

All enquiries to: envelopeofsupport@wyndhamcec.org.au

“We are all one. We are all equal. And if you are ever feeling down, try to remember that you are loved and supported by many people inside and outside of the African community.”

Matthew Martin
Lawyer
Werribee Branch

WEstjustice

Thank you for coming to Australia & adding your experiences, Insight, resilience & fun to Australia.

I think you have so much to offer us as a nation & want you to feel welcomed & encouraged.

Stand & walk tall!

Jeanette Wade
Maternal & Child Health Nurse

“Victoria’s African Community is one of the State’s greatest resources and treasures. I have the privilege and honour of knowing and being good friends with many people of African heritage and every one of them exudes dignity, class, kindness, generosity, humanity and compassion.”

Bruce T. Colcott PSM, OAM | Project Officer
Priority Communities Division | Corporate Strategy & Operational Improvement Department |
Victoria Police

You are not your stereotypes

- Jordan, Youth Development Officer

I like African young people because they are great Gospel singers and performers in churches.

- Robert Kasmiro

I have had the pleasure of knowing many African-background young people in Melbourne through my teaching, research and volunteer work. Their resilience, warmth, energy and ambitions for the future are contagious, and my community is a better place for having these wonderful young people become part of our lives.

Professor Michele Grossman
Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation
Deakin University

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“Your playing small does not serve the world. There’s nothing enlightened about shrinking so other people don’t feel insecure around you. We’re all meant to shine.... It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone...As we are liberated from our fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”— Marianne Williamson

Linette Harriott

Sector Support & Youth Leadership Coordinator (Mon - Thu)

You are all amazing, kind hearted, and beautiful people – I am privileged to work with so many young African people every single day! You all brighten my day so much and I can’t wait to continue to work with you all.

Teaghan Nott – Youth Development Officer

To the African young people of Victoria:

There is much more love in the world than there is hate. We don’t see it because hate and bad deeds make the news. Please know that there are many more people for you, on your side, than against you; people who truly want you to have a good life.

**Ruki Bartholomeusz | Community Liaison Officer | Southern Melbourne
South Eastern Victoria Region | Regional Services Group
Department of Education and Training**

I am a Muslim African Australian woman who has gone through tough times in the past 18 years. I’ve experienced uneducated comments and abuse but my advice is to keep your head up; never let anyone make you feel you don’t belong or that you’re different. We are all human.

Shukria | FARREP Health Promotion Worker
Sexual and Reproductive Health



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To my young African friends,

Much like the way the media isn't representing you and your family, their opinions don't represent me or mine.

But don't stress, this is all temporary.

We've seen it before.

Stay strong and don't change.

Matt Astbury – Community Worker, Wyndham

Many and maybe most young Africans in Melbourne come from refugee backgrounds. I have absolute admiration for young people who are trying to put bad times behind them and make a new life while continuing to honour their African heritage. You're amazing.

Rod Grant

Retired, and Treasurer of Hobsons Bay Refugee Network

Whenever you find yourself doubting how far you can go.

Just remember how far you have come.

Remember everything you have faced, all the battles you have won
and all the fears you have overcome.

You make the world a better place.

best wishes, Judy

I am so inspired by your achievements – when I meet young African people and hear about your studies, community activities, passion for the world around you, I am delighted that you are contributing so positively to our community, and excited to see such wonderful leadership and potential.

Ellie Wellings

You are not alone. You do belong. All of you in all your diverse identities belongs. You are community and this community is only a community with you. This country is so lucky to have you here. This community has a long journey ahead of it, but it has rich and fragmented history to reconcile and you have so much to offer and are part of this journey.

Amber Cassidy

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To The Young African People of Melbourne,

Thank you for your contribution to our rich and diverse culture. The African Continent is made up of 54 countries and as such hosts a large diversity of ethnicities, cultures and languages. We benefit greatly from this diversity. Be proud of who you are.

Ann

Ann Nicholls
Project Lead – Respectful Relationships
(Southern Melbourne Area)
South Eastern Victoria Region
Department of Education and Training

African young people make a great contribution to Australia. We wish them well in their studies at school and university and in their professional lives. Our African-Australian communities belong here and we welcome you. Stay close to your families and embrace your culture and the Australian way of life.

Best wishes from the team at Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria

In 2009, I joined the MRC refugee youth mentor program. I was luckily enough to be matched with the most amazing young girl from Sierra Leone. Fleeing from terrible and tragic circumstances and facing a disability as a result, this incredible lady has inspired me in so many ways. Such strength of character, yet still a sense of respect and kindness - I'm so glad we met. I've loved getting to know her and her family, learning about their culture and community and value our friendship so much!

Diane

I love the African families I see in my job. The mums I work with are so caring to their new babies, brings joy to my heart.

Wendy Avery | Enhanced Maternal & Child Health Nurse,

From 2001 to 2010, I was the Multicultural Liaison Officer for Footscray Police. Each year we ran an event called African Cup. There were many African teams and the best players combined with a team to play Victoria Police. The event showed good working relations with Victoria Police and the African community. In this time, I made many new friends from within various African communities. I wish you all the best for the future. Study hard, work hard and enjoy your new life in Australia.

Craig Spicer
Employment Specialist
West@Work

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I am excited to have a growing number of African youth in Wyndham. My interactions and experience with African youth has been very positive I have found those I have had privilege to meet to be reliable, warm and honest and committed to supporting one another which I really admire and value.

Cheers

Jacinta
Employment Specialist
West@Work

I would like to say 'Thank you' to the young African people for teaching **me**! I've learned so much about their language, their dancing and their art. I am often inspired by their keen interest to try new things and their willingness to join in new sports and activities.
Keep on sharing- we can all learn then!

Carolyn Burns
Teacher

YOUNG PEOPLE OF AFRICAN BACKGROUNDS ARE A HUGELY EXCITING ELEMENT IN PROGRESSIVE SOCIAL CHANGE IN VICTORIA. I LOVE ALL THE ARTISTS AND ACTIVISTS OF AFRICAN BACKGROUNDS WHO HAVE EMERGED. MANY ARE CONNECTING WITH ABORIGINAL PEOPLE. THERE ARE MANY BEAUTIFUL, BRAVE, CRITICAL, SAVVY PEOPLE INJECTING NEW ENERGY INTO THE SCENE

CLARE LAND
REICHSTEIN FOUNDATION / VICTORIA UNIVERSITY

African young boys are very intelligent and respectful people. They have hopes and dreams like everyone. What they need is education and opportunity.
Thanks,

Hassenet Younis
Community Mental Health-Worker

I have the privilege of teaching English language to teenagers who come from various countries and situations.

Some of my favourite students come from South Sudan. I have found many to be incredibly gentle, warm and quietly motivated.

Kind regards

Megan Donald

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My life is better for knowing African young people. They have taught me many things: how to laugh through adversity; how to stop and take the time just to talk; the importance of family; and belonging. Many start a conversation with, "How is your family?" Knowing them has made me a better person.

Richard Dove
Settlement Service Coordinator
Wyndham Community and Education Centre

A friend asked me to write something about Africans and I find it impossible. Africans are as diverse as all of humanity and even the small group of Africans that I know personally are all different. But, of course, the ones that are my friends are absolutely marvellous.

Udi

Remember that it takes a village to raise a child ... you're welcome in our village

Garry Wood
Village Elder

When I was young, I was poor. But I showed them. I have had a good and successful life and I know you will too. Believe in yourself and believe in this country. You need it and it needs you.

Gaye Yuille
Werribee South. VIC. 3030
Retired Union Official and University Lecturer

I welcome the positive contribution of our young people from African backgrounds – their energy, diversity and the opportunity they provide to us all in learning new perspectives and cultural practices. I want you to feel valued and an important part of our evolving community.

Thank you!

Suzette Cameron
Teacher
Placement Co-ordinator
Swinburne University of Technology - PAVE

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My words of support are stolen from A. A. Milne of Winnie the Pooh fame - You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think. Young people with African backgrounds have so much to offer - we support you and are here to help.

Many thanks! 😊

Kind regards,

Monique Hurley
School and Youth Lawyer

I love working with African young people. They are very hard working and focused.

With love and best wishes,
Amb Jude Ediae (NSV Social & Welfare Sec, ECAI PRO, ADA OM, VMC RAC, ECCV Dir.)

Young African are just ordinary young people. When you see a group of young African don't assume they GANG they might be a group of young people hanging and having fun. If you get to know them they might be really cool.

Shadia Mohamed Aly
DriveLink Project Officer
Monday, Wednesday, Friday



At our Uniting Church in Werribee, I enjoy the lively, uplifting presence of African kids who come regularly with their refugee parents to our Sunday morning worship.

Neil Tolliday

The haters are going to hate. So why surround yourself with hate.

Try a NO GO TELL.

Say NO to hate. If someone is being mean to you, racist, discriminating, or stigmatizing you or your race, name it. Say "That's racist" or "That's discrimination".

Go, don't stay. Remove yourself. Seek out somewhere safe. Change carriages if on a train, move to another area if on the playground at school.

TELL. Tell you friends what happened, tell a teacher, tell you parents, tell a counsellor, wellbeing officer, tell the police.

Mark Camilleri
Senior Child and Family Practitioner

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A South Sudanese family lived next door to us for a number of years. We found them to be really good neighbours, hard- working and keen to fit in to Aussie life Their two children, primary school age, were obedient and enthusiastic and it was a pleasure to know them all.

- Mary Dixon

"I am here to say I am glad you here, and my hope is you can find your way in our community and have a very good, safe, healthy, productive, meaningful, satisfying and happy life here. Please do all you can for your own positive future, and build relationships with others in the community who can support you to find your way."

**Reima Pryor
Psychologist**

My favourite thing about working with young people from Africa are the big, bright smiles, the sense of humour and the laughter. It is infectious and always brightens my day!

Cheers,
Tess Jolley
Counsellor / Advocate
Foundation House
The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc

To young people of African-Australian communities,
I'm glad you are here. I see you working and learning every day.
You are important and your ideas matter. You make a positive impact on our communities.
I really look forward to our future. Thanks for being part of us.

Meg Cotter
Education Projects Officer
Wyndham Community & Education Centre

Dear Young person,
Welcome to Australia and I hope your life here will be rewarding and full of joy.
There is so many opportunities please grab hold of them and go for it
Some people may not be welcoming but there are many that are and like the world there are many different
Personalities and cultures to enrich it so please continue to enrich us.

Regards

Di Van Vliet
Refugee Health Nurse
IPC Health

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Dear African Youth,

It has been a pleasure to teach every one of you who has been a student of mine over the last decade.

Without exception I have found each one of you to be polite, hard-working and positive. I believe you, as does any New Australian, have each already made and will continue to make, a significant contribution to this country.

I have yet to meet an African youth who was not ambitious and determined to be a success here. You need our encouragement, NOT our condemnation!

Please know that I am right behind each one of you, 100%!

Sincerely,

Julie-Anne Bennett
VCAL EAL Teacher
Wyndham CEC

When I think about African young people living in Victoria I think about all young people and how incredibly diverse they are. 'Resilient' is a word that comes to mind. African young people have amazing resilience and strength. I feel privileged to know many African young people and to have them living and learning in our community.

Jennie Barrera
CEO Wyndham CEC

It has taken me a lot of time to think about the right words to say, because when I think about young people of African descent, I think of my children who have a proud Kenyan heritage. So whatever negativity and prejudice is in the media right now affects them in their day to day too - so this is personal to me. But I want to say that we are a diverse and welcoming society, and the views portrayed in the media do not represent the majority. So stand proud and remember your parents, and grandparents and the ones before them, who have overcome numerous challenging moments in history and stood above it, and you can also raise above it, and know that many more of us are your ally that want to see you succeed in this journey called life.

Valeska Zuniga-Chondo
Manager, Community Strengthening Unit
Wyndham Community and Education Centre

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Dear friends,

I have been thinking about your email. And thinking that I can write a lot of positive and nice words/things about the Africa Young People but what will 'stick' for the young person. What kind of 'positive' 'uplifting' and 'encouraging', words will enable the young audience to find their own 'power' within themselves. To me, as now a youngish African mother, it was a poem I recited so many years ago as young South Sudanese refugee in a Kenyan primary school. It is a poem by Dave DIOP, and I remember each and every single word so many years later.

Africa, my Africa
Africa of proud warriors in ancestral savannahs
Africa of whom my grandmother sings
On the banks of the distant river
I have never known you
But your blood flows in my veins
Your beautiful black blood that irrigates the fields
The blood of your sweat
The sweat of your work
The work of your slavery
Africa, tell me Africa
Is this you, this back that is bent
This back that breaks
Under the weight of humiliation
This back trembling with red scars
And saying yes to the whip under the midday sun
But a grave voice answers me
Impetuous child that tree, young and strong
That tree over there
Splendidly alone amidst white and faded flowers
That is your Africa springing up anew
Springing up patiently, obstinately
Whose fruit bit by bit acquires
The bitter taste of liberty.

All the best,

Kind regards
Sarah

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Be you, bravely.

from Edmee

My dream would be a multicultural society, one that is diverse and where every man, woman and child are treated equally. I dream of a world where all people of all races work together in harmony.

Nelson Mandela

I am sorry for the criticism and racism directed at your community. We welcome you and thank you for the great contributions your community is making to our multicultural society.

**Louise Holley
Community Hub Coordinator
Wyndham Park Primary School**

My message is to those young people who have been associated with crime and judge by association, merely because of their skin colours or backgrounds.

If you are being picked on or abused daily on the streets because the perpetrators/bullies or racists see you look like those who are being shown in an unscrupulous media (TV and Newspaper) outlet; mainly with the intention to cause you harm you, your family, people of your backgrounds or only to score political point. If you have been denied jobs and other services, and above all don't feel you belong as a consequence.

Please don't despair because there are countless Australian (from different cultural backgrounds) out there who love, care and want you to feel at home and succeed in life – please do right and don't let the media negativity and few racists discourage or make you feel hopeless.

You are tomorrow's future and tomorrow belongs to you. As Malcolm X said, education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belong to those who prepare for it today. Encourages those who are carried away into petty crimes to go back to school or seek help to get jobs.

Santino Atem Deng, PhD

"A friend of mine from high school was a young Ethiopian girl with erratic dreams and crazy ideas. Today I'm a very proud to know that she has achieve her goal, and opened her own Ethiopian restaurant in Brunswick. Not only is the food great, but she has made it her mission to share her culture with Melbourne and I hope that her achievements can inspire others."

Shantel, Advanced Case Manager, Sunshine Community Correctional Services

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"I would not be able to travel around the world sampling different cuisines in just a short walk down Barkley Street in Footscray, if it weren't for the African Community"

Amanda, Case Manager, Sunshine Community Correctional Services

"My experience with African youth has been rewarding and fun, they have such a great sense of humour"

Luisa, Case Manager, Sunshine Community Correctional Services

Bright smiles,
sparkling eyes
add light and colour
to our lives.

Broad grins,
cheeky faces
bring light and warmth
to cold, dark places.

Singing, dancing
celebrating life
Making us all laugh
in the midst of strife.

Christine Morris - Teacher

African people living in Victoria are part of our community. They are parents, children, spouses, brothers, sisters, neighbours, friends, students, colleagues. "They" are us.

Scott Ridout

Regional Manager
Consumer Affairs Victoria
North West Metropolitan Area

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I want you to know that it is my job to highlight the many positive contributions of the migrant and refugee community in Victoria to the larger population of the state. But I don't do it because I have to. I do it because I want to.

The strength, resilience and intelligence of the African young people I work with inspires me to do the right thing.

Don't ever stop being you because you never know who you serve as an inspiration to.

All my love and support,

Anjali Nambissan

Media & Communications Officer



I know many African people – friends, families and students I have worked with and been fortunate to learn and share much from and with you all. Thanks for the wonderful contribution you are to our Australian community! 😊

Alison McQuade

As a community member and member of several community groups, including Transition Wyndham - I wish to express my support to our African community, and in particular to our young African community members. I want to encourage them to do all the normal things that young people do, and to try to be the best that they can be, in the studies, in their family, amongst their friends.

Australia has a lot of wonderful things to see and do, and explore, well beyond Wyndham. If Wyndham is giving you grief, I hope you can escape to our wonderful beaches, forest, rivers, national parks and enjoy the true spirit of Australia. Once recharged, you will be in a better position to tackle some of the unfortunate prejudice that exists.

Lisa Field

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Many people understand that the negative stories presented in the media about African people are false or misleading. While it can be difficult to ignore those loud, hateful voices, you are valued members of our society and there are a great many other Australians who understand that.

MICHAEL TORRISI

Regional Officer

Consumer Affairs Victoria

North West Metropolitan Area

I value passion, energy, wisdom, compassion, joy and friendship found in encounters with members of African communities now in Melbourne. I am sorry for negative media attention that focus on division and know of positive often unsung efforts of peace builders. We need to hear more of your stories.



Laurence Gray | Interfaith Development Officer