

REPORT

Leisure Centre Forum

Delivered by the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) in
partnership with the Centre for Culture Ethnicity and Health (CEH)
and Local Government Physical Activity Network

4th September 2006



Leisure Centre Forum Report

The aim of the forum was to engage staff in the Leisure, Fitness and Local Government Sectors who want to increase access to CLD young people.

The objectives of the forum included:

- Identify barriers and strategies from focus group discussions
- Showcase of best practice
- Produce a report with recommendations
- Produce resources for the sector based on information from the forum
- Plan/ research the development of a training package and capacity building strategies

The forum was opened by Theresa Whalen, Senior Health Promotion Officer, Kinect Australia.

Alex Prado, Multicultural Sports and Recreation Officer, CMYI launched the report 'Creating a Level Playing Field in More Than Just a Sport – A Report on CLD Young People's Access and Participation in Leisure & Recreation Centres Within the City of Yarra'.

The report is available from the CMYI website's Publications and Resources page: <http://www.cmyi.net.au/SportandRecResources>

The aim of the project was to gather information from both young people aged 12-25 from CLD backgrounds and City of Yarra leisure centre staff that would inform both the City of Yarra and CMYI's strategic directions in increasing participation and access for CLD young people to leisure centres. This report documents their findings.

A Discussion Panel followed which addressed the topic: Issues and strategies to address barriers to participation. Panel members were:

- Chrissy Billings, Access for All Abilities and Program Development Officer, City of Yarra
- Jo Hansen, Manager, Carlton YMCA
- Maree Jones, Manager, St Albans Leisure Centre

Morning tea included the introduction to and viewing of the photo exhibit 'Journeys'. This project was an initiative developed by the City of Greater Dandenong and Leisure Link Up which focused on supporting people with disabilities from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to access leisure activities of their own choice. The project identified that participation levels in leisure by people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds were low in Greater Dandenong. It also determined that sport and leisure service providers experienced difficulty in engaging people from the target group into leisure.

The project researched the reasons for this lack of participation then developed a model (available from http://www.greaterdandenong.com/SiteDocuments/0704_InclusiveModelforLeisure.pdf) for including people with disabilities. The model can be used by sports and leisure providers alike to address the issues raised by the project. Action research was also conducted to test the model. They worked with the South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Center and the Eastern Region Mental Health Association who already had established trusted relationships with individuals who were experiencing isolation.

The results of the action research are documented in the form of a photographic exhibition called "Journeys". The exhibition shows at a glance the journeys 20 participants have made from isolation back to participation in community life in the leisure pursuit of their choice.

View the photos and read the stories:

<http://www.greaterdandenong.com/Documents.asp?ID=1259&Title=Inclusive+Model+for+Leisure>

LEISURE CENTRE FORUM: FOCUS GROUP SESSIONS

BARRIERS:

The main barriers identified by the focus groups were:

- Language barriers
- Cultural sensitivities
- Cost
- Transport
- Child care
- Lack of facilities
- Lack of funding for projects that specific target CLD communities
- Lack of awareness from CLD young people

It was also identified that there is a lack of specific programs for CLD young people, as well as gender specific programs for these groups. Another barrier was the issue that most CLD specific programs are not sustainable. Programs become popular and trust is developed with participants and workers, and when it ends there is nothing to progress onto. According to a number of participants there is also a lack of understanding among staff from leisure centres of why special programs are necessary.

One participant stated that mainstream sport is not inclusive and there is too much focus on competition and not fun. Also it was identified that sports in general is male dominated and young CLD women are missing out on participating in physical activity more than young men. One participant stated that we can't lump young people together and it is important to identify diversity within diversity.

It was identified that there is a lot of pressure on newly arrived families, with older siblings having to look after the younger ones and do school work in a second language. These families often have different priorities due to settlement issues and leisure and recreation may not be valued by them; in this case parental consent may be an issue. Moreover physical activity may incur extra costs to an already impoverished family and if parents are not able to pay these fees, their children will not be able to participate. Young mothers with infants may also miss out on physical activity if appropriate baby sitting services are not available at leisure centres.

One participant stated that young people are more likely to participate in team based structured sport rather than non-structured physical activity, such as gym. Another participant stated that there isn't consultation happening with young people and therefore, there is a lack of understanding of the target group and their needs.

Rural areas were identified as locations where the barriers are even more complex, because they are conservative environments, with small CLD communities that are difficult to access, and it is also difficult to justify programs that specifically target the needs of these groups.

A number of issues were identified specifically pertinent to Council. According to one of the participants, even the successful initiatives don't last since it depends on the policies of the politicians that are there at the time. Therefore, Council policies are unpredictable and this has an impact on long term sustainable initiatives. Moreover, the same participant stated that Councils select the cheapest contracts and their motivation is often driven by profit, with a focus of increasing their membership.

STRATEGIES:

Networking was a very popular strategy highlighted by many participants. Participants in the focus groups were interested in sharing information on strategies, opportunities and resources. They stated that there is a need for partnerships that reach out to young people and address barriers such as cost, limited facilities and time restrictions. One group stated a need for more opportunities to share knowledge, experiences and best practice models as well as to promote more understanding of the barriers impacting on CLD youth. Another suggestion was to set up a network for agencies working specifically on PA for CLD young people, with the aim of building the capacity of participating organisations and workers, through training and sharing information.

Other strategies to engage communities and overcome barriers included being in the community, asking questions and talking to elders and decision makers. Participants stated that workers based at leisure centres from the same background as those we are trying to attract, helps to increase participation rates. One participant stated that there needs to be more positions at Leisure Centres, such as the Community Development Director funded by YMCA, who works through various LGAs closely with community leaders to find out the needs of the community. Also, it was suggested that bilingual role models could deliver peer education sessions to CLD young people and encourage participation in physical activity. Another suggestion was to engage community members to do life-guard training and other training in the fitness industry, so that they can gain employment in this field in the future.

Participants also pointed to an increasing need for localised services and mapping activities that monitor gaps, as well as the creation of a database of activities. Workers need to become more aware of what is happening in communities and other organisations and tap into what is going on at the community level, eg Active After Schools Programs. There isn't a need to reinvent the wheel, nor duplicate existing programs.

Another key finding was that there needs to be more sustainable, long-term funding opportunities that target CLD communities. There also needs to be funding for planning as well as for needs analysis; not only projects. One participant also stated that there needs to be funding available for appropriate and thorough evaluation and documentation of projects.

Participants stated that it is important for Council to demonstrate commitment and leadership and that their various departments are working in collaboration (eg. Youth Services and Leisure Services). Active partnerships were also encouraged, such as the example of the Brunswick YMCA and the Brunswick English Centre, where the students are allowed to swim or have free swimming lessons at specific times. At these times the pool has a higher staff ratio and they provide separate lanes for boys and girls. Another example is the partnership between the same Leisure Centre and the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre. It is council policy that asylum seekers referred by the centre should be allowed to access any of the leisure centre's activities for free; this is a condition of their contract with YMCA. Another interesting initiative was the partnership between Swinburn University and Stonington Council, where students and staff can swim for free anytime at the local leisure centre. One participant stated that at the times when leisure centres are empty, cheaper programs should be encouraged and promoted; this may also generate more income to council.

LEISURE CENTRE FORUM: MODEL PROGRAMS

SUDANESE HEALTHY PATHWAYS PROJECT

Warrnambool City Council

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The aim of the project is to promote health and well being and develop social connectedness for the Sudanese Community in Warrnambool. The project will be conducted over a 2 year period and will finish in Dec 2007.

The goal of the program is to provide the new community, which consists of approximately 85 men, women and children with an increased awareness of, and access to, recreation and sporting opportunities in Warrnambool.

The project is hoping to provide:

- Affordable access to physical activity activities
- Health and nutrition information sessions
- Greater awareness of sport and recreation opportunities
- Opportunities for active and passive recreation

Target group is the Sudanese community - all genders and all ages.

The project involves a number of partners from cross sections of the community, including other local agencies, local sport and recreation clubs, and most importantly the local Sudanese Community.

Program Progress

As part of the Healthy Pathways Project the Project Officer has been operating a FIT program (Familiarisation, Information & Try). This was used to introduce the Sudanese community to the local leisure centre. Within this activity they have 31 children enrolled in Learn to Swim program which has them participating in swim lessons on Saturday mornings. The children are integrated into the leisure centre's swim program. Ages of children participating are from baby to 12yrs. It has been a great way to bring the community members together, lots of fun for the children and the women have also been part of the infant classes. The adult members of the community were given the choice of adult learning to swim lessons or a multi-pass for the use of the gym and fitness classes, most took the gym pass.

An interest in music/singing was identified by the community which lead to arranging for the women to participate in the Gorgeous Voices Festival in Bendigo. The women were involved in singing workshops then performed with Ajak Kwai in the Gorgeous Voices concert. Since then they have been asked to record with Coco's Lunch on their new album. This has been very exciting for the Sudanese women.

ACTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Brunswick City Baths - Victorian YMCA

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The Brunswick City Baths/YMCA has started a partnership with the Brunswick English Centre allowing participation in a swimming program at a discounted cost with a higher teacher ratio of staff than traditional programming.

The target group is Asylum Seekers from Asylum Centre Resource Centre, of all ages. The goal of the Brunswick English Language swim program is for people new to the country to gain water familiarisation and swimming skills, in a supervised education environment rather than attend the pool unaware of their limitations in an aquatic environment.

There are separate lanes for boys and girls and an option of a dry activity is provided for girls unable to swim in a public venue. It is council policy that asylum seekers referred by the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre are allowed to access any of the centre's activities for free; this is a condition of their contract with YMCA.

This is part of an initiative by the current council to assist asylum seekers to participate in activity in our community without cost concern. The full range of programming is offered in this circumstance; memberships for adults, aquatic education (infant, preschool, primary, secondary, adult) or teen gym.

CASEY YMCA SENIOR STRENGTH TRAINING FOR CLD COMMUNITIES

Casey YMCA

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The goal of this program is to increase participation in physical activity of the senior CLD communities in the Casey area, particularly in Cranbourne and Doveton, two of the more ethnically diverse communities. One program began at the Cranbourne Sr. Citizens Centre, once per week for one hour each session. There was some external funding available to purchase dumbbells, ankle weights, storage. This funding allowed for subsidising the cost of the program. Participants paid \$3 per session. This program, based on participant feedback, has moved to the YMCA. In order to be sustainable, to continue without outside funding, the group need only to reimburse the YMCA for instructor time.

This is possible by participants paying \$5 per session, which they have agreed to do, if needed in the future. Another program began at the Doveton site of the Cardinia-Casey Community Health Services, which has an exercise area for the program use. Participants were recruited from the local area, including via the local community hall. Participants are from a range of ethnically diverse backgrounds. Again, due to subsidies provided for by outside funding, cost is only \$3 per session. As the Cranbourne group has moved to the YMCA that equipment has been added to use for this group. The qualified fitness leaders for both groups attended training by the Centre for Ethnicity and Health to learn to better engage and meet the needs of ethnically diverse communities. They found this to be valuable. Organisers also learned to better engage the target community in planning and delivering the programs.

CARLTON GIRLS SPORT PROJECT

Carlton Parkville Youth Services YMCA

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Sports and Recreation Victoria has funded Basketball Victoria, Cricket Victoria and Football Federation Victoria to deliver women's sport packages over four years to 2006-07. The State Sporting Associations, in partnership with the Carlton Parkville Youth Services YMCA and the Carlton Baths YMCA, provide a multi-sport program for culturally and linguistic diverse (CLD) young women from 12-18 years who live, work or study in the Carlton area. The objectives of the program are to offer and facilitate participation in sports for young women from CLD background.

Participants take part in clinics on a weekly basis with qualified coaches supplied by each State Sporting Association at the Carlton Baths YMCA, which provides its facilities free of charge. The program aims to introduce participants to the sports and also offer development opportunities for those interested in pursuing a particular sport further. Clinics feature Football, Cricket and Basketball on a rotational basis with the aim to conclude with a competition/tournament day at the end of the program.

Participants in the program are also exposed to other opportunities to become involved in sport. Courses are offered in Coaching, Refereeing/ Umpiring and Leadership and also opportunities to develop leadership skills by working in Carlton Parkville Youth Service YMCA programs.