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Speaking the language of health

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By Casey Neill

Afghan and Tamil volunteers are spreading life-saving health messages to their cultural communities.

Enliven Victoria rolled out the red carpet at Dandenong Civic Centre on Thursday 17 August to recognise its latest volunteers.

Dandenong MP Gabrielle Williams presented certificates to recognise the health champions' graduation from a training program.

They'll now teach members of their community about health and help them to find and use local health services.

Their training covered mental health, child health and development, alcohol and drug use, and family violence.

Local partner organisations hosted the volunteers and the Victorian Multicultural Commission and the South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network provided funding.

Long-standing enliven volunteer Weda Mohseni said the program was important.

"In our community we never take things serious until it gets very critical and then we jump into hospital," she said. The Afghanistan-born Dandenong resident said herbal medication and advice from elders trumped western medicine.

"People are still following the same steps," she said.

"It's good for people to know you don't have to wait until the last moment to go to the hospital.

"They also need to know the after-hours doctor is available.

"When a person from their own community explains everything and makes sure to explain that it doesn't come with any cost, they use it."

Ms Mohseni has also educated people on the dangers of passing on their prescription medication to others.

"It's something very common," she said.

"They don't know the side-effects of medication and they offer it to their relatives.

"The other person could end up in hospital because of the side-effect.

"It might save a person's life."

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Tamil Community Strengthening Project's Bhagya Etta. 171719
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