

Let's Talk Money

EVALUATION SUMMARY



Let's Talk Money is a financial literacy program that aims to support the economic empowerment of migrant and refugee women living in the northern metropolitan region (NMR) of Melbourne.

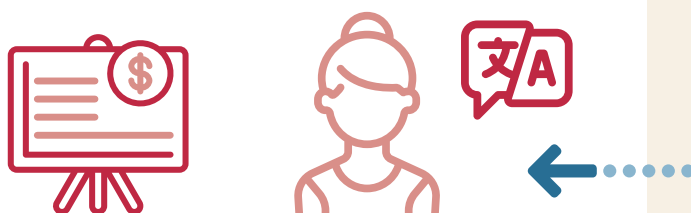
It is a unique financial education model that uses a bilingual peer educator approach. The model involves employing and training women from diverse cultural backgrounds to deliver practical, tailored financial literacy and money management workshops to women in their own languages and communities.

The program was developed and delivered by Women's Health In the North (WHIN), the regional women's health service for the NMR. It was delivered in the municipalities of Hume and Whittlesea over 2017 and 2018.

In 2018, Bluebird Consultants conducted an evaluation of the Let's Talk Money program, on behalf of WHIN, funded by Financial Literacy Australia. This summary has been produced by WHIN. For a copy of the full report, *Let's Talk Money Evaluation Report* (Watson & Kenway, 2018), please visit www.whin.org.au/ltn

FROM SEPTEMBER 2017 TO SEPTEMBER 2018

workshops were delivered in Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Assyrian, Punjabi and Persian, across the cities of **Hume** and **Whittlesea**.



12 PEER EDUCATORS

from 8 cultural backgrounds, speaking 14 languages, employed by WHIN



WHIN DELIVERED 3-DAY TRAINING PROGRAM

to peer educators, plus workshop support, debriefing and supervision



Peer educators delivered **26 LTM WORKSHOPS**, reaching **330 WOMEN** in the community



About Let's Talk Money

The Let's Talk Money program builds on WHIN's previous work in delivering financial literacy education to women. In 2017, WHIN employed a program coordinator and 12 bilingual peer educators. The peer educators were selected on the basis of having multi-lingual skills and having strong links with migrant and refugee women in the community. The program coordinator drew on WHIN's award-winning resource, *Managing Money: Every Woman's Business*, to develop a 3-day training course that suited the cultural and linguistic needs of the peer educators, who were trained in a range of aspects of financial literacy and workshop delivery.

Over 2017 and 2018, the peer educators delivered 26 workshops, reaching 330 women across the municipalities of Hume and Whittlesea. Workshop participants came from nine cultural groups: Afghani, Assyrian, Indian, Iranian, Iraqi, Lebanese, Pakistani, Sri Lankan and Syrian. Peer educators chose workshop topics to suit the women's needs, and included banking, bills, budgeting, debt management, financial rights, tenancy rights, Centrelink services, and understanding financial paperwork. The workshops were delivered in locations suitable to the participants, and included childcare and catering. The program coordinator supported the peer educators with sourcing and printing workshop materials, booking venues and childcare, and debriefing after every workshop.



The program responds to the barriers many refugee and migrant women face in achieving economic inclusion. These include poverty-related debt, financial challenges exacerbated by low English literacy, cultural and gendered expectations around financial decision-making, and lack of familiarity with Australian financial systems (e.g. banking and financial products) and legal systems (e.g. tenancy rights). The program also seeks to address barriers that women face due to gender inequality, which prevent women becoming more involved in financial decision-making (Watson & Kenway, 2018, p1).

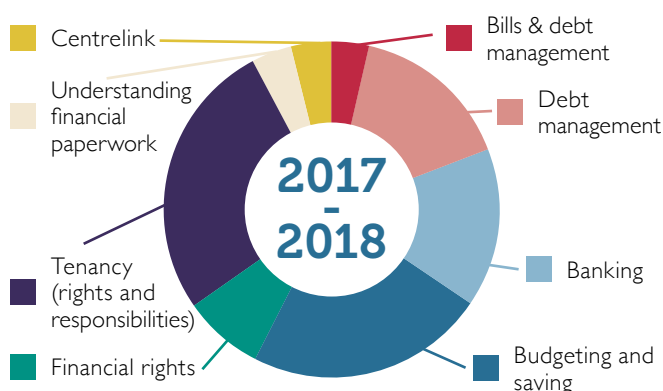
About the Evaluation

Bluebird Consultants were engaged by WHIN to conduct a program evaluation of Let's Talk Money in 2018. The evaluation approach included 12 semi-structured in-depth interviews with workshop participants, a focus group with six peer educators, a survey of participants at four workshops, and observation of one workshop. A thematic analysis was undertaken and applied to the following three key evaluation questions:

1. What was the program's impact upon women's financial literacy knowledge and skills?
2. What benefits did the peer education model of delivery provide?
3. How did the program impact in specific ways for migrant and refugee women?

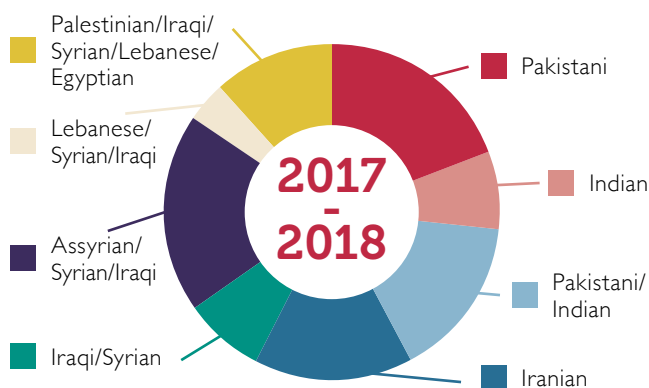
A summary of the evaluation findings is provided on the following pages. For further detail, please refer to the full report at www.whin.org.au/ltn

Workshop Topics



Cultural Groups Reached

Workshops delivered to the following women's groups:



* Some groups had women from a range of cultural backgrounds.

Q1: What was the Program's Impact upon Women's Financial Literacy Knowledge and Skills?

This section of the evaluation looked at what women learned, what they found most beneficial, and how new knowledge translated into improved financial practices.

'Results indicate that the program has provided both practical and meaningful change to women's knowledge and skills, particularly in the areas of tenancy and banking. All interviewees reported at least one significant learning from attending the program' (Watson & Kenway, 2018, p15).

Findings included:

- Most women reported the information they received was a first for them, despite having lived in Australia for a number of years.
- Building an understanding of tenancy rights was considered particularly important for newly arrived women in Australia, especially those from refugee backgrounds.
- Basic banking information was valued by participants, for example, the notion that banks in Australia keep money secure and that banking can involve transaction fees.
- Online banking was noted as particularly useful to participants, enabling them to better monitor their money and reduce financial risk. Paying bills online was specifically mentioned as a way women avoided the time and expense of travelling to pay bills in person.

- Being referred to financial and tenancy support services was mentioned frequently as being valuable, with participants previously unaware of support services available to them.
- Some women shared their learning with their family, and in doing so felt they were taking a greater role in budgeting in their family.
- The accessibility of the workshops was a key to knowledge acquisition, including workshops being delivered in the participants' language, at venues known to participants. Provision of childcare strengthened inclusion.

What made you feel **THE MOST** comfortable in the workshop:*

31% The educator **speaking my language** and understanding my culture

31% Being in a **women-only** group

17% The workshop being held in a **place I know**

14% Having a **woman educator**

8% Having **childcare** available

* Participants were asked to choose one answer only

'There was a lady, she was having some problem with their tenancy things, and they were not giving her back the bond money so she ... went through the Ombudsman. She got the money back ... she said because of these sessions she had this information' – peer educator

'The budgeting, and the saving part of it ... that's really significantly impacted how I spend money and save money, and how I think about money'
– workshop participant

Q2: What Benefits did the Peer Education Model of Delivery Provide?

This section of the evaluation explored the strengths and constraints of the peer educator model, including the skills required, the outcomes of the training, personal benefits, and where additional support could be provided.

'The overwhelming response from peer educators indicated that the training they received from WHIN was very effective in preparing them to deliver workshops in their community. On a personal level the experience of becoming a peer educator was described by one educator as 'life changing' (Watson & Kenway, 2018, p22).

Findings included:

- The three-day train-the-trainer program was considered very effective. In particular, peer educators valued seeing the training methods modelled by the trainer, the varied delivery styles, the PowerPoint template, the systematic structure and the opportunity to practise presenting skills.
- Peer educators valued having a reliable collection of training resources that they could trust to design their workshops and they praised the high quality resources provided by WHIN.
- Peer educators reported that the most important skills required as a peer educator were knowing their community and being able to communicate. Understanding women's experiences, and having existing relationships with women in their community were also mentioned.
- The trust developed between peer educators and their community was unique and crucial feature of the program.
- Many peer educators were new to facilitating workshops and hence, despite the support provided by WHIN, the ability to feel prepared for delivering workshops was a concern expressed by all peer educators.
- The strong connections that peer educators had with their communities were seen to add an extra layer of self-consciousness and professional complexity for peer educators. The importance of self-care and professional supervision was highlighted.
- Peer educators identified their key personal achievements as: increasing their self-confidence, gaining and sharing knowledge, and using the power of their role to make a difference to other women. They also reported that they increased their own financial literacy.
- Peer educators saw themselves as having an important role in promoting and upholding women's rights to financial literacy education.



'I can now say I have become a backbone of my family'

— peer educator

'I think the first thing and the main thing [is] that they trust me as a peer educator' — peer educator

'If the group think that the trainer has the same issues and challenges as they do, for example in the money management, they would both trust and engage more'

— peer educator

Q3: How did the Program Impact in Specific Ways for Migrant and Refugee Women?

This section of the evaluation looked at how women's ability to become more financially literate was influenced by other issues in their lives, and considered how these specific issues were addressed by the program.

'There was a strong relationship between increased knowledge leading to increased confidence and a growing sense of empowerment. Having the opportunity to learn about financial matters was overwhelmingly recognised as a key step toward empowerment' (Watson & Kenway, 2018, p31).

Findings included:

- Providing workshops in women's first languages meant there was a lot more conversation, enabling people to discuss their own circumstances. However, providing technical terms in English was deemed important.
- Peer educators said that newly arrived women can sometimes be 'overwhelmed' with too much information. They suggested women who have lived in Australia for a few years would be more likely to recognise the relevance of the program and be keener to engage.
- The program provided a unique experience for some women to talk about money and other financial matters as a group, often for the first time. Most participants said they had not received financial education since arriving in Australia (which for some was many years earlier).
- The workshops were also a unique opportunity for some women to learn about, or to express, their experiences of gender inequality for the first time in a safe group setting.
- The program did not shy away from naming gender inequality. It provided women with knowledge by addressing their right to be informed and encouraged them to be active in managing financial issues that affect them.
- A number of participants reported that the program fostered increased confidence in talking about finances with their family, and several women who already had a significant role in decision-making reported that the program strengthened their position even further.
- Involving both men and women in conversations about money and finances was viewed as important for a range of reasons, including for women's power and knowledge to be recognised by men.
- Peer educators taught women how to identify financial abuse and were trained to handle disclosures and give appropriate referral information if needed.



'The information that I got ... these are things that I would definitely look into when it's time to partner up with somebody, because that's when I can voice my opinion'

– workshop participant

'We don't know women's rights and human rights and now we know these things. I have been here last 13 years and didn't know, but now I know' – workshop participant

'[Workshop participants] are thirsty for knowledge.

They have been here for [a] few years and they want to learn' – peer educator



Evaluation Conclusion

Let's Talk Money, WHIN's innovative financial literacy program for migrant and refugee women, clearly shows that engaging with women in the places they naturally congregate, and using their first languages, has had significant success in reaching women who may not have otherwise accessed financial literacy programs. In fact, the evidence would suggest that many women reached by the program had not received similar information prior to attending workshops despite having lived in Australia for years or even decades. [...]

Feedback from participants suggests the workshop topics were extremely useful, especially in terms of banking, budgeting, debt management and tenancy. For example, of note was the number of women who commented on the practical difference learning about online banking made to their life: for example, not having to travel by public transport with young children to pay bills in person. [...]

The peer educator model of delivery chosen provided significant benefit to both participants and the peer educators. Peer educators know their communities. They also speak the languages of their communities, enabling women to feel more familiar and comfortable. [...]

The program's 12 peer educators derived major personal benefits in terms of knowledge and confidence, which might also have a flow on impact to their families and communities. For example it is possible that the peer educators provide a positive role model to other migrant and refugee women (and younger women in particular).

– Extract from *Let's Talk Money Evaluation Report* (Watson & Kenway, 2018, p33)

Acknowledgements

WHIN thanks the peer educators and workshop participants for contributing to the evaluation. Thank you to Let's Talk Money program funders for 2017–18, the Victorian Government Office of Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion, and the evaluation funders, Financial Literacy Australia*. WHIN also thanks Bluebird Consultants for conducting the evaluation.

Let's Talk Money Program Expansion 2019–20



Let's Talk Money will continue to expand over 2019–2020, thanks to further funding from Ecstra Foundation*, the Victorian Government Office for Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion, the Collier Charitable Fund and the Victorian Women's Benevolent Trust. 'Let's Talk Money' will recruit more peer educators, include other language groups, and be offered across the northern metropolitan area of Melbourne.

For more information

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*The business and activities of Financial Literacy Australia were transferred to Ecstra Foundation in December 2018.



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