

# Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum

## Minutes – Executive Meeting No. 8 – Wednesday 13 March 2019

### Monash Council, 293 Springvale Road, Glen Waverley

**Chairperson:** Mayor, Cr Roz Blades AM (Greater Dandenong)

**Attendees:** Lynley Dumble (*Brimbank*), Cr Matthew Kirwan (*Greater Dandenong*), Marek Krol (*Greater Dandenong*) – Minute Taker, Peter Johnstone (*Greater Dandenong*), Mandy Bathgate (*Darebin*), Mayor, Cr Jonathon Marsden (*Hobsons Bay*), Mayor, Cr Shane McCluskey (*Monash*), Emily Webb (*Monash*), Fee Harrison (*Monash*), Kerryn Jansons (*Monash*), Pamela Kosij (*Monash*), Cristina Del Frate (*Yarra*),

**Guests:** Daniel Scoullar (*Social Change Projects*), Jo Tabit (*Brotherhood of St Laurence*), Jospeh Youhana (*Brotherhood of St Laurence*)

**Apologies:** Mayor, Cr Lucinda Congreve (*Brimbank*), Mayor, Cr Susan Rennie (*Darebin*), Cr Susanne Newton (*Darebin*), Mayor, Cr Carly Moore (*Hume*), Teneha Greco (*Hume*), Amber Cassidy (*Hobsons Bay*), Meghan Hopper (*Moonee Valley*), Kate McCaughey (*Darebin*), Mayor, Cr Natalie Abboud (*Moreland*).

Agenda Item	Discussion Points/Comments	Follow up Actions / Who
<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mayor, Cr Roz Blades acknowledged traditional owners. Mayor, Cr Shane McCluskey welcomed all Council representatives attending Monash Council.</li> <li>Apologies noted.</li> </ul>	
<b>Endorsement of Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Previous minutes moved by Mayor, Cr Jonathon Marsden, seconded by Cr Matthew Kirwan.</li> </ul>	

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<b>Review of Outstanding Action Items</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marek Krol - reiterated the request that all member councils follow / like Back Your Neighbour (BYN) Campaign social media pages i.e. Facebook, Twitter, post social BYN social media content on their own Facebook pages, and to provide a list of local organisations (contacts/names).</li> <li>• Hobsons Bay organised translation of petition into multiple languages (i.e. Hindi, Greek, Italian, Punjabi, Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog and Arabic). Marek Krol – emailed to Executive and General Members.</li> <li>• Marek Krol - Draft Taskforce Strategic Priorities sent out to council members for review and endorsement.</li> <li>• Daniel Scoullar / Marek Krol – Lobby letters written and sent on behalf of Taskforce to Federal Government, Federal Opposition, and State Government members of parliament.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All councils – provide progress update to Marek by end of March</li> </ul>
<b>Update on the SRSS Situation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SRSS eligibility assessments now including families with children 6 years of age or older.</li> <li>• Government is requesting from service agencies verification of evidence for individuals who are claiming medical or other serious impairment.</li> <li>• According to Red Cross - homelessness and requests for material aid are rising.</li> <li>• South-east of Melbourne many SRSS recipients have successfully moved on to paid employment with assistance of targeted employment support programs.</li> <li>• Work with Red Cross to provide financial support to asylum seekers facing homelessness.</li> <li>• Most providers do not provide housing services to asylum seekers.</li> <li>• Identified that many healthcare clinicians are not providing adequate medical evidence regarding a person seeking asylum claim for SRSS payments.</li> <li>• Southeast PSAARD Taskforce – has formed a homelessness working group focusing on asylum seekers.</li> <li>• Rise in single males being taken off SRSS program, primarily in Cumberland Council, NSW.</li> <li>• Jesuit Services in Cumberland Council running out of food supplies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marek Krol (CGD) –make contact with Primary Health Networks about providing healthcare professionals with a standard medical letter template for SRSS recipients</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Back Your Neighbour Phase 2 Campaign Update</b> (with activity status updates from individual Councils)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 2 early focus was on building campaign support from community organisations, councils and individuals.</li> <li>• Present focus is to utilise campaign supporters to start applying pressure on Federal Government.</li> <li>• Fifteen organisations have signed on to support the campaign. Full list of supporters can be found on BYN Campaign website.</li> <li>• Negotiating with Trades Hall to send out petition to 15,000 people from their email list</li> <li>• Over 400 individuals on campaign email list, 350 petition signatures, 1,600 followers on Facebook, over 1,100 followers on Twitter. 1000 people have visited the campaign website in the last month.</li> <li>• Possibility to utilise DoGooder to increase campaign pressure.</li> <li>• Member Council progress update on campaign contributions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Darebin – working with Brotherhood of St Laurence to create a story focused on a person seeking asylum. Active with promoting BYN campaign on social media.</li> <li>○ Monash – Working with settlement services to find a person seeking asylum to share their story. Challenge to find people who will share their story, due to fear and vulnerability experienced by many people seeking asylum.</li> <li>○ Brimbank – planning to speak to local service providers and identify impact. Taskforce advocacy added to 2019 council advocacy plan.</li> <li>○ Yarra – in contact with service providers. Challenge to find people seeking asylum in Yarra area. Taskforce advocacy added to 2019 council advocacy plan.</li> <li>○ Hobsons Bay – Working with Interfaith Network, and working with videographer to document stories with people seeking asylum. Distribution of Facebook material to community organisations.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Emily Webb suggested promoting the BYN campaign on podcasts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All councils – to send media release of support for BYN campaign to local Leader Paper</li> <li>• Emily Webb (Monash) – to investigate promoting campaign as podcast advertisement</li> </ul>
<p><b>Media Approach Leading up to the Federal Election</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two media angles – families affected by SRSS cuts and the impact the cuts are having on service providers and community organisations. Critical for developing media story.</li> <li>• An option to overcome challenges with interviewing people seeking asylum can be to talk to colleagues, neighbours, or employers to create a BYN story.</li> </ul>	

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<b>MP Advocacy Updates</b> (with activity status updates from individual Councils)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CGD sent letters out on behalf of Taskforce – State Government, Federal Government, Federal Opposition</li> <li>• Mayor, Cr Jonathon Marsden confirmed that Hobsons Bay sending letters out to local MPs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All Councils - to send out individual letters to local MPs. Templates were supplied to each council prior to meeting</li> </ul>
<b>ALGA General Assembly Planning</b> (Motion and any other activities – delegations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ALGA Motion approved by Greater Dandenong Council on Tuesday 12 March</li> <li>• Eight Councils have officially supported the Notice of Motion – Whittlesea, Maribyrnong, Hume, Darebin, Yarra, Geelong, Wagga Wagga, Inner West</li> <li>• Setting up of joint Taskforce response for ALGA General Assembly.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peter Johnstone(CGD) – determine which councils are attending the ALGA General Assembly</li> </ul>
<b>Walk for Justice for Refugees Organisation</b> (Palm Sunday, Sunday April 14, 2019 : 2pm-5pm starting at State Library)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Palm Sunday march will take place at 2pm, Sunday April 14. Commencing at State Library and ending at King's Domain.</li> <li>• Taskforce to meet at Joan of Arc statue at State Library.</li> <li>• Encouraging all Taskforce mayors to attend. MC will announce on the day all mayors and councils attending rally.</li> <li>• Taskforce will be positioned behind Interfaith Leaders, ensuring high exposure.</li> <li>• Banner currently being designed for rally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marek Krol (CGD) – determine which councils will be attending Walk for Justice for Refugees.</li> <li>• Marek Krol (CGD) – to circulate map of event and create calendar event</li> <li>• Marek Krol (CGD) – to circulate banner design for approval and prepare for production</li> </ul>
<b>Taskforce Administration, Governance and Membership Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bendigo has changed their Taskforce membership from Supporter Council to General Member</li> <li>• Inner West Council has joined as a General Member</li> <li>• Total of 30 Taskforce Members</li> <li>• Cr Matthew Kirwan in negotiation with Hornsby Shire regarding their participation in the Taskforce.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marek Krol (CGD) – follow up with City of Melbourne about joining the Taskforce</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Presentation from Brotherhood of St Laurence</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) discussed their groundwork activities and recommendations for councils.</li> <li>• EPPSA (Employment Pathways for People Seeking Asylum) originally focused at providing employment opportunities for young people. In 2017 program scope was broadened to include people seeking asylum of all age groups.</li> <li>• Program experienced a change in needs, involving greater demand for assisting asylum seekers find employment. BSL received grants from Darebin Council and Hume Council to employ a dedicated employment officer.</li> <li>• 74 people registered in the EPPSA program, with 39 active participants.</li> <li>• Alongside EPSSA, BSL has had a longstanding employment support program for asylum seekers. Over a five year period supported 1,400 people, 545 people were found employment. 99 per cent of those jobs were for over 8 hours per week, and 54 per cent were for over 30 hours per week. BSL worked in collaboration with over 300 employers.</li> <li>• BSL advocated for the State Government to include asylum seekers in their back to work subsidy scheme, which led to including asylum seekers in the Jobs Victoria Employment Network.</li> <li>• Along with ASRC, BSL is the port of call for employment support for asylum seekers.</li> <li>• BSL takes referrals from Red Cross and Life Without Barriers to work with asylum seekers.</li> <li>• BSL undertook survey to understand impact of SRSS cuts. Half of the responses indicated that they had been or were likely to be cut off from SRSS. At present, one person a week is facing homelessness due to SRSS cuts in Dandenong.</li> <li>• Many SRSS recipients are struggling to accept that they have been cut off from the program, which shows that they are barely work ready.</li> <li>• Jo Tabit enquired as to whether any Victorian councils could offer one day free childcare, replicating the model offered by a NSW council.</li> <li>• BSL working with Yarra Council, Melton Council, and Whittlesea Council in mandating in their procurement that refugees and people seeking asylum form part of the employee pool. Citywide Service Solutions also on board.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jo Tabit (BSL) – provide factsheet on local government tendering and procurement, and free child care</li> </ul>

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<b>Regional/Local Updates</b> a) <b>Northern Alliance</b>  b) <b>PSAARD Taskforce – South-East Melbourne Regional Aid / Humanitarian Response Collaboration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northern Alliance broadening its agenda and revising terms of reference.</li> <li>• Focus on leveraging local responses and sharing of information between councils and organisations.</li>   <li>• PSAARD – forming a homelessness working group focusing on asylum seekers.</li> </ul>	
<b>Other Business</b>		
<b>Next Meeting:</b>	<b>Wednesday 17 April 2019, 1:00pm-3:00pm</b> <b>Greater Dandenong Council</b> <b>225 Lonsdale Street, Dandenong</b>	
<b>Close</b>	3.45pm	

Other proposed meeting dates and venues

- Wednesday, 22 May                      Yarra
- Wednesday, 26 June                     Darebin
- Thursday, 24 July                         Brimbank