

Improving social inclusion for older Cambodian people in the inner east region of Melbourne

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Inner East Social Inclusion Initiative

Work of members of Inner East Primary Care Partnership

Aim

To increase community connections for isolated older people in the Inner East region of Melbourne

- Two projects were developed to achieve this aim

The Leadership for Social Inclusion Project
Mobilising Communities Project

Inner East Social Inclusion Initiative funded by:
Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, Department of Planning and Community Development, Department of Human Services, Inner East Primary Care Partnership (IEPCP), Whitehorse City Council, Uniting Church in Australia Share Community Appeal

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Mobilising Communities Project

High levels of social isolation and depression among older people from CALD and refugee backgrounds

Older Cambodian people targeted for the *Mobilising Communities Project*

Project adopted the Assets Based Community Development (ABCD) approach



Project strategies

- Developing the skills and confidence of 'natural leaders' in the Cambodian community
- Providing formal and informal leadership training and support for the 'natural leaders'
- Providing opportunities for:
 - building relationships with the Cambodian community
 - social activities for older Cambodian people
 - participation in planning and decision making
 - identifying causes and impact of social isolation
 - Identifying community strengths and resources (potential for oral and written history explored)



Social participation activities

Activity	Number of participants
State Rose Garden	51
Melbourne Botanical Gardens	27
Blue Lotus Farm in Yarra Glen	53
Khmer New Year Celebration	26
Multicultural Buddhist Festival at Federation Square	35
Tourist tram tour of Melbourne CBD	25
Weekly water aerobics (16 weeks) followed by shared lunch	12-18



Issues arising

- Difficulty recruiting community leaders
- Barriers to leadership development
- Extended period of time required for community engagement
- Limitations of ABCD approach
- Readiness for engaging in oral history project



Project impacts



- Impacts of project on participants' lives:
- Improved physical health
 - Improved emotional wellbeing
 - Feeling part of a community
 - Development of new friendships
 - Interest in being active in the community

Participants' comments

- *Talking to each other makes me feel young and happy. Before this group I was taking 8 pain medication tablets per day, now I do not take anything. This is because of the exercise and meeting with my friends to laugh.*
- *I am happy and proud to be part of the group. I did not want to be involved with a crowd and enjoy life because I have been through so much. Because of the information and support I gave it a chance. I joined the group. Since I have been involved I see the amazing and important things that have changed my life. I can't wait to join this group every week, I look forward to it. I want to be part of this group – it is a new life for me. I am nearly 70 years old, but now I feel 50 years old. The group makes me feel young. I feel that there is a bright future for me now; I won't get bored with my life. If this project continues it will help my transition to old age.*

Social inclusion model for older people from small CALD communities

Resources	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes
Time	Promotional activities	Community leaders	Relationships built between community and people involved in the project	Health and wellbeing of group participants enhanced
Partnership	Recruiting community leaders	Community assets mapped	Community leaders independently working with their community	
Lead agency	Community consultation	Communities engage in social activities	Community takes ownership of activities	
Funding bodies	Relationship development		Community leaders empower their community to build connections	
Funded project coordinator	Leadership training (formal and informal)		Improved social inclusion participation	
Volunteer community leaders	ABCD training (formal and informal)		Social capital created	
Community leadership program	Group discussions			
Existing community organisations	Forming connections to community organisations			
Local government	Identifying community assets			

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