

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES
CREATING POSITIVE IMPACT



metro assist



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Acknowledgement of Country

Metro Assist would like to acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and celebrate the diversity of First Nations people and their ongoing cultures and connections to our lands and waters.

About Metro Assist

Metro Assist was established in 1986 as a Migrant Resource Centre. We have extensive history of delivering services to vulnerable individuals, families, and communities in Canterbury Bankstown, Inner West, Burwood, Canada Bay, and Strathfield Local Government Areas. Some of our services support the people across different LGAs of NSW. We have specialist knowledge of the experiences and needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. We are committed to promoting diversity and social inclusion through our services and collaborative sector advocacy work.

Our Vision

A fair society that respects diversity and enables all people to reach their full potential.

Mission

To empower individuals, families and communities of diverse backgrounds through professional person-centred services.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

About us, Our Vision and Mission	2
Acknowledgement of Country	3
Chairpersons Report	4
CEO's Report	5
Our Impact	6
Settlement Engagement & Transition Support	8
Financial Inclusion	10
Family Services	12
Tenancy Services	14
Employment Services	16
Dress for Work	18
Community Engagement & Capacity Building	20
Partnerships, Sector Collaboration & Advocacy	23
Financial Report	26
Partners / Collaborators	28

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

The role Metro Assist plays in the lives of individuals, families, and communities in the Canterbury-Bankstown, Inner West, and broader Sydney area has never been more important than over the past couple of years. In 2023/24, migrant numbers remained steady while, at the same time, cost-of-living pressures escalated as inflation soared to its highest levels in recent history. These challenging economic conditions have made it increasingly difficult for both established communities and newly arrived individuals to survive and thrive.

Refugees and migrants are at their most vulnerable when they first come to the country. Our clients either have no or limited networks of friends and family to draw upon. This is where Metro Assist provides an invaluable role, supporting migrants through a diverse range of services, to help them find their feet in their new

homeland and to start their work and life journey. Securing ongoing funding for settlement services last year has ensured that Metro Assist can continue its critical mission of supporting newly arrived populations, a commitment that has endured since 1986.

This year, the demand for all services assisting vulnerable people continues to expand, while the quality of these services and our care for our clients remains high. This would not be possible without the invaluable contributions of our funding partners and contributors. I extend my sincere gratitude to our Federal, State, and Local Government funders, as well as our private sector partners, for their continued financial support and endorsement.

“OUR WORKFORCE ARE HIGHLY COMMITTED PASSIONATE PEOPLE WHO BELIEVE IN WHAT THEY ARE DOING.”

On behalf of the Board, I would like to acknowledge the great work of our CEO Nina Shahi, her leadership team, and all the Metro Assist team members and volunteers. Our workforce are highly committed passionate people who believe in what they are doing. Our team continues to find new and meaningful ways to make a positive difference to the lives of our clients and their families. The organisation has been very successful in a dif-

ficult economic environment where workforce shortages has placed significant pressure on the team to deliver the quality services they are renowned for.

Our directors also volunteer their time selflessly, balancing these responsibilities alongside their existing family and professional commitments. Each director brings a unique set of skills, expertise, and perspectives to foster well-informed and collaborative decision-making. Their dedication and passion for the organisation's mission and its outcomes are evident. I would like to extend my gratitude to the director who retired in early 2024, Alex Maitland, and the director retiring at this year's AGM, Susan Loane. Both have made significant contributions to the

organisation during their tenure, and their professional insights will be greatly missed.

I would like to acknowledge the contributions of my predecessor, Scott Machin, who served as Chair for six years before stepping down in December 2023, after which I took over the role. His leadership was instrumental in transforming the organisation into the success it is today.



Richard Wonders
Director and Chairperson

CEO'S REPORT

The fiscal year 2023/24 was a period marked by both exciting advancements, meaningful achievement for our clients and significant challenges including uncertainty of funding for our core services for Metro Assist, reflective of the unique challenges faced by small to medium-sized charities and community sector organisations. Amidst the constraints, Metro Assist was able to positively impact the lives of individuals and families in our service areas through a comprehensive range of wrap-around services for those who have been disproportionately affected by escalating living costs and the ongoing housing crisis.

A key achievement this year was securing funding to continue providing the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program in our service regions. With the conclusion a decade-long NSP partnership for SETS led by Settlement Services International (SSI), through which Metro Assist and other partner organisations delivered services collaboratively, we transitioned to a localised partnership model. This shift led to the establishment of the Canterbury Bankstown and Inner West SETS consortium, designed to provide collaborative and coordinated support for newly arrived migrants and refugees in our regions.

This year also saw a historic review of the multicultural framework by the Australian Government. As a multicultural organisation, Metro Assist welcomes the reform and is committed to strengthening the fabric of multicultural Australia, ensuring that diverse communities are supported and empowered through our services and community voices.

Alongside our ongoing services in family support, tenancy support, financial inclusion, and employment assistance, this year we

expanded our financial counselling program in the Bankstown area with funding support from the Department of Social Services. We also expanded our Dress for Work fee-for-service initiative and initiated the "Love and Hope Hub", a collaborative, one-stop walk-in service where women experiencing family and domestic violence can access immediate support in a safe environment.

“AS A MULTICULTURAL ORGANISATION, METRO ASSIST WELCOME THE REFORM AND IS COMMITTED TO STRENGTHENING THE FABRIC OF MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA”

Financially, Metro Assist maintained a healthy surplus in 2023/24, keeping us in a strong fiscal position. This stability is essential to our long-term sustainability, building our capacity to invest in the infrastructure, capabilities, and systems required to enhance service delivery. This year, we made strategic investments to improve our service delivery practices and staff capacity-building initiatives.

We extend our gratitude to our funding bodies, including the Department of Home Affairs, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, NSW Office of Fair Trading, Multicultural NSW, the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, LinkedIn, and other funding agencies, for their continued support and trust in our teams.

We also fostered partnerships and collaborated throughout the year with a diverse range of stakeholders to enhance both our service delivery and advocacy efforts. We are sincerely thankful for the ongoing support and collaboration of local councils, partner organisations, ethno-specific groups, community leaders, peak bodies such as Settlement Coalition of Australia, FAMS, and Refugee Council of Australia. These collaborations have allowed us to

deliver integrated and inclusive services while amplifying critical community voices to influence policies that foster equitable outcomes.

To our leadership team, staff, and volunteers, I offer my heartfelt appreciation for your invaluable contributions throughout the year. Your dedication, agility, and remarkable resilience during times

of change have been instrumental in advancing our mission to empower the clients and communities we serve.

Finally, I extend my gratitude to our Board of Directors for their voluntary contributions to the organisation and strategic guidance, and ongoing support to me and our management team. Our team is grateful to our Chairperson, Richard Wonders, and the Board Directors for their leadership and invaluable contributions to Metro Assist.



Nina Shahi
CEO

OUR IMPACT

In 2023-24, Metro Assist continued to support the social well-being of the communities we serve by addressing the challenges faced by vulnerable people and communities, including people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, migrants and refugees and families.

Our Family, Finance, Employment, Settlement and Tenancy programs empower individuals by working to their strengths and aspirations. **This holistic approach promotes long-term well-being, encourages self-sufficiency and resilience, and enables clients to contribute meaningfully to the communities they live in.**

Through collaborative sector advocacy, we work alongside other organisations and government bodies to create safe and welcoming spaces where individuals can engage, connect, and support one another. The result is a more connected, empowered, and inclusive society, where individuals and families can thrive.



We supported:

13,318
people through our holistic services

Top 4 Languages spoken:



Arabic
Mandarin
Bengali
Vietnamese

(NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO MAINTAIN CLIENT CONFIDENTIALITY)

 **3,190**
newly arrived migrants and refugees to settle into Australia

 **150**
skilled workers to find meaningful employment

 **700**

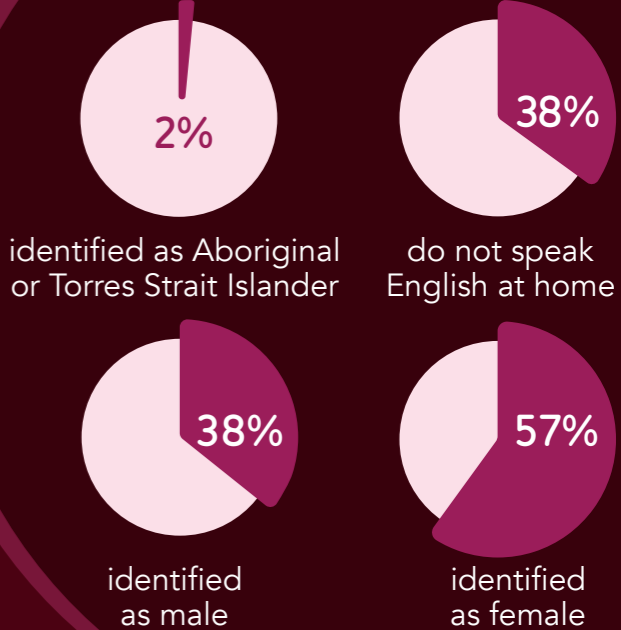
parents with young children towards their work goals

 **3,289**
children, young people & families to build positive life skills

 **1,046**
households access to financial services

 **3,887**
tenants needing advice

Who our clients are:



We supported

 3,190

newly arrived migrants and refugees to settle into Australia

 946 new intake clients

 106 newly arrived DFV victims and survivors

 80 learners with free driving practice

 152 group activities to increase knowledge, skill and enhance social participation

 102 in-language sessions

 150 sessions for youth through school-based programs

SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Our **Settlement service** is dedicated to empowering newly arrived humanitarian entrants and other eligible permanent migrants in Canterbury Bankstown and Sydney Inner West areas by equipping them with the knowledge and tools needed to integrate into Australian society.

At Metro Assist, our focus is on enhancing social participation, economic well-being, independence, personal wellness, community connectedness and self-agency for our clients. We achieve these goals through tailored wrap-around one-on-one support, group-based interventions, and community capacity building. In 2023/24, our team of professionals from diverse cultural backgrounds with lived experiences as migrants or refugees, delivered culturally sensitive person-centred support that drove impactful outcomes for our clients in accessing education, English language skills, employment, housing, health, family support, civic engagement, the justice and legal system, and achieving financial independence.

We offered targeted support to **at-risk youth, domestic violence survivors, and job seekers**, ensuring services met the specific needs of these migrants and refugee cohorts and ensure that no one is left behind.

We continued to strengthen our partnerships with government agencies, businesses, and service providers initiating collaborative initiatives as well as advocating for changes to address systemic challenges that create barriers to the successful settlement of migrants. A notable achievement, we launched the Love and Hope Lakemba Hub, where service providers collaborate weekly to deliver free, comprehensive support for domestic violence survivors. Following its success, a second hub was opened in Burwood, expanding access to this vital service.

KATE

SETS DV Support

KATE, a Vietnamese immigrant, came to Australia after marrying her ex-husband. Her husband had been physically, emotionally, and financially abusive, forcing her to cover his gambling expenses. By the time she reached out to Metro Assist, she and her three children had been kicked out and were staying with relatives.

Metro Assist prioritised Kate's safety and well-being, providing her with counseling, one-on-one coaching, and connecting her with the women's support circle. This helped her regain confidence and build social connections. Kate also joined the Ladies Job Fit program, which introduced her to the Australian job market. Inspired to work in aged-care or disability services, she was linked to an NDIS provider, marking the start of her path to financial independence.

KATE IS FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT, CONFIDENT, AND PURSUING FURTHER STUDIES

She is now working towards applying for public housing and Australian citizenship, and is financially independent, confident, and pursuing further studies, a testament to Metro Assist's holistic support.

(NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO MAINTAIN CLIENT CONFIDENTIALITY)

KHAN

SETS Youth Support

Through Metro Assist's Driving Program, **KHAN** from Afghanistan received five free lessons, helping him gain the skills and confidence needed to secure his license.

Khan then set his sights on finding a job in the logistics sector, where he could utilise his previous experience from Afghanistan. He attended job readiness workshops, learned how to craft a compelling resume and practiced for interviews. The program not only equipped him with essential skills but also introduced him to other young immigrants facing similar journeys.

AS KHAN'S SETTLEMENT CONTINUES, HE REMAINS COMMITTED TO MAKING THE MOST OF METRO ASSIST'S VARIOUS PROGRAMS

As Khan's settlement continues, he remains committed to making the most of Metro Assist's various programs. Through community events and social gatherings, Kahn has formed friendships that provide him with a sense of belonging. He shares his stories and experiences with others, becoming a source of encouragement for those who are just beginning their own journeys.

“
CLIENT
STORIES

We supported



330

Inner West Council households with 2717 financial counselling sessions, to manage their debts



48

Bankstown households with 538 financial counselling sessions to manage their debts

426



households in financial crisis with 344 clients accessing emergency relief assistance



242

Households to access NILS loans

\$160,564

worth of EAPA Assistance

FINANCIAL INCLUSION

The **Financial Inclusion Program** offered within the **Inner West and Canterbury-Bankstown Local Government Areas (LGAs)** play a vital role in supporting individuals and families who are facing financial difficulties. This year, as the cost of living continues to rise exponentially, many community members struggled to meet basic expenses and faced daily financial challenges, including accumulating debts and difficulty making loan and mortgage repayments.

In 2023/24, our **Financial Counselling, No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS), Energy Accounts Payment Assistance (EAPA), and Emergency Relief** services helped build financial resilience within the community and played a crucial role in reducing the risk of homelessness, poverty, and financial exploitation by offering targeted support that empowers individuals to regain control of their finances and reduce the risk of long-term financial hardship.

Our dedicated team of financial counsellors and financial capability workers provided personalised advice and support, helping individuals assess their financial situation, access immediate relief assistance, negotiate with creditors, and develop manageable repayment plans, thereby alleviating the burden of overwhelming debt.

By helping alleviate financial stress, Metro Assist services improved mental health and well-being, empowering vulnerable individuals and families with the tools and resources needed for a secure, stable future.

MICHAEL

Financial Counselling Inner West

MICHAEL, a 45-year-old construction worker, suffered a workplace injury requiring surgery and rehabilitation, leaving him unable to work. Although he received Workcover payments, his reduced income made it difficult to meet mortgage repayments. After six months of hardship assistance from his bank, further help was denied.

“WHEN MICHAEL RETURNED TO FULL-TIME WORK, THE COUNSELLOR HELPED NEGOTIATE THE ARREARS ON THE LOAN

Michael contacted Metro Assist's Financial Counselling Service for support. The counsellor, with his consent, presented the bank with evidence of Michael's capacity for partial payments and a rehabilitation plan. The bank extended the reduced payments, and when Michael returned to full-time work, the counsellor helped negotiate the arrears on the loan. Michael was relieved to keep his mortgage and home and appreciated the guidance from Metro Assist.

FADA

No Interest Loan Scheme

FADA, of Arabic background, had moved into temporary accommodation for safety reasons. She contacted Metro Assist seeking a NILS Loan in the hope of buying a couch and side table for her new home. Fada expressed concerns about her ability to cope with bills as a single parent of three children and the challenges of the application requirements.

Since financial budgeting was new to Fada, the NILS worker used simple ideas to build a better understanding of financial literacy and was able to create a sustainable budget that allowed Fada to make repayments while still being able to pay bills and other living expenses. When the application was successful, Fada expressed her gratitude for the time and support provided by the NILS worker.

“SINCE FINANCIAL BUDGETING WAS NEW TO FADA, THE NILS WORKER USED SIMPLE IDEAS TO BUILD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF FINANCIAL LITERACY

Fada was referred by the Family team, highlighting the importance of using an in-house wrap-around approach. Fada was able to share her story and feel comfortable with the application process while also indirectly building financial resilience that Fada can use in her daily life.

(NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO MAINTAIN CLIENT CONFIDENTIALITY)

“
CLIENT
STORIES

We supported

 3,289

children, young people and families
to **build positive life skills**

1,754

people with
opportunities
to **connect**
with others in
the community



 80

families with
psychologist services

509

people
with **targeted**
education and
skills training



96

children, 10 young
people and **45 families**
experiencing or at risk
of vulnerability to
manage their life
situations early



17

women experiencing
DV, or relationship
breakdown in
accessing relevant
services and build
their self-resilience



“
CLIENT
STORIES

FAMILY SERVICES

Our **Family Service program**, funded by the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) under the **Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI)** and **Family Preservation Programs**, provides critical support to vulnerable families with children. Focused on early intervention, cultural safety, and evidence-based practices, the program strengthens family connections and helps families access education, skills training, and targeted support in areas such as mental health, parenting, and family preservation.

In 2023/24, our **TEI program** offered a wide range of activities, including community events, safe community spaces, and skill-building activities like Barista courses and Music Therapy. Initiatives such as the Conversation Club and Art Therapy fostered social connections, while evidence-based parenting programs, including Tuning into Kids, 1-2-3 Magic, and Blackbox, were tailored for CALD families. Families also received free counseling and family therapy service from an in-house psychologist, alongside support through referrals, advice, and case management by our qualified and passionate caseworkers. Our program supported families by addressing their immediate needs while empowering them to build long-term capacity and resilience.

Our **Family Preservation Program** works with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) families within the child protection system to create safe environments for children at risk of significant harm. In collaboration with the DCJ, we supported families in Bankstown, Liverpool, and Fairfield, ensuring safe and nurturing home environments, thus preventing the need for out-of-home care. Our bilingual and bicultural workers approach family support through a cultural lens, ensuring the service is both culturally safe and responsive.

JACK

Psychological support

JACK was referred to the Metro Assist's Psychological Support Service after he struggled to cope with his wife's mental health challenges following the birth of their child. Jack and his partner were socially isolated in Australia. They have no family and very limited opportunities to make friends.

Jack found himself working in a limited job skill set despite his overseas qualifications. As a result, Jack's confidence took a hit. Through his sessions Jack began to understand that when his mental health was strained, his perception of his surroundings and community became distorted.

“**HIS JOURNEY IS A TESTAMENT TO THE POWER OF SELF-EMPOWERMENT**

Inspired by his sessions, he sought to find additional resources within the community to enhance his well-being. With these tools, Jack developed greater self-awareness and insight, enabling him to make meaningful changes in his life. His journey is a testament to the power of self-empowerment, seeking help, embracing growth, and finding strength in the Australian community.

TANYA

Bringing Up Great Kids

"I am writing to express my gratitude for the incredible experience I had attending the Tuning in to Kids, 1-2-3 Magic, and Bringing Up Great Kids workshops. As a mother of two, these sessions have not only enriched my parenting journey but equipped me with valuable insights into emotional intelligence.

Before these workshops, I didn't fully grasp how essential emotional intelligence is for myself and my children. The guidance provided not only highlighted its importance but offered practical tips for incorporating it into our daily lives. The idea that there is no 'perfect parent' – only a 'good enough' one – has lifted a huge weight off my shoulders, allowing me to focus on being the best I can be for my kids.

“**THE IDEA THAT THERE IS NO 'PERFECT PARENT' – HAS LIFTED A HUGE WEIGHT OFF MY SHOULDERS**

Special thanks to Kay, our facilitator, whose warmth and expertise created a supportive learning environment. I encourage all parents to attend these workshops – the insights are transformative, and the practical tips are invaluable tools for navigating parenthood.” — **TANYA L.**

(NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO MAINTAIN CLIENT CONFIDENTIALITY)

We supported



4,712

tenants in protecting their tenancy rights



4,031

open cases and 3,986 were closed



4,099

counts of information provided



3,647

tenants with **Duty Advocacy** service



1,460

tenants with **NCAT application** and representation



6.3%

tenants reported to have **disability**

TENANCY SERVICES

The **Southern Sydney Tenants Advice and Advocacy Service** (SSTAAS), funded by NSW Fair Trading, provides information, advice, and assistance to private and public housing tenants, including communicating with landlords and real estate agents and preparing for, and attending, consumer tribunal hearings.

The rental market in 2023-2024 was among the toughest in decades, marked by historically low vacancy rates and unusually high rental prices, pushing many renters into a housing crisis. Southern Sydney with its high proportion of rental properties in NSW, was particularly affected, driving significant demand for our tenancy service. This ongoing crisis significantly increased demand for the service, particularly in cases involving rental increases, arrears, evictions, maintenance disputes, and other tenancy issues. Our tenant advocates provided crucial advice and advocacy support to renters facing multiple barriers to achieving equitable justice, prioritising representation support to individuals experiencing family and domestic violence, those living with mental health challenges or disabilities, people having language barriers, and individuals from First Nations backgrounds and LGBTQIA+ communities.

During 2023/24, the NSW Government's announcement of an imminent "No Grounds" eviction policy marked a significant milestone. Metro Assist, as a member of its peak body Tenant Union, played a role in advocating for this policy for over a decade and we welcome the reform. This policy will offer greater stability and security to renters, providing them with protection against evictions without reasonable grounds.



(Second from right) Sophie Cotsis MP, Minister for Industrial Relations, and Minister for Work Health and Safety, Member for Canterbury, with Metro Assist Staff.

CLIENT STORIES

AHMED

AHMED, a tenant from Roselands, receives disability payments also faced language barriers and financial hardship. After his landlord repeatedly ignored requests to address severe mould and a leaky roof to the property he had lived for 12 years with his wife and two young children, Ahmed reached out to Metro Assist.

Metro Assist helped Ahmed send a formal repair request, which was ignored. When the situation worsened and the kitchen ceiling collapsed, Ahmed filed an application with NCAT, seeking rent reduction and compensation. NCAT ruled in his favour, ordering the landlord to pay him \$10,000 compensation immediately.

“**AHMED WAS ABLE TO PROTECT HIS RIGHTS AND SECURE THE COMPENSATION HE DESERVED**

Ahmed was further empowered with bond advice, enabling him to successfully file another NCAT claim after moving out. He is now receiving help with a rent arrears claim from his landlord. Thanks to Metro Assist's guidance, Ahmed was able to protect his rights and secure the compensation he deserved.

HANA

HANA, a single mother to a 7-year-old daughter, had survived domestic violence and faced eviction when her landlord issued a 90-day notice to vacate. Due to financial hardship, health issues, and limited income, Hana struggled to find alternative housing.


When Hana contacted Metro Assist seeking advice, the Tenancy Advisor recognised her urgent need for housing, and referred Hana to Homes NSW, advocating on her behalf to access more secure accommodation. Hana and her daughter were eventually offered a stable home in public housing.

“**HANA AND HER DAUGHTER WERE EVENTUALLY OFFERED A STABLE HOME IN RIVERWOOD**

After moving in Hana was connected with St Vincent de Paul Society for white goods and Anglicare for financial assistance. Feeling safe and secure, Hana has regained the confidence needed to seek employment and is working towards a better future for herself and her daughter.

(NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO MAINTAIN CLIENT CONFIDENTIALITY)

We supported

 **700**
parents with
young children

ParentsNext participants with
 **75k**
in financial support

 **100**
skilled migrants and refugees
with education and employment
opportunities

 **30%**
of SkillME participants to
gain employment, internship
or volunteering

 **20%**
of SkillME participants were
connected to industry specific
professional help

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

ParentsNext is a voluntary pre-employment program that supports parents and carers in planning for work before their youngest child starts school. Through case management, Metro Assist helped participants identify and create career pathways and supported them with the relevant courses, driving lessons, study related expenses, and childcare as well as linked them to internal and external services to address other barriers such as domestic violence, homelessness, or financial hardship.

In addition to one-on-one support, in 2023-2024, our team conducted over 20 information sessions and workshops relevant to parents and families. We provided direct assistance to around 150 participants with resume writing, cover letters, interview skills, and job mentoring, empowering those ready for employment.

SkillME is an employment support program aimed at assisting skilled migrants and refugees in finding meaningful employment in Australia by addressing the intersectional barriers they face. Through the program, we connected skilled migrants and refugees with work opportunities and supported their career and employment goals through training, education, skill recognition, and mentoring. These efforts further enhanced their employability and job readiness skills, helping them achieve sustainable employment outcomes.

AISHA

ParentsNext

AISHA contacted Metro Assist's ParentsNext service in 2022 after having escaped domestic violence and facing severe financial hardship, to build independence and a stable future for herself and her children. Exploring study options, Aisha decided to pursue a Certificate III in Accounting.

To ensure Aisha could focus on her studies Metro Assist covered her course fees, provided her with a study device, and assisted with childcare and travel costs. By 2023, after successfully completing her study, Aisha secured a traineeship with an accounting firm and chose to further her education by enrolling in a Certificate IV in Accounting.

“ AISHA PROUDLY COMPLETED HER TRAINEESHIP AND SECURED EMPLOYMENT BEFORE HER CHILDREN STARTED SCHOOL

In 2024, Aisha proudly completed her traineeship with the organisation, expressing gratitude to Metro Assist for the guidance provided to complete the qualifications and secure employment before her children started school. Aisha's story is one of resilience, growth, and empowerment, demonstrating the life-changing impact of Metro Assist's support.

“
CLIENT
STORIES

NATALIA

SkillME

NATALIA, a Ukrainian refugee, reached out to Metro Assist's SkillME program with hopes of achieving her employment goals. After taking the time to understand her aspirations, and the barriers she faced, the SkillME facilitator connected with an Australia Post officer on Natalia's behalf, who shared details about their career program for refugees. With the facilitator's guidance, Natalia was encouraged to explore this opportunity.

“ NATALIA SUCCESSFULLY SECURED A POSITION AT AUSTRALIA POST, A ROLE SHE CONTINUES TO ENJOY

Natalia's resume was enhanced, and she received valuable interview preparation to strengthen her application. Her efforts paid off—Natalia successfully secured a position at Australia Post, a role she continues to enjoy. Grateful for the personalised support from the SkillME program, Natalia shared how it made a significant difference in her journey. Her success story highlights the impact of Metro Assist's dedication to helping refugees like Natalia find stability and fulfillment through meaningful employment.

(NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO MAINTAIN CLIENT CONFIDENTIALITY)



Jihad Dib MP
@ DFW showroom

CLIENT STORY

DRESS FOR WORK

We supported



over

1,000

men to cultivate resilience and confidence



40

empowerment workshops



600

men with resume writing and job interview skills

Dress for Work is dedicated to empowering men to achieve their full potential through a comprehensive range of services including workshops, mentoring, and professional clothing assistance. The aim is to ensure that each participant gains a clearer understanding of their goals and how their engagement with the program brings them closer to achieving them. Over the past year, Dress for Work program has successfully engaged over thousand men including young people, **fostering an environment to cultivate resilience, confidence, and a positive self-image.**

This year, our ongoing collaboration with the Department of Education, high schools, and employment agencies across New South Wales has allowed Dress for Work to expand its fee-for-service offerings, moving closer to achieving financial sustainability. Our highly passionate team provided fitting and styling support alongside tailored job readiness program and mentoring to the students and job seekers under these partnerships including a standout program, the **Boys-2-Men DFW School Program**. This program focused on promoting the safety and well-being of young males, helping them feel confident and connected to their community despite external challenges. These workshops covered topics such as leadership, teamwork, mental health awareness, responsible decision-making, and anger management. By imparting essential life skills, the program empowering young men to set self-directed career goals and navigate life's challenges effectively.



BEFORE



AFTER

BUILDING MY CONFIDENCE AND SETTING SOME ACHIEVABLE GOALS TO CHANGE MY FUTURE

Tyrone - Empowerment Workshop attendee before & after

MORRIS MUKASA

Morris's journey to resilience and transformation

Morris Mukasa, enrolled into the 10-week empowerment program, as a basic need to provide for his family when he first arrived in Australia. Mukasa not only received support needed from the course but was also empowered to make a difference in the lives of others. Inspired by his own experiences, Morris envisioned a community initiative to help individuals like himself in navigating the challenges of settling in a new country.

“MAKASA'S STORY IS AN INSPIRATION, SHOWING HOW ONE PERSON'S STRUGGLES CAN LEAD TO MEANINGFUL CHANGE FOR OTHERS

The KWETU program, which stands for “The Therapeutic and Transformative Program” offers practical support such as obtaining food and clothing, as well as emotional and psychological guidance. His contributions to promoting social cohesion and supporting fellow migrants earned him a nomination for the prestigious Australian African Awards.

Makasa's story is an inspiration, showing how one person's struggles can lead to meaningful change for others. Without the initial support from the Dress for Work program, Morris' transformative journey and the impact of the KWETU program may not have been possible.





Big Day Out

The Big Day Out has become a hallmark event for Metro Assist, held annually to provide parents and carers in the Canterbury Bankstown area with access to essential information, resources, and community engagement. Organised in partnership with the Canterbury Child and Family Interagency, the event featured information stalls from local child and family services. We facilitated a variety of engaging recreational activities, including Zumba, arts and crafts, sports, and an interactive reptile display, which were enjoyed by children of all ages. With 534 attendees, the event's resounding success fostered community engagement, strengthened local connections, and provided a meaningful platform for families to access vital support and build lasting relationships.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CAPACITY BUILDING

Metro Assist delivered a suite of impactful initiatives throughout the year, fostering connections among diverse communities, including First Nations peoples, and promoting belonging and inclusion. These programs empowered refugees, families, women, and youth at risk of isolation, enabling them to build confidence, engage socially, and participate actively in community life. Below is a snapshot of some of these activities we delivered.

Refugee week

To mark Refugee Week, Metro Assist hosted a **vibrant Gala Dinner** under the theme **Finding Freedom: Family** celebrated the resilience of refugee families with over 200 guests, including the Hon. Minister Tony Burke. The evening featured a cultural fashion show celebrating rich cultural diversity, musical performances, video stories of refugees' employment journeys, and a panel discussion on "You Can't Ask That," which dispelled stereotypes about refugees. The event paid tribute to refugees' invaluable contributions to the community, enriching cultural diversity, advancing economic growth, and exemplifying resilience in rebuilding lives, families, and homes away from home.



Kick, Hit and Bond Program



Metro Assist's Kick, Hit & Bond program, funded by the Department of Social Services, engaged over 190 young people and families from refugee, migrant, First Nations, and Australian-born backgrounds in Inner Southwest and Southwest Sydney through sporting activities, a universal medium for bringing people together and breaking down barriers. **The program promoted teamwork, respecting different perspectives, access to sporting programs for new arrivals, physical well-being, and social integration.** Over 110 participants joined soccer clinics, 30 took part in basketball sessions, and 50 engaged in biking. The initiative helped foster a sense of belonging and social cohesion among the young people and families through the shared experience of sports.

Halloween Youth Health Spookfest



In partnership with headspace, Co.As.It. and the Inner West Council, the Family Team hosted a "Spookfest" a Halloween festival for teenagers across the Inner West LGAs. The event led by 21 young people, primarily from the Headspace Youth Reference Group and the Inner West Young People Working Group, played a key role in both the planning and execution of the festival, gaining valuable experience and confidence in the process. The event included badge and lantern-making activities, spin the wheel, a DJ, and a BBQ. **The festival not only highlighted the talents and personalities of the young organisers but also provided a supportive space for local teens,** especially those with mental health challenges, allowing them to take centre stage, build self-assurance and encourage social engagement through their active participation.

Lunar New Year



Cr John Faker, Mayor of Burwood, Mr Mark Buttigieg MLC, State Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism, The Hon. Minister Ron Hoenig, NSW Minister for Local Government, Dumpling making

Aiming to promote cross-cultural understanding, Metro Assist hosted a successful cultural exchange event in February 2024 to mark the Lunar New Year. **New migrants from Korean, Vietnamese, Nepalese, Indonesian, Indian, and Arabic communities gathered for a Chinese dumpling making experience.** Organised in partnership with Burwood Council and SBS Australia, the event was attended by government representatives, parliamentarians, and key stakeholders including Services Australia, Service NSW, Sydney Local Health District, Burwood Police, TAFE NSW, and Marrickville Legal Centre. It was a vibrant celebration of inclusion and community engagement, where participants enjoyed the fun of making and tasting dumplings, all while sharing smiles.

Community Capacity Building



During 2023- 2024, Metro Assist has continued to prioritise working closely with ethno-specific and emerging community groups as part of the Emerging Communities Network (ECN). The Network represents diverse groups including Chinese Chinese, Nepalese, Arabic, Korean, Indonesian, Afghani, Ukrainian, Yemeni, Indian, and others, along with ethno-specific LGBTQIA+ and youth groups. It serves as platform for regular dialogue with community leaders. Insights from the Community Leaders Forum continue to shape our service delivery strategies, helping us better address the priorities of the communities we serve. We delivered fundraising, governance and DV awareness workshops to the community leaders and exposure to NSW parliamentary system through excursion to parliament.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CAPACITY BUILDING

CONTINUED

Compact (Youth Program) Funded by Multicultural NSW

In its second year, Metro Assist's compact program engaged 124 youth across four sister school partnerships, fostering community harmony and empowering young people to unite against hate and extremism. The program included leadership, anti-racism, and violent extremism workshops, alongside creative storytelling of personal experiences. By pairing schools with diverse cohorts ranging from migrant and refugee backgrounds to those with established communities or high achievers, the initiative promoted cross-cultural exchanges, enhancing students' understanding and empathy for different perspectives. The impact was evident in the positive feedback, with young people acknowledging how the program nurtured mutual respect and encouraged a collaborative approach to community harmony.

Racial Discrimination Day

A one-day workshop to honour Racial Discrimination Day brought together young people from diverse backgrounds, including migrants, refugees, First Nations people, and other CALD and Australian communities, to foster unity and connectedness.

The 'We All Smile in the Same Language! event explored themes of racial discrimination through powerful stories shared by guest speakers with lived experience from First Nations and refugee backgrounds. They also engaged in storytelling through Aboriginal art, guided by Drew Roberts, Founder of Shared Knowledge. The event promoted community harmony and celebrated Australia's rich cultural diversity.



Women's Circles



The Women's Circle is a transformative post-Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) initiative that empowers survivors to rebuild their lives. This year, the program supported 70 women through skill-building workshops focused on job readiness, driving, digital and financial literacy, conversational English, and overall wellbeing. Participants also engaged in recreational activities, excursions, and community events, fostering connection and belonging.

A dedicated online group was created to keep participants connected, share updates, and build friendships, cultivating a strong community of mutual support. The program continues to enhance confidence, promote healing, and equip women with the skills needed to regain independence and thrive.

Parenting Programs and Parenting Circle

Our evidence-based parenting program, delivered to 157 parents by trained staff, focuses on providing culturally inclusive support tailored to families' needs. The range of parenting programs includes Blackbox (trauma-informed parenting), Tuning in to Kids, Bringing Up Great Kids and 1-2-3 Magic. All our programs are delivered with respect and are reflective of the cultural backgrounds of participants, particularly their beliefs, values, and parenting styles, to ensure success.



Our partnership with CBMIA members

We continued co-convening the **Canterbury Bankstown Multicultural Interagency (CBMIA)**, which brings together services, councils, and government agencies and facilitate exchange of information, sharing of learnings, fostering collaboration and advocating for needs, and addressing service gaps through regional initiatives.

In collaboration with the Canterbury Bankstown Multicultural Interagency (CBMIA) and its members, **Metro Assist proudly co-hosted the International Women's Day (IWD) celebration** at Canterbury Leagues Club in March 2024. The event featured a lineup of guest speakers, including Councillor Rachelle Harika, Deputy Mayor of Canterbury Bankstown Council, and Louise Sauvage OAM, an acclaimed Australian Paralympic wheelchair racer, cultural performances and a well-being session. This event underscored Metro Assist's commitment to celebrating the resilience, achievements, and enduring contributions of women while affirming their pivotal role in shaping a more inclusive and equitable society.

PARTNERSHIP, SECTOR COLLABORATION & ADVOCACY

Collaboration and partnership are fundamental to Metro Assist's mission of empowering communities. Metro Assist has cultivated strategic alliances and partnerships with local services, not-for-profits, local councils, peak bodies, policy makers, political leaders and parliamentarians, government agencies and mainstream services, businesses, and the private sector. These collaborations have enhanced our capacity to address multifaceted challenges and enabled us to strengthen our collective impact and tackle complex social issues that demand comprehensive societal interventions.

Launch of Love and Hope Hub



In December 2023, as part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, **Metro Assist launched the Love & Hope Hub in Lakemba to support women from diverse backgrounds experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV)**. This collaborative initiative brings together key services, including Metro Assist, Legal Aid, Services Australia, WDVCS, and police liaison officers, to provide accessible and holistic support under one roof, eliminating the need for women to repeat their stories to multiple service providers, travel to various service locations or organising multiple appointments while dealing with traumatic experience of violence.

The hub runs weekly and operates as a one-stop service, offering critical support such as personal safety assistance, legal aid, financial aid, and employment programs, all within a safe, non-judgmental, and culturally sensitive environment. Women have reported feeling safer and more hopeful due to the coordinated approach. Due to its success, the hub's services were expanded to Burwood in 2024, extending its reach to more communities in need in the Inner West.



PARTNERSHIP, SECTOR COLLABORATION & ADVOCACY

CONTINUED

Outreach

Our Financial Inclusion Program team continues to demonstrate their agility and flexibility in **delivering outreach services across various locations**, enabling them to respond effectively to the needs of the community. We thank Drummoyne Community Centre and The Deli Women and Children's Centre for making it possible to provide local access to community members in need of financial counselling and emergency relief assistance.

Partnership with St Nectarios Church



For the past few years, Metro Assist has been receiving Christmas hampers from the Youth in Action volunteer team at St. Nectarios Church. **This year, we were fortunate to receive 150 hampers for our clients.** The volunteers raised funds through their annual fundraising efforts to support the hamper program. This long-standing partnership embodies the spirit of community support for refugees and other vulnerable clients. We extend our gratitude to St. Nectarios Church and its youth volunteers for their continued generosity and commitment.

Sky is the Limit

Our team successfully ran the Sky is the Limit empowerment program for young girls aged 12-16 years who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Run in partnership with Deadly Connections, Headspace and Newtown Neighbourhood Centre, **the 2-day event celebrated First Nations women, culture and achievements.** The program was supported by Inner West Council as part of NAIDOC week. Led by strong Indigenous women, the program featured cultural activities such as a smoking ceremony and earring-making, providing participants with the opportunity to connect with their heritage. The program created a culturally rich, supportive space, empowering the girls to embrace their identities and celebrate their collective

NSP Partnership

Metro Assist continued to deliver settlement services under the NSP partnership in 2023/24. However, with the change in contracting arrangements for the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program following the service tender outcomes, Metro Assist will transition from a state-level NSP partnership to a regional partnership from July 2024 onwards. **We extend our sincere thanks to Settlement Services International (SSI) and their dedicated settlement team for leading the consortium for over nine years,** supporting its partners in delivering services collaboratively, and achieving remarkable outcomes for both clients and the settlement sector.

Corporate Partnerships

Metro Assist is proud to continue our partnership with **LinkedIn's Global Refugee Fund**, which supports job-ready refugees by providing them with access to essential networks, skills, and resources to re-enter the workforce. Throughout 2023-2024, this ongoing funding has enabled us to further enhance our job readiness programs, offering career training, mentorship, and facilitating connections between employers and refugee talent.



We also extend our deep appreciation to **Sam Bazzi, Branch Manager at CommBank Campsie**, for his continued support of our initiatives. Over the past year, Sam and his team have generously contributed toys for Ukrainian children during their Christmas celebrations, made a \$2000 community donation to support our work, and provided 12 laptops for the Love & Hope Hub to empower women affected by domestic violence.

Throughout the year, we maintained strong partnerships with employers, recruitment agencies, and corporate clothing donors, whose invaluable support enabled us to deliver the Dress for Work initiative and other employment programs, offering resources, skills, and career guidance to clients.

Government Engagement and Sector Advocacy



Sally Sitou MP, Member for Reid, visiting Burwood Love and Hope Hub

Metro Assist continued its active involvement in policy advocacy by engaging with peak bodies, participating in policy consultations, submitting feedback on policy papers and service reforms, and engaging with government representatives and parliamentarians. Through these efforts, we aim to ensure that the needs of migrants, refugees, and other vulnerable groups are addressed and that the voices of the communities we support are represented at the policy level. We advocate for systemic change and improved services, raise awareness of emerging issues, foster collaboration between service providers, policymakers, and the community, and help shape policies that reflect the diverse needs of those facing social, economic, and systemic inequalities.



Hon. Natasha Maclaren-Jones Shadow Minister for Disability Inclusion, Homelessness, and Youth visiting Dress for Work showroom

FINANCIAL REPORT

Statement of Profit and Loss and Other Comprehensive Income		
	Year Ended 30 June 2024	Year Ended 30 June 2023
Total Revenue	6,643,703	6,820,149
Less Expenses		
Employee benefits expense	4,521,854	4,453,741
Program expenses	527,267	499,539
Property, rent & utilities	400,973	362,832
IT expenses & ISO certification costs	196,298	269,020
Staff development and amenities	189,124	194,850
Other expenses	306,803	319,003
Total Expenses	6,142,319	6,098,985
Total profit for the year attributable to the members	501,384	721,164

Statement of Financial Position		
	30 June 2024	30 June 2023
Assets		
Current	4,565,511	4,217,963
Non-current	68,527	14,814
Total Assets	4,634,038	4,232,777
Liabilities		
Current	1,309,155	1,441,012
Non-current	172,238	140,504
Total Liabilities	1,481,393	1,581,516
NET ASSETS	3,152,645	2,651,261
Equity		
Retained surpluses	3,152,645	2,651,261
TOTAL EQUITY	3,152,645	2,651,261

Overview

In FY2024, Metro Assist reported a revenue of \$6.64 million and an operating surplus of \$0.5 million. The decline in revenue is primarily attributed to the up-front recognition of a \$262,000 grant received from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation USA in FY2023.

Government funding continues to be our major source of revenue, accounting for 94 per cent of revenue in FY2024 (93 per cent in FY2023). Dress for Work, our fee for service program which is a wrap-around service that prepares men for employment, generated \$131,850 in FY2024.

In line with historical trend and budget expectations, employee costs and program expenses continued to represent a high proportion of total expenses. In FY2024, these components made up 82 per cent of total expenses (81 per cent in FY2023).

Metro Assist continues to operate debt-free. Net assets at the end of FY2024 stood at \$3.15 million, strengthening our liquidity position to enable us to navigate the constant changes and challenges within the sector we operate in.

The FY2024 external audit of Metro Assist was completed without any audit adjustments. This reflects our commitment to ensuring appropriate internal controls and financial governance processes are in place to both meet all compliance requirements and the expectations of our funding bodies and supporters.

OUR AUDITORS

ESV Business advice and accounting
Level 13, 68 York Street
Sydney NSW 2000

OUR FUNDING BODIES

Metro Assist is grateful to the following organisations and agencies for the funding support during FY2024:

- › Australian Chinese Charity Foundation
- › Burwood Council
- › Cancer Institute NSW
- › Canterbury Bankstown Council
- › Club Five Dock RSL
- › Commonwealth Bank of Australia
- › Department of Home Affairs
- › Department of Social Services
- › Good Shepherd Microfinance
- › Inner West Council
- › LinkedIn
- › Multicultural NSW
- › NSW Department of Communities and Justice
- › NSW Electoral Commission
- › NSW Fair Trading
- › SBS Corporation
- › Settlement Council of Australia
- › Settlement Services International
- › State Insurance and Regulatory Authority
- › Transport for NSW

The Hon. Andrew Giles, then Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, and Hon. Jihad Dib, NSW Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government at Metro Assist Bankstown Office



PARTNERS/ COLLABORATORS

- Anglicare
- APM Employment Services
- Ashfield Boys High
- Asuria
- Australian Tax Office
- Bankstown Senior College
- Beverly Hills Intensive English Centre
- Bonnie Support Services
- Breakthru
- Burwood Council
- Campsie Public School
- Canada Bay Council
- Canterbury Bankstown Council
- Canterbury Hospital
- Career Seekers
- Centrelink
- Chester Hill Intensive English Centre
- CMNL Academy
- Co.As.It
- Creating Chances
- Creating Links
- Department of Communities and Justice
- Department of Social Services
- Dragonfly Network
- Drummoyne Community Centre
- Engineers without Borders
- Headspace Ashfield and Camperdown
- Housing NSW
- Infant Child Adolescents Mental Health Service (ICAMHS)
- Inner West Council
- Justice Support Centre
- KidsXpress
- Marrickville High School
- Marrickville Intensive English Centre
- Max Employment
- Mission Australia
- Mott Macdonald
- Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network Australia
- National Disability Insurance Scheme
- Navitas
- Office of Financial Research
- Outloud
- Police Citizen Youth Club
- Salvation Army
- Service NSW
- Services Australia
- Settlement Services International
- South Western Sydney Local Health District - Community Paediatric Clinic
- St Vincent de Paul's
- Strathfield Council
- Strathfield Girls High
- Sydney Local Health District
- Sydney Secondary College Leichhardt
- TAFE NSW
- The Deli Women and Children's Centre
- Transcultural Mental Health
- University of Technology Sydney
- WHO'S
- Woman And Girls Emergency Centre
- Youth services
- Zakat Foundation



EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES
CREATING POSITIVE IMPACT



Metro Assist Ltd.

Level 2, 59-63, Evaline Street,
Campsie NSW 2194

(02) 9789 3744 | info@metroassist.org.au

www.metroassist.org.au