

Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum Minutes – Executive Teleconference Meeting No. 15 – Wednesday 18 March 2020

1pm-3pm, Greater Dandenong Council

Chairperson: Cr Matthew Kirwan representing Mayor Jim Memeti (*Greater Dandenong*)

Minute Taker: Marek Krol (*Greater Dandenong*)

Attendees: Wambui Thirimu (*Brimbank*), Mayor Susan Rennie (*Darebin*), Peter Johnstone (*Greater Dandenong*), Marek Krol (*Greater Dandenong*), Cr Jonathan Marsden (*Hobsons Bay*), David Henry (*Hume*), Cr Josh Fergeus (*Monash*), Siobhan Wood (*Monash*), Pamela Kosij (*Monash*), Petr Svoboda (*Moreland*).

Apologies: Deputy Mayor Susanne Newton (*Darebin*), Mayor Jim Memeti (*Greater Dandenong*), Amber Cassidy (*Hobsons Bay*), Mayor Lambros Tapinos (*Moreland*), Mayor Misha Coleman (*Yarra*), Cr Danae Bosler (*Yarra*), Cristina Del Frate (*Yarra*).

Agenda Item	Discussion Points/Comments	Follow up Actions / Who
Welcome and Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cr Matthew Kirwan welcomed all representatives participating in the Teleconference meeting and acknowledged the Traditional Owners. • Apologies noted 	
Endorsement of Minutes of previous Meeting	Correction was noted for omission of action re: Completion of spreadsheet detailing Council services for people seeking asylum. Previous minutes moved by Mayor Susan Rennie, seconded by Cr Matthew Kirwan	
Review of Outstanding Action Items	One action was carried over from previous meeting – completion of spreadsheet detailing Council services for people seeking asylum. Awaiting feedback from Marie Hapke's (Refugee Advocacy Network) on spreadsheet.	Spreadsheet to be circulated amongst Executive and General Members for completion – Marek Krol.
General Update on SRSS Situation	<p>According to AMES Australia until the beginning of March documents associated with the last round of assessments were still sitting with Home Affairs. For this reason, there have been no new exits due to not meeting vulnerability criteria to date.</p> <p>Exit rate will change once review process of assessments begins.</p> <p>Major concern is getting people back on SRSS if their circumstances have changed.</p>	

Agenda Item	Discussion Points/Comments	Follow up Actions / Who
<p>Taskforce Secretariat activities (December-January 2019/20)</p> <p>a). Meetings with Victorian Government MPs</p> <p>b). Media Updates</p> <p>c). Meeting with VAAN Network</p> <p>d). Refugees Alternative Conference (Brisbane) Presentation to Movement Day</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with Victorian Government MPs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Kara Hadgraft (Advisor to Martin Foley MP)</i> ○ Minister Foley's Office is very aware of the current situation for people seeking asylum. ○ Request was made by Kara for CGD to prepare a report detailing how this crisis is affecting organisations outside of the State Government's \$3 million funding package, and highlight the possible gaps in the funding and future opportunities. ○ Kara indicated if the case was compelling enough, Minister Foley's Office could seek \$6 million in funding from the State Budgetary Committee for the following financial year – 2020/21. ○ Report was well received by Minister Foley's Office, providing insight into the growing demand experienced by service provider such as Cabrini Health, The Salvation Army, Asylum Seeker Centre etc. ○ <i>Gabrielle Williams MP (Minister for Youth, Women and Prevention of Family Violence)</i> ○ Minister Williams was supportive of advocating for further Victorian State Government funding for people seeking asylum. ○ Indicated she would raise the issue with Treasury, framing SRSS cuts as an issue contributing to domestic violence; an issue which comes under her portfolio – Prevention of Family Violence. • Media Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nil • Meeting with VAAN Network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ President of Victorian Afghan Association Network, Nazir Yousafi, met with Cr Matthew Kirwan and Marek Krol to discuss opportunities for joint advocacy and collaboration. ○ Was supportive of the Back Your Neighbour campaign, and providing stories of lived experience by VAAN members and promoting Back Your Neighbour via VAAN communication channels. • Refugees Alternative Conference – Presentation to Movement Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Peak conference for refugee policy in Australia. Includes representation from non-profits, volunteer groups, universities, state and local governments etc. 	

Agenda Item	Discussion Points/Comments	Follow up Actions / Who
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cr Matthew Kirwan presented at Movement Day for the Conference, presenting the Back Your Neighbour Campaign and the lessons learnt. ○ Received offers of support from Edith Cowen University Western Australia (our first WA contact) and the Asylum Seeker Centre from Western-Sydney. 	Cr Matthew Kirwan to follow up contacts from Refugee Alternatives conference
ALGA Lobbying Approach in conjunction with RCOA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discussions have been held with Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) over the past two months. ● RCOA has explained that is wanting to advocate for baseline support for all people seeking asylum. ● Baseline support includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Access to Medicare ○ Work rights ○ A valid bridging visa Accompanied with SRSS support made consistently available to the most vulnerable. ● According to RCOA there are about 8,000 people seeking asylum with no baseline support, with the majority in Victoria and Queensland. Addressing this would free up service providers by up to 50 per cent. ● Advocating for baseline support would involve enlisting as many Taskforce Member Councils to send a letter (letters would be drafted by Marek and Samuel (RCOA) to their local MPs, particularly Coalition MPs and Senators, asking for baseline support and requesting a meeting. ● Marek and Samuel would prepare info packs for any meetings taking place with MPs (briefing notes, local case studies etc). Further ask would involve requesting the MP to raise the issue with their respective party head for immigration e.g. Minister Alan Tudge (Acting Minister for Immigration) and Senator Kristina Kenneally, Shadow Minister for Immigration. ● Depending on whether ALGA will be held this year, a follow up request would be made with each of the MPs to meet in Canberra, with RCOA also organising possible media coverage for the day. ● Present Taskforce Executive Members endorsed the joint advocacy campaign with RCOA. 	
Draft Back Your Neighbour – Campaign Strategy and Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Present Taskforce Executive Members endorsed the Back Your Neighbour – Campaign Strategy and Plan 	

Agenda Item	Discussion Points/Comments	Follow up Actions / Who
Power Map Discussion	Power map feedback will be sought via email due to the limitations of a teleconference.	Circulate power maps for feedback amongst Taskforce – Marek Krol
Other Business a). ALGA Motion b). Palm Sunday 2020 – 5 April c). ASRC Home Campaign d). Amnesty International Community Sponsorship Update e). Community Placement Support Proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALGA Motion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To be discussed at a later date. • Palm Sunday 2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Event cancelled – due to COVID-19. • ASRC Home Campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Marcella to present ASRC Home Campaign to Taskforce at next meeting. • Amnesty International Community Sponsorship Update Amnesty to collaborate with RCOA in their advocacy with Federal Government. ASRC has advised that people seeking asylum may not benefit from International Community Sponsorship. This may result in a conflict of interest. • Community Placement Support Proposal Cr Matthew Kirwan awaiting further information on the proposal 	<p>Invite Marcella to present ASRC Home Campaign for next meeting – Marek Krol</p> <p>Further investigation required – Marek Krol</p> <p>To be carried over to next meeting – Marek Krol</p>
Regional/Local Updates a). Northern Alliance b). PSAARD Taskforce	<p>Nill update</p> <p>PSAARD Taskforce – Peter Johnstone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Due to COVID-19 pandemic, PSAARD Taskforce meetings have been postponed. ○ PSAARD will continue to investigate material aid options for people seeking asylum affected by COVID-19 pandemic. 	

Agenda Item	Discussion Points/Comments	Follow up Actions / Who
Executive Council Updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brimbank Council has prepared two motions for ALGA and MAV requesting the Australian Government to engage with the Local Mayoral Taskforce's Supporting People Seeking Asylum. Brimbank Council approached by RCOA to be part of Refugee Welcome Zone Leadership – possible opportunity for membership. • Darebin Council prepared for motion for ALGA highlighting the issue of Medivac patients being held at the Mansa Hotel and the human rights abuses occurring by holding people in indefinite detention. • Monash Council with Amnesty International prepared motion for ALGA regarding International Community Sponsorship. Monash Council through its Multicultural Settlement Services Network is supporting an asylum seeker family who have no income support. Variety of different supports is being provided through the Network. • Moreland Council has had two events around people seeking asylum cancelled due to Coronavirus. Potential still exists to have those lived experiences and stories shared through other mediums. Moreland Council is also providing subsidized access to leisure and swim centre for people seeking asylum. • Hume Council is continuing with youth transition program in partnership with Brotherhood of St Laurence. Focusing on employment skills for young people. 	<p>Email copy of motion to Marek – Brimbank Council</p> <p>Email copy of motion to Marek – Darebin Council</p>
Next Meeting	TBC – date to be determined in terms of need to make decisions and/or when ASRC are free to present	
Close	2pm	