

Women at the Wheel

Settlement Services International

(Previous known as Access Community Services)



Settlement
Council
of Australia

AT A GLANCE

Target participants:

CALD women, women from refugee background

Aim of program:

Provide CALD women with the opportunity to gain their driver license, build knowledge of road safety, increase their social inclusion and independence and improve access to employment.

Organisations involved

/ partnerships:

Transurban – sponsorship & support with educational sessions & events

Location: Logan, QLD

Funding:

Transurban (for Women at the Wheel); YTS (extension of program for young CALD (refugee) women participating in our YTS program; SETS (extension of program for women participating in our SETS program.



Women at the Wheel

INTRODUCTION

Women at the Wheel supports CALD women to gain the required knowledge and practical experience of Australian Road Rules & driving lessons to enable them to obtain a provisional Queensland Driver's License. Participants also gain knowledge regarding driving on highways, paying tolls and using the Transurban/Linkt network.

It provides access to TMR driver literacy and road safety information sessions when the women start in the program. These sessions are designed to improve knowledge of Australian road rules as well as practical information sessions on purchasing and maintaining a motor vehicle. The Driver Literacy Sessions promote digital literacy, and incorporate general literacy and vocabulary to improve English language knowledge of road rules.

The women have access to an initial 15 (free of cost) driving lessons with one of the driving schools we partner with. Some of the driving schools have driving instructors that speak a variety of community languages (which removes the language barrier).

The women have access to a (free of cost) driver test, including car hire to get to the test. If the woman is successful at her first attempt, she will be provided with a 2 year (paid for) driving license. If unsuccessful we provide an additional 5 -10 lessons and pay for a second attempt at the driving test.

Throughout the program additional information sessions are provided, including on Toll Roads, child seat fittings, car registration, insurance, and maintenance. Events are held throughout the year with the women, during International Women's Day, an annual Graduation event and the women are invited to many of our other events held as part of our settlement programs. Additionally, we organise annual outings in which the participants visit the Transurban control centre. We organise simulated driving experiences for those women, who want to obtain their driver license, but are not yet fully confident to commence their driving lessons.



Women at the Wheel

We partner with a variety of agencies and offer spots in our Women at the Wheel program to women from different programs, including Community Hubs, TAFE Workforce Australia, the SRSS program, SETS CCB Thriving Afghan Women Program, SETS DFV and our 99 Steps (Domestic and Family Violence) Programs.

We also offer our driver literacy and road safety (community education module) sessions separately to TAFE QLD and Community Hubs.

We have replicated the model and deliver it with additional cohorts within both our Youth Transitions and Settlement (YTS) and Settlement Engagement and Transition Support Program (SETS) clients.

POINT OF DIFFERENCE

The variety of partnerships we have established, such as with the driving schools offering lessons in a variety of community languages, and the link with Workforce Australia for women who are work-ready but lack a drivers license.

Our partnership with Transurban, who provide sponsorship to the program, and who engage with a multitude of information sessions and the annual Graduation Event.

The financial barrier (which is a major barrier for many of the women) is removed by offering a large number of lessons and the opportunity to get a paid-for license (2 years).

The focus on social inclusion and bringing the women together, outside of the information sessions, to build strong connections with one another.

OUTCOMES

- Annual intake of around 50 women.
- Increased confidence to independently mobilise and navigate road rules.
- Increased digital literacy in participants.
- Increased social and economic participation due to greater mobility, especially for those in more regional areas with a lack of public transport.
- Increased peer support and building of friendships through connection with women in the program.



Women at the Wheel- Graduation

CHALLENGES

Many women are initially quite overwhelmed when they start the driving lessons. There is a lack of confidence and familiarity with busy roads. As a result, some women needed a large amount of lessons (more than 20) and some women had to attend the program twice. Not all women were able to achieve their license at the end.

In order to improve the women's confidence, we commenced simulator-driver sessions with a group of women prior commencing the program/driving lessons, which has been helpful.

KEY LEARNINGS

- That a high need exists for a driving program, based on the number of inquiries we receive each year – we cannot accommodate for all the interest currently, and there could be room for expansion.
- The importance of transport for access to employment and social cohesion. Many women report feeling a greater sense of belonging in Australian society now that they can independently travel.
- The cumulative positive effect on children and families (ability to attend GP or specialist health services, education etc).
- Some level of English is still required in order to sit the test.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

<https://www.ssi.org.au/our-services/settlement/women-at-the-wheel/>

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