

Local Government Mayoral Taskforce Supporting People Seeking Asylum Minutes – Executive Meeting No. 19 – Wednesday 2 February 2021

1-3pm via Microsoft Teams

Chairperson: Cr Rhonda Garad (*Greater Dandenong*).

Attendees: Mayor Jasmine Nguyen (*Brimbank*), Wambui Thirimu (*Brimbank*), Pradeep Peteti (*Casey*), Renae Buckley (*Casey*), Shabaz Fattah (*Darebin*), Cr Rhonda Garad (*Greater Dandenong*), Cr Lana Formoso (*Greater Dandenong*), Peter Johnstone (*Greater Dandenong*), Marek Krol (*Greater Dandenong*), Cr Jonathan Marsden (*Hobsons Bay*), Amber Cassidy (*Hobsons Bay*), Celia Chang (*Hume*), Mayor Steve Staikos (*Kingston*), Elisabetta Robecchi (*Kingston*), Colin Bostock (*Monash*), Pamela Kosij (*Monash*), Mayor Mark Riley (*Moreland*), Emma Sampson (*Moreland*), Nelum Buddhadasa (*Moreland*), Mayor Sophie Wade (*Yarra*).

Guests: Cr Rose Iser (*Moonee Valley*), Daniel Scoullar (*Social Change Projects*).

Apologies: Mayor Ranka Rasic (*Brimbank*), Lynley Dumble (*Brimbank*), Calum Pattie (*Casey*), Courtney Boi (*Casey*), Mayor Lina Messina (*Darebin*), Cr Susan Rennie (*Darebin*), Cr Susanne Newton (*Darebin*), Mayor Jim Memeti (*Greater Dandenong*), Mayor Peter Hemphill (*Hobsons Bay*), Kristen Cherry (*Hume*), Julie Andrews (*Hume*), Mayor Stuart James (*Monash*), Cr Brian Little (*Monash*), Cr Josh Fergeus (*Monash*), Fee Harrison (*Monash*), Petr Svoboda (*Moreland*), Nalika Peiris (*Moreland*), Meghan Hopper (*Moonee Valley*), Emma Patterson (*Moonee Valley*), Cr Gabrielle de Vietri (*Yarra*), Cristina Del Frate (*Yarra*).

Agenda Item	Discussion Points/Comments	Follow up Actions / Who
Welcome and Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cr Rhonda Garad welcomed all representatives attending and acknowledged Traditional Owners. Apologies noted. 	
Endorsement of Minutes of Previous Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previous minutes moved by Cr Rhonda Garad (CGD) and seconded Cr Mark Riley (Moreland). 	
Review of Outstanding Action Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions carried over from previous meeting: Develop list of marginal seats in Victoria. 	Carried over actions to be followed up – Marek (CGD).

<p>Overview of Back Your Neighbour Campaign and Asks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Updated Back Your Neighbour asks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Replace the existing system with a single Refugee Status Determination process and an independent, timely and fair merits review - Replace Temporary Protection Visas with a permanent humanitarian visa - Increase funding to urgently clear the backlog of asylum applications and appeals - Provide access to Centrelink, Medicare and other support services for applicants - For state and territory governments to provide funding to local services who are supporting individuals and families seeking asylum • Immediate focus is to update all existing infrastructure to include revised objectives, messaging and language. • Focus will then be on changing community perceptions around people seeking asylum and securing policy commitments from federal parties and independents. • Suggestions by the Executive were made to include a scorecard as a part of the Back Your Neighbour campaign. • Campaign needs to be conscious of the ongoing weaponization and politicization of people seeking asylum by political parties. Therefore, part of the strategy will involve direct lobbying with politicians and securing commitments. • Community mobilisation will also be effective in placing pressure on political parties to develop positive policy reforms. • Key strategies will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sharing stories of lived experience which touch on the challenges of being stuck in limbo and the benefits that a responsive Refugee Status Determination process provides ○ Sharing stories of service providers working closely with people seeking asylum ○ Promote Back Your Neighbour campaign via council channels e.g. social media, council websites, publications, and local media outlets ○ Mobilising support from communities and organisations, which will translate into political pressure • Refugee Voices has a good program in place that includes refugees telling their stories about seeking asylum. It was suggested by the group to connect with Refugee Voices. 	
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	<p>Also, universities have cohorts of people seeking asylum. These could be positive stories about people seeking asylum advancing in education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cr Garad suggested councils endorse similar motions to that of Hobart Council regarding the immediate release of refugees in the Carlton Park Hotel. 	
<p>Contribution of Officer Hours Amongst Executive</p>	<p>Back Your Neighbour – Working Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Taskforce Secretariat is proposing to establish a working group to focus on key aspects of the Back Your Neighbour campaign • Ideally, an officer from each Executive Council will take part in the working group, with a commitment of 5 hours per fortnight. As well as, a commitment to attend a weekly working group meeting. • Operation of the working group will run until the date of the next federal election. • The following is a list of tasks that officers may be required to undertake: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Informing local networks, organisations and relevant stakeholders about the Back Your Neighbour campaign ○ Encouraging local organisations to sign on and support Back Your Neighbour ○ Organising the promotion of Back Your Neighbour material via Council channels e.g. Facebook, Council magazine, Instagram etc ○ Identifying stories amongst service providers, people seeking asylum, and ordinary people/allies for content creation ○ Letter writing e.g. to local federal and state parliamentarians • Please contact Marek Krol (marek.krol@cgd.vic.gov.au) for further information and/or confirmation of participating in the Back Your Neighbour Working Group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marek (CGD) to send out invite to all Councils requesting officer input.

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Back Your Neighbour Launch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back Your Neighbour Election Campaign Launch (10am, Wednesday 16 February via Teams) • Invites to be sent out shortly to all Taskforce Members. • Launch will set the beginning of the Taskforce's public profile in the lead up to the election. • Cr Jim Memeti (CGD) and Cr Rhonda Garad (CGD) to speak, as well as other Taskforce Mayors or Councillors. • People with lived experience will also be asked to speak at the launch. • A high-profile speaker will also be sought to speak at the event. Suggestion was made to contact Tim Costello. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cr Steve Staikos (Kingston) to contact Tim Costello
Taskforce Letter re: Carlton Park Hotel / Meeting with Minister Alex Hawke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter was sent to Minister Alex Hawke requesting the release of all refugees in the Carlton Park Hotel on behalf of the Mayoral Taskforce. • In late 2021, Cr Jim Memeti (CGD) and CGD officers met with Minister Hawke to discuss some aspects regarding policies affecting newly arrived Afghan refugees. • Asks included increasing Australia's intake of Afghan refugees to 20,000 and permitting family reunification. Several Back Your Neighbour asks were also discussed in the meeting. • Minister Hawke was non-committal towards changing any current policies in regards to intake of refugees and providing people on Temporary Protection Visas with a pathway to permanency. 	
Regional/Local Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSAARD Taskforce • Greater Dandenong Material Aid Consortium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>PSAARD Taskforce</u> • Has now changed its name to PSAARD Network. • Qutbiallyam Timor (ASRC – Director Refugee Resource Hub) newly appointed Chairperson of PSAARD Network. • With the new Refugee Resource Hub services will benefit in providing more tailored and responsive support. • <u>Greater Dandenong Material Aid Consortium</u> • A lot of people accessing food relief has been people seeking asylum. Close to 60 per cent. • In excess of \$1million has been distributed in food and material aid. 	

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Other Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cr Steve Staikos (Kingston) requested the Taskforce investigate forming a delegation of councillors to attend ALGA. • Brimbank making submission to the National Anti-Racism Framework. One of the key issues being raised is the politicization of refugees and people seeking asylum, and the impact this has on the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marek (CGD) to include as an agenda item at the next Executive meeting
Next Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-3PM, Wednesday 9 March, 2022 	
Close	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2:50pm 	