

# Hands & Heart

EDITION 3 | MAY 2021



## Welcome to the latest edition of Hands & Heart

In this moment of history, more people than ever before are being forced to flee their homes. Around 120,000 people are currently seeking asylum across Australia, and an estimated 59,000 – half of them – are residing in Victoria. Our aim at Cabrini Outreach is not only to fill the critical gap in healthcare services for people seeking asylum, but to provide guidance, hope, support and safety as they strive to reclaim their freedom, autonomy and human rights. The

number of people facing destitution and requiring integrated medical care is increasing, and the last months have tested everyone's strength. However, our staff, partners and the recipients of our care remain hopeful and determined. I am proud of the tireless effort that both our employed and pro bono teams put towards helping those most in need amongst our community. Looking internationally, we can be grateful for the reciprocated relationship and support we have with our partners in Eswatini, Ethiopia, Papua New Guinea and New York. Despite the extraordinary difficulties that many of these countries are facing in the ever-changing patterns of the COVID-19 pandemic, the dedication, commitment and resilience that our

partners and friends have shown through their own acts of kindness is remarkable.

May 2021 marks our Cabrini Asylum Seeker and Refugee Health Hub's 5th birthday – a proud achievement where we have provided care and support to over 1000 clients. We have been so successful due to the unwavering generosity of our pro bono staff, donors, Cabrini Health Executive and the passion of our team. I would like to say thank you for taking part and contributing to our journey. Without you, our achievements would not have been possible.

### Tracey Cabrié

Manager of Cabrini Asylum Seeker and Refugee Health Hub

## ANNUAL HUB FUNDRAISING EVENT

This month, our Cabrini Asylum Seeker and Refugee Health Hub held their annual fundraising event in Brunswick, welcoming trustees, donors and other special supporters such as Federal MP for Wills, Peter Khalil.

Our experienced staff took the opportunity to showcase the important progress that the Hub has made over the past years, spread awareness of the challenges that refugees and people seeking asylum continue to face in Australia, and reach out for offerings in the effort to bolster the important work being done. Dr Suresh Sundram, co-founder of the Hub and Director of Research, had this to say:

*"The people that come to us are the most traumatised of the traumatised. The vision of the Hub is not one of making do – it is to be the best leading cutting-edge health service*



Staff of Cabrini Outreach at the Annual 2021 Hub Fundraising Event

*for refugees and asylum seekers in Australia, and globally."*

\*Amir, one of our clients from Iran, also got up and offered some touching words: *"I have seen how there can be so much joy in putting smiles on people's faces, like Cabrini Outreach does. Living in uncertainty is hard, and a lot of people can crack under the pressure. It is very hard to reflect on those tough times, but I am glad that*

*they are over. I now see myself as an Aussie."*

By supporting us, you not only help strengthen one of the only accessible primary and mental health care services for Melbourne's asylum seekers and refugees, but you help us fund ground-breaking research into the ways that trauma can be managed in this vulnerable cohort.

*\*Name changed to protect identity*

## WE ARE EXCITED TO ANNOUNCE THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLINIC SIHAT IN SHEPPARTON

Cabrini Outreach are expanding their specialist primary health service to Shepparton, to address the needs of vulnerable refugees, undocumented migrants and people seeking asylum.

More than 2000 people residing in Shepparton were born in a refugee-producing country, according to the most recent census. Estimates place the population of temporary migrants from Malaysia between 800-1000, and community leaders estimate that there are around 250 people seeking asylum from the Hazara, Iraqi and Iranian communities in the region. A large proportion of this population will not be eligible for Medicare, and therefore are unable to access healthcare unless they are in a financial position to pay or they choose to attend the local hospital. Unfortunately, there are no

GPs in Shepparton willing to see people seeking asylum and migrants without Medicare free of charge.

As part of the expansion of our specialist mental health service to the region, we consulted extensively with local community leaders and services. It became acutely apparent that there was a serious need for primary care.

Through a partnership with Primary Care Connect, we will expand our health service to Shepparton, to address this need. The new clinic will be named Clinic Sihati; 'Sihati' meaning 'health and wellbeing' in Malay, Arabic,

Hazaragi and Urdu. It will offer on-ground presence of an experienced pro bono GP and practice nurse, as well as a specialist mental health clinician who will work with clients via telehealth. We will offer the provision of free immunisations, pathology tests, clinical referrals and a pharmacy waiver service – all provided free of charge to the clients. As a pilot program, we hope that this will build capacity for local GPs to accept referrals and provide appropriate clinical care to refugees. We are looking for pro bono GPs to provide care. If you can help, please get in touch!

## FILLING IN THE GAPS: CATCH-UP IMMUNISATIONS FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

When people seeking asylum and refugees arrive here in Melbourne, they often have not had access to the same immunisations that others born and raised here might have.

These clients are a particularly vulnerable group, and many have come from countries overseas where there is a high prevalence of infectious diseases. Though they are often forgotten, Cabrini Hub's Immunisation Program ensures that new arrivals can be on par with the general public when it comes to being vaccinated. Whenever a new client presents at the Hub, our nurses meet with them to undergo a full refugee health screening assessment, and a catch-up immunisation schedule is created outlining what vaccinations they need and when. This can include Polio, Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (whooping cough), Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Varicella (chicken pox), as well as Hepatitis B. They also provide Influenza, Meningococcal ACWY, Gardasil, Pneumococcal and Herpes Zoster Vaccine for adults who are eligible. As it takes about 3-6 months

for adults to catch up, this also allows the time and opportunity to check in with clients monthly and thus build rapport.

*"Offering this service to clients leaves them feeling extremely happy and grateful afterwards," says Maymun Mohamad, Refugee Practice Nurse. "There is extremely little hesitation – if only from needle phobia – and it makes them feel like they are on the same level as others in the community. As nurses, it is a privilege to provide the service, and it is lovely that clients are so open and trusting with us."*

While the peaks of COVID-19 posed a challenge in bringing clients in for their immunisations, our team of nurses and doctors worked hard to rearrange the catch-up schedules whilst wisely weighing up the risks of bringing their clients into Cabrini Hub. As we begin to witness the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out



Hannah (right), a practice nurse, vaccinating an asylum seeker client at the Cabrini Asylum Seeker and Refugee Health Hub

throughout Australia, we are further reminded as to why free and accessible vaccinations are so important. Rest assured that our Hub will continue to play its part and be involved with the Victorian Government and other partner agencies to ensure equity of access for our clients to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

## A GLIMPSE INTO OUR WORK OVERSEAS

### Eswatini

Last year when masks were mandated in Melbourne, around 25-30 people valiantly volunteered to sew fabric face



Children at Cabrini Ministries Eswatini wearing face masks sewed by Cabrini volunteers

masks for the clients and families of our Cabrini Outreach asylum seeker health programs. Having made more than 2000 at the time, all extra masks were shipped to our partners in Cabrini Ministries Eswatini, where teachers and parents were overjoyed to see their children receiving the free masks at school. The adult masks were also distributed to their elderly and HIV positive patients, who are at higher risk of infection if exposed to COVID-19.

*"Pre-school has been running now for 4 weeks, and of course*



*most of our children have lost or destroyed their masks, so this stock will ensure our kids remain compliant with our national regulations until they hopefully ease later in the year. We are so grateful to have this gift to support us in our determination to beat this virus!"* (Joanne Chesson Smit, Program Manager Cabrini Ministries Eswatini)

### Ethiopia

While the past few months have seen Ethiopia battle harder against the COVID-19 virus, our friends and partners at St Mary's Hospital in Dubbo have never stopped trying to provide the best healthcare services they can to their patients in need. Cabrini Outreach continues to contribute funds to the hospital's Maternal and Child Health Program, which has fortunately witnessed the continuation of: pregnant mothers attending for assisted births; their antenatal education program boosting engagement; malnutrition being addressed; and clients receiving surgical care when needed.

### Papua New Guinea

This month, thanks to the generosity of the Pacific Development and Conservation Trust, we sent a much needed autoclave machine and a vaccination fridge to our partners at Malala Health Clinic. As the COVID-19 pandemic has begun to affect the people of Papua New Guinea more severely, we hope that with this equipment they will also be able to strengthen their maternal and child health programs in the Malala region.

I WOULD LIKE TO  
*support* CABRINI  
OUTREACH

Here is my donation of:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

My donation is:

Once off     Monthly

My payment details are:

Please debit my:

Visa     Mastercard     AMEX

Card number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expires: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Card holder name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

OR, Enclosed cheque/money order payable to Cabrini Outreach

Please contact me about leaving a Bequest to Cabrini Outreach.

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please direct my donation to:

My details are:

Title: \_\_\_\_\_ First name: \_\_\_\_\_

Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Suburb/Town: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2021 TAX APPEAL

Support people seeking asylum in  
Regional Victoria



Cabrini Outreach is already providing health care to people seeking asylum around the north of Melbourne. Now, we are asking for your help to provide similar health services in regional Victoria, where there is an identified, urgent need.

A needs assessment conducted by Cabrini Outreach in regional Victoria showed that there is a drastic shortage of primary health care services for people seeking asylum, which is why we are establishing a new primary health service in Shepparton. The new Shepparton health service will provide a GP, a primary care nurse, and essential medications for people who have no other means to access vital health services.

In our new fundraising appeal, regional psychosocial support worker Ali says of the clients he sees: *"They don't have work rights... so they are afraid to go to the doctor... They're afraid it will cost money and they don't have money to pay for this... So they try to tolerate the pain until their condition becomes more severe."*

Left untreated, many of the health issues they are experiencing can lead to serious health complications. Many people seeking asylum have already gone through trauma due to persecution or conflict in their countries of origin. So they often struggle with depression, PTSD and other mental health conditions in addition to day-to-day primary health issues.

The fact is, **a drastic shortage of primary health care services for people seeking asylum** exists in regional Victoria. But thanks to caring people like you, it doesn't have to be this way.

You can help people in regional Victoria who have no other avenue for support by making a tax-deductible donation today. Go to [www.cabrinioutreach.com.au](http://www.cabrinioutreach.com.au) or phone 9508 1412.

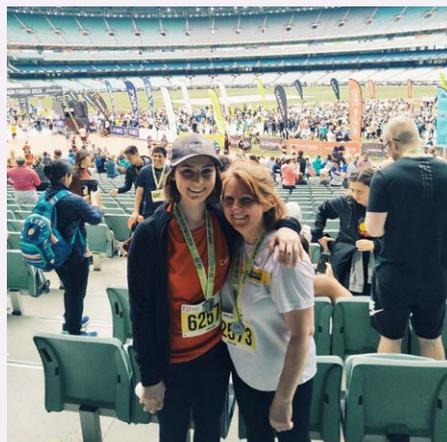
## MEET

# Claire!

We're pleased to introduce you to Claire, one of our Cabrini Outreach Special Project Officers.

Claire started at Cabrini Outreach in January 2019, after working in hospital administration at Ramsay Private, as a lifeguard in the US, and as a volunteer at kids and leadership camps. She has recently taken over the administrative duties for our Hume Whittlesea Pharmacy Waiver Program, working closely with people seeking asylum who need help accessing their essential medications, as well as providing other support to our Cabrini Hub team. All while completing an Honours Degree of Arts majoring in Sociology, and working as a support worker in her spare time. We asked Claire about her experience working with Cabrini Outreach:

*"Working with Cabrini Outreach has been a truly inspiring experience. When working with the pharmacy waiver clients I am always overwhelmed*



*Claire (left) taking part in the 2019 Melbourne Marathon*

*by their gratitude for simply being here in Australia, despite all the obstacles they encounter. The team at the Hub work with people seeking asylum; some of whom have been waiting long periods in limbo to find out if they can stay in Australia. I have met people who after six to eight years of building a life, making friends, having kids and recovering from trauma, are still waiting to know their refugee status outcome.*

*Before I was diagnosed with a mix of rheumatoid arthritis and scleroderma, I wanted to run my own café. But after losing around 70% of movement in my hands I had to rethink what I wanted*

*to do. With rest, proper medication and a holistic understanding of chronic disease management, I have been lucky to get most of my movement back and get my health under control. But it set me on a new path. This is why I am passionate about our Pharmacy Waiver Program, which has supported more than 100 clients since it began in 2019. I know first-hand the trouble it causes when you don't have control over your medications. If you don't follow your doctor's prescription, a manageable issue can quickly spiral out of control.*

*I love working with our clients to ensure they have access to essential medications, which puts them one step closer to independence and a better managed health journey."*



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[www.cabrinioutreach.com.au](http://www.cabrinioutreach.com.au)