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PATHFINDERS: THE CULTURAL CONNECTIONS IN DISABILITY PROJECT

EVALUATION: FINAL REPORT

September 2022

STAND OUT REPORT

Presented to the Multicultural Communities Council of SA (MCCSA) and Project Partners

PROJECT PARTNERS

AFSSA
Australians For SYRIA S.A.
أستراليون من أجل سوريا (جنوب أستراليا)

Iranian Women Organisation SA
سازمان زنان ایرانی استرالیای جنوبی

विश्व हिन्दू परिषद
धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः

C.C.S.A
Congolese Community of South Australia
"Together we are Strong"

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UNITING SA Together we can

MCCSA
Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia

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2. Its *community development focus* sits well with community beliefs that value self-reliance, often building on a tradition of volunteerism which has provided a strong foundation for Community Connectors, and for implementing the Project as a whole.
3. The strategy of *sharing of information through word-of-mouth via trusted and respected intermediaries* in the community (Community Connectors) is both effective and appropriate. For some communities, this has extended to engaging with spiritual leaders for this purpose.

Commonly experienced challenges

A number of challenges were experienced across communities, and these tended to be interactive in their effect. However, they were anticipated when the Project was designed and addressing them has been central to defined Project outcomes. These involve addressing:

- disability-related shame and stigma
- low levels of awareness and understanding of disability and the disability service system
- the interactive effect of some cultural and spiritual beliefs that interact with low levels of understanding of disability and associated stigmatisation
- the limitations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

ADDRESSING DISABILITY-RELATED SHAME AND STIGMA

One of the challenges being addressed by the Project is to change perceptions of disability being shameful, something that is ignored rather than discussed openly. Stigmatisation with associated negative stereotyping is a significant issue and can be exacerbated when intertwined with some cultural traditions, and some spiritual beliefs (discussed below).

Stigmatisation has meant that families and individuals tend to not identify as living with disability and to not seek out services, creating a further challenge in implementing the Project.

KEY FINDING

Feedback from different Project stakeholders identifies disability-related shame and stigmatisation as the major challenge faced and one that requires long term intervention. However, the Project has made a significant start because of the awareness raising and education it has provided, and because this has been provided by people with whom they have relationships based on trust and respect.

There is a trend for attitudes to vary with type of disability, with most stakeholders reporting that it has been much easier to discuss physical and other visible disabilities than mental health-related disabilities and neuro-diversity related disabilities. There is significant stigma attached to these disabilities, making it extremely challenging to raise awareness, provide information and educate the community. People with such disabilities are described as being less visible participants in community activities and awareness of their needs has been low.

Despite the magnitude of change required, many of the Community Connecters have expressed appreciation for being able to discuss these issues, and to identify strategies for addressing disability in their communities, helping to "normalise" disability.

LOW LEVELS OF AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF DISABILITY AND OF THE DISABILITY SERVICE SYSTEM

Low levels of understanding of disability are intertwined with stereotyping and negative attitudes. The Project taps into a significant need to raise awareness and understanding of disability, how best to support people living with disability and their families, to increase knowledge of the NDIS and what it can provide, and how to access this and other formal services and supports.

Lower levels of understanding and awareness of the disability concept, and the role of formal services, were reported by community representatives as being more likely to occur among recent arrivals, many of whom are unfamiliar with the Australian disability service system and the rights of people with disability to access its support.

THE EFFECT OF SOME CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL BELIEFS INTERACTING WITH LOW LEVELS OF UNDERSTANDING OF DISABILITY AND ASSOCIATED STIGMATISATION

A diversity of religions exists across the participating communities, and for some, religious belief views having a child with disability as destiny, and encourages stoic acceptance of the fate assigned by God with disability constituting a test of faith. Religious belief can regard having a child with disability as the Karmic outcome of poor behaviour by parents in a previous life.

Consequently, some people choose to be private and to not divulge any challenges they are experiencing (described by one community representative as a 'my problem is my problem' attitude). Concern has been expressed by some families about visual images of them or their children being shared through the Project video.

Keeping a family member's disability out of public view means that formal services tend not to be sought out (often exacerbated when English is not proficient), and the extent of disability in the community has not been well understood, even by community leaders (until this Project). However, this has not created a barrier to accepting information from a trusted, respected person. Consequently, Community Connectors and community and spiritual leaders have a critical role to play.

PROVIDING FACE-TO-FACE INFORMATION AND SUPPORTING DURING A PANDEMIC

Not surprisingly, the Covid-19 pandemic was a challenge (outside of Project control) that reduced face to face participation for a significant period of time. This has slowed down the community education process and required innovation on the part of participating communities, with useful guidance gained from the Project's multi-modal *Communication Strategy*.

Key Enablers

The Project has faced substantial challenges in achieving its ambitious goals but in the process, lessons are emerging about key Enablers to addressing those challenges. In particular, the following have been identified as critical:

- The Community Connector and Peer Leader roles
- The use of word of mouth via trusted and respected community intermediaries
- The application of co-design strategies to tailor interventions according to varying community need and capacity
- A multi-mode Communications Strategy to address diverse needs and preferences
- Effective use of social media
- Inclusive community events
- The provision of structured education with follow up support.

Early impact of the Project on how communities address disability issues

Across participating communities, the Project is seen as needing years to achieve the goals and outcomes sought, particularly in relation to changing attitudes towards disability - but as having made an important start. One community representative described it as having made *"… a dent, and that is still an achievement."*

The Project has provided a structured opportunity for community members to have conversations about disability, often for the first time, and its information and education activities have lifted levels of understanding of disability, and initiated a process of growing acceptance of disability.

Community stakeholders report an increase in levels of *awareness of disability issues and knowledge of services and support*, resulting in more open discussion of these, and in the process, a 'normalisation' of the concept of disability and reduced stigmatisation. The formal training program, with follow up support from Community Connectors and MCCSA staff in particular, has seen measured increases in understanding of -

- disability and the human rights of people with lived experience
- how to support people living with disability and their families
- the NDIS and broader service system
- the barriers faced by people living with disability
- how to be more inclusive of people with disability at the community level.

There has been an increase in awareness and understanding of neuro-diversity related disabilities and of mental health-related disabilities, but more community education is needed.

In addition, the Project has resulted in the identification of people with disability and their families who previously had not been 'visible' at community level, making community leaders more aware of the extent of disability in their community in the process. In some communities with a high proportion of people who came to Australia as skilled migrants, and associated restrictions of accepting people with significant medical issues, disability prevalence had been expected to be low and the Project has challenged that assumption.

Community representatives report varying levels of Project impact on community members' understanding of the NDIS, and this can be a reflection of their degree of engagement with the scheme.

KEY FINDING

The Project has had a positive effect on increasing community understanding of a rights-based concept of disability, on increasing their confidence to support people living with disability and their families, and to be more inclusive. It has also begun to increase knowledge of the NDIS and has enhanced understanding of the barriers faced by people with lived experience of disability.

However, issues needing further and ongoing training and support from the Project involve changing attitudes and reducing stereotypes in order to make communities more inclusive for children and adults living with disability. This finding was echoed in structured interviews with Community Connectors and community representatives in the Project Consortium. There is also a need to continue community education regarding the NDIS and the wider social services system, and for specific education and support in making communities more inclusive for people living with disability, in particular, those living with developmental delays and or neurodiversity.

IMPACT OF PROJECT RESOURCES

Prior to the Project, there had been no community-wide information and awareness-raising campaigns about disability and formal service support, no resources tailored to community need (in terms of language and culture), and low levels of understanding of the NDIS, its provisions and how to access them. The Project is seen to have produced valuable resources that will continue to be disseminated, enabling community leaders to build on growing levels of awareness of disability issues and knowledge of services and support.

One of the most valuable resources has been the *Speak My Language* podcast that was created by the MCCSA and spoken by a Community Connector in each participating community. The presence of a familiar voice discussing disability issues was welcomed, and delivery in community languages was very important to access to its information. The podcast has been very well received across communities and has contributed significantly to raising awareness and understanding.

Similar impact is expected from the video resource involving trusted community intermediaries (eg Community Connectors), religious leaders, again under the guidance of MCCSA Project staff with lived experience of disability. The videos are expected to result in a valuable resource for these communities.

KEY FINDING

The Project has produced multiple valuable resources that have been critical enablers to achieving Project goals and outcomes, as has the strategy of distributing them via trusted community intermediaries, including Community Connectors. The co-design process involved in their development has itself contributed to education and awareness raising and once implemented, that process has extended to the wider community. This impact can be expected to enhance the sustainability of this Project.

IMPACT OF TRAINING

Survey findings across all three training workshops indicated that the large majority of participants believe their understanding of the topics presented to have increased by between 75% and 100% - with some variations from one topic to another, and across communities. The topics with the largest measured gain in knowledge (**93% to 94%** rating their understanding as having increased by between 75% and 100%) were:

1) Understanding of disability and the human rights of people with disability in Australia
2) Confidence in understanding how to support people living with disability

3) Knowledge of how to work with families of children with developmental delays/disability
4) Understanding the Five Stages of Grief parents may experience and how to support them.

Topics where **82% to 86%** rated their knowledge as having increased by between 75% and 100% were:

5) Understanding of the NDIS
6) Awareness of the barriers faced by people with disability in accessing their community
7) How to support living with disability to be more included in their community.
8) How to help people living with disability and make a positive difference for them.

The following three topics were associated with a self-rated gain of 75%-100% by **71% to 79%:**

9) Knowledge needed to navigate the NDIS.
10) How to make communities more inclusive for people living with disability
11) How to create inclusive environments for children with developmental delays and/or neuro-sensitivities.

More than **93%** of Community Connectors rated the likelihood of **applying the knowledge** gained from this formal training to their role as between 75% and 100%.

Conclusions

The evaluation has found strong support for the Project and have endorsed its model and the way in which it was implemented. The goals of this Project are ambitious but extremely worthwhile, and significant progress has been made towards achieving them. All key stakeholders believe that resources should be found to continue the Project as the timeframe needed to educate, inform and change attitudes requires more than two years of intervention. A strong foundation now exists to continue the work of this Project.

It is evident that participating communities are building an important knowledge base associated with achieving Project goals and that there is scope for them to share their learnings with each other, and with other CALD background communities. Resourcing to support the MCCSA in coordinating a Community of Practice and having a dedicated project officer to facilitate that Community of Practice would be a valuable way to extend the Project's impact.

SUSTAINING THE IMPACT

The complex needs, issues and challenges associated with achieving an increase in understanding of disability, knowledge of and confidence to use formal disability services, building links to services and community confidence in accessing those services, all require long-term intervention. Changing negative stereotypes and stigmatisation of disability also requires a timeframe that extends well beyond the life of this Project.

The underpinning Project model itself provides the framework for continuing because of the community development focus that empowers communities to build the knowledge, skills and experience to achieve positive change. This has augmented the self-reliance evident in participating communities and the Project's Community Connectors are expected by community representatives to be maintained as part of their volunteer base.

In addition, the resources developed as part of the Project will continue to be used, and the learnings gained formally and informally can be expected to have ongoing application.

However, the extent to which communities are able to continue Project work is going to be dependent on already stretched and time-poor voluntary input, unless further funding can be obtained. While individual communities can apply for funding, and some have or intend to do so, it is important to have a Project level focus so that resources can be applied as efficiently and effectively as possible, and so that the Community of Practice that is emerging from this Project can be further developed.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

It is recommended that funding be sought from the Department of Social Services to continue the Project in order to avoid losing the momentum created and to acknowledge the longer timeframe required to achieve Project goals and outcomes.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that funding be sought from Commonwealth and/or State government to support the creation of a CALD Disability Inclusion Community of Practice, coordinated by the MCCSA and working in partnership with communities who have participated in this Project.

1. INTRODUCTION

The *Cultural Connections in Disability* Project ('Cultural Connections') is innovative with few similar models existing in Australia. It has no pathways to follow, especially in South Australia, and so for participating communities there are no role models or mentors to whom they can turn for guidance on achieving Project goals and outcomes. Consequently, Project participants are pathfinders, creating learnings as they proceed, and in this sense, the Project involves action research and has been evaluated accordingly (see Section 1.1).

However, the Project design has drawn inspiration from, and been informed by the experience of partner Uniting SA's *Pathways to Multicultural Access and Participation in Disability (PMAPD)*. Many of the relationships on which the Cultural Connections Project are based were initiated by the PMAPD and this has been a valuable foundation.

In addition, the Project represents a continuation of the MCCSA's series of community capacity building initiatives (2017 onwards) that are all linked by a guiding community development model, building knowledge, skills and confidence to achieve change and become increasingly resilient in the process. Together these varying initiatives provide a growing evidence base from which resources, knowledge and skilled individuals can be leveraged with a multiplier effect.[1] The *Cultural Connections* Project has benefitted from this foundation.

Partnership

Cultural Connections is a partnership that is managed by the Multicultural Communities' Council of SA (MCSSA) as the lead agency, guided by a Consortium of partners, namely:

- Australians for Syria SA
- Chinese Welfare Services of SA
- Congolese Community of SA
- Iranian Women's Organisation SA
- KDG Partnerships
- MCCSA
- St Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church Parish Association
- Uniting SA
- Vishva Hindu Parishad of Australia Inc

The Consortium has met on a quarterly basis and the evaluation team have observed all meetings and provided ongoing evaluation reports to them.

Launched in December 2020, the Project has been funded by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services' Information Linkages and Capacity Building program.

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[1] In particular, the following programs - *Intercultural Youth Leadership, Building Resilient CALD Communities, Youth Engagement, Success Through Sport, Successful Communities*

Project Goals and Objectives

The Project aims to:

a) Enable the increased contribution to community life of CALD people living with disability and their families.

b) Realise their right to a good life by breaking down barriers they face and building their knowledge, skills and confidence to voice their concerns and advocate for what they need, and to increase their capacity to make choices that will enhance their participation in family life, community life and wider society.

c) Enhance the capacity of CALD communities to be more understanding and supportive of the changes needed to ensure the full contribution of community members with lived experience of disability.

Through co-design with people living with disability and their families, the Project has sought to achieve the following objectives:

- ⇨ Increase their capacity to understand and exercise their rights, especially their right to a good life, and what a good life looks like; to be able to recognise what is best practice and that they have a right to ask for it from providers and from their communities.
- ⇨ Build their motivation and confidence to self-advocate for the supports and services they need, increase their capacity to manage their NDIS plans and especially how to maximise utilisation of their plan.
- ⇨ Build their knowledge and confidence to assess and access quality supports and services, especially appropriate support coordination.
- ⇨ Broaden their awareness of what other services they can access especially if they are not eligible for the NDIS, or the service is not included in their NDIS plan.
- ⇨ Build their capacity and confidence to voice their concerns and self-advocate to resolve issues and realise their choices.
- ⇨ Support robust peer to peer support network(s) of CALD people with disability and their families to provide ongoing support and engagement as well as build bridges and generate community connections that foster inclusion and full participation in the life of their ethnic communities and wider community.

Project Outputs

Seven Outputs were identified by those planning this Project. It can be seen from *Table 1* that all eight key planned Outputs have been achieved.

TABLE 1: COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS: OUTPUTS AND THEIR ACHIEVEMENT

PLANNED OUTPUT	ACHIEVED
Establishment of a Peer Leader network to provide mutual assistance and support	✓
Provision of Community Connectors training sessions	✓
Provision of support to Peer Leaders and Community Connectors as a follow up to formal training	✓
Provision to communities of disability-related information and resources	✓
Provision of support to people living with disability to access the NDIS and other disability services and assisting them if they experience challenges with such services	✓
Development of linkages and connections between participating CALD communities and the disability services sector	✓
A co-designed multi-modal communication strategy developed by and with each community	✓

The Project Model

Cultural Connections is underpinned by a model that has been found to be appropriate and effective in achieving Project aims and outcomes. Four features of the model are critical:

1 A **community development/community capacity building focus** that generates and builds on communities' tradition of self-reliance and volunteerism.

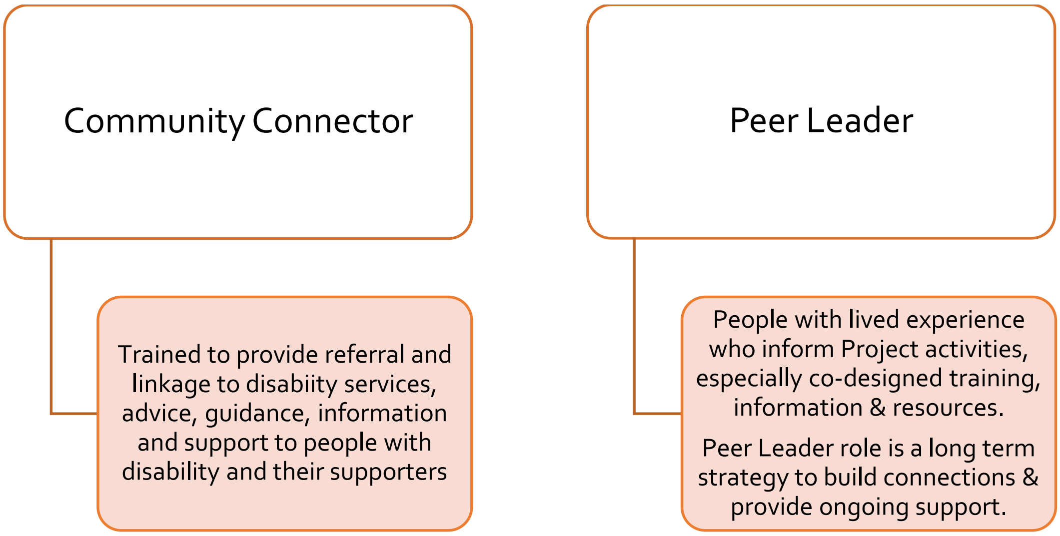
2 **Co-design** of resources and implementation strategies with each community, and within each community, with people living with disability and their families. This has been key to an **inclusive** approach to the Project as a whole.

3 **Flexibility** in the application of Project goals and processes to accommodate diversity of culture, capacity and need, across and within participating communities.

4 The creation of two roles to translate these first three principles into action – the **Community Connector** role and the **Peer Leader** role, both of which draw from members of participating communities.

These roles and the way in which they have been fulfilled during the course of the Project are considered by the evaluators to constitute critical enablers to the application of the Project model.

FIGURE 1: KEY COMMUNITY ROLES



Community Connector

Trained to provide referral and linkage to disabiity services, advice, guidance, information and support to people with disability and their supporters

Peer Leader

People with lived experience who inform Project activities, especially co-designed training, information & resources.

Peer Leader role is a long term strategy to build connections & provide ongoing support.

Four key Outputs have been key to implementing the Project model –

1. Face to face **training** designed to achieve Project goals and outcomes. A total of 3 Workshops were provided for Community Connectors and Peer Leaders as well as a Forum for Connectors and Leaders that involved key disability service providers.
2. **Resources** that inform and educate, such as, a Toolkit to help navigate the NDIS, Podcasts and Videos focused on living well with a disability and participating in all aspects of life.
3. A co-designed, **multimodal communication strategy** to assist communities to share information about the Project and the different supports it has offered.

    - Visual (educational and awareness raising video, posters)
    - Spoken/Audio (eg use of ethnic radio, podcasts)
    - Written and online information
    - Activities (eg community events_

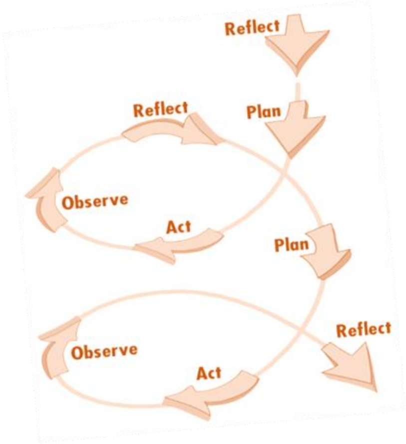
    This has provided guidance on the use of podcasts, video, ethnic radio (5EBI), sport and recreation, festivals and media coverage, in some cases leveraging from the MCCSA's own resources – in particular, the successful Speak my Language podcast series.

4. **Tailored support** to apply the learnings from the first three outputs. This has been critical to individualising Project interventions and to assisting Community Connectors, community leaders and other key stakeholders to address a range of challenges experienced in seeking to achieve Project goals.

1.1. METHOD

This has been a *formative* evaluation, that is, capturing information over the course of the Project, rather than only at the end (*summative* evaluation). Consequently, the evaluation approach has been *iterative,* that is, following cycles of Planning, Acting, Observing, Reflecting, and flexibly revising methodology as needed. This approach is suited to action research projects, such as, *Cultural Connections*.

The evaluation began in **December 2019** and ended in **September 2022,** in line with the Project timeframe.



As with most evaluations, the approach has been to separately identify *Project Inputs* (eg staffing, learning resources), *Project Outputs* (eg number of training sessions, resources produced), *Project Outcomes* (what has resulted as a result of the combined effect of Inputs and Outputs (eg increased awareness of disability issues) and early *Impact* (the overall effect of Outcomes at greater than individual level eg increased community capacity to support people living with disability; strong connections between multicultural communities and formal disability services).[2] Project Impact will take years to be fully realised and this evaluation can only capture early or indicative impact.

This method has needed to be flexible, adapting to each community's preferred information and data collection methods, and their ability to contribute time to the evaluation. Information collection has been undertaken with the goal of *minimising burden on communities* in recognition of the fact that those participating in the Project are time-poor and have been providing evaluative information in multiple ways beyond formal Project evaluation feedback.

The evaluation has used *triangulation,* that is, posing similar questions to different stakeholder groups, in order to assess and compare findings.

Component 1: Structured Interviews with Key Stakeholders

1. **MCCSA Project leadership team**: CEO (Helena Kyriazopoulos), Program Manager (Megan Hill then Julie Hoare) and Project Coordinator (Hanaa Grave) – at the beginning and end of the Project, and during the Project as appropriate.

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[2] 2 This is usually known as a *Program Logic* approach which involves a hierarchy that begins with Inputs, followed by Outputs, then Outcomes, and finally Impact.

2. **Consortium Partners:**
    - ⇨ Australians for Syria SA; Chinese Welfare Services of SA; Congolese Community of SA; Iranian Women's Organisation SA; St Elias Antioch Orthodox Church SA; Vishva Hindu Parishad of Aust Inc.[3]
    - ⇨ Maria Eliadis (Project Consultant) from KDG Partnerships.
    - ⇨ Tina Karanastasis (Strategic Advisor) from Uniting SA.
3. **Community Connectors**
4. **Peer Leaders**.

Component 2: Surveys

A number of questionnaires, distributed at each training session and using five-point Likert scales, captured changes in knowledge, confidence and overall capacity *prior to and immediately following training*. Three surveys were completed by almost all participants in 2021 at the April 10th (Workshop 1), April 24th (Workshop 2) and July 10th (Workshop 3) training sessions. Qualitative feedback was obtained in a fourth workshop/forum held on May 20th. 2021.

The evaluators analysed those findings independently and provided individual reports and a combined report comparing findings over these training sessions. The table below presents profile information about workshop participants.

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[3] These partners formed the Governance Group for the Project and played a number of other critical roles including selecting and supporting Community Connectors and intervention planning.

TABLE 2: SURVEY RESPONDENT PROFILE

Community group	**No of respondents**		
	Workshop 1	**Workshop 2**	**Workshop 3**
Australians for Syria SA		1	1
Chinese Welfare Services of SA	6	5	4
Congolese Community of SA	3	1	4
Iranian Women Organisation SA	3	2	2
St Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church Parish Association	3	3	2
Vishva Hindu Parishad of Australia	1	1	1
Peer Leader	1	1	
Total	**17**	**14**	**14**

Component 3: Case Studies

Four Case Studies were included to provide more detailed information about Project outputs and outcomes, as well as insight about the ability of the Project model to adapt to different community need and capacity.

Component 4: Observation

A member of the evaluation team participated in all Consortium Partners Governance Meetings, presenting information to these as appropriate.

2 FINDINGS

2.1 OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

From October 2021 to July 2022, the evaluators interviewed Peer Educators, Community Connectors, and community partners represented on the Project Consortium to obtain their feedback and insights about the program. Some of those interviews informed the four Case Studies presented throughout this section of the report.

Interviews were completed with **7 Peer Leaders** and **12 Community Connectors** from all targeted communities, as well as from **8** of the 9 Project Partners. Table 4 in Appendix B summarises the guiding questions that structured these interviews.

Those interviewed have been very positive about the Project and its impact on them, describing it as "*excellent*", "*an eye-opener*", ‘*very useful*", "*lots of information, advice and help*", and "*a way to meet others and form connections*". One person described it as giving "*confidence in approaching/supporting other people given that NDIS advertising is still confusing and unclear.*" Another described it as "*an excellent program to offer to community members which helped them to know the NDIS*". The Project is described by them as having been delivered "*professionally*", with "*clear communication*".

> ***"Very much enjoying what I am doing on this project."***
>
> ***"This is an important project and new in the way it is delivered – it gives people hope."***

It was clear from these interviews that participating communities have valued the multicultural focus of the support offered, particularly the provision of information in community languages and within a culturally-specific context. Providing a culturally safe environment for the Project was described by several as increasing their confidence in sharing stories and this was also valued highly.

Appropriateness of the Project Model

Three features of the model underpinning the Project were identified consistently across participating communities in support of its appropriateness.

1. It is sufficiently *flexible* to respond to diversity within and across participating communities.
2. Its *community development focus* sits well with community beliefs that value self-reliance, often building on a tradition of volunteerism which has provided a strong foundation for Community Connectors, and for implementing the Project as a whole.
3. The strategy of *sharing of information through word-of-mouth via trusted and respected intermediaries* in the community (Community Connectors) is both effective and appropriate. For some communities, this has extended to engaging with spiritual leaders for this purpose.

Case Study: The St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church Parish Association

Appropriateness of the Project model

The St Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church Parish Association ('St. Elias') reports a positive experience in applying the Cultural Connections Project model because it has been -

- Sufficiently *flexible* to adapt to diversity within this community.
- Its *community development focus* sits well with the St. Elias community's self-reliance, especially its strong volunteer ethos.
- Its promotion of *inclusivity* for people living with disability is in sync with Christian beliefs.

There have been multiple outputs associated with St. Elias's implementation of the Project, all of which have been designed to promote the Project itself as well as its associated information and awareness raising:

- ⇨ Official Launch, conducted by the 4 Community Connectors and the V. Rev. Fr Georges El Tahan (June 2021)
- ⇨ Ladies Group Gathering conducted by 2 Community Connectors and the wife of the V. Rev. Fr. Nicolas Haddad (June 2021)
- ⇨ Men's Group meeting that included information and awareness raising (October 2021)
- ⇨ St. Elias Festival 2021 (October 2021)
- ⇨ Multicultural Festival which showcased the Project and the specific component being delivered by St. Elias (November 2021)
- ⇨ Podcast interview (in Arabic) with Community Connector Salwa Wardeh Madback (December 2021)
- ⇨ Disability Awareness Stakeholder Meeting (May 2022).

Challenges experienced in implementing the Project

- This is a faith-based community and comprised of people from different nations, so its identity is not based on nationality or specific cultures. Most people are business owners who work 7 days and week, so attendance at Church at times is low and sporadic. Even though this community attends Parish events irregularly, the majority of people come for Sunday services, and especially on Holy feast days which draw large numbers of people throughout the year. Attendance is driven by spiritual belief as well as social connection.
- Some of the Project guidelines were not easily implemented, in particular, those associated with Project participation. Some who were eligible on the basis of their disability did not meet the age requirement of the broader disability system (ie under 65 years of age). Some people living with disability were keen to be part of the Project, but their condition did not fit the required disability profile. This slowed down the formation of a Project participant group.

- A large part of the Church community are older people, which has meant that the involvement of younger people has been more challenging to achieve.
- Addressing the issue of stigmatisation of psycho-social disabilities has been another challenge. It has been much easier to discuss physical and other visible disabilities than mental health-related disabilities and autism spectrum disabilities. There is significant stigma attached to these difficult-to-address disabilities, making it extremely challenging to raise awareness, provide information and educate the community. People with such disabilities tend not to be visible participants in community activities and awareness of their needs has been low. However, the viewing of disability through the lens of Christianity has been found to shape attitudes towards people living with disability in the St. Elias community in a positive way.
- Not surprisingly, the Covid-19 pandemic was a challenge (outside of Project control) that reduced face to face participation for a significant period of time.

Effect of the Project on how disability issues are being addressed

The establishment of this Project within St. Elias has provided a structured opportunity for Parish members to engage in Project disability awareness initiatives, and has led to increased understanding of disability, particularly by community leaders, together with a growing acceptance of disability across the community. The Project has identified people living with disability in the community who had not previously identified (or their families had not identified them) as living with disability.

One of the most valuable resources for the St. Elias community has been the *Speak My Language* podcast that was created by the MCCSA and spoken by a St. Elias Community Connector. The presence of a familiar voice discussing disability issues was welcomed, and delivery in community languages was very important to community access to its information. The podcast has been well received within the St. Elias community and has contributed significantly to raising awareness and understanding.

Similar impact is expected from the video resource involving the St. Elias parish priest (V. Rev. Fr. Georges El Tahan) and a Community Connector, again under the guidance of the MCCSA Project staff with lived experience of disability. The ideas being proposed have been very well received and the important effect of endorsement by a respected and trusted community leader, the most senior spiritual leader of the Parish, are expected to result in a valuable resource for the community.

Lessons learned so far about supporting people living with disability and their families

- Throughout the course of the Project, St. Elias has discovered that there are a large number of people in their community who are living with a disability, many of them doing so in silence, and without strong links to the wider community. The need to apply *co-design* principles to the design of facilities or supports for people living disability has been learned in the process of developing plans for the disability-friendly community centre modifications.

- An important lesson has been for Community Connectors to continually update their knowledge, or even refresh their knowledge on all facets of the NDIS. Otherwise there has been a tendency to forget the information even when it needs to be re-applied.
- Avoiding the labelling of individuals and instead targeting needs has been a valuable lesson.
- For community leaders the lessons relate to enhanced understanding of disability in its various dimensions.
- It is clear that the Project cannot be a once-off intervention and the need to continue awareness raising and enhancing acceptance of disability needs to be ongoing.

Plans for addressing disability after the Project finishes

Building on the strong volunteering commitment, the community now sees a responsibility to make available the necessary volunteers to continue the Community Connector role.

The community has developed plans for a new facility for people living with disabilities, which will include a kitchen and toilets as well as a community space that are all accessible for people living with disabilities. Those plans are being assessed by the City of Charles Sturt council as part of a funding application to support the new facility.

Funding has also been sought from the MCCSA, and the State government to assist with further resources to continue the consortium partner Project into the next financial year, and in particular, to obtain administrative support.

The resources developed during the Project will continue to be made available.

With or without specific funding to continue the Project, it will be continued as part of this church-based community's activities which are part of the fabric of the St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church community.

2.2 CHALLENGES FACED IN PURSUING PROJECT GOALS AND OUTCOMES

A number of challenges were experienced across communities, and these tended to be interactive in their effect. However, they were anticipated when the Project was designed and addressing them has been central to defined Project outcomes. The four most commonly identified challenges involve addressing:

- disability-related shame and stigma
- low levels of awareness and understanding of disability and the disability service system
- the interactive effect of some cultural and spiritual beliefs that interact with low levels of understanding of disability and associated stigmatisation
- the limitations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Addressing disability-related shame and stigma

One of the challenges being addressed by the Project is to change perceptions of disability being shameful, something that is ignored rather than discussed openly. Stigmatisation with associated negative stereotyping is a significant issue and can be exacerbated when intertwined with some cultural traditions, and some spiritual beliefs (discussed below). Stigmatisation has meant that families and individuals tend to not identify as living with disability and to not seek out services, creating a further challenge in implementing the Project.

There is a trend for attitudes to vary with type of disability, with most stakeholders reporting that it has been much easier to discuss physical and other visible disabilities than mental health-related disabilities and neuro-diversity related disabilities. There is significant stigma attached to these disabilities, making it extremely challenging to raise awareness, provide information and educate the community. People with such disabilities are described as being less visible participants in community activities and awareness of their needs has been low.

Many of the Community Connecters have expressed appreciation for being able to discuss this issue, and to identify strategies for addressing it in their communities, helping to "normalise" disability. However, more work still needs to be done in addressing this challenge.

KEY FINDING

Feedback from different Project stakeholders identifies disability-related shame and stigmatisation as the major challenge faced and one that requires long term intervention. However, the Project has made a significant start because of the awareness raising and education it has provided, and because this has been provided by people with whom they have relationships based on trust and respect.

Low levels of awareness and understanding of disability and of the disability service system

Low levels of understanding of disability are intertwined with stereotyping and negative attitudes. The Project taps into a significant need to raise awareness and understanding of disability, how best to support people living with disability and their families, to increase knowledge of the NDIS and what it can provide, and how to access this and other formal services and supports. The NDIS is a new and complex concept for many, and it takes a long time for them to understand all aspects of the program.

Unmet need in relation to awareness of a human rights approach to disability support, the role of formal services and the right to access them, were reported by community representatives as being more likely to occur among recent arrivals, many of whom are unfamiliar with the Australian disability service system and its underpinning rights-based approach.

The effect of some cultural and spiritual beliefs interacting with low levels of understanding of disability and associated stigmatisation

A diversity of religions exists across the participating communities, and for some, religious belief views having a child with disability as destiny, and encourages stoic acceptance of the fate assigned by God, with disability constituting a test of faith. Religious belief can regard having a child with disability as the Karmic outcome of poor behaviour by parents in a previous life.

> ***"Lack of understanding of cultural relevance for example, people think they did something wrong because they have a disability or it was their karma and then they try to hide that, hide their children, particularly those with a disability that is not visible – this is why they don't want to use the word "disability".***

Consequently, some people choose to be private and to not divulge any challenges they are experiencing (described by one community representative as a 'my problem is my problem' attitude). Concern has been expressed by some families about visual images of them or their children being shared through the Project video.

Keeping a family member's disability out of public view means that formal services tend not to be sought out (often exacerbated when English is not proficient), and the extent of disability in the community has not been well understood, even by community leaders (until this Project). However, this has not created a barrier to accepting information from a trusted, respected person. Consequently, Community Connectors and community and spiritual leaders have a critical role to play.

Case Study: The Vishva Hindu Parishad of Australia Inc

Appropriateness of the Project model

The Project model is reported as having worked well with the Hindu community, which is diverse in terms of the multiple nationalities who are part of the community but who are linked by culture and faith. The Vishva Hindu Parishad of Australia Inc (VHP) works with 65 partner organisations, which also reflects the diversity involved. The main features of the model that align well with this community's needs have been identified as follows:

- It is sufficiently *flexible* to respond to diversity in the community.
- Its *community development focus* sits well with community beliefs that value self-reliance, and its tradition of volunteerism has provided a strong foundation for the Project's Community Connectors.
- The *sharing of information through word-of-mouth via trusted and respected intermediaries* in the community (Community Connectors) is effective and appropriate.
- These Community Connectors are also willing to act as *Champions for the Project.*

Challenges experienced in implementing the Project

Several complex and interacting issues have raised significant challenges for the Project, and these are described as involving:

- Low levels of understanding and knowledge of disability, and of formal disability services and supports (especially the NDIS) have characterised the Hindu community as a whole.
- Significant stigma and shame being associated with disability, often based on guilt on the part of parents of children with disability, and believed to be the Karmic outcome of poor behaviour in a previous life. Religious belief also means that having a child with disability means accepting this as fate.
- Consequently, people choose to be private and sharing problems is not the norm (described as a 'my problem is my problem' attitude). Concern has been expressed by some families about visual images of them or their children being shared through the Project video.
- Keeping a family member's disability out of public view means that formal services tend not to be sought out, and the extent of disability in the community is not well understood, even by community leaders (until this Project).
- It also means that those families tend to be isolated and not connected with their community or its community groups, while participating Hindu community partner organisations have been slow to place Project information on already full agendas.

Effect of the Project on how disability issues are being addressed

Although the Project model is described as being appropriate for the Hindu community, it is also seen as needing a long-term investment (involving years rather than months) to achieve the goals and outcomes sought. At this early stage, however, the Project has been important in –

☑ helping to start conversations about disability and how best to support people living with disability and their families.

☑ It has made community leaders more aware of the extent of disability in the Hindu community and removed former beliefs about disability not really being an issue for them. (With many community members arriving as skilled migrants, and associated restrictions of allowing into Australia people with significant medical issues, it had been assumed that disability would not be widespread.)

☑ The Project's impact on understanding of the NDIS varies across the Hindu community but can be divided into two main groups –

- Those who have engaged with the NDIS, have done their research and are happy to guide others in how to navigate the scheme and benefit from it.
- Those who refuse to engage with the NDIS, many of whom prefer to return to India where they can receive family support, and where their child will not be labelled as 'disabled' but simply as 'someone who needs to be looked after'. For example, in India there is no word for 'autism'.

☑ The Project is seen to have produced valuable resources that will continue to be disseminated, enabling community leaders to build on growing levels of awareness of disability issues and knowledge of services and support.

Lessons learned so far about supporting people living with disability and their families

- The VHP's original strategy for raising awareness of disability and how to support those with lived experience and their families was to invite them to events with a disability-specific focus. They have found greater success in **making large mainstream community events more inclusive** for people living with disability.
- Providing **individual support to carers** of people with disability has also been found to be effective.
- Awareness raising is most effective when it is provided by **trusted intermediaries using word-of-mouth and an individualised approach**.
- Those same intermediaries have also been found to have an important role to play as **Champions** of disability-awareness and inclusion on a community-wide basis.

Plans for addressing disability after the Project finishes

The Project is seen as a '10 year project', building on the knowledge and awareness gained so far by continuing Project activities (eg continuing to disseminate the resources produced – especially the video made with MCCSA support – and the Community Connector role).

The VHP leadership intends to address the challenge posed by disability stigmatisation and the tendency to value privacy over disclosure by demonstrating with examples of people being willing to disclose and access NDIS and other formal supports.

Providing face-to-face information and supporting during a pandemic

Not surprisingly, the Covid-19 pandemic was a challenge (outside of Project control) that reduced face to face participation for a significant period of time. This has slowed down the community education process and required innovation on the part of participating communities, with useful guidance gained from the Project's multi-modal *Communication Strategy*.

2.3 BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND AWARENESS

Impact of formal training

Surveys completed by workshop participants have been extremely positive in rating the knowledge and understanding gained on all learning topics.

Across all three workshops there was **significant self-rated change in understanding on all topics** - with some variations from one topic to another, and across communities – but with almost all participants describing an improvement of **between 75% and 100%.**

Furthermore, **more than 93%** of Community Connectors rated the likelihood of applying the knowledge gained from formal training to their role as between 75% and 100%.

These were the topics:

1) Disability in Australia and the human rights of people living with disability
2) The NDIS – what it is and who can access its services
3) Navigating the NDIS
4) Barriers faced by people with disability in accessing their community
5) Helping people living with disability and making a positive difference for them
6) Making communities more inclusive for people living with disability
7) Supporting people living with disability
8) Supporting people living with disability to be more included in their community
9) Working with families with children living with development delays and/or neuro-sensitivities
10) Creating inclusive environments for children with developmental delays and/or neuro-sensitivities
11) The five stages of grief parents may experience and how to support them.

Table 3 compares the change in knowledge by workshop and by topic, with level of impact presented in descending order.

TABLE 3: IMPROVEMENTS IN KNOWLEDGE BY TOPIC AND WORKSHOP

Topic (ranked by increase in understanding)	**% with increased understanding of 75%-100%**
Areas of greatest gain in knowledge and understanding	
1. Understanding disability and human rights of people with disability in Australia	94.0
2. Confidence in understanding how to support people living with disability	93.0
3. Knowledge of how to work with families of children with developmental delays/disability	92.9
3. Understanding the 5 Stages of Grief parents may experience and how to support them	92.9
Areas of second greatest gain in knowledge and understanding	
4. Understanding of the NDIS	88.3
5. Awareness of barriers faced by people with disability in accessing their community	86.0
5. How to support people living with disability to be more included in their community	86.0

Topic (ranked by increase in understanding)	% with increased understanding of 75%-100%
Areas with the lowest levels of gain in knowledge and understanding	
6. How to help people living with disability and make a positive difference for them	82.4
7. Knowledge needed to navigate the NDIS	79.0
8. How to make communities more inclusive for people living with disability	76.5
9. How to create inclusive environments for children with developmental delays/ neuro-sensitivities in the community	71.4

Structured interviews with Community Connectors, Peer Leaders and Consortium partners reinforced these survey findings. There has been extremely positive feedback about the training program, with some of those interviewed stating that this had been the most valuable component of the Project. Among the reasons given for valuing the training were its role in assisting them to connect to their community, and the strategies given for practical application of learnings in their community.

> ***"The Project has been really useful for our community particularly after the training as it helped us to better connect with our community."***
>
> ***"What has been really valuable is after the training we then have the knowledge to pass on to our community and we feel less afraid to let them know that the Government is here to help them and in turn they are less afraid."***

A key strength of the training was seen to be its ready translation into practice, no doubt because the Project as a whole has focused on capacity building through a combination of training and associated support and development (by both KDG Partnerships and the MCCSA).

> ***"Learning is good when we implement it".***

The Project has helped Community Connectors by building their confidence to discuss disability in an informed way, and to help their communities understand the NDIS and how to access its services.

Community Connectors told us that they received constructive feedback from their communities which helped them to design and tailor a specific information and support package for their community. **They described a subsequent change in awareness as community members realised that the NDIS was an entitlement, gaining new understanding of what they could receive, and learning how to access its services.** Many had no idea of what was available to them or how to approach the NDIS or where to begin. Community Connectors have described the positive changes resulting from this increase in awareness levels.

Project assistance given to coordinate community events as a means of building community connections, awareness and understanding has been valued enormously. This strategy has been described by them as “a fantastic way” to engage and highlight access opportunities.

A key outcome has been increased awareness by many in the community who needed assistance but had not been aware of available formal services and supports and how to access them.

> ***“The Project has been extremely useful in terms of awareness of disabilities in our community and has helped us to understand and implement initiatives that have increased engagement.”***

KEY FINDING

The Project has had a positive effect on increasing community understanding of a rights-based concept of disability, on increasing their confidence to support people living with disability and their families, and to be more inclusive. It has also begun to increase knowledge of the NDIS and has enhanced understanding of the barriers faced by people with lived experience of disability.

However, issues needing further and ongoing training and support from the Project involve changing attitudes and reducing stereotypes in order to make communities more inclusive for children and adults living with disability. This finding was echoed in structured interviews with Community Connectors and community representatives in the Project Consortium. There is also a need to continue community education regarding the NDIS and the wider social services system, and for specific education and support in making communities more inclusive for people living with disability, in particular, those living with developmental delays and or neurodiversity.

Case Study: Chinese Welfare Services of SA

Appropriateness of the Project model

Chinese Welfare Services of SA (CWSSA) describe the underpinning Project model as appropriate and working well for the Chinese community in SA, mainly because of these features:

- It is sufficiently *flexible* to respond to diversity in the community. For example, some people prefer to receive information face to face (this is the case for many Cantonese speakers) while others, particularly those who are Mandarin speakers, prefer to use social media (regardless of age group). There is also a need to respond to different faith-based groups in the Chinese community.

- Its *community development focus* sits well with community beliefs that value self-reliance, and the Project has been able to build on the solid foundation provided by CWSSA volunteers.
- The *sharing of information through word-of-mouth via trusted and respected intermediaries* in the community (Community Connectors, who have been drawn from the existing volunteer base). The Project has also collaborated closely with religious leaders in order to respond to different faith-based groups in the community.

Challenges experienced in implementing the Project

- The Project taps into a significant need to raise awareness and understanding of disability, how best to support people living with disability and their families, to increase knowledge of the NDIS and what it can provide, and how to access this and other formal services and supports,
- Associated with these low levels of awareness and understanding is the challenge of reducing the stigma associated with disability, and particular disabilities (eg mental health-related, neuro-diversity related). Stigmatisation has meant that families and individuals tend to not identify as living with disability and to not seek out services, creating a further challenge in implementing the Project.
- The Covid-19 pandemic has made it extremely challenging to provide face to face presentations and this has slowed down the community education process.

Effects of the Project on how disability issues are being addressed

The Project is described as having made a positive impact by increasing community awareness and understanding of disability, and increasing knowledge of the NDIS. There has been a significant increase in awareness and understanding of neuro-diversity related disabilities and an early increase in understanding mental health-related disabilities and reducing the stigma attached to them. However, much more community education is needed.

Prior to the Project, disability-related information came via school children who received information at school and then shared this with their parents. There had been no community-wide information and awareness-raising campaigns, no resources tailored to community need (in terms of language and culture), and low levels of understanding of the NDIS, its provisions and how to access them. CWSSA has, through the Project, been addressing these challenges.

The Project has also managed to reach families and individuals who have 'flown under the radar' in terms of identifying as living with disability, although there is more to do in this area.

Lessons learned so far about supporting people living with disability and their families

The main lessons identified are:

❖ The need to target different sections of the community and **tailor** information according to their needs and preferences eg social media for some, face to face for others.

- **Social media** can play an important role in providing information and education that reaches people who are reluctant to identify or be identified as living with disability.
- **Community events** have also been found to provide an effective way of attracting people who would otherwise not participate, or are difficult to reach, but the challenge is to retain continuity between events.
- **Schools** provide another important means of reaching community members and providing Project information and resources. The CWSSA runs a Chinese school on Saturday mornings and has about 150 students and has strong links with Marden Senior College which has about 250 Chinese students.

Plans for addressing disability after the Project finishes

The CWSSA identifies multiple strategies for continuing Project impact including:

- Developing a disability-specific section on the CWSSA website, with all information and resources from the Project being made available there.
- Building on its knowledge and skills base in delivering home care packages for older people and becoming a provider of disability services and support.
- Continuing its collaboration with religious leaders by presenting information about disability issues and the NDIS.
- Continuing the role of the Community Connectors as part of the volunteer role.
- Establishing a special group for making presentations about disability and related issues to the community.
- Continuing awareness raising and community education. One avenue for this will be the Chinese School where presentations can be made to parents and grandparents. Another is the Overseas Chinese Association which has around 500 students and it is hoped to make presentations to them.
- Continuing efforts to reach community members who are reluctant to identify publicly as living with disability or having a family member with disability.

Impact of Project Resources

Prior to the Project, there had been no community-wide information and awareness-raising campaigns about disability and formal service system support, low levels of understanding of the NDIS, its provisions and how to access them, and no resources tailored to community need (in terms of language and culture). The Project is seen to have produced valuable resources that will continue to be disseminated, enabling community leaders to build on growing levels of awareness of disability issues and knowledge of services and support.

One of the most valuable resources has been leveraged from the MCCSA's *Speak My Language* podcast which is spoken by a Community Connector in each participating community. The presence of a familiar voice discussing disability issues was welcomed, and delivery in community languages was very important to access to its information. The podcast has been very well received across communities and has contributed significantly to raising awareness and understanding.

Similar impact is expected from the video resource involving trusted community intermediaries (eg Community Connectors), religious leaders, again under the guidance of MCCSA Project staff with lived experience of disability. The videos are expected to result in a valuable resource for these communities.

KEY FINDING

The Project has produced multiple valuable resources that have been critical enablers to achieving Project goals and outcomes, as has the strategy of distributing them via trusted community intermediaries, including Community Connectors. The co-design process involved in their development has itself contributed to education and awareness raising and once implemented, that process has extended to the wider community. This impact can be expected to enhance the sustainability of this Project.

Case Study: Australians for Syria SA

Appropriateness of the Project model

Australians for Syria SA report that the Project model has worked well with the Syrian community, which has a significant number of people living with disability, and in particular, with refugee families. Between 130 and 140 families are involved in the Project, with social media playing an important part in engaging with them. The model is regarded as appropriate because it is –

- Sufficiently *flexible* to respond to diversity within this community which includes established and recent migrants, and arrivals from the skilled business as well as humanitarian immigration programs.
- The *sharing of information through word of mouth and via trusted and respected intermediaries* (Community Connectors). This has been found to be far more effective than simply providing translated written information because the issues being addressed are not solely language-based.

Challenges experienced in implementing the Project

The Project faced several challenges based on the following interacting issues in the SA Syrian community:

- Low levels of understanding and awareness of the disability concept, and the role of formal services, particularly among recent arrivals.
- Shame and stigmatisation attached to disability, especially for the refugee group, and more so for non-physical disabilities than for psychological disabilities.
- A reluctance to seek formal support, often exacerbated when English is not proficient, but also because of cultural and/or religious beliefs that encourage stoic acceptance of the fate assigned by God and regarding disability as constituting a test.

However, this has not created a barrier to accepting information from a trusted, respected person. Consequently, Community Connectors and community and spiritual leaders have a critical role to play.

Effect of the Project on how disability issues are being addressed

Although the Project model is appropriate for the Syrian community, it is seen as needing years to achieve the goals and outcomes sought, particularly in relation to changing attitudes towards disability.

However, the Project is regarded as *"… making a dent, and that is still an achievement."* Levels of *awareness of disability issues and knowledge of services and support* have increased, resulting in more community members openly discussing disability-related issues and in the process, 'normalising' the concept of disability and reducing its stigmatisation.

Resources developed by Project stakeholders (eg podcasts, video) are regarded as valuable and they will continue to be disseminated.

Lessons learned so far about supporting people living with disability and their families

- It is important to **not label people or make assumptions** about their needs and capabilities.
- There is a need to listen, and then **tailor and individualise** our response to disability. This involves asking in-depth questions, and drilling down to initial responses (because of the tendency to accept the challenges associated with disability as fate).
- **Word-of-mouth** is the most effective means of communication, using one-on-one, in-depth conversations.
- However, **social media** has an important (accompanying) role to play as well.

Plans for addressing disability after the Project finishes

Next steps include finishing the video and inviting NDIS representatives to speak at the monthly community meetings.

The Project is seen as having made an early start, with long term change required. Consequently, it is intended to continue Project activities (eg Arabic language resources, the Community Connector role). With awareness of formal disability services lifting, there is now a need to address challenges being experienced regarding service access and satisfaction.

3 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation has found strong support for the Project and have endorsed its model and the way in which it was implemented. The goals of this Project are ambitious but extremely worthwhile, and significant progress has been made towards achieving them. All key stakeholders believe that resources should be found to continue the Project as the timeframe needed to educate, inform and change attitudes requires more than two years of intervention. A strong foundation now exists to continue the work of this Project.

It is evident that participating communities are building an important knowledge base associated with achieving Project goals and that there is scope for them to share their learnings with each other, and with other CALD background communities. Resourcing to support the MCCSA in coordinating a Community of Practice and having a dedicated project officer to facilitate that Community of Practice would be a valuable way to extend the Project's impact.

Key Enablers

The Project has faced substantial challenges in achieving its ambitious goals but in the process, lessons are emerging about key Enablers to addressing those challenges. In particular, the following have been identified as critical:

- The Community Connector and Peer Leader roles
- The use of word of mouth via trusted and respected community intermediaries
- The application of co-design strategies to tailor interventions according to varying community need and capacity
- A multi-mode Communications Strategy to address diverse needs and preferences
- Effective use of social media
- Inclusive community events
- The provision of structured education with follow up support.

Sustaining the impact

The complex needs, issues and challenges associated with achieving an increase in understanding of disability, knowledge of and confidence to use formal disability services, building links to services and community confidence in accessing those services, all require long-term intervention. Changing negative stereotypes and stigmatisation of disability also requires a timeframe that extends well beyond the life of this Project.

The underpinning Project model itself provides the framework for continuing because of the community development focus that empowers communities to build the knowledge, skills and experience to achieve positive change. This has augmented the self-reliance evident in participating communities and the Project's Community Connectors are expected by community representatives to be maintained as part of their volunteer base.

In addition, the resources developed as part of the Project will continue to be used, and the learnings gained formally and informally can be expected to have ongoing application.

However, the extent to which communities are able to continue Project work is going to be dependent on already stretched and time-poor voluntary input, unless further funding can be obtained. While individual communities can apply for funding, and some have or intend to do so, it is important to have a Project level focus so that resources can be applied as efficiently and effectively as possible, and so that the Community of Practice that is emerging from this Project can be further developed.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

It is recommended that funding be sought from the Department of Social Services to continue the Project in order to avoid losing the momentum created and to acknowledge the longer timeframe required to achieve Project goals and outcomes.

Recommendation 2

It is recommended that funding be sought from Commonwealth and/or State government to support the creation of a CALD Disability Inclusion Community of Practice, coordinated by the MCCSA and working in partnership with communities who have participated in this Project.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEWS

Dr Assem Alwani	Australians for Syria SA, **Consortium Partner**
Mr Rateb Al Khalil	Australians for Syria SA
Ms Olga Anderson	Peer Leader
Mr Baseme Baelomona	Congolese Community of SA
Mr Kam Chiu	Chinese Welfare Services of SA, **Consortium Partner**
Ms Maria Eliadis	KDG Partnerships, **Consortium Partner**
Mr Elias Elmassih	St Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church Parish Association
Mr Brian Fang	Chinese Welfare Services of SA
Ms Hanaa' Grave	Project Coordinator, MCCSA
Mr Simon Haddad	St Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church Parish Association, **Consortium Partner**
Ms Julie Hoare, Ms Megan Hill	Manager, Programs, MCCSA
Ms Tina Karanastasis	Uniting SA, **Consortium Partner**
Ms Silky Khanuja	Peer Leader
Ms Helena Kyriazopoulos	CEO, MCCSA, **Consortium Partner**
Ms Maria Luciano	Peer Leader
Ms Doris Madi	St Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church Parish Association
Ms Lydia May	Peer Leader
Mr Simon Mboki	Peer Leader
Mr Sengo Kwibe Mussa	Congolese Community of SA
Mr Rajendra Pandey	Vishva Hindu Parishad of Australia Inc, **Consortium Partner**
Mrs Deepti Pandey	Vishva Hindu Parishad of Australia Inc
Mr Sisaleo Philavong	Project Officer, MCCSA
Ms Shahla Rostami	Iranian Women Organisation SA, **Consortium Partner**
Mrs Zohreh Saeidi	Iranian Women Organisation SA

Mr Ali Sharifi	Iranian Women Organisation SA
Ms Esther Simbi	Peer Leader
Ms Yufei Wang	Chinese Welfare Services of SA
Ms Mei Xue	Chinese Welfare Services of SA
Ms Alice Zhou	Chinese Welfare Services of SA

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONS GUIDING STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

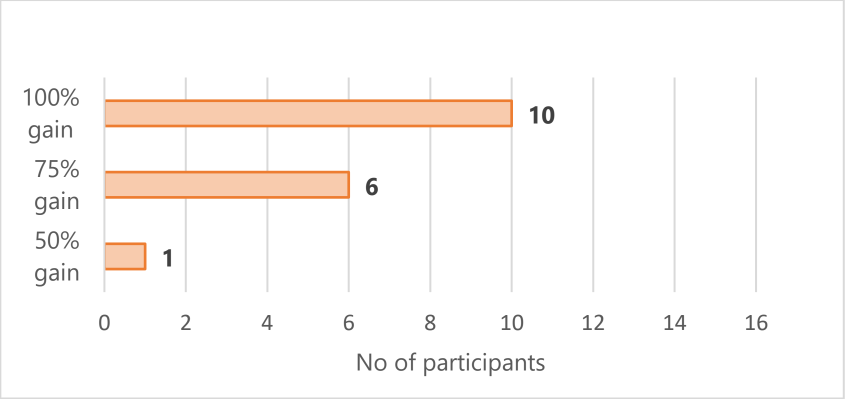
TABLE 4: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS BY STAKEHOLDER GROUP

Guiding Question	Community Connectors and Peer Leaders	Consortium Community Partners
How **useful** has this Project been so far for you/your community?	✓	
How **well** does the model underpinning this Project work for your community?		✓
What do you find **most valuable** about the Project?	✓	
How could it be **improved**?	✓	
What are the key **issues and challenges** associated with disability in your community? How are they normally addressed outside of the Project?		✓
What **effect** is the Project having on how these issues and challenges are being addressed?		✓
What are the **challenges** facing you in **raising awareness** about disability and increasing the participation of people living with disability in your community?	✓	
What are the **challenges** facing you in **supporting** your community and people living with disability in your community?	✓	
What **helps** you in meeting these challenges within your role in the Project?	✓	
Are there any **lessons learned** so far about supporting people living with disability and their families?		✓
Does your community have any plans for addressing disability after the Project finishes?		✓

APPENDIX C: SURVEY FINDINGS IN DETAIL

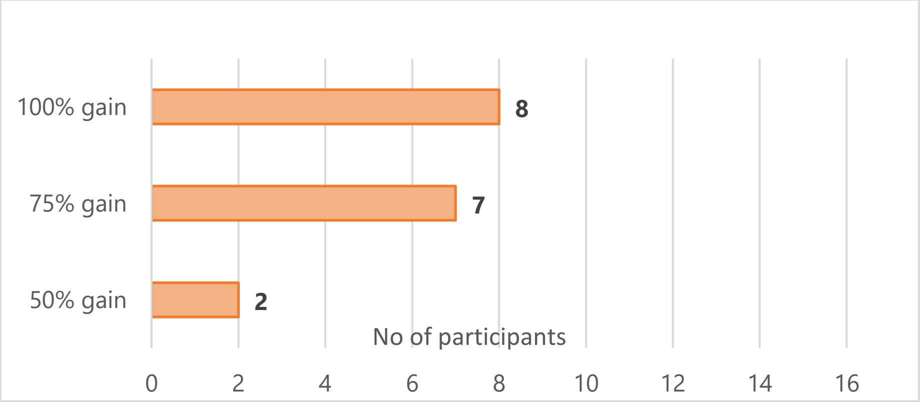
All but one respondent **(94 %)** rated their understanding of disability in Australia, and the human rights of people with disabilities, as having improved by **between 75% and 100%.**

FIGURE 2: UNDERSTANDING OF DISABILITY IN AUSTRALIA AND THE RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (WORKSHOP 1)



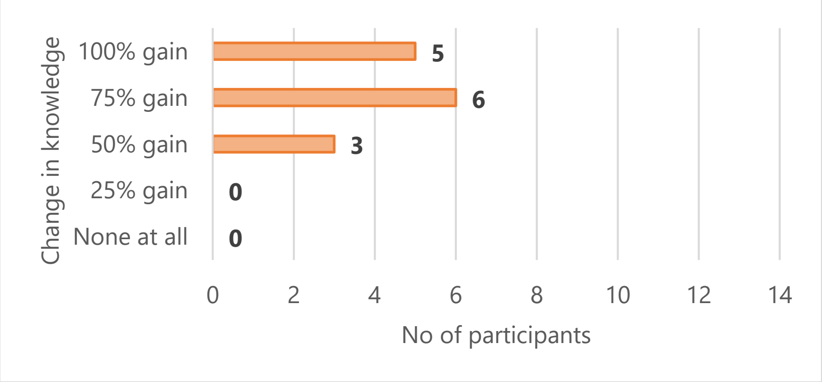
The majority of respondents **(88.3%)** rated their understanding of the NDIS as having improved by **between 75% and 100%.**

FIGURE 3: UNDERSTANDING OF THE NDIS (WORKSHOP 1)



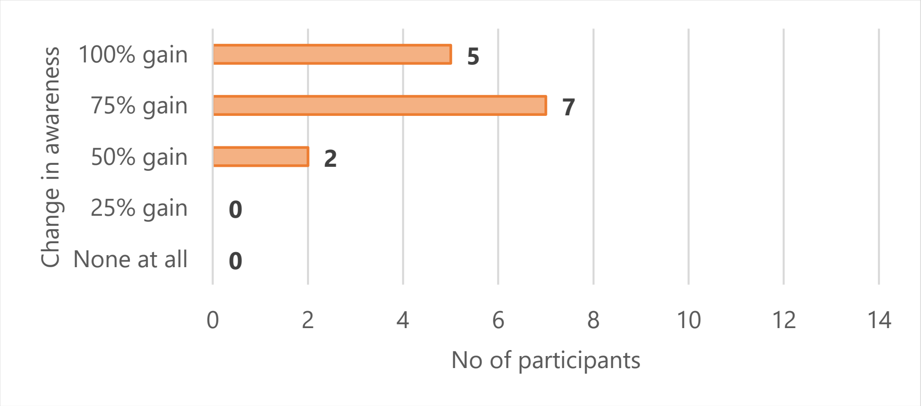
All but 3 of the 14 respondents **(78.6%)** rated their knowledge of how to navigate the NDIS as having **improved by between 75% and 100%.**

FIGURE 4: NAVIGATING THE NDIS (WORKSHOP 2)



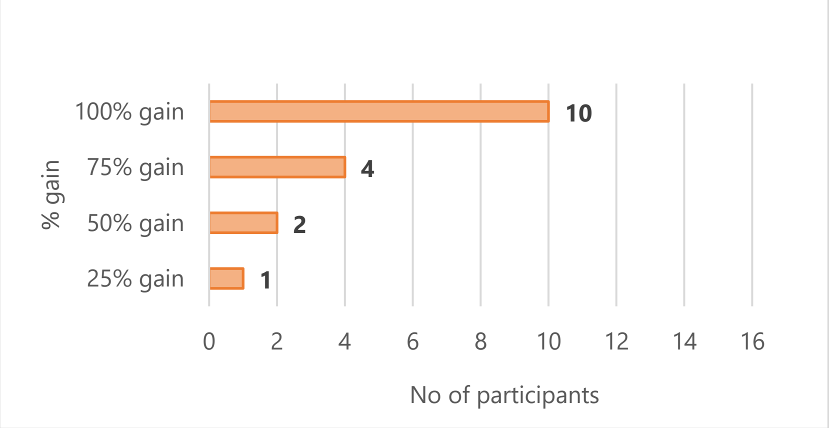
The majority of respondents **(85.7%)** rated their understanding of the barriers faced by people living with disability in accessing their community as having **improved by between 75% and 100%.**

FIGURE 5: AWARENESS OF BARRIERS FACED BY PEOPLE WITH DISABILIY IN ACCESSING THEIR COMMUNITY (WORKSHOP 2)



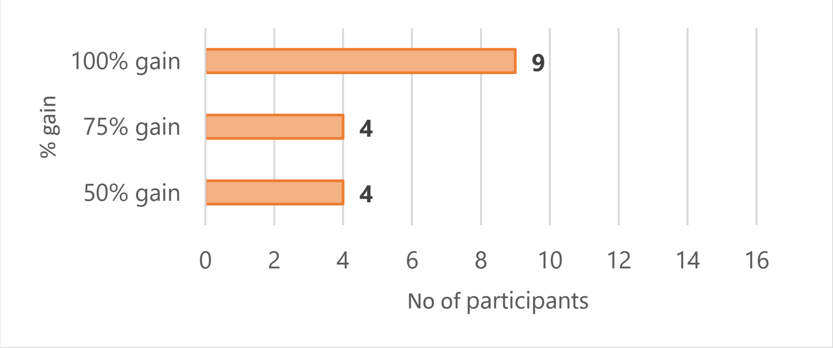
The majority **(82.4%)** of respondents rated their understanding of how they can help people living with disability, and make a positive difference for them, as having improved by **between 75% and 100%.**

FIGURE 6: HELPING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY AND MAKING A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE (WORKSHOP 1)



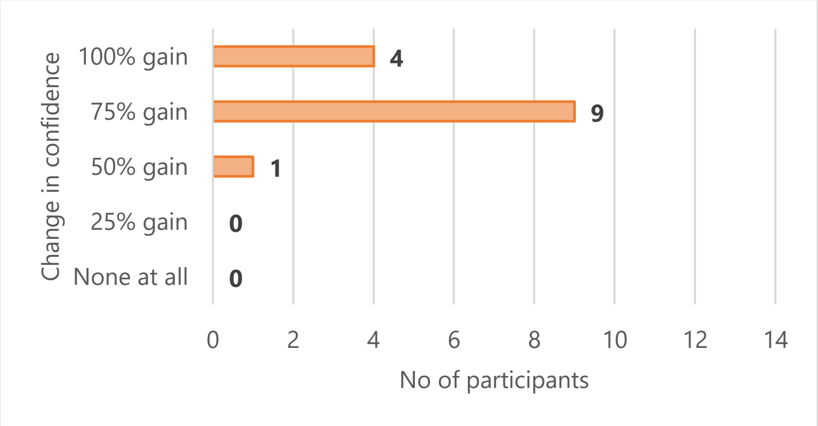
Just over three-quarters **(76.5%)** of respondents rated their understanding of this issue as having improved by **between 75% and 100%.**

FIGURE 7: MAKING COMMUNITIES MORE INCLUSIVE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY (WORKSHOP 1)



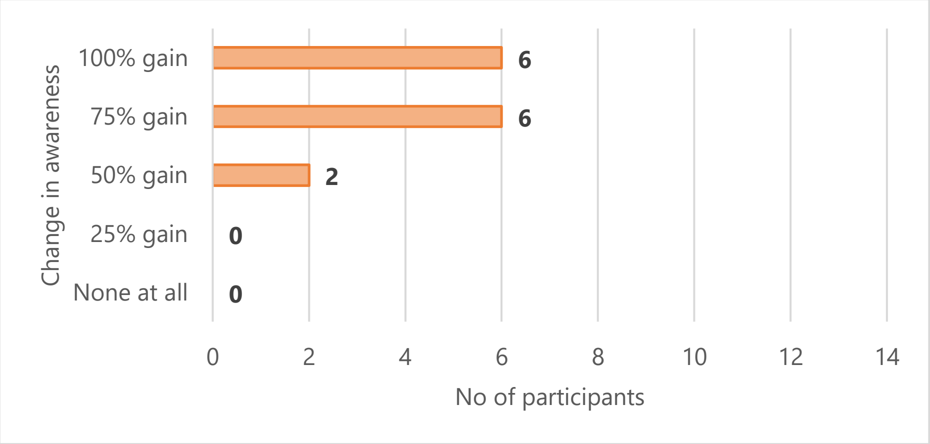
The majority of respondents **(92.9%)** rated their confidence in understanding how to support people living with disability as having **improved by between 75% and 100%.**

FIGURE 8: CONFIDENCE IN SUPPORTING PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITY (WORKSHOP 2)



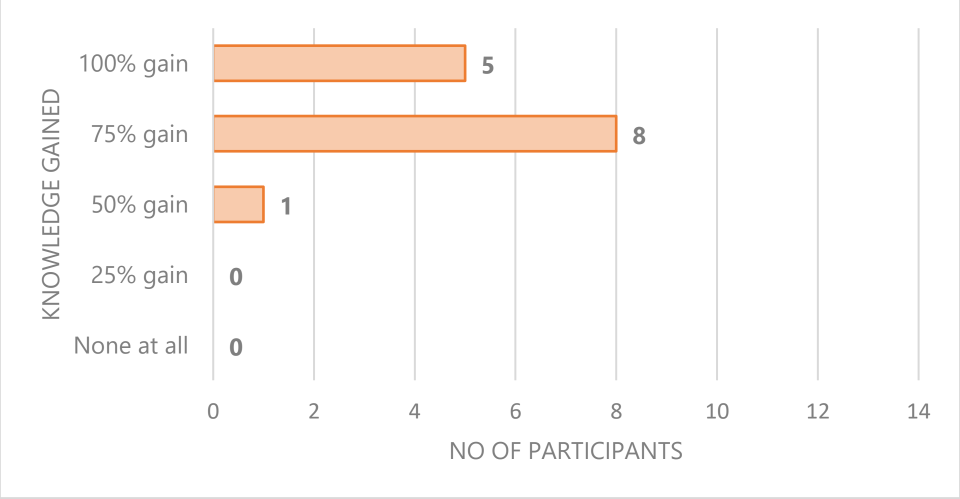
Most **(85.7%)** respondents rated their awareness of how to support people living with disability to be more included in their community as having **improved by between 75% and 100%.**

FIGURE 9: CHANGE IN AWARENESS OF HOW TO SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY TO BE MORE INCLUDED IN THEIR COMMUNITY (WORKSHOP 2)



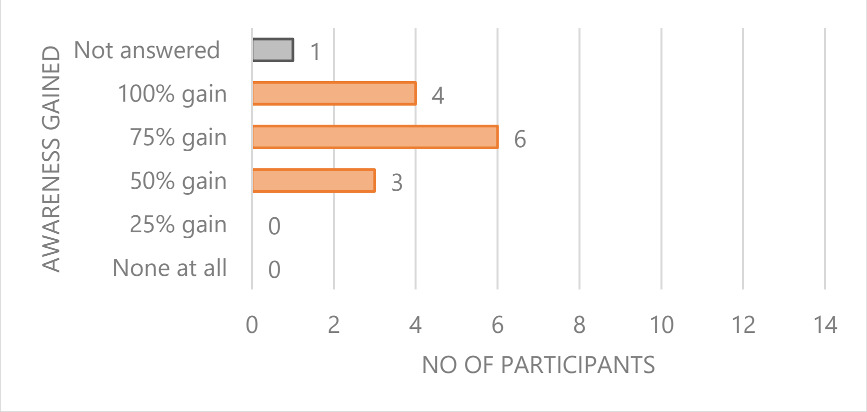
All but 1 of the 14 respondents **(92.9%)** rated their knowledge of this issue as having **improved by between 75% and 100%.**

FIGURE 10: KNOWLEDGE OF HOW TO WORK WITH FAMILIES (WORKSHOP 3)



The majority **(71.4%)** rated their awareness of these issues as having **improved by between 75% and 100%.**

FIGURE 11: AWARENESS OF HOW TO CREATE INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS (WORKSHOP 3)



The majority of respondents **(92.9%)** rated their confidence in understanding the five stages of grief parents may experience and how to support them as having **improved by between 75% and 100%.**

FIGURE 12: UNDERSTANDING OF THE 5 STAGES OF GRIEF (WORKSHOP 3)