

# Macro Social Work in the 'Land Down Under'

## University of Michigan School of Social Work

### Melbourne, Australia

Melbourne is the "Most Livable City" in the world. It is home to 4.1 million people. Melbourne is known for its cafes and laneways, which are fun to explore! The city has inner and outer suburbs and sits around Port Phillip Bay. Although a young and thriving city, it also has a rich history.

### Sunshine, Melbourne, Australia

Sunshine is a Western suburb of Melbourne. It is very diverse with many refugees and asylum seekers becoming community residents. Language barriers are high and laws regarding this population are strict. Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2011), "41.9% of people living in Sunshine were born in Australia. The other top responses for country of birth were Vietnam 13.4%, India 4.2%, Philippines 3.4%, Malta 3.1%, and Italy 1.6%," (ABS, 2011).



Above: One of LUC's Community Garden plots. Contains rhubarb, parsley, basil, lettuce, and peppers. All produce was utilized for Community Lunches, hosted twice per month. The Community Garden was tended to by refugee clients once per week, mostly from Iran.

#### References

- <http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/AboutMelbourne/MelbourneProfile/Details/AboutMelbourneprofile.aspx>
- <http://www.lentarauc.org.au/>
- [http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/205101182?opendocument&navpos=220](http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/205101182?opendocument&navpos=220)

## Global Field Placement Information

### Agency: Lentara Uniting Care, Sunshine Mission

Sunshine Mission is a community based agency that provides an array of services. Some of these include; a food pantry, emergency relief, financial assistance, volunteer services for residents on community release from prison, a Men's Shed program and various community development programs. The majority of population served are asylum seekers or refugees and low-income Australian residents.

### Responsibilities & Tasks: Macro Level

- Participated in all Community Development Programs
- Built relationships with clients participating in programs
- Observed intake operations to develop new models
- Provided assistance to program volunteers
- Researched relevant policies that affected clients and program operations

### Outcomes: Projects & Tasks

- Recommended three models of intake in a community setting
- Advocated for space and materials for program clients
- Built many meaningful relationships with program clients
- Learned gardening, sewing and cooking skills
- Wrote an intake development plan and report

### Lessons Learned: Major & Minor

- Internal organizational politics exists everywhere
- Clear communication and expectations
- Confidence in advocacy
- Importance of relationships and rapport with clients
- Critical thinking around international context

### Skills: Utilized & Learned

- Cultural humility
- Program model development processes
- Cultural context differences
- Entering and exiting international communities
- Team and relationship building

Right: Hot chocolate made by the Tea Room, a social enterprise venture of Lentara. All proceeds made by the Tea Room go directly back into the budget for programming costs.

## Applicability



Above: Bricks of encouragement found in local park.

### Classroom Connections

- Global Courses: prepared for departure and assisting with re-entry
- IP Courses (623 & 625): skills for building meaningful relationships with clients
- Integrative Learning for CO (713): analyzing entrance and exit of community and my purpose for being involved
- Management (663): helpful with intake model project and understanding context of the organization internally

### Career Connections

- Importance of advocacy for clientele even if not supported by administration
- Meaningful relationships no matter what level of job
- Idea of social enterprise opportunities for organizations
- Interacting on an international level
- Funding streams

### Acknowledgements

- Office of Global Activities: Scholarship Funding
- Alumni Board of Governors: Scholarship Funding
- Office of Financial Aid: Coleman Global Experience Scholarship
- Katie Lopez and Larry Root, OGA Faculty – greatly assisted with challenges while abroad, prepared for departure and assisting with re-entry
- Parents – supportive of this experience and career path

### Advice

- Research relevant policies related to work assignment
- Be aware of your own personal biases of your location
- Acknowledge why you're there
- Don't expect to change the world – or country
- Be intentional
- Communicate clearly your expectations and hopes for the placements
- Have a self-care plan that doesn't rely on other people
- Be prepared for loneliness
- Challenge yourself out of your comfort zone
- HAVE FUN!

