
- Finance and money
- Centrelink and government support
- Legal system and Government
- Relationships and Family
- Migration and Citizenship
- Staying safe
- Pre-departure and arrival
- Destinations
- History and culture
- Getting around
- Media
- Environment and climate
- Sports
- Study and education
- Health and wellbeing
- COVID-19
- Bringing up children
- Working in Australia
- Relationships and family
- Health system.

Providers commented that languages, such as Assyrian would be helpful to be added, so that the app could be used by their clients.

Highlights

Some of the clients who arrived a number of years ago are now getting their **citizenship**, which they are very excited about and are hoping to sponsor their families to move to Australia. Other clients are requesting for support to **bring their families** from Afghanistan and Syria and service providers are support in various ways. Citizenship classes are very popular at the moment.

Recently in Canberra a **Women's Summit** allowed for clients to be able to share their questions and thoughts. This was very successful and the clients were happy to be heard and to be able to request particular services which they require, as part of a tailored program.

COVID-19 Challenges

The number of members of the community who have had COVID-19 and have not experienced bad side effects, means that it is now being treated **the same as a common cold**. A number of people who have survived after having COVID-19 feel they are now immune and do not want to be vaccinated.

Many **staff have had COVID-19**, which means that service providers have had to juggle limited numbers of staff.

Clients who are employed on a casual basis and have had COVID-19 in some cases have had their **employment affected**. A lot of clients have requested support when positive, with getting food. A number of service providers have given food hampers and **emergency relief supports** to clients.

Community gatherings continue to be affected, as during the pandemic communities had to find another way to gather and are continuing with these alternatives. Some community members are **fearful of COVID-19** and are remaining isolated. The rise in colds and flus also has the community concerned.

Other challenges

Service providers are delivering some group **information sessions online**, as well as face to face. For those sharing online, some clients are struggling to engage with the online system, unless supported. Some service providers are working to deliver **hybrid events** as there are some clients willing to work face to face and other who are not, due to their concern of COVID-19 when out in the community. The technical challenge of this makes it difficult for services who have not previously worked in this way and are having to upskill. There is also concern that hybrid events do not produce strong outcomes for those who are participating.

Many providers have had rising numbers of clients struggling with the **cost of living**. The number of requests for support with paying bills, rental costs (previously rent was \$500 / week and is now \$650 / week in some cases), food and other groceries has grown. This is especially the case for clients who are living on income support payments from Centrelink. Many service providers are also dealing with requests for support coming from other who are not eligible for SETS, such as clients who have been living in Australia for more than 5 years and other mainstream clients. The increase in inquiries from ineligible clients takes time from SETS services staff.

Housing is also reported as ongoing issue of concern. Due to the housing shortage, in particular in rural and regional areas, compared to the number of jobs available, there is a lot of competition for rentals. This is impacting other services systems, such as hospitals, who are struggling to get housing for their staff. Settlement services are receiving a lot of requests for support with housing from bridging and protection visa clients.

Service providers are also receiving requests for support with **employment** from people with bridging visas, and some who have permanent visas who want to work, but can't find the right kind of work which will have longevity. In addition, some clients, such as single mothers, are struggling when their work impacts them by reducing their Centrelink income.