

# Whittlesea Disability Network November Meeting

## Minutes

Tuesday 25 November 2025

Fountain View Room, Civic Centre, 10.00am – 12:30pm

| Item                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| <b>1. Welcome</b>                                                                 | Emma Hanna,<br>Unit Manager of Healthy and Inclusive Communities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>2. Acknowledgement of Country</b>                                              | Emma Hanna,<br>Unit Manager of Healthy and Inclusive Communities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>3. Council Update</b>                                                          | Emma Hanna gave an update of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provided a summary of the community plan 2025-2029. Plan and current action plan available to view on <a href="#">website</a>.</li><li>• New Mayor Cr Laurie Cox and Deputy Mayor Blair Colwell.</li><li>• Highlighted Internal Day of People with Disability event being held at TRAC on Tuesday 2 December 10:30am - 1pm</li><li>• Carols by Candlelight Friday 12 December 6pm-9pm at the council offices</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>4. Youth and Mental health services and programs in the City of Whittlesea</b> | <b>Mike Colling, Unit Manager Youth Development</b> gave a presentation on Youth Development team.<br>Mike highlighted the programs offered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Youth Council.</li><li>• School holiday events which have now expanded to middle years.</li><li>• Skill based programs to build capacity of young people.</li><li>• Youth Take over monthly at Mill Park/Mernda Library,</li><li>• Young Women's Leadership Program;</li><li>• Multicultural Leadership program,</li><li>• Young Men's Leadership Program,</li><li>• Pride Leadership program.</li><li>• Amplify program which is an array of events for all creatives, music to dance, free events</li><li>• 2025 Youth Summit</li></ul> |

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|                                             | <p><b>Mental Health:</b></p> <p>There is no mental health service through City of Whittlesea however Youth Development do work closely with local service providers. Youth Development do provide primary prevention and programs.</p> <p>Data shows the major factors affecting young people’s mental health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of living</li> <li>• Climate change and environmental issues</li> <li>• Violence, safety and crime</li> <li>• Mental health challenges</li> </ul> <p>Suicide is leading cause of death of Australians aged 15-34.</p> <p>Youth Development takes a primary prevention approach to mental health, delivering evidence-based programs that promote wellbeing, address risk factors, create supportive environments, encourage early intervention, and reduce stigma.</p> <p><b>Question</b> Asked about a Youth Hub space in the City of Whittlesea if there will be a designated space.<br/>Mike advised that there will be a Youth Hub update on 4 December.</p> |
| <p><b>5. Resilience Through Failure</b></p> | <p><b>Ridmi Dolamulla - Lived Experience Speaker</b></p> <p>Spoke about her mental Health journey.</p> <p>As a child, Ridmi’s life was essentially mapped out for her. Her parents had given her only three acceptable career options: doctor, engineer, or lawyer. Ridmi chose the medical path.</p> <p>However, at the end of Year 12 she didn’t get into medicine and was devastated. Having grown up being told she needed to be perfect, she saw this as a personal failure—and for the first time in her life, she felt she had fallen short. The pressure and disappointment caused extreme stress.</p> <p>Seeking support, Ridmi started therapy, which became a turning point for her. She also discovered Muay Thai—a sport that teaches you that when you’re knocked down, you get back up.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |

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|                                                                          | <p>Over time, Ridmi was accepted into biomedicine and later received an offer for medicine, but ultimately decided not to pursue it and changed direction. Through these experiences, Ridmi learned valuable lessons from her setbacks—resilience, self-awareness, and the strength to rise again.</p> <p>Ridmi’s message is to celebrate failures just as much as successes. She likens it to buffaloes—when they sense a storm, they run <i>towards</i> it. In the same way, facing challenges head-on builds strength, while avoiding them can take a toll on mental health.</p> <p>Most importantly, Ridmi reminds us to always be kind to ourselves.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>International Day of Disability and End-of-Year Celebration</b>       | <p>Emma Hanna mentioned the event happening at TRAC to celebrate International Day of Disability.</p> <p>A short video was presented of the Ambassadors for this year’s celebration</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Reflection Activity</b><br><br><b>What does wellbeing mean to me?</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling – comfortable, supported and safe</li> <li>• The overall state of a persons existence including physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual</li> <li>• Quality of life – care</li> <li>• Wellbeing mean to be is physically healthy and the capacity to think that I’ll be okay, even though things can go wrong</li> <li>• Feeling of belonging</li> <li>• Feeling good mentally and physically</li> <li>• Wellbeing relates to accounting for all dimensions of health including physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual. It is consider a complete state of equilibrium of an individual feeling happy, healthy, capable and engaged.</li> <li>• Being happy with myself and people</li> <li>• Having an accepting group of people surrounding you.</li> <li>• A sense of being understood and listened to</li> <li>• Having the opportunity to have access to the gym, mental health services, Doctors and nutritious food.</li> <li>• Wellbeing is able to open up when you’re struggling and be in the headspace to acknowledge when you need a break from anything.</li> <li>• Having the ability to express myself freely without being judged.</li> </ul> |

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|                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A healthy sense of mental physical and spiritual health. It also means balance in life.</li> <li>• Experiencing inner peace and self-acceptance</li> <li>• Balance between the needs and interest of responsibility we have in our lives</li> <li>• Feeling energized, feeling emotions well, sense of security</li> <li>• Feeling connected to supportive people</li> <li>• To be supported and to be able to live in a positive and healthy environment</li> <li>• Not relying on others to support but being able to rely on yourself as well</li> <li>• Vital part of self-care</li> <li>• Positive wellbeing allows me to function</li> <li>• Less isolation is good</li> <li>• Positive relationships</li> <li>• Ability to participate in community activities</li> <li>• Living in a way that reflects my values and what matters to me</li> <li>• Wellbeing encapsulating being in a state of being healthy and capable in the dimensions of physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual. Knowing that it is dynamic, and hardships occur but propose wellbeing would encapsulate appropriate intervention and redirecting</li> </ul> |
| <b>How could mental health services be accessible?</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By making them more affordable</li> <li>• Be located in public and private spaces</li> <li>• Like to see day programs including food, exercise available at all NDIS participant at least twice a week</li> <li>• Through programs that bring awareness to actual resources that are out there</li> <li>• Online triage services to be connected to the appropriate supports</li> <li>• More collaboration between organisations, community and government</li> <li>• In home supports rather than accessing in community</li> <li>• More education in schools</li> <li>• Creating forums for people to easily reach out at any time – and also encouraging people to seek help</li> <li>• More funding using more down to earth approach</li> <li>• Mental health services can be made more accessible by raising awareness in the community and promoting participating activities such as mental health information workshops</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

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|                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Widespread awareness in easily accessible places</li> <li>• To have more mental health services</li> <li>• Auslan interpreter for deaf people as needed</li> <li>• Telehealth interpreter safe spaces to bring friend or family</li> <li>• Having culturally appropriate services with translated materials in different languages</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>What does an inclusive society look like to me?</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be more involved</li> <li>• Knowing that “you” matter</li> <li>• Opportunities open and accessible to all community members</li> <li>• A society where everyone feels, safe, comfortable and have a sense of belonging</li> <li>• No judgement</li> <li>• Being kind to all people</li> <li>• An inclusive society to me incorporates practices that celebrate, congratulate, normalize and up lift everyone in the community</li> <li>• Where all people feel comfortable in all environments</li> <li>• All-inclusive society would be one that is affordable, understanding and open with one another</li> <li>• Cultural, racial, religious and diversity are celebrated not suppressed</li> <li>• Everyone feels valued respected and able to participate fully regardless of their background, identity or abilities</li> <li>• Inclusive society means welcoming everyone even the other person may have different point of view</li> <li>• Having to eliminate all forms of discrimination</li> <li>• Decision making and leadership repeat the diversity of the community</li> <li>• An inclusive society is one which people are aware and accepting of others, but also where they are open to learn about others</li> <li>• People don’t choose ignorance over learning</li> <li>• Community support is strong people look out for one another and no one feels isolated or invisible</li> <li>• Policies and systems are fair, addressing past inequities rather than pretending they never existed</li> <li>• Where everyone is included in community activities and access</li> <li>• An environment without prejudice and discrimination</li> </ul> |

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|                                                                                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability acceptance</li> <li>• Being able to do anything/go anywhere without the fear of not belonging/being accepted</li> <li>• Place of safety and harmony</li> <li>• People in community using Auslan</li> <li>• All schools teach Auslan</li> <li>• Giving respect and not making assumptions</li> <li>• An inclusive society is a group of people I can feel comfortable with the people around regardless of their abilities, race, ethnicity or gender</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>What big questions or themes do you have that you would like to explore in WDN in 2026?</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PCAS (Person Centred Active Support)</li> <li>• ROC (Roster of Care)</li> <li>• NDISC Complaints system given there is recent restrictions</li> <li>• NDIS value for money services</li> <li>• What is being done to evolve advocacy? (Themes, methods, strategies etc)</li> <li>• Accessibility in community for all including people with disabilities</li> <li>• Sharing stories about inclusion</li> <li>• More people with disability in the workforce</li> <li>• Inclusivity</li> <li>• More emphasis on Community</li> <li>• Plenty of coverage of NDIS eg: changes</li> <li>• How to get more detailed information on decisions</li> <li>• How to best use core supports</li> <li>• Resources/services for people who have been kicked out of the NDIS</li> <li>• My biggest theme will be around employment opportunities for people with a disability, getting a job boost self esteem</li> <li>• Youth with disability employment, partnerships with employers creating jobs for them</li> <li>• Sub community group</li> <li>• Explore local data understand what the needs are for people with disability in our areas</li> <li>• Explore transitions from school, to work experience – employment opportunities for people with disability; What are the gaps – how can we assist with the gaps</li> <li>• Mental health and social; prescribing</li> <li>• Bridging the gap for community access to services, including Council and other services. Reducing the isolation we all work in</li> </ul> |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More education on god and leaning on him for hope and guidance</li> <li>• Youth bible study</li> <li>• More representation of Aboriginal community, health, disability, youth suicide – hidden disabilities</li> <li>• Explore supporting person in a whole some way. Set up as part of team on organization where person with disability will have opportunity to spend whole day where they can practice hygiene, have good food, community access skill development opportunity</li> <li>• More autism friendly group/spaces to enjoy inside or outside</li> <li>• Footpaths to be repaired for easier wheelchair access</li> <li>• Actively encourage people with disabilities to attend these meeting</li> <li>• To have more people with lived experience speak at these meeting ie: panel discussion or individual speaker</li> <li>• To encourage councillors to attend these meetings</li> <li>• How do we truly eliminate the discrimination people with disabilities face?</li> <li>• How doe we urge the community to education themselves on this matter?</li> <li>• How we as a society can support and become more inclusive of different needs and behaviors of all disabled people?</li> <li>• Mental health (prevention and treatment)</li> <li>• Resources to use when needed</li> <li>• Get in touch/bring the International Day of Disability ambassadors</li> <li>• More awareness programs and explanations</li> <li>• Better understanding on how disability actually manifests in the lives of individuals who live with them and also the people around them</li> <li>• How we as able-bodied people can be more empathetic and accepting of people with a disability</li> <li>• Where does the line lie between being aware of someone's disability and being discriminatory against it? How do people become aware of this?</li> <li>• On how we could create more inclusive and diverse programs in the community</li> <li>• Youth disability activities/programs for schools in partnership with council</li> </ul> |
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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Workshop for school educators and resources in partnership with organization</li><li>• Auslan language workshop for students</li><li>• Holiday programs for people with disability for all ages</li><li>• Information sessions for families of migrant backgrounds</li></ul> |
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