

**Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum
Minutes – Meeting No. 29 – Wednesday 30 August 2023**

1pm-3pm via Microsoft Teams

Chairperson: Mayor Cr Eden Foster (Greater Dandenong Council (CGD))

Member attendees:

Peter Johnstone (CGD), Michael Maxwell (Blacktown), Amani Nyikang (Yarra), Celia Chang (Hume), Deputy Mayor Cr Jennie Barrera (Wyndham), Petria Jukes (Newcastle), Cathy Miles (Hobsons Bay), Petr Svoboda (Merri-bek), Pradeep Peteti (Casey), Cr Sarah Race (Mornington Peninsula), Cr Belinda Moloney (Geelong), Cr Anab Mohamud (Yarra), Deputy Mayor Cr Susanne Newton (Darebin), Wambui Thirimu (Brimbank), Mayor Cr Hadi Saab (Kingston), Tracey Collins (Kingston), Amy Bennett (Bass Coast), Kara Barnett (Melbourne), Shabaz Fattah (Darebin), Deputy Mayor Rafaela Pandolfini (Randwick), Amey Rountree (Monash) and Pinar Maher (Bendigo),

Guests:

Jahangir Hosseini, Nosrat Hosseini, Narges Shaterian, Atena Kashani, Atefeh Hassanpour, Amin Shadamani (Community members, Merri-bek), Rebecca Eckard (Refugee Council of Australia [RCOA] Director of Policy and Research) and Rebecca Langton (RCOA Manager).

Apologies: Mayor Cr Angelica Panopoulos (Merri-bek), Mayor Cr Dallas Tout (Wagga Wagga), Mayor Cr Susan McIntyre (Wyndham), Mayor Cr Sarah Carter (Maribyrnong), Mayor Cr Joseph Haweii (Hume), Mayor Cr Bruce Lancashire (Brimbank), Lord Mayor Sally Capp (Melbourne), Cr Roshena Campbell (Melbourne), Cr Kevin Louey (Melbourne), Cr Philip Le Liu (Melbourne), Cr Jamal Hakim (Melbourne), Cr Dr Olivia Ball (Melbourne), Cr Jason Chang (Melbourne), Cr Davydd Griffiths (Melbourne), Mayor Cr Isabelle Tolhurst (Queenscliffe), Mayor Cr Rob Steane (Maroondah), Chris Riseley (Maroondah), April Wilson (Nillumbik), Zoe Quinn (Whitehorse), Chris Munro (Mornington Peninsula), Ann Ly (CGD), Cr Mark Riley (Merri-bek), Emma Sampson (Merri-bek), Nelum Buddhadasa (Merri-bek), Lee Tozzi (Merri-bek), Cr Steve Staikos (Kingston), Susan Quach (Kingston), Mayor Cr Julie Williams (Darebin), Cr Gaetano Greco (Darebin), Cr Rhonda Garad (CGD), Cr Lana Formoso (CGD), Mayor Cr Tina Samardzija (Monash), Cr Rose Iser (Moonee Valley), Mayor Cr Tony Bleasdale (Blacktown), Mayor Cr Darcy Byrne (Inner West), Cr Pauline Lockie (Inner West), Cr Justine Langford (Inner West), Cr Marghanita Da Cruz (Inner West), Sana Saiyed (Whittlesea), Dalal Sleiman (Whittlesea), Sandra Khazam (Port Phillip), Alison Hines (Hobart), Cristina Del Frate (Yarra), Tara Bewley (Yarra), Milica Latu (Yarra), Julie Andrews (Hume), Cr Sahana Ramesh (Wyndham), Lynley Dumble (Brimbank), Teresa Lawler (Casey), Mayor Cr Des Hudson (Ballarat), Frances Salenga (Ballarat), Nikki Williams (Bendigo), Mayor Cr Andrea Metcalf (Bendigo), Lisa King (Banyule), Cr Peter Castaldo (Banyule), Mayor Cr Tammy Radford (Cardinia), Catherine Dwyer (Maribyrnong), Deputy Lord Mayor Nicolas Reece (Melbourne), Cr Elizabeth Mary Doidge (Melbourne), Cr Rohan Leppert (Melbourne), Mayor Cr Ben Ramcharan (Nillumbik), Deputy Mayor Cr Geoff Paine (Nillumbik), Graeme Beattie (Canterbury Bankstown), Garry Starr (Canterbury Bankstown), Jane Wager (Geelong), Mayor Cr Mark Lane (Whitehorse), Mayor Cr Heather Cunsolo (Port Phillip), Sally Abbott (Moonee Valley), Liana Thompson (Wyndham), Cr Jennifer Anderson (Macedon Ranges), Mayor Cr Annette Death (Macedon Ranges), Paul MacDonald (Maroondah), Mayor Cr Ian Bye (Wellington), Mayor Cr Tony Briffa (Hobsons Bay), Ben Pollard (Hobsons Bay), John Drennan (Ballarat), Mayor Cr Dylan Parker (Randwick), Cr Philpa Veitch (Randwick), Cr Kym Chapple (Randwick) and Cr Elizabeth Adamczyk (Newcastle).

Agenda Item	Action
<p>1. Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country and Introduction to new Member Council (Blacktown City Council) Chair acknowledged Country and welcomed Blacktown Council to the Taskforce.</p>	-
<p>2. Endorsement of Minutes of Previous Meeting Minutes endorsed.</p>	-

Agenda Item	Action
<p>3. Review of Outstanding Action Items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taskforce 2023-24 membership – General Members Banyule Council, Canterbury Bankstown Council, Greater Bendigo Council, Maribyrnong Council, Nillumbik Shire Council, Randwick Council, Blue Mountains Council and Launceston Council have yet to confirm membership. • New member recruitment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Invitations have been sent from Chair to Mayors of Benalla, Hepburn Shire, Strathbogie Shire, Shepparton, Albury City Councils, which have met with Neil Para on the 1,000 km Walk for Freedom campaign to date. ○ Invitations to Hepburn Shire and Mount Alexander Shire Council have been sent by Deputy Mayor Cr Susanne Newton but still waiting on response. ○ Invitations have been sent by Secretariat on behalf of Chair to ALGA Morning Tea attendees in July. 	<p>Outstanding Member Councils to confirm membership asap with Secretariat.</p> <p>Mayor Eden Foster (CGD) will follow up with outstanding Member Councils and invitations to join Taskforce.</p> <p>Taskforce members who have personal contact with ALGA morning tea attendees to write and encourage them to join the Taskforce.</p>
<p>4. Back Your Neighbour (BYN) Campaign Next Steps - Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligning with Refugee Council of Australia's (RCOA) advocacy priorities – presentation by Rebecca Eckard (RCOA): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ RCOA has six priority areas for refugee policy reform developed with refugee community and sector members, with the following priorities most relevant to the Taskforce: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Financial support for people seeking asylum – SRSS is currently not achieving its intended goals. <p>The need has grown dramatically over the last 12-18 months – mainstream housing services are reporting an increase in number of people seeking asylum sleeping rough. RCOA is advocating to expand SRSS eligibility criteria and simplify application process, provide emergency payments for people experiencing crisis via SRSS or other Commonwealth support payments and access to accommodation support for people sleeping rough.</p> <p>Priority to processing of protection visas and addressing delays of Tribunal for people who have been waiting years for a decision on their protection claims</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Increase in refugee and humanitarian program including the Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP) 3. Ending temporary protection including access to family reunion. There are 9,000 people who have gone through the fast-track process and have not been able to find protection. • Fifty Senators and MPs have now joined the Refugee Council of Australia Parliamentary Friends Group. An event was held in Canberra during Homelessness Week in August. Lived experience speakers and service providers attended. Alongside, RCOA used digital and radio media to share stories of people seeking asylum experiencing homelessness in Western Sydney. • Recommendation to engage with the RCOA Refugee Sector Strategy Group at 12 October meeting to plan alignment. • Need for a BYN communications strategy to maintain momentum e.g. weekly-fortnightly social media updates and Members sharing content focusing on key topics e.g. material aid, the need for emergency support services. There is opportunity during Mental Health Week in October to highlight the needs of humanitarian arrivals through this lens. • Taskforce Members are invited to share with Secretariat potential community stories suitable for promotion via BYN Campaign. • Refugee Trauma Recovery in Resettlement Conference in Adelaide in October will have national and international speakers who are leaders in the field of human rights and refugee trauma recovery. • Australia is the Chair (Federal Government and RCOA co-chairs) of the Consultation on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways including CRISP – a working group to be hosted in February 2024 in Sydney. 	<p>Rebecca Eckard to share sample of RCOA's social media plan on key topics.</p> <p>Taskforce Secretariat to develop a draft communication plan for discussion at next meeting.</p>

Agenda Item	Action
<p>5. Advocacy Software – ‘Advoc8’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CGD has been approached by Advoc8 about their digital advocacy platform, which helps manage campaigns, stakeholder engagement and profiling. Cost is \$15,000 per annum. Cockburn City Council had been using this platform for 3 years for their Council’s various advocacy campaigns. Advoc8 is offering CGD a short-term trial for no cost with no obligation to purchase subscription once trial complete. • Comment that Advoc8 sounds like a good way to keep track of the advocacy and outcomes – recalled past feedback from some members who would like better oversight of the Taskforce’s work, which they can then bring back to respective Councils. • Cr Susanne Newton (Darebin) indicated there is a similar tool called Kindful - agreed that a system to organise advocacy work is worth the investment. Ideally if Advoc8 could be used by a Council/Councils as well and to possibly share costs. • RCOA uses Nationbuilder for stakeholder communications with supporters and donors. 	<p>Secretariat will invite Advoc8 to the next Taskforce meeting to provide a demonstration of the Advoc8 platform.</p>
<p>6. Other Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy and Support for the Iranian Community in Melbourne: Permanent Visas, Refugee Intake and Collaborative Strategies with Local Councils – Iranian Women’s Association <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Narges Shaterian, Atena Kashani, Amin Shadamani, Jahangir and Nosrat Hosseini (Merri-bek residents and members of the Iranian community) spoke about the difficulties of Iranian people seeking asylum in Australia including ongoing delays and long wait times for appeals and/or protection applications. ○ They have been lobbying with MPs that Iran is not a safe place for refugees to return to. ○ Mention of Iranian refugees living in Indonesia and Türkiye don’t have work rights and their children cannot go to university. ○ The group is seeking more Councils to support their campaign and advocacy that their applications for protection are genuine. To lend support, please contact Nos Hosseini at IranianWomensAssociation@outlook.com and 0447 979 699. • Australian Government Multicultural Framework Review – Submissions close 29 September. RCOA are happy to share their outline before submission date. • Mayor Cr Eden Foster (CGD) mentioned campaigning by Afghan community leaders who led a walk from Dandenong to Canberra in July in advocating to the Federal Government for reunion of Afghan families. 	<p>Secretariat to draft Multicultural Framework Review submission and share with Taskforce members for feedback.</p>
<p>7. Next Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next Meeting Wednesday 25 October 1pm-3pm, MS Teams. 	<p>-</p>
<p>8. Meeting closed 2.55pm</p>	<p>-</p>