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Research into the Current and Emerging Drivers for Social Cohesion, Social Division and Conflict in Multicultural Australia

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Abbreviations

ABS Australian Bureau of Statistics
AFL Australian Football League
AHRC Australian Human Rights Commission
AHURI Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
AMEP Adult Migrant English Program
ASeTTs Association for Survivors of Torture and Trauma
ASIB Australian Social Inclusion Board
ATN All Together Now
ATSI Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
BCC Blacktown City Council
BCCCP Blacktown City Council Cultural Plan
BCSP Blacktown City Social Plan
BECAP Blacktown Emerging Communities Action Plan
Blacktown SIN Blacktown School-Industry Network
BREED Blacktown Regional Economic and Employment Development Taskforce Inc
CaLD culturally and linguistically diverse
CBD central business district
CCS Complex Case Support CHASE Centre for Health through Action on Social Exclusion
CIRCA Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia
CMYI Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues
COM4Unity Connecting Our Minds 4 Unity
CRC Community Relations Commission
DCP Department for Child Protection
DEET Federal Department of Employment, Education and Training
DEEWR Federal Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations
DIAC Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship
DSCP Diversity and Social Cohesion Program
ECU Edith Cowan University
ESL English as a second language
FECCA Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia
FUn Football United
HREOC Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
HSC Higher School Certificate
HSS Humanitarian Settlement Services
IEC Intensive English Centre
IED Indigenous Economic Development
ISEC Intensive Secondary English Class
ITT Integrated Threat Theory
KI key informant
LCP Local Community Partnership
LGA Local Government Area
LOTE language other than English
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
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<td>MPSP</td>
<td>Multicultural Policies and Services Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>MRC</td>
<td>Migrant Resource Centre</td>
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<td>Mt Druitt IEP</td>
<td>Mt Druitt Industry-Education Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAP</td>
<td>National Action Plan (to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security)</td>
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<td>NCCPP</td>
<td>National Community Crime Prevention Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-government organisation</td>
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<td>NSW</td>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>OMI</td>
<td>Office of Multicultural Interests</td>
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<td>PACSI</td>
<td>Philippine-Australian Community Services Inc</td>
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<td>RAP</td>
<td>Reconciliation Action Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCOA</td>
<td>Refugee Council of Australia</td>
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<td>RMIT</td>
<td>Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University</td>
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<td>SA</td>
<td>South Australia</td>
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<td>SBS</td>
<td>Special Broadcasting Service</td>
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<td>SES</td>
<td>socio-economic status</td>
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<td>SGP</td>
<td>Settlement Grants Program</td>
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<td>SNSEP</td>
<td>Swan Nyungar Sports Education Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIU</td>
<td>Social Inclusion Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>SydWest MSI</td>
<td>Western Sydney Multicultural Services Inc</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Training and Further Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIS</td>
<td>Translating and Interpreting Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>US</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<td>UNSW</td>
<td>University of New South Wales</td>
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<td>UWS</td>
<td>University of Western Sydney</td>
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<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education Training</td>
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<td>WA</td>
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<td>Youth Off the Streets</td>
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Executive Summary

Introduction: Aims and the social cohesion framework

This report presents findings from a study of the drivers for social cohesion, social division and conflict in multicultural Australia, prepared on behalf of the Joint Commonwealth, State and Territory Research Advisory Committee, which was conducted in April-November 2011.

The broad aims of the project were to identify and examine current and emerging drivers for social cohesion, social division and conflict in multicultural Australia; and to identify strategies that increase social cohesion. To achieve these broad aims, we addressed the following research questions:

- What are the evidence and indicators of social cohesion in the Australian context?
- What are the factors that enhance or disrupt social cohesion, sense of community belonging and tolerance in Australian communities?
- How effective are various strategies in building community resilience and fostering social cohesion?
- What is the role of media access and participation in Australians’ perspectives on multiculturalism and living with diversity, particularly as these relate to the construction of difference, national identity and belonging?

To examine social cohesion we utilised Jenson’s (1998) framework, in which five domains of social cohesion are proposed:

- belonging (shared values and identity)
- inclusion (equal opportunities for access)
- participation (engagement in structures and systems)
- recognition (respect and tolerance)
- legitimacy (pluralism).

Methodology

The research included a comprehensive literature review, a web-based audit of government and community programs, media analysis, and case studies of three Australian communities: Mirrabooka/Balga (Western Australia), Blacktown (New South Wales) and Murray Bridge (South Australia). Interviews were conducted with 54 key informants and 15 focus group discussions were held with 138 community residents.

The five dimensions in Jenson’s framework, together with content related to indicators of social division and conflict, and the media, formed the basis of our interview and focus group discussions. Key informants were community leaders and workers, and representatives of non-government and government service providers in the communities. Focus group participants came from diverse ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds and included (emerging, recent and long-established) migrants, refugees, Anglo-Australians, and Indigenous Australians.
Findings

(A) Evidence and indicators of social cohesion in Australia

International and national indicators suggest that Australia compares well on dimensions of social cohesion, social division and conflict, relative to other nations. On general aspects of wellbeing, Australia ranks above the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average for household income, employment, quality of education and life expectancy. On indicators of social conflict such as safety, violence, corruption and anti-social behaviour, Australia also compares very favourably with other nations (OECD, 2011a; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). In addition, Australians report high levels of life satisfaction and sense of belonging and pride in Australia and the Australian way of life (Markus, 2011; OECD, 2011b).

However, there are some areas for improvement: the OECD report and Australian Social Inclusion Board (ASIB) have identified that there are some socially excluded groups in Australia, such as older Australians, people with low incomes, the unemployed, those with poor health, Indigenous Australians, sole parent families, and people not proficient in English (ASIB, 2010). Our community case studies provided evidence that some groups do not feel socially accepted or that they are not recognised appropriately, including some refugee communities, Indigenous Australians, Anglo-Australians and British migrants. In addition, and consistent with other Australian research, it is evident that many Australians experience racism, particularly those who are from more ‘visible’ minority groups, are Indigenous Australian, or from recently-arrived migrant groups. Muslim Australians are specific targets for racism since the terrorist attacks on the USA on September 11, 2001, and the Bali and London bombings, in 2002 and 2005 respectively. The Cronulla riots (Sydney, 2005) provided an additional impetus to examine social cohesion and intergroup relations more closely in Australia. It is also apparent that there is a lack of genuine, intercultural interaction in the community. Moreover, there is evidence that the growing problem of securing affordable housing in Australia, combined with ignorance about refugees and how material resources are distributed, has contributed to a kind of racialised resentment (Hudson, Phillips, Ray, & Barnes., 2007). Finally, some community members remain socially excluded in terms of employment and community participation. Again, this appears to affect Indigenous Australians disproportionately more than other groups.

(B) Factors that enhance or disrupt social cohesion, sense of community belonging and tolerance in Australian communities

The factors are illustrated in the following diagram and discussed thematically thereafter. (Media is discussed separately in (D).)
Figure: Factors that enhance or disrupt social cohesion.
1. Recognition of Indigenous Australian cultures and history is an important driver for social cohesion in Australia. This theme emerged in all of our communities and was a prominent feature of discussion among Anglo-Australians and Indigenous Australians in particular. Many Indigenous Australians do not feel recognised or respected. Whilst most Australians see the value in learning about Indigenous culture and history, they concede that they do not know enough and that there is considerable prejudice and mistrust between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

2. Greater awareness and understanding of diversity and ‘difference’ in the Australian community is a driver for all social cohesion dimensions. Ignorance and stereotypes contribute to cultural misunderstanding, discrimination and prejudice. Participants in our case studies identified real and perceived cultural differences as factors influencing community members’ ability to secure appropriate employment and satisfactory healthcare. This applied across the community but particularly affected Indigenous Australians, some migrants and Muslim-Australians. Many refugees were impacted negatively by stereotypes and misinformation about asylum seekers. This socially divisive issue can become fuel for racialised resentment among Anglo-Australians, longer-term migrants and Indigenous Australians.

3. Frequent, positive intercultural contact is a powerful driver for all dimensions of social cohesion, particularly recognition. While intergroup contact can sometimes exacerbate tensions or lead to ‘racialising’ of grievances, under the right conditions it can reduce prejudice through improving mutual understanding and reducing anxiety and threat between groups. However, intercultural interactions are significantly less common for Anglo-Australians and much intercultural contact is among migrants and second-generation groups.

4. Racism and discrimination disrupt all social cohesion dimensions. This is well-documented in the national and international literature and emerged in our community case studies. Experiences of racism and/or discrimination denote a lack of recognition in the community and can disrupt belonging, inclusion and participation. The impacts of racism and discrimination are pervasive and enduring. This is a factor in all dimensions and related to others such as cultural awareness, the role of the media, and positive intergroup contact.

5. Support for culture maintenance among migrants, refugees and other cultural and/or linguistic minorities is a driver for belonging. As recognised in Australian multicultural policy, maintenance of ethnic and/or cultural beliefs, customs and practices is important for the well-being of migrant and ethnic minority groups. It is important that we continue to support this as new and more ‘culturally distant’ groups settle in Australia.

6. Community activities and ‘social spaces’ can enhance the likelihood of positive intercultural interaction and enhance community belonging. Community events, activities and programs around food, sport, music and art are most successful in bringing people in the community together. They need to be seen as inclusive and to be free (or cheap), accessible and include childcare. Sites for potential intercultural encounters include parks, community centres, gardens and libraries, schools and child-care facilities, neighbourhood-watch programs, youth projects and urban regenerative projects. The function and appearance of public space are also significant drivers of community belonging and participation among local residents.

7. Equality of access to resources drives social inclusion. The impacts of a decline in access to community resources include decreased life chances in terms of employment, income and health, social isolation and discrimination. From our case studies we observed genuine and perceived
competition over resources such as jobs, healthcare, and housing. Concerns about the equitable distribution of resources, especially public housing, contributed to inter-ethnic tensions in some of our communities and there was evidence of resentment among older Anglo-Australians and Indigenous Australians.

8. Being able to communicate confidently with other community members is a driver for belonging, inclusion, and participation. English language competence affects many migrants’ and refugees’ ability to secure satisfactory housing, healthcare and employment, and to engage effectively in education. Lack of confidence in being able to communicate with others can also impact on community participation and the capacity to develop meaningful relationships with other community members. This latter factor impacts on native English speakers as well: anxiety over intercultural interactions can lead to avoidance of contact with members of other ethnic or cultural groups.

9. Mentoring and leadership development for community capacity-building are drivers for social cohesion, particularly inclusion and participation. Mentoring ethnic minority youth can overcome social barriers and help them to respond effectively to racism and discrimination. Skill and leadership development promote community participation.

10. The active promotion of the value of diversity and pluralism at national (e.g., government policy, public institutions) and community (e.g., organizational cultures and policies) levels is a driver for legitimacy. In diverse communities there need to be institutions and processes in place to mediate potential intergroup tensions and the public must have confidence in them as trustworthy, fair and impartial. Australian organisations and strategies such as the Australian Multicultural Council, the National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy, Reconciliation Australia, the Native Title Tribunal, racial vilification and anti-discrimination legislation, and programs to strengthen access and equity for Australians from Indigenous and migrant backgrounds are crucial for social cohesion.

(C) Effectiveness of various strategies in building community resilience and fostering social cohesion

The Australian Government has articulated policies on social cohesion. State and Local governments also have policies and programs addressing social cohesion. Civil society is also strong, with community organisations and networks actively pursuing the enhancement of individual or combined dimensions of social cohesion. What our case studies revealed is that the collaboration of government and community, a whole-of-government-and-community approach, make for successful, sustained and realisable pathways to enhancing social cohesion in multicultural Australia. Special emphasis is put on effective and genuinely consultative development of programs and strategies; adequate funding by Government; transparency in communicating these strategies and funding; and on including all groups (migrants/refugees/Humanitarian Entrants, Anglo-Australians and Indigenous Australians) as both target participants and facilitators.

(D) Role of media access and participation in Australians’ perspectives on multiculturalism and living with diversity

Media can have a significant impact on social cohesion and discord through the promulgation of stereotypes and the reproduction of racism (van Dijk, 1998) and the silencing of minority groups (Fürsich, 2010). It was evident from our case studies that the ongoing political and public debate about ‘boat people’ is socially divisive: it has a negative impact on belonging among Australians from
refugee backgrounds, and reinforces negative stereotypes and myths about refugee privilege among other Australians. Media also contributed to negative stereotypes of Indigenous Australians.

However, media can also be powerful forces for developing cultural awareness and education. We found that local media, in particular, challenged negative social stereotypes and promoted diversity and multiculturalism in the local community. In addition, social media have the potential to promote civic/political participation and inclusion, and enable global networking that foster belonging and social connections.

Conclusion and recommendations

Our findings augment existing Australian research on social cohesion, such as the Scanlon Foundation Surveys, by providing in-depth and detailed analysis of people’s views and experiences in culturally diverse communities. In particular, our community case studies highlight the need to engage Anglo-Australians and Indigenous Australians in positive intercultural interaction. More—and longer-term—government funding needs to be devoted to collaborative projects designed to meet this goal. In addition, local communities and the media have an important role in actively facilitating opportunities and sharing positive experiences.

Following from the main findings of the study, we developed six key recommendations:

- promote awareness, knowledge, recognition, and understanding of cultures, ‘difference’, and cultural diversity
- create opportunities for frequent, positive intercultural contact
- address racism and discrimination
- improve community capacity
- involve the media in enhancing social cohesion
- conduct further research on mutual intercultural relations, and on social media and social cohesion.
1 Introduction

1.1 Background

As a settler society with a history of immigration, Australia has become one of the most ethnically diverse ‘multicultural’ nations in the world (Borowski, 2000). Approximately 2.5% of the population identify as Indigenous Australian (Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Australian); Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2009). In addition, more than one-quarter of the population was born overseas and 43% has at least one parent born overseas (ABS, 2012). Although people from the UK remain the largest overseas-born group, since World War II an increased number of migrants from continental Europe and Asia have settled in Australia. The Australian government also operates a Humanitarian Program in which permanent visas are granted to some 13,750 refugees and Special Humanitarian Program migrants per year. Migrants who settle in Australia under the Humanitarian Program originate from different countries compared with entrants under other immigration programs; half the migrants in the 2006 Census were born in the ‘North Africa’ and ‘the Middle East’ regions (ABS, 2010). In the 2006 Census most Humanitarian Entrants in Australia were from Iraq, Sudan and Iran (by country of birth).

Since 1978 Australia has had an official policy of multiculturalism to address this ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity. Like the Canadian example that preceded it, the Australian approach is best described as a ‘pluralism ideology’ (Van de Vijver, Breugelmans, & Schalk-Soekar, 2008, p. 94) in which diversity is celebrated, migrants and refugees are entitled to maintain their heritage cultures and languages, and the Australian government is required to support this cultural maintenance through services and programs (e.g., English language courses, the Special Broadcasting Service [SBS], translation and interpreting services, and support for the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia).

Australian attitudes to multiculturalism and diversity are mixed: they tend to be more accepting of immigration and the benefits it has brought to the Australian economy (Markus, 2011) than of multicultural policy per se. They see the latter as having both positive and negative consequences for Australian society (Ang, Brand, Noble, & Wilding, 2002; Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010; Dunn, Forrest, Burnley, & McDonald, 2004; Ho, 1990). In particular, Anglo-Australians and Indigenous Australians tend to be more ambivalent than Australians from migrant and/or other minority ethnic backgrounds (Ang et al., 2002; Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010; Liu, 2007). As members of the dominant group, Anglo-Australians may feel threatened by multiculturalism, because it requires them to ‘make room’ for other cultural identities, which is threatening to their cultural hegemony (Verkuyten, 2005). In previous research we found that perceived security (the positive inverse of threat) was related to support for multiculturalism, such that participants who were less secure (personally, culturally and economically) were less supportive of multicultural ideology (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010). Drawing upon the work of Dunn and others, Dandy (2010) has characterised this ambivalence as the tension between two competing discourses: one that emphasises egalitarianism and social justice (a

1Consistent with current terminology we use ‘Indigenous Australian’ throughout this report to refer to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, except where other terms (e.g., ‘Aboriginal’) are used by our research participants or in formal documents. We use specific local names (e.g., Nyoongar and Ngarrindjeri) to refer to Indigenous groups by locality (where known).

2‘Anglo- Australians’ are those Australians with British ancestry: the majority, and dominant cultural group in Australia.
discourse of fairness) and another that emphasises threats to Australian identity and national unity (a discourse of fear).

However, there has been little work to date addressing how these perceptions and attitudes translate into behaviour, social action and interaction. Some indicators suggest we are doing well: there are few examples of extreme racial or inter-ethnic conflict in recent Australian history and Australia ranks among the top countries across all indicators of well-being provided by the Better Life Initiative of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2011b). Nonetheless, there is discrimination and prejudice, particularly against Indigenous Australians and Muslim Australians, and the riots in Cronulla, Sydney in 2005 illustrated that some Australians hold an exclusive construction of Australian identity, one which is white and Anglo-Celtic (Dunn, 2009).

Context is important here: Not every Australian experiences the outcomes of multiculturalism in the same way, and indeed, inter-ethnic interaction is unequally distributed throughout the broader community. Factors such as the availability of migrant support programs, cheap and public housing; and the presence of existing migrant communities, result in the geographical concentration of some ethnic minorities in Australian cities. It is in these communities that the daily experience of ‘living with diversity’ is played out. Research such as that conducted in Ashfield, Sydney (Wise, 2005) confirms Anglo-Australians’ anxieties and ambivalence about living in increasingly diverse neighbourhoods but has also identified positive dimensions to intercultural interactions. One of the objectives of the present research was to extend this approach to further explore the daily experience of living in a culturally diverse Australian community and the factors contributing to social cohesion or discord in these settings.

Finally, it was evident that there was a need to embrace a more holistic approach to understanding intergroup relations in diverse Australian communities; to move beyond the restricted focus of acculturation and ethnic-relations research and to explore a whole community through the lens of a more comprehensive construct. From preliminary searches of the literature, Jenson’s (1998) dimensions of social cohesion, summarised in Section 2, emerged as the best framework to achieve this.

1.2 Aims and scope of the project

The research project was prepared for the Joint Commonwealth, State and Territory Research Advisory Committee.

The broad aims of the project were to identify and examine current and emerging drivers for social cohesion, social division and conflict in multicultural Australia; and to identify strategies that increase social cohesion.

To achieve these broad aims, we addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the evidence and indicators of social cohesion in the Australian context?

2. What are the factors that enhance or disrupt social cohesion, sense of community belonging and tolerance in Australian communities?

3. How effective are various strategies in building community resilience and fostering social cohesion?
4. What is the role of media access and participation in Australians’ perspectives on multiculturalism and living with diversity, particularly as these relate to the construction of difference, national identity and belonging?

1.3 Study methodology

The project focused on three communities in three states of Australia. Being mainly qualitative, the intent of the project was not to get a representative picture, but to understand in-depth the views and experience related to the above research questions.

The methodology consisted of the following:

1.3.1 Literature review

We conducted a comprehensive review of the academic and grey literature using umbrella terms such as multiculturalism, social cohesion, community cohesion, social conflict, immigration, multicultural communities, intergroup relations, and intergroup attitudes. In addition, searches were conducted using keywords derived from the social cohesion framework: belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition and legitimacy. Evidence was sought primarily from academic research databases, and also from websites of government departments and non-government organisations.

1.3.2 Web-based audit of government and community programs

The primary goal of this method was to get an overview of existing programs related to social cohesion. Knowing that the range of programs would be varied and the number large, we expected this to be a survey rather than a formal and comprehensive evaluation of programs.

Thus, we conducted a broad web-based audit of Australian (national, state, territory and local government and overseas initiatives aimed at promoting social cohesion or some dimensions of it. We also attempted to describe the extent and nature of past and existing programs (with particular emphasis on the Australian context), as well as summarised, where information is available, the existing evaluations of programs and initiatives.

A more targeted identification of government and community programs aimed at promoting and enhancing social cohesion that were particular to the three community case studies was also done. We based these data on what our key informants and focus group participants told us (we asked them about ‘best practice’ programs and services), on searching the available websites, and on documents we were able to collect. These are presented in section 4 where we present the detailed findings of the community case studies.

Conducting a more comprehensive evaluation of programs and strategies explicitly aiming to enhance social cohesion was beyond the scope of the project. In addition, we acknowledge that there are ‘mainstream’ programs, which, although not aimed at promoting and enhancing social cohesion may have that effect but it was not possible to conduct a full examination of these. Nonetheless, we have provided an overview of social cohesion programs, and a focused look at what was available in the three communities.

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3The full literature review was submitted to DIAC as a separate report document (Dandy, Pe-Pua & Sala, 2011).
4‘Grey literature’ refers primarily to material not subject to peer-review and/or in-house publications such as government reports, policy statements and issues papers, conference proceedings, facts sheets, and newsletters and bulletins.
1.3.3 Community case studies

We adopted a community case study approach, which is defined by Yin (1994, p. 13) as ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’. This approach allowed us to obtain detailed, in-depth understanding of the indicators of social cohesion and factors that contribute to social cohesion, division and conflict in the context of select Australian communities.

Research conducted on behalf of the Scanlon Foundation (‘Mapping Social Cohesion’, e.g., Markus, 2010) provides large, representative surveys of Australians’ views on aspects of social cohesion, such as attitudes towards immigration and trust in government and fellow citizens. The results of these surveys give an excellent snapshot of the current state of Australians’ attitudes, and the use of standardised questions and response formats enables comparison across time and place. However, this method may fail to capture people’s more nuanced perspectives, explanations and/or ambivalence (Babbie, 2008; Yin, 2011). Our aim was to augment the Mapping Social Cohesion findings with rich, in-depth and detailed analysis of intergroup attitudes, relations and experiences in ethnically and diverse communities: to add explanatory value to existing Australian data such as the Scanlon survey findings. The community case study approach is appropriate to achieve this aim.

Fieldwork was carried out in three research sites: Mirrabooka/Balga (Western Australia), Blacktown (New South Wales), and Murray Bridge (South Australia) during September and October 2011. Mirrabooka/Balga and Blacktown were selected because they are urban locations that are highly ethnically and/or culturally diverse and include residents from more recently-arrived migrant and/or refugee groups (e.g., Sudanese, Afghani). In addition, Mirrabooka/Balga has a high proportion of Perth’s Indigenous Australian (Nyoongar) population. Murray Bridge was selected because it is a rural community that has become home to a small but significant refugee population (primarily from Sudanese, Afghan, Uzbek backgrounds) as well as a number of Chinese migrants. The three communities were also selected with the aim of representing several Australian states. Focus group discussions were conducted with local residents and community members, and interviews were held with key informants and service providers from local government and non-government organisations. (Further details about the community case study method are provided in section 4 of this report.)

1.3.4 Media analysis

We collected materials for examining how the three communities are represented in the local, state and national media, particularly with regard to diversity, difference, multiculturalism, immigration, and also aspects of community living such as safety and crime. We examined each community’s reputational geography (Parker & Karner, 2010) which is defined as ‘social imaginaries defining an area as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, safe or volatile, ‘no-go’ or peaceful…the symbolic and material boundaries drawn around places as indicators of social status, sites of memories and repositories of affect that can have profound socio-economic as well as emotional consequences for city residents’ (p. 1452). Parker and Karner argue for the importance of local contexts and geographical space in understanding social cohesion and multiculturalism.
The media analysis involved an analysis of archival media material pertaining to each community and was time limited to the past two years. The strategy of analysis was content analysis (Berelson, 1971; Mostyn, 1985), that is, broadly looking at what is being reported on and examining the amount of times something occurs. Our media analysis approach was also data-driven; we chose to focus on key issues that emerged from our focus group discussions with community residents.

1.4 Content and structure of the report

This report has 5 major sections. The Introduction provides a brief background, and outlines the aims and scope of the project, and the study methodology. The second section presents the conceptual framework and literature review. Section 3 outlines the government and community approach to social cohesion. Section 4 presents the three case studies’ findings, preceded by details of the case studies’ method, concluding with a cross-case analysis. Section 5 provides an integrated analysis focusing on the drivers and barriers for social cohesion, relating them to past literature, and presents our conclusions and recommendations.
2 Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

The main framework that we adopted for this study is Jenson’s (1998) dimensions of social cohesion. Other concepts that are relevant to this study are: multicultural community, social division and conflict. The framework, concepts and relevant literature are briefly described below.

2.1 Jenson’s framework of social cohesion

There are many definitions of social cohesion in the academic and policy literature, and there is considerable debate regarding the conceptualisation and measurement of the construct (Beauvais & Jenson, 2002; Hudson, et al.; Jenson, 1998; Spoonley, Peace, Butcher, & O’Neill, 2005). In simple terms, social cohesion can be defined as ‘the ties that hold people together’. Markus and Kirpitchenko (2007) identified the common features of social cohesion definitions to include that community members hold ‘a shared vision’ (shared values, aspirations or identity), that social cohesion is regarded as ‘a property of a group or community’, and that it is a process rather than simply an outcome (p. 25). Others have proposed that there are two underlying themes to social cohesion: a psychological one that relates to identification with the group/community, and a social one that refers to relationships with others (Rajulton, Ravanera, & Beaujot, 2007). Moreover, because social cohesion is linked to concepts such as social capital, and economic and political participation, researchers such as Bernard (1999) argued that social cohesion can be conceptualised as encompassing three broad domains: social, economic and political.

No matter which definition is adopted, social cohesion is recognised as a multidimensional concept (Rajulton et al., 2007). Jenson’s (1998) dimensions therefore offer a suitable framework for this study since they delineate the factors that contribute to or disrupt social cohesion. These dimensions have been adopted more widely in research and/or policy than other conceptualisations, and encompass five domains (as shown in Figure 1, and with the indicators outlined in Figure 2):

- belonging (shared values and identity)
- inclusion (equal opportunities for access)
- participation (engagement in structures and systems)
- recognition (respect and tolerance) and
- legitimacy (pluralism).
The first dimension is perhaps the most fundamental and complex. *Belonging* refers to the extent to which community members experience (or express) a sense of connection to and/or pride in ‘the community’ or the nation more broadly (Markus, 2010). It features in the majority of other definitions of social cohesion although it is perhaps the most contentious aspect, particularly with regard to the subcomponent of shared values. Nonetheless, a sense of connectedness, belonging and trust in others in one’s community is central to most definitions (Jenson, 1998).

*Belonging* is often measured in terms of strength of identification with particular social groups, including ethnic, cultural or religious identification (particularly among migrants and minority ethnic group members) and national identification (e.g., Ward, 2010). Thus, in the Australian context, belonging may be thought of in relation to one’s identification with one’s ethnic, religious or cultural background, as well as identification with being Australian. These are not mutually exclusive, and research suggests that a strong bicultural identity, for example, ‘Italian-Australian’, may be indicative of belonging (Ward, 2010). From the cross-cultural and immigration literature, migrants (and others in intercultural contact) who desire to maintain aspects of their heritage culture and seek out interaction with other ethnic and cultural groups are defined as adopting an integration acculturation strategy (Berry, 1990, 2005). In nations with an official policy of multiculturalism, such an approach is also considered an indicator of belonging (Ward, 2010).
Inclusion refers to the extent to which community members have equal access to resources in the community, including education, employment, healthcare and housing. The majority of the literature on inclusion uses the term social inclusion, which is related to equality and opportunity (Kelly, 2011). According to Hayter (2009), the concept of social inclusion can include providing opportunities for individuals to maximise their rights, whether they be social, political, cultural and/or economic. Social inclusion is therefore multidimensional in nature.

Katz (2008) argues that social inclusion is a way of thinking about what kind of society governments should be creating. Consistent with this, the Australian Social Inclusion Unit (Australian Government; 2009a) outlines that Australia must build a fairer society, one in which all cultures/communities are strong and resilient, with a sense of pride, identity and respect for all members of the community. This construction clearly overlaps with the concept of social cohesion. Social inclusion and social exclusion are closely related (Buckmaster & Thomas, 2009; Hayes, Gray & Edwards, 2008). The two concepts are often conceptualised as being on a continuum with social exclusion at one end and social inclusion at the other (Hayter, 2009). Social exclusion is characterised by: economic disadvantage through joblessness, and/or dependence on income support; failure to access resources such as healthcare and education; and the absence of participation in ‘normal’ activities available in the community (Burchardt, Le Grand & Piachaud, 2002; Levitas et al., 2007). Common indicators of inclusion/exclusion include measures of workforce participation, income, receipt of welfare or social support, home ownership, education, and occupation. These are demographic indicators that are typically accessed through large national surveys such as the Australian census, and reports by organisations such as the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI, a UNSW-UWS Research Centre).

Participation refers to engagement in structures and systems, outside of formal employment, including being involved in voluntary work, and also political participation such as voting behaviour, participation in political protest or dissent (e.g., signing a petition; Markus, 2010). In addition to voting and ‘civic engagement’, Spoonley et al. (2005, p. 105) denote other more social behaviours as falling under this dimension, such as participation in education, arts and cultural activities, and sport and leisure. Thus, this dimension may be thought of as containing two sub-components: political participation (or civic participation) and social or community participation (Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia [CIRCA], 2010), although there is mixed evidence for the relationship between the two sub-components (Rajulton et al., 2007).

The dimension of recognition includes mutual respect and tolerance among members of the community. In the Scanlon Foundation reports by the Monash Institute for the Study of Global Movements, this refers to the extent to which community members feel they are accepted or rejected by others in the community (Markus, 2010). This is measured by a variety of indicators including:

- self-reported experiences of discrimination, prejudice, and perceived vulnerability to hate crime
- intergroup attitudes, particularly discriminatory attitudes and prejudice
- more general perceptions of the extent to which there is tolerance and mutual respect (and conversely, prejudice and racism) in the community.

Some authors, e.g., Crisp (2010, p. 123), have argued that exclusion and inclusion are not ‘binary opposites’; some people may be included and excluded at the same time depending on the characteristic being considered.
The dimension of *legitimacy* is not always included as a separate component of social cohesion, for example, it is included with acceptance and rejection in the Scanlon Foundation surveys (e.g., Markus, 2010: Markus & Arnup, 2009). It reflects more formal institutional level factors, such as policies relating to pluralism and multiculturalism, and also public confidence in institutions such as the political system, government departments and unions (Rajulton et al., 2007; Spoonley et al., 2005). According to Jenson (1998, p. 16), this reflects the need for having macro-institutions that can manage or ‘mediate’ potential conflict in pluralist societies. Macro institutions include government departments, political parties, as well as non-government organisations, local advocacy groups and social movements (Jenson, 1998).

### 2.2 Social cohesion and related constructs

*Social capital* refers to social networks and relationships, and norms and resources that community members contribute to and draw upon (Edwards, 2003). Social capital is often seen as an antecedent to, or condition for, social cohesion, such that community members may draw upon social capital in order to become more cohesive (Cheong, 2006; Spoonley et al., 2005). However, as noted by Cheong (2006), other factors such as socio-cultural and economic constraints can impair the process of social capital building, particularly among migrant groups. Therefore, the relationship between social capital and social cohesion is likely to be bi-directional: communities that are fragmented and impoverished may be less likely to develop strong social networks and relationships, although this depends on the context (Parker & Karner, 2010). Thus, social capital is a complex construct and, as identified by Stone (2000), the empirical research on social capital lags behind, and is not always informed by, theory.

Social capital tends to be used more in quantitative survey research in which researchers measure participation, volunteering and trust in others, including ‘outgroups’ (Holtug & Mason, 2010). Thus, *social capital* also overlaps with *social trust*, which is a general belief that ‘different others share our fundamental beliefs and values, that they are part of our ‘moral community’, and that they will not seek to harm us or take undue advantage’ (Phan, 2008, p. 25). Social trust might, therefore, be thought of as a sub-component of social cohesion (overlapping with the belonging dimension).

Social inclusion is another construct that overlaps with social cohesion, although it appears more in the policy literature than in academic discourse. It is variously defined (see, for example, Hayes et al., 2008; Hayter, 2009) and, in some ways, understood better by its reverse: social exclusion (isolation, marginalisation and disadvantage). Like social cohesion it is multidimensional and complex. It is also regarded as a process, rather than an outcome, and it may be conceptualised as a macro/societal level variable rather than an individual one (Hayes et al., 2008). Social exclusion is also thought to obstruct social cohesion, although given the substantial overlap between these constructs it is difficult to distinguish cause and effect. Similarly, social inclusion is linked to social capital (e.g., Hayes et al., 2008; Ride, 2007) but the exact nature of the relationship remains an empirical question.

Additional terms such as ‘social harmony’ and ‘community harmony’ tend to be used more in policy and everyday discourse rather than in the academic literature. Although these constructs overlap with social cohesion, it is evident from their use in the grey literature that they are defined more narrowly; they are related more to the belonging and connectedness themes of social cohesion than the social justice and equity aspects (i.e., inclusion and recognition).
2.3 Defining multicultural community

This project is about ‘multicultural Australia’. The terms ‘multicultural’ and ‘multiculturalism’ have various and contested definitions in the literature, differing among lay, academic and policy constructions. Australian multicultural policy represents multiculturalism as both the demographic reality of contemporary Australian society (‘Australia is a multicultural nation’) and the means to achieve socially desirable outcomes such as social cohesion and community harmony through key principles of fairness and inclusion, and the promotion of tolerance. However, research indicates that most Australians understand multiculturalism as the former: ‘a demographic feature’ of a society (Van de Vijver et al., 2008, p. 93). That is, most Australians regard multiculturalism as an outcome of Australia’s history of immigration and settlement, rather than in terms of its ideological features or as a social policy (Dandy, 2010; Vasta, 2003). Following from this, Australia’s ethnic and cultural diversity is linked in people’s minds to the presence of migrants from diverse ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds (although not necessarily Australia’s Indigenous peoples). In this project, we have used this lay definition of ‘multicultural’ in our community case studies, a description of a culturally (and/or ethnically) diverse society.

The Australian nation can be considered a ‘multicultural community’ but communities can exist on levels other than that of the nation-state. Sarason (1974, p. 1) defined community as ‘a readily available, mutually supportive network of relationships on which one could depend’ and applied the term to localities, community institutions, friends, neighbours, and religious bodies. Community can be distinguished between territorial/geographical communities which are defined by geography, for example, neighbourhood, town, city and rural regions; and relational communities which are defined by interpersonal relationships. Relational communities include professional groups, sporting teams, online communities, cultural groups, spiritual/religious communities, that is, networks of relationships that provide friendship and support that are not geographical (Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, 2007; Sonn & Fisher, 1996). Both forms of community were considered in this study.

From the literature, it is evident that there are multiple levels of communities. We drew upon Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) concept of ecological levels that impact on human development to conceptualise these multi-layered aspects of communities, in which there are:

- microsystems (e.g., families, friends, workgroups, teams)
- organisations (e.g., schools, workplaces, religious groups)
- localities (e.g., neighbourhoods, cities, towns, rural areas)
- macrosystems (e.g., cultures, societies, governments, corporations, mass media, internet, social environments, belief systems).

Communities are also related across levels, for example, macro-systems can influence organisations (e.g., workplaces and schools), and therefore improving community life involves change at multiple levels (Dalton et al., 2007). The majority of research has considered social cohesion at the levels of local neighbourhood and/or nation (Phan, 2008; Rajulton et al., 2007). This has resulted in the use of units defined by census statistical data (e.g., local government areas) as well as national-level surveys. For example, within the Australian context, community can be defined in terms of suburbs or local government area, or the Australian nation. In international research, multilevel quantitative analyses, in which local, state and national levels are considered, are
increasingly common (e.g., Phan, 2008; Rajulton et al., 2007). In assessing indicators of social cohesion for the New Zealand context, Spoonley et al. (2005) identified ‘elements of socially cohesive behaviour’ that operate at the individual level, and ‘conditions for a socially cohesive society’ that can be measured at the societal level (Spoonley et al., 2005, p. 105).

2.4 Drivers for social cohesion, social conflict and division: Evidence from the literature

In this section we provide a brief review of the international and Australian literature concerning the key drivers for social cohesion, in particular, factors that promote or enhance cohesion (enablers), and factors that detract from cohesion or increase rejection and exclusion (barriers). The review is followed by an analysis of social conflict and division, and a separate section that summarises current international and national key indicators of social cohesion and social conflict. Finally we conclude with a summary of key literature that addresses the role of mass and social media in representations of diversity, multiculturalism, national identity and belonging.

This summary review draws upon a comprehensive search of the academic and grey literature conducted during February to June 2011. This included searching academic databases such as PsycINFO, CINAHL Plus, ERIC, and PsycARTICLES as well as GoogleScholar, using umbrella terms such as multiculturalism, social cohesion, community cohesion, social conflict, immigration, multicultural communities, intergroup relations, and intergroup attitudes. In addition, searches were conducted using keywords derived from the social cohesion framework: belonging, inclusion, participation, engagement, involvement, racism, tolerance, prejudice, discrimination, social capital, and trust; paired with descriptors such as citizen, social, community, multicultural, diverse and group. In general, searches were limited to publications since 2000, with the exception of relevant Australian research and topics in which there was little published research (in which case the search parameter was extended to publications from 1990). Searches were also restricted to publications in English, and dissertations/theses were generally excluded. Searches using Google, GoogleScholar and Library OneSearch identified relevant grey literature, and additional searches were made of government department (e.g., DIAC) websites and those of other organisations (e.g., the Australian Social Inclusion Board). Government and other reports were also recommended by representatives from government and non-government agencies working in the sector. Branching from existing sources, a secondary search process was also undertaken.

2.4.1 Enablers and barriers for Belonging

A sense of connectedness, belonging and trust in others in one’s community is central to most definitions of social cohesion (Jenson, 1998). From a psychological perspective, belonging is considered a basic human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The bulk of the literature on belonging derives from community and social psychology (e.g., from Social Identity Theory), and includes predominantly empirical studies. From our review it is evident that interpersonal factors such as contact (particularly positive interactions among community members), the sharing of important events, investment in the community, and having a spiritual bond are enablers for belonging in multicultural communities (McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Rappaport, 2000). In particular, a sense of connection to one’s ethnic, cultural or religious community is critical to a sense of belonging for people from ethnic, cultural and/or religious minorities (Fisher & Sonn, 2002; Sonn & Fisher, 1996; 1998). Nonetheless, research supports the multiple and complex ways in which people can identify...

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6 Where necessary, ‘diversity’ was defined as ethnic/cultural diversity due to the large body of literature relating to social inclusion for groups defined according to gender, sexual orientation, and disability.
and belong in diverse, multicultural communities (Collins, Reid, & Fabiansson, 2007; Saeed, Blain, & Forbes, 2007; Wetherell, 2008; Zevallos, 2008). These ‘multiple possibilities of belonging’ (Wetherell, 2008, p. 306) can be a strength of diverse communities and they are not necessarily competing but can co-exist in the form of, for example, minority ethnic and national identities (e.g., Saeed, et al., 2007).

However, multiple identities can be problematic. Australian research has indicated that for some members of Australian Muslim communities there may be conflict between religious and Australian identities (CIRCA, 2010). The experiences of belonging for Muslim Australians in particular may be more complex and conflicted in the post-September 11 socio-political climate (Dunn, et al., 2004; Dunn, Klocker, & Salabay, 2007; HREOC, 2004). In addition, being ‘visibly different’ to the Anglo-Australian norm is a factor that may disrupt sense of belonging (e.g., Inglis, 2010; Nesdale, Rooney & Smith, 1997). This research highlights the potentially problematic nature of social groups and categories: their boundaries can be too rigid, creating an ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality. If group boundaries become inflexible, they will exclude others which may give rise to anti-immigration, anti-multicultural and anti-Aboriginal sentiments (Fisher & Sonn, 2002). This is particularly the case for identifying as ‘Australian’, which some authors have argued is an almost exclusively white, Anglo-Celtic identity (Dandy, 2010; Dunn, 2009; Hage, 1998).

In addition, a political and social climate which supports diversity and pluralism (e.g., multiculturalism) contributes positively to sense of belonging at the community and national levels. This extends to the mass media. Barriers to belonging include experiences of discrimination and prejudice, shame or humiliation, ambiguous and unresolved interactions among community members, and public expressions of nationalism that are culturally exclusive. In addition, social trust has been found to be related to belonging. This is also a key enabler for participation and hence is addressed in depth in that section of the review.

### 2.4.2 Enablers and barriers for Inclusion

As noted earlier, Inclusion refers to the extent to which community members have equal access to resources in the community and is therefore a very broad dimension. Key enablers for social inclusion that have been identified in the literature are: employment, social relationships, community strengthening and capacity building, community development, countering media stereotypes, and respecting and maintaining culture, heritage and values.

The Australian Social Inclusion Board proposes that social relationships can prevent isolation, loneliness and social exclusion (ASIB, 2008; Vison, 2009). Furthermore, social relationships can assist in the development of networks in the community (Babacan, 2008) which can ultimately foster social inclusion. One of the key characteristics of successful interventions to promote social inclusion and reduce disadvantage is community strengthening and capacity building (Babacan, 2008; Australian Government, 2009b; Vison, 2009). In addition, media are seen as the most influential aspect in achieving a more inclusive society (Australian Human Rights Commission [AHRC], 2010; DIAC, 2008a). In a report on young Muslim Australian youth (DIAC, 2008b) participants suggested that more Muslims need to work in the media in order to prevent negative stereotypes. This is an ongoing theme throughout the literature on social cohesion in Australia, as seen in the previous section on belonging and addressed subsequently in reference to enablers and barriers to recognition. Similarly, another key strategy for inclusion is respecting and maintaining culture, heritage and values (AHRC, 2010), which is an aspect of recognition.
Whilst employment is seen as an enabler for inclusion, much of the research has focused on barriers to workforce participation. As outlined by Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2007), a persistent theme is the need to improve the national system of qualifications recognition for migrants. Additionally, there is a need for public awareness campaigns to make employers aware of the benefits of diversity for their work environments. English-language instruction is also necessary to assist migrants and refugees who need it. Finally, employers need to be educated about what constitutes discrimination in the workplace and the benefits of providing employment opportunities to people from ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic minorities.

Sports-based interventions have also been proposed as enablers for inclusion but they are more prominent as enablers for participation and hence, are addressed in the next section.

2.4.3 Enablers and barriers for Participation

Participation refers to engagement in structures and systems outside of formal employment, including being involved in voluntary work; and also political participation. Enhancing community participation has been a focus of government policy and programs in many multicultural societies, and there is consequently a considerable amount of grey literature on this dimension. The Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA) recently conducted a study into the social and civic participation of Australian Muslim men and identified that participation needs to be addressed at three different levels: the individual, the ethnic/cultural community and mainstream community (CIRCA, 2010). Moreover, the Centre’s report states that: ‘Without an understanding of how these capacities affect each other, mechanisms for addressing barriers to social and civic participation will have limited impact’ (CIRCA, 2010, p. 72). Factors that contribute to effective participation are proposed to include: support networks and ‘social spaces’; fostering biculturalism and valuing diversity; volunteering; capacity building—mentoring and leadership; anti-racism practices; music; sport; local initiatives and activities; and spiritual and religious factors (CIRCA). Employment, addressed under inclusion, has also been identified as a key factor, which further illustrates the overlapping nature of the social cohesion dimensions.

Support networks and ‘social spaces’ are important factors in enabling participation. Major types of support networks include family and friendships which can connect people to the broader community (Harris, Wyn, & Younes, 2007). Other types of support networks within social spaces include: prayer rooms, cafés, sports clubs, parks, beaches, shopping centres, and the internet—for example, chat rooms, Facebook and Twitter (CIRCA, 2010). However, ‘social spaces’ can also hinder participation due to differences in cultural practices, for example, the Australian custom of alcohol consumption in social settings can be a barrier to social participation for Muslim Australian men and women (CIRCA, 2010; McCue, 2008).

Fostering biculturalism and valuing diversity is another way to enable participation (CIRCA, 2010; Kabir & Rickards, 2006). As outlined by Kabir and Rickards (2006), a bicultural identity can enhance a sense of belonging to both cultures (ethnic minority and majority). It should therefore be fostered as a means of valuing diversity. Therefore, retaining cultural traditions is also important in that one can participate in both his/her ethnic community and within the mainstream community (Kabir & Rickards, 2006).

Volunteering can lead to participation (Handy & Greenspan, 2009; McCue, 2008; Uslaner, 2002), and there are many benefits to volunteering such as enhanced well-being (CIRCA, 2010; Haski-Leventhal, 2009). Furthermore, volunteering is perceived as a social and community activity that
enhances social capital by helping create networks (Haski-Leventhal, 2009; Putnam, 2000). It also reduces social exclusion, and it empowers members to give back to the community (Haski-Leventhal, 2009). In light of these benefits Haski-Leventhal (2009) outlines that volunteering is especially important for migrant communities.

Mentoring and developing leadership are also important in promoting participation (Foster-Fishman, Pierce, & Van Egeren, 2009). Leaders and mentors can provide skill development that community members need that, in turn, can encourage greater participation (Foster-Fishman et al., 2009). Music can be used as a tool to increase participation, and as a form of creative engagement (Kabir & Rickards, 2006). It can also provide minority youth with a voice, for example, Stephenson (2008) reported on the development of young Australian Muslim hip-hop groups (e.g., The Brotherhood) using rap music to help young people take pride in their Muslim identity. Community radio and ‘communities of musicians’ were also identified by Hudson et al. (2007, p. 74) as sources of participation and involvement in diverse communities in London and Manchester. Broadcasting local-and diverse-opinion through community radio can also enhance recognition.

Sport has also been used as a tool to increase participation, particularly for migrants, refugees and Indigenous people (Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues [CMYI], 2007; Oliver, 2006; Peters, 2010; Refugee Council of Australia [RCOA], 2010; Wise & Ali, 2008). Furthermore, participation in sport has been linked to social capital and to the development of cohesive communities (Atherley, 2006). Sport has also been linked to reconciliation strategies (Höglund & Sundberg, 2008). As maintained by Oliver (2006), sport can help migrants become involved in the community and interact with people from different backgrounds. For Indigenous communities, it can be a way to improve their economic and social well-being.

Sport has been used in particular for newly arrived refugees to assist them in their resettlement process and to promote participation in the mainstream community (Bunde-Birouste et al., 2009; CMYI, 2007; Nathan et al., 2010; RCOA, 2010). However, sport can provide more than this for refugees, for example, it provides a site for building trust; it can be a diversion strategy; it can provide life skills; it can help refugees learn about Australian culture; it can promote health and well-being; and it can have therapeutic benefits for people recovering from the trauma of the refugee experience (CMYI, 2007; RCOA, 2010).

The benefits of participation in sport can be divided into individual and community benefits (McMeekin, Hancock & Bahn, 2009). As outlined by McMeekin and colleagues (2009), individual benefits include: enhanced physical and mental health, social and psychological well-being, building trusting relationships, a sense of belonging, and broader participation in community activities. Community benefits include: increased community cohesion, promotion of diversity and tolerance for difference, and reduced anti-social behaviour. However, one should be cautious not to over-state the benefits of sport for building social capital and/or promoting social cohesion (Coalter, 2010; Kelly, 2011). Researchers in the Netherlands have found that minority participation in sport, specifically soccer, can serve to enhance rather than overcome existing inter-ethnic tensions (Krouwel, Boonstra & Duyvendak, 2006). In addition, some authors have argued that an emphasis on sport interventions can result in neglect of important structural inequalities that also contribute to social exclusion and community discord (Kelly, 2011).

Spiritual and religious activities have also been identified as enablers for participation and engagement (CIRCA, 2010; Uslaner, 2002). In the 2002 General Social Survey for the Australian
Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2006) ‘church and religious activities’ were rated highest amongst other types of social participation, by people born in non-English speaking countries compared to those born in mainly English speaking countries. Hudson et al. (2007) found that faith groups were significant sources of involvement and social activity for Somalis in London and Manchester.

Anti-racism initiatives are also enablers of participation (CIRCA, 2010). This factor is addressed in more detail in relation to recognition, below.

From the literature it is evident that there are specific barriers to participation for minority ethnic groups, migrants and refugees. These include: experience and perceptions of marginalisation and social exclusion, economic exclusion; language issues; lack of support and resources; lack of skills and knowledge; and food and gender customs (CIRCA, 2010; McCue, 2008). Other barriers include: lack of trust in institutions related to previous experiences; inaccessible services; and political and cultural discrimination (Hoffmann-Ekstein, 2007). The experience of discrimination also affects individuals’ participation and sense of belonging (CIRCA, 2010). Similarly, participation (like belonging) is a function of society’s ‘openness’ to migrants (Breton, 1997). Furthermore, there are barriers to participation in sport for migrant and refugee women in particular (Lai & Rudez, 2009; McMeekin et al., 2009). This may be due to cultural and religious issues, family commitments, clothing requirements; and appeal of the sports available (Cortis & Muir, 2007; Lai & Rudez, 2009; McCue, 2008). In summary, settlement services have often used sport to increase participation, but this has been particularly for men (Lai & Rudez, 2009). From the literature it is evident that action is required to address low participation of women from minority ethnic, cultural, religious and/or linguistic groups in sport.

Research has also identified particular barriers faced by Australians from Indigenous and other minority groups to their participation in sport. These include racism and discrimination (Oliver, 2006; RCOA, 2010), as well as: difficulties in accessing transport, lack of knowledge of rules, differences in attitudes to physical activity, English language proficiency, availability and accessibility of facilities, financial constraints, time constraints, lack of accommodation to religious customs regarding dress, and confidence and self esteem issues (CMYI, 2007; Cooper, Bahn & Hancock, 2009; McMeekin et al., 2009).

2.4.4 Enablers and barriers for Recognition

Recognition refers to the extent to which diversity and difference are tolerated and/or respected within the local community or society more broadly. This is a very broad dimension and we focused on literature concerning racial, ethnic, and religious prejudice and discrimination, and cross-cultural research on attitudes toward migrants, acculturation and multiculturalism. In addition, our primary emphasis was on the Australian context and discrimination on racial, ethnic and religious grounds because these aspects are most relevant to social cohesion in multicultural Australia.

The key drivers for recognition operate at multiple levels (individual, community, nation) and are interrelated. Individual factors that have been identified as influencing prejudice, discrimination and tolerance include age, education, knowledge, and empathy. At the interpersonal or group level, our review identified ingroup identification, contact, perceived cultural distance, and acculturation orientations (particularly discordant or conflictual orientations). At the societal level, factors such as social norms, the political climate, unemployment levels, and immigration numbers (or perceptions thereof) appear to be influential.
Not all of these factors are equally amenable to change (or appropriate for interventions), for example, age cannot be manipulated, although findings concerning demographic and individual difference variables may assist in identifying certain sections of the community that require a particular strategy or initiative (or type of strategy or initiative) to enhance intergroup recognition. Positive factors that we have identified as most amenable to change, *enablers*, include awareness, empathy, values, contact, and encouragement, as well as active promotion of all of the above by authorities at the community (e.g., school staff, workplace supervisors) and societal levels (e.g., politicians, institutions).

*Barriers* to recognition include the opposite of the above list (e.g., negative interactions or competition between groups), as well as broader socio-economic factors, such as conditions of high unemployment, a socio-political climate in which an assimilationist ideology dominates, and weak or non-existent sanctions against discrimination.

In the following sections, we look at the categories of factors in more detail.

- **Individual factors**

  Research demonstrates that individual characteristics such as education and age are significant factors in prejudice and attitudes toward multiculturalism. In particular, studies show lower levels of prejudice among younger people and people who are tertiary educated (e.g., Dunn et al., 2004). Education is also positively related to attitudes toward immigration, multiculturalism and cultural diversity (Ang et al., 2002; 2006; Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2003; Betts, 2002, 2005; Breugelmans, van de Vijver & Schalk-Soekar, 2009; Bulbeck, 2004; Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010; Paradies, 2005; Schalk-Soekar & van de Vijver, 2008). In addition, Dunn et al. (2004) found that older Australian participants were less likely to acknowledge the existence of racism, suggesting a lack of awareness around these issues.

  Following from the finding that the more highly educated tend to be less prejudiced is the claim that prejudice stems from lack of knowledge, that results in a tendency to rely on stereotypes and false beliefs about minority groups: the ‘prejudice is ignorance’ argument. Therefore, some anti-racism interventions have attempted to challenge people’s stereotypical beliefs and negative attitudes through cross-cultural awareness programs and advertising campaigns (Pedersen, Walker, & Wise, 2005). Although rigorous evaluations of programs are relatively rare, the available research suggests that such programs have weak and only short-term effects on attitudes, if any effect is observed (Hill & Augoustinos, 2001; Pedersen et al., 2005; Sanson et al., 1998). The failure of cross-cultural awareness programs may be because they are one-off and, in the case of school-based interventions, not integrated into the school curriculum (see Cotton, 1993 for a review). Lack of success may also be due to the nature of stereotypes, which have been shown to be highly resistant to change (Pedersen et al., 2005; Sanson et al., 1998). Some researchers have also demonstrated that cultural awareness programs that focus on particular ‘outgroups’ can have the opposite effect, confirming participants’ pre-existing stereotypes (Massey, 1991, cited in Pedersen et al., 2005). Similar findings have been reported for advertising campaigns (Pedersen et al., 2005). Recent evidence suggests this tendency for awareness programs to backfire might be linked to different receptivity to anti-racism or ‘multicultural’ messages among high and low prejudiced people (Vorauer & Sasaki, 2010).

  One way to challenge pre-existing attitudes is to induce *cognitive dissonance* (Pedersen et al., 2005). Dissonance occurs when an individual becomes aware of inconsistencies among their
attitudes and/or values. It is argued that this is uncomfortable and therefore that the person will attempt to reduce the discrepancy by changing either of the inconsistent thoughts. Using this mechanism, it may be possible to challenge discriminatory attitudes by making egalitarian values salient (Levy, 1999). This may be particularly relevant in the Australian context with a cultural emphasis on egalitarianism and the ‘fair go’ (Feather, 1998; Haslam, Oakes, Reynolds, & Mein, 1999). To our knowledge no research has tested this hypothesis within the Australian context.

Finally, there is some evidence that interventions that enhance empathy towards others lead to decreases in prejudice (Pedersen et al., 2005). Jane Elliott’s ‘blue eyes-brown eyes’ experiment7 with her third grade students in Iowa is an example of this, although there are ethical concerns about the stress induced by such a procedure (Pedersen et al., 2005). It is also difficult to evoke empathy, and a focus on negative emotions can interfere with the effect. Nonetheless, methods to enhance empathy toward others may be useful in reducing discrimination, particularly with children and young people.

- **Interpersonal and intergroup factors**

  Whilst individual or personality dimensions may be useful to identify how to target an information campaign to reduce prejudice and discrimination, an examination of the social or intergroup factors that enhance or decrease prejudice would appear to be more useful for strategies and interventions. In particular, genuine intercultural interaction has been shown to be far more effective in reducing prejudice than mere information about other cultures (Pedersen et al., 2005; Sanson et al., 1998). Beginning with Gordon Allport’s (1954) seminal work, much social psychological research has been devoted to the study of intergroup contact as a means for lowering prejudice. Although it is now acknowledged that the relationship between contact and prejudice is complex and bi-directional (people who are high in prejudice are likely to avoid contact, whilst those who are low in prejudice tend to be favourable toward diversity and seek contact; Pettigrew, 2009), research has consistently demonstrated the benefits of frequent, positive intergroup contact. These benefits seem to reduce prejudice through improving mutual understanding, and reducing anxiety and perceived threat between groups (e.g., González, Verkuyten, Weesie & Poppe, 2008; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Swart, Hewstone, Christ & Voci, 2011; Tausch, Hewstone, & Roy, 2009). In their meta-analysis of over 500 studies, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) identified that, in general, contact reduced prejudice through reducing individuals’ anxiety and enhancing empathy toward others. This effect was enhanced when Allport’s optimal conditions for contact were present: the groups in contact are of equal status, they share common goals, there is no intergroup competition, and contact is encouraged by authorities (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011). This last condition means that intergroup contact is supported and promoted, rather than discouraged, through government policy and practice (Legitimacy) and by authorities in the local context such as in schools and workplaces.

Australian research on the effects of intergroup contact is relatively sparse, although the rates of intercultural ‘mixing’ through friendships, interaction and intercultural marriage are high compared with other nations (Ang et al., 2002). A closer examination of these data reveals that such

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7 Jane Elliot was a primary school teacher in the US who, beginning in the late 1960s, conducted a series of ‘natural experiments’ with her third grade students. In her exercise she manipulated discrimination by dividing her class according to eye colour and enhancing intergroup distinctions that were favourable to one group and derogatory for the other. This became the basis for more extensive ‘Diversity Training’. For further information see ‘A Class Divided’ http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided/etc/view.html
intercultural contacts are significantly less common for Anglo-Australian residents, such that inter-ethnic social interaction tends to be higher among migrant and second-generation groups than with members of the Anglo-Australian majority (Ang et al., 2002; Inglis, 2010). However, this depends on a number of other factors such as age, gender and socio-economic status (Collins et al., 2007; Wise & Ali, 2008).

Thus, investigating intercultural contacts in genuine community settings may be limited by their actual frequency and unequal distribution across the community. Nonetheless, in one of the few available studies, Nesdale and Todd (1998) found that intercultural contact in Australian university settings increased knowledge and tolerance of outgroups. Ethnographic studies, such as the work of Amanda Wise, have also demonstrated the impact of positive interaction amongst community members from different cultural backgrounds (Wise, 2005; Pember, 2008).

Another factor that social psychological research has demonstrated to be related to prejudice and discrimination is *perceived threat* (Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006; Stephan, Renfro, Esses, Stephan, & Martin, 2005). This body of research largely draws upon the Integrated Threat Theory (ITT) in which four categories of threat that affect attitudes toward outgroups are proposed: realistic threat, symbolic threat, negative stereotypes, and intergroup anxiety (Stephan et al., 2005). *Realistic threats* pertain to perceived intergroup competition for scarce resources, such as political power, economic assets, health, education, employment opportunities and social status. *Symbolic threat* refers to perceived intergroup differences in values, norms, beliefs, morals and standards, and threats to the ingroup’s general worldview (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). *Intergroup anxiety* refers to anxiety about possible interactions with out-group members, and fears of negative outcomes including feelings of uneasiness, rejection, disapproval or embarrassment (Riek et al., 2006). Finally, *negative stereotypes* are shared social schema that are heavily weighted with negative—and in the case of ITT, threat-oriented—traits, such as aggressive, untrustworthy, manipulative, hostile and arrogant (Corenblum & Stephan, 2001; Stephan et al., 2005).

International and Australian research has demonstrated the role of perceived threat, or security, in people’s attitudes to outgroups including migrants, refugees, and international students (Breugelmans & van de Vijver, 2004; Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010; Leong & Ward, 2011; Riek et al., 2006; Rohmann, Florack, & Piontkowski, 2006; Stephan et al., 2005; Ward & Masgoret, 2006, 2008). The role of realistic threat, in terms of employment and financial security, is also supported by Betts’ analysis of Australian Electoral Survey data, in which unemployed people were found to have stronger negative attitudes to immigration and multiculturalism (Betts, 1996). Similarly, in their analysis of national survey data in the Netherlands from 1979-2002, Coenders, Lubbers, Scheepers, and Verkuyten (2008) found that a large recent increase in unemployment was related to more public support for ethnic discrimination (e.g., favouring ethnic Dutch in decisions about housing, jobs, and job promotion).

Cultural or symbolic threat may be significantly more salient for members of the dominant cultural group or ‘host community’. Dutch researcher Maykel Verkuyten has argued that multiculturalism is identity-threatening for dominant or majority group members (e.g., Verkuyten, 2005). This is particularly the case for those who strongly identify with their ingroup, typically defined as an ethnic or national ingroup in these studies (e.g., Australian, Anglo-Australian, English; Hudson et al., 2007). Ethnic minorities have much to gain through multiculturalism, including respect for and legitimacy of the maintenance of their original cultural norms and practices. In contrast, multiculturalism is threatening to the dominant group which has to make room for other cultures
and identities, and this threatens their cultural hegemony (Dandy, 2010; Verkuyten, 2005). Thus, research has shown a positive association between ethnic ingroup identification and support for multiculturalism among migrants, but a negative relationship among dominant group members (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010; Verkuyten, 2005). Australians who strongly identify as ‘Australian’ and/or experience more pride in their Australian identity are less likely to support multiculturalism.

The negative effects of ingroup identification among dominant group members may be ameliorated if the ingroup identity becomes more inclusive (Pedersen et al., 2005), such that, for example, ‘Australian identity’ is defined to include migrants and other minority ethnic groups (Collins et al., 2007). As identified earlier, the boundaries of Australian identity may be perceived as rigid and containing only those from a white, British cultural heritage (Dunn, 2009; Hage 1998). Research in the US has also demonstrated that group categorizations can be manipulated to be broader superordinate categories and this reduces intergroup bias (e.g., Gaertner, Mann, Murrell, & Dovidio, 1989; Gaertner, et al., 1999). Whilst there appears to be no research demonstrating this in the Australian context, Collins et al. (2007, p. 8) found that minority young people in Sydney held a cosmopolitan identity—‘as Australians located in and linked to a wider world’—demonstrating the potential value of further research in this area in Australia.

Research in cross-cultural psychology has shown that perceived cultural or social distance is a significant factor in the host or dominant group’s attitudes toward acculturation, migrants and multiculturalism (Berry & Kalin, 1995; Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010; Montreuil & Bourhis, 2001; Schalk-Soekar & van de Vijver, 2008; Ward & Masgoret, 2008). This refers to perceived differences between the values, norms and practices of the dominant or majority culture, and those of migrant or other minority ethnic groups. International research has demonstrated an ethnic hierarchy in terms of the dominant groups’ preferences, such that migrant groups that are seen as more culturally similar are preferred. In our research we found that people from New Zealand and Britain were the most liked, and ‘Arabs’, ‘Muslims’, and ‘Lebanese’, the least, by dominant group members (‘Anglo-Australians’; Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010). These results are consistent with Social Identity Theory, as an extension of ingroup favouritism, but also highlight the highly negative representation of Muslims in Australia as the current targets of racism and xenophobia (Dunn et al., 2007; HREOC, 2004; Inglis, 2010).

The impact of perceived cultural distance has implications for other predictors of intercultural attitudes and behaviours. Some researchers have identified that host or dominant group members prefer certain migrant groups to assimilate or be entirely separate from the rest of the community (e.g., Montreuil & Bourhis, 2001; Piontkowski, Florack, Hoelker, & Obdrzálek, 2000). In these cases it would appear the dominant group does not wish to engage with the migrant group or accommodate its culture (known as majority acculturation; Schalk-Soekar & van de Vijver, 2008). In turn, this may influence the degree to which members of the dominant group seek to engage in (or avoid) contact with members of these groups. As discussed earlier, positive contact can be a key factor in reducing prejudice, and intercultural contact tends to be higher among minority groups rather than with the dominant majority. Thus, it may be that programs and strategies need to be tailored to engage members of the majority group in particular, and to promote their interaction with those groups perceived as most culturally different. The paradox here, of course, is that this is precisely the most difficult task to achieve.
Community level factors

As noted in the earlier section on perceived threat, structural level factors such as unemployment also impact on people’s attitudes to diversity (Coenders et al., 2008). In addition, Coenders et al. (2008) found that Dutch support for ethnic discrimination was higher in periods of high levels of immigration and among those members of the public who had entered their formative years (aged 16-20) during periods in which there were higher numbers of ethnic migrants entering, and the level of national unemployment was high. It should be noted, however, that these national survey studies are correlational and therefore cause and effect cannot be concluded.

The role of government policies such as multiculturalism will be examined in the subsequent section on legitimacy. However, for our purposes here, it is worth examining public perceptions of social norms and ideologies like multiculturalism, and the impact of those perceptions on discrimination and negative attitudes. To what extent do people support the government policy and how does this impact on their attitudes and behaviours? And what do they think the majority or consensus opinion is?

Schalk-Soekar and van de Vijver (2008) found that Dutch people’s belief that there was a norm to approve cultural maintenance among migrants and minorities influenced multicultural attitudes, such that a perception that cultural maintenance was supported more broadly in the community was related to more positive individual attitudes. In turn, these attitudes were related to knowledge about and contact with minority ethnic or religious groups. In an experimental study, Coenders et al. (2008) found that making an assimilation ideology salient (as opposed to a multicultural ideology) led to Dutch participants showing more negative feelings toward outgroups, particularly toward Turks and Moroccans.

From Coenders et al.’s (2008) findings one could conclude that attitudes toward outgroups or ethnic minorities are susceptible to change, depending on the ideological context, such that a strong public statement against immigration or multiculturalism by a significant political or media figure, for example, could alter people’s feelings toward minorities. However, this interpretation is debated—other researchers argue that multicultural attitudes are relatively strong and stable, and less likely to be influenced by policy or political climate (e.g., Breugelmans et al., 2009).

Finally, mass media are another community-level factor that influences recognition, by perpetuating or failing to challenge negative stereotypes and misinformation about cultural, ethnic and religious minorities (Liu, 2006; Mastro, 2003; van Dijk, 1989). This is discussed in more detail in section 2.6.

2.4.5 Enablers and barriers for Legitimacy

The last dimension of Jenson’s framework, legitimacy, refers to more formal institutional factors rather than individual or community-based ones. According to Jenson (1998), this dimension emerged primarily from work conducted on behalf of the Club of Rome (see Berger, 1998), and reflects a recognition of the need for the management of pluralism. That is, promotion of pluralism will naturally result in some differences in beliefs, values and opinions in a society. The role of managing, or ‘mediating’ that potential conflict lies with macro institutions (such as political parties and also non-government organisations, local advocacy groups and social movements; Jenson, 1998, p. 16). Thus, this dimension is reflected at the societal level rather than the individual and hence, we did not focus on drivers for legitimacy in our review, other than to refer to research findings that
point to public trust or confidence in these institutions and processes (Markus, 2010; Spoonley et al., 2005).

Jenson (1998) identified that this dimension has received little research attention. In the Australian context, the best available indicator is a measure of confidence in the government used in the Scanlon surveys (see, for example, Markus, 2010). The most recent data from these studies revealed a marked decline in public trust in the government ‘to do the right thing for the Australian people’ from 2009 to 2010 (Markus, 2010, p. 14). Markus proposed that this is largely due to a change in attitude to the Rudd Labor government during this period, the causes of which are not entirely clear. It is also evident that institutional trust may be low in certain refugee communities, due to people’s prior experiences in their home country and countries of transit (Campbell & Julian, 2009). A general decline in trust in government and democratic processes has been observed more broadly in western societies (Inglehart, 1999, cited in Misztal, 2001).

2.4.6 Social division and conflict

Social division and conflict are frequently conceptualised as the opposite to social cohesion\(^8\), and have received less attention in social research. In the literature review we conducted, social division and conflict were alluded to in the discussion of the first four dimensions of social cohesion.

A number of barriers to belonging could lead to social division and conflict, for example, experiences of discrimination and prejudice, shame or humiliation, ambiguous and unresolved interactions among community members, and public expressions of nationalism that are culturally exclusive.

Social exclusion, related to the dimension of inclusion, has the key elements of economic disadvantage, lack of access to resources, and lack of participation in the community/society which could lead to social division and conflict.

Barriers to participation could also lead to social division and conflict. Examples of these barriers are: ‘experience and perceptions of marginalisation and social exclusion, economic exclusion; language issues; lack of support and resources; lack of skills and knowledge; food and gender customs’ (CIRCA, 2010); ‘lack of trust in institutions related to previous experiences; inaccessible services; and political and cultural discrimination’ (Hoffmann-Ekstein, 2007, p. 28).

Perhaps the most significant contributor to, and indicator of, social division and conflict, racism/discrimination/intolerance is subsumed under the dimension of recognition. Racism and discrimination have been identified as barriers to almost all dimensions of social cohesion (Phan, 2008; Spoonley et al., 2005). Additionally, recognition is related to the acculturation attitudes or orientations of the host community. In this context, conflictual outcomes could arise if migrants prefer one strategy (e.g., integration) and host community members endorse another (e.g., assimilation)—discordant acculturation orientations. Misinterpretation of each other’s preferences could also lead to conflict.

2.5 International and national indicators of social cohesion, social division and conflict

2.5.1 Indicators of social cohesion

Data from the Scanlon Foundation surveys confirm the relatively high levels of life satisfaction and sense of community belonging among Australians: in 2010, 88% of respondents said they were

\(^8\) However, this is not to say that a cohesive community is defined only by the absence of conflict.
happy with their lives, and at least 90% of respondents reported a sense of belonging and pride in Australia and the Australian way of life (Markus, 2010). It is also evident that some multicultural communities in Australia regard their community as cohesive, such as the Shire of Katanning in Western Australia (OMI, 2011). Community consultations and interviews with key individuals and agencies revealed a community that is highly supportive of multiculturalism, and in particular, feel pride in the community’s ability to meet the needs of people from diverse backgrounds. Similarly, Collins et al. (2007, p. 5) found the majority of minority youth in their sample from western and south-western Sydney felt good about living in Australia, felt ‘ownership of their local area,’ and felt safe living there. Respondents in this study also reported strong inter-ethnic friendship and social networks.

The research on everyday multiculturalism highlights the many positive experiences of intercultural interaction within the Australian community (e.g., Wise, 2005). However, the ethnographic approach limits analysis to examination within the local context: how cohesive is the Australian community relative to other nations? Based on the available comparative data, Australia has largely succeeded as a liberal democracy characterized by ‘peaceful co-existence’ of diverse groups (Borowksi, 2000, p. 461). For example, Australia ranks among the top countries across all indicators of well-being provided by the Better Life Initiative of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD2011b). There are 34 member countries of the OECD, including many European nations, the US, Japan and Korea. The indicators of well-being include measures of housing, income, education (participation rates as well as quality), health, community, environment, governance, life satisfaction and safety. Australia ranks above the OECD average for household income, employment, quality of education and life expectancy. In addition, ratings in aspects of social cohesion dimensions of belonging and participation are high:

- 95% of Australians surveyed said they have somebody they can rely on in a time of need, compared to the OECD average of 91%. Australia ranked 6th best on the index of community. The top five countries were Iceland, Ireland, New Zealand, Denmark and Sweden; Canada ranked 7th, the UK 11th, and the US, 22nd (http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/community/).
- Australia had 95% voter turnout (an index of political participation\(^9\)), compared to the OECD average of 72%. Also, 71% of people in Australia said they trust their political institutions (an index of legitimacy), higher than the OECD average of 56%. Australia ranked highest on the index of governance, followed by Sweden, the US, New Zealand, Denmark, Finland and the UK; Canada ranked 14th (http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/governance/).
- Finally, 75% of Australians said they were satisfied with their life, which is considerably higher than the OECD average of 59%. Australia ranked 6th on the index of life satisfaction. The top five were Denmark, Canada, Norway, the Netherlands, and Switzerland; the US ranked 13th and the UK ranked 15th (http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/life-satisfaction/).

The OECD also publishes an overview of social indicators every two years. Society at a Glance 2011: OECD Social Indicators (OECD, 2011a) has a specific chapter on social cohesion indicators. Some of the relevant data are:

\(^9\)It should be noted, however, that this is contributed to by the policy of compulsory voting which is not present in many countries included for comparison.
• Trust: The ‘percentage[s] of people expressing high level of trust in others’ are greatest in Nordic countries (Denmark, Norway, Finland, Sweden-top 4 countries). Netherlands ranked 5th; UK ranked 10th; Australia 12th only (64% compared to the OECD average of 59%), and the US ranked 21st, below the OECD average (pp. 90-91).

• Confidence in social institutions: Australia ranked an equal 5th with Switzerland on the index of confidence in national institutions, with 71% compared to the OECD average of 56%. Top 4 countries were Finland, Denmark, Luxembourg, and Netherlands. Canada, the UK and the US were still above the OECD average (pp. 92-93).

• Pro-social behaviour: Australia ranked 3rd best on the pro-social behaviour index, with 59% compared to the OECD average of 39%, next to the US and Ireland, and followed by New Zealand and the UK (pp. 94-95); Canada ranked 8th best.

• Voting: Consistent with the OECD Better Life Index data, Australia had the highest voting participation, with 95% compared to the OECD average of 70%. Australia is followed by Luxembourg, Belgium, Chile, and Denmark on the top list. The UK (61%), Canada (60%), and the US (48%) fell below the OECD average (pp. 96-97).

• Tolerance: Canada was the highest ranked in terms of community tolerance of minority groups (i.e., ethnic minorities, migrants, and gay and lesbian people), followed closely by Australia (84% compared to OECD average of 61%), New Zealand, the Netherlands and Iceland. The US (76%, 9th highest) and the UK (71%, 13%) were also above the OECD average (pp. 98-99).

The OECD report provides some interesting insights into drivers for social cohesion. For example, the data show that:

• ‘Richer countries trust more,’ and ‘Trust is higher when income is more equally distributed’ (OECD, 2011a, p.91).

• Confidence in national institutions is higher in higher income countries.

• Pro-social behaviour seems to be positively related to the income level of a country.

• The likelihood to vote seems to be positively related to level of education and age.

• Community ‘tolerance is highest for ethnic minorities and lowest for gays and lesbians across the OECD’, and ‘richer countries have more tolerant communities’ (OECD, 2011a, p. 99).

Citizenship can be considered an index of belonging to, and participation in, the community. The uptake of citizenship by migrants to Australia is very high—68%—second only to Canada and 20 percent higher than the OECD average (DIAC, 2011). Moreover, more than 80% of migrants who have lived in Australia for more than 10 years become Australian citizens. This is in part due to the Australian government’s active encouragement of migrants to become citizens and the provision that migrants can hold dual citizenship. Migrants from Asia, Eastern and Southern Europe, and refugees are most likely to become Australian citizens, whilst those from Japan, Singapore, the UK and New Zealand are less likely (DIAC, 2011). Differences between countries of origin are influenced by a number of factors including historical features (e.g., in the past British migrants did not have to become Australian citizens in order to vote in federal elections), and whether dual citizenship is permitted by the country of origin.

Relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians also provide insight into the nature and extent of social cohesion in Australia. Whilst the social, health and economic
disadvantage of Indigenous Australians are well-documented, recent data from the Australian Reconciliation Barometer (Reconciliation Australia) point to an improvement in intergroup attitudes. Surveys and focus groups to explore Australians’ views on reconciliation with Indigenous Australians (‘awareness, attitudes, perceptions and action’) are conducted every two years to produce the barometer. Findings from the 2010 report suggest that the majority of Australians (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) see the relationship as important, see the value in learning about Indigenous culture and history, and recognise ‘the special place of Indigenous people and their connection to the land’ (Reconciliation Australia, 2011, p. 2). However, the overwhelming majority of Australians also acknowledged that there is considerable prejudice and mistrust between the two groups. Whilst the 2010 results show improvement, clearly there is more to be done to enhance these relations.

2.5.2 Indicators of social division and conflict

The Better Life Initiative indicators of the OECD (OECD, 2011b) also provided comparative evidence of Australia’s status regarding social division and conflict. On the indicator of safety, only 2% of people reported falling victim to assault in the previous 12 months (lower than the OECD average of 4%); 27% said they feel unsafe on the street after dark (slightly higher than the OECD rate of 26%); and Australia’s homicide rate was 1.2% (less than the OECD average of 2.2%). Overall, Australia ranked 4th as safest country, next to Japan, Iceland and Canada; then followed by Austria, Poland and New Zealand. The UK ranked 12th, and the US ranked 6th from the least safe country (http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/safety/). There are, however, some indications of social division and conflict explicitly pointed out by the OECD data. For example, in relation to ‘community’, the web report stated, Social exclusion in Australia is an issue for several groups: those with low incomes, the unemployed, those with poor health and people not proficient in English. Most of these groups also have particular difficulty in ‘having a say’ in their community or influencing decision makers (http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/community/).

The Society at a Glance 2011: OECD Social Indicators (OECD, 2011a) provided some comparative data, which reinforce the same conclusion of low level of social division and conflict in Australia.

- Confidence in social institutions: Australia ranked 5th lowest on perception of corruption in social and economic institutions (33% compared to OECD average of 56%). Ahead of Australia are Denmark (lowest), Finland, Sweden and New Zealand. Canada ranked 9th lowest (38%); the UK, 12th (48%); the US, 22nd (67%, below the OECD average) (pp. 92-93).
- Anti-social behaviour: The OECD average on the anti-social behaviour index is 8%. The lowest levels are found in Poland (4%); followed by Israel, Korea, Japan and the Russian Federation (5%). Canada and the UK had 7%; and Australia and the US had 8% (p. 95).

Another source that provides comparison of Australia with other countries on several dimensions is the book by Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) titled The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone. The core proposition is that income inequality, not level of income, is relevant in explaining social problems. They ranked 25 rich countries on income inequality and compared these countries on nine dimensions: level of trust, mental illness, life expectancy and infant mortality, obesity, children’s educational performance, teenage births, homicides, imprisonment rates, and social mobility. Australia ranked 5th on income gap (inequality), after Singapore (most unequal), the US, Portugal, and the UK. Among the most equal countries are: Japan (top), Finland, Norway,
Sweden and Denmark. Canada featured at the median in the inequality ranking. The comparative findings related to social division and conflict are:

- **Community life and social relations:** Australia had around 40% of people surveyed agreeing to the statement ‘Most people can be trusted’, compared to the UK with around 30%, and the US around 35%. Countries with greater trust are the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands.

- **Violence:** Australia had fewer than 20 homicides per million (and ranked 9th only from the highest), and the UK had an even lower rate, compared to more than 60 for the US (highest) and more than 30 for Portugal (2nd highest). Finland came out as the 3rd ranked, and the explanation is gun ownership. On the other end, Japan had the lowest (around 7), followed by Spain, Ireland, Norway and Austria around the 10 homicides per million mark.

- **Imprisonment and punishment:** Australia was shown to have close to 100 prisoners per 100,000, lower than the UK and the US, but higher than most Scandinavian countries (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010).

### 2.6 The role of media

In the following section we present key literature that addresses how diversity, migrants and multiculturalism are represented through the mass media and how these representations and practices might impact on social cohesion and discord. By *mass media* we are referring to mass communication via the internet, television, newspapers, film and radio. Additionally, we examine research that considers the use and influence of social media in representations of multiculturalism, diversity, national identity and belonging. *Social media* can include collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia), blogs (e.g., Twitter), content communities (e.g., Youtube), and social networking sites (e.g., Facebook; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). With the exception of the portrayal of asylum-seekers and refugees, it is evident that there is a dearth of Australian empirical research on the role of media in representing multiculturalism and diversity; the literature tends to be characterised by discussion and theoretical papers.

#### 2.6.1 Representations in the mass media

Media are seen as one of the most influential aspect in achieving a more inclusive society (AHRC, 2010; DIAC, 2008b) and have a major impact on social cohesion and discord. International research suggests that the portrayal of ethnic and racial minorities in the mass media contributes to stereotypes. For example, early studies demonstrated the role that media played in the reproduction of racism (van Dijk, 1989). Liu (2006) outlines that representations of minorities in the Western media are characterised by reporting that focuses on conflict and crisis which leaves the viewer with negative representations of minority ethnic groups. Mastro (2003) outlined that ‘exposure to negative racial imagery in the media adversely impacts subsequent evaluations of minorities’ (p. 109). Furthermore, research suggests that mass media not only shapes majority views and beliefs about ethnic minorities, but that this can influence minorities’ responses to majority groups (Faber, O’Guinn, & Meyer, 1987).

According to Fürsich (2010), news and entertainment media stereotype minorities by excluding them from coverage, by offering a limited range of representations, or by ignoring their viewpoints. This has been termed *silencing* and it can also result in stereotypical portrayal of a group (Fürsich, 2010). Fürsich also proposed that media representations classify minority groups as ‘deviant’. This
can be seen in the Australian media in which Middle-Eastern refugees or asylum seekers have often been represented as ‘terrorist’. Globally, since the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US, the mass media have been instrumental in portraying a climate of fear towards migrants from the Middle East. In a study of the psychological reactions to 9/11, Huddy, Feldman, Lahav and Taber (2003) claimed that ‘replaying of images from a terrorist event serves to heighten public fear and anxiety’ (p. 256). Media reports have represented Arabs and Muslims as a threat to national security both internationally and in Australia (Boomgaard & de Vreese, 2007; Collins, 2007a; Gray & Aglias, 2010; Huddy et al., 2003; Jakubowicz, 2009; Pietsch & Marotta, 2009). These reports may reflect, or influence, majority attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers in Australia. Jakubowicz (2009) argued that ‘studies of media and its engagement with Arabs and/or Islam in Australia have shown the systematic practices associated with the marginalisation of these groups from the ‘mainstream’. The semantic structures employed by the media consistently locate these groups outside what it means to be Australian’ (p. 177). In this way, media can detract from belonging and disrupt recognition for members of Australian minority groups.

Several studies have involved analyses of print media as a form of discourse around refugees, asylum seekers and racism in Australia (see: Augoustinos & Every, 2010; Gale, 2004; Kampmark, 2006; O’Doherty & Augoustinos, 2008; O’Doherty & Lecouteur, 2007; Pedersen, Attwell, & Haveli, 2005; Quayle & Sonn, 2009). For example, in a study of Australian print media with regards to asylum seekers and refugees in Australia, categorisations such as: ‘illegal boat arrivals’, ‘detainees’, ‘illegal immigrants’, and ‘foreigners illegally living in Australia’ were found (O’Doherty & Lecouteur, 2007). These categorisations, the authors suggested, served to evoke negative connotations towards asylum seekers and further marginalise those seeking asylum.

The Cronulla riots (Sydney, 2005) represent another event in which the Australian print media constructed an ethnic minority group or groups (Muslim and/or Lebanese Australians) as ‘others’ (Jakubowicz, 2009; Quayle & Sonn, 2009). Quayle and Sonn (2009), in their analysis of newspaper discourse and letters to the editor, demonstrated that Muslims were referred to as ‘inassimilable’ and ‘criminal others’ (p. 8). The authors outline that ‘in contemporary Australian society, the media, as a form of social practice, should be recognised as an institution capable of obfuscating, legitimating and naturalising the ideology of racism, and hence perpetuating the oppression of minorities’ (Quayle & Sonn, 2009, p. 10), and ‘media representations are considered, a site where dominant social narratives manifest and where racism happens’ (Quayle & Sonn, 2009, p. 8). Australian research also demonstrates that some ethnic minorities believe the media do not represent their culture and way of life, particularly Lebanese Australians and Indigenous Australians (Ang et al., 2002).

As noted earlier, negative media stereotypes have been identified as a barrier to social cohesion. In order to overcome the stereotyping of ethnic minority groups in the media, Fürsich (2010) outlined the need to ‘to take a previously stereotyped minority and create media content that presents this minority in a positive light’ (Fürsich, 2010, p. 121-122). Furthermore, Cottle (2007) argued that there is a silencing of ethnic minority groups and Indigenous people in Australia. Cottle (2007) proposed that mainstream journalism in Australia should be giving minority groups a voice in the media and airing programmes that allow minority groups to tell their side of the story.
2.6.2 Minority use of mass media

Despite the negative effects of stereotyping and silencing, mass media can also facilitate cultural adaptation of minorities (Liu, 2006). In particular, the use of ethnic media by minority populations helps to maintain ethnic and cultural identity and links to their homelands (Croucher, Oommen, Borton, Anarbaeva, & Turner, 2010; Sutton-Brady, Davis, & Jung, 2010), although this varies across groups and generations (Ang et al., 2002). Sutton-Brady and colleagues refer to a ‘nostalgic consumption’ of ethnic media by ethnic minority groups (Sutton-Brady et al., 2010, p. 349). Ethnic media can promote ethnic group cohesion though language use and relevance of news stories (Liu, 2006; Ward & Hewstone, 1985). In Australia, this is particularly evident through programs broadcast by the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS; Ang et al., 2002; Sutton-Brady et al., 2010).

Sutton-Brady et al. (2010) found that the use of ethnic media helped Korean migrant families in Australia to maintain ties to their homeland and culture. Furthermore, these authors demonstrated that ethnic media consumption for second-generation children was a way to maintain their Korean language. Finally, their results also showed that mainstream media consumption was a way in which information was gained about the Australian environment and therefore facilitated cultural adaptation for Korean families in Australia.

2.6.3 Social media

Social media, such as ‘Facebook’, are used for a variety of reasons, including to maintain and develop relations with others (Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009); maintain connections (Cruickshank, 2004); allow freedom of expression (Al-Saddek, 2008); and for social activism (Scott, 2011). Internet access has also been linked to community participation; in an American national survey on access to the internet the results showed that ‘individuals living in [internet] access communities are significantly more likely to be involved in different local community organizations than individuals living in non-access communities. In other words, access communities are more likely to be participatory communities as compared to non-access communities’ (Dutta-Bergman, 2005, p. 104). Clearly, there exists a gap between communities in terms of their access to the internet and this gap has detrimental consequences for civic participation. In line with these results, the internet can be seen as a resource which can increase the social capital of communities (Dutta-Bergman, 2005). The concept of digital divide is important to note here, which is related to the gap in society in terms of who has access to the internet (Hindman, 2000).

Social media can also promote civic/political participation and inclusion. In an online survey with undergraduate students Vitak, Zube, Smock, Carr, Ellison, and Lampe (2011) found political engagement occurs within Facebook; this social networking site allows people to express political views. Furthermore the results of the study suggest that political activity on Facebook (i.e., posting a politically oriented status update) is related to more general political participation (e.g., volunteering for an organisation or signing an online petition). Therefore, according to Vitak and colleagues, there is a link between social media and civic/political participation. In terms of social inclusion, Notley (2009) found that Australian teenagers who were identified as being ‘at risk’ of social exclusion (either because of homelessness, mental health issues, pregnancy, drug abuse and family illness), were using online networks to participate in society and therefore provided an opportunity for social

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See Ang et al. (2002) for a more comprehensive review of use of media among ethnic, cultural and/or linguistic minority groups in Australia.
inclusion. Notley outlined a new concept, digital inclusion, which emphasises how technology is used in order to promote inclusion and participate in society.

Social media may serve particular functions for migrant and diasporic communities. Komito (2011) argues that ‘Debates about the social effect of new social media technologies have special relevance for migrants, because, as dislocated individuals who have grown up in one society and now live or work elsewhere, changes in communication technologies are likely to have a significant effect on their lives’ (p. 1075). In particular, social media enable global networking and connections that were hitherto absent or very slow (e.g., postal mail). For example, Cruickshank’s (2004) ethnographic research with Arabic-speaking families in Sydney showed that teenage children used email and participated in chat rooms, connecting with Arabic-speaking teenagers around the world, creating ‘a network of friendships that is immediate but linked across space and time’ (Cruickshank 2004, p. 470). Similarly, in their study in the US, Lam and Rosario-Ramos (2009) found that digital and social media were major tools for young people from migrant backgrounds to maintain and develop relations with people and events across the world. Furthermore, within their digital networks, the youth used multiple languages to conduct interpersonal relationships and seek out information from various sources in their home and host societies thereby maintaining relationships in both countries.

Similarly, Komito’s (2011) study of social media and migration with Polish and Filipino ethnic minority groups in Ireland showed that internet applications allow ethnic minority groups to extend personal networks (building bridging capital) as well as contributing to participation and feelings of membership in their country of origin (bonding capital). Social media for migrants is, therefore, more than keeping in contact with friends; it allows for collective membership to online groups both in the host and home countries. These functions are linked to aspects of social capital: extending personal networks and liking diverse groups together is a form of bridging capital, and strengthening the collective membership within a group is bonding capital (Putnam, 2000). However, there is debate about whether individuals identify with their online communities in the same way (and to the same extent) as other social groups. Reich’s (2010) study on adolescents’ sense of community on MySpace and Facebook found that adolescents did not feel a strong sense of membership to these social networking sites (reflecting bonding capital) despite their usefulness in bridging connections to others. This is a relatively recent area of research and more work is needed to understand the complexities of social identification with online communities.

Social media may also be used for activism among ethnic minority communities. In Scott’s (2011) study on the grassroots-level political activities of ethnic minority communities in Australia, results showed that ethnic communities (e.g., Tamil, Burmese, Iranian, Sudanese, Fijian, Assyrian and Somali) were participating in social activism through the use of internet based networking media (e.g., web pages and weblogs).

Another type of social media is weblogs, also known as blogs. According to Chau and Xu (2006), these are the fastest growing type of web-based media. Blogs express identity and allow for an online identity (Brock, 2009; Kurubacak, 2008). Furthermore, they allow for an expression of worldviews, personal ideology, and opinions (Brock, 2009; Chau & Xu, 2006; Kurubacak, 2008). They also allow for dialogue with others through an ‘electronically mediated space’ (Brock, 2009, p. 348). In the blogspace there are cyber communities (Chau & Xu, 2006); a blogger can post an entry on their own blog space and another blogger can respond leaving a comment—this activity signifies a connection or relationship between bloggers which is a significant aspect of cyber communities.
(Chau & Xu, 2006). Research on blogging suggests that it has implications in the social and political spheres and allows freedom of expression (Al-Saddek, 2008). In a review on young bloggers in the Middle East, Beckerman (2007) suggested that blogs reflect a ‘new culture of openness, dialogue, and questioning’ (p. 18) for young bloggers. Beckerman reports that blogging has taken off in the Arab world because it ‘presents an opportunity to reclaim individuality’ (p. 20)—people have used websites to expose injustices. The Arab blogosphere allows for discourse around liberalising Arab society (Al-Saddek, 2008, p. 18).

Social networking sites and blogs have many benefits including a greater connection to different ‘others’. One particular study (Tynes, Giang, & Thompson, 2008) focused on intergroup contact and out-group orientation among diverse groups of adolescents on the internet and results showed that for European Americans, time spent interacting with other ethnic minority groups on the internet was positively related to out-group orientation. However, one negative aspect of social media is that people high in racial prejudice have been able to express their views more freely on the internet, perhaps due to greater (perceived) anonymity (Chau & Xu, 2006; Kurubacak, 2008). Thus, there has been an emergence of racist and hate groups online (see Chau & Xu, 2006; Gerstenfeld, Grant, & Chiang, 2003; Glaser, Dixit, & Green, 2002; Kurubacak, 2008). Blogs can offer racist resources and ‘information’ about groups of people based on that group’s ethnicity, values, and beliefs (Chau & Xu, 2006; Kurubacak, 2008). These groups can use their blogs to recruit new members, linking to other extremist groups and spreading ideas (Gerstenfeld et al., 2003).

Social networking sites can also be used to express exclusionary or discriminatory views. In a study of responses to a proposed Islamic school in Camden (a predominantly Anglo-European suburb in the outskirts of Sydney), Al-Natour (2010) demonstrated that social networking sites were used to discuss opposition to the proposal. An example of comments left on the social networking site were: ‘I hear there is a lot [sic] of land in Iraq [sic] and afganistan [sic] to build your lovely school on??? Hint hint!!!!!!!!’ (posted 1.19 a.m., 31 December, 2007, as cited in Al-Natour, 2010), and ‘we will loose [sic] our identity. This is about the Australian identity. White Europeans developed and built this country and I see no reason why Australia should not remain predominantly white’ (posted 9.49 p.m., 29 October 2008, as cited in Al-Natour, 2010).

In sum, social media are tools that can be utilised to enable or disrupt social cohesion. Australian research on social media use among minority ethnic groups is small but growing. Findings suggest that sites such as Facebook are used more extensively by young people, and that women from non-English-speaking backgrounds are the lowest users of ‘new media’ such as the internet (Ang et al., 2002).

2.7 Summary

Evidence from national and international indicators of social cohesion suggests that Australia compares well with other nations. However, it is apparent that there remains much work to be done to enhance relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and to improve social inclusion for Indigenous Australians. In addition, racism and discrimination remain a problem, particularly for those who are from more ‘visible’ minority groups (Dunn et al., 2004; Dunn, Forrest, Pe-Pua, Hynes, & Maeder-Han, 2009; Inglis, 2010; Markus, 2010; Runions, Priest, & Dandy, 2011), identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (Paradies, Harris & Anderson, 2008), or are from recently arrived migrant groups (Mansouri, Jenkins, Morgan, & Taouk, 2009). In addition, the
ongoing political and public debate about asylum seekers arriving by boat is divisive (Markus, 2010) and detracts from social cohesion.

Our literature review revealed that social cohesion is a complex, multidimensional and multi-level concept. Jenson’s (1998) dimensions of belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition and legitimacy are overlapping, as are the drivers for these dimensions. This is not necessarily problematic, since some drivers have the potential to promote cohesion across multiple dimensions, for example, positive intergroup contact appears to be a key driver for belonging, participation and recognition.

In particular, two key factors that emerge appear to operate in all dimensions and have strong and long-lasting effects are positive intergroup contact (an enabler), and discrimination and prejudice (a barrier). The role of the mass media is also crucial as it has the potential to detract from or enhance belonging and recognition directly, which in turn can affect participation and inclusion. Emerging drivers include the use of social media, for developing and maintaining social networks (enabling belonging and participation), and also as sites for the expression of racism and discrimination (as barriers to recognition). Comparatively less is known about the impact and influence of social media and more research is needed. In particular, the impact of social media among Australian young people requires further investigation because they appear to be more engaged with the internet than with traditional forms of communication, compared with older Australians. Social media allow new connections and new identities to be constructed and negotiated, which may challenge existing conceptualisations of ethnic, racial and cultural categories and their boundaries.

Other limitations in the literature include the dominance of survey-based studies, in which the findings are correlational and therefore causal connections cannot be determined. Whilst we have identified key drivers in our review, it should be acknowledged that distinguishing between pre-conditions (‘causes’) and outcomes (‘effects’) for social cohesion remains a difficult task. It is likely that many relationships are bi-directional, such that, for example, positive outcomes further strengthen community bonds and the development of social capital in a reciprocal cycle. More research is needed, particularly Australian research, because the socio-political and historical context of intergroup relations is important.

In addition, the overwhelming majority of the research is on attitudes (social and psychological factors) or outcomes (economic factors), with relatively few studies examining genuine intercultural interactions. It is well known that attitudes are not always good predictors of behaviour, although they may point to behavioural intent. Several social psychological experimental studies address behaviour, particularly in the area of intergroup contact, and some sociological research involves ethnographic studies in field settings. Nonetheless, it is evident that further research in genuine intercultural settings is needed.
3 The Australian Government and community approach to Social Cohesion

Our web-based audit generated a good number and range of government and community programs that enhance social cohesion. We have also learned about several more from our KI interviews and focus groups. We found that many of these programs often targeted one or a combination of specific dimensions of social cohesion, in accordance with Jenson’s framework. Some programs targeted social cohesion as a whole, with or without providing a definition of social cohesion.

Australian governments (Federal, State and Local) have funded a range of initiatives to promote social inclusion and social cohesion including non-government and community programs and projects. In this section we start by giving the government framework for social cohesion, and then present some of the programs.

3.1 Vision of a ‘socially inclusive society’

In 2007, the Australian Government adopted a social inclusion approach and established the Social Inclusion Unit (SIU) which is located in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. In 2008 the Australian Social Inclusion Board (ASIB) was established as the Government’s internal advisory body on social inclusion. The Government’s vision of a socially inclusive society is one in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate actively in society (Australian Government, 2009a). Social Inclusion initiatives are thus not limited or specific to particular cultural, linguistic or religious communities.

A socially inclusive society, as outlined in the Government’s Social Inclusion Agenda (ASIB, 2010, p.15) is one in which all Australians have the resources, opportunities and capabilities to:

- learn by participating in education and training
- work by participating in employment, in voluntary work and in family and caring
- engage by connecting with people and using their local community’s resources (connect with people, use local services and participate in local, cultural, civic and recreational activities)
- have a voice so that they can influence decisions that affect them.

It is evident that there are many groups of people that are excluded from Australian society. These include: older Australians, those who are not engaged in education or work, those living in low socio-economic households, Indigenous Australians, sole parent families, and people of non-English speaking backgrounds (see ASIB, 2009a; Davies, 2010; Vison, 2009). In light of this, the Government has adopted six specific priority areas for policy action, for example: supporting children at greatest risk of long-term disadvantage; helping jobless families; focusing on communities experiencing the greatest disadvantage; creating employment opportunities; reducing homelessness; the Closing the Gap initiative for Indigenous Australians; and assisting vulnerable new arrivals and refugees (Australian Government, 2011).

In addition, a core component of Australian and other nations’ policies on social cohesion is the elimination of discrimination on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, religion or other minority background characteristics (Markus & Kirpitchenko, 2007). For example, several key objectives of
the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship’s Diversity and Social Cohesion funding program (DIAC, 2010, p.5) include to:

- ‘address racism and prejudice at community level
- promote the importance of mutual respect, understanding and fair treatment of all, regardless of peoples’ cultural, racial or religious differences
- demonstrate, as feasible, practical and effective means of addressing systemic issues of racism and discrimination’.

In addition, the fourth policy principle of Australia’s Multicultural Policy specifically relates to acceptance and discrimination (DIAC, 2011, p.5):

The Australian government will act to promote understanding and acceptance while responding to expressions of intolerance and discrimination with strength, and where necessary, with the force of the law.

Australian government initiatives, such as those outlined in the Multicultural policy, can be enablers for legitimacy, although the extent to which they have public confidence is not yet known. These include:

- the establishment of the Australian Multicultural Council
- the National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy (a collaboration among the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, the Australian Human Rights Commission, the Race Discrimination Commissioner, the Department of Families, Housing, Community Service and Indigenous Affairs, the Australian Multicultural Council and the Attorney-General’s Department)
- programs to strengthen access and equity for Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

In addition, government legislation to address racial and religious vilification is key to legitimacy, as are strategies for reconciliation with Indigenous Australians (e.g., ‘Reconciliation Australia’).

3.2 ‘Whole-of-government’ approach

Kevin Andrews (2007), a former Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, provided a good overview of the Australian government’s ‘whole-of-government’ approach to strengthening social cohesion. Among the programs/strategies in this approach were:

- Settlement services to ‘help new arrivals quickly become confident participants in Australian society’ (p. 49): provision of information about Australian society and culture; the Australian Cultural Orientation Program for Humanitarian Entrants (delivered offshore); the [then] Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS), the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), the Language Literacy and Numeracy Program, the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program, and the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) (Andrews, 2007); additionally, Complex Case Support (CCS) Program, Settlement Grants Program (SGP), Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) (http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/delivering-assistance/government-programs/settlement-programs/).
- Living in Harmony community grants to ‘address issues of social cohesion more directly by enhancing respect between Australians and encouraging participation in education,

- National Action Plan (NAP) to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security which had the following key elements: ‘improving understanding of extremism, building leadership capacity in Australian Muslim communities, promoting non-violent interpretations of Islam in Australia, encouraging mutual respect, and actively engaging with Australian Muslim communities’ (Andrews, 2007, p. 55): funding for projects including research projects and community projects.

- Strategies for connecting communities and government: community liaison officers, network, funding for the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia (FECCA) (Andrews 2007).

Andrews (2007) stressed the ‘practical’ nature of the Australian government’s approach. These government initiatives aimed to lead to self-reliance, participation in and contribution to national life, institutional trust, respect—‘paving the way for a prosperous and cohesive future for all Australians’ (p. 58).

The Living in Harmony and the NAP are now covered in the Australian Government’s Diversity and Social Cohesion Program (DSCP) that aims to help community organisations to undertake projects that ‘promote respect, fairness and sense of belonging for everyone’.

The Government’s social inclusion strategy is set out in A Stronger, Fairer Australia (Australian Government, 2009a). This outlines ‘those actions and our approach to making Australia stronger and fairer over time’, by:

- ‘maintaining a strong and internationally competitive economy;
- creating the opportunities and resources that every Australian needs to participate in the economy and community life;
- ensuring that services which are provided to all Australians meet high standards;
- supporting families and building strong and cohesive communities; and
- building new and innovative partnerships with all sectors of the economy’ (p. 4).

This strategy is built on five pillars: economic growth, equitable social policy, quality services, strong families and communities, and partnership for change. The priorities for action are: jobless families with children, children at greatest risk of long-term disadvantage, people living with disability or mental illness and their carers, Indigenous Australians, and neighbourhoods and communities that are characterised by entrenched disadvantage. Several case studies and examples of specific policies and programs were given to illustrate how these priorities have been, are being, or will be, addressed (Australian Government, 2009a, 2009b). Other documents that emerged from the Australian Social Inclusion Board (ASIB, 2010, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c) also provided several examples.

A more recent release, Foundations for A Stronger, Fairer Australia (Australian Government, 2011) provides an overview of the government’s progress on the social inclusion priorities. (Note the use of social inclusion in these documents.)

In 2009, SIU produced The Australian Public Service Social Inclusion Policy Design and Delivery Toolkit that ‘aims to help in the task of translating social inclusion principles and priorities into the
daily practice of government and public administration’ (Australian Government, 2009b, p. Deputy Prime Minister’s foreword). The toolkit recommends six steps to design socially inclusive policy and programs:

- ‘identify groups at risk of exclusion
- analyse the nature and causes of disadvantage and exclusion
- strengthen protective factors and reduce risk factors
- work with other agencies to coordinate efforts across government and other sectors
- (re)design delivery systems and promote changes in culture
- establish a clear implementation plan and monitor delivery’ (p. 7).

3.2.1 Diversity and Social Cohesion Program (DSCP)

This is an Australian Government initiative that aims to help community organisations to undertake projects that ‘promote respect, fairness and sense of belonging for everyone’. In 2010, the DSCP grants replaced those previously funded under the Diverse Australia Program, and the National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security Community Grants. As part of the analysis, we tallied the information about 47 DSCP grants in 2010-2011: name of the program, description, organisation, funding awarded, the State, any local area, the target group, and the strategy used to deliver the program. We then analysed the dimension of social cohesion that the programs related to. These are all presented in a matrix in Appendix F.

Among these grants, 15 grants went to Victoria, 14 to New South Wales (with 1 to Blacktown), 6 to Western Australia (with 1 to Mirrabooka/Balga), 5 to Queensland, 3 to South Australia, 2 to the Northern territory, and 2 to Tasmania. The most frequently targeted group was the youth (29 grants representing 62%).

In terms of dimensions of social cohesion, this exercise has provided evidence that it was possible to examine programs in terms of what aspect of social cohesion they intended to address. In general, the most frequently targeted dimension among the 47 programs was Belonging (37), followed by Recognition (35), Participation (32) and Inclusion (25).

3.2.2 ‘A Stronger, Fairer Australia’ and Cultural Diversity

A Stronger, Fairer Australia (Australian Government, 2009a) contains programs about promoting social cohesion. Some of these that are more directly related to cultural diversity issues and the needs of disadvantaged groups are:

- Targeting youth/education—The Successful Learners Pilot, Newly Arrived Youth Support Services, Social Studies Remixed Design Project, Community Street Soccer, Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters

3.2.3 Other government programs/services

The following government programs were regarded as relevant to enhancing Belonging, Inclusion and Participation:

- Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)—provides free English language tuition to eligible migrants and Humanitarian Entrants who do not have functional English.
• Complex Case Support (CCS) Services—provides specialised and intensive case management services to Humanitarian Entrants with exceptional needs.
• Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS)—assists refugees and Humanitarian Entrants settle in Australia.
• Settlement Grants Program (SGP)—a program by which organisations apply for and receive funding to provide settlement services where they are most needed.
• Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)—helps migrants with limited English skills to access translating and interpreting services.

Some Australian government departments and agencies have a Workplace Diversity Strategy that outlines a commitment to the creation of an inclusive workplace and focuses on initiatives promoting the attraction, recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce. The social cohesion dimensions embraced by DIAC’s strategy are Inclusion and Recognition. The vision as stated in the 2011–2013 Strategy was ‘Recognising uniqueness, promoting inclusion, looking to the future. Everyone matters’ (Inside cover).

This strategy aims to address barriers experienced by some people in gaining access to employment, development or promotional opportunities. Our workplace diversity documents acknowledge that innovative and flexible strategies are required if we are to attract, recruit, and retain the best people and remain competitive within the employment market as the workforce demographic evolves. (DIAC, 2011, Secretary’s Foreword)

The Strategy identified the following as priority groups: Indigenous Australians, people with disability, women, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, mature age workers and the inter-generational workforce. The following strategies were planned, with a number of action points for each:

• Increasing the recruitment and retention of Indigenous people
• Increasing the recruitment and retention of people with disability
• Provide flexibility for supporting employees to balance work and life responsibilities
• Increasing the recruitment and retention of employees from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
• Recognising and supporting the needs of an inter-generational workforce
• Delivery of the strategic initiatives.

3.2.4 State government programs and services

In each Australian state there is a state government division or organisation with a multicultural portfolio. We summarise these for Western Australia, New South Wales and South Australia, the states in which the community case studies were conducted, below.

In Western Australia, the Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) is a division of the Department of Local Government. ‘OMI supports the development of State Government policies and programs to promote multiculturalism and improve services to Western Australians from diverse cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds. OMI provides leadership on multiculturalism within the public sector, to the Western Australian community and with business – creating partnerships for a more inclusive and productive society’ (OMI; http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/index.cfm). OMI’s 2009-2013 strategic plan outlines the Office’s main objectives as:
• ‘Participation: Full participation of CaLD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) communities in social, economic and cultural life.
• Equity: Remove the barriers to equity experienced by CaLD communities.
• Promotion: Promote the benefits of Western Australia’s cultural and linguistic diversity’.

In addition, OMI operates a community grants program, an ethnic organisations fund, provides funding for Harmony Week activities, coordinates an inter-agency settlement group, and has prepared a Language Services policy.

The Community Relations Commission (CRC) For a Multicultural NSW is the lead multicultural agency in New South Wales (see http://www.crc.nsw.gov.au/home). It promotes community harmony, participation and access by people from culturally diverse backgrounds to government activities and programs. In order to fulfil these functions it:

• consults with ethnic and multicultural communities in NSW to identify priority issues for culturally diverse communities in relation to government policy and programs;
• organises events which promote and celebrate the social and cultural benefits of living in a multicultural society;
• has a number of Grants Programs which support priority issues in the community,
• provides a comprehensive interpreting and translation service in 100 languages and dialects, including Auslan;
• has oversight of the Multicultural Policies and Services Program (MPSP), to support NSW government agencies in meeting their obligations to implement the Principles of Multiculturalism (Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act). Under the MPSP program the Commission ‘assists and assesses’ NSW public agencies to plan for, and respond to the needs of a culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse community.

In South Australia, issues relating to migrant and minority ethnic and cultural communities come under the auspices of Multicultural SA. ‘Multicultural SA works to achieve an inclusive, cohesive and equitable multicultural society, where all our communities are valued and supported, so that they can become full participants in our society’ (Multicultural SA; http://www.multicultural.sa.gov.au/index.htm). The primary roles of Multicultural SA are to:

• ‘increase awareness and understanding of the ethnic diversity of the South Australian community and the implications of that diversity;
• advise the Government and public authorities on, and assist them in, all matters relating to multiculturalism and ethnic affairs’ (http://www.multicultural.sa.gov.au/index.htm).

In addition, Multicultural SA is responsible for:

• provision of interpreting and translating services
• contribution to improving equitable access to government services for people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
• fostering a coordinated approach to multicultural affairs across Government
• promoting the benefits of cultural diversity and fostering community harmony
• informing and consulting ethnic community organisations and promoting cooperation among groups involved in multicultural affairs
• supporting ethnic community festivals and events
• administering funding grants
• supporting and recommending special initiatives such as those for multicultural youth, women and the aged
• supporting the development of community volunteers
• publication of Multicultural Life magazine
• convening the South Australian Multicultural Forum
• coordinating the activities of Regional Advisory Committees
• providing information to students and teachers on multicultural matters.

3.3 Community programs, projects and services

Thus far we have discussed the government framework of social cohesion. In this section we present the community programs, projects and services aimed at increasing social cohesion; followed by a reflection on both government and community approaches to promoting social cohesion. It should be noted that many mainstream programs can have a significant effect on social cohesion, however consideration of such programs was beyond the scope of the research.

Australia has a long history and good track record of civil society, with community organisations being at the forefront in promoting social cohesion. For example, in our audit, we found reports of several events that have been held, many on a regular basis that fostered social cohesion, for example:

• Taste of Harmony—funded by the Scanlon Foundation; an annual event that provides Australian workplaces with the opportunity to celebrate the diversity in their workforce [Inclusion]
• Symposium on Community Safety in Multicultural Australia: Counter Terrorism, Social Cohesion and Belonging—sponsored by Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) University, held on 8/9/2010 at RMIT, Melbourne; a one-day symposium that brought together academics and practitioners to explore the implications of these measures on civil liberties, community policing and social cohesion [Belonging, Recognition].

We also found activities of organisations that were established specifically for promoting harmony and social cohesion, such as:

• Australian Intercultural Society, established ‘to enhance social cohesion and harmony through social interaction and partnered projects’. Examples of projects include: luncheon forums; women’s interfaith dinner; iftar dinner programs [Belonging]
• All Together Now (ATN), dedicated to eliminating racism/racist behaviour through ‘innovative, evidence-based and effective social marketing.’—not well-established yet, but it will be interesting to see how they are progressing [Recognition]
• Centre for Health through Action on Social Exclusion (CHASE), Deakin University, dedicated to ‘working collaboratively with communities, organisations and governments to promote social inclusion and to enhance the health and well-being of all, particularly those populations, communities and individuals who are experiencing exclusion’. Examples of projects include: Taking It Up; Healing Stories [Inclusion, Belonging]
• Cultural Infusion, ‘a not-for-profit organisation that works in education, youth, communities and the arts to promote cultural harmony and well-being for a more cohesive and richer society.’ Examples of projects include: InterACT Arts Project; Cultural Awareness Training;
Well-being Programs in primary and secondary schools; Sonic Elevation-Helping Young People Take Flight [Inclusion, Recognition, Participation, Belonging].

We found some school-based programs, such as:

- Adelaide High School’s Intensive Secondary English Class (ISEC)—offered in a learning environment that nurtures social cohesion and intercultural perspectives for students before they enter the mainstream [Inclusion]
- Countering Racism in Western Australian Schools [Recognition].

There are sports-related programs, such as:

- Social Cohesion through Football—an intervention and research project (2009-2011) of the University of New South Wales that aims to investigate the effects of the Football United program on individual’s health and well-being and social cohesion in the community
- Program of Surf Lifesaving Australia after the Cronulla riots, involving more diverse groups in the lifesaving movement, cited by Inglis (2010).

Some specific projects/programs are targeted at Humanitarian Entrants and refugees. DIAC (2008a) produced a compendium of useful and successful projects to be a ‘resource tool for community workers, volunteers and government multicultural project or liaison officers who are helping refugees and Humanitarian Entrants settle in Australia’ (p. 1). *Empowering Refugees: A Good Practice Guide to Humanitarian Settlement* contains 29 case studies in nine areas: health, education, employment, community harmony, law, youth, families, women, and other. The Guide identified some ‘good practice trends’ that emphasise consultation, research, getting feedback, use of interpreters and bilingual workers, use of oral tradition in providing information, providing transport and childcare. This is an extremely useful compendium.

Focusing on the needs of Muslim families in Australia, Pe-Pua, Katz, Gendera and O’Connor (2010) compiled 23 ‘good practice’ case studies which are grouped into four categories: family support services; services and programs for young people and youth ‘at risk’; programs and initiatives to enhance social inclusion and cohesion; and education and school-based programs. Five criteria were used in selecting good practice case studies: innovative, evidence-based, theoretically grounded, culturally sensitive, and strengths-based. Each case study was described briefly, then key good practice ingredients were identified, as well as key lessons learnt or areas for improvement. The study aimed to develop a ‘best practice’ model, but settled for ‘elements of best practice’ instead. These elements are: cross-sectoral collaboration and community capacity-building; enhancing informal support and social capital; educating the community; and ‘best practice’ guidelines at policy, service and practice levels. At the policy level, the emphasis is on enhancing diversity and equality, accountability, evaluation and funding. At the service level, the emphasis is on engagement, service delivery, training and networking. At the practice level, the emphasis is on culturally sensitive practice. (This research project was funded by DIAC under the NAP program.)

The Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA, 2010) also outlined some best practice principles from their results on the study of Australian Muslim men. These are derived from a literature review, consultations with young Muslim men and key stakeholders and case studies.
These findings may be generalised to other ethnic/cultural communities in Australia (CIRCA, 2010). Their principles are:

- community capacity building: enhancing self-esteem and resilience by building personal capacity and skills (e.g., through programs that enhance life skills, mentoring programs, leadership, sport, and creative arts)
- strengthening personal identities and making connections with mainstream society (through bicultural capacity building, and by accommodating cultural and religious beliefs)
- promoting systemic inclusion and acceptance (through addressing negative stereotypes, generating positive media stories, and anti-racism strategies)
- sustainability (i.e., long-term commitment to programs).

Wise and Ali’s (2008) report Muslim-Australians & Local Government: Grass-roots strategies to build bridges between Muslim & Non-Muslim Australians presented nine case studies of initiatives, selecting them on the basis of their being ‘interactive type activities’ rather than formal seminars and the like or inter-faith dialogues. These case studies included women’s dinners, workplace-based activities, sport based activities, an activity to tackle neighbourhood tensions, and home-based interfaith encounters. The initiatives were:

- Auburn Football Cultural Diversity Project
- Coles Morning Tea
- Home Encounters Network
- Muslim Dialogue Project
- Football United: Refugee Youth Soccer Development Program
- Social Craft Group
- The Cramer Street Neighbourhood Project
- Women Helping Women
- Women’s Dinner Project

Al-Momani, Dados, Maddox and Wise (2010) researched the scale and nature of Muslims’ participation in Australian political life [Participation] and factors that influence this participation. Their report presented the findings of interviews. As part of this, they featured four Australian and three UK case studies of initiatives ‘designed to build and develop leadership skills, civic participation and knowledge of the political system and political responsibilities.’ The case studies are:

- Leadership Training Program for Young Muslims (Victoria, 2007-2010)
- Leadership Australia—A New Generation (Victoria 2008-2009)
- ‘Learn to Lobby Your Local Polly’ Workshop (NSW, 2004)
- ‘Believe, Achieve & Inspire’ (Queensland, 2009-2010)
- Young Muslims Leadership Network (UK, 2009-2010)
- Active Citizenship Program of Study (UK, 2009-2010)
- ‘Get Out and Vote’ campaign, UK elections (UK, 2010).

The researchers observed that there is very good representation of leadership programs for young Muslims in Australia, compared to the UK and the US.
Some programs target racism specifically. In 2009, the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) published a document, *Building on Our Strengths: A Framework to Reduce Race-Based Discrimination and Support Diversity in Victoria* (Paradies et al., 2009). A number of effective and promising strategies were recommended in regards to: organisational development, communication and social marketing, legislation and policy reform, direct participation, community strengthening, advocacy, and research/evaluation/monitoring.

Building on the above framework, VicHealth commissioned Greco, Priest and Paradies (2010) to conduct a Review of Strategies and Resources that Address Race-based Discrimination and Support Diversity in Schools. They compiled 50 resources/programs, of which eight were reviewed in depth. The review was done by examining the target population, the merit of the guiding approach, the details of the programs/resources, the strengths, and limitations. The 50 resources/programs were grouped into six categories: teaching about Indigenous Australians, multicultural education, teacher training, anti-racist education, the creation of school policies and practices that address race-based discrimination and support diversity, and websites containing content or activities relevant to school-based efforts to address race-based discrimination and support diversity.

Another review commissioned by VicHealth is a Review of Audit and Assessment Tools, Programs and Resources in Workplace Settings to Prevent Race-based Discrimination and Support Diversity (Trenerry, Franklin, & Paradies, 2010). They evaluated diversity-training resources, and organisational assessment tools. As a result, they suggested some principles to guide the selection of organisational audit tools: ‘theoretical and empirical development; operationalised domains, practicality and feasibility of implementation, context relevance, a range of response formats, and moving beyond self-assessment’ (p. 25). They also proposed 15 principles of relevance to diversity-training strategies.

A detailed analysis of programs and initiatives relevant to social cohesion in our selected communities is provided in the next section: The Three Case Studies.
4 The Three Case Studies

Research was undertaken in communities selected because they had several or all of the following features:

- are ethnically and culturally diverse, including Australians who identify as Indigenous;
- have been identified as a cohesive and harmonious community or have found positive approaches to inter-ethnic tensions;
- include residents from recently arrived, ‘visibly different’ backgrounds;
- include residents from recently arrived but less culturally distant groups, e.g., British migrants, for point of comparison.

In addition to these criteria, our aim was to include both metropolitan and regional areas to take into account differences in community characteristics (e.g., demographics, history, nature of intergroup contact), and one community in Western Australia (WA) and one in New South Wales (NSW). At the time of the project WA was experiencing rapid growth and change, including a rise in interstate and international immigration and increasing cultural diversity. Therefore it was considered an appropriate location in which to examine emerging issues.

In Perth, Western Australia, the sites that were chosen were the neighbouring suburbs of Mirrabooka and Balga. In South Australia, we chose the rural town of Murray Bridge; and in New South Wales, Blacktown (Sydney) was the site in which the fieldwork was undertaken.

4.1 Details of the case study method

We established contact with key service providers in each fieldwork site prior to commencing data collection. In Mirrabooka/Balga, this was the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (MMRC) and the Edmund Rice Centre (Western Australia). In Blacktown, this was SydWest Multicultural Services. In Murray Bridge, the Migrant Resource Centre had reduced its services, and hence key contacts were made through community organisations such as church groups, the community centre and the local council. In all three sites, these organisations supported the research project by engaging staff and community members to be involved, organising community consultations and other group meetings, providing resources including space for meetings and discussion groups, and providing input on the methodology and issues of local concern.

We obtained ethics approval from the Human Research Ethics Committees of Edith Cowan University and University of New South Wales. After ethics approval was obtained, community consultations were held in each fieldwork setting. We invited community leaders, service providers, and community members and residents to attend the consultation. At these sessions a member of the research team outlined the project aims and methodology, and invited input on the project approach in terms of method, sampling and research questions. Attendees also provided suggestions of additional groups and/or community members to be included in the case study, and highlighted issues of particular concern in the local community.

11 Additional research assistance in Murray Bridge was provided by Dr Ian McKee (Flinders University).
12 Subsequently, we obtained ethics approval to interview teachers in government schools (Mirrabooka and Balga) from the Western Australian Department of Education.
Two main data collections methods were used in the case studies; focus group discussion and key informant interviewing.

4.1.1 Focus group discussions with community residents
A total of 15 focus group discussions were conducted with a total of 138 residents, many of whom were clients utilising local services in the three communities. Table 1 shows the breakdown of number of participants and their gender in the three research sites.

Table 1. Number of focus groups, and gender of participants for the three community case studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research site</th>
<th>Number of Focus groups</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mirrabooka/Balga (WA)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacktown (NSW)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray Bridge (SA)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus groups varied in size, ranging from 2 to 30 participants. Although our intention was to hold focus groups with between 6 and 10 people, when more (or fewer) participants attended than expected, we adapted to the setting in order to be inclusive of as many interested community members as possible.

Focus group participants were recruited with the assistance of third parties, mainly staff from the supporting organisations, community groups and key community members. Thus, many of the focus groups consisted of participants who had previously accessed (or were currently accessing) a service or community group in the local area. Some focus groups were pre-existing groups where members were somewhat familiar with one another. The focus groups consisted of participants from a range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Age and background of focus group participants
The average age of focus group participants was 48.55 years, ranging from 15 to 87 years. Our participants came from diverse ethnic backgrounds and included migrants, refugees, Anglo-Australians and Indigenous Australians. Approximately 85% of the sample was born overseas. Countries of origin included Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, England, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Liberia, Macedonia, New Zealand, Palestine, the Philippines, Poland, Scotland, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Vietnam, and the former Yugoslavia. The average amount of time resident in Australia for the overseas-born was 12.63 years, ranging from approximately 4 months to 61 years. The main languages spoken were Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Dan, Dari, Dinka, Dromo, English, Farsi, Filipino, Italian, Karen, Kurdish, Madi, Macedonian, Nepali, Polish, Serbian, Sinhala, Spanish, Swahili and Vietnamese. The main religions were Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism.

In Mirrabooka/Balga the focus group discussions included 16 Anglo-Australians and 39 people from refugee/migrant backgrounds (28 refugees/Humanitarian Entrants and 11 migrants)\(^{13}\). In Blacktown all 55 focus group participants were from refugee (30) or migrant (25) backgrounds. For Murray Bridge, nine focus group participants were Anglo-Australian, six were Indigenous-Australian, four were migrants and seven were from refugee backgrounds.

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\(^{13}\) Demographic data were unavailable for two Focus Group participants in Mirrabooka/Balga.
Socio-economic indicators (employment and education) and Volunteering

Because of the disproportionate number of women (most of whom were stay-at-home mothers) and retired people in the sample, the majority (approximately 77%) was not engaged in paid employment at the time of the study. Of those who were employed, occupations included child care worker, cleaner, hairdresser, administrative officer, teacher, assembling air conditioning, factory worker, in retail and hospitality, community worker, and interpreter. Approximately 35% of the sample reported being involved in volunteering, including as sewing instructor in a community program, language teaching (English and LOTE), cleaning and other assistance at the local church, sports coaching, caring, kitchen work at a local community group, helping in ethnic community organisations, and in community club leadership roles (e.g., as club treasurer). Summary statistics for employment, education and volunteering are presented in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Education, employment and volunteering of focus group participants in the three communities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest level of education completed</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown/Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paid employment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No paid employment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unknown</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volunteering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unknown</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Tertiary 1 = TAFE Diploma or Certificate, Tertiary 2 = Bachelor’s degree, Tertiary 3 = Postgraduate study

Ten focus groups were conducted fully in English, with no help from an interpreter. Four focus groups were conducted with the help of interpreters in the following languages: Arabic, Bhutanese/Nepali. One focus group was conducted fully in Filipino by a member of the research team (Pe-Pua).

Focus groups were conducted in spaces that were familiar to participants, usually meeting rooms in the offices of local service providers, or multi-purpose space in community organisations’ headquarters. In two cases, the focus groups were held in a community park where participants of a sport program had their practice; in another, it was in a participant’s home. Emotional support was available from service providers and community workers employed at the organisation, if needed.
The facilitator\(^{14}\) provided a verbal summary of the project aims and procedure prior to the commencement of discussion, and answered any questions. Issues relating to confidentiality of discussion and the audio-recording were emphasised, as well as participants’ right to not participate if they so chose. Consent forms (see Appendix A-1) were distributed and completed. At the conclusion of the discussions, participants were asked to complete a short anonymous questionnaire (see Appendix A-3) referring to demographic information (such as age, gender, country of birth, parents’ country/ies of birth, language(s) spoken at home, employment and education status). This was completed with the assistance of an interpreter or bilingual worker, if needed. Catering, in the form of morning or afternoon tea, was provided for the focus groups.

For the first two focus groups of the study, held in Mirrabooka, we distributed a questionnaire addressing social and mass media access and use (see Appendix A-4). However, this proved to be too difficult for participants with limited English literacy to complete in the time available. Therefore, a verbal version of the questionnaire was introduced into the discussion for subsequent groups.

A Focus Group Discussion guide (see Appendix A-2) provided some structure to the discussions. Starting with a discussion of the positive and negative aspects of living in their culturally diverse community, the discussions proceeded to canvass opinions and experiences related to belonging and connectedness to the community; inclusion, or equality of access to employment, health, education and other opportunities; community participation, including social and political participation; recognition, including respect and trust; and legitimacy or confidence in institutions. The role of mass media and social media, as well as factors that lead to social cohesion, social division and conflict were also discussed. Overlaying this discussion was an attempt to draw out some programs, services, and initiatives that the participants have found to be effective in promoting social cohesion, or would like to see developed or enhanced in the future.

### 4.1.2 Key Informant (KI) interviews

A total of 54 KI interviews (35 women and 19 men) were conducted across the three sites: 20 in Blacktown, 22 in Mirrabooka/Balga, and 12 in Murray Bridge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research site</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirrabooka/Balga (WA)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacktown (NSW)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray Bridge (SA)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These interviews were conducted with representatives from:

- local government
- key service providers (specifically services for refugees and newly arrived communities and/or ‘multicultural agencies’)
- community workers, including ethno-specific (e.g., Afghani, Indigenous Australian, Pacific Islanders, Bhutanese, Sudanese), age-focused (e.g. aged, youth, parents), and gender-focused (e.g. fathers, mothers, multicultural women/men) workers

\(^{14}\) Dr Dandy and A/Prof. Pe-Pua facilitated discussion with the focus groups with the exception of one Mirrabooka group which was facilitated by the Project Officer, Ms Sala.
government primary and secondary schools
- TAFE
- health and employment agencies (government and non-government)
- government and non-government employment agencies and services
- commercial/business groups (shopping centre management)
- community representatives (from the Sudanese and Somali communities)
- legal services
- the police
- project team members.

An interview guide (see Appendix B-1) covered the same topics as the focus group discussions, i.e., belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition, legitimacy, role of media, effective services/programs/projects. However, the direction of the interview depended on the role or position occupied by the KI interviewee. For example, community workers were asked to focus on the community or the groups they were supporting; KIs from Centrelink or employment–related agencies were asked to elaborate on issues related to employment and training; someone from the Police naturally talked more about peace and order issues. Nonetheless, we tried to cover all topics in the interview guide.

The interviews were almost always held in the office or work premises of the KIs, except where special arrangements were made to meet elsewhere. The interviewees were asked to provide written consent (see Appendix B-2) before the interviews commenced.

4.1.3 Data analysis
Verbatim transcriptions of the focus groups were completed by research assistants and the Project Officer. KI interviews were transcribed by research assistants, or, in several cases the interview was transcribed by a commercial transcribing agency.

The focus group and interview transcripts were then imported into the software program NVivo (version 9.0), a tool to assist in qualitative data analysis through electronic organisation and collating of text-based data. The data were analysed for key themes, identifying commonalities and differences in the informants’ perspectives (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2011). In the first instance these were organised by the a-priori themes of interest, that is, we focused on the dimensions of social cohesion (belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition and legitimacy), social division and conflict, and media use and influence. These themes were further coded and investigated, and sub-themes were identified. In addition, a second stage of analysis involved an inductive, exploratory approach to identify additional themes that emerged from the data (relevant to informants’ perspectives on social cohesion but not necessarily captured by Jenson’s dimensions).

Consistent with the case study approach, which aims to obtain an in-depth understanding of the complexity of the case, a within-case analysis was first conducted, that is, analysis of the data for each community (Mirrabooka, Blacktown, Murray Bridge). The data include the KI interviews, focus groups, media analysis, and analysis of relevant government and non-government programs that are particular to the communities. These findings are presented first, to provide a snapshot of social cohesion in each community. A cross-case analysis, identifying broad themes across the three communities, was conducted subsequently and is presented in section 4.5.
The following sub-sections provide a background of each community, the key findings from the focus group discussions, the key informant (KI) interviews, the audit of programs related to the area, and the media analysis. The full and detailed findings are provided in Appendices C-E.
4.2 Mirrabooka and Balga (Western Australia)

4.2.1 Geographical and demographic profile

Both Mirrabooka and Balga are situated in the north-east of Perth and are part of the City of Stirling Local Government Area. According to Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2008), Mirrabooka and surrounding suburbs are Perth’s lower socio-economic areas, with cheaper housing and large numbers of public housing. Many refugees and people settled under Australia’s Humanitarian Entrant program live in these suburbs. Consequently, there are also many migrant services located here—specifically in Mirrabooka (e.g., Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre, ISHAR Multicultural Women’s Health Centre, and Intensive English Centres at the schools). An estimated 6,000 recent refugees (mainly of African descent) live in Mirrabooka and surrounding suburbs (e.g., Balga) and the numbers are growing (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008). Furthermore, these suburbs are home to other ethnic and cultural minorities and a large proportion of the urban Indigenous Australian population of Perth (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2008).

Cultural Diversity: According to the 2006 Census, there were a total of 16,292 people in Mirrabooka and Balga. Of the total population, 79.8% of people in Mirrabooka and 77.6% in Balga were Australian citizens. There are more who identify as Indigenous Australian compared with the national average of 2.5%: 3.5% in Mirrabooka and 4.5% in Balga (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2009). Approximately 46% of Mirrabooka residents and 31% of Balga residents were born overseas, compared to only 22.2% in the national population (ABS, 2006a, 2006b). The most common countries of birth for those born overseas include Burma, Vietnam, Sudan, England, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, New Zealand and Iraq. Only 43.5% of Mirrabooka residents speak English at home, and the most common languages other than English were: Vietnamese, Arabic, Macedonian, Italian, Bosnian, Dinka and Cantonese. Furthermore, the most common responses for religious affiliation for people resident in Mirrabooka were Catholic, Islam, No Religion, Anglican and Buddhism.

Cultural diversity can also be gleaned from Annual School Reports. Mirrabooka Primary School reported that in 2010 there was a strong multicultural identity with 8% of students identifying as Indigenous Australian, and 72% of the students had English as a second language (ESL) background. The countries of birth of the students included: Afghanistan, Bosnia, Brazil, Burma, Burundi, China, Croatia, DR Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, Iran, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Liberia, Macedonia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda and Vietnam (Mirrabooka Primary School, 2010). Another example of the cultural diversity in schools located in Mirrabooka is at Dryandra Primary School which reported that, in 2009, 56% of their students came from an ESL background, including students from South East Asia, East Europe, Middle East and Africa (Dryandra Primary School, 2009).

15 The Indigenous Australian people of the Perth area belong to the southwest region and are referred to by various names. For example: Nyoongar, Nyungar, Noongar, Wajuk and Wudjari (http://www.creativespirits.info/ozwest/perth/aboriginalhistoryperth.html).
16 Although the 2011 census had been conducted, the data were yet to be publicly released. It must therefore be noted that demographic compositions and other Census-derived statistics presented in this report may have changed over the preceding six years.
In the neighbouring suburb of Balga there is an Intensive English Centre (IEC) for newly arrived refugee students at the local high school. In 2010 most of the students in the IEC were Humanitarian Entrants and refugees, mainly from Burma, Afghanistan, Thailand, Liberia and Sudan (Balga Senior High School, 2010). Another program at Balga SHS is the Swan Nyungar Sports Education Program (SNSEP). The SNSEP program targets Indigenous Australian students in the North East Metropolitan Area with the goal of improving educational outcomes by using sport (Swan Nyungar Sports Education Program, 2011). In addition, Balga Primary School reported that 22% of the school is made up of Indigenous Australian students and 40% of students at the school receive ESL support (Balga Primary School, 2010).

**Employment:** The ABS (2006a) reported that during the week prior to the 2006 Census, 6,309 people aged 15 years and over, resident in Mirrabooka, were in the labour force. Of these, approximately 57% were employed full-time, 28% were employed part-time, and over 7% were unemployed (6.4% for Mirrabooka and 8.3% for Balga, both of which are higher than the national average of 5.2%). There were 4,877 usual residents aged 15 years and over not in the labour force. The most common responses for occupation for employed people were: labourers, technicians and trades workers, machinery operators and drivers, clerical and administrative workers, and community and personal service workers.

**Income:** The median weekly individual income in Mirrabooka and Balga (around $348) was lower than the national average ($466). The same pattern holds for the median weekly household income ($5821 for Mirrabooka and $644 for Balga, compared to $913 for Australia), and median weekly family incomes ($1,027 for Mirrabooka and $785 for Balga, compared to $1,171 for Australia; ABS, 2006a, 2006b).

**Family and dwelling characteristics:** The 2006 Census reported 4,045 families in Mirrabooka and Balga, for Mirrabooka: 52.5% were couple families with children (34.7% for Balga), 21.3% were couple families without children (Balga—33.4%), 24.6% were one-parent families (Balga—29.5%) and 1.6% were ‘other families’ (Balga—2.4%). In Mirrabooka, the median weekly rent was lower than the national average ($150, compared to $190 in Australia). Furthermore, approximately 20% of occupied private dwellings in Mirrabooka and Balga were fully owned, 42.6% were being purchased (Balga—26.9%) and 29.3% were rented (Balga—41%). Of the occupied private dwellings being rented, large proportions (46.7% for Mirrabooka, 35.1% for Balga) were rented from a State or Territory housing authority (‘HomesWest’). This is significantly higher than the 14.9% of state or territory rental properties Australia wide (ABS, 2006a, 2006b).

The rest of Section 4.2 presents the findings from the data collected through the six focus groups and 22 KI interviews, analysis of media, and audit of programs related to Mirrabooka and Balga, WA. The detailed findings on social cohesion, social division and conflict, and the use of media are found in Appendix C-1.

### 4.2.2 ‘The community’

The focus groups and KI interviews generated two sub-themes related to ‘community’: one relating specifically to the physical environment and public space, and the other to the reputation of the community or its reputational geography.
In terms of the **physical environment and public space**, KI interviewees made generally negative comments about the visual appeal of the Mirrabooka community, noting that parts of the area, particularly those in which there is more public housing and lower SES residents, are ugly. Because these unattractive ‘pockets’ were public space, the responsibility for improving them was seen to rest with the local council. The physical environment was considered important because it contributes to community pride and belonging.

A WA Department of Health project that had focused on improving the public space—‘*Trolley pond to Billabong*’—had been identified as successful in this regard—it ‘rescued the park for the people, and with the people, and provide[d] community with activities that they want[ed] to implement’. Unfortunately, this initiative ended due to lack of funding, and the council planned to build a road through the pond area, a fact that was also commented on by interviewees: ‘*They want to knock off the meeting places of the Aboriginal people, like we have this area here, the pond area. They want to put a road through it.*’

KIs noted that changes to the physical environment of the community had been made. Some were regarded as improvements; others were seen as contributing to the community’s problems with a lack of public space and social inequity. For example, new housing developments provided needed housing, but, as a largely private development it a) replaced open space and bush land, and b) did not provide affordable housing for the lower SES members of the community, e.g., refugee families.

Other changes were seen as positive, particularly in terms of enhancing community safety. One area near the bus station had been identified as a ‘hotspot’ for violence, on Friday nights—‘fight night’—when young people, from a variety of ethnic backgrounds would congregate. This had been re-developed and was seen as much safer now.

The focus group participants’ opinions about the physical environment of Mirrabooka and Balga, and of Perth in general were quite positive. Their positive comments included things like the centrality of the location, the proximity to ‘everything’—the bus station, the park, the shopping areas, schools, Centrelink, and other services; adequate housing, good shops, and so on. Many acknowledged that a lot of improvements have been made, especially when they compared the current situation to the past.

They’ve also done up Mirrabooka, the shopping centre has been done up. The bus station has been done up. When we first came here, you wouldn’t go to the park. There was glass everywhere...we used to call it ‘glass park’ down the road. And there were syringes... (Burmese-Anglo female youth)

On the negative side, some of the complaints of focus group participants about Mirrabooka included the lack of entertainment places, not having banks, and inadequate street lightings.

In terms of the **area’s reputational geography**, KIs and focus group participants acknowledged that Mirrabooka/Balga was often stereotyped as places of crime and violence (e.g., the Bronx), which they attributed partly to the media.

They [media] show what sells, so, I mean, automatically when I meet people and you say that you’re from Balga, they’re all like ‘oh, Balga *said in a negative tone*’. That’s because they show on the media that Balga is... as soon as something happens in Balga, everyone knows about it, but you know if something happens in Peppermint Grove, you don’t really hear anything. (Burmese-Anglo female youth)
But many participants thought that Mirrabooka/Balga was a good community to live in, or that it was no different from any other suburb.

4.2.3 Belonging

Belonging to which community? KIs involved in service provision for migrants and refugees indicated that belonging for these groups was strong within their ethnic or background community, or the Mirrabooka/Balga community more broadly, due to the number of support services for recently-arrived groups. On the other hand, KIs involved in local and/or state government departments were more likely to regard community belonging in a negative light, characterised by segregated communities, not being proud of their community, for example. Differences in sense of belonging were linked to age and generation, or to the circumstances that they have come from.

Definitely the age gap is a major thing. If you are over 40 years old and recently arrived from Africa, there is not that sense of belonging because they always have this attachment back home.

Many Mirrabooka/Balga residents, especially the migrants and refugees, referred to ‘Australia’ when talking about a sense of connectedness to the community. Thus, there was a lot of sharing of how wonderful a country Australia was to them, in terms of opportunities provided, services they enjoyed, the generosity of the Australian government, and most especially when they compared the situation in Australia to countries where they came from, and especially when you have become ‘Australian’.

The Anglo-Australian residents and some long established migrants tended to compare the Australia today to the Australia of the past, oftentimes referring to their own experience when they first came to the country. They also commented on the impact of the arrival of migrants and refugees to Australia, and to Mirrabooka, and these comments tended to be negative.

Particular to Mirrabooka/Balga, focus group participants talked of the multicultural nature of the community. On the positive side, they saw opportunities for meeting different groups of people, making it possible to have more participation in services, a livelier environment, and so on.

Lately, I think they put all the new immigrants around Mirrabooka and Balga. Ideologically, they are more Australians than foreigners; they absorbed very much the Australian ideology. And of course, because of that, the way they live is different from Mirrabooka. (Italian male)

On the negative side, they saw the negative influence on children’s behaviour, cultural differences that tended to disadvantage the immigrants’ culture, for example in relation to disciplining their children. They explained that belonging is related to feeling settled; and when the family did not feel settled due to problems between parents and their children, then that sense of belonging would not be forthcoming.

Regarding Mirrabooka/Balga community, there was a more positive sense of belonging and connectedness. And yet for some, the sense of belonging was still not there.

I think we have a lot more different groups, like, a lot of different cultures, but I’m not sure whether it’s socially cohesive. Probably not so much… (Anglo female youth)

In discussing community belonging and connection, KIs identified some excluded groups – groups that might experience lower sense of belonging, or may actually be excluded from the community, or who may exclude themselves from the community. Examples were people from southern Sudan and Afghanistan, Indigenous Australians, refugees, Muslims, and even Anglo-
Australians. Language, and not being fluent in English in particular, was nominated as a barrier to belonging.

Lack of residential stability, that is, the transience of the community, due to problems with finding affordable housing, was seen as contributing to a lack of community belonging and strong community relations among residents.

4.2.4 Inclusion

Some of the indices of inclusion discussed by KIs and focus group participants were: access to housing, financial support, transport, healthcare, childcare, employment, learning English, and education. In general, the distribution of access to resources was seen as equitable within the community but inequitable compared with other communities in Perth.

Housing was identified as a major problem area: rising cost of private rental accommodation affecting lower SES families (including refugee families, disabled, senior citizens); and discrimination in housing (in particular, reluctance to rent to African families), possibly due to racism, beliefs about lack of experience/skills in maintaining a house, and concerns about potential damage by children (many of the African residents have large families). In the longer term this could be disempowering to the communities.

So let’s say if you’re unemployed and you’re looking for a house, you’re going to find it extremely hard to find one in the private rental market. Add to that, you’ve got a different skin colour; add to that, your language level is different; add to that, you have a different religion that somebody doesn’t quite trust; and add to that, you know, you’ve got six kids... (KI)

Owning a house had its own problems, such as the cost of houses, the amount of money one needed to save before they could contemplate buying, or getting a home loan; and dealing with settling down to a new neighbourhood and knowing the facilities and services in the new place.

Sharing a house or rental property had become a common trend, and was not a good experience, mainly because of the type of people they were sharing a house with.

Government or public housing was also discussed. Some participants observed that it would take a long time to avail of public housing; that public housing was usually located in distant places; that the existence of government housing did not give the community a good social environment, often reflecting the lower socio-economic status of residents.

Some participants commented that there were not enough resources to help them with housing, for example, NGOs not being resourced enough to help residents; or services related to banking, learning practical skills and learning English.

Despite the seemingly predominant sentiments about the housing situation in Mirrabooka/Balga, many participants were happy renting or owning a house in this area. Some talked of how much cheaper it was to own a house in the past.

Focus group participants viewed the issue of transportation this way: Public transportation facilities were adequate or very good; but a big problem for those who lived far from a bus stop, or the transportation was expensive (e.g. ,taxi), or they lived very far from places they needed to go to (e.g. ,services). Transportation issues become even more serious for the senior members of the community.

There were different views on the degree of equality of access to healthcare. Whilst the majority of KIs regarded access as equitable, some thought that people from non-English speaking
backgrounds were likely to receive a lower quality of care. Barriers cited included socio-economic rather than cultural or linguistic, for example ‘if a person doesn’t have a private insurance, it can take up to a good one and half years, or two years, to see a specialist for a chronic disease even.’ Some focus group participants felt that migrant, refugee and Indigenous Australian groups used health facilities in greater proportion than Anglo-Australian residents. Also, there was dissatisfaction over the ‘unprofessional’ behaviour of some migrant doctors.

The issue of childcare was brought up by a number of focus group participants: that it was very expensive, thus their reliance on family and friends for support. Some felt that the childcare issue was very serious and needing urgent action. Some suggestions were: building more crèches, or having emergency carers.

Participants perceived serious barriers in access to employment, particularly for newer migrants, and refugees, including lack of recognition of overseas qualifications and/or experience; lack of English language proficiency; discrimination and mistrust; unfamiliarity or confusion with the process of finding a job, either because they don’t know the system in Australia, or the services that are supposed to help them find a job have not been that helpful or effective. Where further studies or training, or sitting an examination was required, difficulties were encountered due to their age or, again, inadequate English skills. Some of them got frustrated or impatient, so they ended up accepting jobs that were below their actual training, or gave up.

The financial implications of not finding employment or having inadequate employment dominated some focus groups. The rising costs of commodities had not helped ease the problems.

On the other hand, there were positive stories of how migrants and refugees were actually given a chance at employment which for some led to employment on a continuing basis. Some felt that the system in Australia was fair, that people were given a ‘fair go’. Others felt that they were able to get effective assistance from some community organisations. Others were simply grateful given their point of comparison, which was the country they came from.

Some participants expressed what they thought was the key to success in finding a job, i.e., improve your skills by accessing available programs (many of which are free), and rely on your community, family and friends.

Most KIs thought that access to education was equitable and open to members of the Mirrabooka/Balga community. However, there were concerns about early drop-out in the secondary schools, especially among children from non-English speaking and/or refugee backgrounds, which could be due to their transitioning experience to mainstream schooling, not having support at home, or that secondary school had become a less supportive environment.

One sub-theme of Inclusion related to groups that were regarded as socially excluded in the Mirrabooka/Balga community. These included the elderly, unemployed people, people with disabilities and their carers, refugees and Indigenous Australian (Nyoongar) residents. Some participants suggested ways to solve the problem of exclusion, for example, inviting the Indigenous Australians, migrants and refugees to clubs or organisations that are dominated by Anglo-Australians so there would be opportunities to mix.

4.2.5 Participation

Participation in social and community activities was seen to be high within ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic groups for those from migrant backgrounds. In general, wider community
participation was regarded as very low among the Indigenous Australian residents, and people from Asian and Middle Eastern backgrounds. There was little spontaneous mixing across ethnic or cultural groups, particularly as part of ‘everyday life’. Issues of trust and a lack of services or infrastructure were given as reasons for the lack of involvement for Indigenous Australians in particular. On the other hand, the following were seen to be actively participating in community activities: Asians (Burmese, Indians, Filipinos), Europeans (Italians), and Africans (Sudanese); and people with disabilities.

The activities that allowed people from different groups to participate in and thus interact were related to dance (e.g., Zumba, belly-dancing), activities that promote well-being (e.g., tai chi), crafts (e.g., sewing), arts (e.g., oil painting, drawing), sports (e.g., swimming), and cooking. There were also activities targeted at special groups, such as senior residents or women. While not technically community activities, some participants mentioned programs offered by community groups that help them acquire or develop special skills such as life skills, computer and language skills.

Harmony Week was celebrated with a fair-type event in the heart of Mirrabooka which, for the last few years, has been organised by local non-government organisations in the community (supported by the OMI). There are associated events and activities in schools and in the shopping centre. Most focus group participants did not have much to say about Harmony Week, but most KI identified Harmony Week with the single-day event held in Mirrabooka Square. They regarded this event positively but insufficient as a one-off event.

In general, KIs regarded the community as having low levels of political participation, particularly among immigrant and refugee groups, whose members were occupied with trying to establish themselves within the community and achieve stability in housing, employment, finding schools for their children and other basic tasks. Thus, political participation was represented as a ‘higher-order’ activity that one engaged in when one had more time and was ‘settled’. Groups that were more established in the community, or those who had more highly-educated members, were involved, for example a group of African leaders was meeting to develop ways to approach government and address community issues. Some forms of political participation cited were voting in the local council elections, and speaking up on issues that matter.

Volunteering occurred ‘in one’s own community’, i.e., ethnic or cultural, for example by migrants and refugees. Anglo-Australians (commonly retired) were most likely to cross ‘ethnic’ boundaries in volunteering, for example, helping with the English language classes run by community organisations. Motivations for volunteering included this being an individual thing, or depending on ability, or having the time or resources (e.g., money for transport), or ‘if you are not living by yourself’. But for many, volunteering is seen as a good thing.

KIs identified a number of enablers and barriers to participation. Enablers included having a ‘multi-systemic approach’ and strong leadership. Barriers included transport, the cost of activities, issues in finding childcare, and a focus on ‘just getting by’ among refugee families. Some of these barriers operated in concert.

Often our numbers [of program participants] go down when the weather’s bad because they [refugees] have to get a couple of buses, or they might have to get kids to day-care, and then kids to primary school and then, it’s all too hard. (KI)
Focus group participants highlighted the following factors for participation: communication and English language skills; acceptance of differences and willingness to learn and share; knowledge of services, activities and resources.

### 4.2.6 Recognition

Recognition encompasses mutual respect and tolerance, and the extent to which community members feel accepted or rejected by others. Sub-themes identified in the interview and focus group data for Mirrabooka/Balga included intergroup attitudes, experiences of, or witnessing discrimination and/or racism, lack of acknowledgement of Indigenous Australians in the community, and issues around perceived competition for resources and privileges. There was little consensus among KIs and focus group participants in relation to the overall extent of recognition in the Mirrabooka/Balga community: some thought it very low ("They ‘tolerate’. I wouldn’t say ‘respect’"); whilst others thought that it was moderate to high ("I’ll say overall yes, they do [respect each other]. If they didn’t respect each other, there’d be quite a lot of conflict within the area"). Perceived contributors to a lack of intergroup respect included communication issues, residential instability, distrust, and suspicion and fear of others and the unknown.

In terms of intergroup attitudes and relations, there was a strong perception of tensions (and resentment, rather than open conflict) between different minority groups in Mirrabooka, particularly between refugee groups and Indigenous Australian residents. Reasons given included a lack of recognition and awareness of Indigenous Australian culture and history by migrants and refugees as well as more broadly by the community, and perceived discrimination in housing and other public services.

On one hand, there was a belief that different (cultural, religious) groups got along. They socialised with each other. There was acceptance, tolerance, friendliness, respect. Some reasons for these were: being migrants/refugees all, were in the same class. On the other hand, there was more intra-group than inter-group mixing. There were tensions or discomfort. Or the friendliness was one-way, for example, Anglo-Australians towards refugees and migrants and Indigenous Australians, but not the other way around.

We specifically asked about neighbours in the focus groups. There were stories of ‘good’ neighbours and ‘bad’ neighbours. Among the good stories were: friendly, helpful, nurturing, and ‘protective’ neighbours; neighbours that could be relied on to look after their property when they were away. The bad stories were around: unfriendly neighbours, the neighbour put rubbish in front of their house; the neighbour picked on them based on difference in religious affiliation; could not rely on neighbours for help; refusal of some building activities (e.g., fence). Other stories were quite neutral: referring to the ethnicity of their neighbours (e.g., Chinese, Australian, ‘from Iraq’), or stating that there is hardly any relationship with their neighbours. Some participants gave suggestions on how to develop good relations with neighbours: introduce yourself to them when you first arrived in an area; reach out and participate in neighbours’ activities when invited; accept neighbours’ cultural background.

There were also opinions about the kind of people that should be allowed to enter/stay in the country and who should not (e.g., criminals, drug dealers, and people who came from countries that Australia were/are at war with). In many instances, there was a message of assimilation that was expected of refugees and migrants, but not necessarily Anglo-Australians adjusting to refugees and migrants. In this regard, there were perceptions of who assimilated and who did not (e.g., Muslims).
There were some strong negative opinions about refugees, reflecting a misunderstanding of the legal status or conditions of this group of entrants, and confusing the issues of ‘boat people’, asylum seekers and refugees. Similar misunderstandings about Muslims came out in the focus groups.

Amidst these misunderstandings, however, there were some sympathetic or counter opinions about Muslims (e.g., acceptance of the burqa) and refugees. There were also some advice to migrants to ‘educate’ others about their culture, in order to facilitate acceptance; and encouragement of more mingling, in order to foster better intergroup relations.

A set of opinions about intergroup relations that also provided insights to enablers and barriers can be grouped under culture. Some participants acknowledged that both mainstream and migrant/refugee groups could be ignorant of each other’s cultures, which explained the lack of acceptance of migrants/refugees. Cultural differences were considered one key factor in intergroup relations. For example, etiquette related to being guests and hosts; whether neighbours know each other or not; stereotypes held by migrants, refugees, Indigenous Australian and Anglo-Australians about each other; parent-child relationship where migrant parents were noted to be more protective and strict towards their children; differences in terms of friendliness, humour, emotion, and so on.

Some participants were pragmatic about cultural differences, i.e., it’s part of ‘culture shock’, that people should learn how to accept them in order to settle down, and that eventually most people do. Being involved in community activities apparently helped some participants develop close relationships or interactions with other groups. Or simply reaching out to the other person would lead to good intergroup relations.

Another issue related to recognition is resource competition and ‘privileges’. There was a perception that certain groups, i.e., Indigenous Australian residents, migrants and refugees, were receiving more benefits and privileges than others, e.g., Anglo-Australians. Examples given were: Indigenous Australian kids were supported by government to go to school trips but other kids were not; refugee applicants for housing were given such housing within a short period of time while Anglo-Australians had to wait a longer period; refugees were given financial assistance for burial. Therefore, there were some intense comparing between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in terms of material things and wealth indicators. There were also criticisms of how Indigenous Australians, refugees and migrants depended on government support; how much money the government was spending; and how migrants and refugees were sending money back to their home country to support family members of friends.

A lack of awareness and recognition of local Indigenous Australian (Nyoongar) history and culture among more recently-arrived groups was clearly expressed in the interviews and focus groups. For one, there was no community resource centre for local Indigenous people. Some Anglo-Australians pointed out that Indigenous Australians should be given more attention than newly-arrived refugees and migrants. There was however a feeling that even with Indigenous Australians, there were too many resources committed to them, some of which were regarded as reasonable due to the disadvantage they experienced. Another aspect was African residents fighting the Indigenous Australians, with the latter being blamed for it.

There were a number of negative portrayals of Indigenous Australians from the focus groups, for example, drinking too much, being involved with crimes and theft, and physical attack. There was
an acknowledgment though, that it must be quite difficult to be an Indigenous Australian because of the disadvantage they were in, and because of the pressure that a big family network could create.

**Racism, discrimination and prejudice** were not regarded as widespread but were perceived as subtle and occurring more frequently in recent times. KIs said the most common targets were Indigenous Australian people (*and then there’s the stereotyping, ‘oh bloody black fellas, that’s what they do’*), those from African groups (*some Sudanese young people are disrespected and not trusted because they’re sometimes viewed as violent*), and Muslim women wearing a headscarf (*And so if you’re an African Muslim woman you haven’t got a chance!*). Public displays of discrimination included name calling, verbal abuse, being spat at, ignored, looked down on, and negative comments. These occurred in public places such as the shopping centre, the medical centre, and government offices (e.g., Centrelink, Medicare). More subtle forms of discrimination were also observed, in which migrants or refugees were not served in shops, or were not acknowledged or spoken to when an English-speaking person was with them. People from some cultural groups were often treated with suspicion in the shopping centre (*You have an allocated security guard following you if you’re a Middle Eastern, African or Aboriginal person*).

A frequently reported aspect emphasised in racist behaviours is religion or indicators of religion, such as the cross for Christians, and the headscarves for Muslim women. Another basis is the colour of the skin or non-European/Anglo-Celtic features, i.e., Asian or Middle Eastern features.

The perpetrators of racism were varied – ‘mostly white people’, Asians (*especially Chinese*), non-migrant (*You cannot discriminate against others when you are an immigrant*). In terms of coping, most victims preferred the inaction approach, such as ignoring them (while hurting and feeling bad/helpless inside or doubtful that anything could be done).

### 4.2.7 Legitimacy

Because legitimacy refers primarily to government policies, structures and systems, this was not a focal area of our fieldwork. Nonetheless, we included questions concerning trust and confidence in government departments and services.

There was a perception that some community members had a lack of trust, particularly among Indigenous Australians and refugees, in government departments, particularly the Department for Child Protection (DCP). This was regarded as stemming from a lack of awareness of the role of the department, and a lack of understanding of Australian cultural norms and laws (and the difference between them) regarding the disciplining and supervision of children among some African community members in particular. There were accounts of migrant/refugee women who got distressed with the threat of the department taking their child/ren away for using a culturally-based strict strategy for disciplining their child/ren.

There was also distrust of or dissatisfaction with other government departments/services, such as Centrelink (who assumed social security fraud was committed by migrants), and Immigration (who let people from war-torn countries come to Australia, spent a lot of money on refugees). Some commented on politicians’ attitudes (e.g., dominated by self-interest rather than the good of the country). There were suggestions that more information should be provided to the wider community from government departments, for example from Immigration to explain the status and circumstances of ‘boat people’. Also, there was a suggestion on individual self-reflection which was opined to be key to changing the government. For others, they simply did not know much about the government.
Views on trust in the police were more positive, although mixed—some KIs thought the local police had built good relationships with African and Indigenous Australian communities whilst others thought that African community members’ trust in the police was low. For migrants and refugees this was believed to stem from experiences in their home countries, as with trust in government institutions in general. Some focus group participants noted how helpful the police were in responding to residents’ call for assistance, for example with burglary, attack on property; on the other hand, some complained that the police were nowhere to be seen, or were slow to respond to calls for assistance.

4.2.8 Social division and conflict
In general Mirrabooka/Balga KIs reported that social conflict was low in the community, but identified elements of tension and division. On the other hand, only a few focus group participants commented on the extent of social conflict and division in their community but many told stories of such.

KIs identified a history of intergroup tensions between some African and Indigenous Australian residents, as evidenced by incidents between African and Indigenous Australian youth at the local secondary school and in the streets. However, the KIs reported that the school had made significant efforts to address these tensions and relations were improving. The KIs also mentioned a specific day that was organised to address the issues between the African and Indigenous community members. They also identified other intergroup tensions, between different migrant groups such as the southern Sudanese and some Arab communities. However, these were mentioned far less frequently.

The focus group participants spoke of fights between Anglo and Indigenous Australian youth; and general fights taking place between different groups.

There were within-group tensions also, sometimes along tribal, political (for example, related to the war in their home country) or religious lines.

Social tensions and violence in the Mirrabooka/Balga community were also seen as resulting from youth aggression rather than interracial tensions or ethnic ‘gangs’. Young people were portrayed as ‘wild’, and uncontrollable. And participants were very quick to attribute these to the influence of Australian society/culture. That is, this society allowed them freedom to express themselves in whatever way they wanted, freedom to go against their parents’ wishes, and then youth misunderstanding what this freedom really meant. Again, the theme of cultural difference in the area of disciplining children was very strong here. Bad company and social issues (e.g., poverty, unemployment, social housing) were also cited as reasons for youth aggression. School was not spared of ‘problems’ with youth either.

The perceived lack of safety in the community was said to have contributed to social division. Some participants talked about actual experience of being victims of crime, or of feeling unsafe. For example, fearing that someone would follow them to their car after they withdrew money from the bank or the ATM machine; feeling a need to lock their cars; fights (physical or verbal); theft and robbery; a man exposing himself to a woman. Some did not attribute this to ethnicity, believing that it’s more about Mirrabooka, or that it is actually happening everywhere, and especially during night time. Some believed drugs and alcohol, individual personality characteristics (‘crazy, selfishness, egoism’) and the lack of police presence contributed to the crime and lack of safety. But others linked the crime and safety issues directly to certain ethnic groups in the community, or to the fact
that there were many different cultural groups. The places of crime or environment considered unsafe included around the shopping centres and the bus station. Many participants, however, said they felt safe in Mirrabooka. One said that the crimes have reduced in the community.

4.2.9 Media use and influence

KIs and focus group participants were asked how much they thought people in the community used the media, particularly the internet and social media, as well as the potential influence of the media in terms of intergroup relations and social cohesion. Unsurprisingly, they indicated that internet and social media use was much higher among the younger members of the community, people who had been living in Australia longer, and people with higher levels of education and/or literacy. There were mixed views on the impact of social media such as Facebook: it may bring young people together but ‘they may be coming together for the wrong reasons’ (KI) (alluding to anti-social activities such as crime and gangs). A focus group participant pointed out the benefit of social networking which was communication with people who are far away, but warned against the risks, such as misunderstandings, unintended publicity of materials that may affect people’s reputation, and unexpected influence on people’s opinions.

The mass media have contributed significantly to the promulgation of negative stereotypes about ethnic and cultural minorities, and ‘refugees’. Some KIs thought this situation was improving, and reported they had developed positive relations with editors of local and state newspapers which had led to a reduction in racial or ethnic group labelling of alleged offenders (in crime reports). Nonetheless, many highlighted the role of commercial television media in promoting perceptions that refugees received preferential treatment in terms of state housing, financial support from Centrelink and other ‘privileges’. The constant debates on television and radio about the asylum seekers issue, always highlighting the negative, have been bad for refugees/Humanitarian Entrants morale. The media seemed to have prejudged refugees, Muslims and other groups. Some participants said they would just avoid watching television to avoid being affected by all the negative stereotyping and prejudices showing in these media.

The media has also provided a negative portrayal of the community of Mirrabooka. The propensity of media to sensationalise issues or events has led some participants to distrust the media. Nonetheless, some KIs described how they had been successful in challenging journalists and editors to present positive stories, particularly in the local media (newspapers). One participant observed that the media coverage of Mirrabooka has improved.

4.2.10 Media analysis results for Mirrabooka/Balga

An internet search was conducted in local, state and national print media in the past two years (1/01/2010 – 22/11/2011). Keywords included primarily ‘Mirrabooka’ and ‘Balga’, and ‘diversity’; ‘belonging’; ‘cohesion’; ‘multiculturalism’; ‘Sudanese’ (or a combination of these terms).

For the local media, the website http://inmycommunity.com.au was used to search for articles in the Eastern Reporter and the Stirling Times. In this search 122 articles were retrieved. For the state media www.watoday.com.au and www.perthnow.com.au were used to search for articles in WA Today and The Sunday Times. For WA Today 124 articles were retrieved, and for PerthNow 88 were retrieved. The Australian was used as a source of national media (www.theaustralian.com.au)

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17The internet search was not comprehensive. Articles were selected for their relevance to social cohesion.
and from the search 18 articles were retrieved. To broaden the search Google news (www.news.google.com.au) was also used, retrieving 11 results for ‘Mirrabooka’. Items in newspapers were considered relevant if they mentioned aspects of community living such as safety and crime, and also diversity, difference, multiculturalism, and immigration. (The news articles are listed in Appendix C-2.)

Generally, the local media reported more stories that related to promoting social cohesion (in terms of the cultural diversity in Mirrabooka/Balga) than stories regarding the lack of social cohesion in the area (e.g., safety and crime issues). Below are a few select examples of the types of stories that were reported on, and are not a comprehensive list of all the articles published about Mirrabooka/Balga.

In analysing the local print media stories, it became apparent that aspects of the social cohesion dimensions (i.e., Jensen’s framework) could be applied. There were general stories regarding celebrating Mirrabooka’s cultural diversity which related to inclusion and social participation domains. For example:

- Festival snapshots of cultural harmony—Residents from different cultures shared their views on harmony and life at a multicultural community gathering with a film crew at Mirrabooka Shopping Centre (January 26, 2010; www.inmycommunity.com)
- Young refugees share their stories though art—Young refugees at Mirrabooka, Balga ... had their artwork on display in the Free From Fear exhibition at Central Park in Perth (July 6, 2010; www.inmycommunity.com)
- Plans for Mirrabooka markets—Cr Sharon Cooke called for staff to size up potential markets in Mirrabooka as she considered it something the community wanted and would celebrate the area’s multicultural diversity (September 20, 2011; www.inmycommunity.com).

Other types of stories related to the inclusion and participation of Mirrabooka’s Sudanese residents. For example:

- Rudd makes Sudan pledge—Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd addressed members of the Sudanese community in Mirrabooka last week (July 19 2011; www.inmycommunity.com)
- Birth of South Sudan brings joy to many—Dancers in Mirrabooka celebrate the birth of their new nation, South Sudan, and hopefully an end to decades of bloodshed (Liam Croy, Eastern Reporter, July 12, 2011)

Finally, there were stories that related to the inclusion of Mirrabooka and Balga’s Indigenous Australian residents with respect to housing and education. For example:

- Madeline makes a difference each day—Balga resident and Noongar role model Madeline Anderson (24) has been recognised for her tireless work as an Aboriginal Support Officer with the Department of housing (Liam Croy, Eastern Reporter, July 12, 2011)
- Indigenous beacon awarded $50,000—Balga Senior High School has received a $50, 000 Schools First grant for the success of its Indigenous empowerment program (Liam Croy, www.inmycommunity.com; November 2, 2010).

The above stories demonstrate that the local print media were reporting positive stories related to the inclusion and participation of migrant and Indigenous residents and therefore played a role in promoting social cohesion.
However, within the local print media, another theme emerged, which was broadly related to social division and conflict—that is, safety and crime issues. It is notable that these stories about crime did not report the perpetrators’ ethnicity. For example:

- Beer bottle assault—A 20-year-old Dianella man was lucky to escape serious injury after he was assaulted with a glass bottle near the corner of Mirrabooka Avenue and Yirrigan Drive in Mirrabooka last night (Adriana Tsouleas, Eastern Reporter, March 8, 2010)
- Hunt for home intruder who beat up woman—Mirrabooka detectives have called for public assistance after a Balga woman was seriously assaulted in her own home on Friday night (Liam Duce, Eastern Reporter, May 9, 2011)
- Pair attack teenage girl – Witnesses are needed to identify two women who attacked a 16-year-old girl in Balga (June 15, 2010, www.inmycommunity.com)
- Crime figures dip, but stay vigilant – Mirrabooka police have reported a significant reduction in burglaries but have warned residents not to let complacency undo the process (January 19, 2010, www.inmycommunity.com).

There was also a story which outlined Balga as being ‘WA’s welfare capital’.

Balga is WA’s welfare capital, with 30 percent on Government handouts—Balga and its surrounding suburbs is the welfare capital of WA, with almost a third of residents receiving Centrelink payments (Linda Cann, The Sunday Times, April 17, 2011).

Stories such as these played a part in portraying Mirrabooka and Balga as having a ‘bad’ reputation and being a ‘no-go’ area (Parker & Karner, 2010). Reporting of crime, where it is seen to be abnormally high, could erode trust and therefore impact on social cohesion.

Unlike the local media, the state media reporting on Mirrabooka and Balga was primarily negative. Only one story was found that related to Mirrabooka’s cultural diversity, one that spoke of a police officer who was rewarded for his work with cultural minorities.

Sergeant rewarded for multicultural work—Mirrabooka policeman Sgt Don Emmanuel-Smith has been recognised as WA’s top cop for 2011 after receiving the Police Officer of the Year award. The community diversity officer was honoured …for his work towards the culturally diverse community in Perth’s northern suburbs (Chris Robinson, PerthNow, October 4, 2011).

The majority of stories which mentioned Mirrabooka and Balga in the state media related to safety and crime issues, highlighting issues of social division and conflict in the areas. Again, and similarly to the local media, in these stories there was no mention of the perpetrator’s ethnicity. Most articles were about local incidents of assault and/or robbery with a weapon (7 articles; e.g., ‘Man beaten with a pole in Mirrabooka’ Lucy Rickard, WA Today, April 15, 2011), ‘home invasion’ (2 articles; e.g., ‘Shot fired, woman bashed with hammer in violent home invasion’ Katie Robertson, PerthNow, August 17, 2011) and police questioning local residents suspected for other crimes (2 articles; e.g., ‘Men questioned over shooting’ Nicole Cox, PerthNow, July 2, 2011; ‘Young cop struck down by clan lab fumes’, Phil Hickey, PerthNow, June 26, 2011).

Overall, there were few news articles regarding Mirrabooka and Balga in the national media. There was one story relating to promoting social cohesion, specifically through inclusiveness (i.e., health of its culturally diverse residents).
Map of needs gives kids a start—... thanks to the largest child health and development survey undertaken in Australia, suburbs such as culturally diverse Mirrabooka now have the information needed to tackle their issues and help every child get a good start in life (Tony Kirby, The Australian, June 5, 2010).

Other stories related to safety and crime issues. In particular, one story was about the murder of a Sudanese young man in Mirrabooka, an incident that was reported in both state and national media and was identified by KIs and focus group participants as a specific issue that received intense media attention. A total of nine stories related to this were collected for analysis. We did not find any reports about this issue in the local media at the time of analysis.

The only article in the national newspaper, The Australian, is reproduced below. This article described the severity of the crime - ‘one man dead’, ‘another is in critical condition’, but there was no mention of the motivation, the race or ethnicity of the people involved.

**One man dead, one critical after Perth brawl (The Australian, April 22, 2010)**

ONE man is dead and another is in a critical condition after a street brawl in Perth. About 10pm (WST) yesterday police were called to Mirrabooka in the city’s north where about 20 young men were fighting in the street with sticks and other weapons. They found two men seriously injured at the scene, a police spokesman said. One man later died and the other remains in a critical condition in hospital. The area has been cordoned off and a crime scene established.

The other eight articles were reported in the state media. Further details are presented in Appendix C-3.

The first article that was reported after the incident (‘Sudanese student killed in street brawl’, by Aja Styles, April 22, 2010, WA Today), mentioned the ethnicity of the victims and the perpetrators, however the suggestion that this may have been racially motivated was minimised. The article mentioned that the stabbing victim was a Sudanese student and it was a large group of men fighting in the street. Police spoke with Afghan and Sudanese community representatives but would not say whether race or ethnicity was a factor. Superintendent Gilbert said, referring to the Afghani men, ‘These members are no more members of a gang than a few mates walking along the road so I don’t think it is gang-related...There’s no information to say it’s racially motivated’. Even though there was a major brawl the police commented that crime rates for the area have gone down. Sudanese community leader Simon Dang said the victim was not involved in any activity that would lead to him being stabbed, he was just minding his own business—‘He was an honest young man, he was never involved in any type of crime, he just died for no reason’. Dang commented that the whole Sudanese community was affected by the death, not just the family—‘For the Sudanese community and the wider Western Australia if we don’t deal with it responsibly there will be a lot of problems on the street and in public places...This is the very first case for our community’. Residents close to the crime scene were said to be shocked about what happened: ‘I have been here 21 years so it’s never happened like that, so I was quite shocked when I heard (the news) this morning’. What is interesting to note however is that there was no mention as to why the Afghani man was carrying a weapon at the time of the crime.

Only one other article mentioned the ethnicity of both the victim and the perpetrators (‘Man charged over brawl death in Perth’, WA Today, May 17, 2010). Looking closely at the language used in this article, we noted the words ‘stabbing death’, ‘wild brawl’, ‘serious stab wounds’, accompanied by the description of the two groups of Sudanese and Afghan migrants. Another article...
'One dead, one critical after Mirrabooka street brawl' (Chris Robinson, *PerthNow*, April 23, 2010) used words such as ‘violent brawl in Mirrabooka’, ‘multiple stab wounds and head injuries’. This discourse evokes negative connotations for Mirrabooka’s reputational geography and adds to the already existing stereotypes of Afghani communities—as violent, ‘criminal other’ (Quayle & Sonn, 2009)—which could serve to marginalise members of these communities. They may also contribute to beliefs in intergroup tensions and perceptions that multiculturalism has ‘failed’ among other members of the community (e.g., Anglo-Australians), although community leaders and others interviewed by the media tended to disagree with the suggestion that the violence was indicative of ongoing inter-ethnic tensions. Consistent with this, our KIs and focus group participants regarded this as a one-off incident between young men. Although a detailed analysis of the impact of the reporting of this incident on perceptions of and within the community is beyond the scope of this analysis, it is likely that, at the very least, these media articles reinforce Mirrabooka’s reputation as a dangerous area, particularly after dark.

Three articles mentioned the victim’s ethnicity, but not that of the perpetrator, again de-emphasising the role that ethnicity/culture might have played, for example: ‘A man has been charged with the murder of a Sudanese student following a mass street brawl in Mirrabooka’ (‘Man charged over Sudanese student murder’ by Chalpat Sonti, May 17, 2010, *WA Today*); ‘A 20-year-old man, a Sudanese student, was fatally stabbed in the fight and another was critically injured with multiple stab wounds and head injuries’ (‘Murder charge after street fight’, *PerthNow*, May 17, 2010); and ‘Two people, including a 16-year-old, have been charged in relation to the murder of a Sudanese student in Mirrabooka last month’ (‘Teen charged over Mirrabooka murder’ by Chloe Johnson, May 25, 2010, *WA Today*).

Finally, two state articles did not mention the ethnicity of either the victims or the perpetrators:

- ‘Police have charged a 16-year-old youth in connection with the fatal brawl in Mirrabooka. A 20-year-old-man was killed and a 27-year-old suffered serious injuries after a minor traffic dispute on Australis Avenue in Mirrabooka turned violent last month’ (‘Teen charged after fatal brawl’, *PerthNow*, May 25, 2010)

### 4.2.11 Promoting social cohesion

Our KI interviews raised issues about programs and strategies for promoting social cohesion, or improving the current situation in relation to the specific dimensions of social cohesion. From these discussions five main themes relating to general factors that would enhance social cohesion were identified: activities, education and awareness, leadership, program funding, and a whole-of-community approach.

**Activities and events** relating to food and music were the most successful in bringing people in the community together. The success of food markets and shared cooking classes was attributed to people’s common enjoyment of food, that participation revolves around a common purpose and that such activities do not necessarily require proficiency in English (or a language in common) in order to participate. More activities of this nature were deemed to be needed in the Mirrabooka community and that they should be cheap or free, held in accessible public spaces and not specific to a particular ethnic or racial group.
Yeah, more day events are, I can say are the good tools of bringing people together.

In a more fun way, in a more relaxed way, tasting food.

Because food, music, beauty...that's what brings people together. Not lots and lots of literature put upon some wall.

More work in building awareness and knowledge in the community was suggested since many of the intergroup tensions stemmed from lack of understanding or ignorance. Some suggested that developing greater awareness extended to service providers themselves, but the majority proposed that it was needed in the community more broadly. In particular, KIs thought that community-wide (and in fact, Australia-wide) there should be efforts to enhance knowledge about refugees and Humanitarian Entrants: about their home countries and reasons for leaving (in general), about the numbers of refugees in Australia relative to other parts of the world, and about exactly what they are entitled to in terms of government support and assistance. There was also a need for further education and awareness of Indigenous Australians’ cultures and history, particularly among newer migrants and refugees (‘Aboriginal people as traditional owners of the land, that sort of stuff’). This was linked to acknowledgement of Indigenous Australians, as discussed earlier under Recognition.

Strong and effective leadership within communities was a significant contributor toward social cohesion, particularly the dimensions of participation and recognition. They were speaking specifically of leadership of minority ethnic groups but also more broadly in terms of political leadership at the local, state and federal level.

KIs were almost unanimous in the view that the nature and extent of most program funding resulted in short term and piecemeal approaches. Some complained that the nature of many grants meant that pilot projects were popular but it was difficult to secure longer-term funding once the pilot was complete. They also proposed there should be more cooperation among organisations, government and non-government, to enable more comprehensive programs and strategies with larger budgets. Finally, some proposed that there should be more grant funding available for whole-of-community initiatives which promote participation by everyone, rather than targeting specific ethnic groups.

We feature below some key programs for promoting social cohesion in the Mirrabooka and Balga areas that we compiled from websites and brochures and were mentioned by KIs and/or focus group participants. Programs that focus exclusively on settlement of migrants and refugees were not included in this search, nor were mainstream whole-of-community programs and activities that do not target specific ethnic or migrant groups.

The examples below represent key themes of arts, sport, employment, English language, and community capacity building. As expected, there were considerable overlaps among the themes. At the time of writing only two programs had been evaluated formally (i.e., for the City of Stirling CaLD Youth Sport and Recreation Project and the Reel Connections program). Appendix C-4 provides a more comprehensive list of programs that run in the Mirrabooka/Balga area, specifically related to aspects of social cohesion. Due to the multifaceted nature of social cohesion, it was not possible to cover all related programs in Mirrabooka/Balga, therefore key agencies and organisations were focused on, for example, the Office of Multicultural Interests (WA government); City of Stirling; the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre; ISHAR Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health; the Edmund Rice Centre; Mercy Care; and various local school programs.
Harmony Week activities and events celebrate Australian ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity and thereby contribute to the social cohesion dimensions of Belonging, Recognition and Participation.

Harmony Week is coordinated and funded by the Office of Multicultural Interests (WA government). It is held annually, from 15-21 March and concludes on the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Its aims are to celebrate diversity and ‘enables Western Australians to take a stand against discrimination and racism in all its forms’ (http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi_harmony_week.cfm). Events and activities are organised locally, with support from the Office of Multicultural Interests and in conjunction with non-government organisations. In Mirrabooka, the most prominent event for Harmony Week is an event celebrating multicultural food, music, art and sports, held in Mirrabooka Square. This is usually hosted by local organisations such as the Edmund Rice Centre and Ishar Multicultural Centre for Women’s Health, together with local government (the City of Stirling).

Migrants Got Talent contributed to Belonging, Participation, and Recognition dimensions of social cohesion, particularly among young people. It also contributed to promoting and enhancing leadership skills among young Western Australians from migrant backgrounds.

This was a collaborative program involving the City of Stirling, the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre, the Association for Survivors of Torture and Trauma (ASeTTs), KULCHA (a multicultural arts organisation), GOWRIE (child care and community services), and the Edmund Rice Centre. It was funded by the Department of Communities and Healthway (WA government health promotion foundation). It was a talent show, profiling young people from diverse backgrounds from across Perth. The program was developed by a local youth leader, Jeremiah Wordsworth, who was a refugee from Liberia. Contestants were supported through auditions and rehearsals over several months and the finale has been held in the Perth Town Hall and the Perth Convention Centre. The program had high participation rates and the finale was very well attended in 2010 and 2011. It had also received some positive media attention, including a segment on the Channel 10 news (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ3lQJR5KaU). Jeremiah Wordsworth won the Create! Propel Youth Arts Award and was WA’s Young Person of the Year in 2010.

City of Stirling CaLD Youth Sport and Recreation Project (2006-2009)

This program contributed to the Participation and Recognition dimensions of social cohesion. It was a project ‘designed to engage diverse young people, particularly those from African and Indigenous backgrounds, in organised sport, recreation and leisure activities’(www.dsr.wa.gov.au/city-of-stirling-project). It was funded by the Department of Sport and Recreation, the Office of Multicultural Interests and the City of Stirling. The project ‘focuses on suburbs in the Balga and northern Lawley wards (Mirrabooka, Balga, Westminster and Nollamara) and the adjacent suburbs of Girrawheen and Koondoola, where there is a relatively high concentration of young people from these backgrounds who have low participation rates in organised sport and recreation. The three-year project aims to use sport as a vehicle to help decrease social tension and at-risk behaviour that can result from feelings of marginalisation and [18] Although additional events and activities may be held at local schools and other organisations.
alienation often experienced by CaLD young people, which can adversely affect their development and wellbeing (www.dsr.wa.gov.au/city-of-stirling-project). The project was based at the Herb Graham Recreation Centre in Mirrabooka, and staffed by a full-time Special Project Officer. Some of the objectives of this programme were to:

- Enable sporting and community groups the opportunity to showcase their club and recruit new members through a wider range of community events and activities
- Training relating to Inclusive participation in sport and recreational activities for established sporting clubs
- Increase opportunities to collaborate with peak ethnic community organisations
- Additional support to assist with engaging multicultural youth into your sporting club
- Coaching workshops for multicultural youth
- New multicultural youth participation programs through sport and recreational activities
- Sport education and training workshops around engaging CaLD youth into sport, recreation and leisure activities
- Club development education specific to CaLD youth
- Coaching and officiating training courses for target group to be role models

An evaluation of the project was conducted by the Social Program Evaluation Research Unit, Social Justice Research Centre (Edith Cowan University) in 2009 (Cooper, Bahn, & Hancock, 2009 – available at http://www.ecu.edu.au/schools/psychology-and-social-science/research-activity/social-justice-research-centre/publications). Cooper et al. (2009) concluded that the project had achieved many of its objectives including increased participation in sport, recreation and leisure among young people from the target groups. Nonetheless, the authors noted that there were still barriers to participation, particularly among young women. These included lack of childcare and gender-specific activities, and cost. In addition, Cooper et al. commented that further support was needed for some sport and recreation clubs to develop practices to increase cultural and linguistic diversity among their members and participants.

Beatball (2010-2011)

Beatball, an innovative basketball program, was designed to enhance Belonging, Participation and intergroup Recognition among Indigenous Australian, culturally diverse and Anglo-Australian youth (12-18 tear olds) in Mirrabooka and surrounding suburbs. It was run by the City of Stirling at the Herb Graham Recreation Centre in Mirrabooka, and funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship under the Diversity and Social Cohesion Program Grants scheme. It was conducted in collaboration with Nyoongar Sports and the Community Policing Office Mirrabooka.

‘Beatball is a 3 on 3 basketball program played to music, targeting the challenges of respect, fairness and sense of belonging faced by the 12 to 18 year old Indigenous and culturally diverse communities within the region’ (http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/delivering-assistance/government-programs/dscp/funded-projects/grants2010-11/2010-wa.htm). Beatball was a monthly event and includes food, DJ sets and dance performances prior to the round-robin competition. The program also developed leadership in young people by selecting representatives from the local Indigenous Australian, African, Middle Eastern and Asian Communities to be mentored by a Beatball member as part of the Beatball Ambassador Team.
The Reel Connections Programme (2008-2010)

The Reel Connections Programme contributed to Inclusion through its emphasis on employment and education for young people from Indigenous and culturally diverse backgrounds (aged 15-25 years). It was funded under the community grants program of the National Community Crime Prevention Programme (NCCPP) and was a collaboration of the City of Stirling, the City of Wanneroo, Community Arts Network WA, Filmbites Youth Film School, the WA Police and the Balga Detached Youth Work Project.

The programme had three inter-related components and was intended to provide arts-based training that promoted ‘intercultural understanding; awareness of rights and responsibilities; awareness of alternative training and employment opportunities; community safety messages through the production of DVD resources’ (http://www.stirling.wa.gov.au/Home/Services/Families/Youth.htm).

In addition, the programme aimed to reduce anti-social behaviour and to prevent young people from entering the justice system. The three components were: Alternative Training Programme Fired Up Sparking Arts and Creativity (art development and information on career and employment in the arts); Multimedia training and DVD resource production (training in animation, short film and documentary film making); and Information dissemination: Rights and responsibilities (workshops on the law and police, conflict resolution which was interwoven throughout the first two programmes).

The programme was evaluated by the Social Program Evaluation Research Unit of the Social Justice Research Centre (ECU) in 201019. The report authors concluded that the programme was highly valued in the community and achieved many of its short term objectives, such as ‘better access to information about legal processes’ among participants and enhanced retention in education and employment (Cooper & Bahn, 2010 draft report p. 2). However, project funding ended in 2010 and therefore Cooper and Bahn were sceptical about the likelihood of achieving longer-term objectives, such as changing negative community norms.

Community Capacity Building Program (2009-2010)

The Community Capacity Building Program contributed to Participation and Inclusion, particularly for diverse communities, and to the promotion of Recognition through celebration of diversity (http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi_ethnic_organisations_fund.cfm). It was run by the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (Mirrabooka and Clarkson) and funded by the Office of Multicultural Interests.

The program aimed to develop community capacity through ‘leadership and governance training for community leaders from CaLD backgrounds’ (http://www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi_ethnic_organisations_fund.cfm). The program provided: community consultations, resources and service information; and support and mentoring of community leaders to assist in applying for funding and conducting community projects and activities. These were provided through individual and community consultations as well as skill-based workshops.

19 Only a draft of the final evaluation report was available at the time of writing.
20 At the time of writing, this project was ongoing and no evaluation was available.
English/Language for Living in Australia (2009- )

English/Language for Living contributed to Inclusion and Participation, particularly for people from refugee and Humanitarian Entrant backgrounds. Because of the mixed ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of participants (including Anglo-Australians as voluntary tutors) it could be argued that this program contributed to the social cohesion dimension of Recognition as well.

The program was run by the Edmund Rice Centre Mirrabooka and funded by the Office of Multicultural Interests. The program involved weekly English classes based around practical themes that assisted students in everyday living in Australian society. Conversation classes were a component, experienced teachers/former teachers were instructors, and bilingual and multilingual residents assisted in interpreting and translating.

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21 At the time of writing, this project was ongoing and no evaluation was available.
4.3 Blacktown (New South Wales)

4.3.1 Geographical and demographic profile

Blacktown is a suburb in the City of Blacktown Local Government Area, in western Sydney (NSW). Blacktown is the largest of any suburb in New South Wales and is one of the most culturally diverse places in Sydney. In the 2006 Census (ABS, 2006d), there were 38,914 people residing in Blacktown. Of the total population in Blacktown 1.5% were Indigenous persons, compared with 2.5 in Australia overall (ABS, 2009).

Cultural Diversity: In the 2006 Census, 80.8% of people in Blacktown were Australian citizens and 39.6% were born overseas (compared to only 22.2% in the national population). The most common countries of birth for those born overseas include Philippines, India, Sudan, New Zealand and England. The most common languages other than English spoken at home were: Arabic, Hindi, Tagalog (Filipino), Mandarin and Italian. The most common responses for religious affiliation for people usually resident in Blacktown were Catholic, Anglican, No Religion, Islam and Hinduism (ABS, 2006d).

Annual school reports provide more up to date information on the diversity of the community. For example, in 2010, Blacktown North Public School reported that it had students who came from over 20 different nations and 96% of its students had language backgrounds other than English and/or ESL (Blacktown North Public School, 2010). Also Blacktown South Public School reported that the majority of students at the school spoke languages other than English with the most common being Mandarin, Arabic and Punjabi (Blacktown South Public School, 2010).

Employment: 17,746 people aged 15 years and over in Blacktown were in the labour force at the time of the 2006 Census. Of these, 64.1% were employed full-time, 21.7% were employed part-time, 3.2% were employed but away from work, 3.4% were employed but did not state their hours worked, and 7.6% were unemployed (higher than the national average—5.2%). There were 10,873 residents not in the labour force (ABS, 2006d). The most common responses for occupation for employed people usually resident in Blacktown were clerical and administrative workers, technicians and trades workers, professionals, labourers, and machinery operators and drivers (ABS, 2006d).

Income: The median weekly individual income for people aged 15 years and over was $425, compared with $466 in Australia. The median weekly household and family incomes were only slightly lower than the national average: $972 and $1080, compared with $1,027 and $1,171, respectively (ABS, 2006d).

Family and dwelling characteristics: At the 2006 Census, there were 10,380 families in Blacktown: 47.9% were couple families with children, 30.0% were couple families without children, 19.9% were one parent families and 2.2% were other families. The median weekly rent was $215, compared to $190 in Australia. In addition, 28.7% of occupied private dwellings were fully owned, 31.1% were being purchased and 32.3% were rented. Of the occupied private dwellings being rented, 66.0% were rented from a real estate agent, 13.0% were rented from a State or Territory housing authority, and 19.0% were rented from other landlord types. In comparison, in Australia 50.5% were rented from a real estate agent and 14.9% from a state or territory housing authority (ABS, 2006d).
We held five focus groups and conducted 20 KI interviews in Blacktown. Below is a summary of the findings. The fuller findings from the focus groups and interviews are found in Appendix D-1.

4.3.2 ‘The community’

Blacktown, the community, has been characterised in several ways, including as highly culturally diverse, as socio-economically disadvantaged and as densely-populated (‘you line up 74 Australians, one of them live in Blacktown, we like to think of ourselves as a microcosm of Australia’; ‘it’s a very big LGA and populous’). Discussion centred around three themes: socio-economic disadvantage in the community, the physical environment and public space in the community, and the community’s reputation as being unsafe or full of crime. Diversity, and the fact that no single cultural or ethnic group dominated, was seen as a strength of the community.

The socio-economic disadvantage in Blacktown was perceived to be concentrated in particular areas such as Mt Druitt, and places where public housing dominates.

Comments about the physical environment centred on housing development and the shopping centre. It was recognised that the construction of large blocks of small apartments may have contributed to social problems, and that public housing should be less concentrated to reduce socio-economic segregation. The physical environment and infrastructure in the area was linked to social inclusion explicitly, that is, we need to build ‘physical spaces that allow people to participate in a meaningful way (KI)’. There were also several comments about young people congregating in and around the local shopping centre, and the problems this was causing because other community members found it threatening. This is discussed in more detail under Social Division, later.

Blacktown was perceived to have a negative reputation in the wider Sydney and Australian community. This was largely associated with the social disadvantage and public housing in the area, as well as perceptions regarding crime—perceptions that KIs regarded as unfortunate and as an unfair representation of the community.

4.3.3 Belonging

There were mixed views on the extent of belonging to Blacktown. KIs tended to distinguish among sub-groups within the community, referring specifically to the migrant and/or refugee communities, or the Indigenous Australian communities. Thus, discussion centred on the themes of defining community and excluded groups. With regard to defining community, there were multiple communities and identities to which Blacktown residents might belong, for example, community associations, neighbourhoods, ethnic groups, and so on. There was diversity even within the Indigenous Australian community of Blacktown because residents came from different Indigenous Australian nations and tribes but also because they might identify with a smaller geographical area within the LGA.

The multicultural nature of the community was the point most talked about in the focus groups. The sense of ‘Knowing each other’s cultures’ that this feature allowed was what gave many participants a sense of belonging to Blacktown. The friendliness of this multicultural community, the peacefulness, and the availability of good services added to that feeling of satisfaction and belonging. It reduced isolation and ‘homesickness’ for many participants.

For some participants, the ethnic welfare organisation or community worker provided the sense of community, which in this case meant their ethnic community. They acknowledged that they had several adjustment problems when they first arrived in Australia, and it was their organisation or
worker that gave them a lot of information, and a place/space to come to and meet some other people from their ethnic groups. They said that in the midst of too much diversity, sometimes it was difficult to know who the authorities for certain things were. The community organization and worker provided that bridge, and the ‘home’ or safe place to come to at the end of a very difficult day or experience

We see PACSI (Philippine-Australian Community Services Inc) as the very home to go back to. Just like when we were young and still in school, we looked forward to going home each day. Outside the home brings difficulties, but home is always peaceful. When I come to PACSI, it’s like having a mother to come home to. PACSI gives us that refuelling for the emotion. No matter how highly educated you are, you can still feel lost because of the harsh realities of life. It’s the people in PACSI who make this place ‘home’. (Filipino female)

Language barriers were a common reason for some groups feeling a sense of belonging or connection to others in the community, particularly for recently arrived groups. Visible difference, particularly for the African migrants, was a barrier to connecting with others in the community.

Regarding residential stability, longer residence (or being second-generation) was observed to be related to greater sense of belonging and connection to the community.

At the beginning we were thinking maybe we can, we will go back soon. Not feeling like we are connected. Now we lived here for few years so we feel like, oh yeah, this is the place, we have to live here. (Bhutanese female)

4.3.4 Inclusion

As with Mirrabooka/Balga, access to housing and employment were of significant concern, and were seen to reflect the socio-economic disadvantage of the area relative to other parts of Sydney and Australia more generally. Access to employment was the main area in which ethnicity or race was seen to be a factor. KIs also discussed access to healthcare, education, and identified groups within the community who may be socially excluded.

There was a common sentiment that it was hard for lower income families to find affordable housing. This most affected the migrant and refugee families because they had larger families. Competition for government housing was also an issue. Apart from a lack of housing that could accommodate large families, there was discrimination against migrants and refugees in the private housing market due to their lack of proficiency in English and illiteracy, and some beliefs held by real estate agents that some groups (e.g., Africans) were bad tenants.

Access to healthcare (or lack thereof) was not a major concern raised in the Blacktown fieldwork. The focus group participants seemed to be satisfied, and quite appreciative of the Medicare system. However, KIs highlighted the problems associated with language barriers for patients from non-English speaking backgrounds. There was discussion of the use of interpreters, mainly around some services avoiding getting interpreter services for clients who needed it, because it would take time to book them, and the interaction with the clients, through the interpreter, would be twice as long. Access to mental health services was also identified, particularly a need for bi- or multilingual counsellors to assist refugees.

Blacktown KIs did not highlight access to education as a big problem for the community, although they identified a need to improve literacy among young people and to target programs earlier. Literacy was seen to be a problem for all members of the community, associated with socio-economic disadvantage and contributing to problems in obtaining suitable employment (and thereby perpetuating socio-economic disadvantage). Literacy was seen to be a significant problem
for some of the refugee children, especially those who were in refugee camps for a long period, and who have arrived in Australia recently. The government schools’ policy of placing children from new communities in age-appropriate school levels might hamper their educational level since they might not have the academic preparation before they came to Australia. Also, because of the two-year waiting period for newly arrived migrants and refugees to avail of government assistance, some adult participants could not study at university if they wanted to without having to pay the fees. This has affected not just getting local qualifications but their job prospects as well.

Discrimination was cited by two participants: A TAFE teacher doubted her English ability even though the assessment of the migrant’s skills was done in front of the teacher. Another teacher judged prematurely that the work of the Asian participant was inferior.

Some suggestions related to education: There should be more education about and encouragement for refugee children and young people to participate in TAFE, rather than pushing them toward the HSC (Higher School Certificate). Promote approaches to programs that had been successful in engaging Indigenous Australian students in school, at the primary level, such as exposing them at an early level to positive role models, to industry, so they could set goals for the future.

On the positive side, some participants were pleased with the quality of education in Australia and grateful that their children would succeed in the future because of this.

Access to employment was a major sub-theme of inclusion for Blacktown KIs. There was discussion of the links between education and employment (and English language education for new communities), difficulties in having overseas qualifications recognised, needing local experience and problems with the job network. Participation in meaningful employment was linked to other dimensions of social cohesion such as belonging and participation, and seen as a preventative factor in social conflict and division.

If kids thought that their future relied on getting a job over there, or in junior school hallways instead of sitting out in the street, if they were given a job at the local Coles or Woolworths, what that does is potentially they realise it’s their backyard. They’ve got some ownership for themselves. (KI)

Employment is the most important thing in human life. The more you are employed, this depression, this social isolation—all stuff like that—are reduced. If you are employed, you will have good network and you socialise also with other people. (KI)

KIs identified some successful initiatives to employ young people locally but there was a view that more support was needed for people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, who lacked a community network to find employment.

Underemployment, due to English-language difficulties, lack of recognition of overseas qualifications and a preference for people with ‘local’ experience, was identified as a problem for new communities.

The focus group participants cited difficulties in finding employment, describing the long process (e.g., years) of constantly trying. Or they were able to get only jobs that were lower than what they had trained for. Prospective employers were known to look for local experience, but participants felt that if no one was prepared to give them a job, when would they get that local experience? Many felt that employers immediately assumed they could not handle the job, instead of giving them a chance to prove themselves. Opening up these opportunities, even on a trial basis, or an internship would be helpful, the participants said.
Many participants identified the lack of English skills and the non-recognition of their overseas qualifications (not to mention the cost of having these qualifications recognised) as the main barriers for not accessing employment opportunities. For some who have lived in refugee camps for so long, they have come to Australia at a stage in their life (age 45-60) when learning a new language has become difficult. This then leads to difficulties in upgrading their skills or applying for suitable jobs.

Sometimes there were perceived misunderstandings or lack of appreciation by services, of the urgent need and desperation of refugees to find employment, and why it was important for them to have a career.

Discrimination in employment was also a common theme in the focus groups. Many of the experiences were in applying and finding a job. This could be based on age, or ethnic background, or the lack of English proficiency. Or it could be because of the threat that someone with higher qualifications posed on existing staff.

The frustration at not finding a job or adequate employment was discussed as having affected the participants’ self-esteem, relationships with their spouse and children; or they felt their abilities and skills were being ‘wasted’; some felt unsettled.

There was some advice given by participants to help migrants and refugees find a job: consider volunteering in order to gain the local experience and have people who would act as referees for future job applications, for the government to be more considerate in assessing overseas qualifications, to give migrants and refugees a fair go.

KIs pointed out that excluded groups in Blacktown were Indigenous Australians, and refugee and migrant communities that had poor English skills and/or traumatised backgrounds. For KIs, the social exclusion of Indigenous Australians was obvious, based on statistics of employment, home ownership and health. Thus, aspects of exclusion were interlinked and seen as contributing to each other. Ways to enhance inclusion for Indigenous Australians included respect for Indigenous Australian customs and culture.

Finally, problems with English and understanding Australian systems, contributed to exclusion for migrant communities. In this regard, some participants pointed out that migrant elderly are doubly disadvantaged because of their age and lack of English skills.

4.3.5 Participation

There were mixed views on community participation in Blacktown. Some felt that participation around social and/or cultural events was quite good, and that participation within ethnic and/or cultural communities was strong. Interactions across groups (migrant and refugee, Indigenous, and Anglo-Australian) were less frequent.

Young people were seen to be more likely to get involved, which was related to community participation (‘I think it’s because young people tend to engage in more activities’ (KI)). Being involved in community activities such as sports programs helped make them feel belonging to the community, since these were where people from different groups met and got to know each other. These sports programs were regarded as even more useful when they included leadership training and camps that involve skills and awareness training for participants. The youth also mentioned activities run under the Youth Off the Streets (YOTS) program, the culture choir in school, Indigenous Australian community of wrestlers program, sport festival. For future, they suggested swimming, kung fu or self-defence classes, dance and multicultural days. They even have a strategy in mind to
encourage more participation among youth of different groups: start small, involve community (youth) leaders, and then expand.

Older adults were seen as being busy with work and other tasks that prevented them from getting involved, although there was informal participation within communities (see Volunteering, below). Other participants identified a number of community activities that they participated in: bowling, events organized by community organizations, special courses, playing cards.

Harmony Day activities were seen to bring diverse members of the community together. However, there was need to engage Anglo-Australians in Harmony Day activities and events.

Some participants raised concern over the lack of activities for middle-aged refugees who were not retired yet and still had capacity to learn and be involved. Also, it was thought that were not enough activities for newly-arrived refugees who would not readily mix, socially. Cultural activities were said to attract the young and the elderly, but not necessarily the middle-aged.

Political participation in the form of voting in state and federal elections was something that had been targeted in the Blacktown community, due to a high number of invalid papers previously. For migrants and refugees from some countries, political involvement or interests from their country of origin were a source of within-group tensions. Some participants talked about the importance of expressing their views and letting their community workers know of issues that should reach the local government, so that things can be done to address problems.

Volunteering was not a major sub-theme of discussion in Blacktown. Nonetheless, through activities such as the street walk (in which the police patrol the community together with ethnic community leaders and representatives), English classes, and driver education, many Blacktown residents were actively volunteering in the community. These activities were seen to contribute to interaction and mixing across different ethnic groups within the community. The value of volunteering was recognized by the Filipino participants: making a contribution to others’ welfare (individuals as well as ethnic community); learning things, developing skills, and increasing familiarity with the services system; and gaining work experience that could be used for future job application. Some volunteers learned through this how certain problems could be solved, including their own.

Enablers for participation included: confidence in speaking English; and having programs and events that were culturally sensitive and aware (e.g., for the Indigenous Australian community), were based locally and easily accessible to the community, and involved shared interests in religious and sporting activities, and individual. For example, one KI praised the Football United initiative (described under programs, subsequently) as bringing people together, both youth and their parents. Therefore, sports could break barriers to community participation.

Barriers to participation identified included cost, transport, migrant families being busy with multiple jobs and shift work, and lack of English language confidence. The lack of English language skills was seen to be related to the age at the time of arrival in Australia and to the readiness to learn new things. Apparently the youth would find it easier; but the elderly would not be ready to make major adjustments to their life, and thus could be alienated from community and political participation. Having said that, the lack of English skills and the low level of participation could serve as ‘a blessing’ in that they could also be sheltered from the problems and issues affecting migrants and refugees. They could also be oblivious of the discrimination and racism around them, or the demands of familiarising with the new environment if their recourse was just to stay within their ethnic group, where they could communicate in their native language effectively. The dissonance of
whether to maintain or give up their native culture in order to become integrated in Australian society was felt by some participants. Another participant offered a solution to this dilemma, that is, to become multicultural.

Community integration is not only one-way. It’s not only we adopt the Australian life or culture. For example, my first daughter in law, she’s an Australian here. She learned to cook all our traditional food, we had the wedding on our style, then her brother gets married, they organized the wedding similar to our way. They adapt our way. The celebration, exactly like. Another example is 2 years ago, Iraqi soccer team played with Australian, they came here. And my daughter in law she raised the Iraqi flag. So it’s not only one-way, we adapt Australian life. If we can give the Australian people our tradition, our custom, our food, they will have some. That’s why we say multicultural country. (Iraqi male)

The frustration over not being able to communicate because they did not speak English was expressed poignantly by one Bhutanese male participant when he said, through an interpreter,

People like you, we need and would like to talk to you. Lot of worries from the human part of us. They all get stuck over here [throat]. I really want to express my feeling, but because of my language I can’t. (Bhutanese male)

But most participants spoke of how hard they tried to learn English, and how committed they were to continue improving their English skills. They were aware that not having these skills was a major reason for not making friends with other groups, and not being able to participate fully in Australian society.

The culture issue extended to discussion of cultural differences around the relationship between parents and children—regarding friendships (e.g., children’s behaviours of hanging out with friends), the issue of trust (e.g., parents towards children), and setting rules. Parents’ encouragement was seen as important for young people to fully participate in community activities.

Language (not just English) and communication were cited as enablers and barriers to community participation. For example, some youth participants believed that it is important to speak English, as a common language, when different groups are around (e.g., in school), rather than speak in an ethnic language which could alienate non-speakers of that language. On the other hand, some participants defended this behaviour, saying that joining their own ethnic group and speaking in their language could provide the sense of security so they could communicate, especially if they have poor English skills.

Community organisations and the church were regarded by many participants as instrumental to bringing different groups together and encouraging community participation.

4.3.6 Recognition

Recognition is a complex construct of understanding and respect for others, and not surprisingly, there were mixed views about the extent that there was recognition in Blacktown. Sub-themes were intergroup attitudes (and interaction), perceived competition for resources, lack of acknowledgement of and respect for Indigenous Australians, and discrimination and prejudice.

In general, KIs thought that intergroup attitudes were positive in Blacktown (‘I don’t see when I’m out at the schools, an animosity or friction that’s ethnically based within the schools’ (KI)). Some commented about negativity toward Muslims, contributed to by stereotypes in the media such as associations with terrorism. Others spoke of community members’ initial fear of African refugees, particularly the young men. It was acknowledged that a contributing factor was the tendency for
these young men to ‘hang out’ in public spaces, which many people found threatening, and that this may have a cultural dimension.

Many focus group participants spoke of different groups getting along just fine. Some factors that caused this were: common interests, common experience of being migrants/refugees; similar experience of disadvantage, and respect accorded to people with high educational background. Some participants spoke of getting along more with people from the same ethnic background. A participant spoke happily about having good neighbours, mainly also because she had gone out of her way to be a good neighbour herself.

There were concerns that Anglo-Australians avoided getting involved and this may be due to negative attitudes towards refugees. Some participants suggested that for Anglo-Australians and migrants/refugees to get along, there must be mutual acceptance, and both parties must be prepared to adjust, and to initiate reaching out to each other; also avoid staying just within their own group.

Several Blacktown KIs identified that there were perceptions in the community (among Anglo and Indigenous Australian residents in particular) that migrants and refugees were taking resources that were limited, and thus, others were missing out. In general, however, our KIs did not regard this kind of perception as a major issue in Blacktown.

The subtheme of lack of acknowledgement of Indigenous Australians was not as prominent in the KI interviews and focus groups in Blacktown as those in Mirrabooka/Balga. Blacktown has a Reconciliation Action Plan, Indigenous Australian community workers and a number of other initiatives to enhance recognition of indigenous Australian issues. Nonetheless, several KIs mentioned that more work was needed in this area, such as showing them more respect, and adjusting to their peculiar ways of involvement in developing programs for them.

People from Muslim, African and Indigenous Australian backgrounds were identified by KIs to be the most common targets of prejudice and discrimination. As discussed earlier, this occurred in contexts like applying for housing and employment, but also in public spaces. Some racist behaviours mentioned were: name-calling, malicious teasing based on race, bullying, and making fun of people’s cultural attire. Some KIs were quite direct in calling Anglo-Australians racist. Some other examples relate unfair treatment which the ‘victim’ readily attributed to ethnicity. There was the example of a young African girl receiving a fine for not having a valid train ticket when she had purchased one, but forgot to validate it. Another story is of a Filipino being given the bad look by an Indian shopkeeper, suggesting some suspicion of shoplifting. The effect of these racist experiences was: lowering of self-esteem and self-confidence.

### 4.3.7 Legitimacy

In general, trust in the police was seen to have had built through positive initiatives such as the ‘street walk’ and other community collaborations (‘doing really good work to bring the police with young people together and doing joint patrols and things like that’, KI). It was acknowledged that trust was slower to develop among some ethnic and cultural groups, due to previous experiences in their home countries.

Confidence and trust in government departments also depended on migrants’ and refugees’ previous experiences. KIs commented that this would improve with time, when they came to
understand the system. Some focus group participants expressed gratitude for the financial support and services that the government provided.

Trust was also identified as an issue for Indigenous Australian residents, connected with interventions such as the Stolen Generations and the Northern Territory intervention. Some KIs also mentioned problems with understanding the role of the Department of Communities, in relation to removing children from families.

### 4.3.8 Social division and conflict

Blacktown KIs spoke of social divisions primarily in terms of socio-economic differences, or strategies that had been developed to address tensions between ethnic, cultural or religious groups. With regard to the latter, then, it was represented as something that had been resolved in the main, or was being addressed presently. Referring to the COM4Unity program (discussed subsequently), one KI said:

As far as between the young people themselves, we don’t see any racial, cultural difficulties, probably because we foster a platform where that’s not tolerated and people come knowing that.

There were accounts of **intergroup tensions and youth aggression** between young people from Pacific Islander and Sudanese backgrounds, particularly on ‘fight night’ (young people—mainly young men—coming together on Thursday nights in Blacktown to fight). These tensions were attributed to territorial disputes and testosterone (*I think sometimes it’s access to public space, everyone think ‘Oh I’m the toughest. I’m the hard guy’ (KI)*); but also convenience: the transport hub meant young people from across Sydney were coming together in Blacktown; they were not only Blacktown residents. Other potential reasons included concerns that the girls from one group were flirting with young men from the other, and a lack of strong male role models in some of these communities. Several KIs challenged the assumption that the conflict was racial in origin, characterising it as simply ‘young male violence’.

The focus group participants added a few more observations: There were a lot of groups sticking to their own ethnic groupings, which then alienated other groups and were likely to be a source of intergroup friction. There were also some ‘posturing’ behaviours of showing ‘power’ over the other groups, trying to provoke a response. Sometimes this was due to disrespect for others’ religion. Also, the participants suggested that there were less (or hardly any) of these kind of youth tension in some particular schools (e.g., selective and private schools), or particular groups getting along better.

The Aboriginal kids seem to get along with the Australians than with the migrants or the refugees. (Male youth)

Intergroup tensions could be due to a number of factors, as some focus group participants shared: peer pressure, wanting to fit in; previous rivalries and conflict in the countries of origin; misunderstanding of each other’s cultures (which was said to be a natural part of multiculturalism).

There were some suggestions to prevent intergroup tension and aggression, including not fighting back but simply walking away; for the government to be stricter with youth aggression.

There were also **tensions within groups**. KIs questioned the tendency to view ethnic and cultural groups as homogenous and highlighted differences of opinion and disputes within groups. These were not presented as outright conflict per se, but tensions and division. For example, the diversity within the Indigenous Australian community was commented on—‘communities’ instead
of ‘community’, defining who the Darug people were, and so on. There were also divisions within the Burmese community along political, ethnic and religious lines. There were also signs of intergenerational conflict occurring in some migrant communities, as the children of migrants adopted more ‘Australian’ ways (‘we have a session where the older and the younger generation were split up. This was requested by the young people’ (Kl)).

The fine details of subtle intra-group tensions were openly expressed by Filipino participants when they talked about the tendency of co-nationals to gossip, not presenting a united front, conflicts within families, and inequality of treatment even within the same community. The suggestion here was that this could apply to any community in Australia; and that it was difficult to tell who was right and who was wrong in their views.

As discussed under Community earlier, KIs identified that Blacktown had a reputation for being a crime hotspot. When there was a police strategy to address ‘fight night’, police discovered a large number of weapons around the shopping centre. In general, though, KIs did not feel that Blacktown was an unsafe area and recognized that the statistics reflected the size and density of the population, but were usually misrepresented by media in such a way as to portray Blacktown as a place of high crime.

Some focus group participants did talk about personal experience of crime and feeling unsafe in Blacktown. One spoke of her husband being harassed at the train station; another of their house being broken into (which came as a shock because she thought these things do not happen in Australia). Some witnessed drugs and alcohol; phone grabbing at the train station; vandalism; and fights in public places.

4.3.9 Media use and influence

As with the Mirrabooka/Balga interviews, Blacktown KIs indicated that social media use was high among the younger members of the community. Social media seemed to offer means of social connection for migrants, although there were also concerns that young people needed to be educated about their safety online. Other forms of media that migrants and refugees were thought to access included commercial television, community radio, and ‘ethnic newspapers’.

The focus group participants gave some comments about mass media. The good points were related to the media being a venue for expressing opinions, reporting news, and predicting future events or issues; also, accuracy of reporting. The bad points were: judgemental and opinionated, biased, sensationalism, breach of confidentiality (which could have a devastating effect on the affected party. They believed that the media must have a sense of responsibility.

The internet and social media were also discussed, with the cited positives being the capacity to widen friendship networks, ability to bring family and friends in touch, support in promoting/marketing goods and services. The negatives were related to irresponsible use by young people, which could get them into trouble.

There was a widely-held perception that the media contributed to the promotion of negative stereotypes that were detrimental to social cohesion. These included stereotypes about Indigenous Australians, Muslims and asylum seekers.

In terms of media influence, Blacktown KIs regarded the local media positively, indicating they had good relationships with editors and journalists who were interested in representing diversity positively. In particular, KIs described an incident in which community leaders had influenced the
local media to not publicise a potential race riot. Community members had learned of a proposed anti-African rally, being put forward by a number of the same people who had been involved in the Cronulla riots. The council, the police, the Department of Premier and Cabinet all came together to persuade the paper not to publish the advertisement, that it would not be in the community’s interest. A story by the ABC on 7.30 in 2011 that highlighted the positive initiatives in Blacktown, was also discussed by KIs as a significant positive representation for the community (See http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2012/s3402882.htm).

4.3.10 Media analysis of Blacktown

An internet search was conducted in local, state and national print media in the past two years (1/01/2010—22/11/2011).

For the local media, the websites http://blacktownsun.com.au and http://blacktown-advocate.whereilive.com.au were used to search for articles in the Blacktown Sun and the Blacktown Advocate. Keywords included primarily ‘Blacktown’, combined with ‘multiculturalism’, ‘refugee’, ‘social cohesion’, ‘migrants’, ‘Sudanese’, ‘image’, ‘immigration’, ‘diversity’, ‘dance’ (Blacktown was popular for its dance culture) and ‘Aboriginal’. A total of 688 articles were retrieved using the various keywords (523 for Blacktown Sun and 165 for Blacktown Advocate.) Out of this, 278 (40.4%) were selected for their direct relevance to the study.

The purpose of this analysis was to look at how the local media perceived issues of social cohesion in the local area. The 278 articles from Blacktown Sun and Blacktown Advocate that were deemed relevant to social cohesion were classified into general topics, generating 15 topics, presented below from most frequently occurring to least (single categories only for each article), and described briefly below.

- ‘Aboriginal affairs (62)’
  The articles about ‘Aboriginal affairs’ were mostly about celebrating or protecting Indigenous Australian heritage, whether land or cultural, through exhibitions, music, arts, dance and storytelling. NAIDOC (National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee) week in particular was about ‘promoting awareness, recognition and an understanding of the history and culture of Indigenous peoples.’ (http://www.blacktownsun.com.au/news/local/news/general/naidoc-week-has-family-fun/2208216.aspx)
  Some articles were about reconciliation programs launched to bridge the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous in terms of housing, education, healthcare and employment and making people aware of the plight of the Indigenous Australians in the past and present by commemorating National Sorry Day. A handful of articles were about Phyllis Bowden, an Indigenous Australian elder who died in Blacktown Hospital because of poor treatment and lack of proper care.

  Other articles were about programs designed to strengthen community cohesion by educating children about the local Indigenous community or improving literacy. One such program, which was the brainchild of Blacktown education student Jo Cameron, ‘deals specifically with the Darug people, traditional landholders of parts of western Sydney and the Blue Mountains.’ She has sketched a science-fiction scenario to better illustrate how Indigenous Australian people felt. (http://www.blacktownsun.com.au/news/local/news/general/putting-kids-in-the-picture/1770929.aspx)
Music and arts (50)

Arts, as covered by the articles under this category, included various forms of art including literary, visual, applied and performing arts. Books, plays, movies, and exhibitions that were featured offer a special insight into the lives of refugees and migrants alike, and also portrayed Australia’s diverse culture. Three examples are:

- Blacktown-based play ‘My Name is Sud’ was about ‘a family who has escaped the war in Sudan and has faced the conflicts of freedom in Blacktown.’ (http://www.blacktownsun.com.au/news/local/news/general/freedom-brings-new-conflict/2171745.aspx)

Music in the selected articles was featured as a vehicle not only for entertainment but also to tell a story. For example, Mary Mamour, a Sudanese community leader sang of her ‘struggles as a refugee and the joys of her life in Australia’ during a Celebration of African Cultures Festival at Auburn Park. (http://www.blacktownsun.com.au/news/local/news/general/lets-all-unite-to-celebrate/1794838.aspx)

Dance articles included traditional and modern types of dance. Hip-hop in particular was a growing trend in Blacktown. ‘Blacktown has had a reputation for having some of the most competitive dancers in Sydney,’ according to Edgar Iskander, manager of Prolifique—a hip-hop dance group (ages 15-18) based in Blacktown. (http://www.blacktownsun.com.au/news/local/news/general/blacktown-dancers-are-prolifique/2201506.aspx) Prolifique is just one of the many active dance groups in Blacktown which compete locally. Some dance groups not only compete locally, but also internationally.

Social cohesion (38)

These articles featured programs which helped migrants and refugees in many areas, for example, court support programs for the Sudanese community, youth mentoring programs, grant schemes to provide funding for various programs, outreach programs, community education programs, and other multicultural services to help migrants and refugees settle in Australia. Some examples are:

- There were several articles featuring COM4Unity, an ongoing program founded by Superintendent Mark Wright and regarded as one of the most successful programs in Blacktown. Some articles featured the launching of the program where ‘Blacktown Police joined forces with community leaders and Westpoint shopping centre to work together with the aim of reducing instances of antisocial behaviour and engaging young people to achieve better social outcomes.’
There were 4 articles about SWITCH, a ‘COM4Unity initiative designed to promote positive change among the youth of Blacktown through dance’. SWITCH has had several successful performances in Blacktown and continues to grow in popularity.

An article refers to a sport-related initiative by COM4Unity ‘COM4Unity Cup’ where Blacktown police officers and community service workers competed with students from local high schools in a football championship. According to Wright, ‘the inaugural COM4Unity Cup was an opportunity for kids to get to know contacts in the community in a casual atmosphere.’

COM4Unity also won the ‘Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Award’ in late 2011 for ‘its work engaging young people.’ The award focuses on the ‘benefits of longer-term strategies when it comes to reducing crime and making the community safer.’

A $50,000 grant from the Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration Affairs was awarded to SydWest Multicultural Services that lead to the launch of a series of programs in 2011 designed to foster social cohesion among Blacktown’s many multicultural groups. For example, the ‘Create, Engage, Unite: A Blacktown Creative Arts Project’, a new initiative to bring together youth with African backgrounds with those of Islander heritage.

The Riverstone Neighbourhood Centre was a place that people from various community groups (senior citizens, youth, indigenous and disabled groups) called home. It provided services to the aged, people with disabilities, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people on low incomes, as well as those from the wider community... The centre recognises opportunities, resources and power are not equally available to all people, particularly groups and individuals who experience disadvantage and discrimination... It is our vision to commit to a safe, socially cohesive, connected, informed community for a sustainable future.”

Awards and celebrations (28)
Eight articles were about awards given to people who have contributed significantly to the community, for example

The Blacktown’s Woman of the Year went to Julie Nunez in 2010 for her work on the Philippine-Australian Community Services Inc; and to Sandra Lee in 2011 for devoting ‘thousands
of hours to preserving the area’s rich Indigenous history and works to assist countless Indigenous families across Blacktown’; and to Karen Tyler in 2011 also for helping ‘rebuild the Dean Park Community Development Project and for being instrumental in lobbying for a number of local infrastructure developments across the city.’ (http://blacktown-advocate.whereilive.com.au/news/story/lee-and-tyler-honoured-as-top-women/)

- Australian Family Child Care Awards, Blacktown City Local Business Awards, Medal of the Order of Australia for community service, Child Care Week 2010 Awards, Women of the West awards and the annual Blacktown Police Officer of the Year Award.

There were 20 articles that reported on various multicultural groups celebrating Australia’s diversity through food, music, dance and other activities. Examples are:

- The 11th annual Australia’s Biggest Morning Tea in Blacktown was hosted by the members of the Bangladeshi community. They served ‘Bangladeshi food like paratha [bread with vegetables], spiced cha-ta tea and our traditional winter cakes. ‘All residents and visitors are invited to attend for their pleasure as well as help raise more money to fight cancer.’ said Abdul Haq, organiser of the event. (http://www.blacktownsun.com.au/news/local/news/general/bangladesh-causes-a-stir/2157234.aspx)

- An African food event where Blacktown police and the local African community mingled together which ‘helped strengthen the community’s relationship with police’ and also change the community’s perceptions about the police where they are seen as a threat in some African countries. (http://blacktown-advocate.whereilive.com.au/news/story/feasting-on-good-will/)


**Sports (23)**

These articles featured football, also known as soccer, and basketball as popular sports among youth which have been used as tools for community engagement and to help refugees and newly-arrived migrants feel a sense of connectedness. (Sport articles related to COM4Unity are not included in this category; see social cohesion category.) Some examples from this category are:

- Success stories of migrants and refugees competing professionally outside Australia. For example, former Sudanese refugee Ater Majok was drafted to play for the LA Lakers, joining the likes of NBA superstar Kobe Bryant (URL). (http://blacktown-advocate.whereilive.com.au/sport/story/aters-slam-dunk-as-hes-drafted-to-la-lakers/)

- Blacktown Workers Club’s soccer club has offered to pay the $240 registration required per person to participate in the soccer club for Sudanese-Australians.

- Success of Evans High School boys’ soccer team composed of boys from different countries: Liberia, Congo, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Afghanistan, Kurdistan, Burma, Iraq and Australia—how they touched each other’s lives, and how they shared a special bond, which contributed to the team’s success and lead them through the quarter finals of the NSW Errea State High School Knockout soccer competition.
There was a special theme in the articles under this category, that is, outsiders having a negative view of Blacktown, and insiders defending Blacktown’s image. For example, two media personalities, Eddie McGuire and Deborah Hutton, have made controversial comments about Blacktown, i.e., McGuire referred to Blacktown as the ‘land of the falafel’; and Hutton has publicly rejected a t-shirt with the slogan ‘I love Blacktown’ presented to her by Blacktown Mayor Alan Pendleton. Both instances lead to a series of defence from local residents and prominent people. (More on this further in this section)


Immigration and refugees (12)

Six articles contained stories of immigration to Australia from various countries like the US, Philippines and China. Some articles talked about difficulties experienced in migrating to Australia, for example, not meeting the English language requirement or bureaucratic anomalies. One article featured a historian’s journey in tracing the history of a particular group of pioneering Chinese migrant workers in western Sydney.

Six articles focused on the success stories of refugees; their background stories; how they’ve adjusted to life in Australia and how they are contributing to their own community. One such story was about John Kon, a former Sudanese refugee who participated in ‘Walk and Talk’, a program where ‘community workers are working with Blacktown police and government organisations to help young African refugees adjust to life in Australia.’ (http://blacktown-advocate.whereilive.com.au/news/story/sudanese-man-making-a-big-difference-with-small-talk/)

Education (12)

Several articles in this category featured the successes in education of specific programs or of specific individuals, for example:

- The Ausgrid Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pre-apprenticeship program (http://blacktown-advocate.whereilive.com.au/news/story/blacktown-boys-laying-groundwork-for-careers/)

There was an article about school suspension figures released by the Department of Education and Training: ‘12,273 students were suspended from school for between five and 20 days’ and ‘Some 21 per cent of the students suspended for more than five days were Aborigines or Torres

Falafel is a dish made out of ground chickpeas which are formed into balls and deep-fried.

- **Safety and crime (9)**

- **Housing (9)**
  These articles featured issues related to housing, for example:

- **Health (3)**
  These articles were about multicultural services designed to improve the health and well-being of migrants such as:
  - Pregnancy and parenting courses and interpreter services for migrant mothers in Blacktown Hospital
  - A proposal for accessible toilets to be built for cab drivers due to the inaccessibility of current toilet locations.

- **Employment (3)**
  Two articles described programs which helped migrants in the job-seeking process like the Blacktown TAFE employment expo and Choice employment solutions. One article described the difficulties migrant teachers faced in getting a job in Australia.
Politics (3)
These articles featured migrants who ran for a position in the government. Mr Ed Husic in particular, was the first Muslim to be sworn in as MP by the Chief Justice of the High Court. (http://blacktown-advocate.whereilive.com.au/news/story/proud-day-for-ed-husic/) Others included:

- Dr Amarjit Singh Tanda, an entomologist, poet and social worker represented the Indian and Punjabi community.

Language (3)
These articles featured English classes and other language services designed to help both migrants and refugees alike in their resettlement and gaining employment, for example: English and computer classes for Sudanese established by the Horn of Africa Relief and Development Agency which was a ‘pilot project specifically aimed at the resettlement and re-education of Sudanese refugee men, primarily in the 25-45 year old age group.’ (http://blacktown-advocate.whereilive.com.au/your-news/story/sudanese-mens-english-pilot-program/)

Racism (2)
These two articles are about the SBS’ mini-series called ‘Go Back to Where You Came from’, which was about the plight of refugees and migrants. One of the participants in the mini-series, Blacktown’s Raquel Moore, who was a self-confessed racist, has had a change of heart at the end of the mini-series after experiencing what refugees go through in various countries. Zee Zarifi, an Afghan refugee and Geohini Sivaraj, a Sri-Lankan migrant who worked in SydWest Multicultural Services have both praised the mini-series for helping the mainstream public understand the predicament of migrants and refugees. (http://blacktown-advocate.whereilive.com.au/news/story/refugee-praises-sbs-for-shedding-light-on-racism/)

For the state media, the websites www.smh.com.au and www.dailytelegraph.com.au were used to search for articles in The Sydney Morning Herald (SMH) and Daily Telegraph. ‘Blacktown’ was the only keyword used because the purpose was to see how Blacktown was being portrayed outside the local Blacktown media. For SMH 1,001 articles were retrieved, and for Daily Telegraph 487 were retrieved; thus, a total of 1,488 articles for the two newspapers. Because of this large number, we decided to concentrate on the 2011 search results (374 articles for SMH and 248 articles for Daily Telegraph) for further analysis. These 622 articles were found to fall under 14 topics, with the top five being:

- Crime (147)
- Sport (131)
- Politics (84)
- General news (75)
- Housing (47)

Since the purpose of the state media analysis was to examine how Blacktown was portrayed within the framework of social cohesion, we decided to drill down further and select the articles that
were relevant to social cohesion. The resulting 34 articles are related to the following topics and they are described briefly below.

- **Image (12)**
  Most of these articles focused on the Eddie McGuire and Deborah Hutton controversy and mirrored the findings in the local media analysis, including articles that indicated a backlash against Hutton. There was also an article about the negative reaction of the Housing residents in Western Sydney against ‘Housos’, a TV show lampooning the people who live in housing communities. In this article, Ed Husic, federal member for Chifley, said that ‘his electorate, centred on Blacktown, was already bruised from being labelled "awful" by TV presenter Deborah Hutton.’

- **Sport (7)**
  Most of these articles featured success stories in sports, particularly football and basketball, of refugees in Blacktown. One article talked about the outrage of the Girl’s football team over the banning of the hijab by FIFA. Another article featured the reactions of the readers over the banning, most of them, in support of the girls.

- **Refugees (3)**
  These articles described how the Sudanese community was coping with the differences in how laws were implemented in Sudan and Australia; their struggles as refugees; how they were merging their own culture together with Australian culture; how the police were working with community elders to resolve issues with Sudanese youth; and the difficulties of the older generation with the newer generation. One of these articles focused on the success of Deng ThiakAdut, a Sudanese refugee who planned on becoming a barrister, or following his childhood dream of studying environmental law.

- **Housing (3)**
  These articles, written in early 2011, described Blacktown as a ‘boom town’, because it was the suburb with the most real estate property sales in 2010. According to these articles, Blacktown homes have also risen in value.

- **Crime (2)**
  Only two articles were selected because the Sydney street gangs which have ‘adopted names and mannerisms’ of organized crimes overseas, the topic of the article, included gangs that were allegedly based in Blacktown. The articles have also described the gangs’ ethnicities. Some of the names of the gangs themselves reflected their ethnicity like the FBI-Full Blooded Islanders. Some comments from the readers in one article linked multiculturalism to crime. Deputy Police Commissioner Nick Kaldas mentioned ‘the element of belonging’ as one of the reasons why disenfranchised youth could be attracted to the Muslim Brotherhood Movement, a gang which the police have singled out, as a more serious concern than ordinary street gangs.

- **Migrants (2)**
  The common theme of these articles was the description of Sydney as the ‘arrival city’, a term coined by Doug Saunders. They also described Saunders’ research, that ‘clustering of migrants into

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23 **hijab** – a head scarf which covers the head and neck but leaves the face uncovered, worn by women who practice Islam
24 **FIFA** – *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* or International Federation of Association Football
particular suburbs brings more benefits than problems because the neighbourhoods often become centres of economic activity.’

- **Politics (2)**

  One article was about the ethnic awards commissioned by Kristina Keneally, which have come under fire for being used as a ploy to ‘vote grab in key electorates’ and not as a ‘genuine recognition for ethnic communities’. The other article is about Ed Husic, the first Muslim to become an MP.

- **Other (3)**

  One article described the day-to-day life of Blacktown police officers and their enormous effort in protecting a city with ‘63 square kilometres, supporting more than 100 different cultures and about 100,000 residents.’ It also featured photos of them at work and their interaction with the community.

  Another article featured an early education program that was introduced in NSW ‘in an effort to break the cycle of poverty in Indigenous and disadvantaged families.’ Two centres that were announced by the state and federal governments in 2009 were in Blacktown.

  The final article featured letters from readers about certain issues. One letter was from a Blacktown resident who did not take kindly to the relatives of the Christmas Island tragedy and called them ‘boat people.’

  *The Australian* was used as a source of national media (www.theaustralian.com.au). The same keyword and rationale applied as in the state media. A total of 250 articles were generated for the two years. To be consistent with the state media sampling, we decided to concentrate on the 2011 results only which consisted of 160 articles. Of these, only 45% (72) were really about Blacktown; the rest only mentioned Blacktown. Of the 72 articles, we selected 10 that were related to social cohesion. These are described briefly below.

- **Sport (3)**

  These articles are, in a way, slightly different from the articles found in the local and state media analysis in that these focused more on two themes: (a) inclusiveness, i.e., open the doors of sport to people from various backgrounds (including Asian and African men in AFL\(^25\) for example); and (b) to engage local players from multicultural backgrounds so more can participate in sports and produce more successes. The articles from the local and state media tended to focus more on success in sports. Here are some excerpts from the articles that displayed the inclusiveness theme:

  - **How the west will be won—** ‘If Sheedy\(^26\) had his way, ‘there’d be a guide standing outside every immigration office giving out membership tickets and saying, ‘Get to know us, we’ll help you get settled in Australia.’ That’s how you do it. I’ve only been here a few months, but don’t think it won’t happen eventually, touching base with new people coming to live in Australia, because that’s how this country’s been built.’”

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\(^{25}\) AFL = Australian Football League

\(^{26}\) Kevin Sheedy was the current coach of the Greater Western Sydney Football Club (The Giants) in the Australian Football League
• Future AFL stars march to African beat— ‘Williams\textsuperscript{27} is talking about the importance of engaging with the local community, of getting western Sydney’s migrants and refugees to engage with something other than soccer and rugby league.’

• We need to extend boundaries for talent— ‘If a player of Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, or Malaysian origin makes it on to an AFL list in the near future and succeeds on field, the seed will be sown. I for one look forward to this happening. While this is a multicultural society, we also have a multi sporting culture that is healthy and balanced. So while we need to continue our worldwide search for the next generation of footballers, we also need to keep the game accessible to Indigenous Australians, especially those living in remote areas.’

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Refugees (2)}

An editorial entitled ‘Population debate ignores the dire social fallout’ criticized the government’s handling of the refugee program and stated that there was more that needed to be done other than the English language lessons and cultural adjustment seminars. Some of the problems that the editorial focused on were the male frustration and domestic violence which was alleged common within the community. Another article talked about the ‘unintended consequence of the High Court’s rejection of the Malaysian asylum-seeker swap is its effect on Australia’s intake of African refugees.’

\item \textbf{Image (2)}

Only a couple of articles were found which dealt with Blacktown’s image. These articles were about Eddie McGuire’s ‘land of the falafel’ comment.

\item \textbf{Crime (2)}

These articles explored the nature of crime among migrants and its links to ethnicity. These articles also explained why ethnicity was not regarded as intrinsically linked to crime but rather, migrants are vulnerable people and according to Detective Superintendent Scott Cook, commander of the Asian Crime Squad in the NSW Police ‘it’s not ethnicity that causes crime, it’s ethnicity that makes them vulnerable to it.’ Superintendent Mark Wright said he has avoided problems in Blacktown ‘by forging strong relationships with community leaders, and working with local business and charities to deliver employment opportunities, training, sports and social programs for the new arrivals.’

Our KIs and focus group participants in Blacktown were not able to nominate a \textbf{specific issue that received intense media attention}. But our analysis of print media revealed one special issue that received similar attention from local, state and national media, albeit it in different intensity. This is the matter of Blacktown’s image which was portrayed in a disparaging way by two media personalities. The thread here is about outsiders having a negative view of Blacktown, and insiders defending Blacktown’s image.

The first media personality was Eddie McGuire, host of the show Who Wants to be a Millionaire (now known as Millionaire Hot Seat); President of the Collingwood Football Club and Melbourne Stars; and host of the radio show Hot Breakfast with Eddie McGuire on Triple M Melbourne. On 11 February 2011, at his breakfast show, McGuire made this statement: ‘I've just put a team together of your 17-year-olds who'll be sick of living up in the land of the falafel in western Sydney playing in

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{27} Mark Williams was the current assistant coach of the Greater Western Sydney Football Club (The Giants) in the Australian Football League
\end{footnote}
front of a 12,000-seat stadium that's still not put up.’ This lead to a number of articles, more in the state and national media, than in the local media.

In one of these articles, McGuire apologised for the slur but ‘labels the political backlash as a beat-up’. The editor of the *Blacktown Advocate* himself wrote an editorial about McGuire’s remark entitled ‘Why Eddie McGuire is wrong about Western Sydney’.

The other media personality was Deborah Hutton, former model and television presenter, magazine editor of *Australian Women’s Weekly* (for more than 10 years). The incident involving Hutton attracted more attention in the local media than the McGuire incident. On April 2011, Hutton was hosting an urban development awards night in Adelaide where she met Blacktown Mayor Alan Pendleton. Pendleton approached her and presented her with a t-shirt that had ‘I love Blacktown’ written on it. Hutton was reported to have said that she will never wear the t-shirt in Sydney because ‘Blacktown is a terrible place.’ Hutton’s apparent disdain for Blacktown stemmed from a childhood experience where she and her friends were harassed at the ‘Blacktown’ train station. It turned out, it was Bankstown and not Blacktown. ‘First she was sorry and offered to visit Blacktown to make amends, then she told the story of being bullied on a train station near Yagoona as a teen—proving the ‘terrible’ place she recalled from almost 40 years ago was not Blacktown at all, but Bankstown.’ (Scott Warren, *Blacktown Advocate*; [http://blacktown-advocate.whereilive.com.au/news/story/huttons-hot-shoe-shuffle/](http://blacktown-advocate.whereilive.com.au/news/story/huttons-hot-shoe-shuffle/) This incident prompted *Blacktown Advocate* to host a contest asking residents to relate why they love Blacktown. Blacktown Council provided 10 t-shirts with the slogan ‘I love Blacktown ‘to the top 10 winning entrants.

### 4.3.11 Promoting social cohesion in Blacktown

Our KI interviews revealed some positive things happening in Blacktown, quite a contrast to Mirrabooka/Balga and Murray Bridge. The data are integrated with information that we collected from the KIs, from the websites, and from both printed and multimedia materials. Note that presented below are only a few selected initiatives.

The programs that directly included aspects of social cohesion can be grouped into three: initiatives of the local government (i.e., policies and programs); multicultural services and multi-sectoral networks; ‘best practice’ programs. Programs that focused exclusively on settlement of migrants and refugees were not included here. The focus was on social cohesion as a whole or aspects of social cohesion.

The KIs who were not staff of the Blacktown City Council have been very positive in their comments about the *local government*. The Council was perceived to be active in promoting social cohesion. Some specific initiatives, including policies and plans, are presented below.

- **Blacktown City Social Plan (2007; 2010-2012)**

  The Blacktown City Social Plan (BCSP) 2007 ([http://www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au/shadomx/apps/fms/fmsdownload.cfm?file_uuid=3E233582-E7FF-0ADF-94BF-8621BE79FF14&siteName=blacktown](http://www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au/shadomx/apps/fms/fmsdownload.cfm?file_uuid=3E233582-E7FF-0ADF-94BF-8621BE79FF14&siteName=blacktown)) was ‘developed in partnerships with the community, government departments and community organisations’ The Plan described the City’s social situation at that time and identified ‘the opportunities, facilities and services to assist local people achieve their full potential, and to enhance community spirit’.

  One of the key areas identified in the Plan was social exclusion (pp. 53-66). Among the situations of social exclusion were: restriction of social mobility due to poverty; ineffective
community integration due to cultural differences and lifestyle choices, racism and discrimination against Humanitarian Entrants and refugees who have come from war-torn countries, Indigenous Australian and other minority community members, due to lack of understanding of cultural diversity; digital divide; lack of affordable recreational and educational activities for youth; stereotyping of Indigenous peoples and refugees; intergenerational conflicts; lack of adequate facilities for the physically disabled and aged in recreational, community and health services; safety and crime issues; and unacceptance of gay people due to homophobia.

The key strategies planned to address issues of social exclusion included:

- Raising awareness of the issues—media promotion of achievements of groups, promote cultural awareness raising in local groups
- Advocacy/policy development—support the implementation of the BECAP (emerging migrant communities)
- Service development and support—English/employment services for newly arrived African communities; work with TAFE Outreach to increase number and availability of computer training courses
- Community development and action—develop cross cultural mentoring and interaction programs; support intergenerational cultural projects
- Leadership/modelling in Council—translate key documents into key community languages; use libraries as community resource learning hubs; ensure built environment allows easy access (buildings and open space); act as employer role model—by developing employment/work experience opportunities.

The responsibility for implementing the plan was given to the Community Development Unit (which included 7 community development workers at that time), in partnership with the community. Two of the seven priority themes in the implementation model were directly related to social cohesion. They were:

- Community participation (priority areas: social support and stress)—increasing participation in recreational activities (and use of Council facilities); supporting volunteerism
- Community harmony (priority area: social exclusion)—building community spirit; overcoming racism, homophobia, ageism, etc; creating links between and across communities

The BCSP 2007 was operationalised through the BCSP Action Plan 2009. The Action Plan was monitored and a report on its activities and outcomes was presented as part of the BCSP Action Plan 2010-2012 (http://www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au/shadomx/apps/fms/fmsdownload.cfm?file_uuid=5F31A5F0-E7FF-0ADF-928D-93D9362F91AB&siteName=blacktown). The achievements relevant to social cohesion were:

- Community participation—formation of groups, clubs, networks and committees (the Youth Advisory Sub-Committee (YASC), the Druitt Team, the Western Sydney Reconciliation Network, the Western Sydney Koori Interagency, Older Women’s Network, Senior Citizen Clubs, Resident Action Groups); various events, activities and programs/projects for youth, seniors, women and people with disability; and a volunteer manual.
• Community harmony—development of plans and strategy documents (ATSI Youth Engagement Strategy, Reconciliation Action Plan); holding of events and funding of projects for Indigenous Australians, culturally diverse communities, and the economically disadvantaged (e.g., Lethbridge Park Community Kitchen).

As a result of this preliminary review of the DCSP 2007, the DCSP Action Plan 2010-2012 was developed, again focusing on the same priority areas but with different actions. Those related to addressing social exclusion were:

• Facilitate access and skill development throughout the City to bridge the digital divide through internal and external partnerships.
• Develop an Aboriginal Employment Strategy for Council and the City.
• Develop an Ageing profile of Blacktown City to assist in the planning and delivery of service provision.
• Facilitate the development of Social Enterprise in the City.
• Support the planning processes for the design, construction and operational model of the Mt Druitt Child and Family Centre (focus on the delivery of Early Childhood services for Indigenous Australian communities).
• Support and develop Fresh Food initiatives in the City.
• Increase access and use of Council community facilities.
• Support the implementation process of successful Jobs Fund projects.
• Develop and facilitate an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous Australian) Youth Engagement Strategy for the City.

❖ Blacktown City Council Cultural Plan 2007-2017

The basis for the Blacktown City Council Cultural Plan (BCCCP) 2007-2017 (http://www.lgsa.org.au/resources/documents/Blacktown_Cultural_Plan-2007-2017.pdf) was a recognition of the strength found in the city’s ‘children and young people, in the rich cultural diversity of its established and newly arrived communities and in its significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population’ (p. 6).

The Plan embodied six goals, each of which was accompanied by general strategies and specific actions, time frame, section responsible, and funding strategy. They were:

• ‘To encourage pride, cohesion and participation through cultural development.
• To respect and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity, history and aspirations through the support and encouragement of the artistic expressions of these communities.
• To provide citywide access to cultural development opportunities for all residents.
• To animate the City through community and artist inclusion in public art and performance, cultural industries, urban and open space design.
• To create a strong economic base for the arts in Blacktown.
• To ensure the ongoing inclusion, consultation and participation of Council departments and communities in the plan’s short, medium and long-term goals.’ (p. 8)
Blacktown Emerging Communities Action Plan (BECAP)

The Blacktown Emerging Communities Action Plan (BECAP) (http://www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au/shadomx/apps/fms/fmsdownload.cfm?file_uuid=05736ADD-E7FF-0ADF-9866-653B6E7278A5&siteName=blacktown) was established in 2004 by a number of community representatives, community organisations, Local, State and Commonwealth agencies in response to the lack of services for new and emerging African communities. The aim of BECAP is: ‘Through coordinated planning and activity, to provide support to emerging communities and foster community harmony in the Blacktown Local Government Area.’ (p. 1)

A BECAP Emerging Communities Profile Working Group established in May 2008, with multi-agency representation. The Group produced a BECAP Profile Report in November 2008, identifying six groups as emerging community groups within Blacktown LGA: Sudanese, Afghanistan-born (Dari speakers), Iraqi, Liberian, Iranian and Sierra Leonean (from largest to smallest in number). The Report contained information about the settlement patterns and social needs of emerging communities in Blacktown, as well as the services and resources currently available in Western Sydney for emerging communities (a good map of available services was appended).

To address and support the settlement and social needs of these emerging communities the Working Group made the following recommendations for BECAP to consider:

- continued focus on and support for emerging African communities
- specific consultation with the local Sudanese community on settlement needs and building community capacity and opportunities
- further consultation with the Liberian community on settlement needs and building community capacity and opportunities
- establish connections, representation on the BECAP and consultation with the local Sierra Leonean, Afghanistan (Dari speaking), Iranian and Iraqi communities, and assist their settlement
- establish connections with services to improve service delivery for emerging communities
- a future project to compare settlement need against available resources, with the aim of identifying gaps in service provision
- share and promote the information provided in this report with its members, other services and service networks in Blacktown
- ensure that the information in this report is reviewed and updated on a bi-annual basis.

Reconciliation Action Plan 2010

The Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2010 (http://www.blacktown.nsw.gov.au/shadomx/apps/fms/fmsdownload.cfm?file_uuid=00E4DA7-5056-991A-C107-5CAA6B150EE9&siteName=blacktown) was developed with the involvement of internal ATSI staff and external ATSI representatives, and through consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) community members, ‘Aboriginal networks’ and organisations. Four key areas were covered:

- Relationships—Building positive relationships with ATSI peoples, organisations, communities, professionals and staff (focus areas: Commitment, protocols and engagement)
• Respect—Respect for ATSI peoples, acknowledging the special place, histories, cultures, and contributions they make (focus areas: cultural training of BCC staff; BCC leadership and participation in public celebrations, program and events)
• Opportunities—Creating opportunities for ATSI peoples, organisations, groups and staff to participate in Council through health, employment, education and general projects—‘closing the gaps’ (inclusion, employment and development, and cultural visibility
• Tracking and reporting.

Under each key area are actions, people/group responsible, timeline, and measurable targets. Some of these actions are:

• Relationship—establish a RAP Working Group to manage the delivery of RAP; endorse and promote the Statement of Commitment (to reconciliation); develop protocols that guide the way the organisation works and consults with ATSI communities; facilitate the ATSI Advisory Committee; foster consultation with ATSI communities.
• Respect—develop and deliver ATSI cultural awareness training; major events must be inclusive and have a public demonstration of respect to ATSI communities; continue to reference Aboriginal History for visitors to the Blacktown Visitor Information and Heritage Centre; continue to acknowledge traditional owners of the land at all major events; fly the ATSI flags at all major civic events; provide opportunities that engage and increase ATSI participation in community development projects; provide ATSI with opportunities for participation in recreational programs and promote physical activity; include Aboriginal heritage provisions in the city-wide Local Environmental Plan.
• Opportunities—develop and deliver an Aboriginal Employment Strategy; support and encourage the artistic expressions of ATSI communities; continue dialogue with ATSI communities about establishing an Aboriginal Cultural Centre in Blacktown; continue support for the toastmaster’s model as a leadership project; and so on.
• Tracking and reporting—monitor implementation of the RAP; evaluate, review and update the RAP based on lessons learnt and new opportunities.

❖ Blacktown City Council as a Refugee Welcome Zone
This declaration is prominently displayed at the lobby or reception area of the Blacktown City Council. Refugee Welcome Zones are an initiative of the Refugee Council of Australia, Australia’s peak refugee support organisation. The purpose of the Refugee Welcome Zones is to enable councils to declare that they welcome refugees into their area, to celebrate the diversity of refugees and cultures in their midst and to acknowledge the importance of upholding the rights of human refugees who have escaped persecution.

The multicultural services and multi-sectoral networks in Blacktown were:

❖ Sydwest Multicultural Services Inc
As stated in its brochure, ‘SydWest Multicultural Services Inc [http://www.sydwestmsi.org.au] was established in 1985 as Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre to assist with the settlement needs of migrants and refugees in the Blacktown LGA.’ Since then, their services have expanded to include ‘practical assistance and services for the relief of poverty, distress and misfortune to disadvantaged and marginalized people in the Western Sydney Area,’ for example, community care and other services for special needs groups (e.g., older people, people with disabilities), community capacity-
building, and representation of community needs. It aims to ‘empower people irrespective of their ethnic, cultural or religious backgrounds to equally participate in Australian Society’. There is a special focus on (but not limited to) refugees and Humanitarian Entrants in recent years. SydWest MSI offers information programs and classes, and information and referral services, settlement and case work assistance provided by bilingual workers, outreach services, and use of their facilities and equipment (e.g., to community organisations).

SydWest MSI’s main program is the Settlement Grants Program (SGP) funded by DIAC. Through the SGP workers, newly-arrived refugees and Humanitarian Entrants in western Sydney are provided with settlement assistance and support (casework, referrals, information session, advocacy). The goal is to assist communities to build social capital, enhance skills, link members to services towards integration in the broader Australian community. Also, for them ‘to reach their full potential in order to contribute meaningfully in their new country’ (SydWest MSI, 2010, Annual report, p. 7). The program currently is able to cater to the following communities: African, Sudanese, Bosnian, Congolese, Ethiopian, Sierra Leone, Liberian, Italian, Croatian, Persian, Bhutanese, Burmese, Iraqi, Afghani, Indian, Tamil, and other Asian and Middle Eastern countries. The SydWest MSI Settlement Services has three main components:

- **African Projects**—African Orientation Project; African Communities Development; and Sudanese Men and Families. Specific activities in 2010 included: casework, information sessions, and ongoing weekly programs.
- **Generalist Projects**—Blacktown Generalist Project; Blacktown and Outer Western Sydney generalist Project; Women’s Project. Specific activities for 2010: casework, information sessions, weekly programs, special projects, cultural awareness between police and the African Muslim community, Goulbourn police visit, Driver Education Programs, Family Harmony ‘Conflict Resolution’ Program, Family Safety Project, Women’s And Daughter’s Camp, activities of the Multicultural Women’s Group, African Sisters on the Move, Strength to Strength Project
- **Youth Projects**—Humanitarian Youth Project, Youth Empowerment through Sport, Youth in Transition: Education and Employment Project, African Youth Project

SydWest holds events related to social cohesion such as Refugee Week, Harmony Day, Nowroz Celebration (of Afghan and Iraqi new year) and International Women’s Day.

SydWest has two outreach locations, in Mount Druitt and in Kingswood.

The website of SydWest and the annual reports will help readers to appreciate the extent and quality of its role in promoting social cohesion in Blacktown.

**Mount Druitt and Blacktown Migrant Interagency**

‘The Mount Druitt and Blacktown Migrant Interagency is a dynamic and effective network composed of over 170 government and non-government organisations and community groups in the Blacktown and Mount Druitt LGAs. On the last Friday of each month, the group of up to 45 people meets at SydWest MSI.

‘The aim of the Migrant Interagency is to enhance service delivery for the CaLD communities, newly arrived and longer term refugees and Humanitarian Entrants by effectively disseminating information, identifying gaps in delivery, advocacy and avoiding duplication of services.’ (SydWest MSI, Annual report for 2010, p. 20)
The Migrant Interagency has traditionally offered a format of guest speakers to deliver information about relevant community services addressing the needs of CaLD clients in the target areas. In 2010 the group introduced a program in which representatives from different communities living and working in Mount Druitt and Blacktown LGAs provided a presentation about their country of origin, the refugee community in Sydney of which they are a part and their related work. This took place every second month, with the traditional ‘Hot Topic’ speakers scheduled on alternate months. The Migrant Interagency was the driving force behind the annual Community Services Expo which this year [2010] showcased the services of over 80 organisations. It is funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC).’ (SydWest MSI, Annual report for 2010, p. 20)

COM4Unity (Connecting Our Minds 4 Unity)

COM4Unity was mentioned by several KIs as one of the success stories in social cohesion in Blacktown. It was also the subject of much news coverage, and more recently was featured on ABC TV 7:30 Report (‘Blacktown Unblackens Its Name, 5 January 2012). The success was mainly around getting kids off the street and reducing youth problems, around different sectors working together, and eventually improving Blacktown’s public image.

When Detective Superintendent Mark Wright became the Blacktown Local Area Commander of NSW Police in 2009, he found that several youth were coming to Blacktown to settle disputes and cause trouble (robberies, assaults) specifically near and around the WestPoint Shopping Centre which is located adjacent to the Railway Station. Combined with the growing local youth population who also congregated at WestPoint, high volumes of young people could be seen on Thursday and Friday nights, which had come to be known as ‘fight nights’. Wright started a tactical operation of ‘zero tolerance’ to those committing offences; additionally, conditional bail not to return to Blacktown CBD. With most of the non-Blacktown youth gone, he concentrated on the youth of Blacktown.

This was when he brought together a group of non-government organisations to discuss a way forward. This led to the formation of COM4Unity—Connecting Our Minds 4 Unity. The ‘4’ actually refers to level 4 of WestPoint where most youth congregate. The group comprised of Breakthrough Church, representatives of the WestPoint Shopping Centre, Father Chris Riley’s Youth Off the Streets, Rotary International, the NSW Police, SydWest Multicultural Services Incorporated, Blacktown City Council, Human Services NSW, Marist Youth Care, Initiatives of Change, and Hillsong City Care.

Backed up by survey information on the needs and views of 1,800 youth, COM4Unity started establishing programs, projects, and strategies to fulfil the network’s aim: ‘to develop a pathway for young people to become meaningful participants in our community’. This aim is envisioned to be ‘achieved by providing a range of coordinated activities and links to local service providers and support mechanism for young people in Blacktown. Through this engagement young people will have increased self-esteem, respect from the community, access to career pathways and employment and increased interpersonal skills and aspirations.’ Thus, the ‘model’ espoused by COM4Unity embodies seven steps: engagement, consultation, participation, mentoring and support, education and training, employment/social inclusion, and evaluation (Wright, 2010).

In the early days of developing strategies of engaging youth, Wright implemented ‘Operation Kona’—engaging local community leaders/members to help with policing on Thursday nights. Ethnic community leaders/members would walk with police officers around and inside the Railway Station
and WestPoint and talk to young people, sometimes in their ethnic language. At one point, even the principal of a high school joined the walkabout. Sometimes, they ask the community leaders of the African and Islander groups to join the walk at the same time, so youth from both groups would see the effort to be united. These walkabouts have continued to the time of writing this report. Through this, youth are able to engage with police, and are able to see role models. Community leaders are also able to engage with their youth.

Some of the initiatives and achievements of COM4Unity are:

- Establishment of the Blacktown Youth Team
- SWITCH—an initiative designed to promote positive change among the youth through dance. Participants have to commit to 6 weeks of workshops, at the end of which they will showcase their skills in a presentation at WestPoint (who provided the stage). This was so popular that the stage has been booked out for months. The vehicle of dance is coupled with mentoring to empower, provide positive messages and offer opportunities for youth to display their creativity (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4LEYmcCbtc)
- Beat Town Showcase—a dance and music event that highlights talented local vocalists, musicians and dancers
- Workshops for young people seeking skills to apply for jobs, with real job opportunities offered through local retailers. According to Wright, local business (especially in WestPoint) cooperated by providing internships for these participants. The philosophy behind this is not just developing work skills, but also, if the youth are going to work in WestPoint, they would not want their workplace to be disrespected, so they would encourage their friends to behave properly while there.
- Retail Operations Accreditation Courses held for local youth, and a presentation night for graduates.
- A Youth Off the Streets initiative in Alpha Park, Blacktown on Thursday nights
- COM4Unity Cup, Soccer Gala Day, involving high school students, police and COM4Unity representatives.

The impact of COM4Unity has been widely publicised. According to WestPoint retailers, the local environment has improved significantly. Residents observed the decrease of negative incidents at the Railway Station. COM4Unity won an award—the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Award in 2011.

We note that there were many ‘best practice’ programs related to social cohesion in Blacktown. However, only two have been selected for featuring in this section.

Football United

Football United was the brainchild of founder Anne Bunde-Birouste and her team of academics at the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Sydney. The name was the creation of the youth participants of this program.

Social cohesion through sports was the guiding motivation behind this program that started in 2005. Football United Report of Activity 2009-2010 stated: ‘Football United promotes harmony through the global game of football. Our goals are to bring people together to have fun while learning and playing football. We believe in harmony and social justice for all.’ In its background section, the Report wrote: ‘Football United began four years ago with a vision to assist recently
arrived humanitarian refugee youth and families in their transition into Australian society. Using people’s love of football (soccer) we build opportunities for belonging, racial harmony and community cohesion.’ (p. 3)

The program was backed up by research, including an Australian Research Council (ARC) grant that helped identify the needs and the gaps in services, which the program consequently tried to address.

There are currently 10 Football United programs across West and South West Sydney and Southern Brisbane, with more than 1,000 participants per week. Schools, local community organisations, migrant resource centres and representatives of the various cultures involved worked collaboratively in designing the parameters of the program. Local youth and adult leaders are empowered to run these programs for children to make them free and easily accessible. (2009-2010 Report). According to Bunde-Birouste, whom we interviewed for this research project, sustainability is important in selecting sites and granting support to set up a program there.

Blacktown was the site of the first Football United program. There are now two programs running in Blacktown: a Saturday program at Campbell Park, run by volunteers; and a school-based program at Evans High School.

To quote the 2009-2010 Report (pp. 1-2):'Football United is a not-for-profit organisation that assists disadvantaged youth, in particular recently arrived refugee children, youth and their families, in overcoming societal barriers. It has four specific goals:

- To contribute to building social cohesion in refugee communities through a youth football program
- Promote social inclusion and address issues of disaffection amongst young refugees students
- To contribute to building racial harmony and social integration across communities through support for youth football development
- To contribute to learning through program monitoring, evaluation and qualitative research.

While there is a particular focus on youth, the program contains elements designed to contribute to building community cohesion among the different refugee communities and exploring potential for bridging between different Australian communities in general. The program combines a number of approaches that have had documented success, such as the use of sport to bring people from different communities together. Fundamental is the use of proven intervention strategies focusing on personal and social development, such as empowerment, life-skills workshops, and youth mentorship programs. In addition the program puts into practice recommendations made at the 6th Global Conference on Health Promotion convened by the World Health Association in Bangkok, Thailand (August 2005), specifically by facilitating innovative, private-public multi-sectoral partnerships that support local engagement and action.’

Football United’s core activities included:

- Weekly football activities—Deliver in-school, after-school and weekend football programs, holiday camps and Futsal competitions, which include coaching and playing activities for participants, delivered by qualified volunteer coaches
- Leadership education and development—Train refugee youth and adults as volunteer leaders, coaches and referees, enhancing their leadership, personal development and role model capabilities
• Community partnerships—Create extensive partnerships with stakeholders, including local, state and national football organisations, government agencies, local councils, businesses, community groups and other not-for-profit organisations to achieve long term and sustainable outcomes for the participants
• Promotion and advocacy—Promote the program with the support of partners extensively in the media, publications and at Football United events and activities
• Research—Implement impact and process measures through longitudinal research to determine the contribution that football can have toward social inclusion and community participation of refugee and disadvantaged populations; monitoring and evaluation of all activities.’

One of Football United’s biggest achievements was the formation and training of a team that represented Australia at the Football for Hope Festival in South Africa in July 2010.

This was followed by the production by North One Television Australia of a documentary entitled Football United: Passport to Hope. ‘The film presents the remarkable journeys of eight Football United participants and follows the ups and downs of their lives before, during and after the Football for Hope Festival in South Africa, where they proudly represented Australia.’ (2009-2010 report, p. 13). The documentary was premiered at UNSW in September 2010, and subsequently won the Australian Human Rights Commission’s TV awards in December 2010 for ‘encouraging audiences to look past the sensational news headlines and the political rhetoric to see that refugees and asylum seekers are far more than just statistics’ (p. 13)

We interviewed the founder Bunde-Birouste and the project officer, Tun Shwe, for this research. We also ran a focus group with eight members of Football United, after their Saturday football practice. They provided testimonies of how the program allowed them to meet fellow youth from different backgrounds and break the silos of different cultures being on their own. They talked about the value of the youth camps where leadership training was provided. One of the participants had become a coach through the leadership training.

❖ Blacktown Regional Economic and Employment Development (BREED)
[Excerpt from the website: http://www.breedcp.com.au/]

‘Blacktown Regional Economic and Employment Development (BREED) Taskforce Inc was established in July 1992 with funding from the then Federal Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET). Its aim is to stimulate economic and employment growth within the Blacktown LGA. The BREED Taskforce has a unique opportunity to investigate initiatives that would not normally attract government funding, to:

• Determine the most effective and efficient delivery of employment, education and training programs and services in the region to enable the most efficient, effective and equitable use of the labour force in the region.
• Investigate restructuring issues in the labour market, and explore possibilities for economic and employment development, particularly new enterprises and small business opportunities.

BREED seeks funding from various Government, Commercial and Community bodies to undertake projects for the benefit of the Blacktown area in economic development and employment growth.
Two of the projects undertaken by the BREED Taskforce Inc. were the Blacktown School-Industry Network (Blacktown SIN) and the Mt Druitt Industry-Education Partnership (Mt Druitt IEP).

Both Blacktown SIN and Mt Druitt IEP were established to provide a co-ordinated approach in assisting Year 11 and 12 students studying Vocational Education Training (VET) subjects for the HSC in obtaining work placements. BREED was successful in receiving funding from the federal and state governments to establish and manage the Local Community Partnership for 2006 to 2008. BREED amalgamated the Blacktown SIN and Mt Druitt IEP programs into one Blacktown LCP. This has enabled a more streamlined delivery of services to both the local schools and industry. The LCP also had the responsibility of two new programs, Career Transition Support and Adopt-a-School.

In 2010 BREED secured funding to deliver the Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations (DEEWR) School Business Community Partnership Broker Program as part of the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions. This national partnership aims to increase the educational engagement and attainment of young people and to improve their transition to post school education, training and employment through immediate, concerted action supported by broader long term reform.

Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) are incorporated not-for-profit community based organisations which aim to assist all young people aged 5-24 years to gain the skills, experience and professional guidance to help them achieve a successful transition through school, and from school to further education, training or employment. To achieve this, LCPs will partner with industry and employer groups, schools, professional career advisers, community organisations, parents, young people youth service providers and other government organisation to provide the following career and transition programs.

Stephen Gummerson of BREED spoke to us about the importance of the partnership brokering that they do, specifically in the area of attainment of HSC. They link schools and industry by organising visits which are aimed at exposing students to the realities of working in industry. He said that Indigenous Australian students were one of the most disadvantaged in school, with drop outs occurring at year 5 or 6. Therefore, if schools wait until year 9 or 10 to encourage them to go to HSC, through bringing students to industry places, it would be too late for the Indigenous Australian students. So they started promoting industry visits as early as year 5. Also, they did not target Indigenous Australian students only since that would create a stigma. So they would bring the whole class, which then benefited more students.
4.4 Murray Bridge (South Australia)

4.4.1 Geographical and demographic profile

Murray Bridge is located on the Murray River, 76 kilometres east-southeast of Adelaide in South Australia. It is a town that is part of the Rural City of Murray Bridge (Local Government Area), and there were 14,048 people resident at the 2006 Census (ABS, 2006c). Of the town’s population, 4.5% identified as Indigenous Australian, which is higher than the national average. The Indigenous Australian inhabitants are mostly descended from the 18 tribes of the Ngarrindjeri nation, whose land extends from Mannum on the river and lakes, the Coorong, to Kingston in the southeast and Cape Jervis on the Fleurieu peninsula.

Cultural Diversity: At the 2006 Census (ABS, 2006c), 89.9% of usual residents in Murray Bridge were Australian citizens and 10.4% were born overseas. The most common countries of birth for those born overseas include England, China, New Zealand, Italy and Germany. The most common languages other than English spoken at home were: Mandarin, Italian, Turkish, Arabic and Vietnamese.

Annual School Reports reveal that in 2009 there was a significant ESL enrolment at Murray Bridge South Primary School, including students from Afghanistan, China, Kenya, New Zealand, Philippines and Turkey. Furthermore, the report outlines that in 2009, 20% of students were Indigenous Australian (Murray Bridge South Primary School, 2009).

Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants have settled in Murray Bridge since 2001 and have come primarily from Sudanese, Afghan and Uzbek communities. They have all self-settled in Murray Bridge (Taylor-Newman & Balasingam, 2009). As stated in the South Australia settlement trends report, ‘all permanent residents have the right to move within Australia following initial settlement (secondary migration). They may choose to relocate to access ‘employment, education or other opportunities’ (DIAC, 2007, p. 24). Thus, a significant number of Humanitarian Entrants have settled in Murray Bridge as a result of secondary migration. According to Taylor-Newman and Balasingam (2009), approximately 80 Afghans (mostly men) began arriving in Murray Bridge in 2001 as holders of Temporary Protection Visas. From mid 2005 their families began arriving through the family reunion component of the Special Humanitarian Program. In late 2005, 150 Sudanese refugees arrived in Murray Bridge from Adelaide; they were recruited in Adelaide by an employment agency on behalf of the major meat processor. In 2005 approximately 200 workers from China settled in Murray Bridge on Regional Temporary Business Long Stay Visas (subclass 457).

Employment: 6,102 people aged 15 years and over in Murray Bridge were in the labour force at the 2006 Census. Of these, 56.0% were employed full-time, 30.3% were employed part-time, 3.4% were employed but away from work, 3.1% were employed but did not state their hours worked, and 7.1% were unemployed (higher than the national average—5.2%). There were 4,536 residents aged 15 years and over not in the labour force. The most common occupations were: labourers, technicians and trades workers, clerical and administrative workers, managers and community and personal service workers (ABS, 2006c).

Income: The median weekly individual income was $365, compared with $466 in Australia. The median weekly household income was $639, compared with $1,027 in Australia. The median weekly family and household incomes were $861 and $639, compared with the national averages of $1,171.
and $1027, respectively (ABS, 2006c). A significant employer in the town, particularly for refugees and new migrants, is T&R Pastoral, a meat processing facility. The town is also home to the Mobilong Corrections Centre, a low to medium security prison for men. Some families of prisoners at Mobilong relocate to Murray Bridge during their family member’s period of detention.

**Family and dwelling characteristics:** In the 2006 Census, there were 3,814 families in Murray Bridge: 36.5% were couple families with children, 43.1% were couple families without children, 19.1% were one parent families, and 1.4% were other families. Among the dwellings, 32.1% of occupied private dwellings were fully owned, 27.0% were being purchased, and 33.2% were rented. Of the occupied private dwellings being rented, a significant proportion (36.3%) was rented from a State or Territory housing authority, compared to the 14.9% national average. The median weekly rent was lower than the national average ($130, compared to $190 in Australia; ABS, 2006c).

We held four focus groups and conducted 12 KI interviews in Murray Bridge. Below is a summary of the findings. The fuller findings from the focus group discussions and interviews are found in Appendix E-1.

### 4.4.2 The ‘community’

As noted earlier, this theme refers to comments regarding the community in an abstract, more general sense including community reputation and physical features of the neighbourhood. KIs and focus group participants in Murray Bridge focused less on the reputation of the area and spoke more about the town’s identity. The tenor of these discussions tended to be more neutral or positive, and conveyed a strong sense of **community identity**—typically as a ‘country town’. The sense of ‘a lot quieter than the city’, ‘more relaxed’, and ‘close enough to town’ were echoed by the focus group participants. Most acknowledged that Murray Bridge is a ‘tiny place’. Many expressed being happy living in Murray Bridge—people were friendly, the pace of life was relaxed.

Many participants talked about the features of the place such as the beach, the swimming pool, the river, the ferry, the churches, ‘a nice little picture theatre’, the town hall, bowling facilities, clubs, hotels; and the many activities that can be done. However, some commented that there was not much to do in Murray Bridge by way of entertainment.

Some participants talked about the difficulty of transportation if they wanted to go to the University or to Adelaide. In fact, for many things such as studying and getting specific items (e.g., for photography), Murray Bridge presented as a distance away from modern requirements. Even within Murray Bridge, getting from one place to another could be a problem, according to the focus groups.

Change and development in the region were also part of this discussion, for example one KI referred to Murray Bridge as ‘a community that’s learning and growing together’. Changes identified as significant included the arrival of new migrant and refugee groups and also population growth in the area, and local commercial developments such as the new shopping centre, and proposed Equine Centre. In general, KIs regarded such changes as positive, offering new employment opportunities for the community. There were however some concerns expressed by focus group participants regarding the modernisation of the place, for example, traffic congestions, while acknowledging the benefits of modernisation, e.g., modern highways that made Murray Bridge more accessible to Adelaide and vice-versa.
Very few KIs mentioned public space within Murray Bridge. One KI noted that recently-arrived migrants and refugees were not geographically segregated in the community but that their residences were dispersed throughout the community. This was attributed to the rental accommodation arrangements of the major employer, T&R Pastoral, and regarded positively. The only segregation of note in the community seemed to be a north-south divide, which was largely along socio-economic lines (there was more public housing in the southern end of town).

In terms of human landscape, Murray Bridge was described in some focus groups as first a place that attracted retirees. Then Indigenous Australian people came, relocating from more remote areas. Then modernization overtook the whole community.

There is a prevalent community reputation of ‘a prison town’—the ‘bad name’ due to Murray Bridge’s proximity to Mobilong Prison and because it had higher than average levels of unemployment and socio-economic disadvantage. Because of a lack of affordable transport to Adelaide, many families of prisoners—who are often from lower socio-economic groups—re-locate to Murray Bridge. In addition, house prices were cheaper than in Adelaide and there were many government houses. Thus, the town was attractive to people on low incomes, and this led to its reputation as a welfare town, according to some KIs.

Some focus group participants talked about the reputation of Murray Bridge as a place that was ‘unsafe’—where kids could not be allowed to walk to the corner store without risk of being ‘grabbed’; where young women could be raped; where drugs and alcohol were common. Such reputation of being ‘unsafe’ was apparently held more by people outside Murray Bridge. In addition, some participants were amazed at how many people in Adelaide did not know where Murray Bridge was.

Many youth participants expressed frustration over the lack of activities and future prospects for them in Murray Bridge, so much so that they wanted to leave the place when it was time (e.g., when they finished secondary school) —another sense of the place being like a ‘prison’.

4.4.3 Belonging

Murray Bridge KIs described Murray Bridge as a warm and welcoming town in which residents had a high sense of community belonging. However, they acknowledged that there were sub-groups and social divisions in the community, for example, the ‘white collar worker’, the ‘meat work type class workers’, young people, the older retirees, and the unemployed. In particular, there were seen to be socio-economic divisions, as identified above, and that some minority ethnic or cultural groups ‘stick to themselves’ (although this view was disputed by others). KIs were in general agreement that sub-groups such as the sporting clubs and the churches provided a strong sense of belonging and connection to their members, including refugee families.

For many focus group participants, ‘community’ refers to the multicultural community of Murray Bridge where people of different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds co-exist. There were also several religious affiliations.

For some, ‘community’ is Australia, that is why their sense of belonging related to how they were made welcome in Australia, how they were initiated to the life in Australia through the Australian Orientation Program while they were still in refugee camps, how grateful they were to be receiving settlement assistance from the Australian government.
The sense of belonging to a community was also related to the small town features where most people knew each other—something that Murray Bridge apparently had, despite it being a big town. There was active involvement of residents with each other’s lives, either through the church, community organisations or loose networks of friends and neighbours.

KIs indicated that groups who may feel excluded or experience a lower sense of belonging to Murray Bridge community included the Ngarrindjeri residents, people of lower SES, people who were learning English and the Chinese migrants. The Ngarrindjeri were seen to have strong connections to place and within their community, but not necessarily a sense of belonging to or trust in the broader, or mainstream community. KIs spoke of a ‘hidden’ Chinese community as if it was possibly fictitious because they rarely saw Chinese residents. Some KIs attributed the lack of visibility of the Chinese workers to their shift work at the meatworks: ‘but I guess, y’know, part of that is that a lot of them work out at the meatworks. And they work shift work and that’s pretty full on work out there’; whilst others saw the Chinese families as choosing to be separate: ‘I think they’re sort of a separate little entity, or community’.

The only focus group participants that spoke of the Ngarrindjeri group being excluded were the Indigenous Australian (Ngarrindjeri) women participants. They talked about a Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority that existed but was not recognized.

The issue of stability of residence and its relationship to belonging was raised among Murray Bridge KIs. KIs talked about years and generations of living in the local area in order to be accepted as part of the place. It was acknowledged that this view was changing, but that the more recent trend of people living in Murray Bridge and commuting to work in Adelaide (and vice versa) was an additional barrier to belonging.

The only comment on residential stability in the focus groups was one on lots of turnover of residents which was linked to subsequent changes in neighbourhood relations.

4.4.4 Inclusion

KIs had mixed views on the extent to which there was equality of access to resources in the Murray Bridge community: some viewed it was generally equitable whilst others pointed out that changes in state government funding had meant the loss of some community workers such as those assisting with settlement and other assistance to migrants and refugees. Some of these gaps had been picked up by local community organisations such as Lutheran Community Care. Lack of affordable housing and higher education were seen to be problematic areas, whereas employment and healthcare were regarded as more equitable.

A lack of suitable housing was a problem for recently-arrived groups, particularly African families with many children. Finding housing was also difficult for single males. In addition, temporary or emergency housing was identified as lacking.

The African focus group participants in Murray Bridge elaborated on how difficult it was to get housing in Murray Bridge. Some talked about the long waiting process. Others talked about the bias that owners and real estate agents had towards African applicants because they were known to have big families (‘many children’) and perceived to be not careful with the houses they rented. The far distance of available housing was also pointed out as a problem. There were a few stories also of how difficult temporary emergency housing could be—having to move again, and with many children too; and then finding new schools again.
Regarding the family sizes of most African families, the participants observed that the Australian government did not seem to understand that large families are valued in other countries. They offered some useful suggestions to solve their problems: the government would build bigger houses and the residents will pay to own these in 20-30 years.

In general the Murray Bridge KIs thought that access to healthcare was equitable, noting the local general practitioner clinic (that had two offices), the Murray Mallee Community Health unit, and the Aboriginal Primary Healthcare unit. However, a number of KIs pointed out that access to affordable (or public) healthcare was restricted for the Chinese and other migrants who were 457 Visa holders.

The Ngarrindjeri women focus group was quite passionate in their discussion of access to healthcare in Murray Bridge. One big issue for them was ‘racism’—being ignored or being treated rudely at the health services; being made to wait a long time, either on the phone when making inquiries, or at the health unit. Sometimes the rudeness was perceived to apply to migrant/refugee clients as well.

Auntie went in and talked to them about whatever. But they’d still be rude, that’s how they are. But then if one of the nephews goes in there who’s got darker skin and stands next to her, they get totally ignored. And it’s the same with my daughter and her husband who has very light skin—she gets treated like she doesn’t know anything, she’s just a woman; and then when her hubby comes in, who’s younger than her by 6 months...(laughs) (Indigenous female)

The issue of representation of Indigenous Australians in health services was pointed out as another important issue related to access. Adequate representation meant not simply having Indigenous Australian workers, but for the Indigenous Australian community to know where the worker/s came from, and then for both parties to negotiate how the community members could be engaged in the health system. The sensitivity of the non-Indigenous mentors to Indigenous issues was also regarded as a core element in delivering effective services to the Ngarrindjeri community.

There is a lack of appropriate representation. There is always going to be Aboriginal people that will be there, but they can always be from somewhere else. Just as long as they’ve got the Aboriginal logo thing on them. That’s one of the big issues for me—when there is representation of Aboriginal people, find out where they come from so that you can deal with that appropriately. And then where you are an employer or a community member, as a community member we can teach them. We can say ‘this is the kind of thing you need to do in order to engage our community’. You can’t come in with the other person’s interpretation of community engagement, because then you’ll just screw it up, and it will take years and years and years to get it back to where we got it to. And that’s very easily done because young people come in and think ‘hey, I got a job’, so that's great, but the mentor that they’ve got is non-Aboriginal, somebody that’s non-Aboriginal that hasn’t lived in the community with Aboriginal people will know how they work. It just messes it all up. (Indigenous female)

The women in the Ngarrindjeri community have set up an enterprise through which they offered health and other services to Indigenous women who would otherwise not get any because of the barriers to accessing healthcare in the health services. Examples of services/program mentioned by participants were programs for young mothers (looking after children, setting up house) and counselling.

The other focus group participants conveyed views of both positive and negative experiences of access to healthcare. On the positive side, most participants were appreciative of having a universal Medicare system (through the ‘Medicare card’), and for having excellent facilities (e.g., fully equipped hospital, helicopter service to bring emergency cases to Adelaide), with medical staff
providing equal treatment to all. Many found it easy to get a doctor’s appointment, or get the ambulance when there was an emergency.

On the negative side, some of the problems with access were: long distance between residence and health units; lack of access facilities for people with a physical disability; and unfamiliarity with the whole healthcare system.

Some sensitivity was seen to be surrounding the access to mental health services in that, there was a stigma associated with accessing them, for example the program Head Space.

From our KI interviews it was apparent that the availability of employment varied across the Murray Bridge community, depending on the type of work one was looking and/or qualified for. There was plenty of unskilled or semi-skilled work available in the local horticultural industry and the meatworks, which employed many of the recently-arrived migrants and refugees. However, many KIs identified the issue of lack of recognition of overseas qualifications for these migrant groups which was linked with education (addressed next), because the lack of higher education opportunities in Murray Bridge meant that many families were likely to move to Adelaide when their English proficiency improved, in order to obtain a better job and also to enable their children to have better educational opportunities.

KIs also noted that the lack of skilled and professional employment was a problem for the community more broadly.

The issue of access to employment was discussed at length in the focus groups. As with the healthcare issue, the Ngarrindjeri focus group participants pointed out that there was racism in employment at Murray Bridge, as evidenced by the absence of anyone of Indigenous background in the employment places, giving Coles and Woolworths as example. Many talked about experience of their own or of another Indigenous person of not being given a chance as soon as employers saw the colour of their skin; or being treated ‘like crap’ (especially the young people).

The other focus group discussions brought up some difficulties with accessing employment at Murray Bridge: employers looking for local experience when the newly-arrived migrants or refugees clearly have not had the opportunity to hold a job yet. Not finding a job along their area of training or qualification has made some participants frustrated and depressed.

An Anglo youth participant expressed an opinion that there was actually some discrimination against Anglo-Australians when African refugees were favoured in the meat processing industry; and they attributed this to the fact that company owners received an incentive funding from the government if they hired refugees as workers. At the same time, the same participant acknowledged that many young Australians would prefer to work in an office than at the abattoir. The youth focus group revealed that many of the difficulties faced by refugees and migrants affected youth as well, such as Murray Bridge not having enough jobs available, young people being the first to be laid off, the uncertain and unstable nature of casual work, and so on.

Technology has made it possible for a youth participant to be working for a company at Adelaide but be based in Murray Bridge, which she had found suitable.

In terms of what actions to take to address problems with access to employment, again, the Ngarrindjeri participants cited the Ngarrindjeri enterprise as a place where Indigenous Australians can be supported in terms of getting suitable employment and advocating for them to be treated properly. Running this business, of course, was a worry for them because they needed to keep it
financially viable. Other participants suggested the following solutions to employment problems: more English classes, more job opportunities, less discrimination among employers, recognise their overseas qualifications. Many talked of hopes for more employment prospects once the planned building of a shopping centre in Murray Bridge is completed.

As discussed above, KIs identified that post-secondary education was severely limited in Murray Bridge and this was a significant problem for the community, particularly in retaining families. As will be addressed in Participation-barriers subsequently, the issue of access to higher education was also connected with the problems of transport between Murray Bridge and Adelaide.

On the positive side, KIs thought that there was good access to English classes for those who wanted it, including tuition and assistance on the weekends for those working (provided largely by church and community groups).

Many youth focus group participants pointed out the difficulties in obtaining post-secondary education, with many knowing the need to travel to Adelaide to get a university education or go to TAFE and the costs associated with the expenses. Therefore some of them would take a gap year\(^\text{28}\) after finishing high school and save money to then pursue post-secondary education. Anticipating that they would not be able to study fulltime, they expected difficulties in getting government assistance. Some other issues brought up by the youth were: fights and bullying in (high) school, with some students getting away with bad behaviours and the school being helpless in disciplining them; some students not having the support of their parents in terms of help with homework and guidance with their behaviours.

A few positive views on education were related to adequate opportunities in Murray Bridge, and the recognition of Indigenous Australian culture (e.g., school logo having a translation in the Ngarrindjeri language).

Almost all the Murray Bridge KIs identified that workers on the 457 Visa were most likely to be excluded groups.

457 Visa holders had a pretty rough deal: there’s nothing available to them except education for their children. Everything else, the federal government can’t supply, the state government can’t supply. They’ve had bugger-all support, versus humanitarian people in the main, get a hell of a lot of support...and it’s not fair.

As described earlier, this exclusion was seen as impacting upon healthcare in particular, but also access to childcare services.

4.4.5 Participation

A distinctive feature of the Murray Bridge community is the extent to which people get involved, particularly in volunteering, reflecting strong community participation. There were many activities available to community members, through sport, churches, and local events such as the Christmas Carols, the Christmas Parade, and other community events. Arts activities were less well patronized, although it depended on the event. A Council employee said that, in one round, the Council had applications for community grants from 40 different individual, incorporated not-for-profit organisations. The major town events tended to be rather culturally homogenous (predominantly Anglo-Australian) and old-fashioned, and organizers were reluctant to change or

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\(^{28}\) A gap year is a term used to describe taking time off or ‘out’ between life stages, most commonly a delay of one year in commencing tertiary education after completion of secondary school.
experiment. There was little discussion of Harmony Day—one KI thought it was celebrated at the local secondary schools and an exhibition of students’ work at the town art gallery.

The Anglo-Australian seniors focus group participants added more activities that members participated in, such as the community lunches offered by the seniors club/group, golf club, arts club, writers group, racing club, Christmas pageant, tai chi class. They emphasized that these activities were available to everyone, inclusive of people from different ethnic backgrounds, and people with disability or special dietary requirements. They also recalled an oral history project where a number of them (the seniors) were trained to interview and document the life stories of local residents.

The Ngarrindjeri participants added arts and crafts to the activities offered by their group. When asked whether their community participation was more with the Ngarrindjeri community instead of the broader Murray Bridge community, they explained that they also tried to engage with everyone, for example the various organisations that connected with them. Some mentioned that the church played a significant role in bringing people out to be involved in community activities.

The youth focus group participants mentioned the following activities for youth: night clubbing, music, concerts, painting, arts, photography, ‘burn-out auto festival’ (which had been banned), movie nights, sports, and the multicultural day at school. They were appreciative of local businesses sponsoring some of their activities such as the art competition. But many were quick to explain that for youth above 18 years, there were not many activities, so most youth ended up hanging out with friends, and sometimes getting drunk, and getting into trouble with the police. Many would have wanted to take their activities further such as forming bands or sports groups, but they knew it was going to be difficult because it was not easy getting some funding for these.

Other social activities cited by the remaining focus groups were: visiting friends and family, going to the beach, swimming, and going to church.

The benefits of community participation could not be underestimated. For some participants (e.g., seniors, refugees, newly arrived migrants), this provided the much needed human contact to reduce the isolation. For others, this opened up opportunities to develop networks that could prove useful in their access to services, including but not limited to health care and employment.

Political participation in local government—in the form of letters to the Council, complaints to the paper and local radio about the council and the occasional petition—was also quite strong in Murray Bridge; and mentioned by youth participants as something that they have done. However, running for the local Council was not seen as something ‘attainable’, particularly among the Ngarrindjeri, recent migrant and refugee groups. In addition, KIs said that voting in local elections was restricted to ratepayers and Australian citizens, thus a significant proportion of the local community would be excluded.

As with many Australian rural and/or regional towns, there was a strong tradition of volunteering in Murray Bridge. Volunteer groups tended to be older members of the community, and therefore there was concern regarding who would take over these roles in the future. New Neighbours were less likely to be involved in volunteering due to their work and other commitments, although they often assisted others within their ethnic community. There might be cultural differences in perceptions of volunteering, or limited understanding of the construct.
Barriers to participation among the more recently arrived migrant and refugee groups included English language proficiency, work hours (particularly shift work), childcare responsibilities, unfamiliarity with local institutions (such as the school system) and time. For the Ngarrindjeri community there is that additional barrier of a lack of trust or familiarity with services and institutions.

Cost was also identified as a barrier faced by lower SES members of the Murray Bridge community.

Transport—locally and to Adelaide—was identified as a significant barrier to Participation and Inclusion. The lack of public transport within the community was a barrier to participation in community activities, particularly for recently arrived migrants and refugees who may not have a car or drivers’ license, and even for long-term residents, including young people. Transport to Adelaide was a particular barrier to inclusion (education) for the youth in Murray Bridge who had to attend university classes: they had to catch several buses; it was quite expensive and was difficult after 5pm. Therefore some families in Murray Bridge supported their children going to university by renting private accommodation in Adelaide, something that was beyond the financial means of many.

An enabler of community participation was resources and money, for example the youth participants mentioned the support of local businesses and government funding; and accommodation for visitors who attended their events (e.g., concerts, motor cross racing, the Pedal Prix). Space was a resource that Ngarrindjeri participants felt was important for community participation—a place where people could come and engage in collective activities. And government support could not be underestimated as an important promoter of participation. And this regard, there was a bit of tension regarding the perceived shift of allocation of resources and support—from the Indigenous Australians to the newly arrived migrants and refugees.

A barrier to participation could be considered cultural, for example, when some cultural groups had specific restrictions on mixed-gender mingling, thus some women could refrain from participating in certain activities.

We had Afghan ladies come here too, a couple of years ago to learn English. And we had to be extremely careful, because their husbands didn’t want too many men around. So the Afghan ladies no longer come, because most of our volunteers are men. (Anglo Senior female)

4.4.6 Recognition

In general Murray Bridge KIs indicated that mutual respect and tolerance were evident in the community. Most acknowledged that some members of the community were less tolerant—usually older, long-term residents who were not educated—but believed that intergroup respect was high. This was linked to ‘country values’ and ‘old-fashioned values’ of interpersonal respect.

Consistent with the general evaluation of tolerance and respect in the community, intergroup attitudes tended to be positive, with one exception: relations between Indigenous and Anglo-Australians. These relations were not described as highly conflicted but rather as two communities that were ‘wary of each other’, and that the Ngarrindjeri people did not feel ‘respected and treated

\[29\] This had been identified by Taylor-Newman and Balasingam (2009) in their study of Sudanese settlement in Murray Bridge. Clearly it is an ongoing problem.

\[30\] The Pedal Prix is the third and final race in the Australian HPV (Human Powered Vehicle) Super Series. It is held annually in Murray Bridge, with the first two races taking place in Adelaide.
right’. Nonetheless, the Anglo-Australians supported the Indigenous Australian community when a commonwealth government consultation on changing the Australian constitution (to acknowledge Indigenous Australian peoples) was held. There was also a perception that some members of the wider community were suspicious of the Sudanese men.

There were many focus group opinions that expressed satisfaction over the increasing presence of various cultural groups, and that different groups were getting along. Many refugee participants felt that Australians were friendly, and vice-versa. Many have met friends through the church, school, and community gatherings. Some have attributed the positive intergroup relations to an acceptance of each other’s cultures.

On the other hand, there were a number of issues raised in focus groups that reflected dissatisfaction with the state of group relations in Murray Bridge. One prominent theme was around the tendency of various groups to stay within their own group, or speak in their own language even when there were other people around who did not speak their language. Some examples: Chinese students in a high school staying more within their own group and talking in Chinese among themselves (which made the other kids wonder whether the Chinese were saying something nasty about them), Indigenous Australian youth staying within their own group in school, Filipinos speaking their own language at parties. Some reasons were offered to explain these attitudes and behaviours: lack of self-confidence and inadequate English language skills, the Indigenous Australian students being segregated (i.e., separate classes), or the lack of motivation to integrate into Australian society because of their temporary status (e.g., international students). The consequences were: It became difficult for Anglo-Australians to get to know them better, and they could actually feel left out; a divide was created making it difficult to have close relationships and more meaningful social interaction;

Another theme was around neighbour relationships. There was a general feeling among the participants of being happy with their neighbours, with the following characteristics and experiences with ‘good’ neighbours contributing to this feeling: getting along; dependable especially when there is a problem; look out for each other; help each other; afforded independence and privacy despite being involved in a friendly and helpful way.

**Discrimination and prejudice** did not emerge to be significant problems in Murray Bridge although it was acknowledged that there may be incidents that the KIs themselves had not witnessed. When ethnic or racial discrimination had occurred, the most common targets were Indigenous Australian and African members of the community. There was a general feeling among Ngarrindjeri participants that there was much racism against Indigenous Australians in Murray Bridge. Their experience of this in healthcare, education and employment was already discussed earlier. There were also experiences with the police picking them out as target of attention (e.g., search, stronger police presence in Indigenous events/activities). Politics was an area where their presence could make a difference, but they felt that Indigenous Australians would not be successful in getting inside this arena. Some felt that Indigenous Australian children went into undesirable activities because there were not that many positive activities in Murray Bridge. They felt they always had to justify who they were and found themselves demanding for respect, fair treatment and recognition, whether from Anglo-Australians or migrants and refugees. They felt that the multicultural services did not include them, or at least did not make them feel welcome there.
…we’re always justifying who we are. And even with [migrants]. We’re dealing with visitors to our country to start off with, and we have big issues now because people aren’t recognising that we are Aboriginal because they don’t see us as being black enough and y’know running around in little...well like hardly any clothes (laughing) But y’know it’s those kinds of things, and it’s sort of like we’re justifying our existence all the time. And when people marry into our family, we don’t always expect that everyone that marries into our family get treated the same as we get treated. Especially when we go to the GP’s and stuff like that. But we do expect a little understanding. And especially when we’ve already organised for our elders to be, and when we talk about our elders we don’t see the colour. We talk about the elders and our family and stuff like that. So when we go to the doctors we expect the same treatment. (Ngarrindjeri female)

The Anglo youth participants acknowledged the alienation that young Indigenous Australians in the community experienced. For example, the stigmatisation of Indigenous Australian children; the very low number of Indigenous Australian kids in mainstream schools; how Indigenous Australian kids have separate classes; fights happening among Indigenous Australian kids being regarded as like a big issue when fights among ‘white’ kids occurred as often; the dilemma some kids experienced about their ‘Aboriginality’ and the reputation that society has associated with it (which lead to some kids trying to deny this identity).

The Anglo senior participants acknowledged the problems in the Indigenous Australian community—problems with youth not staying in school and becoming involved in undesirable street activities, drugs and alcohol. The seniors participants were sympathetic, mentioning that ‘there’s a lot of good Aboriginals here’; that there were some prominent Indigenous Australian families who tried and worked hard to make sure their kids got an education; and that there was a history of Indigenous Australian people being treated badly, which caused the problems of disadvantage they now faced. Some mentioned certain programs that tried to address the problems faced by the Indigenous Australian community; or simple steps to bring out the pride in being Indigenous among the students (e.g., having the school logo translated in the Ngarrindjeri language).

4.4.7 Legitimacy

Trust in government departments did not seem to be a major issue in Murray Bridge. Most of them thought that there was trust in local government, although one said that some members of the community ‘are not quite sure who the local government represents’. In addition, it was identified that some young people in the community may not have faith in the Council—‘they’re not going to listen to me, I’m just a kid’.

Some focus group participants expressed appreciation for the support that the government has been giving the refugees. Some however expressed confusion over rules created by government, such as those in relation to penalty fines for a number of things; and over the system of political participation of members of society (e.g., just accepting penalties associated with the many rules on different aspects of life).

There was a strong view that the Murray Bridge community has little confidence in the police. This was presented primarily as an issue of availability and resourcing, not one of integrity. In particular, there was a widely-held perception that the police were unhelpful, slow to respond, and unlikely to assist after hours. Some groups were said to be unfairly targeted by the police, such as Indigenous Australian young people. Some recognized that there was a lot going on for the police to focus on, such as drugs and alcohol, ‘hoon driving’, ‘burn-out auto fest’, theft and robbery; also, that they had lesser resources (compared to Adelaide).
In contrast to these negative views of the police, some thought the local police had been good in developing trust among members of newly-arrived groups such as the Sudanese community.
4.4.8 Social division and conflict

Consistent with the view that Murray Bridge is generally a tolerant community, the study did not identify significant sources of social division and conflict. In particular, there was a shared view that any division that was evident was predominantly socio-economic rather than ethnic, racial or cultural—‘the haves and the have-nots’. Nonetheless, there were some intergroup tensions and safety concerns.

Although there were few examples of intergroup tension, they did mention that some Anglo-Australian residents had expressed concern about the growing numbers of ‘foreign people’ being employed locally. In addition, there were lingering tensions between the Anglo-Australian and Ngarrindjeri people, as discussed under Recognition, earlier.

For some focus group participants, the intergroup tension was more a youth thing than along ethnic lines (‘because they have nothing to do here’); however, Indigenous Australian kids were often perceived to be more involved. Youth aggression was thus pointed out, as manifested in fights in school and in public places; smoking, drugs and alcohol, even among the very young (e.g. under-10 years); and unbecoming behaviour (e.g., animal cruelty).

Murray Bridge was generally regarded as a safe community although there was growing concern and ‘caution’ in the community with regard to personal safety. Some linked this to an over-reporting of crime in the local media and noted that statistics did not support residents’ fears. There were quite a significant number of accounts of safety and crime issues which created an impression that residents probably felt unsafe and concerned about the crime situation in Murray Bridge. They cited: drugs and alcohol (which many associated with unemployment); fights between groups (Friday and Saturday nights were common periods when fights happened; altercations between Africans and Indigenous Australians were widely known), many of which have led to serious injuries, and some to death; grabbing or kidnapping of children and girls; rape; and stalking.

While not necessarily related to safety and crime, there was also concern over unwanted teenage pregnancy, and depression due to isolation.

What to do to address the issue of safety and crime: There was a government plan to install surveillance facilities (which some felt uneasy about), actually encouraging more people to come out at night, having greater police presence, sending back the ‘criminals to where they came from’.

On the other hand, a number of participants, especially the refugees who have felt very unsafe where they came from (i.e., home country or refugee camp) indicated that they felt safe in Australia, particularly in Murray Bridge.

4.4.9 Media use and influence

KIs mentioned the local newspaper The Murray Valley Standard as the main source of local information. The most common criticism of the paper was a perceived over-reporting of crime and negative incidents. Despite this criticism, the paper supported the local community in ‘promoting local activities’. The local paper was not seen as contributing to stereotypes about ethnic or racial groups, or contributing to local tensions. A representative from the paper was interviewed who suggested that the paper was conscious about its role in promoting cohesion, thus, an example of strategy was including various ‘faces’ in the paper, not just the ‘white’ people. This journalist also described how the paper had stopped publishing a separate section on ‘multi-cultural issues’ and
instead had moved to ‘blend it in with general news because we wanted to see that become just a normal part of things’.

A Ngarrindjeri participant said that the paper had improved in that it had become more sensitive to Indigenous Australian news reporting and featuring issues. But whenever a new staff was recruited, they would start the negative profiling again and would have to be trained again not to do so. The reduction of negative news reporting mentioned by the journalist above was consistent with the views of some participants that many crime and disturbance-related incidents had not been reported in the paper, which they pointed out as a criticism because with the under- or non-reporting, the residents did not get to know what was going on in their community. (The young people had learned to use the internet instead, with Facebook as one of the most popular, to find out about news in Murray Bridge and Adelaide.) The national media was heavily criticised for their creation of Murray Bridge as a bad place; in one instance of reporting, there was alleged misreporting and dishonesty. Such inaccuracy of reporting was also a criticism of the local paper.

Having outlined the criticisms, there were some positive comments about the local paper: very active, published regularly (twice a week), community-conscious, and cheap advertising.

4.4.10 Media analysis results for Murray Bridge

An internet search was conducted in local, state and national print media in the past two years (1/01/2010—22/11/2011). Keywords included primarily ‘Murray Bridge’ but also ‘diversity’; ‘inclusion’; ‘Aboriginal’; ‘cohesion’; ‘safety’; ‘crime’; ‘Harmony’; ‘Sudanese’; ‘NAIDOC’; ‘multiculturalism’; ‘Murray Bridge High School’ (or a combination of these terms).

For the local media, The Murray Valley Standard (http://www.murrayvalleystandard.com.au/) was used. From this search a total of 153 articles were retrieved. For the state media www.AdelaideNow.com was used to search for articles from The Advertiser and The Sunday Mail. From this search 938 articles were retrieved. The Advertiser website (www.adelaideadvertiser.com.au) did not directly link to articles from the Advertiser, but rather from Google, and from this 11,400,000 links were found. The relevance of these links was poor, and consequently was not used. For the national media, The Australian (www.theaustralian.com.au) was used, and from this search, 938 articles were retrieved; these were the same articles from the state media. No articles were therefore found in the national media pertaining to Murray Bridge. An additional search was conducted on Google News (www.news.google.com.au), including the keyword ‘Murray Bridge’ and 675 links were found, however, none was relevant for the purpose of this analysis. Items in newspapers were considered relevant if they mentioned aspects of community living such as safety and crime, diversity, difference, multiculturalism, and immigration. (The list of news articles analysed is found in Appendix E-2.)

In reviewing the articles in the local media for Murray Bridge, it became apparent that two types of stories were reported on in terms of Murray Bridge’s reputational geography and cultural diversity: stories about the Ngarrindjeri community and general stories about immigration and refugees in Australia (not specifically related to Murray Bridge).

The stories about the Ngarrindjeri community were about aspects of social inclusion (i.e., health and education). For example,
• Better health—More than $2 million will be spent improving and expanding health facilities at Murray Bridge with another $150,000 earmarked for Aboriginal health care at Raukkan (Joanne Fosdike, December 6, 2010, *The Murray Valley Standard*)

• Students praised for hard work—More than 200 people converged on the Murray Bridge Town Hall on Friday night to applaud Aboriginal students who are making the most of their education (*The Murray Valley Standard*, November 17, 2011).

Another story about the Indigenous Australian community in Murray Bridge related to the broad dimension of recognition, more specifically racism/discrimination in the employment sector.

• Regional racism—A survey of business owners has revealed that 14 per cent of employers in the Murraylands would refuse to consider hiring an Aboriginal person, despite an ongoing rural skills shortage (Chanelle Leslie, November 22, 2011, *The Murray Valley Standard*).

In the local media, there was also an article about the lack of cultural diversity in mainstream television:

• Too-white TV must tune in to the real Team Australia—More than 2 million Australians were born in Asia and our Indian-born population has more than tripled in a decade, but mainstream television, other than SBS, rarely reflects this fact (Suzy Freeman-Greene, November 26, 2011, *The Murray Valley Standard*).

In the local paper there were no stories related specifically to the migrant and refugee community in Murray Bridge. Further the only mention of the refugee community was at a national level.

Stories in the South Australian state media focused on crime and safety in Murray Bridge, which reflected (and/or contributed to) the town’s reputational geography. Below are select examples of the types of stories that were reported on. There was no mention of race and ethnicity in the stories below.

• Pair rob man of wallet at Seacombe Gardens—police arrested the Murray Bridge youth, 16, and the Daw Park man, 19, for aggravated robbery (August 22, 2011, *AdelaideNow*)

• Man hunt after girl sexually assaulted in Murray Bridge—A young girl has escaped injuries after she was sexually assaulted in Murray Bridge on Friday night (April 2, 2011, *Sunday Mail*)

• Woman hospitalised after Murray Bridge home invasion—A youth has been charged after an alleged home invasion and assault at Murray Bridge (June 14, 2011, *AdelaideNow*)

• Shovel used as weapon in Murray Bridge home invasion—A man armed with a shovel has allegedly robbed a man in his Murray bridge home overnight (May 20, 2011, *AdelaideNow*)

• Students charged over fight at Murray Bridge High school—A bashing at a school with a program for unruly students has cast doubt over a plan to tackle school violence (October 1, 2011, The Advertiser)

• Woman calls police after shots fired at Murray Bridge house—Police are investigating a drive-by shooting at Murray Bridge (September 10, 2011, *AdelaideNow*)

• Teenager arrested for armed robbery—A Murray Bridge teenager has been arrested after he allegedly robbed a clothing store while armed with a knife (April 22, 2010, The Advertiser).
No articles were found online in the national media pertaining to Murray Bridge. There was also no particular issue related to social cohesion that was reported on several times in the various print media, at any level (local, state, national).

### 4.4.11 Promoting social cohesion in Murray Bridge

Our KIs mentioned a few things about programs and strategies that are explicitly aimed at promoting social cohesion, or improving the current situation in relation to the specific dimensions of social cohesion. These were categorised under themes of activities, education and awareness, program funding and whole-of-community approach.

**Activities** involving food, particularly sharing food, were a good strategy for bringing people in the community together. Artistic activities were also mentioned by some, who proposed that the enduring presence of an artistic installation also contributed to community belonging and pride (unlike a one-off food-related activity). The construction of mosaic pillars at a local child care centre by local agencies and service providers was a good example of this.

Building **education and awareness** was not a major theme. Nonetheless, one KI noted that the less ‘well-travelled’ members of the community were more likely to be ignorant and narrow-minded when it came to appreciating other cultural traditions and customs.

Many KIs in Murray Bridge identified the need to have **long-term funding**, for example, to support a long-term lease on a building for a youth support organisation. Continuity of working with a community, population or issue was seen to be of value—something that was disrupted by changes in government contracts and/or grants. There was also discussion of the problems that stemmed from agencies and organisations competing for funding; some worked more collaboratively than others, and some acted as ‘gate-keepers’ for their clients. KIs thought that the way many government grants were structured, for a specific population or group, contributed to this problem. Related to this, many KIs thought a more coordinated whole-of-sector approach was needed in the local community so that agencies were not providing overlapping services but also had larger budgets, in combination, to provide more significant programs or events.

We feature below some **key programs for promoting social cohesion** (or aspects of it) in the Murray Bridge area that we compiled from websites and brochures and were mentioned by KIs and/or focus group participants. Since Murray Bridge was not a site of primary settlement for migrants, many programs and/or centres developed in response to need and were no longer running in Murray Bridge at the time of writing. There were few programs that aimed to promote intercultural relations and interaction specifically. Therefore, we have included settlement and English programs here. Much of the primary support for refugees and migrants in the area was informal, provided by religious organisations such as local churches.

- **Murraylands Migration Settlement Program (2006-)**

  This is a Local Government Area cultural diversity program, which was funded by the Murraylands Regional Development Board, Department of Trade and Economic Development, T&R Pastoral and the Rural City of Murray Bridge. It related primarily to settlement and aimed to provide a coherent information program for all new migrants in the Murraylands region, irrespective of Visa class. Thus, it related primarily to social cohesion dimensions of inclusion and participation.

  The program was developed because it was recognised that some new migrants to the Murraylands area were experiencing difficulties in settling into the region, there were inequities in
access to services, and there was a lack of a coherent approach in information and service provision. The Murraylands Regional Development Board, in partnership with local and state government and industry, reviewed potential barriers to inclusion of new migrants and developed the Murraylands Multicultural Project to provide a streamlined service of information and communication. (http://www.rdamurra.org.au/migration_settlement.html)

- **Murraylands Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) (2007-)**
  
  This was a regional branch of the South Australian Migrant Resource Centre, based in Murray Bridge to address the needs of migrants in the Murraylands, Murray Mallee and the adjoining hills areas. The Centre’s activities related to settlement support, and therefore the social cohesion dimensions of inclusion and participation. The following services were provided:
  
  - Refugee settlement services
  - Community development and participation programs
  - Welfare services and emergency relief
  - Empowerment programs for families
  - Counselling services

- **Lutheran Community Care Refugee Services (2007-2012)**
  
  This program addressed settlement and integration for refugees in the Murray Mallee and Riverland area. It was funded under the Settlement Grants Program of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and run by Lutheran Community Care in conjunction with the Rural City of Murray Bridge, Lutheran Women of SA. An additional community development leadership program was supported by the Rural City of Murray Bridge.

  Lutheran Community Care provided advice, referral and casework for members of new and emerging communities in Murray Bridge. Encouragement and support towards self-advocacy and self-reliance was the focus of this service. The Murraylands New Settlers Program offered case work, information sessions, community events and linked refugees to information and services for new arrivals (http://old.lccare.org.au/ourPrograms/forFamilies/refugeeServices.html).

  As part of this program, a New Settlers’ Retreat was set up in Murray Bridge in 2007, funded by Community Benefit SA. This centre was open weekdays during office hours and provided a place for community meetings, and teaching (e.g., voluntary tutoring in English).

- **Previous Settlement Programs for Sudanese Residents**
  
  According to Taylor-Newman and Balasingam (2009) a number of government and non-government organisations provided direct and indirect settlement support to Sudanese refugees in Murray Bridge in the past. These included Centrecare, the Salvation Army, MurrayMallee Community Health, churches, Lutheran Community Care, Murraylands Migrant Resource Centre, Murraylands Regional Development Board, Murraylands Sudanese Association, English language services, New Arrivals Program, Murray Bridge North Primary School, Murray Bridge High School, ESL volunteers and local residents. However, because the local Sudanese community has declined, with many families re-locating to Adelaide and elsewhere, the need has decreased.

- **English Language Service: Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)**
  
  TAFE SA has a campus in Murray Bridge, offering a range of courses including English as a Second Language. The Adult Migrant English Program is funded by the Department of Immigration
and Citizenship. Competence in English is critical to the social cohesion dimensions of inclusion, participation and recognition. In addition, the social aspect of participating in regular classes with the same group of people contributes to Belonging and Recognition. Services include:

- free day and evening classes
- teachers providing accredited training from beginner to intermediate levels
- literacy development
- free translation of personal documents
- referral to the AMEP Distance learning courses

Settlement support is also provided, for example:

- Australian systems and culture
- getting overseas qualifications recognised
- study and employment pathways
- health services—hospitals, doctors, specialised services, Medicare
- housing services—renting, tenancy, bonds, housing loans
- using public transport
- obtaining a driver’s licence
- family support
- legal information—police, courts, government


The Indigenous Economic Development program was an initiative of Regional Development Australia (Murraylands and Riverland region) and the South Australian government to enhance employment and business development in regional Indigenous Australian communities. Thus, it contributed to inclusion under the social cohesion dimensions. ‘The main objectives of the project are to:

- Facilitate economic development with the regional Aboriginal community through promoting opportunities in training and employment;
- Facilitate economic development with the regional Aboriginal community through promoting opportunities in business;
- Provide support to any existing Aboriginal businesses.’


Murray Bridge Youth Centre—Headspace and The Station (2007-)

The Murray Bridge Youth Centre included The Station and Headspace. The latter was an initiative of the National Youth Mental Health Foundation, funded by the Commonwealth Government. A Youth Development Officer was funded by the Rural City of Murray Bridge. Together they contributed to belonging, inclusion, participation and recognition under the social cohesion framework.

Headspace provided no-cost medical services and youth activities for people aged 12-25 years. Counselling, psychiatric, psychological and medical services were available, as well as support programs for young mothers in the Murray Bridge area. There were also youth activities, including a weekly music ‘jam and drop in session—Livin it Loud’ (http://www.headspace.org.au/headspace-
centres/murraylands-headspace/what-we-do#) and a program to enhance leadership and participation in young people ‘MyGen’.

4.5 Cross-case Analysis

In this section we present the findings from our cross-case analysis, identifying broad themes of drivers for social cohesion, social division and conflict from the three community case studies. It should be acknowledged, however, that the three selected communities differ considerably in their demographic characteristics, the proportion and backgrounds of migrants, refugees and Indigenous Australians, and history of intergroup relations. In addition, each community is located in a different Australian state and local government area. These contextual factors will affect the experience of ‘living with diversity’ (Wise & Velayutham, 2009) and there are issues that are likely to be unique to each setting. Therefore, in addition to identifying broad commonalities we highlight some significant differences across the communities that may contribute to our understanding of the drivers for social cohesion.

It should also be noted that the KI interviews and focus group discussions naturally emphasised different areas of social cohesion and reflect different perspectives. That is, whilst KIs were in a good position to comment on participation in specific programs and to take a more ‘meta’ perspective, i.e., across the community, they were less well placed to discuss intergroup relations and behaviours outside of those that occur in their work. Thus, for Belonging and Recognition in particular, more data are drawn from the focus groups.

General observations about each community are presented first, followed by an examination of common themes organised under Jenson’s (1998) social cohesion dimensions of belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition and legitimacy. In addition, common factors that appear to enhance social cohesion or alleviate social division and conflict within the communities are discussed.

4.5.1 General observations about the communities

An issue present for all three communities was the community’s negative reputation, which was largely related to perceptions of crime but also the proportion of migrants and refugees for Mirrabooka/Balga. For Blacktown, the community’s diversity was regarded in a positive light, and seen as a strength of the community. For Murray Bridge there was a negative association with the Mobilong Detention Centre and socio-economic disadvantage.

A lack of inter-ethnic interaction, involving Anglo-Australians in particular but also Indigenous Australians, was a feature of all communities. Although there were instances of contact between, for example, Anglo-Australians and refugee groups through volunteering, this was limited. Activities and programs by non-government organisations were often perceived as being exclusive to particular minority groups. Groups ‘kept to themselves’ and opportunities for authentic sustained contact, of the kind Allport (1954) described in his optimal conditions, were rare (or rarely taken up). This appeared to be less so in Blacktown, perhaps because it is the most densely-populated and diverse of the three communities and therefore contact is harder to avoid. It may also be due to more collaborative whole-of-community initiatives and strategies in this community, led by SydWest MSI and the local council. It is also worth noting that inter-ethnic contact was greater among practicing Christians in Murray Bridge, as discussed under Belonging, below. Following from this, a theme that
emerged was a need to include Anglo-Australians in ‘diversity’ activities and strategies, from which they feel excluded.

4.5.2 Public and social spaces

Use and appearance of public space was a significant theme for the Mirrabooka/Balga and Blacktown communities. Public areas near transport hubs and shopping centres had become locations of youth tensions and violence. Community policing initiatives, in conjunction with community leaders, had successfully calmed these tensions. In Blacktown in particular, a major initiative involving dance and music (Blacktown Showcase), had contributed to a sense of ownership and pride in the shopping centre. The ugly appearance of public areas in Mirrabooka/Balga was seen to contribute to lack of community pride and belonging. Community initiatives involving art, music and dance that occupy and/or beautify the space would seem to be a successful way to enhance a sense of community, and had been successfully implemented in Murray Bridge (albeit on a small scale).

4.5.3 Belonging

Belonging is perhaps the most complex of the social cohesion dimensions and it is therefore not surprising that there was little consensus about the nature and extent of belonging within our communities. Despite the lack of consensus, belonging within ethnic groups was considered to be generally high in our three communities. This was seen to be partly the outcome of shared values, beliefs and language within ethnic groups but also a lack of genuine inter-ethnic interaction within the community. However, the latter was more the case for Mirrabooka/Balga than the two other communities: in Blacktown there was a sense of connection to the ‘multicultural community’ and in Murray Bridge, a sense of belonging and place in the ‘country town’.

Participants reported multiple communities to which they felt connected. Similarly, identifying with, for example, one’s ethnic group did not preclude a sense of connection to other groups or the Australian community. Many of our migrant and refugee focus group participants indicated a strong sense of connection to Australia, whilst simultaneously identifying with their ethnic group and country of origin. There were also more refined categorisations of community, in which residents felt a connection to others in their local neighbourhood or an area within the LGA (e.g., Mt Druitt in Blacktown). Some residents from minority ethnic groups also indicated a connection to the community because of the services it provides (e.g., migrant resource centres, shops with food from their country of origin).

There was also a general view that belonging to the local and national community (‘Australia’) is something that increases with time and that subsequent generations (the children of migrants, for example) will and do feel a greater sense of connection to the community. Overcoming mistrust and suspicion among recent refugee groups is also influenced by time and positive interactions with other members of the community.

The country town identity for Murray Bridge, however and paradoxically, was affected negatively by the proximity to Adelaide, which means that many people in the community commuted to work in the city, or resided in the city and worked in Murray Bridge\footnote{Difficulties in commuting to Adelaide for study or entertainment – as reported in Section 3 - were primarily experienced by young people. In contrast, according to our participants there are many employed adults who travel to or from Adelaide for work.}. Working and living in Murray Bridge were regarded as essential to ‘belonging’ in the community. Nonetheless,
belonging was enhanced in Murray Bridge through participation in the local churches and religious groups. This contributed to inter-ethnic interaction, as well as a sense of shared values and beliefs (that cross ethnic or national categorisations).

Other significant enablers for belonging included language and communication and stability in housing. In particular, confidence in communicating with others (including those of English-speaking background) was not only a significant factor in sense of belonging but also contributed to community participation and interaction with others.

4.5.4 Inclusion

Inclusion is a diverse dimension, encompassing many aspects of formal involvement in community life (e.g., housing, healthcare, education and employment). In general, social inclusion was seen to be a significant problem for community members from Indigenous Australian backgrounds, and this is supported by national statistics on education, employment, health and other indicators. There was also a concern that some of the newer communities, such as the Karen Burmese in Mirrabooka/Balga and the Bhutanese in Blacktown, were becoming socially excluded.

By far the most significant issue to emerge in the Inclusion domain was housing. Access to affordable and/or suitable housing was a theme in all communities. KIs and focus group participants described long waiting lists for public housing, the rising costs of private housing, and few large houses to accommodate African families. Lack of cultural awareness and understanding about large families in, for example, African communities, was also mentioned in all three settings. This factor, in turn, contributed to discrimination against African community members in the private housing market.

In addition, perceived and genuine competition for public housing contributed to inter-ethnic tensions in Mirrabooka/Balga—particularly in terms of resentment among Anglo-Australians and Indigenous Australians. Resentment by Anglo-Australians is related to a sense of entitlement; that longer-term or ‘real’ Australians should be given priority, rather than preference being based on need. What is significant for this study though, is the extent to which this takes on a racial or ethnic dimension in diverse communities. There was clear evidence of this in our focus group discussions, particularly among Anglo-Australian seniors in Mirrabooka/Balga.

However, access to education was seen as equitable and an advantage of living in Australia (with the notable exception of tertiary education for people in Murray Bridge). Members of new and emerging communities spoke very positively about access to education in Australia, although some thought that additional (free) English tuition was required in order to maximise employment and educational potential, particularly for migrants with low literacy in their native language. In addition, focus group participants spoke of discrimination in education and difficulties in accessing tertiary education associated with two-year residency requirements. For long-term and other Australians, barriers to education were more subtle, including factors associated with socio-economic disadvantage and low expectations.

Low English language proficiency was regarded as a barrier to employment for migrants and refugees, along with a need for local work experience, and lack of recognition of overseas qualifications (and costs in having these assessed). In addition, migrants and refugees indicated they had difficulty in finding employment (due to lack of social capital, not understanding local systems and processes) and there needed to be more understanding, among employers, of migrants’ backgrounds and circumstances. On-the-job training and internships were proffered as potential
solutions to these problems. Employment discrimination against Indigenous Australians was a theme in all three communities, particularly in Murray Bridge.

Views on access to healthcare in the three communities were mixed. In general, a positive view of the Australian public health system emerged. However, there was a view that people for whom English is a second language, and/or who required an interpreter, are regarded as ‘difficult’ patients and do not receive as good service as native English-speakers. In addition, access to affordable healthcare was a problem for 457 Visa holders in Murray Bridge, and some Ngarrindjeri community members felt there remained discrimination against Indigenous Australian people in the health system.

4.5.5 Participation

There were mixed views on participation and a clear distinction between recent arrivals, particularly refugees, and other members of the community. A common theme was that residents who came to Australia as refugees were still processing their pre-migration experiences and this may serve as a psychological barrier to being more involved in the community. It was also widely acknowledged that there was little time and/or energy for recent arrivals to participate, when they were struggling with the basics of living in a new community: finding appropriate housing, enrolling children in school, learning English, understanding the banking and other systems, shopping, and securing employment. This might be linked to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs: before higher order needs of self-esteem and self-actualisation are sought, basic physiological needs (e.g., shelter and food) and security needs must be addressed (Maslow, 1970). Thus, participation was seen as something that is likely to increase with time amongst these communities, as they adapt and settle.

It was also evident that many refugees engaged in volunteering within their own ethnic community: helping others to settle, being involved in interpreting and translating, and caring for children or other family members. Due to cultural differences in concepts of caring, for example, these activities were not always identified as ‘volunteering’. Migrants, on the other hand, and particularly some communities in Blacktown, were heavily engaged in local community groups and ethnic organisations as volunteers.

Barriers to participation in community activities included communication difficulties, cost, lack of suitable and affordable childcare, transport, and cultural differences. Communication difficulties contribute to shyness or lack of confidence among those from non-English speaking backgrounds and hence they retreat from some participation. Cultural differences include customs of separating men and women; for some (mainly Muslim) groups, women would avoid activities that may involve men they did not know because they may consider it inappropriate. Childcare was a significant barrier for women’s participation, particularly for migrant and refugee women who did not have family living nearby. Age was also identified as a factor; participants claimed there were more activities and opportunities for younger people to interact than for middle-aged people.

There was limited discussion of political participation in our focus groups. Whilst most focus group participants acknowledged that they voted in state and federal elections, few took an active part in local government and few spontaneously identified additional forms of political participation. Barriers to greater involvement included lack of awareness of the processes involved and a perception that running for the local Council was not ‘attainable’ for ‘people like us’ (but instead, something for long-term Anglo-Australian residents in the community). This was most evident among the Ngarrindjeri women in Murray Bridge, and recent migrant and refugee groups in all
communities. For recent migrant and refugee groups an additional barrier was time and energy, as with community participation more generally. Despite this a number of focus group participants were actively engaged in leadership and representative roles for their ethnic/cultural group.

In general, Harmony Day (Harmony Week in WA) was regarded as a positive event that promoted diversity and brought people in the community together. Nonetheless, some focus group participants were not aware of it, and some Anglo-Australians and British migrants felt excluded by it, i.e., they did not feel it was for them; or many simply did not care. Many of the KIs thought that it was insufficient as a one-off event; that festivals and fairs should be more frequent and more inclusive. Many focus group participants felt that the more external aspects of culture, such as food, dance, and music, are not sufficient or effective in making others understand what the different cultures are really about, for example, their history, why they came to Australia, their values, and their beliefs and philosophy in life.

4.5.6 Recognition

Recognition—mutual tolerance and respect—is another complex dimension that is influenced by and influences other social cohesion dimensions. As noted earlier, aspects of recognition, such as discrimination, racism and prejudice, perceptions of interpersonal and intergroup acceptance and tolerance, were the subject of much exchange of views in focus groups.

Discussions of attitudes toward other groups revealed the complexity of views on migrants, multiculturalism and diversity. Themes in our focus groups—mainly among Anglo-Australians—included debate about who should be allowed into the country and migrants’ responsibilities in ‘fitting in’. The latter had an assimilationist flavour, in which those who would not accept ‘our’ ways should be not allowed into the country or, if in Australia already, should be deported. There was a clear lack of understanding of multicultural policy, as well as policy and processes regarding refugees and asylum seekers. This was felt very keenly by community residents from refugee backgrounds who thought that this discourse (particularly in the media) contributed to the community not accepting them. Debates about who should stay (or be allowed in) reflected ideas about entitlement and identity (‘I’ve been here longer’ or ‘I’m a real Australian therefore I am entitled’). Related to this sense of entitlement was a perception among some Anglo-Australians and British migrants that they were not recognised.

Anglo-Australians were not the only ones who discussed ‘fitting in’; migrants in our focus groups also identified their responsibilities in developing intercultural awareness and interaction, through educating others about their cultures and more mixing. They regarded this as a mutual, dynamic process of acculturation and adjustment. Following from this, in our communities there were stories of good intercultural relations, although intra-group mixing was more common for all ethnic/cultural groups. Intercultural interactions occurred through programs (which included people from diverse backgrounds and in which Anglo-Australians volunteered as tutors), religious activities, events like Harmony Day/Harmony Week, and accidental meetings and interactions with neighbours. First impressions were important in these neighbourhood experiences; a smile or friendly gesture was often sufficient to promote more positive interaction whilst the converse was intimidating and led to people avoiding each other. From these data we can see examples of the kind of transversal enablers described by Wise (2009). These are community residents who seek out diverse others, engage in cultural exchange and learning, and helping. There was evidence of these
enablers in every community we studied. They came from a range of ethnic and/or cultural backgrounds and most were women.

Instances of discrimination were described in each community, although it did not appear to be widespread. People from African, Muslim and Indigenous Australian backgrounds were most likely to be the targets of prejudice, which took the form of being spat at, verbal abuse, name calling, being ignored and receiving unfair treatment. Thus, racism took covert or blatant, and subtle or covert forms. In every community there were instances in which young people from minority backgrounds were treated with suspicion by people in authority, such as transit officers, security guards and the police. As described earlier, discrimination against African families in the private housing market—a form of systemic racism—was a problem in each community.

A common theme across the communities was a perceived lack of recognition of Indigenous Australian cultures and history. This was expressed by Indigenous community members themselves, and also non-Indigenous key informants and focus group participants. There was an acute sense of lack of respect for Indigenous Australians, exemplified by the absence of support for an Aboriginal Resource Centre in Mirrabooka/Balga and Murray Bridge. Discrimination and prejudice were also regarded as significant problems for Indigenous Australian community members. However, a more positive picture emerged in Blacktown in which the council had developed a Reconciliation Action Plan and there were more dedicated Indigenous workers.

4.5.7 Legitimacy

Consistent with other researchers’ interpretations of legitimacy we explored community members’ confidence in the police and government departments. This varied considerably among individuals, and often reflected abstract and general perceptions since many individuals had limited personal experience with government agencies. One common theme across communities was a general suspicion of police among migrants and refugees due to past experiences in their countries of origin. This reduced with time, and positive experiences. There was also a view that young Indigenous Australians were likely to be targeted unfairly by the police.

Another common theme—most prominent in Mirrabooka/Balga but present in all—was a poor relationship between some migrant communities and the Department for Child Protection (DCP; WA) or the Department of Community Services (NSW). Much of this appeared to originate from cultural differences in parenting beliefs and practices (including methods of disciplining children but also cultural practices in older siblings caring for younger children) that were most pronounced for those from African backgrounds. However, a contributing factor was also lack of understanding of the role of these departments, and generational conflicts arising within migrant families. Thus, some teenage children were reported to be manipulating the system to obtain greater freedom than their parents would allow traditionally, such as living independently at age 16. Distrust of DCP was a significant and growing problem in Mirrabooka/Balga in particular. This also extended to Indigenous Australian families, many of which have a historical suspicion of government departments due to past interventions such as the forced removal of children from their families (the Stolen Generations—see http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/).

Outside of these specific issues, migrants and refugees generally indicated confidence that Australian government department processes will be fair, impartial and transparent. They were also grateful for assistance they had received from government agencies (and non-government organisations).
4.5.8 Social division and conflict

There were some tensions among ethnic groups in all three communities, although this appeared to be most pronounced in Mirrabooka/Balga. There was a view that diversity and difference are ‘tolerated’, not respected. That is, many participants (particularly our KIs) proposed that people ‘put up’ with community members from different backgrounds (Robinson, Witenberg, & Sanson, 2001), but may continue to hold negative attitudes toward them and/or choose not to engage with them.

Inter-ethnic tensions were complex and multifaceted, including conflict between African and Indigenous Australian groups (Mirrabooka/Balga), and African and Pacific Islander groups (Blacktown). The causes of these were also perceived to be multifaceted, with some participants attributing it to youthful aggression, power and masculinity, and others to competition over public space and resources. These sets of explanations are not necessarily mutually exclusive; ‘territoriality’ and open (and sometimes violent) competition over public space can seen as expressions of masculinity, as observed in the Cronulla riots in Sydney (see for example, Jakubowicz, 2009). Resentment of the perceived material privileges given to refugees and Humanitarian Entrants was evident among Indigenous Australians and Anglo-Australians, as discussed earlier.

Social division in Murray Bridge appeared to be more socio-economic in origin, and indeed, this was often the underlying source of tensions in Mirrabooka/Balga and Blacktown. Inter-ethnic tensions, including conflict between young people from different ethnic backgrounds, were highlighted in our discussions with KIs and focus group participants. In both communities, ‘street walk’ strategies, in which the police are accompanied by ethnic community leaders as they walk around the hotspots of the community, were successful in alleviating tensions or preventing them from escalating. Local schools had also successfully engaged leaders and representatives from the groups involved, to address some issues. Through efforts such as these, which often involved a different approach to community policing, collaboration with community leaders, and, in the case of Blacktown, provision of a positive alternative activity (the Blacktown Showcase at WestPoint Shopping Centre), ‘fight night’ — a regular feature in both communities — had also been dissolved.

Whilst some of these tensions appeared to stem from youth boredom and aggression (‘testosterone’ as many participants said), a more fundamental fear of difference was a common theme in all three communities. That is, participants expressed a fear of people who were most culturally distant from themselves, and this was described in very basic terms of physical appearance. In particular, community members described fear of the ‘tall and dark’ Sudanese and Congolese people, particularly young men. These fears were more common among Anglo-Australians, but included other migrant groups and among people who had had little direct contact with members of these groups. Such fear is likely to result in avoiding contact, which may exacerbate negative stereotypes and poor intergroup relations.

4.5.9 Promoting and enhancing social cohesion

Thus far we have shown the complexity of social cohesion as a concept, the overlapping nature of the dimensional components, based on the findings from our community case studies. We have also identified that the three communities are very different but similar in many ways.

When we look at the programs that are available in these sites, we also found disparities and commonalities. For example, Blacktown, being the most diverse and the biggest of the three in terms of land and population, has the most programs, and perhaps the best coordinated, compared
to the two other communities. This has to do with the fact that Blacktown was identified as the place where newly-arrived refugees and Humanitarian Entrants in recent years were to be settled. The sudden influx of emerging communities lead to great pressure for services, local council and community to get their act together. Also, according to our KIs there, Blacktown has actually benefited from the over-attention of government and media in that it becomes the target for new funding schemes for new government programs and policies. ‘We need to pilot this. Let’s do it in Blacktown.’ In a way, Blacktown has become an ideal laboratory for social experimentation. This is a double-edged sword for Blacktown residents and service providers, especially when the area is also a favourite target for attention of a media that is always eager to sensationalise. Having said that, Blacktown has gained significant success in having media on Blacktown community members’ side, and the media are encouraged to portray what is good in the area, more than before. Also, with the backdrop of a huge set of challenges and issues that beset newly-arrived refugees and Humanitarian Entrants, as well as service providers, the various sectors of government, non-government and community were drawn together organically to form effective networks. It was crucial that the local council was an active player and a leader, because without it, such networks would not succeed.

This is where the similarity with Mirrabooka/Balga lies. Mirrabooka also had some of the effective strategies of Blacktown, such as the walkabout, the programs for youth, the high awareness and civic society, the cooperative working together of various sectors, and the improved relationship with the local media, although what Mirrabooka/Balga achieved has not got nearly to the level of Blacktown.

And we then see the stark difference from Murray Bridge where formal resources were minimal. The isolation is the most serious here compared to the two other places. And it is this isolation that has caused Murray Bridge to lie outside the radar of government. The volume of new arrivals was not as great as in Mirrabooka/Balga and Blacktown, which is why Murray Bridge did not necessarily qualify for more workers and funding for example. As one KI in Blacktown said, ‘There is a formula. Before we can ask for another SGP worker for my community, we have to show that we have so-and-so hundred more coming.’ And yet, this KI reported that their workload was already too much.

We will come back to the matter of strategies and policies for enhancing social cohesion in section 5.

4.5.10 Media

Most of our focus group participants accessed local media, in the form of local newspapers, as well as state-based print and television media for their news. New social media technologies, such as Facebook, were not a prominent topic of discussion among our focus group participants or KIs although it was evident that this was becoming an important form of communication and information gathering for young people from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

A common theme across communities was the view that stereotypes and a focus on crime in the state and national media contributed to social conflict and division in the local communities. This manifested in negative stereotypes of particular minority groups, such as Muslims, Indigenous Australians, African groups, and refugees and asylum seekers.

KIs were much more positive about the local media, particularly the local newspapers, and described cases of positive stories about diversity and the community that had been featured. As identified earlier, in Blacktown there was a particularly good relationship between local government,
non-government organisations and agencies and the media, resulting in the successful squashing of a Cronulla-style ‘call-to-arms’ protest about African people.
5 Social Cohesion, Social Division and Conflict in Australia: Key findings and Conclusions

In this section we integrate the literature review findings with the analysis of data from our community case studies, media analysis, and audit of government and community programs to identify and examine current and emerging drivers for social cohesion, social division and conflict in multicultural Australia, and to identify strategies that increase social cohesion. As outlined in the Introduction, our aim was to address the following research questions:

1. What are the evidence and indicators of social cohesion in the Australian context?
2. What are the factors that enhance or disrupt social cohesion, sense of community belonging and tolerance in Australian communities?
3. How effective are various strategies in building community resilience and fostering social cohesion?
4. What is the role of media access and participation in Australians’ perspectives on multiculturalism and living with diversity, particularly as these relate to the construction of difference, national identity and belonging?

The key findings pertaining to these questions are summarised below. However, before we address these, it is important to acknowledge some of the limitations and gaps in the research reported here. Firstly, our focus was on social cohesion with regard to cultural diversity. Other dimensions of diversity, such as those relating to gender, socio-economic status, disability and sexual orientation, were not examined in this project, although in some cases we have identified where they may overlap with issues relating to ethnicity and culture (e.g., with gender and socio-economic status). Whilst Australian research and policy addressing social inclusion could be argued to capture many of these perspectives, we would recommend that future research also include exploration of these dimensions using the social cohesion framework.

Our literature review revealed some gaps in the Australian and international literature regarding aspects of social cohesion and its drivers. For example, comparatively little is known about the impact and influence of social media and more research is needed. In addition, there is a dearth of Australian research on superordinate/subordinate categories of identification (e.g., ethnic, city, state and national identities) and their relationships with intergroup bias. Other limitations in the literature include the dominance of survey-based studies, in which the findings are correlational and therefore causal connections cannot be determined. In addition, the overwhelming majority of the research is on attitudes (social and psychological factors) or outcomes (economic factors), with relatively few studies examining genuine intercultural interactions. It is well known that attitudes are not always good predictors of behaviour, although they may point to behavioural intent. Several social psychological experimental studies address behaviour, particularly in the area of intergroup contact, and some sociological research involves ethnographic studies in field settings. Nonetheless, it is evident that further research in genuine intercultural settings is needed.

In terms of methodology, we adopted a community case study approach because our aim was to augment the findings of Australian surveys, such as the Scanlon Foundation Mapping Social Cohesion studies, by providing a rich and detailed understanding of how living in a diverse Australian community is experienced by community members. The emphasis of such an approach is
explanatory—how and why—rather than the more enumerative approach of survey designs that address ‘what’, ‘how many’ or ‘how much’ (Yin, 2011). Thus our aim was not for statistical generalisation but *analytical generalization*—linking and integrating findings from the case studies with the research literature in a meaningful way. This should then inform of the possible processes, meanings and experiences that Australians draw upon in ‘everyday multiculturalism’. To obtain a snapshot of these processes, we selected communities that met certain criteria, relating to their ethnic and cultural composition; previous or current strategies and/or initiatives to address social cohesion and conflict; and location throughout Australia (a selection of different Australian states, and metropolitan and regional areas).

Thus, these communities are not representative of every Australian community and our participants may not be representative of Australians more generally, or of the particular ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic groups with which they identify. In particular, our sample contains a disproportionate number of migrants, women and people who were not engaged in full-time employment; and young people and Indigenous Australians were under-represented. This is due to a) our third-party sampling approach and the reality of participation in community programs - the majority of participants are not engaged in full-time employment; b) a general trend toward low participation of white or Anglo-Australian employed men in social research; and c) insufficient time to engage in more creative and sustained recruitment approaches (e.g., to recruit employed men). In future studies researchers should endeavour to include a broader range of residents from the communities of focus.

Finally, our analysis of media representations of diversity and difference was primarily restricted to the print media and issues that emerged from our community case studies. A more detailed and comprehensive examination of the impact of the media on social cohesion in multicultural Australia is needed, particularly given the role of social media as an emerging driver.

### 5.1 Evidence and indicators of social cohesion in the Australian context

In this project we used Jenson’s (1998) dimensions to provide a framework for conceptualising social cohesion and its indicators. This framework encompasses five dimensions that encapsulate—or at least overlap with—definitions and concepts evident in the policy and academic literatures, nationally and internationally. Although these dimensions are complex and overlapping, and dimensional approaches are not without their problems (see Limitations and Gaps, below), Jenson’s framework proved a useful tool to examine social cohesion in a broad sense. Utilising this conceptualisation, and drawing upon the literature, we propose that there are five key dimensions to social cohesion. These dimensions and their indicators are:

- **belonging**—shared values and identity
- **inclusion**—equality opportunities for access
- **participation**—engagement in structures and systems
- **recognition**—respect and tolerance
- **legitimacy**—pluralism.

It is evident that Australia compares well on these dimensions relative to other nations. In particular, OECD indicators of well-being, which may be considered relevant to the social cohesion

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32 We would argue that this is not achievable, since every community is affected by a unique and dynamic combination of economic, social and political factors that affect intergroup relations.
dimensions of belonging and participation, are high and above the OECD average (e.g., for life satisfaction and ‘having somebody you can rely upon in a time of need’; OECD, 2011b). The findings for life satisfaction are further confirmed by Australian research: In 2010, 88% of respondents to the Scanlon Foundation surveys said they were happy with their lives, and at least 90% reported a sense of belonging and pride in Australia and the Australian way of life (Markus, 2010). Australia also performs well in regard to the uptake of citizenship, second only to Canada in international comparisons (DIAC, 2011). Becoming an Australian citizen can be considered an index of belonging and participation. Moreover, Australia ranks above the OECD average for household income, employment, quality of education and life expectancy, all of which are indicators of inclusion (OECD, 2011b). Finally, on indicators of social conflict such as safety, violence, corruption, and anti-social behaviour, Australia compares very favourably with other nations (OECD, 2011a; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010).

However, there are some areas for improvement. In the OECD Better Life Initiative report it is proposed that social inclusion remains a problem for some groups in Australia, including people with low incomes, the unemployed, those with poor health, and people not proficient in English (OECD, 2011b). Our community case studies further illustrate these findings: There is evidence that some groups do not feel socially accepted or that they are not recognised appropriately, including some refugee communities, Indigenous Australians and Anglo-Australians. From our case studies and the research literature, there is also evidence of discrimination and prejudice against people from African backgrounds, Muslims, and Indigenous Australians (Dunn et al., 2004; Dunn, Forrest, et al., 2009; Inglis, 2010; Mansouri et al., 2009; Markus, 2010; Paradies et al., 2008; Runions et al., 2011). It is also apparent that there is a lack of genuine, intercultural interaction in the community. Moreover, there is evidence that the growing problem of securing affordable housing in Australia, combined with ignorance about refugees and how material resources are distributed, has contributed to a kind of ‘racialised resentment’ (Hudson et al. 2007, p. 42). Finally, some community members remain socially excluded in terms of employment and community participation. Again, this appears to affect Indigenous Australians disproportionately more than other groups.

5.2 Factors that enhance or disrupt social cohesion, sense of community belonging and tolerance in Australian communities

From our literature review and community case studies, we identified 11 key factors that enhance or disrupt social cohesion, sense of belonging and tolerance in Australian communities which are illustrated in Figure 3. Ten of the 11 factors are discussed below. The factor ‘media’ is discussed in section 5.4 because it relates to a separate research question.

Many of these factors operate across social cohesion dimensions, are overlapping, and also, in their absence or converse, may serve to enhance social conflict and division. In particular, there are five key factors that appear to operate in all social cohesion dimensions and have strong and long-lasting effects: 1) recognition of Indigenous Australian cultures and history; 2) awareness and understanding of diversity and ‘difference’ in the Australian community; 3) intercultural contact; 4) discrimination and prejudice; and 5) media.
Figure 3. Factors that enhance or disrupt social cohesion
Recognition of Indigenous Australian cultures and history is an important driver for social cohesion in Australia. This theme emerged in all of our communities and was a prominent feature of discussion among Anglo-Australians and Indigenous Australians in particular. On the positive side, most of our Anglo-Australian participants acknowledged the unique place of Australia’s original peoples, that Indigenous communities continue to be substantially disadvantaged, and that racism and prejudice against Indigenous Australians remains a problem. This is consistent with Australian research (e.g., Dunn et al., 2004; Dunn et al., 2009; HREOC, 2004; VicHealth, 2009) and the findings of the Reconciliation Barometer (Reconciliation Australia, 2011). However, this issue does not appear to be a high priority for most Australians: racism and Indigenous issues were ranked 10th and 12th as the most important problems facing Australia today, respectively, behind issues such as the economy, unemployment, poverty; the environment; and, significantly for this study, immigration and asylum-seeker issues (Markus, 2011).

We observed positive initiatives in recognising Indigenous Australians in many of our communities. Anglo-Australians in Murray Bridge highlighted community support for changing the Australian Constitution to acknowledge Indigenous Australians in a recent government consultation; the Blacktown Council had a Reconciliation Action Plan; and the Edmund Rice Centre in Mirrabooka conducted several successful Harmony Weekends that included education about Indigenous culture and history. However, and as acknowledged in the Reconciliation Barometer report, more needs to be done to improve relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia.

Following from this, a general recommendation is to promote strategies for building greater awareness, knowledge and recognition of Indigenous Australian cultures and history among more recently-arrived migrant and refugee groups, as well as among long-established and long-term Australians.

Awareness and understanding of diversity and ‘difference’ in the Australian community is a driver for all social cohesion dimensions. Ignorance and stereotypes contribute to cultural misunderstanding, discrimination and prejudice (Mackie, Hamilton, Susskind, & Roselli, 1996; Sanson et al., 1998; Stephan et al., 2005). As described earlier, participants in our case studies identified real and perceived cultural differences as factors influencing their ability to secure appropriate employment and satisfactory healthcare. This applies not only to migrant and refugee communities but to Indigenous Australians as well, for example, KIs identified that culturally appropriate ways of consulting or engaging with Indigenous communities are not always respected. This may be because they were not understood by government and/or community workers, because they were seen as requiring too much effort, or because the methods and timelines of consultation do not fit with existing systems and processes.

Intercultural awareness in the broader community is also crucial. Our case studies revealed a lack of understanding and awareness of Indigenous Australian history and cultures among some recently-arrived migrant and refugee groups, contributing to stereotypes and negative attitudes. In some ways this had become an aspect of acculturation to Australian cultural norms: migrants had acquired negative stereotypes of Indigenous Australians from their Anglo-Australian neighbours and co-workers, and the media. Further support to strategies and initiatives that promote learning about Indigenous cultures and history among more recently arrived groups is needed.

Cultural awareness was also a factor in perceptions of refugees in our communities. A lack of understanding of the size and constitution of some refugee families, particularly those of African
backgrounds, contributed to problems in obtaining suitable accommodation. Ignorance and misinformation also contributed to intergroup resentment over government support in the Mirrabooka/Balga community: focus group participants cited examples of alleged government ‘gifts’ (cash, expensive televisions, and cars) to refugees. Clearly the media played a significant role in exacerbating these beliefs, through the perpetuation of—or failure to challenge—false claims of refugee privilege. Case study participants also spoke of the negative impact of community ignorance about reasons for seeking refuge in another country and the distinction between asylum seekers and people already classed as refugees. Findings from the recent Scanlon Foundation survey also highlight the inaccuracy of many Australians’ beliefs about asylum seekers and the socially divisive nature of this issue in Australia (Markus, 2010).

In addition, awareness of specific cultural and religious differences in customs is important, for example, times of prayers for Muslims, dress codes for women (including in sport), and customs relating to the consumption of alcohol and the mixing of men and women in activities (e.g., in social, sporting, community programs). This awareness is needed to enhance community participation among minority ethnic and cultural groups. Community leaders and workers, and the broader public, need to be sensitive to these issues, but also, as suggested by Wise (2009), it may be beneficial to develop awareness among more recently-arrived Muslim groups, for example, that social drinking in moderation is an Australian cultural norm.

Nonetheless, we should acknowledge that although greater cultural awareness and knowledge among Anglo-Australians might help overcome barriers such as fear of difference and change (Wise, 2005), they are not sufficient conditions for mutual acceptance and respect but can sometimes lead to further stereotyping. Moreover, there may be some ethnic, cultural, and/or religious beliefs and practices, particularly those relating to women, that many Australians reject (Collins, 2007b). More informed discussion of these topics is needed, in addition to the promotion of strategies for developing greater awareness and understanding of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity in the Australian community.

(3) From the literature and our case studies, it is evident that positive intercultural contact is a powerful driver for all dimensions of social cohesion, particularly recognition. A substantial body of research evidence supports the role of frequent, positive intergroup contact in reducing prejudice through improving mutual understanding and reducing anxiety and threat between groups (e.g., Gonzalez et al., 2008; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Swart et al., 2011). However, there is little research on the effects of intergroup contact in Australia. Although rates of intercultural ‘mixing’ through friendships, interaction and intercultural marriage are high compared with other nations (Ang et al., 2002), it would appear that intercultural contact is significantly less common for Anglo-Australian residents. Much intercultural contact is among migrants and second-generation groups (Ang et al., 2002; Inglis, 2010).

We observed this in our community case studies, in which engagement between Anglo-Australians, Indigenous Australians, and migrant and refugee groups was limited. Following from this, a theme that emerged was a need to include Anglo-Australians and British migrants in ‘diversity’ activities and strategies, from which they have felt excluded. It has been acknowledged by Wise (2009) that past practices (in the 1950s-70s) of Anglo-Australians’ neighbourly helping of new arrivals was a positive way of establishing inter-ethnic contact and building intergroup relationships (the ‘Good Neighbour Movement’). The ‘New Neighbours’ construct in the community of Murray
Bridge draws upon a similar idea— ‘how can we help our New Neighbours to settle in?’\textsuperscript{33} The Good Neighbour Movement was criticised as paternalistic, potentially disempowering of new and emerging communities, and, in some ways, a method of promoting assimilation to ‘our’ (Anglo-Australian) ways and customs. Thus, it was replaced by the different ideology of multicultural policy. However, as noted by Wise (2009), without such programs and with the emphasis moved to government provision of support for ethnic communities, Anglo-Australians may see themselves as excluded from the process of acculturation and intercultural interaction. Thus, ‘this shift...removed the responsibility of multicultural recognition from the realm of everyday practice’ (Wise, 2009, p. 41). Consequently, and as observed from our KI interviews and focus groups, there is little expectation or requirement of Anglo-Australians (as they perceive it) to help others to adjust, or indeed, to adjust themselves, to accommodate new languages, cultures and customs. This would seem to be contrary to the principles of mutual acculturation—in which all groups participate and experience (some) cultural change and adaptation—and is an area that warrants greater attention in policy and practice.

Nonetheless, in our communities there were stories of good intercultural interactions through: programs that included people from diverse backgrounds and in which Anglo-Australians volunteered as tutors; religious activities; events like Harmony Day/Harmony Week; and accidental meetings and interactions with neighbours. From these data we saw evidence of \textit{transversal enablers} (Wise, 2009), that is, community members who seek out diverse others, engage in cultural exchange and learning, and helping.

In general there need to be more strategies and opportunities for frequent, positive intercultural contact in Australian communities. In addition, future research should include a study that investigates mutual intercultural attitudes and behaviour involving Australians from Anglo-, Indigenous, and migrant/refugee backgrounds.

\textbf{(4) Racism and discrimination disrupt all social cohesion dimensions.} This is well-documented in the national and international literature and emerged in our community case studies. Experiences of racism and/or discrimination denote a lack of recognition in the community and can disrupt belonging, inclusion and participation. The impacts of racism and discrimination are pervasive and enduring. This is a factor in all dimensions and related to others we have identified, such as cultural awareness, the role of the media, and positive intergroup contact.

There is debate about the extent of racism in Australia, partly because it depends on how it is defined and measured. Evidence from the Scanlon Foundation surveys suggests that at least 14% of Australians have experienced discrimination in the previous 12 months because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion, and this percentage has risen over the past few years (Markus, 2011). Instances of discrimination were described in each of the communities we studied, although it did not appear to be widespread and in most cases racism tended to be subtle or covert. However, there were examples of people being spat at, verbally abused, called names, being ignored or receiving unfair treatment. People from African, Muslim and Indigenous Australian backgrounds were most likely to be the targets of these discriminatory acts. In every community there were incidents in which young people from minority backgrounds were treated with suspicion by people in authority, such as transit officers, security guards and the police.

\textsuperscript{33} Interestingly, the New Neighbour term was coined originally by recently-arrived migrants and refugees in Murray Bridge to describe themselves.
Systemic racism in the form of discrimination against Africans in the private housing rental market was apparent in each community.

It is evident that the overwhelming majority of Australians agree that racism is a problem in Australia and/or there is a need for anti-racism initiatives (e.g., Dunn et al., 2004; Dunn et al., 2009; HREOC, 2008; VicHealth, 2009). However, very few Australians acknowledge that they are personally racist or have engaged in discriminatory behaviours based on others’ ethnic, racial or religious background (Dunn et al., 2009). Thus, racism is something other people do. It is also likely that social and political sanctions against discrimination discourage the open expression of such attitudes; they have become socially unacceptable. It may also be that many Australians do not recognise their thoughts or behaviours as racist, or they justify them on the grounds of differences in norms and values—modern or symbolic racism (Augoustinos & Reynolds, 2001; Sanson et al., 1998)—rather than belief in a racial hierarchy per se. It would seem that more needs to be done to prompt Australians to examine and discuss these ‘subtle’ forms of racism and discrimination. Anti-racism initiatives such as the Challenging Racism project at the University of Western Sydney and the VicHealth ‘More than Tolerance’ project represent promising strategies in this direction.

(5) Culture maintenance among migrants, refugees and other cultural and/or linguistic minorities is a driver for belonging. Considerable international and Australian research supports the role of culture maintenance in the well-being of migrant groups (e.g., Fisher & Sonn, 2002; Sam, Vedder, Ward, & Horenczyk, 2006; Sonn & Fisher, 1996, 1998), and this finding is one of the cornerstones of multicultural policies, including current Australian policy. It is important that we continue to support this, as new and more ‘culturally distant’ groups settle in Australia. Migrants and refugees in our community case studies reported a strong sense of belonging within their ethnic, cultural and/or religious groups. However, they also reported multiple communities to which they felt connected, including their ethnic minority group, their country of origin, and Australia. There was a general view that sense of belonging to local (neighbourhood, suburb) and national communities increases with time, and therefore subsequent generations will and do feel a greater sense of connection to the community.

Support for religious and spiritual activities is an important component of this. This has been identified as an enabler for participation and engagement in Australia and internationally (CIRCA, 2010; Uslaner, 2002). In the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS) for the Australian Bureau of Statistics church and religious activities were rated highest amongst other types of social participation, by people born in non-English speaking countries compared to those born in mainly English speaking countries (ABS, 2006). Hudson et al. (2007) found that faith groups were significant sources of involvement and social activity for Somalis in London and Manchester. In our research, participation in religious groups was an important driver for sense of belonging and community, particularly in the Murray Bridge community. Importantly, the impact of this was greater than assisting in heritage culture maintenance and identity because it also contributed to inter-ethnic interaction. Churchgoers had shared values and beliefs that cross ethnic and linguistic barriers. Other authors have commented on the potential for religious groups to contribute to ‘mutual understanding’ (Hudson et al., 2007, p. 75). Moreover, this finding highlights the potential for community members to come together through shared values in other domains such as environmental sustainability, animal rights, and wildlife conservation.
Related to intercultural contact, community activities and ‘social spaces’ can enhance the likelihood of positive intercultural interaction and enhance community belonging and participation. Community events, activities and programs that were seen as ethnically and culturally inclusive, were free (or cheap), accessible and included child care were identified as successful in bringing people in the community together. Activities around food, sport, music and art were most favoured.

Previous research has identified that sites for intercultural encounters include parks (Peters, 2010), community centres, gardens and libraries (Fincher & Iveson, 2008), schools and child-care facilities (Amin, 2002; Hudson et al., 2007; Noble, 2009), neighbourhood-watch programs, youth projects and urban regenerative projects (Amin, 2002) and ‘over the garden fence’ (Wise, 2009). To promote positive intercultural contact, interaction should be necessary in these settings (Amin, 2002), and sites such as schools should include strong sanctions against discrimination and encourage inclusion because they can become places of prejudice (Inglis, 2010; Valentine, 2008) and marginalisation (Due & Riggs, 2010).

Based on our case studies it was evident that the function and appearance of public space were significant drivers of belonging and participation among community members. The ugly appearance of public areas in Mirrabooka/Balga was seen to contribute to lack of community pride and belonging, whereas a government and community initiative to improve a local park (the From Trolleypond to Billabong project) had successfully engaged community members from a range of cultural backgrounds in cleaning up the park and participating in collaborative art activities. A similar activity involving the construction of a mosaic at the community child-care centre had been successful in Murray Bridge. Moreover, a major initiative involving dance and music in Blacktown had contributed to a sense of ownership and pride in the shopping centre, previously the site of tensions and violence. Community participants also thought that designated space, in the form of an Aboriginal Resource Centre, would enhance community recognition for Indigenous Australians in Mirrabooka/Balga and Murray Bridge.

Of course there are significant constraints on public and community space, especially in densely populated areas (e.g., Blacktown) or cities with rapidly growing populations (e.g., Perth). Development for housing, transportation and commercial activity continue to compete with the need for community buildings and open spaces. Nonetheless, it is important that the potential impact of development on social and community life—and social cohesion—is considered by federal, state and local government agencies in planning decisions.

Following from this we would recommend the promotion of community activities and creation of ‘social spaces’ that provide opportunities for positive intercultural interaction and enhance community belonging and participation.

Communication is a driver for belonging, inclusion, and participation. Being able to communicate confidently with other community members is important. It is widely accepted that English-language competence affects many migrants’ and refugees’ ability to secure satisfactory housing, healthcare and employment, and to engage effectively in education. Lack of confidence in being able to communicate with others can also impact on community participation and the capacity to develop meaningful relationships with others in the community (Hudson et al., 2007). This latter

34 For example, the central park where the ‘Billabong’ is located is currently under threat from development to alter local roads and traffic conditions.
factor impacts on native English speakers as well: research demonstrates that majority members’ anxiety over intercultural interactions, due to fears about offending or misunderstanding, can lead to avoidance of contact with members of other ethnic or cultural groups (Harrison & Peacock, 2009). Concern about offending others is also linked to cultural awareness and stereotyping: greater awareness and understanding of other cultures can help people avoid unintentional offence and enhance confidence about interacting with others. It is important to promote strategies to develop competent communication skills among all community members.

(8) Perceived and genuine equality of access to resources drives social inclusion. The impacts of a decline in access to community resources (social exclusion) are well documented (see for example: ASIB, 2009b; Babacan, 2008; Scutella, Wilkins, & Horn, 2009). These include decreased life chances in terms of employment, income and health, social isolation and discrimination. From our case studies we observed genuine and perceived competition over resources such as jobs, healthcare, and in particular, housing. Concerns about the equitable distribution of public housing contributed to inter-ethnic tensions in some of our communities and there was evidence of resentment among older Anglo-Australians, British migrants, and Indigenous Australians. Resentment by Anglo-Australians and British migrants was related to a sense of entitlement; that longer-term or ‘real’ Australians should be given priority, rather than preference being based on need. We can also relate this finding to realistic threat theory: people feel threatened by others when there is a perception that there is intergroup competition for scarce resources (Stephan et al., 2005). What is significant for this context though, is the extent to which this takes on a racial or ethnic dimension in diverse communities. Because refugees and more recently-arrived migrant families were seen to be given priority in the public housing ‘queue’, the discourse became one in which perceived group differences were enhanced (‘us’ and ‘them’). The view appeared to be that if resources were to be distributed unequally and unfairly (as they were perceived to be), then a different ranking system should be used—one in which Anglo-Australians and/or people who have lived in Australia longer should be given priority. This perspective, in turn, challenges sense of belonging to the national (Australian) community among more recently-arrived groups.

We should not overstate the case for this in our sample; it was evident primarily in the Mirrabooka/Balga community. Nonetheless, this ‘racialised resentment’ over the distribution of resources has been observed in other contexts (e.g., the UK; Hudson et al., 2007), suggesting a common pattern of applying a racial or ethnic lens to resource competition. Moreover, it demonstrates how perceived or real resource competition can affect other dimensions of social cohesion, such as belonging and recognition (tolerance and acceptance), and has the potential to result in serious inter-ethnic tensions in a community (Amin, 2002).

(9) Mentoring and leadership development for community capacity-building are drivers for social cohesion, particularly inclusion and participation. Mentoring ethnic minority youth can help them overcome social barriers and respond effectively to racism and discrimination (DIAC, 2008b). Skill and leadership development promote community participation (Foster-Fishman et al., 2009). There were many positive examples of mentoring and leadership development in Mirrabooka/Balga and Blacktown, particularly involving young people from ethnic and cultural minorities. The Football United project in Blacktown is a case in point. Similarly the MyGen project in Murray Bridge provides young people with a voice and leadership development although this does not focus on ethnic minority youth. It is important to support programs and projects that are related to mentoring and leadership development for building capacity in the community. Moreover, it is necessary for
community organisations to have succession planning in place. In our case studies it was evident that local ‘champions’ were key to the success of certain strategies and initiatives (e.g., Superintendent Mark Wright in Blacktown). Without succession planning and mentoring of future leaders, previously successful programs often flounder or fail.

(10) More broadly, the active promotion of the value of diversity and pluralism at national (e.g., government policy, public institutions) and community (e.g., organizational cultures and policies) levels drives social cohesion, particularly legitimacy. This point returns to Jenson’s (1998) concept of legitimacy: in diverse communities there need to be institutions and processes in place to mediate potential intergroup tensions and conflicts. In addition, one of Allport’s optimal conditions for intergroup contact to reduce prejudice is that authorities encourage intercultural contact (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew et al., 2011). As outlined in section 3 of this report, Australia has a number of institutions to safeguard legitimacy, including the Australian Multicultural Council, the National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy, Reconciliation Australia, the Native Title Tribunal, racial vilification and anti-discrimination legislation, and programs to strengthen access and equity for Australians from Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Not only do such institutions and processes need to exist, but they need to be perceived as trustworthy, fair and impartial by community members: there must be public confidence in them. From our case studies it was evident some community members—particularly those from African and/or refugee, and Indigenous Australian backgrounds—did not trust some government departments such as the Department for Child Protection (WA) and the police. The reasons for this are complex and different for each group but clearly need to be addressed to avoid further disruption to communities.

In addition, it was evident from our data that some community residents—mainly Anglo-Australians and British migrants—hold different preferences for migrant acculturation and adaptation than do most migrants and these are inconsistent with the themes of Australian multicultural policy. For example, some of our focus group participants expressed a concern that some migrants were not ‘fitting in’. This discourse had an assimilationist flavour: those who would not accept ‘our’ ways should be not allowed into the country or, if in Australia already, should be deported. This is consistent with the findings of previous Australian research (e.g., Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2010) and reflects a belief that responsibility for adapting and integrating into Australian society lies primarily with migrants and refugees. Whilst our participants from migrant backgrounds accepted this responsibility, at least in part, they regarded the process as mutual and dynamic. International research has demonstrated that discordant fit in acculturation preferences between the host community members and migrants can be problematic for intergroup relations, for example, if migrants prefer integration and host community members endorse assimilation (Bourhis et al., 1997). However, our data are from three select communities that may not be representative: more research needs to be conducted in Australia to examine the extent to which Australians hold consensual, problematic or conflictual acculturation expectations and strategies.

35 Indeed it should be acknowledged that not all Australians agree with or support multicultural policy.
5.3 Effectiveness of various strategies in building community resilience and social cohesion

Section 3 of this report presented the findings regarding government and non-government/community policies and strategies for enhancing social cohesion. They are mainly from grey literature, since academic literature is lacking in materials that examine effectiveness of strategies and policies, except for those specifically related to combating racism. While section 3 was the result of our web-based audit, we need to reiterate that a full audit that is evaluation-oriented was beyond the scope of our study. Nonetheless, the materials we gathered were very useful, especially when complemented by the programs and strategies that we gathered from our three community case studies.

The Australian Government’s policy related to social cohesion is encapsulated in the Government’s Social Inclusion Agenda (Australian Government, 2009a). The ‘whole-of-government’ approach/strategy is articulated in A Stronger, Fairer Australia (Australian Government, 2009a) that outlines ‘those actions and our approach to making Australia stronger and fairer over time (p. 4).’ With the establishment of the Social Inclusion Unit (SIU) in 2007, and the Australian Social Inclusion Board (ASIB) in 2008, the Government was able to articulate its vision of a socially inclusive society, one in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate actively in society (ASIB, 2010).

Civil society is very strong in Australia, with community organisations actively promoting social cohesion. In our audit, we found the following programs, activities, and strategies that promote social cohesion: events that fostered social cohesion; organisations that were established specifically for promoting harmony and social cohesion; school-based programs; sports-related programs; specific projects/programs targeted at Humanitarian Entrants and refugees; programs focusing on the needs of Muslim families; and programs targeting racism specifically.

The programs/strategies that aimed at promoting social cohesion from our case studies include the following: Activities that promote multiculturalism and inclusion; programs aimed at education and awareness-raising; programs that aimed to promote intercultural relations and interaction; settlement and migrant resource services; English-language programs; capacity-building programs; school-based programs; multi-sectoral, multi-ethnic and/or inter-agency networks; and local council-developed action plans. Some of the vehicles for implementing these programs are art, sport, festivals, training workshops, dance and music, and so on. They could be focused on specific groups, such as youth, women, men, elderly, refugees, students, Indigenous Australians, and Muslims, or they could be for general groups. These programs were mostly funded by Government (Federal, State or Local); and run by community organisations, multicultural services, local councils, governmental agencies, individually or cooperatively.

Reflecting on our findings, one important insight from our case studies is about the consultation process. Refugee and migrant groups in our three community case studies did not seem to have a problem with this. They felt that there was some understanding of their needs, and the services were available, and so they were very grateful, although they cited some inadequacies. However, consultation—particularly the lack thereof—came out as a big issue among Indigenous Australian participants and workers. Strikingly, the theme of how dissatisfied they were about their role in developing culturally appropriate services (i.e., how they were consulted and involved in the actual
development) was as important as how dissatisfied they were with the treatment they received in areas of housing, employment, education and healthcare. As some Indigenous Australian participants said, they were not represented; they had no one to advocate for them; they were not consulted; and if Indigenous Australian residents were consulted, who were these Indigenous Australians? As one Indigenous Australian Kl said, people in government need to appreciate the cultural ways of consultation and negotiation that Indigenous Australians value and expect, before any consultation could be effective. And after the consultation, they need to be informed as to what happened to their input. Indigenous Australians have a lot to offer if they are properly involved. And once they are, they will have a sense of ‘ownership’ and pride in their involvement. This goes to the heart of respect, something that Indigenous Australians are passionate about because they have experienced so much disrespect and lack of recognition historically and up to the present, as our research also showed.

The issue of ethnicity of target participants for programs was also a point for reflection for us. Is ethno-specific more effective than multicultural? Do we need a separate program for refugees and Humanitarian Entrants? Or for Indigenous Australians? Do we assume that mainstream services are for Anglo-Australians and other long-established migrant groups only? Could it be that separating them actually contributes to the slower path to social cohesion?

The government approach has been to focus funding and services to cater to the special needs of newly-arrived migrants, refugees and Humanitarian Entrants, at least in the last five to ten years. This is understandable, and we would argue that this has to continue. There is also separate funding specific to Indigenous Australian communities, which we believe should also continue. In the midst of these, there should be some clear communication strategies to convey the message that allocating resources to one side does not mean taking away from the other side. And we must remember that there is also another group, the Anglo-Australians, who also claim the resources are taken away from them.

More programs that try to bring the three groups together would provide new pathways for genuine social cohesion. It becomes not just about inclusion (equal access to resources) but about more positive intergroup relations—acceptance, and harmony. There are already examples in the three case studies of such programs. For example, the Football United program in Blacktown now has participation from all groups—refugees and Humanitarian Entrants, long-established, Anglo-Australians, and Indigenous Australians. However, the organisers acknowledged that the number of Anglo- and Indigenous Australians is still very low. Nonetheless, the Blacktown SWITCH program provides great potential for the engagement of all groups along common interests. Another example is the Reel Connections program in the City of Stirling which included young people from Indigenous and migrant backgrounds. The suggestion by some focus group participants and KIs to let the Indigenous Australian and Anglo-Australians lead the organising of Harmony Day has potential of seeing ‘harmony’ from groups other than the migrant and refugee groups. After all, if Harmony Day is for the wider community to come together to appreciate cultural diversity, we need to bring more of the ‘un-converted’ to participate.

Another significant insight from our three case studies is the importance of collaboration across agencies and organisations, government and non-government. We have evidence that this can work. Representatives from the networks, though, spoke of needing resources to sustain their activities, and sustainable funding of services, programs and projects. A number of workers and staff in these
programs who we interviewed expressed feeling over-worked, that it is mainly their commitment and dedication to their clientele and their work that have kept them going.

Following from this a general recommendation is to promote and support whole-of-community programs/projects/services that bring different groups together (in addition to ethno-specific strategies). It is common knowledge in cross-cultural psychology that the best way to reinforce positive cross-cultural contact is to give the group a common goal or task (e.g., project) where the chances of achieving it are high. On this logic therefore, perhaps those programs with great promise for bringing about positive interactions among diverse Australians are those which are not necessarily badged as ‘social cohesion’ programs but mainstream activities in all aspects of civic life including in workplaces, sport, the arts, politics, commerce, and environmental activities. We could expect some resistance from among the groups themselves. However, making activities for all, having appropriate cultural, linguistic and other diversity among participants, and meeting appropriate conditions for positive contact experiences is likely to be a more useful vehicle for more understanding, acceptance and social cohesion.

5.4 The role of media access and participation in Australians’ perspectives on multiculturalism and living with diversity

We examined media use and impact within our selected communities. Although these examples are not necessarily representative of the wider Australian community, they offer a detailed insight into how media representations can influence social cohesion, conflict and division.

Most of our participants accessed local and state print and television media for news and to search for employment opportunities. Web-based media, such as Skype, were more commonly used for people to stay in touch with friends and/or family overseas. Young people were a notable exception to this: they tended to use social media, e.g., Facebook, as a means of obtaining news as well as for maintaining social relationships.

Media are regarded as one of the key factors in social inclusion (AHRC, 2010; DIAC, 2008b) and they can have a significant impact on social cohesion and discord through the perpetuation of stereotypes and the reproduction of racism (van Dijk, 1989), and the silencing of minority groups (Cottle, 2007; Fürsich, 2010). We saw evidence of this in our community case studies; many participants from refugee backgrounds keenly felt the negative impact of the ongoing political and public debate about ‘unauthorised boat arrivals’ (see O’Doherty & Lecouteur, 2007; Pedersen et al., 2005). In addition, they were affected negatively by tales of ‘refugee privilege’ circulated through talkback radio, emails and commentary on online news stories. Media also contributed to negative stereotypes of Indigenous Australians, and the negative reputation of the communities as sites of crime and violence.

However, media can also be powerful forces for developing cultural awareness and education. It was evident from our communities that local media, such as community newspapers, could provide information that challenged negative stereotypes: taking ‘a previously stereotyped minority’ and creating ‘media content that presents this minority in a positive light’ (Fürsich, 2010, pp. 121-122). Thus, our participants described cases of positive stories about diversity and the community that had been featured in local newspapers, with which community leaders had developed relationships. Some initiatives had come from journalists and editors themselves: a local journalist in one community acknowledged the role of the newspaper in challenging stereotypes, and described the newspaper’s transition from having a special ‘ethnic’ or ‘multicultural’ section to incorporating...
more representative content throughout the paper. As she presented it, this was a mainstreaming of ‘ethnic’ content, relevant to all domains of news and community life. Similarly, in Blacktown there was a particularly good relationship between local government, non-government organisations and the media, resulting in the successful squashing of a Cronulla-style ‘call-to-arms’ protest about African people. There is anecdotal evidence of the positive impact of a story on the ABC’s 7.30 Report (‘Blacktown Unblackens Its Name’, 5 January 2012) as well. This media piece was about successful initiatives to address youth violence in Blacktown such as the COM4Unity project.

These examples illustrate that reflection and awareness among journalists and editors, and developing good relationships with media outlets, can produce positive outcomes for Australians’ perspectives on multiculturalism and diversity. Programs such as SBS’s Go back to where you came from (2011-2012), depicting the typical journey of people seeking asylum in Australia, are good examples of media challenging misinformation\(^{36}\). However, as a self-regulated and (largely) commercial industry such approaches are unlikely to become adopted without further assistance (or pressure). It may be useful to draw upon overseas initiatives, such as the Diversity Toolkit in the European Union, to enhance awareness and responsible reporting in the Australian media (see European Union Agency of Fundamental Rights [EUAFR], 2007; European Broadcasting Union [EBU], 2010; Horsti, 2011). The toolkit provides practical tools for journalists and covers topics such as: reporting of immigration; visibility of ethnic minorities; and balance and perspectives.

Social media emerged as potential drivers for social cohesion. Comparatively less is known about the impact and influence of social media but from our case studies and Australian research it is evident that young people are more engaged with the internet than with traditional forms of communication, compared with older Australians (Ang et al., 2002; Inglis, 2010). Our young participants and youth workers described Facebook as their primary means for communicating with their friends, and for learning about news, current events and local activities.

Social media can also promote civic/political participation and inclusion (Vitak et al., 2011) and enable global networking and connections (Cruickshank, 2004; Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009). Social media allow new connections and new identities to be constructed and negotiated, which may challenge existing conceptualisations of ethnic, racial and cultural categories and their boundaries. However, and as described earlier in relation to racism and discrimination, social media can also be used to express exclusionary or discriminatory views (Al-Natour, 2010). Clearly more research is needed on the nature and effects of social media in Australians’ perspectives on multiculturalism and diversity and their potential for enhancing social cohesion.

### 5.5 Recommendations

Based on an examination of the key factors influencing social cohesion, social division and conflict; a reflection on effectiveness of government and community strategies; and an initial analysis of the role of media, including social media, we have formulated a number of recommendations. These are inevitably general, and could be treated as a menu of possible steps to be taken for enhancing social cohesion. We acknowledge that our three community case studies did not represent the whole of Australia, however, they did represent the variation we can expect when we try to tailor programs and activities for specific purposes.

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\(^{36}\)Two series of ‘Go Back to Where You Came From’ were produced by SBS in 2011 and 2012. A group of Australians was selected and taken on a journey to the countries where immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers came from, and through the experiences and processes they encountered ([http://www.sbs.com.au/goback/](http://www.sbs.com.au/goback/)).
Our six key recommendations are to:

- promote awareness, knowledge, recognition, and understanding of cultures, ‘difference’, and cultural diversity
- create opportunities for frequent, positive intercultural contact
- address racism and discrimination
- improve community capacity
- involve the media in enhancing social cohesion
- conduct further research on mutual intercultural relations, and on social media and social cohesion.

These recommendations are detailed in the next sub-sections. Taking a ‘whole-of-government-and-community’ lens, we have attempted to identify, where possible, the roles of commonwealth, state and local governments and community organisations in taking up these recommendations. We have also included, where we can, the vehicles for implementing the recommendations, for example, sport, community events, action plan, and media involvement.

### 5.5.1 Promoting awareness, knowledge, recognition, and understanding of cultures, ‘difference’, and cultural diversity

This recommendation is linked to two main findings from our community case studies: the lack of recognition of Indigenous cultures and history; and the lack of awareness and understanding of diversity and ‘difference’ in the Australian community. Here we outline some best practice actions and/or activities to address these findings. These include methods for raising awareness among Anglo-Australians, migrants, refugees and Humanitarian Entrants of the important role of Indigenous cultures and history, and according Indigenous Australians the recognition that they have felt was lacking. At the same time, there is a need to raise awareness of the different cultures in society, beyond the level of knowing the cuisine, dance and music, and arts of different groups. Last but not the least, cultural diversity and pluralism need to be celebrated by focusing more on the positive impact of these characteristics of multicultural Australia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key findings</th>
<th>Best Practice Actions and/or Activities</th>
</tr>
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| Perceived lack of recognition of Indigenous Australian cultures and history | Commonwealth government:  
- Lead national strategies to further recognition of Indigenous Australians  
Local governments:  
- Develop action plans aimed at recognizing the important place of Indigenous Australians (ref Blacktown City Council’s Reconciliation Action Plan).  
- Provide resource centres for Indigenous Australians.  
Organisers of events:  
- Include a Welcome to Country and/or acknowledgement of the Indigenous owners of the land on which events take place.  
Community organisations:  
- Develop activities to raise awareness and greater recognition and respect for Indigenous members of the community.  
Media: |
Develop a program of projects that will raise awareness, knowledge and understanding of Indigenous cultures and history.

All:
- Cooperate to actively recognize Indigenous Australians’ place in society (ref Murray Bridge support for changing the Australian Constitution to acknowledge Indigenous Australians).
- Develop strategies for improving relations and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ignorance and stereotypes contribute to cultural misunderstanding, discrimination and prejudice. Intercultural awareness in the broader community is crucial.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture maintenance contributes to the well-being of migrants, refugees and Humanitarian Entrants.</td>
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<tr>
<th>All levels of government:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Maintain and improve cultural awareness training within government departments and ensure such training is accessible to non-government organisations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fund more inclusive multicultural events (e.g. from DSCP-Multicultural Arts and Festivals Grants).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Governments and community organisations:</td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encourage well-informed public discussion and debate about intergroup relations towards enhancing relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support strategies that promote learning about the cultures and history of Indigenous people, migrants and refugees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Support the maintenance of cultures of all groups, including Australians of Anglo-, Indigenous, migrant, and refugee/Humanitarian Entrant backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fund/support/organise events and/or activities that showcase the dance, music, arts, cuisine and other cultural aspects of migrant and refugee groups, which can include religious and spiritual activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>• Cover more positive stories, e.g., background and contribution of Indigenous people, migrants and refugees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encourage responsible reporting (e.g., of backgrounds of alleged criminal offenders) and reflective practice.</td>
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5.5.2 Creating opportunities for frequent, positive intercultural contact

The actions and activities in the next table are linked to findings related to the relative absence of opportunities where different groups could come together and work towards a common goal. While there are examples of programs and activities that try to bring refugees as a group, or migrants as a group, together, there was a lack of more concerted efforts at making sure that these activities and programs have a balance of Anglo- and Indigenous participants as well. The actions are also linked to access to resources, the inequality of which is contrary to forming positive intercultural attitudes and behaviour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key findings</th>
<th>Best Practice Actions and/or Activities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequent, positive intercultural contact drives social</td>
<td>Commonwealth, State and Local governments:</td>
</tr>
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</table>
cohesion, and yet:
- Engagement between Anglo-Australians, Indigenous Australians, and migrant and refugee/Humanitarian Entrant groups was limited.
- Anglo-Australians and Indigenous Australians have felt excluded in multicultural activities and resource allocations.
- Migrants, refugees and Humanitarian Entrants did not feel welcomed by Anglo-Australians.
- There are cultural differences that serve as obstacles for more mixing.
- There are not enough physical and ‘social spaces’ for positive intercultural contact.

Funding conditions to include a requirement to demonstrate that participants from multiple groups will be involved.
- Promote funding for programs where participants are from diverse backgrounds, including Anglo- and Indigenous Australians.
- Make funding for such programs more sustainable.
- Provide adequate resources for the creation, improvement and maintenance of physical and social spaces for intercultural contact (ref construction of mosaic in Murray Bridge; Blacktown’s performance stage and space inside the shopping mall, dedicated to young people; retention and improvement of community parks and public squares).

Governments and community organisations:
- Support programs, activities and events that allow different groups to mix (ref Blacktown’s Football United, Mirrabooka’s myGen project); while continuing with ethno-specific programs and activities.
- Develop volunteer training programs where volunteers are from a different group as the participants/beneficiaries. Such programs should make sure to include multicultural content.
- Address communities’ social needs more effectively in planning and development decisions.
- Fund and implement activities with a common goal (e.g., community garden schemes, construction of murals and other public artwork)

Community organisations:
- Identify, recognize and support transversal enablers – community members who seek out diverse others, engage in cultural exchange and learning, and helping.

Mutual acculturation is necessary for social cohesion, and yet there is little expectation or requirement of Anglo-Australians to adjust or accommodate other cultures, or to help other cultural groups.

All:
- Involve Anglo- and Indigenous and migrant/refugee background Australians in strategies that promote greater awareness and understanding of diversity and ‘difference’ as these are excellent opportunities for positive intercultural contact.

Commonwealth government:
- Foster public discussion of the benefits of diversity and pluralism for the Australian community

Commonwealth and state government:
- Strengthen the transparency in decision-making regarding the allocation of resources, making sure that this is communicated adequately to community groups, including Anglo- and Indigenous Australians.

Media:
- Assist Government in publicizing its process and
Genuine equality of access to resources contributes to social inclusion and full participation. Our community case studies show:
- Some of the newer communities (e.g., Karen Burmese and Bhutanese) were becoming socially excluded.
- Access to suitable and affordable housing and stiff competition for this were major concerns, especially for African refugees with big families.
- Access to education was mixed.
- Access to healthcare was treated with mixed views.
- Access to employment among refugees and migrants was related to their English language skills, employers’ recognition of their past experience, and employers’ acceptance of cultural backgrounds of prospective employees.

5.5.3 Addressing racism and discrimination
We cited racism and discrimination as a key barrier to all social cohesion dimensions. The actions below are focused on addressing racism and discrimination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key findings</th>
<th>Best Practice Actions and/or Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Racism and discrimination disrupt social cohesion:  
- Most likely targets: Africans, Muslims, and Indigenous  
- There was everyday racism, in public places  
- Major issue in private housing and employment | Commonwealth and state government:  
- Publicise anti-racism strategies more actively, and include monitoring of reporting of racism.  
- Develop and/or continue to fund racism/discrimination-awareness training in the housing, health, employment and education services, both government and non-governmental sectors.  
 Local government:  
- Develop and implement anti-racism strategies  
 Media  
- Educate the public about subtle forms of or everyday racism. |
| The Government has clear policies that show racism and discrimination cannot be tolerated, and yet there seems to be a lack of awareness about this at the community level; or community members have not used official mechanisms to combat racism and discrimination. | |

5.5.4 Improving community capacity
The recommended actions below relate to two important drivers for social cohesion: effective communication skills, and community capacity, particularly in relation to leadership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key findings</th>
<th>Best Practice Actions and/or Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| English-language competence among migrants and refugees/Humanitarian Entrants affects their ability to secure satisfactory housing, healthcare, employment and education. | Government:  
- Increase the support for English-language tuition among Indigenous and migrants/refugee background Australians based on need.  
- Improve the literacy levels of all groups.  
 English-language skills providers:  
- Involve Anglo-Australians more actively (either paid or volunteer) in English-language education by way of practice partners or actual teachers; and improve the content of language teaching by including more culturally-relevant content.  
- Encourage Australians who speak English only to |
1.45
learn a second language and support programs and/or activities that are targeted at additional language learning for English-only speakers.

Skill and leadership development promote community participation.

Community groups that have local ‘champions’ are able to participate more effectively and tend to have better access to resources.

Government and community organisations:
- Develop, fund and support programs that provide mentoring and leadership development for youth of all backgrounds (ref Blacktown’s Football United, Murray Bridge’s MyGen, Blacktown’s COM4Unity, Mirrabooka’s Reel Connections).
- Assist community groups with succession planning and grooming of local champions. Forming of networks such as Blacktown’s COM4Unity is a good example of ensuring sustainability of programs.
- Identify mentors, and fund them to engage in community capacity building.

5.5.5 Involvement of media in enhancing social cohesion

While a few actions regarding media have already been mentioned above, it is important to add some more that relate directly to the crucial role that media and social media play as drivers for social cohesion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key findings</th>
<th>Best Practice Actions and/or Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Most participants accessed local and state print and television media for news and job search. | Local government, community groups and organisations:  
  - Develop good relations with media outlets, i.e., journalists, editors and producers.  
  - Involve media in developing and implementing programs/projects/events that promote greater awareness of diversity and ‘difference’.  
  - Provide media with positive stories of intercultural contact, especially involving the mixing of various groups.  
  - Provide them with material about meaningful contributions of migrants/refugees and indigenous Australians.  
  - Media:  
    - Cover stories of positive intercultural contact.  
    - Cover positive stories about refugees and Indigenous people. |
| Web-based media were used more for staying in touch with friends and/or family. |                                                                                                         |
| Social media were used more by young people – for news and for maintaining social relationships. |                                                                                                         |
| Media are cited as the main promoter of negative stereotypes about refugee and Indigenous groups, and sensationalisation of refugee issues. |                                                                                                         |
| Media are powerful vehicles for developing cultural awareness and education.   |                                                                                                         |

5.5.6 Further research on mutual intercultural relations, and on social media and social cohesion.

Two specific research projects are recommended, which emerge from the findings: one on mutual intercultural relations, and another on social media and social cohesion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key findings</th>
<th>Recommended Research Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| There is little research on the effects of intergroup contact in Australia.  | DIAC/FAHCSIA:  
  - Commission a study to investigate mutual intercultural attitudes and behaviour involving Anglo-, Indigenous, and migrant/refugee/Humanitarian Entrant Australians. |
| Mutual acculturation is necessary for social cohesion, and yet there is little expectation or requirement of Anglo-Australians to adjust or accommodate other cultures, or to help other cultural groups. |                                                                                          |
| Comparatively little is known about the influence of social media which is a key driver for social cohesion. | DIAC:  
  - Commission research into the nature and |
5.6 Conclusions

In this study we examined current and emerging drivers for social cohesion, social division and conflict in three culturally diverse Australian communities. We utilised Jenson’s (1998) dimensions of belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition and legitimacy, which proved a useful framework to examine social cohesion in a broad sense. In particular, we would argue that the addition of an intergroup attitudes and relations dimension (Recognition) extends beyond current conceptualisations of social inclusion, and this is of considerable value in the multicultural Australian context. In an increasingly diverse community, how we perceive and get along with ‘different’ others is a key component to social harmony. Nonetheless, we would argue against an interpretation of ethnic/cultural diversity as the primary source of social division in Australia. Instead, it would appear that much social division stems from competition for material and social resources that is interpreted through a discourse of ethnic, cultural or racial difference. This may be enhanced by a media and political environment that promotes negative stereotypes and misinformation.

In our community case studies we found examples of positive intercultural relations, a strong sense of community belonging for some groups, perceived equitable access to resources such as education and healthcare (for some), good levels of participation in community activities and events, moderate confidence in government departments and police, and relatively low levels of social conflict. Importantly, there was little evidence for conflicted social identities among migrants and refugees, with community members displaying multiple, diverse and intersecting connections to others including their ethnic/cultural groups, their local community, and the broader Australian community.

However, there was evidence that some groups do not feel socially accepted or are not recognised appropriately, including some refugee communities, Indigenous Australians and Anglo-Australians. There is also ongoing evidence of discrimination and prejudice against people from African backgrounds, Muslims, and Indigenous Australians; and a lack of genuine, intercultural interaction amongst all ethnic groups in the community. Moreover, it would seem that the problem of securing affordable housing in Australia, combined with ignorance about refugees and how material resources are distributed, has contributed to racialised resentment (Hudson et al., 2007). Finally, some community members remain socially excluded in terms of employment and community participation, particularly Indigenous Australians. Barriers to inclusion and participation included the lack of confidence in communication skills, non-recognition of overseas qualifications, difficulties in gaining local work experience, cost, issues with accessibility/transportation, childcare, discrimination and prejudice and cultural differences.

Our in-depth case studies of three Australian communities augment existing Australian research on social cohesion such as the Scanlon Foundation Surveys by providing in-depth and detailed analysis of people’s views and experiences in culturally diverse communities. For example, our data provide a rich analysis of the complexity of people’s views on issues that have been identified in Scanlon surveys as socially divisive, such as those related to immigration and asylum seekers (e.g., Markus, 2011). The impact of the highly politicised and often misinformed debate about asylum seekers cannot be underestimated; it can affect refugees’ sense of belonging to the Australian...
community and become fuel for resentment among Anglo-Australians, longer-term migrants and Indigenous Australians.

In addition, the findings contribute to our understanding of the ambivalence and complexity of many Australians’ views about multiculturalism and living in a diverse community, particularly among Anglo-Australians and Indigenous Australians.

We identified 11 key factors influencing social cohesion. Five of these drive all five dimensions of social cohesion in Jenson’s model:

- recognition of indigenous Australian cultures and history
- awareness and understanding of diversity and ‘difference’ in the Australian community
- positive intercultural contact
- absence of racism and discrimination
- media.

The remaining six factors are linked to specific dimensions of social cohesion:

- culture maintenance among migrants, refugees and other cultural and/or linguistic minorities—Belonging
- community activities and ‘social spaces’—Belonging and Participation
- communication—Belonging, Inclusion and Participation
- perceived and genuine equality of access to resources—Inclusion
- mentoring and leadership development for community capacity-building—Inclusion and Participation
- active promotion of the value of diversity and pluralism at national and community levels—Legitimacy.

Following from the main findings of the study, we were able to develop key recommendations that were grouped into six:

- promote awareness, knowledge, recognition and understanding of cultures, ‘difference’ and cultural diversity
- create opportunities for frequent, positive intercultural contact
- address racism and discrimination
- improve community capacity
- involve the media in enhancing social cohesion
- conduct further research on mutual intercultural relations, and on social media and social cohesion.
6 References


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Appendix A-1  Focus Group Discussion Consent Form

Community Participation in Multicultural Australia
Participant Information Statement and Consent Form for Focus Groups

Why did I get this letter?
You are invited to participate in a study on community because we are interested in your opinion and hearing about your experience. A person from a community or non-government organisation thought you might be interested in taking part in this research. Participation is voluntary. You don’t have to take part if you don’t want to.

What is the study about?
The study is about community participation in multicultural Australia. We want to understand how people feel about their community and what factors contribute to community belonging, participation and mutual respect. We are also interested in what programs, services or initiatives there are in your community that are related to community participation.

Why is the study being done?
The study is being done so we can make some recommendations to government and non-government agencies and services so that they can develop good strategies to foster community participation, and to support the successful settlement of migrants and refugees into Australian communities. We can do this only if we have a good understanding of what factors are important to people living in the community.

Who is conducting the study?
Dr Justine Dandy of Edith Cowan University (ECU) and Associate Professor Rogelia Pe-Pua of the University of New South Wales (UNSW) are conducting the research for the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

Why should I participate in the study?
Because your views are important. You will have the opportunity to tell us about your opinion and experience about community life, about the services and programs that you (and your family) are using, and you can help us suggest how to improve support and services.

If I want to take part in the study, what will I have to do?
If you are happy to participate, we will arrange a time for you to take part in a focus group discussion at a location that suits you. This will take about one hour to 1.5 hours. An interpreter will be available to assist, if required.

Will my family or I be identified in any of the reports or publications?
No. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential, and will be disclosed only with your permission, except as required by law. What you tell us in the focus group discussion will be completely confidential. Neither you nor your family will be identified in any of the reports or papers that we publish about the study. We would like to take notes and will ask you to agree to let us record the discussion to make our notes better. Notes and transcripts from the focus group discussion will not contain any identifying information. The information we obtain will be stored in a secure facility for a minimum of 7 years, after which it will be destroyed according to ethical practice. You will receive a summary of the final report if you request it (please tick the box on page 4).

**What if I have questions about the study and wish to speak to an independent person?**

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committees at ECU and UNSW. If you have any concerns or complaints about the research project and wish to talk to an independent person, you may contact:

Research Ethics Officer  
Edith Cowan University  
270 Joondalup Drive  
JOONDALUP WA 6027  
Phone: (08) 6304 2170  
Email: research.ethics@ecu.edu.au

**What if I change my mind later, and want to leave the study?**

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue your participation at any time without prejudice. If you have any questions, please feel to ask me.

If you have any additional questions in regards to the research please contact me on (08) 6304 5105 or by email j.dandy@ecu.edu.au, and I will be happy to answer them.

---

**What do I do now?**

If you decide to participate in the study:

- Please **keep pages 1 and 2** of the Participant Information Statement and Consent form, after reading them.
- Please **sign and return the Consent Form** (pages 3 and 4) either by fax – 08 6304 5834, or by **post** to Justine Dandy, School of Psychology and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University, 270 Joondalup Drive, Joondalup WA 6027, or in **person** when attending the focus group.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research project!

**Best regards,**

Justine Dandy

---

Pages 1 and 2 are for you to keep
Community Participation in Multicultural Australia

Participant Consent Form for Focus Group Participants

I consent to participate in the above project, conducted by Dr Justine Dandy, School of Psychology and Social Science (ECU) and A/Prof. Rogelia Pe-Pua (UNSW).

I agree that I:

- have been provided with a copy of the Information Statement, explaining the research study;
- have read and understood the information provided;
- have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
- am aware that if I have additional questions I can contact the Chief Investigator (details above).

I understand that:

- participation is voluntary;
- the project will involve participating in a focus group which will be audio-recorded;
- the information I provide will remain confidential and that the identity of participants will not be disclosed without consent;
- the information I provide will only be used for the purpose of this research project;
- I am free to withdraw from further participation at any time.

.............................................................................
Signature of research participant

.............................................................................
(please PRINT name)

.............................................................................
Date
Tick the box below if you would like an interpreter

☐ I would like an interpreter to assist me at the focus group.

Tick ALL the languages you can speak:

☐ English
☐ Cantonese
☐ Vietnamese
☐ Mandarin
☐ Arabic
☐ Macedonian
☐ Bosnian
☐ Farsi/Dari
☐ Other - please write here > ______________________________

Tick the box below if you would like a summary of the final report.

☐ I would like to receive a summary of the research findings.

Please provide the contact details you wish us to use to send you the summary of the report.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Sign Page 3 and return Pages 3 and 4 by fax, mail, or when you attend the focus group.

Fax: 08 6304 5834

Mail: Justine Dandy
      School of Psychology and Social Science
      Edith Cowan University
      270 Joondalup Drive
      Joondalup WA 6027
Appendix A-2

Focus Group Discussion Guide

School of Psychology & Social Science
Social Justice Research Centre
Faculty of Computing, Health & Science
School of Social Sciences & International Studies

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Introduction

- Give an overall statement of the purpose of the study, and what will be covered in the focus group
- Introduce facilitators and then ask participants to introduce themselves
  - Where are you from (if not born in Australia)?
  - How long have you lived here (in Australia and specifically in this community)?
- Can you tell me about what you do in this community? For example, do you:
  - Work? If so, do you work in this community or somewhere else?
  - Go to school, TAFE or university? Where do you go for this?
  - Get involved in sporting, arts or music activities in this community?
  - Take your children to day-care here?

Living in this community (Views on diversity, MC and social cohesion)

Why did you choose to live in this community?

What are some good things about living in this community?

We can see that this is a very diverse community (mention some demographics, main groups, if possible)

- What are the positive aspects of living in such a diverse community?
- Are there negative aspects? If so, what are they?

Do you know of any effective programs that promote diversity?

- If so, what are they?
- Why do you think these programs are effective?
- Can you suggest what programs or service should be developed to promote diversity?

Recognition (respect and tolerance)

Let’s talk about similarities, respect and trust

- How well do people respect each other, generally? What makes you say this?
- Do you feel that that you have things in common with other people in this community (probe – e.g., similar ideas and beliefs)?
- Do you think that people trust each other in this community? (probe: why/why not?)

Let’s talk now about how people get along...

37 Insert name of community/suburb
• How friendly are people to each other, generally?
• How well do people ‘come together’ [connect, share] in the community? What makes you say this?
• Who get along and who don’t get along?
• How can you tell that they get along or they are not coming together? (Probe for examples; aim to get indicators of not getting along)
• What help people get along? What are some ways (or activities) which would help people come together?
• How can you tell that people don’t get along? (Probe for examples; aim to get indicators of getting along)
• What prevent people from getting along?

Are there members of the community who are more likely to have negative experiences because of their background (e.g., culture, religion)?
• If so, who/which backgrounds?
• Why do you think this is?
• How do you call this experience? (Possible response: racism, discrimination, prejudice, stereotype)
• How is this affecting individuals and the community?

If we were asked what can be done to make people get along better, what can we suggest? Any existing best practice in this regard?

**Belonging (shared values and identity)**

Tell me about your connections with other people in the community...

How many of you have family also living here?
• who, how many etc [Accept any definition of family]

How many of you have close friends in the community?
• How many?
• From what backgrounds are they: similar backgrounds as you, from a range of backgrounds (and which backgrounds)?
• How did you meet?
• How often do you meet (encounter/interact with) people from other cultural backgrounds?
• Which backgrounds?
• Where do you mostly interact with them?

How do you feel when you encounter people from different cultural backgrounds to you?
• Are your interactions with people from different backgrounds mostly good or bad?
• Can you give me an example of a good interaction? What makes it a good one? How does it make you feel?
• Can you give me an example of a bad or unpleasant interaction? What makes it a bad/unpleasant one? How does it make you feel?

How about interaction with people from your own cultural background?
• Are these interactions always good?
• In what ways are they good?
• In what ways are they bad?

What are the cultural backgrounds of your neighbours?
• How would you describe your relationship with your neighbours? (Probe: no contact, civil, help with collecting their mail, look after pets when they are away (or vice-versa)

What helps people feel they belong to the community?
• What opportunities are there in this community to meet with people from different backgrounds? [Probe on best practice]
• What other opportunities, programs, services should be created?

What difficulties do people experience that make them feel they don’t belong to the community in terms of belonging?
What cause these?
What can be done about this?

Inclusion (equal opportunities for access)
Let’s talk about how people in this community have access to resources in the community. For example, in your experience or opinion:
- Do people find it easy or difficult getting a job or maintaining their job? Why?
- Are many people on welfare? Is there adequate social support?
- How is home ownership in the community?
- Do most people have access to education? Where are the difficulties, and why?
- If you have children:
  - do your children go to childcare?
  - do you get involved in school activities? If yes, what kinds of things do you do at/for the school?

What do you see as factors that help community members access resources in the community?
What are the obstacles to access?
- What can be done to help community members access resources?
- Can you give us some examples of best practice in making people access community resources?

Participation (engagement in structures and systems)
In [this community] there are many community organisations like [give examples], have any of you participated in programs run by these agencies...?
- Which programs/services?
- How did you find out about them?
- What were the good things about the programs?
- Could they be improved?
- How can we ensure that these programs will be successful?
- Are there other programs/activities/services that are needed in the community?
  - Probe: needed to help people feel like they belong, promote intergroup relations etc
- Are you involved in community activities like festivals or Harmony Day?

Political participation
- Do you vote in local government elections? If yes, why? If not, why not?
- Would you ever think about becoming a local government councillor?
- If you were born overseas, are you now an Australian citizen?
  - If yes: What made you decide to become an Australian citizen?
  - If no: What is preventing you from becoming an Australian citizen?

How can we increase participation in the community or society? Any best practice?
What are the barriers? How can we reduce the barriers?

The role of the internet and media
Distribute questionnaire and ask people to complete.
- How much do you use the internet? (Prepare a scale for responses)
- How do you use the internet? (Prepare list of things and get them to tick.)
- How much do you use mass media? (Prepare checklist and scale)
- Which forms of mass media do you use?
- Do you think that the media influences things in your community, such as how people get along with each other? In what way/s?
• What are some examples of positive influences of the media in your community?
• What are some examples of negative influences...
• Are there particular events that have happened either within your community or outside that your community has been concerned about?
• How popular is social media, for example, facebook, twitter, etc in this community?

Recap

You may notice that we have been discussing things like accessing resources in the community, belonging, participation, respect and tolerance, and so on. All these are part of what is known as social cohesion. We are interested in hearing your experience and about what helps bring about social cohesion and what prevents the development of social cohesion in the community. So far, what we have heard from you are the following as enablers or facilitators of social cohesion:

[list some these. Or ask note-taker to list these. Or supplement the focus group by writing things down on butcher paper]
Have we covered all possible enablers? [A discussion will then follow.]
We have also discussed a number of things that could be barriers for social cohesion such as:
[Again, list the barriers....]

The last thing we are interested in are some best practice programs or services that you know of that helps create social cohesion. Some of those that you have already mentioned are:[list these]
Can you think of anything else?

Conclusion- Is there anything you would like to add? Thank you very much for your time etc...
Appendix A-3
Focus Group Discussion Demographic Questionnaire

School of Psychology & Social Science
Social Justice Research Centre
Faculty of Computing, Health & Science

School of Social Sciences & International Studies

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA
Demographic Information - Focus Group Participants

Please note that this is anonymous – your name is not recorded and we will only summarise this information in the report.

1. What year were you born? ____________
2. Where were you born? ________________________________________
3. If born overseas, how long have you lived in Australia? ____________ (years)
4. Where was your father born? ___________________________________
5. Where was your mother born? ___________________________________
6. What is the main language spoken at home? _________________________
7. Are you involved in (paid) work? □ Yes □ No
   If yes, what is your job? ______________________________________
      □ Fulltime   □ Parttime
8. Are you involved in unpaid work (e.g., volunteering)? □ Yes □ No
    If yes, what do you do? ______________________________________
9. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   □ 1. Primary School
   □ 2. Secondary school
   □ 3. Tertiary 1 (e.g., TAFE diploma or certificate)
   □ 4. Tertiary 2 (Bachelor’s degree)
   □ 5. Tertiary 3 (postgraduate study)
   □ 6. Other (specify) ______________________________________
10. What is your religion? _________________________________________
11. How many children do you have? _______________________________________

Appendix A-4
Focus Group Discussion Media Use Questionnaire
School of Psychology & Social Science
Social Justice Research Centre
Faculty of Computing, Health & Science
______________________
School of Social Sciences & International Studies

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA
Internet and Media Survey - Focus Group Participants

Please note that this is anonymous – your name is not recorded
and we will only summarise this information in the report.

1. Do you have access to the internet at home? ☐ Yes ☐ No

2. How often do you use the internet for personal use (i.e. not for work or study) in a typical month?

☐ 1. at least once a day
☐ 2. at least once a week (but not every day)
☐ 3. at least once a month (but not every week)
☐ 4. less than once a month
☐ 5. never

3. What do you use the internet for? Tick as many as apply

☐ 1. For email
☐ 2. To use social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, MySpace)
☐ 3. To make telephone calls online (e.g., Skype)
☐ 4. To read or watch the news
☐ 5. To search for medical or health-related information
☐ 6. For education, training or school-work
☐ 7. For travel information or making travel arrangements
☐ 8. To search for employment
☐ 9. For electronic banking (e.g., paying bills)
☐ 10. For online shopping or selling goods (e.g., on EBay)
☐ 11. To research community events
☐ 12. To contribute content to or participate in discussion groups (e.g., blogging)
☐ 13. To play online games
4. If you use the internet for contacting others (through email, Facebook or Skype), who are you staying in touch with?

☐ 1. Work or professional connections
☐ 2. Family and/or friends locally (in the same state)
☐ 3. Family and/or friends interstate
☐ 4. Family and/or friends overseas

5. Which forms of mass media do you use? *Tick all that apply*

☐ 1. Free to air television (e.g., Channel 9, ABC)
☐ 2. Pay television (e.g., Foxtel)
☐ 3. Local or national Radio
☐ 4. Local newspapers (e.g., the Stirling Times)
☐ 5. State and national newspapers (e.g., the West Australian, the Australian)
☐ 6. Global media (e.g., BBC World, CNN, Al Jazeera)
☐ 7. Other _____________________________________________________

6. Among the forms of mass media, which 3 do you use more often? *Tick the 3 choices*

☐ 1. Free to air television (e.g., Channel 9, ABC)
☐ 2. Pay television (e.g., Foxtel)
☐ 3. Local or national Radio
☐ 4. Local newspapers (e.g., the Stirling Times)
☐ 5. State and national newspapers (e.g., the West Australian, the Australian)
☐ 6. Global media (e.g., BBC World, CNN, Al Jazeera)
☐ 7. Other _____________________________________________________
Appendix B-1  Key Informant Interview Guide

Demographic and service provider information

- Type of work that government agency, NGO, community service or individual performs
- Individual’s role within the organisation/community

Social cohesion in the community

There are many people from different backgrounds in this community. We’re interested in what makes a socially cohesive community, such as how people get along together, participate with each other in different activities and so on. We’re looking specifically at [the area].

- Belonging
  - To what extent do you think people feel a sense of belonging and connection with others in the community?
  - Are there any groups or individuals who might feel less (or more) connected to the community? If so, which groups and why?
  - Belonging rating from 1 to 10 (where 1 is not at all cohesive and 10 is highly cohesive):
- Inclusion
  - How would you rate this community in terms of equality of access to resources such as employment, education, healthcare, and housing?
  - Are there any groups or individuals who you feel might, or do, have less access to any of these? If so, which groups and resources and why?
  - Rating from 1 to 10:
- Participation
  - To what extent do you think that people in this community participate in community life, for example get involved in –
    - Community activities
    - Volunteering
    - Political activities (e.g., voting, social activism)
  - Rating of participation from 1 to 10:
- Recognition
  - To what extent do you think people in this community respect each other?
  - To what extent do you think people trust each other in this community? Why/why not?
  - Are there any groups or individuals who might experience less respect or trust from others in the community? If so, which groups and why?
  - Do you see any signs of discrimination and/or prejudice in this community? If so, can you give examples? (to which groups, in what situations?)
  - Overall rating for respect and tolerance:
- Legitimacy
  - To what extent do people in this community have confidence in institutions like government departments and the police? (give examples of government departments if necessary)
  - Are there individuals or groups who are more (or less trusting) of these institutions?
Social division and conflict

- Do you see any evidence of division or conflict in this community? What is the extent, using a scale from 1-10, 1 being not divided at all or no conflict whatsoever, and 10 being extremely divided or extremely full of conflict?
- What are the contributors to social division/conflict?
- Give an example of a case of social division in this community. Would this be the most extreme case? If not, what is the most extreme example?

Role of media and internet

- How much do people in this community use the media and internet?
- To what extent do you think that the media and internet has a positive impact on how people get along and work together in this community?
- To what extent do you or others believe that the media and internet influence how people get along and work together in terms of making this community socially cohesive or, instead, creating conflicts and social division? Can you give any examples?

Promoting social cohesion

- Do you or does your own organisation/department have an actual or potential role in promoting social cohesion? If yes, in what way?
- What current or past programs, initiatives, services or activities has your organisation had in place that you believe promote social cohesion in this community?
- Any other current or past programs or activities that promote social cohesion in this community?
- What do you think this community need to promote or enhance social cohesion?
- If you were to pick one or two programs that you are most proud of, or you can say are the best, which ones would they be? Will these be good for us to examine to get the ingredients of a good program for social cohesion?
- What do you think it takes to build a socially cohesive society?
- Overall, to what extent [this area] do you think you can describe [this area] as a socially cohesive community? What factors do you think contribute to this?

Is there anything you would like to add? Thank you very much for your time...
Community Participation in Multicultural Australia

Participant Information Statement for Key Informants

I, Justine Dandy of Edith Cowan University (ECU) am conducting a research project on behalf of the Australian government Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), looking at community participation and social cohesion in Australia. The project will be conducted with A/Prof. Rogelia Pe-Pua of the University of New South Wales, and aims to understand what social cohesion means, what factors contribute to social cohesion, what are the barriers, and what programs, services or initiatives there are in the community that are related to social cohesion.

We are interviewing key people in the community, such as government and non-government service providers, community leaders and community workers. The purpose of these key informant interviews is to get your views on the factors that influence the success of programs and initiatives in fostering social cohesion, together with more general discussion around the drivers of social cohesion and/or tension in multicultural communities. We are also interested in ideas for future programs and initiatives.

We would like to invite you to participate in the study as one of our interviewees. We would like to interview you in person or by telephone for approximately one hour. During the interview, we would like to take notes and, with your permission, record the interviews so that our notes are more accurate. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission, except as required by law. Interview transcripts will be de-identified through the use of pseudonyms. What you tell us will be completely confidential and you, or the agency/service you are affiliated with, will not be identified in any of our reports or papers written for publication. The de-identified data will be stored for a minimum of 7 years, after which it will be destroyed in accordance with ethical practice.

If you agree to participate, please sign the consent form that is attached. You are free to refuse to answer particular questions or to stop taking part in the study at any time. Your decision whether to participate or not will not prejudice your future relations with ECU or DIAC.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committees at ECU and UNSW. If you have any concerns or complaints about the research project and wish to talk to an independent person, you may contact: Ms Kim Gifkins, Research Ethics Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, ECU, Tel: (08) 6304 2170 (research.ethics@ecu.edu.au).

If you have any additional questions in regards to the research please contact me on (08) 6304 5105 or by email j.dandy@ecu.edu.au, and I will be happy to answer them.

Best regards,
Community Participation in Multicultural Australia

Participant Consent Form for Key Informants

I consent to participate in the above project, conducted by Dr Justine Dandy, School of Psychology and Social Science (ECU) and A/Prof. Rogelia Pe-Pua (UNSW).

I agree that I:
• have been provided with a copy of the Information Statement, explaining the research study;
• have read and understood the information provided;
• have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
• am aware that if I have additional questions I can contact the Chief Investigator (details above).

I understand that:
• participation is voluntary;
• the project will involve participating in an individual interview, in person or by telephone, which will be audio-recorded;
• the information I provide will remain confidential and that the identity of participants will not be disclosed without consent;
• the information I provide will only be used for the purpose of this research project;
• I am free to withdraw from further participation at any time.

.................................................. ..................................................
Signature of research participant

.................................................. ..................................................
(please PRINT name)

.................................................. ..................................................
Date

Appendix C-1 Social Cohesion in Mirrabooka (WA): Detailed findings
The following represent the findings from the data collected through 6 focus groups, 22 KI interviews, analysis of media, and audit of programs related to Mirrabooka and Balga, WA. The findings from the KI interviews and focus groups are not presented separately; rather, they are interwoven.

‘The community’

This theme refers to comments regarding the community in an abstract, more general sense such as the community’s reputation and physical features of the neighbourhood. The latter included interviewees’ observations regarding use and sharing of public space and recreational facilities, changes in the community such as housing development, and its impact on physical space and intergroup relations. Within this over-arching theme, there were two sub-themes: one relating specifically to the physical environment and public space, and the other to the reputation of the community or its reputational geography, as perceived by interviewees.

The community—public space

KI interviewees made generally negative comments about the visual appeal of the Mirrabooka community, noting that parts of the area, particularly those in which there is more public housing and lower SES residents, are ugly. Because these unattractive ‘pockets’ were public space, the responsibility for improving them was seen to rest with the local council, for example one KI said,

The City of Stirling should invest a lot more in beautifying and making this area. You go further out, it’s the police station, it’s all landscaped... But that roundabout is ugly; everything around it is ugly. It’s all run down; the verges are not maintained properly... Why?

Interviewees saw the physical environment as a contributor to community pride and belonging. If I live in a nice area, I will eventually be encouraged to take pride in it.

Look at improving the way the community looks. People do not feel good about themselves when they walk around.

Similarly, another KI suggested the area needed ‘something that families can enjoy, a water park, with local flora and fauna’. Some informants thought improving the look of the community should be linked to celebrating its diversity.

Engage the local youth, make a mural, have Aboriginal art on your building, the library. People will feel happier.

If they made it a spectacular place, like you put up the flags of all the nationalities that live here, as you come, say, down that avenue, everybody driving down that road would feel, ‘oh, wow’, you know...it’s a different feeling here. It’s fantastic.

A WA Department of Health project that had focused on improving the public space—‘Trolley pond to Billabong’—had been identified as successful in this regard—it ‘rescued the park for the people, and with the people, and provide[d] community with activities that they want[ed] to implement’. Unfortunately, this initiative ended due to lack of funding, and the council planned to build a road through the pond area, a fact that was also commented on by interviewees: ‘They want to knock off the meeting places of the Aboriginal people, like we have this area here, the pond area. They want to put a road through it.’

KIs noted that changes to the physical environment of the community had been made. Some were regarded as improvements; others were seen as contributing to the community’s problems with a lack of public space and social inequity. For example, whilst new housing developments were
seen as providing needed housing, it was acknowledged that this was largely private development that a) replaced open space and bush land, and b) did not provide affordable housing for the lower SES members of the community, e.g., refugee families.

The recreation centre was double the size of what it is now. So, people wanted to go and play and use the equipment and everything else... Now, because of the increase in population and density, half the ground has been... the Council has decided to take it away and they’ve built it into housing.

A lot of the empty spaces which were bush land around here were converted... all the bush land was cleared up and converted into housing... and either you have double-story million dollar houses selling... or you can have the townhouses.

All that used to be a green area first. It’s been developed into housing and business... Now, suddenly because of the influx of things, and people that are coming in, I have more people to share the place with, and less space in which to do it.

Other changes were seen as positive, particularly in terms of enhancing community safety. One area near the bus station had been identified as a ‘hotspot’ for violence, on Friday nights—‘fight night’—when young people, from a variety of ethnic backgrounds would congregate. This had been re-developed and was seen as much safer now.

On the grassed area here... Thursday and Friday night, we call it fight night. Now, nothing to do with race, normal old fight things from school... whatever. It’s a meeting point and they'd all come and there's going to be a fight.

... the bus station... every Friday and Saturday night... But they've changed the layout there; they've spent a lot of money. They've got more security there...

The focus group participants’ opinions about the physical environment of Mirrabooka and Balga, and of Perth in general were quite positive. Their positive comments included things like the centrality of the location, the proximity to ‘everything’—the bus station, the park, the shopping areas, schools, Centrelink, and other services.

Everything is so close in Perth... you just have to drive 15 minutes to get somewhere. Balga is a very central place. We’re not far from the beach, we’re not far from the city (Burmese-Anglo female youth).

...so close, shop dress, shop food, butcher halal (Iranian female).

...not nice house but very close bus station, shopping centre, all doctors, lots of pharmacy (Macedonian female).

Many acknowledged that a lot of improvements have been made, especially when they compared the current situation to the past.

...and the local pools, there’s a new gym. And they keep the parks nice and stuff. It’s not dodgy like it used to be (Anglo female youth).

They’ve also done up Mirrabooka, the shopping centre has been done up. The bus station has been done up. When we first came here, you wouldn’t go to the park. There was glass everywhere...we used to call it ‘glass park’ down the road. And there were syringes... (Burmese-Anglo female youth)

A few other positive comments about the place related to housing, and good shops.

The housing is also very reasonable here, and they’ve good shops here, basic shops. (Irish male)

The shopping centre has cultural foods, and a halal butcher, it has very good priced fruit and vegetables in comparison to other places... (Croatian female)
On the negative side, some of the complaints of focus group participants about Mirrabooka included the lack of entertainment places, not having banks, and inadequate street lightings.

[Where do you go to meet with friends?] ...like near the coast somewhere. There’s not much. Like even if you wanted to meet up in this area there’s not much. And there’s not much open to go have a coffee or anything. It kind of closes all at five. So there’s not really anything, I mean unless you went to someone’s house, but not much to do at night (Anglo female youth).

No banks of course, there are some things that are missing, the banks... (Irish male)

...night time need more light, because the road is very dark (El Salvadoran male).

Can I just add something, you were talking about the lights on the streets, on the roads. The cost of the lighting in a place like Perth, and Western Australia is vast, huge areas. And the theory is wonderful and the idea is great, but to keep electricity going is very costly. Perth is an enormous city, not a huge population, is very, very big for the few amount of people to have light everywhere. Structurally if they had, it would be extremely expensive. I'm a migrant, I came here over 30 years ago. Lights are atrocious I couldn't believe it, compared to the UK where there are lights, here I couldn't believe the difference. (Irish male)

One participant pointed out the potential for the plan to build a train from the city.

I tell you one thing, this is important because this is the future...the state government is concentrating very much on this place, and they’re going to run a train from the city direct, so this will kind of be a mini city in the future. It's already on the cards and planned. It will make it very good for them—they’ll have access to the city, communication will be much better (Irish male).

Community reputation: ‘it’s an unsafe area’

Another theme identified in the KI Interviews for Mirrabooka related to how informants thought the community was regarded more broadly, the area's reputational geography. Because most of our KIs worked but did not live in the area, this was reflected through comments by their neighbours, in 'nicer' suburbs.

I think when you tell people now, you live close to Mirrabooka, ‘oh my God, that’s a trouble zone, all the Africans live there. It’s a trouble zone, the refugees live there...’ There’s that stigma...

If I’m out socializing and someone says ‘where do you work?’ And I say, Balga, they'll say, ‘ooh!’ That is the response. Balga's not supposed to be a nice place.

Other informants made this reference themselves.

I laugh—‘where do you work?’ I work in the Congo’, that’s my joke. But you don’t want it to be known as that.

Or, ‘I’m not driving over there, I’m driving into the Bronx’.

Associations with other neighbourhoods stereotyped as places of crime and violence (e.g., the Bronx) were made. KIs spoke of the perception that one should be careful.

People say, ‘oh you know, if I’m out and about in Mirrabooka, I always make sure I hold onto my handbag tighter.’

I could go up to the hills, leave my car unlocked, my house unlocked, and not feel like anyone's going to come and steal anything. Mirrabooka on the other hand, it’s a different story.

Before I started working in Mirrabooka, I had a lot of people say, ‘oh, don't work out there, your car’ll get vandalised, and you’ll get bashed up’... scared the living daylights out of me...
The negative reputation of Mirrabooka and Balga was also acknowledged by the focus group participants, but not as frequently and intensely as the KIs did. One participant attributed part of it to the media.

They [media] show what sells, so, I mean, automatically when I meet people and you say that you’re from Balga, they’re all like ‘oh, Balga’ *(said in a negative tone)*. That’s because they show on the media that Balga is... as soon as something happens in Balga, everyone knows about it, but you know if something happens in Peppermint Grove, you don’t really hear anything. (Burmese-Anglo female youth)

I think Mirrabooka has become like a ghetto. (Italian male)

In fact, more participants commented on how Mirrabooka/Balga was a good community to live in, or that it is just like any other suburb.

I have a very strong community here. (Anglo Senior male)

I think people see Balga as being a lot different, but I don’t. I mean, it’s changed a lot in the last few years, and it’s not much different to any other suburb. (Anglo female youth)

**Belonging**

**Overall evaluation: which community are we talking about?**

KIs had mixed views on how much Mirrabooka and Balga residents felt a sense of belonging and connection in the community. To some extent this depended on how community was defined (and hence, which ‘community’ was being considered). Informants who were involved in service provision for immigrants and refugees indicated that belonging was strong within their ethnic or background community, or the Mirrabooka/Balga community more broadly, due to the number of support services for recently-arrived groups. However, KIs involved in local and/or state government departments were more likely to regard community belonging in a negative light, characterised by segregated communities, not being proud of their community, for example. Responses illustrate how extreme and different these views were.

I think people who live here have a very strong sense of connection.

As a whole, I don’t really think any of them feel a sense of identity to the Mirrabooka community. I don’t think that it’s perceived as a community that one can feel proud to belong to.

There is a Chinese pocket, there’s Aboriginal pockets, white Australian pockets...then different African communities as well. But I don’t think any of them see themselves as belonging to the broader Mirrabooka community.

Okay, amongst ethnic groups I would rate very highly as belonging together... Between groups, again it varies between the groups. But less so.

In addition, differences in sense of belonging were linked to age and generation. These related to the migrants’ communities in particular.

Definitely the age gap is a major thing. If you are over 40 years old and recently arrived from Africa, there is not that sense of belonging because they always have this attachment back home.

When exploring the topic of belonging in the focus group discussions, many Mirrabooka/Balga residents, especially the migrants and refugees, referred to ‘Australia’ when talking about a sense of connectedness to the community. Thus, there was a lot of sharing of how wonderful a country Australia was to them, in terms of opportunities provided, services they enjoyed, the generosity of
the Australian government, and most especially when they compared the situation in Australia to countries where they came from, and especially when you have become ‘Australian’.

Australia is a good country, for me, very good. Medicare, good life. Job. Everything (El Salvadoran male).

I like Australia, to bring up my kids here, it’s got a good university and my kids love Australian school. Because they have been in Iranian school as well, and they like Australian school very much. They like to grow up here... Australian teacher most friendly with the kids (Iranian Senior female).

I like Australia, because my sons growing here, have a good job. My husband working very hard, but my children are happy. We happy too now. (Macedonian female)

Generally I am happy in Australia, because I come from a place where financially it’s hard to progress. Here it’s much better. (Macedonian female)

I like to study more. I think Australia has very good government, about money, Medicare. Australia very good and very clear, not messy. (Vietnamese female)

I think as an Australian, it’s a good place, good country. They’re caring of you, for the benefit of Centrelink, can help you... lots of benefits, and they feel secure; if you become Australian, you are secure, yes, you are fully secure (Sudanese female).

The Anglo-Australian residents and some long established migrants were also able to compare the Australia today to the Australia of the past, oftentimes referring to their own experience when they first came to the country.

Australia was a beautiful country before, when I first arrived. This is the second time I’m here in Australia. Was a beautiful country. We had no key for the door! We used to leave the door open! Now cannot afford. But was a beautiful country, was great anyway (Italian male).

They come bring you bread and milk, my husband working, and we leave money on a basket outside. It was very good before. Now, leave it outside...gone! (Macedonian female)

...something happened, I like Australia very much, but I see the difference in the last two years. Two years ago I travelled in Australia just 6 or 7 months, just to see Australia and everything else, but at that moment I find that even in Perth it was a safe and calm, and in these two years it has changed very much. Just you see different cultures and very busy, you see this in the city, it’s very busy and also traffic. And it has changed very much in these few years. And we didn’t believe when we arrived this year. But also it’s very nice city to live, and different from Sydney and Melbourne and cities like this, I like very much (Iranian female youth).

There were also some quite strong and negative views about the impact of the arrival of migrants and refugees to Australia, and to Mirrabooka.

I feel we’ve become the dumping ground for criminals... The first Vietnamese that came here as boat people were the pimps, the drug dealers, because they had the money to come here and that’s what’s happening now... we now have the mafia... we now have the Lebanese criminal communities, and we’re keeping them! What for? Why are we sending our young men over to Afghanistan to be killed and the sods are here living a high life!

When referring to Mirrabooka/Balga, there was acknowledgement among the focus group participants of the multicultural nature of the community, and the positive effect of this – opportunities for meeting different groups of people, making it possible to have more participation in services, a livelier environment, and so on.

Lately, I think they put all the new immigrants around Mirrabooka and Balga. Ideologically, they are more Australians than foreigners; they absorbed very much the Australian ideology. And of course, because of that, the way they live is different from Mirrabooka. (Italian male)
What I’ve noticed, ’cause I live in Inglewood, and when I come to Mirrabooka, it is very multicultural; we got people from all countries, different dress... Everything, and then when you move out into other areas, in Mt Lawley, we live sort of around there, there’s not a lot of different people with other cultural backgrounds... here it’s very multicultural, and that’s why we have our programs here; it’s very happy and full, because there’s people from all over the place, we meet a lot of people here. (Croatian-Australian female)

It makes you open to other cultures, yeah, other religions and other people. (Anglo female)

There were also some negative opinions about the effect of multicultural nature of the Mirrabooka/Balga community—the negative influence on children’s behaviour, cultural differences that tend to disadvantage the migrants’ culture, for example in relation to disciplining their children. They explained that belonging is related to feeling settled; and when the family did not feel settled due to problems between parents and their children, then that sense of belonging would not be forthcoming.

We like the area here and all the community and participating and everything around here, but the problem is the kids. Because when they’ve been around the area here, they go wild, they bring the problems for themselves. From the religious law and cultural law, with us, we have to discipline them, even with hitting. So when they came here and they’re listening to that ‘you are free, you are a teenager, you can do whatever’. The misunderstanding is the using it against themselves and against us, which makes a lot of trouble. When there is no problem with all the families, then the family will be settled. Ok, firstly, we have to settle even our own community. And it comes with the settlement of the family itself(Sudanese female).

Well, it’s a low socio-economic suburb, so you know, there are people from cultures... it’s not even a cultural thing, but there are issues with, like, stealing. We’ve been broken into, my car got stolen, things like that, so that’s an issue. And there’s also conflict as well... there might be diversity but there is also conflict between cultures (Burmese-Anglo female youth).

Regarding Mirrabooka/Balga community, there was a more positive sense of belonging and connectedness.

Definitely the community. It’s a very strong community, and we all come together at all times, I’ve always found that in the 40 years I’ve lived here. (Anglo Senior male)

[The community is] steady, quiet, morally and physically too, this is my judgement (Italian male).

And yet for some, the sense of belonging is still not there.

I lived here 15 years ago. I’m feeling about 4 years I’m ok. I very scared. I can’t speak English. I’m feeling very lonely. I’m at home looking after children, cooking. Many things boring in Australia. (Vietnamese female)

I think we have a lot more different groups, like, a lot of different cultures, but I’m not sure whether it’s socially cohesive. Probably not so much... (Anglo female youth)

**Excluded groups**

In discussing community belonging and connection, KIs identified groups that might experience lower sense of belonging or may be excluded from the community. There was little consensus regarding who might experience this, and several groups were identified, including people from southern Sudan and Afghanistan, Indigenous Australians, refugees, and Anglo-Australians. For example, one informant referred to the labelling of refugees.

...people always say, ‘why are we still called refugees? Are we not citizens? We got our citizenship. We are Australian. But once something is in place, it’s refugees, refugees...are we still refugees?’ Then people still feel like they’re not welcomed.
Some KIs also held the view that Anglo-Australians felt excluded.

Talk to the Australians. They’re feeling marginalised in these areas.

I think there’s a sense that the CaLD families have become the priority and that Indigenous has fallen to the bottom of the heap, and the White Australians are lower down the priority list.

Language, and not being fluent in English in particular, was nominated by many KIs as a barrier to belonging.

Especially those who have difficulties with the language. They don’t feel like they belong because they don’t understand what the whole system is like, and what they should do to look like, to be, to belong here.

You’ve got the language... If you don’t speak the language, you feel alienated. Completely.

The focus group participants did not really identify who are the excluded groups, although some of them expressed opinions about groups who tried to exclude themselves, such as the Muslims.

We do respect other people’s traditions. But they have got their own schools, they’ve got their own traditions, keep them in their own schools, they don’t want to assimilate... building their own schools... They got their own buses; they’re always passing by on the Islamic buses, always. You can see them everywhere. Even the Catholic schools that are very well off by lots of standards, they don’t have their own buses! Kids use their own two feet or their parents take them (Anglo Senior female).

Residential Stability

The transience of the community, due to problems with finding affordable housing, was seen by KIs as contributing to a lack of community belonging among residents.

... the very transient nature. When people come and feel this might be a short term... I’m not sure how, what depth of relationships are built with people within the area.

But they’re struggling because they haven’t got permanent housing, so if you have a 6 month lease and it runs out, you’re not likely to get a house in the same area, so you might have to go from Girrawheen to Balga, so the kids may have to change schools, another 6 months, and I don’t think it’s good for anybody. They’re not settling.

But people that have got their own places up there, they’re feeling that ownership in the community, and actual part of the community and they’re thriving.

If you have an unstable tenancy, you’ve got an unstable family.

The focus group participants echoed this sentiment, the lack of strong community relations due to the transient nature of residents.

In my street 80% of people is renting. The relations between neighbours are very weak because the tenants change, every six months, every year. They’re moving all the time; there is no stability. (Irish male and Polish male)

Inclusion

There was more consensus among KIs in Mirrabooka regarding indices of inclusion, such as access to education, employment, housing and healthcare. The focus groups added some more indices such as transport, financial, English, and childcare.

In general, the distribution of access to resources was seen by the KIs as equitable within the community but inequitable compared with other communities in Perth. That is, KIs acknowledged that Mirrabooka and Balga were characterised by socio-economic disadvantage in terms of employment and income in particular. KIs that worked in organisations involved in support or
education for migrants and Humanitarian Entrants were most likely to say that access to resources was good, especially for those communities.

I think because we have so many NGOs operating in this area, catering to different aspects and everybody pretty much works in consort with each other, so they make sure the clients have access.

**Housing and transportation**

Despite a general view that there was equal access to resources in the Mirrabooka/Balga community, housing was identified by the KIs as a problem. The rising cost of private rental accommodation was identified as a significant concern for lower SES families (including refugee families). Some KIs indicated that there was discrimination in housing (in particular, reluctance to rent to African families), possibly due to racism, beliefs about lack of experience/skills in maintaining a house, and concerns about potential damage by children (many of the African residents have large families). Some KIs had been involved in advocating for their client groups with real estate agents, although it was acknowledged that in the longer term this could be disempowering to the communities.

One KI summed up the barriers thus:

So let’s say if you’re unemployed and you’re looking for a house, you’re going to find it extremely hard to find one in the private rental market. Add to that, you’ve got a different skin colour; add to that, your language level is different; add to that, you have a different religion that somebody doesn’t quite trust; and add to that, you know, you’ve got six kids...

Referring to refugee families specifically, one KI said, ‘And so they’re all in private rental. And often they’re paying 60, 65% of their income on rent. So they’re suffering.’

Similarly, another reported, ‘clients are told they have to rent a house for less than $300 a week. And then there are seven houses in surrounding areas around Mirrabooka within that price range, and they’re crap. They’re really awful.’

African families were regarded as those most likely to be rejected as potential tenants by real estate agents acting for private landlords.

...and they’d say, ‘well, if you quote me, I’ll totally deny it, but I know these owners don’t want Africans in their house. But we can take your deposit, they’d take the application form but you’re wasting your time.’

I think some African families have great difficulties getting housing.

The high cost of renting or owning properties dominated the focus group discussions related to inclusion. Some pointed out that high rental cost is not necessarily due to discrimination but simply because the prices just kept going up. The migrants, refugees, disabled, and even the long-established senior citizens have felt this problem.

Now you talk 300-400 dollars a week to rent a house. I mean it’s too much for people. (Italian male)

I can’t pay full rent with the disability pension. If I had to pay full rent, the rent would be more than my income. To share a house? You have 150 dollars for a room. And in a room you have to share the toilets, shower. (Macedonian male)

They’re encouraging seniors to stay in their own home, but it’s too costly, and they’re being left there to wallow in their own...whatever. (Anglo Senior female)

Owning a house had its own problems for focus group participants as well, such as the cost of houses, the amount of money one needed to save before they could contemplate buying, or getting
a home loan; and dealing with settling down to a new neighbourhood and knowing the facilities and services in the new place.

…not for these people [referring to Iranians], not for the young… It’s changed: For them would be harder to buy a house. (Italian male)

The shortages of the houses, there is not a lot of houses now, not too many houses. And the problem is, even if you buy a house, you have another problem. The payment and the interest is going up and up, and comparing with your low income it’s very hard to cover everything. You try and cover the bill and the bill is high. So, nobody feel relaxed, we always worry. (Sudanese female)

…transport, council things and all that. If you have your own house, how you deal with, and how you use the water, and too many information that is good for people. (Sudanese female)

There’s a few people that own their own homes, and I think it’s because Balga used to be a… what was it called? Homes West-like area and so a lot of people have lived here for a long time and bought their house back as well. That’s what my family did. But there are also quite a few rental properties. But I’d say that a lot of people do own their house, especially where I live. (Burmes Anglo female youth)

Apparently, sharing a house or rental property was a common trend, and not a good experience for those who spoke about this, mainly because of the type of people they were sharing house with.

…everybody not clean enough, they going everywhere. (Macedonian male)

The quality of housing was also the subject of some comments, for example when they were considered old, or unsafe.

…and also all the house are old, not very good… also the houses are not safe, for example when you rent a house at 300 a week, without any fencing, without any walls, just as we heard about stolen something. It’s not good safety for rental. If you wanted to rent a house with safety you should pay 600 or 700… (Iranian female youth)

Discrimination in housing was certainly perceived by some focus group participants, especially against African families, and families with children. The discrimination was manifested in denying of opportunity to rent a property, and low regard for renters of certain background...

If you have kids as well they’ll make the bond higher. (Iraqi female)

I have lived here for three years. The agent who looks after the house, he would just knock on the door, saying ‘I want to come in and look at the house. When he saw the books, he said, ‘Who reads all these books in this house?’ He saw the photo of my husband and son, so he said, ‘You are Muslim people.’ I said, ‘What is wrong with Muslim people or religion? I am in this house because I want to, not because of religion.’ (Sudanese female)

Government or public housing was also discussed. Some participants observed that it would take a long time to avail of public housing; that public housing was usually located in far places; that the existence of government housing did not give the community a good social environment, often reflecting the lower socio-economic status of residents.

…very long, waiting 10 years. (Vietnamese male)

…and even with the houses with the government now. Too many people used to live around this community here and everybody happy, but when you get a government house, it’s like very far, Clarkson, Butler. It’s very hard to come here, as there are no services there. (Sudanese female)

…there’s a house which is behind us which is owned by the foundation department, something like that, but it’s a pretty much like a drop-in house so anyone who needs to go there, who doesn’t have money can pretty much go there. (Burmes Anglo female youth)
Some participants commented on the resources available to assist Mirrabooka/Balga residents with their housing needs. Most of them felt that there were not enough resources, for example, NGOs not being resourced enough to help residents; or services related to banking, learning practical skills and learning English. Some of them articulated what they needed, for their housing needs to be met.

The Salvation Army does an excellent job there, but they can’t do everything; they can only reach a certain number of people; and St Vincent de Paul as well. But they can’t go to everybody; they’ve got too many people here for them to look after. And they haven’t got the resources anyway. The government doesn’t give them enough money. The government keeps saying, they will provide help for you to stay in your own home. You have to pay for that help, it’s not free (Anglo Senior female).

If there are houses, the people will be happy, but they need resources. They need some services there, to use it for their benefit. Like English, life skills... because here, especially in Edmund Rice Centre, there is ‘women together’, sewing classes... they need other information about banking, housing... (Sudanese female)

Despite the seemingly predominant sentiments about the housing situation in Mirrabooka/Balga, many participants were happy renting or owning a house in this area. Some talked of how much cheaper it was to own a house in the past.

...he come and visit, and if something broken he come and fix it... we [are] happy. (Iranian female)

The issue of transportation was brought up by focus group participants only (not by KIs). Many felt that the public transportation facilities were adequate or very good. But many felt this was a big problem. Either they lived far from a bus stop, or the transportation was expensive (e.g. taxi), or they lived very far from places they needed to go to (e.g. services).

We are serviced very well in the Balga area, we always have been. But that was designed in the years when Balga was the newest suburb and we had the best buses, so we’re covered pretty well in the Balga area and Nollamara, but we can only speak for the area that we live in. And there’s very few people that don’t live near a bus stop range, people who haven’t got transport, and they live in the further out areas. (Anglo Senior female)

I live opposite the shopping centre, I can walk across, but if I want to go to the library, I’ve got to get into a car to get there, because there is no way to get there. I’ve got to get into a car to get to the doctor, or I’ve got to catch a taxi, which I can’t afford. Ah, I can walk across the road and get to a bus to take me to the station to get into town, but I’m fortunate on that. How many other people here have a bus stop across the road? (Anglo Senior female)

My nearest bus stop is in the corner up here. If I have to go to go to Mirrabooka, if I have to go to the train, I have to wait for a bus to take me to Warwick (Anglo Senior female).

For myself, for shopping, it’s a bit hard for people who have no cars, because shops are a bit far away. But shops for basic things, there’s not many around. In Queensland there’s a lot of shops around every corner, for normal things, milk, chocolate, biscuits. (Macedonian male)

Mobility issues become even more serious for the senior members of the community.

A long way away from the bus stop, and a young chap, a coordinator came in, and she tried to shift closer to a bus stop, anyway he said to her ‘well, there’s nothing wrong with your legs, you can walk that far’. He said there’s nothing wrong with her, and she’s 85 (Anglo Senior female).

**Healthcare and childcare**
As with inclusion in general, there were different perspectives on the degree of equality of access to healthcare in the community. Whilst the majority of KIs regarded access as equitable across the community, some thought that people from non-English speaking backgrounds were likely to receive a lower quality of care.

I think there is huge access issues there, CaLD people for instance… they often go to the hospital when they have stomach ache for instance, instead of going to the GP, because the GP’s not going to see them… Most of the GPs would rather not see migrant people.

Some KIs indicated that barriers to access were socio-economic rather than cultural or linguistic, for example ‘if a person doesn’t have a private insurance, it can take up to a good one and half years, or two years, to see a specialist for a chronic disease even.’

Healthcare was brought up by the senior citizen focus group participants. And the sentiment was around migrant and refugee groups using the health facilities in greater proportion than the Anglo-Australian residents. Also, there was dissatisfaction over the behaviour of some migrant doctors.

...new medical centre up at Mirrabooka. Very annoying and you go up there. And when we were young we never ever saw a doctor, so why is there so many young, black people at doctors? Young guys too. Why are they in this country if they’re sick? An English person can’t get in this country unless they’ve got a clean bill of health. (Anglo Senior female)

I’m sick and tired of pretending that it’s ok to be abused because I am a white Christian woman. And there are other things that are not shown too. Um, I had rung the Chinese doctor, because he was born in China, he’s gone through the process and cannot get through, the government is not going to hang them up because they go against a rule. One of the rules at the moment in the medical profession is that, not to give out antibiotics willy-nilly… they [the Chinese doctor] won’t give them out if they’re needed because they’re so afraid of the government. (Anglo Senior female)

The issue of childcare was brought up by a number of focus group participants. The main theme had to do with childcare being very expensive, and their reliance on family and friends for support in this area.

I rely on close friends, or aunts. When I was giving birth to my daughter, it was like, oh, where do I put the son, and it was like, out of nowhere, ‘please, can you look after him for a couple of hours?’ So it was nice to have one or two people who you can know just to do that. Because I’ve left my son in childcare overtime and it is expensive. Two dollars for a minute, so if you don’t pick them up at a certain time, it cost you more than you work. (laughs) No, I was working before and that’s what they charge you, when you not working they charge you more, you can’t win. (Vietnamese female)

The childcare issue was seen by some as being very serious and needing urgent action. Some suggestions were: building more crèches, or having emergency carers.

Nobody offers assistance. So it’s like a double edge sword. So a lot of families have gotten in trouble with that kind of thing. Because people aren’t understanding their dilemma. So how do you fix things like that? Have crèches or temporary childcare within the hospital system. Or places like that, or something in the doctor’s surgery where they have a pool of volunteers, or pay people where they can offer that in-house assistance. You need something for people that don’t have family support. (Croatian female)

Maybe more helpers with the children, like sometimes emergencies, like in the hospital, someone to take care of the baby or the toddler, just so you feel you don’t have to worry and stress at the same time. Yeah, just little things like that activities are great, especially for women who feel depression with children or can’t control kids. (Vietnamese female)

**Employment and finance**
KIs were less positive in their overall evaluation of access to employment, particularly for newer migrants, and refugees. Barriers to accessing employment identified by KIs included lack of recognition of overseas qualifications and/or experience, and English language proficiency. For example, with regard to the emphasis on local (Australian) work experience, KIs said,

So there’s lots of people with lots of experience and lots of knowledge, but it’s just not recognised here.

They can’t get jobs because they don’t have experience [in the] Australian workforce, which is really difficult because they have these qualifications, but they’re still on the dole, or they end up working in the factories... because that’s the only jobs they can get. So, you know, we need to be actually looking at the experiences they’ve had... even in a refugee camp...they’re never asked.

You come here as a doctor, you end up as a taxi driver. Is that what you call a life?

Discrimination and mistrust were identified as barriers for some migrant groups.

And one of the largest growing industrial areas is Malaga, where you have a lot of South African business owners. It’s amazing how often you hear them ringing up and asking for staff, and then they’d say to us, ‘but don’t send us the Africans’.

Mistrust straight away. Just because someone is black that walks in, jet black, ‘well, hell, I don’t know if I trust them. I don’t know what he is’. So it’s breaking down those stereotypes to say, ‘I’ll give him a go.’

The difficulties faced in seeking employment are elaborated on by focus group participants in various ways. Most of them have said it was difficult for them finding employment.

The unemployment level, the unemployment of young men and women, especially men, young men, in this area is very high. No job. Most will never work. (Irish male)

You should underline this problem because it’s the greatest problem we got in this country now, remember, because we might finish like Europe (gesture—downward spiral with his hand). (Italian male)

One theme relates to their unfamiliarity or confusion with the process finding a job, either because they don’t know the system in Australia, or the services that are supposed to help them find a job have not been that helpful or effective.

I have completed Certificate III last year. Until now, I’m not finding job. When I applied, they said after three month application, something like that. No more call me, until now. I don’t know how to find job. Too hard to find job. (Afghani female)

She[a Sudanese friend] said she always going and applying for something, and they give her a form, ask her to fill it out, and she said ‘I can’t’, and they say, ‘sorry for that’. (Sudanese female)

Another theme relates to their lack of English language skills, so they ended up with jobs that don’t need much English such as cleaning, pushing trolleys, and factory jobs.

If you don’t have language it’s really hard to find job because they’re looking for someone who know English. Most of time, [I am] looking for job like cleaner, or trolley pusher of something where you don’t need language to do it. (Iraqi female)

They haven’t got time, because they’re 28, 42, 63, they can never pick up the English to get employment, but their children will be fine. And the federal government knows this. Their children will rocket ahead in school. Every country is the same, if I went to China... (Irish male)

In a particular focus group, the discussion around English skills became quite heated when a participant defended why English skills are important, for example in the medical and engineering
professions—that it is a matter of life and death when doctors treat patients, or when electricity is not handled properly due to miscommunication.

That’s a huge question here, because in the medical world, if the doctor doesn’t know what the patient is talking about, or the patient doesn’t know what the doctor is talking about, you have serious problems, you have death! And they have very high standards; otherwise the Australian medical system would collapse. And your wife can have a fantastic university degree from your country, and she’s probably very, very good, but I know of Iraqi specialist doctors, heart specialist and brain specialists, who are unemployed in Australia, they can’t get a job. They are brilliant at their job, they could cure anyone with a brain problem in their own country, because they can speak, but here, they can’t give them work because it’s so serious. One slip, one miscalculation and you’re dead! It’s the same with the electricity thing. It’s the most dangerous and the most important product we have, but that man, he was so good at his job and he had the tech lingo, that he was accepted. And most people find it difficult because their level of English is very low, but he was one who did make it. A tremendous story. But the English, they have to keep their standards up because they have to keep a certain level of English, or else their whole profession would collapse. (Irish male)

Another theme relates to their overseas qualifications not being recognised by employers, or not having local experience in their area. Due to this, they had to undertake further studies or training, or sit an examination, which, for some, proved difficult due to their age or, again, inadequate English skills. Some of them got frustrated or impatient, so they ended up accepting jobs that were below their actual training, or gave up.

They said, ‘You have your own certificate from your country, you go and do more study and then you find job.’ (Iraqi female)

My husband work long time. I work before too, like 2004, I do course for aged care. When apply [for a job], the forms don’t get in, and still waiting now. Work three hours in morning, go back to my certificate. (Liberian female)

I’m on a pension now. I was an industrial electrician. When I first arrived in this country, I came as an electrician. They asked me all the papers, the background, bla, bla, bla. Then they said ‘welcome!’ With my family I came to this country. But what was surprise was that when I come here, and I try to work as an electrician, they said ‘no, you have to go to the TAFE and then attend a practical and theoretical exam. ‘First of all, when you reach a stage in your life, most of the theory you forget, for this is the practical one. I passed the practical exam, but I could not pass the theoretical exam because of language. Now that upsets me and many others because you government accept me in your country with my qualifications. But then you give me the surprise that I cannot perform and I cannot work in my profession. Many people, like doctors I know cannot work as a doctor. He [one of the participants] worked as a doctor for 4 years, 5 years or something like that, and then they disqualified him because I think it’s a matter of language. But he speaks English, he read and write English, but it is not that pin-point English which they require. It’s a bit too much, that kind of ideology, the Australian ideology. It’s unfair. Because you receive me in your country with my papers and my qualifications, you approved everything and when I’m here—I must go and clean the toilets. No, it is not fair. (Italian male)

My wife is a doctor and when she came into Australia, she had 15 years in her profession. When she came here she had problems with the doctors, nurses because she applied for exam. The exam was in English. The second was the writing, and the last one was the practice. She had good English, but she passed for a while, 3 years till she sit the exam. Why? Because she coming from overseas, all medical from overseas have problems here. And Australia needs the medical people, but the staff on top of medicine don’t give opportunities. (El Salvadoran male)

You can’t get a good job according to the qualifications you have, you feel frustrated. Because you spend lots of money for your education and you need to earn that money again (Sri Lankan female).
Discrimination has been cited a number of times to be the reason behind difficulty finding work. For some, it’s gender-related; for others, it is due to the lack of English language skills (see above), or because there was too much competition for employment in the country.

I don’t experience very much at the moment, I have just sent some resumes. I’m an engineer, and I just sent some resumes for some companies. But I hear it from others. For example, they went to the interview and they experienced it themselves and they said to me. And even in this centre, two ladies who introduced ‘tips for resumes’ or something like that, they said that it’s common. They said, ‘don’t worry about these things, it’s common, they discriminate’, and also make difference for gender. And even your names, and – everything. One is for Muslim women finding job. I hear in the government and also communities, even private companies, this is common, and I can see at the moment finding job is very difficult. (Iranian female youth)

People won’t say ‘you can’t get the job because you’re this race’, but I suppose like Aboriginals have a name for...like yeah, being dodgy or whatever. So it could be a reason why someone wouldn’t hire them. But for me, I’ve lived in this area, grown up here, I live in Balga and putting that down on my resume and that’s never restricted me from getting work. (Anglo female)

One is for Muslim women finding job. I hear in the government and also communities, even private companies, this is common, and I can see at the moment finding job is very difficult. Because discrimination is something like, gender...I don’t know about (laughs), but the most important thing is discrimination. (Iranian female youth)

The financial implications of not finding employment or having inadequate employment dominated some focus groups also. The senior citizens also felt the financial difficulty due to rising costs of commodities. Financial hardship was also described by many as affecting many groups, including the youth.

I don’t have money because my husband working, just he give me like $16.00. I have to work, it’s hard. My husband work alone and have loan for house. (Liberian female)

No husband to support her. It’s very hard. Even sometimes they have shortages for food to eat. (Sudanese female)

It costs money, to pay rent. You have to do shopping, you have to do visiting friends and the petrol goes very quickly, and too expensive, petrol, for us, pensioners. (Macedonian senior male)

This place is like the highest area for people on welfare and Centrelink allowance. (Anglo female)

The elderly, there’s allowance for them, and for younger people, I think it’s harder now to be on allowance, I think you have to have worked a certain amount of hours, and study, or your parents must be on a certain wage for you to be getting allowance. (Anglo female)

Another consequence is about gaining permanent residency in Australia.

And also it’s difficult to get residency. And I have a friend who is trying to get permanent residency, and they are finding it so difficult, even just to find someone who will take them on, like to say ‘yes, I will employ you for three years’ for sponsorship. It’s so difficult as it is. Y’know, why would somebody hire somebody that they have to sponsor for three years? (Burmese-Anglo female youth)

On the other hand, there were positive stories of how migrants and refugees were actually given a chance at employment which lasted on a continuing basis. Some felt that the system in Australia is fair, that people are given a ‘fair go’. Others felt that they were able to get effective assistance from some community organisations. Others were simply grateful because their point of comparison was the country they came from.

I think that in Australia, it’s fair and you can find jobs right, depending on your degree and it doesn’t matter what’s your gender. (Iranian female youth)
I think Australian employers, the bosses that interview you, are lazy. I know of a man from your country, from Iran, top class engineer; he has very poor English but is very good at his job back in Iran. And he got a trial job in Western Power who produces electricity. And they said they weren’t sure because of his English, that’s all, because that type of power is the same here and all over the world. They spoke engineering lingo language and he is now permanent with them. They gave him 3 months to see how good he’d get on. And he’s fine. (Irish male)

I had Certificate III. And then we had like an AMEP expo, that expo from many institutes come; they tell about other programs they have, how they can help us. At that expo Mercy had a stall, so I met the ladies who said, ‘you can come to Mercy, make the appointment and come to Mercy, and they can tell you, they can give you the career guidance, about the courses you can do, further qualifications you can get, and how you can find a job’. Ok, so I came to Mercy and I met (staff member’s name) and she was working with the workforce development centre. I have a degree in human resource management in my country, so I assessed my degree and then she said ‘ok, so we have some workshops in Mercy. In the workshop you can learn how to prepare your resume. So, I came to that workshop, and that workshop was handled by (name of staff). Then she went through my resume and she said ‘ok, I think you have a lot of experience’, because I had three years’ work experience in my country. And she said ‘if you need to get local work experience, you can come here and work for us for three months. Free.’ It’s a good opportunity because some people live here, then studied here, but they can’t even get work experience in organisations. So, I worked for one month for free and then the receptionist resigned. So she said to me ‘ok, you have a chance to work, if you like to work as a receptionist’, and I said ‘yes, why not’ (laughs). So now I’m doing full time work here. But then I met some people in Woolworths, cashiers. They say ‘I have a degree in accounting here’, but still they can’t find a place where to get work experience. But some people, they can. For example my husband, when he is in his final year, he got a job in a mining company. Some people they can get, but some people they can’t. I don’t know what the reason is. So, because they are still doing a job in Woolworths, I’m not saying that that job is not good, but according to the qualification they have, they should have a better job. (Sri Lankan female)

When I worked in retail, I know people who were hiring, I mean, it was quite competitive, not that it’s that great to work in retail, but there are a lot of applications. And so it gave the power to the employer to say ‘we don’t want you’ and you don’t even have to say, but just the fact that you have so many people to choose from, and naturally people who don’t speak English looked a bit dodgy or y’know weren’t chosen and often it was based on their ethnic background as well. (Anglo female)

Generally I am happy in Australia because I come from a place where financially it’s hard to progress. Here it’s much better. (Macedonian male)

Some participants expressed what they thought was the key to success in finding a job, i.e., improve your skills by accessing available programs (many of which are free), and rely on your community, family and friends.

I think that in Australia, relationships are very important for getting job...maybe someone introduced him. Because I heard that for getting job, maybe you should have Australian experience or someone introduce you to the company, some friends that works there. (Iranian female youth)

If you improve your skills, there will be lots of opportunities for you. If you don’t improve your skills, you can’t get good things. So, it’s very hard to improve, but anyhow you should improve. Because I think in Australia, there are lots of programs, free things, all are free, so lots of things you can learn. For example in Mercy, lots of things and services: English classes, computer classes, cleaning courses, lots of things. And the other thing you need is a good community, lots of friends. If you have a good network, like many friends, you can have more information. They say ‘I saw there is a job there, I saw a free program in that organisation’, so that’s how you can get the information. (Sri Lankan female)
**Education**

Most KIs thought that access to education was equitable and open to members of the Mirrabooka/Balga community, although there were concerns about early drop-out in the secondary schools.

There seems to be quite a high dropout rate. We’ve got a lot of young students who are 16, 17, who dropped out of school.

It’s one of the big issues now in Mirrabooka. I can say, most of the young people outside there, they don’t go to school, they don’t do anything.

Problems for children from non-English speaking and/or refugee backgrounds were seen to originate in the transition to mainstream schooling and/or the shift to secondary school which was regarded as a less supportive environment.

Kids transitioning, finishing year 7 and transitioning into high school, you see kids that have got so much potential, really bright, really enthusiastic, they get to high school and they stop…They’ve got no one at home to assist with their homework, and because you’ve got so many, teachers don’t have the time to put extra… there just isn’t the support.

And yet when they do go into other programs, we see kids flounder. And kids who have never been rude to a teacher in the whole of the time they’ve been with us, will suddenly have been suspended for telling some teacher to F—off or something like that.

Education was not discussed so much in the focus groups, but when it was, participants expressed the opinion that education is very important. Some participants felt that certain groups, Indigenous Australian and migrant/refugee students, were given preferential treatment in terms of accessing resources.

The Aboriginals... I know this is going back a few years in school, they had a school trip, and the government paid for the Aboriginal children to go, they had to fly somewhere, and the white children, a lot of them couldn’t go because they couldn’t afford it. And yet the Aboriginals got their trip, everything financed by the government, and the white children couldn’t go because their family couldn’t afford it. Twice that happened. (Anglo Senior female)

Some participants felt that the whole society need not be made responsible for the education of migrants and refugees.

And education for immigrants with regard to the differences in culture have got to be taken into account. Ah, their personal responsibilities instead of expecting us to do things all the time. And we have to start talking equality. We’ve got to stop this ‘we’re responsible for everyone’ – we’re not. Each person should be responsible for themselves. (Anglo Senior female)

Some participants held views about other groups’ valuing or not valuing education, including Anglo- and Indigenous Australians.

...and it’s not so much Australia’s fault. I have been in education myself here for many years. These people don’t value schooling, and their parents do not value schooling, so they just say, you don’t need a job, you don’t need to go to school, so it’s the value levels. And unfortunately they’re often people of Aboriginal background. Very large numbers. So they come out at night, wonder around the car park, and might have gone to see a doctor or a chemist or something, and [you] left your car in the car park and you feel vulnerable. (Irish male)

Some felt there was no problem with education at Mirrabooka/Balga.
There’s no problem in education or resources. There’s even Balga TAFE. I don’t think there’s anything lacking in education around the area. The support is just as good as any other suburb. (Anglo female)

**Excluded groups**

One sub-theme of Inclusion related to groups that were regarded as socially excluded in the Mirrabooka/Balga community. These included the elderly, unemployed people, people with disabilities and their carers, refugees, and Indigenous Australian (Nyoongar) residents. In referring to this last group as ‘excluded’, a number of KIs indicated that this was a perception held by local Indigenous Australian people, but not necessarily their (KIs’) own view.

A lot of our local indigenous people currently are feeling that they are being more sidelined by the immigrants and the refugees. So a lot of these services that were focused on the indigenous people years ago seem to be catering more to the other groups.

There’s definitely a perception in the indigenous community that there’s not enough services targeted towards them.

I think that the perception of the Aboriginal community is that they’re not well accounted for. And they feel that newly arrived migrants get far better services than they do. I’m saying that’s a perception of the community and that’s led to quite a bit of resentment towards new and emerging communities… so it’s kind of, I guess, a competition over resources, in essence.

These perceptions among Indigenous Australian residents and the resulting resentment are addressed further in the sections on Recognition and Social Division and Conflict.

The Sudanese were also mentioned in one focus group as the excluded group.

Some people, even some of the kids there, they have no anybody to stay with there. Like always worry, and all the family is like… (Sudanese female)

Some participants suggested ways to solve the problem of exclusion, for example, inviting the Indigenous Australians, migrants and refugees to clubs or organisations that are dominated by Anglo-Australians so there would be opportunities to mix.

Half the time they [Aborigines, migrants and refugees] don’t know about it; half the time it’s not explained to them properly what we’re for. They’re not brought along for a morning to see what we do. Now the Seniors Recreation Council, they do a good job, but not often enough, in my opinion. And they have Aboriginal days, where they have Aboriginals go to different venues. They never had one in Balga, I might add, and they should. I’ve spoken to _____ [name] who is the president about it. Where they have them around for one day to play carpet bowls or bush walking or whatever, instead of letting them come in into an environment of a club. Like when an Aboriginal person comes in, I would choose somebody and team up. I do that with new members, and give an old member to a new member so you can look after them, and that’s how they assimilate to here. And the government should be doing that with the Aboriginal people. Half the time the poor people are left at home doing nothing. And there’s a lot of them, a lot of them, because I’ve been to the Aboriginal days, as a seniors rep, and there’s a lot of them. And that’s why I said to him, you should get them into the local clubs. And let them see what life is really like. Not just one day. One day is no good. (Anglo Senior female)

**Participation**

Mirrabooka/Balga KIs expressed a range of views on the extent of community participation in their respective sites. As with Belonging, a distinction was made between those from migrant and refugee backgrounds, and the Anglo-Australian, and Indigenous Australian residents. Participation in social and community activities was seen to be high within ethnic, cultural or religious groups for those from migrant backgrounds. In general, participation was regarded as very low among the Indigenous Australian residents. Nearly all KIs indicated that there was little spontaneous mixing across ethnic or cultural groups, particularly as part of ‘everyday life’.
We could get maybe up to 50 people... but we don’t get a cross-section. We don’t get indigenous people coming at the same time as the CaLD people come. We don’t have any Anglo... there is some White people in the school. Those parents don’t come. (Informant from a local school)

I think it is more within their own groups. I don’t think you’d find a group of Burmese going to Kings Park for a picnic with a group of Liberians or Congolese, or something like that.

I think other suburbs people are a lot more, like you don’t really, um (pause) yeah there’s not much interaction, but you’re kind of forced to interact in this suburb, like whether it’s to tell someone to get off your front lawn or to get out of your backyard, or I don’t know. (Anglo female)

Community participation

- Who participate?

KIs indicated that immigrant and some refugee groups were involved in many community activities, particularly within their own ethnic or cultural group.

We see that, within the migrant population in the area, they tend to do more community stuff, because there is an actual coming together of, you know, ‘you, me, we do the same thing’.

Some groups within the Mirrabooka/Balga community were identified as less actively involved in the community, including men from all backgrounds, people from Middle Eastern backgrounds, and Indigenous Australians. Issues of trust and a lack of services or infrastructure were given as reasons for the lack of involvement for Indigenous Australians in particular.

One of the hardest groups we find are the indigenous groups... and I don’t blame them because of the mistrust, you know. Why would they come in and participate in our programs? They don’t trust the mainstream.

The Aboriginal community’s infrastructure in our area is not very strong. So there’s not a big Aboriginal organisation or anything like that.

The focus group participants, especially the seniors, portrayed an inclusive range of people who participated in community activities. They include Asians (Burmese, Indians, Filipinos), Europeans (Italians), and Africans (Sudanese). They also include people with disabilities.

Anybody, any nationality is welcome here [club]. On a Friday, I’ve got 13 Filipino girls. We’ve got Burmese and Indians. We have some Italians here. We’ve got all nationalities. Disabled people are entitled to come here, it’s in our constitution, and their carers. Yes, disabled people can come, but must bring their carers. We have homeless people, also people who are intellectually handicapped. Some of them are handicapped mentally, but they did just such a beautiful job, it was lovely to see, just really getting into all forms. There is a group that looks after them two hours a week on a Thursday night—that’sFabulous, absolutely fabulous. They do it in the wheelchairs and everything, which is really, really good. And those people are to be commended for doing that. (Anglo Senior female)

We’ve just celebrated our fifth birthday, and we support a group in Stirling for disabled people, and we give out boxes of food and that was the most beautiful thing, just absolutely lovely, and I would like to see a bit more disabled participate. (Anglo Senior female)

We have someone who is from Eritrea, and from Sudan. (Sudanese female)

There were also groups identified as not participating, or rather, not being very visible, such as Asians (Chinese).

We used to have a lot at one time, but they’ve moved on to other things; they’ve moved interstate. We had quite a lot of Asian here at one time. (Anglo Senior female)
There is one member, group of people that we don’t see very much and that’s the Asian, Chinese. (Anglo Senior female)

**Community activities**

According to the focus group participants, the activities that allowed people from different groups to participate in and thus interact were related to dance (e.g. Zumba, belly-dancing), activities that promote well-being (e.g., tai chi), crafts (e.g., sewing), arts (e.g., oil painting, drawing), sports (e.g., swimming), cooking.

I did belly dancing at the Perth town hall (laughs). (Anglo Senior female)

There are lots already in existence, I’d like to see Zumba down here. Zumba Gold which is especially for seniors, it’s great. (Anglo Senior female)

...tai chi. that’s quite reasonable. [The coordinator] knows he has to do it to keep the people here. So he’s very reasonable, but when it’s up at Herb Graham, it’s quite a different matter...and we can’t get the Zumba people down here. (Anglo Senior female)

I do swimming lessons. I can’t swim, and learning to swim with different culture—it’s great to know other people’s experiences, having more friends. And then I go to another one which is a family program, that’s even...you do a lot of other stuff, you do nutrition, schooling, exercise. There’s so much activities and it’s wonderful you learn so much about people and making friends. Absolutely and it’s great. (Vietnamese female)

At Edmund Rice Centre, it’s going really well. I’ve been there two years and go each Monday and you get to learn many kind of cooking. There’s different cultures food, yes, and I learn so much, so it’s interesting. (Iraqi female)

There were also activities targeted at special groups, such as senior residents or women.

There’s Trinity School for Seniors, if anybody want to go have a look, that’s just amazing and that’s very, very reasonable. And if you choose, you can do perhaps 12 things over 3 days for the one fee. It would be worth your while finding out a little bit about it. Oil painting, drawing, boot scooting. (Anglo Senior female)

We need English, life skills, because here, especially in Edmund Rice Centre, there is ‘women together’, sewing classes. (Sudanese female)

We’ve got the sewing program, we also have the swimming program for women, which is another area where a lot of the girls are enjoying. And some of our Muslim sisters too, they feel a bit more closed in, and they can come in and swim there as well. (Croatian-Australian female)

I think it’s really lovely, I don’t attend too much unfortunately, but I see it’s a great opportunity really for the migrants, especially the women, because most of the day it’s not like the men who go to work, so it’s really a great opportunity for them to have someone else talking to them, you know, organise these kinds of meetings, and at the same time many don’t know how to sew, but yeah I think it’s a great thing, giving them a hobby to distract them rather than feel lonely and sad. (Iranian female)

While not technically community activities, some participants mentioned programs offered by community groups that help them acquire or develop special skills such as life skills, computer and language skills.

...life skills, computer, English classes, the beginner, the higher level, so you can find yourself there. Very good programs, and especially life skills because on life skills, you learn about English, health food, and all the names of vegetable and fruits, a lot of things, yes. And more, they have. (Sudanese female)
Harmony Week

Harmony Week is celebrated with a fair-type event in the heart of Mirrabooka which, for the last few years, has been organised by local non-government organisations in community (supported by the Office of Multicultural Interests). There are associated events and activities in schools and in the shopping centre. Most focus group participants did not have much to say about Harmony Week, but most KIs identified Harmony Week with the single-day event held in Mirrabooka Square. They regarded this event positively but insufficient as a one-off event.

Something that is broader, and it’s like with Harmony Day, but to have it not just a day or a week in a year.

It’s a bit like us with Christmas really. Everyone gets together for Christmas. Well, why doesn’t everybody get together other times of the year?

Harmony Day is one off, as tip of iceberg. It’s not going to bring the harmony, community together. It’s not continuous activity which is participation.

So whilst on the surface, there appears to be a lot going on, there’s a lot of community activities and events and things like that. Some of them…it can be a little bit tokenistic, you know, like, you have your Harmony Week...

And there should be more events, more frequent, you know. Like, not just Harmony Day which is again a stereotypical day. Why should you have just everything on Harmony Day or Harmony Week? What happens the rest of the year—we live in disharmony?

Political participation

In general, KIs regarded the community as having low levels of political participation. This was perceived to be particularly the case for migrant and refugee groups, whose members were occupied with trying to establish themselves within the community and achieve stability in housing, employment, finding schools for their children and other basic tasks. Thus, political participation was represented as a ‘higher-order’ activity that one engaged in when one had more time and was ‘settled’. Thus, more recently arrived communities were concentrating on more fundamental aspects of socio-cultural adaptation such as food and shelter. For example, one KI said, ‘I don’t think there’s very much political interest or activism. I think people, on an immediate day-to-day needs...’

Groups that were more established in the community, or those who had more highly-educated members, were involved, for example a group of African leaders was meeting to develop ways to approach government and address community issues.

There was minimal discussion about political participation in the focus groups, which to them meant voting in the local council elections, and speaking up on issues that matter. Some participated and some did not.

Here at the club, we’ve got council workers who come here regularly, and every [club] member is entitled to go talk to them. In fact they go around the tables talking to people. (Anglo Senior female)

I couldn’t reconcile myself to vote for somebody who I had no idea about. Like, I only got a little leaflet in the mail, I didn’t actively go out and look up what they stood for, and I just didn’t want to vote for someone that I didn’t know about, and I don’t think a pamphlet is a really good enough campaign. (Burmese-Anglo female)
Volunteering

Volunteering can be defined in various ways and is a fairly ‘loose’ construct. Thus, KIs and focus group participants had quite diverse responses to questions about levels of volunteering in the community because they drew upon their own definitions, which were divergent. Once again, a distinction was made between getting involved ‘in one’s own community’, which was typically defined along ethnic or cultural lines, or being involved more broadly. Migrants and refugees were believed to be highly involved in their own communities. People who were most likely to cross ‘ethnic’ boundaries in volunteering were, interestingly, Anglo-Australians. This was mainly in formal volunteering roles, such as helping with the English language classes run by community organisations, and believed to be more common among retired people.

We do have a number of people who volunteer…but again, it’s a large proportion of mainstream.

Volunteering is a thing for retired people to do.

I think there’s quite a lot of senior volunteers.

I teach my language. And in doing so, I speak English more. (Vietnamese female)

Some focus group participants gave some explanations of the motivation for volunteering, such as this being an individual thing, or depending on ability, or having the time or resources (e.g., money for transport), or ‘if you are not living by yourself’. But for many, volunteering is seen as a good thing.

If you can’t do five days, just one day a week [will be good]. (Sri Lankan female)

Enablers and barriers

KIs identified a number of enablers and barriers to participation. Enablers included having a ‘multi-systemic approach’ and strong leadership. Barriers that were more specific to participation included transport, the cost of activities, issues in finding childcare, and a focus on ‘just getting by’ among refugee families. Some of these barriers operated in concert, as one KI who worked in a non-government organisation for migrants and refugees said,

Often our numbers go down when the weather’s bad because they have to get a couple of buses, or they might have to get kids to day care, and then kids to primary school and then, it’s all too hard.

Similarly, another KI noted the difficulties that some families had in getting involved, or in supporting their children to participate in sporting and other clubs.

...and often it’s financial reasons or lack of parent support, and by that I mean, single mums [who] don’t drive or have small kids at home and can’t take [them] often.

Families who had arrived in Australia more recently and/or had experienced torture and trauma were seen by KIs to take longer to get involved.

But most people, I think, are just so overwhelmed with their day to day stuff, there is not a huge amount of ability to do voluntary work.

They’ve come from war torn countries. They’re traumatised, they’re tortured. So what they’re doing is settling themselves within their own house and within their own state of mind.
Communication and English language skills

The focus groups had more to say about enablers and barriers to participation. A major factor for them is English language skills: If you have it, then it enables you to participate. If you don’t, then it is a barrier. Some of the issues specific to employment have already been discussed in an earlier section. In addition, there were further comments made by focus group participants on this issue.

The consequences for not having adequate English language skills are many (aside from the consequences related to employment which have already been discussed previously), including difficulty in passing the Australian citizenship test, not knowing the contents of letters that they received, not fully understanding what is going on around the world, and not being able to make friends. The effect on one’s self-esteem was also mentioned.

When we don’t know language to reading, to talk language, to take citizenship [test], it’s very hard. I pay course, my hour is finished, I pay $250 in Balga, a TAFE course, and then I take my citizenship, but now, now interview. (Liberian female)

... what they’re facing—the lack of English, the lack of language. This is a problem because too many letters come to their letter box, but they can’t do nothing, they can’t understand what’s going on and all that. Yes, it’s difficult, and some always scared to sign and all that, because too many. You don’t know what is going on. (Sudanese female)

The problem is the language, and the other thing is the driving because wherever you go, they ask you if you have driving licence or not, if you have a mobile phone or not, and if you can talk in English, and it’s very hard. (Sudanese female)

...what’s going on around the world, even with the photo and all that, with all the films, everything they can understand what’s going on around the world, but sometimes the lack of language, they can’t understand. (Sudanese female)

I remember, when I was two years in Australia, you can’t communicate, you can’t make friends. You can’t express yourself as you want to. Soon, as you learn more English—no worries. (Macedonian male)

I lived here 15 years ago. I’m feeling about 4 years I’m ok. I very scared. I can’t speak English. I’m feeling very lonely. I’m at home looking after children, cooking. Many things boring in Australia. And then my children tell me ‘mum, don’t be scared’ but I don’t go outside. I’m very, very sad. I’m very, very bored. I’m very upset. My daughter speak English and Vietnamese, a bit of both. We don’t understand, I very scared. The people don’t understand me, I very sad. No time for me; I very, very busy. I talk to my friend: the same—women in Australia, big trouble, busy. (Vietnamese female)

Older people are especially affected by inability to speak English.

Older people, too hard, they don’t know English. (Iranian-Afghani female)

With English skills, they could gain employment, go to TAFE or university, and mingle more with people. Effective communication and improved self-esteem, of course, were the most important benefit of adequate English skills, including appreciation of humour.

I think that there is a lot of people that go there, learning English, being around other people. We’ve got opportunities in Australia to go to uni or to study at TAFE. They are all opportunities to mingle, being part of different cultures. (Burmese-Anglo female)

I would like to progress better in English and with the computer, because with the computer you can communicate with the whole world, and when I learn I can feel not so lonely or something like that, like keeping in touch with family. But after a while, friends who have very good sense of humour, but in different ways. Sometimes if the joke is in my language, it doesn’t work if I translate in English. People not laughing. And I say ‘what’s wrong?’ It doesn’t make sense for them, the way you translate. Because my English is not too good to translate in English way. (Macedonian male)
Some participants commented on the English language classes—availability, free tuition, good program, connecting them to others, just the right pace, but for some, quite difficult.

It [language issue] really is [important], so they [migrants/refugees] can say the same, ‘why don’t you try and learn our language?’ So it works both ways. But there are lots and lots of English classes here that these people go to, and they are free of charge, they don’t cost anything. So, they can go and learn English quite free. There is an English class here for the Sudanese people on a Saturday. So they do come and they are learning English, it’s a slow process, y’know. We have to get everyone to learn English, why the hell don’t we learn another language? (Anglo Senior female)

It’s very good at Edmund Rice. She said, when you been on 510 hours, like certain class, it’s a bit different from what Edmund Rice is doing here because they are going slowly with you, they start from zero, because most of us, um...maybe some people, they not even enter school, so they don’t know alphabet even. And they try and start with you from zero, and slowly and with a nice way of teaching and caring. (Sudanese female)

Very good programs, and especially life skills because on life skills, you learn about English, health food, and all the names of vegetable and fruits, a lot of things, yes. And more, they have. (Sudanese female)

When I get my visa, I got a letter mentioning that you are available for AMEP English course. That is a good way of information. But some people, they don’t know if they come to Australia they are eligible for AMEP. Because I met some students here who learn computer, they did not know that they are eligible for AMEP. (Sri Lankan female)

... I look at her and she asked me, ‘what do you want?’ I said, ‘I’d like to learn some more English’ and I have problem with the writing, I can read a bit better than to write, but writing is terrible, hard to remember the words. And she said, ‘we have a course for English and for computer,’ so she bring me here and I’m happy. (Macedonian male)

When I come here, because I met a lot of people, different cultures, always we can learn something, yes always improve your skills. Because when I studied in AMEP class, we had a chance to volunteer. Because I learn Certificate III, so I had a chance to volunteer, like help the teacher. Because Certificate I, their English level is not good. So if they say something, I translated to my teacher. I also improving. (Sri Lankan female)

Some participants talked about barriers to learning English, such as the difficulty of the language itself, or cultural restrictions (e.g., men who did not allow their wives to learn English), or some physical conditions (e.g., deafness).

English is the hardest language in the world to learn! (Anglo Senior female)

There is going to have to be a law change, with teaching English, because a lot of the men will not allow their wives to learn. So you have to have a rule change, where everybody has to learn English—men, women, children and all. So that they can participate. I’ve searched it and searched it, but quite a lot of the legal terms are beyond me. We have built in our constitution, that we have to supply aid to foreign countries, we have to look after our own, and that is a law that should be changed. Because what are we? 21 million people in Australia? We cannot support the whole world, and until we start thinking on the lines of what... we can’t do the impossible... that some of these people should be looking after themselves, and be proud to look after themselves. I think a great many people that come here, have no pride, they’ve lost everything and their self-esteem is very poor as well. So there’s a lot of issues that have to be looked at and the laws have to be changed. (Anglo Senior female)

I come originally from Macedonia, long time ago. My deafness makes hard to learn language, the people, what they say. Nearly 30, I learn enough English, but not enough for 30 years should be ... (Macedonian male)

The need for more English skills support or resources for migrants and refugees was echoed by several focus group participants.
Some participants believed that English should not be taken at face value, that is, in terms of proficiency. The message here is that communication, not language per se, is what is important. In other words, there should be communication, even if the speaker is not that proficient in the language. The communication though is also significant when it comes to translating humour.

Everyone comes from somewhere, we better communicate, we better have friendship, or understanding even better, even if we don’t speak English properly, but we understand better. (Macedonian male)

I think, still if they have a poor English as well, I think it’s a nice way to, it’s a good way to communicate between people, and that’s a key point. It’s to communicate with others, no matter how your English is. And I believe this way you will improve your English and you will improve even your skill to be a better communicator and to know people easier. Get along. (Iranian female)

Acceptance and willingness to learn and share

Having the right outlook and disposition was regarded by focus group participants as an important enabler of participation, for example accepting differences, willingness to learn and share, and helping one another. And this goes for both migrants/refugees, and Anglo-Australians and Indigenous Australians. This may be in terms of religion, food, and activities.

...we come here to exchange a lot of things... in spite of the language barrier we manage to chat and converse for a long, long time (laughs) (Burmesse female)

I come from a place where we try to help each other, our neighbours. And I ask them for help and ‘what he wants, what he wants something’. Even some situation I find, as we make new friends, we offer them coffee, and they say ‘why?’ ‘Because how to show you that I respect you as a friend? Through coffee. What you did today, you bring some biscuits, so we build up the friendship.’ (Macedonian male)

...fishing, sometime at church, anywhere. I try and communicate with people. Everyone come from somewhere, so try to be a communicative person. So in Australia in the last 4 months, I make 15 friends. (Macedonian male)

... and also religion, like people who have Ramadan, we learn when this is on, through our sister friends, something different, and you learn about the Christian, for the Easter and Christmas, so we’re all learning off each other. We also share a lot of good food in this sewing thing, only last week a woman brought this food from her country, we’ve other people other country who bring food as a gift to share. (Croatian-Australian female)

Opening up the opportunities for people to learn and share with one another required some organised efforts which some participants talked about. They also discussed barriers that migrants faced in joining these activities, for example, competing activities with employment or household, or just ‘lazy’, to go to these activities.

Friday is their time off, and that’s why I try and make the outings on a Friday, so they can take a Friday off and they can come. Normally we have our outings on a Tuesday; every now and again we have a Friday, so the Friday girls can come too. (Anglo Senior female)

...they’re busy here working from morning to five o’clock and you have to get your kids from day-care and have dinner at six o’clock and that’s it. (Iraqi female)

... busy at home: children, homework. They’re lazy. (Vietnamese female)

Such activities were regarded as helpful in reducing isolation and loneliness.

I look to their faces, most of them are so young, but they look like 100 year old, because you’re always thinking. And everybody mentioned that they can’t sleep, because their head is thinking, thinking,
night and day, night and day. With the stress, even if you feed yourself, and you are settled in a very nice house whatever, you will not feel comfortable. You don’t feel like you’re in a good life. Yes, it’s very hard. I prefer to not eat and be relaxed...very hard. (Sudanese female)

Knowledge of services/activities, resources and other factors

Many focus group participants had no or minimal knowledge about services or activities that residents can participate in. Some have cited learning about them by word of mouth or by advertising by the organisations sponsoring the activities or events.

...she told me too. Word of mouth mainly. They do advertise sometimes. City of Stirling do advertise them, but they don’t do a lot for seniors, it’s all for youth, they appeal to youth. All their advertising, everything that they do. And very rarely do they do programs for seniors. (Anglo Senior female)

There are a services here, programs at Edmund Rice Centre, and even (name of staff at ERC), she is one of the workers here, now she always visit around and tells about the Edmund Rice Centre. (Sudanese female)

I’ve never seen any advertisement about it or nothing, like there’s nothing to say there’s a big harmony day or anything. (Anglo female)

A barrier is the resources needed to attend these activities. For example, some activities required a fee to be paid by participants which they might or might not be able to afford. Some organisations might also not be successful in getting funding for the activities they wanted to hold.

The Herb Graham Centre at Mirrabooka has a lot of activities, but they are beyond the price range of seniors. We asked them to cut their prices down, but of course the prices that the teachers charge, they have to have the money accordingly, you see. Up here, I teach boot scooting on a Friday, we don’t charge our members. If anyone wants to come to boot scooting, they can come, and the only criteria (sic) is that they have to belong to this club, they have to join the club, which is a dollar a week, which everybody can meet that. And the same with bowls and the same with boot scooting and everything, we only pay a dollar a week. And it includes everything, tea, coffee, crafts. (Anglo Senior female)

They are supportive, but they don’t give you anything, cash wise. So for instance if we wanted to put a program on and we can’t afford to do it, and we went to the City of Stirling and said ‘we want to do this program for seniors in the city of Stirling’ because that’s the criteria that you have to work with, ‘and we only want to charge a couple of dollars a person, would you subsidise it?’ The answer would be ‘no’. Because we’ve gone to them again, and again, and again. And we’ve got two very good ward councillors here and one of them just happens to be the Mayor. They do work hard, but they can’t get any subsidies for the programs we want to put on. Doesn’t matter what it is. And last year was our 30th anniversary, and I went to the City of Stirling to see if they would give us a donation so that we could put an afternoon tea on for our seniors, our members. And leave it open to all the community, because we’re always inviting.... ‘Oh, it can’t be done’. That was 100 dollars I asked for (laughs). (Anglo Senior female)

Transport was also cited as a factor, especially for those who could not drive or did not have a car.

Sometimes it’s important to say that women they don’t drive, because I see many people who are not driving. It’s very difficult to come, it’s very difficult to take the kids to childcare or come to class, because too much is charged for women to learn to drive, about $45 hours, the one who is not working(inaudible), and too much to pay for this one. (Afghani female)

Some participants cited personal problems as barriers, such as problems at home.

...she [another Sudanese participant] don’t know—they be drug addict now, they’re being drink...she don’t know. And even if she saw one of them [her children], she can’t do nothing because she has been stopped by court order. She can’t do nothing... To her own children, which makes you
like...maybe you are diabete, have high blood pressure, you just ‘bang!’, maybe just finish, maybe your head explode (laughs), it’s hard, it’s very hard. (Sudanese female)

Because she said now, with all these problems, they can’t even breathe. They feel like their heart is bleeding from inside. If they’re not themselves, not being relaxed and no problem around, and like normal life happening to them, definitely will be a lot of problem, you will be nervous, you will drive and make an accident—it’s a... because a lot of problem, even for the government and a lot of cost. Yes, in the hall. Too many mums and too many dads and everybody say their words, his words. as, as, his own problems. And she think if of all this, what we’re saying, had been recorded and they wrote it down, had been sent to the government, maybe they can do something. But what she saw—nothing going there. Just doing things, but nothing going to the government. So they can fix all these problems. (Sudanese female)

† Recognition

The recognition dimension encompasses mutual respect and tolerance, and the extent to which community members feel accepted or rejected by others. Sub-themes identified in the interview and focus group data for Mirrabooka/Balga included intergroup attitudes, experiences of, or witnessing discrimination and/or racism, lack of acknowledgement of Indigenous Australians in the community, and issues around perceived competition for resources and privileges. There was little consensus among KIs and focus group participants in relation to the overall extent of recognition in the Mirrabooka/Balga community: some thought it very low (‘They ‘tolerate’. I wouldn’t say ‘respect’’), whilst others thought that it was moderate to high (‘I’ll say overall yes, they do [respect each other]. If they didn’t respect each other, there’d be quite a lot of conflict within the area’). Perceived contributors to a lack of intergroup respect included communication issues, residential instability, distrust, and suspicion and fear of others and the unknown.

† Intergroup attitudes and relations

KIs spoke of tensions between different minority groups in Mirrabooka, particularly between refugee groups and Indigenous Australian residents.

I’ve heard lots of stories, particularly from our Sudanese families. Sudanese mums would say they go to Centrelink to collect their money or to do whatever they had to do, and they would be spat upon, by Indigenous people.

But certainly most of them [immigrants and refugees] don’t trust Indigenous. They don’t trust them at all.

This was presented as tension and resentment, rather than open conflict, and was perceived to be a result of lack of recognition and awareness of Indigenous culture and history by migrants and refugees as well as more broadly by the community, and perceived discrimination in housing and other public services. These sub-themes are explored more fully in the next two sections.

The focus group participants elaborated on intergroup relations and attitudes by revealing their own feelings towards different groups in the community, or assessment of the extent to which different groups get along.

† Do groups get along?

On one hand, there was a belief that different (cultural, religious) groups got along. They socialised with each other. There was acceptance, tolerance, friendliness, respect. Some reasons for these were: being migrants/refugees all, being in the same class.

I have socialised with too many different background people. And I am happy even with white people, with Iraqi people, or whatever in the community. (Sudanese female)
I try to make a balance in those things, different nationality, so I try to be friendly with them, even from Australia, even from other countries, make friends easy. If I am confronted, I will ignore the situation. (Macedonian male)

... because we are all here for one purpose, to better ourselves, so I think some sort of education system (inaudible) tolerate each other... (Burmese female)

I’ve been here for 46 years now so it’s been awhile, and in those days not as understanding and not as tolerating, but now a lot of associations, a lot of community things have come up, so we can see both sides of things now. (Burmese female)

Some people are Muslim, some people like me Christian, no problem for that, still come together for the class. (Sudanese female)

I don’t know if other people feel like that, but my experience. If I respect other people, they also respect us. (Sri Lankan female)

Even if you have a preconceived idea, being around other people already breaks down that idea that you have. (Burmese-Anglo female)

I don’t see as many European migrants in this area, but a lot of the migrant that I know of that have come from a while ago; they seem to mingle more than the ones that are newer. (Anglo female)

I don’t have any friends that are visibly like, it’s kind of in your face, like I don’t have friends that wear the full hijab or anything, so it’s not in my face. But when you go to their house and they’ve got completely different lifestyle, it’s kind of in your face, but it’s not really something that I pick friends by; I don’t pick a friend because they’re certain race. It doesn’t really define for me anyway. (Anglo female)

On the other hand, there was more intra-group than inter-group mixing noted by focus group participants. Some believed there were tensions or uncomfortableness. Or the friendliness was one-way, for example, Anglo-Australians towards refugees and migrants and Indigenous Australians, but not the other way around.

[About different backgrounds, getting along] Not really. It’s more of an uncomfortableness at times, sometimes drinking too much, it’s low level. (Irish male)

...and the thing is they all go over the top of you... this multicultural thing, you try and be friendly to them, not a hope that they want to be friendly to us. (Anglo Senior female)

I don’t really see different cultures mingling, more like their groups at the park or wherever they are, you only see them. (Anglo female)

...they tend to stay in their own cultural group. (Anglo female)

**‘Good’ and ‘bad’ neighbours**

We specifically asked about neighbours in the focus groups. There were stories of ‘good’ neighbours and ‘bad’ neighbours among the focus group discussions. Among the good stories were: friendly, helpful, nurturing, and ‘protective’ neighbours; neighbours that could be relied on to look after their property when they were away. The participants would tell these stories in a way that reflected a mutual positive treatment between neighbours.

We have neighbours, Vietnamese ones though, and Ethiopians on the other. And we have beautiful neighbours, they’re friendly, they’re lovely. And we consider ourselves fortunate. Especially with [name of husband] as he is, my husband, if he falls over, I’ve just got to call them and they’ll come and help me. For anything that I need. And to be quite truthful I think they’re the best neighbours we could possibly have. (Anglo Senior female)

My neighbour is very good, I have an Australian neighbour, sometimes I need them, sometimes I cannot pick my son, they pick my son up and bring home, yes very good people. (Iraqi female)
We going sometimes, we had a meeting, three or four men and wife, and stay together, a party. I enjoy with them, my neighbours. With protection we have house, because sometimes me working, my neighbour in front working, on the right men working, and only two people on the left, he working and older one. But we protect. (El Salvadoran male)

I live in Dianella for two years, I start relationship with my neighbour from a small accident in the car. She is an old lady, just opposite, I moved out, and she moved out from her house, and we had a small accident, it was her fault, not mine. I was on the street already and she came back. It was very small. Yes, she came out and said ‘sorry, sorry, sorry’, and I said ‘it’s fine, it’s nothing happened’. And now she invite me every time for coffee. And every Friday she teach me English. And the last three weeks she was away (in hospital) and I collected the mail, and after she came home I looked after her every day for 2-3 weeks, by making for her food, and a little bit clean her house, and now we are very good together. She’s old—about 75 or 80 years old, but she is very lovely. One time I was away for one week and she came to my door and said ‘I was worried about you’. And now she’s in hospital and I told her ‘I’ll come to see’ and she said ‘no, no, it’s alright’, and she called me from hospital and asked ‘how are you, how are you going?’ (Iranian female)

My neighbour, if I not home, they look after my house, and if they go on holiday I look out for them... ten years in my house, I know everyone, I help with some food, and then they are very happy with me, now very happy, everyone, yes. (Vietnamese female)

Sometimes, the participants simply stated they have good neighbours without elaborating as to why. Sometimes they would say that this was because they were all migrants in the neighbourhood which then motivated them to get along.

I have Mauritian living next door to me and they are the best neighbours I could ever have. Beautiful. (Anglo Senior female)

I think it depends on where you are. Only because I’m in Balga, and I think surrounding Mirrabooka, because we’re all migrants, we all think alike. We come to Australia, we want to meet our own type of people, we want to have friends who understand me personally culture wise and...having good neighbours are hard. And if we’re migrants, we know, oh ok we need good neighbours to help each other, but if you don’t have them you won’t avoid them. And Mirrabooka, because it’s so multicultural—we get together because we’re all from a different place trying to adapt from Australia. (Vietnamese female)

...one side living German people, and other side Greek people, and Macedonian people, they good neighbours. They help each other, you know. But nice, good area, Dianella. (Macedonian female)

The bad stories were around: unfriendly neighbours, the neighbour put rubbish in front of their house; the neighbour picked on them based on difference in religious affiliation; could not rely on neighbours for help; refusal of some building activities (e.g., fence).

I did not see her for over a year and then one day my husband wanted to put a fence and she came and she said, ‘excuse me, what are you doing?’ My husband said ‘I want to put the fence’; she said ‘you can’t because this is a shared complex’ because it’s a duplex house. So then she stood there and argued with my husband and said ‘I will not allow you to put the fence, and when you came into the house you should have come to my place and introduced yourself’, and I was like ‘she was right’ but the problem was that from the very beginning, she gave me that grumpy look. She’s on my right side, and on my left side actually the first day that I was looking for a recycling bin, I went to my next door on my left side and there were the ladies outside, and I said, ‘excuse me, do we need a recycling bin here?’ and she was quite nicer, and she has two cats, and it was a bit sort of easier to get along with her rather than my other neighbour who is originally from France. And when she told me that I thought, ok maybe that was wrong and that will definitely serve as a lesson for my future, if I go move my house. But at the same time as I said, that grumpy, angry, unwelcome look that she gave me, that gave me the idea that this is going to be very, very cold. She’s next door and obviously she hears us and I have three children and definitely they will jump around and play and make noise and I will shout at them, y’know it’s obvious we are human beings (laughs) You should have seen her look when
she kept on, and that was when we were moving the stuff from the truck to take it into the house. And actually I gave her the smile, but when she looked at me that way... (Iranian female)

I have neighbour, is very hard, you cannot go to. My husband said why you put rubbish at my door, my husband said, don’t worry, he picked up rubbish in bin, he cleaned my door. Say hello, how are you—she say, you Muslim or Christian, I say I’m Christian, she said, oh I’m sorry. Yes, she a Muslim, she said, I never do like this. (Sudanese female)

If you are not at your house, go to neighbours is very hard, like me, I don’t have good neighbours. One day I very sick and one night, like 9.30, I want somebody to help me, my husband take me to the doctor, my children leave at home, I have big daughter who is nine years, I leave few days for hospital, I cannot have somebody with my children, is very hard, if you cannot have good neighbours is very hard, if you cannot have friend too—is very hard. My children left at home 11 hours... (Sudanese female)

...my neighbours are no good. They don’t say hello. Other neighbour say hello. For one year for Christmas I say hello. They can’t say hello... (Sudanese female)

When we moved in Balga, we’ve got a duplex. And the first thing was like—ok, let’s go tell the neighbours ‘hi I’m your neighbour—if you need help, I’m there too’. And it’s to break the wall, regardless how they look, who they are. And it was hard because around the corner there is an Australian elderly, and the other side is Asian Malaysian, and you go in and ‘what do you want’, and we’re like, ‘hi I’m your neighbour—this is my name’. And it was to break the wall and see what they are like. Because sometimes you can see the expression of your neighbour whether they are grumpy, unhappy or busy people ‘oh don’t talk to me, I’ve got to go’. And it just makes you go ‘if that’s want they are, we won’t bother them’. And it’s true, when you move in, you just want to know—are your neighbour good people or not? (Vietnamese female)

Other stories were quite neutral: referring to the ethnicity of their neighbours (e.g., Chinese, Australian, ‘from Iraq’), or stating that there is hardly any relationship with their neighbours.

We just like ‘hi’, ‘hi’ (Iranian-Afghani female)

I live in Nollamara, and it’s the same type of suburb like Mirrabooka, Westminster—it’s the same. And in my street 80% of people is renting, the relations between neighbours are very weak because the tenants change. (Polish male)

[So you don’t have good connections with your neighbours?] no, that’s because there’s a lot of thieves around and a lot happening (Macedonian male)

Some participants gave suggestions on how to develop good relations with neighbours: introduce yourself to them when you first arrived in an area; reach out and participate in neighbours’ activities when invited; accept neighbours’ cultural background.

I live in a block of 20 units, there’s only 2 white people there, and me and my husband are those people but I get on with them all, and that’s my nature, I get on with most people. I like to give everyone a chance, and I’d like to think they give me a chance. And we get on, we swap recipe and we swap food and things like that, because I like to try other people’s food. And we get on really, really well indeed. Now I’m not a catholic and there’s a catholic church across the road, but these people will come and say to me ‘oh, there’s a do on at the church, do you want to go?’ and I go along with them, its fine. And that’s how it should be. And that’s just in a block of 20, they’re all nationalities, mainly Burmese and Vietnamese, Indian, but we get on very well with them. (Anglo Senior female)

I really believe that it’s very important that when you move into a new place, it’s really important to go to your neighbours on both sides. At least start with them. Go and introduce yourself and try and give them the idea that a friendly, nice neighbour
Who should or should not stay?

There were also opinions about the kind of people that should be allowed to enter/stay in the country and who should not (e.g., criminals, drug dealers, and people who came from countries that Australia were/are at war with).

They should be fighting in Afghanistan or wherever they come from. Why should we have to have them? Now, there’s something wrong with our immigration department. Sadly wrong. (Anglo Senior female)

This nation is gutless, the boats are coming in, you’ve only got to turn one boat around, shoot them, like the yanks did when they come over in America. They turned their boats around, they left them there. They didn’t come in to America. But the nation is gutless and then that’s why I didn’t join the RSL because what they done to the Vietnam Soldiers, when they come here, they ‘boo’ them. That’s disgusting. (Anglo Senior male)

I feel we’ve become the dumping ground for criminals. He [another participant] mentioned the Vietnamese. The first Vietnamese that came here as boat people were the pimps, the drug dealers, because they had the money to come here and that’s what’s happening now, and I’m sorry about you (referring to Greek woman participant), but we now have the mafia, we now have the Lebanese, criminal communities, and we’re keeping them! What for? Why are we sending our young men over to Afghanistan to be killed and the sods are here living a high life! (Anglo Senior female)

In many instances, there was a message of assimilation that was expected of refugees and migrants, but not necessarily Anglo-Australians adjusting to refugees and migrants. In this regard, there were perceptions of who assimilated and who did not (e.g., Muslims).

It can be fixed, with some hard work and some very strong minded politicians. They’ve got to say ‘look here, if you can’t do as we do in this country and accept our beliefs and way of living, then trot off back where you came from’. And ship them out, send them back. They’re spending too much money on them here, so shove them on a plane and send them back. They don’t want to be here and accept us the way we are, off you go, mate! On your bike. (Anglo Senior female)

They decry our right. Now, they come to this country, they know it’s a Christian country, why are they arriving if they’ve got those beliefs? (Anglo Senior female)

The Muslims do not assimilate with us at all whatsoever. (Anglo Senior female)

If they come here for a better life, if they can’t come here and leave their prejudices at home, they’re not looking for a better life, they’re here to upset us. That’s gotta change. (Anglo Senior female)

Don’t get me wrong, I served overseas and I served in Vietnam. The fact of the matter is, there are some very good people from over there, but they come over here, and have assimilated within the Australian community. We might bitch, whatever you, whinge, whatever you want to call it. It’s the fact that these people do not want to assimilate. (Anglo Senior male)

...and they putting you on your knee, not they obey your law, but you obey their ideology. (Italian male)

There were some strong negative opinions about refugees, reflecting a misunderstanding of the legal status or conditions of this group of entrants, and confusing the issues of ‘boat people’, asylum seekers and refugees. Similar misunderstandings about Muslims came out in the focus groups.

I will not call boat people refugees, I call them ‘queue jumpers’. Every time, they show a boat, show one of the legal camps that those poor people are waiting to come in here. They haven’t got the money to get on the boat. That’s why we want to get rid of the boats, not because we’re against refugees, but because they’re queue jumpers and they’ve got plenty of money. Get rid of them. Let the poor people that are waiting years in a camp, get them in here. Send refugees, genuine ones. Not these ones they send over their children, so once the children are here, they can come in and they’ve
afforded to send them over. All those people sitting up there on those boats—no I want have a bar of any of them. (Anglo Senior female)

I have met people from many races and most of the time I get along with them, but my Egyptian friends all tell me that there is a worldwide Muslim push to take over the world. My Egyptian friends are quite upset and worried about it, because they’re Christians and they know that they’re going to be the first ones in the firing line. (Anglo Senior female)

Amidst these misunderstandings, however, there were some sympathetic or counter opinions about Muslims (e.g., allowing them to wear the *burqa*) and refugees. There were also some advice to migrants to ‘educate’ others about their culture, in order to facilitate acceptance; and encouragement of more mingling, in order to foster better intergroup relations.

…they should have to be allowed to wear the burqas. (Anglo Senior female)

Perhaps you can expect that because of different cultures, people from different cultures, some people can tolerate, even the way they dress, the way they look; but some people won’t be able to, so I think it’s up to us in a way to educate these sort of people to actually accept, to welcome the next person in this country, in this community even. (Burmes female)

There’s quite a lot of them and they sort of stick together as well and I think that’s also an issue. They’re not really easy to attack because there’s a lot of them, but maybe because they’re seen as alien or different, they’re not mingling as much as they could. (Burmes-Anglo female)

**The influence of culture in intergroup relations**

A set of opinions about intergroup relations that also provided insights to enablers and barriers can be grouped under culture.

Some participants acknowledged that both mainstream and migrant/refugee groups could be ignorant of each other’s cultures, which explained the lack of acceptance of migrants/refugees.

… not aware of things, not aware of each other’s culture in many ways y’know… when we first came here we knew a little about Australia but not everything, and I suppose for them it’s even worse because they haven’t seen migrants as such y’know, and then I think it’s really, really hard for them to accept us as well. (Burmes female)

Cultural differences were considered one big factor in intergroup relations. For example, etiquette related to being guests and hosts, particularly where one culture (Anglo) was used to bringing something when invited to another person’s house, which was regarded as insulting by the migrant host.

The new migrants, they don’t understand that. So it’s both ways, it’s not just him not understanding—just seeing it both ways. Because Australian culture is, you always bring something. And we come from Asia. When we first came here, we felt very insulted when a guest bring something. But then we realise it’s their culture, you know, I mean we just accept it; sometimes we bring something, sometimes we don’t, sometimes we just ask ‘shall we bring something?’ and they say ‘no, don’t bother’ y’know. I think we both have to tolerate that they’re not insulting you, and you’re not insulting them either. Yes, and I think sometimes Australians are very open about those things, and we from different parts of the world are quite closed about things, we don’t say I don’t drink, don’t bring anything. Whereas Australians are quite open, they will just tell you that sort of thing. We should learn to be a little bit more diplomatic. You can ask, y’know, you can tell. (Burmes female)

We have an Australian friend, but one bad thing, we call him to come to the place, for food, and he want to contribute as well, and in our culture, we don’t. You put food, but he feel to contribute first so he can eat. Our culture, you eat, you don’t contribute, [no need] to bring food first. (Liberian female)
The fact that neighbours in most communities did not know each other was also perceived to be a difference in culture. And so were the ways new arrivals are welcomed in the neighbourhood.

In our country is different, we know each other, like the whole street, you know everyone. No, it’s like different, you get to talk to everyone, sharing, and you know everyone. You know the secret of every house, but here even next neighbour don’t know. (Iraqi female)

In our culture, it’s quite different. When you move into the house, it’s more likely that they [neighbours] will bring you food, that they will welcome you. (Iranian female)

It depends where we come from, like compared to Macedonia and Serbia, we are more friendly, more communicative. Here I find that people are more independent, like closed, not too much friendship. Maybe, I don’t move much to other areas, but as I know for themselves, they don’t associate much. Like in Macedonia, everywhere, everyone says hello and good morning. Here you can’t find people to say good morning. They know what you are, what you have at home, and people just off doing bad things. Maybe for that reason people are a bit enclosed. I find in Australia, only next door, maybe you know them, but not their names. But in Macedonia you know not one village, you know several villages. (Macedonian male)

Still related to culture were stereotypes held by migrants, refugees, Indigenous Australian and Anglo-Australians about each other which was talked about at length in focus group discussions.

It’s just basically two different cultures: the society here, they’re more isolated (sic, isolating). Once they know that you’re not from where they originate, they put that sort of stereotype. They have their idea and that’s it. To make your life easier, that’s the main point of it, it’s not so you tell them that you worth it or not, but I think that when you knock the door and when you give them that idea, I think you will have that idea as well of what you might have next door. Where they are going to be good company, or is it going to be hard. It’s definitely not going to be polished from the beginning, but you need to really try because whether we like it or not, we are foreigners here, we look different, and we wear different, everything. That doesn’t give the right to others to criticize you or anything like that, but to make your life easier. (Iranian female)

Yes, I feel that. Say, go to another area say, Karrinyup. You feel, all these people dress so elegant. And you’re wearing...not saying you’re not elegant, but you’re not as good as they are. You feel you’re the outstanding one. So I would say pretty much yes. If you have multicultural you feel that warmth from everybody. (Vietnamese female)

I always tell, don’t judge people how they look. Maybe mini skirt, going on the street playing. She said, nobody like to play with me, I don’t have friends. So I said, leave for this year, maybe next year. And if I can’t, maybe I choose a private school. (Iraqi female)

Another aspect of cultural differences is the parent-child relationship where migrant parents were noted to be more protective and strict towards their children.

Before, I grew up in Sudan. If my mum not look after me, maybe I would run away, but after I listen to my mum, ‘don’t do that, don’t do that’. Even here. My mum. Living with me and my husband and everything is good. (Sudanese female)

There is also a differentiation between migrants/refugees and Anglo-Australians in terms of friendliness, humour, emotion, and so on.

She is mentioning good things especially about Africa. We African, we have very strong emotion—not just with our own kids, even with extension, family kids. (Sudanese female)

...humour, if you do not understand Australian humour, you can’t make a good life. (Macedonian male)

Some participants were pragmatic about cultural differences, i.e., it’s part of ‘culture shock’, that people should learn how to accept them in order to settle down, and that eventually most
people do. Being involved in community activities apparently helped some participants develop close relationships or interactions with other groups. Or simply reaching out to the other person would lead to good intergroup relations.

When you experience the difference and the opposite here, I think you have a culture shock. But then once you live with it, you realise that yeah, just to put the pressure off you. Really to know and learn how to live with others, I think it’s a really great strategy that they should use it, not ignore it, not take it into account. To make their lives easier—really. That’s what I believe. (Iranian female)

I guess it forces you to be like that because you’re in contact with people from different cultures everyday. Yeah, I mean, in my job, I go to all different suburbs and I still interact with people daily, from different cultures as well. Even if I just go down to the shops—I think there’s always interaction. Yeah, exactly. It interesting. It brings interest to a relationship. (Burmese-Anglo female youth)

I think that there is a lot of people that go there, learning English being around other people. And I mean also like, we’ve got opportunities in Australia to go to uni or to study at TAFE. They are all opportunities to mingle, being part of different cultures. (Burmese-Anglo female youth)

I suppose it’s the same, but I mean like, being in a sport group or a choir group or something in the area, and you’re always around people that live in this area and I think that helps, being involved in some social um group. (Anglo female)

People that come from another country are basically very shy. They really don’t know if a white person will accept them because, let’s face it, they come from countries where the white people look down on them. So they don’t know how we’re going to treat them, so to me if you just say ‘hello, I’m so and so, who are you?’, shake hands and that’s what we have to do, it doesn’t cost anything to do that. If they don’t want to be friendly, well that’s fine but in the same token, if you go to a person of a different nationality and offer them a friendship, you’ll get it back. (Anglo Senior female)

Resource competition and ‘privileges’

Many KIs identified a perception among Indigenous Australian and Anglo-Australian residents, that migrants and refugees were receiving more benefits and privileges than they were.

I’d say that we’ve had to work with the Aboriginal population on exactly what refugees actually get, because that misinformation was creating a lot of tension… in terms of they were taking government housing.

Because some mainstream community members feel that migrants are getting it all. Like they get (free) support services which their children have to pay for.

It’s like ‘how dare you take what I’m entitled to? I should be given access to this, but now you’re being given access to this? I’m being forgotten.’

Sometimes you can get tension between mainstream Australian, looking at some of the positive discrimination and thinking, ‘if I was this or if I was that, I’d get more’.

I think initially when we first got a lot of the African families, the Indigenous families believed they were losing their ‘home sweet homes’ to the refugees.

This theme of resource competition and ‘privileges’ was expressed strongly in the focus groups with Anglo-Australians who held views that they (the Anglo-Australians) were ‘excluded’ in the sense that the migrants/refugees and Indigenous Australians got all the attention in the services, and had been enjoying special privileges, to the extent of denying the Anglo-Australians of these. Examples given were: Indigenous Australian kids were supported by government to go to school trips but other kids were not; refugee applicants for housing were given such housing within a short period of time while Anglo-Australians had to wait a longer period; refugees were given financial assistance for burial.
...so if you don’t come from a European or Arab country, or Africa, you can’t get in. Yes, many times – we’ve asked our local politicians, ‘why are we left out of the loop?’ ‘Oh well, you’re classed as multicultural, as a culture’, and we’re not classed as multicultural, we’re not, we’re left out of it entirely. They get all the perks, and we don’t get any perks; they get assistance when they come here, most of us who came from England are 10 pound poms. We didn’t get assistance, we had to work hard to get where we are today. I don’t know how Australians feel… (Anglo Senior female)

They’re still paying Aboriginal children to go to school. As I said, if you got people around and tried to get the Aboriginals assimilated into everybody else, seniors, Aboriginal seniors are on their own, they really are. And they should be starting with them. This country should look after its own people. (Anglo Senior female)

I think someone from Multicultural Affairs needs to go Homes West and ask why a lady should have to wait five years… seven years, and desperately, and I’ve heard of pensioners spending 400 dollars a week on rent. They’ve got absolutely no money for food or bills. They go to Homes West and they say, ‘you’ll have to wait five years’, and refugees… within three weeks, they have homes. And those pensioners who have worked hard in Australia get nothing. (Anglo Senior female)

I feel that was unnecessary money. Those people had just arrived, the boat crashed on the rocks, what adds insult to injury is the fact that they turned around, and they brought people from overseas to go to those funerals and flew them back. If anybody here, I lost my daughter, I had a hard time to get her buried, and yet they had the best of funerals, and never paid a dime! And I think that’s shocking! All those millions, for people that no one here knew. They never did anything. Why are we wasting the money? We can’t even teach the people in the poorer sections of Balga how to eat economically. (Anglo Senior female)

The comparison between ‘us’ and ‘them’ become more intense when focus group participants compared what one group had and the other group did not, for example, material things and wealth indicators.

They’re dripping in gold, they got great big flash cars, they’ve got the latest phones. We don’t have those things and we live here. (Anglo Senior female)

We’ve had blacks move in next door—they got two cars, didn’t have a penny to come here, there’s $6000 each for each child. Do you think that’s fair? When we came here we worked hard. (Anglo Senior male)

...just after I got back from Viet. And we had the Vietnamese refugees come in. I was in the bank, and this woman, Vietnamese woman came in and she had a plastic shopping bag, and she asked how much, what her interest rate would be on this amount of money. And the teller said ‘how much have you got?’ and she said ‘I’ve got 10,000 Australian dollars’. (Anglo Senior male)

There were also criticisms of how Indigenous Australians, refugees and migrants depended on government support; how much money the government was spending; and how migrants and refugees were sending money back to their home country to support family members or friends.

They’re always sending so much money back, I just overheard the other day, $1000. (Anglo Senior female)

In New Guinea, this happened years ago, they used to give all the Indigenous people a handout, for whatever, no matter what. And when the government decided to cut it back, they turned around and said ‘no, we want to still keep it’. It’s the same, you offload a cargo and you give it to them. That’s the cargo cult society. That’s what we are becoming to them. They are becoming a cargo cult society to us, and we’re the cargo, our country. They’re trying to live off us for nothing; they’re not prepared to work for it. You’ve got young blokes coming in off those boats, healthy, strapping young blokes. Ok, the first thing I would do if it was me, I would induct them into the armed forces, give them the training and send them back to where they came from to fight. (Anglo Senior male)
nobody give me so much, you see. Now, to these people, and this is not critique, these are facts. Why to these people give everything? And ok, our time is passed, but still is unfair. And if you accept them in, you have to provide them with work. (Italian male)

That’s what the problem is at the moment. It cost 600 dollars a week for every one of those people, once they step on the shore. (Irish male)

...jumping the queue or something, stealing our resources (Burmese-Anglo female)

**Lack of awareness and recognition of local Indigenous Australians**

Several KIs identified that resentment among local Indigenous people (Nyoongar) was related to a lack of knowledge and awareness of Indigenous Australian history and culture among more recently-arrived groups.

There’s a lot of resentment from the Aboriginal community towards newly arrived migrants and the broader community as well, because they feel like they’re not acknowledged or recognised, and their culture’s not valued in the area.

I know there is a certain level of, there’s a perception within the Aboriginal community that they’re not respected, for their culture and their place within the community.

In particular, KIs commented that the lack of a community resource centre for local Nyoongar people contributed to this resentment.

I think from the Indigenous point of view, they haven’t got a community venue to meet. And suddenly they’re seeing Humanitarian Entrants coming over and getting a lot of assistance and settlement programs...and they’ve been here how long? You know, 40, 50 thousand years. And they’re still battling, and they feel as though ‘we’re still fighting to get what should be ours and we’ve been here first’.

The focus groups revealed similar sentiments. Some Anglo-Australians pointed out that Indigenous Australians should be given more attention than newly-arrived refuges and migrants.

Try to get the senior members of the tribes that live locally into places like this, to assimilate with us; nobody tries. They don’t care. And that’s not fair. And immigration should be looking at that. Looking after our own people, now, the Aboriginals, they are the people of this country, they really are. They should be looked after before anybody else, y’know. And that’s terrible. And I do mean Aboriginals, I don’t mean half-castes. They’re the ones that are not looked after. (Anglo Senior female)

There was however a feeling that even with Indigenous Australians, there was too much resources committed to them, some of which were regarded as reasonable due to the disadvantage they were in.

...that’s because they encourage them to go because they’ve been brought up so differently to what we have, we’ve been brought up to go to school and to learn, they haven’t been brought up to do that at all. So you’ve got to look at it from both sides of the coin. And you talk to normal Aboriginals they want the chance to do these things, but the government aren’t giving them that chance. (Anglo Senior female)

I agree, they [Aborigines] do need looking after, but for goodness sake let’s get off the guilty conscience and stop throwing money at them. Give them something that they can understand instead of money, because it’s only going on grog! And petrol for kids to sniff! (Anglo Senior female)

Another angle to this was about African residents fighting the Indigenous Australians, with the latter being blamed for it.

...especially from these immigrants coming in, you got Sudanese gangs fighting Abos and I’m not being derogatory when I say Abos, because that’s how we think of them and we’ve got some very good friends who are Aboriginals, and they’re starting to fight them now. And these are people who own
this country, they live in the damn thing, and you get people coming out there, these big, tall Sudanese boys who think they can go strutting around and come down on our people, on Indigenous people, y’know. And this is terrible and who gets blame? Not Sudanese, ‘oh, it’s the bloody Abos again’. That’s what you get from the general community. And that’s not right. (Anglo Senior female)

There were a number of negative portrayals of Indigenous Australians from the focus groups, for example, drinking too much, being involved with crimes and theft, and physical attack.

...and also, they drink too much alcohol, and at night, in some places like Mirrabooka, it’s very hard because the police are not anywhere. They should be aware of this. (Iranian female youth)

I hear form a friend that she was going with her friend just in the city, busy area, just one Aboriginal take her bag, and just for her safety she just let it go. (Iranian female youth)

They drink too much and fighting each other. (Macedonian female)

...they don’t attack people so much, they argue with each other, they drink too much. (Irish male)

We were at like McDonalds in Mirrabooka, and it was just a group of girls, they were a group of Aboriginals, they thought that we had something against them or had said something against them and it was blown way out of proportion and we were pretty brutally bashed up. (Anglo female)

There was an acknowledgment though, that it must be quite difficult to be an Indigenous Australian because of the disadvantage they were in, and because of the pressure that a big family network could create.

... there’s been a really high turnover of Aboriginals and there is a particular family living there now, who are fine, they’ve never caused us any problem, they have been the best people we’ve had, but the problem is when they have car loads of other Aboriginals who are coming there because of their nomadic-type lifestyle, they come in and throw a party at night or... and it affects them and that’s just an example of a couple of houses that I know around the area. You know children who are walking around in the streets unsupervised, two years old or like half naked. Just things like that, I think definitely Aboriginal culture has, well, people have had quite a hard background. (Burmese-Anglo female)

**Discrimination and racism**

Racism, discrimination and prejudice were not regarded as widespread but were perceived as subtle and occurring more frequently in recent times (by some KIs). For example, one KI said, ‘people are afraid to display any overt signs of it... in subtle ways, people will, you know, do try to discriminate’ and another, ‘while people don’t make explicit racist comments, they assume that if a client is Aboriginal, that he’s not going to show up’.

KIs said the most common targets were Indigenous Australian people (‘and then there’s the stereotyping, ‘oh bloody black fellas, that’s what they do’), those from African groups(‘some Sudanese young people are disrespected and not trusted because they’re sometimes viewed as violent’), and Muslim women wearing a headscarf(‘And so if you’re an African Muslim woman you haven’t got a chance!’).

KIs had witnessed public displays of discrimination including name calling, verbal abuse, and negative comments. These occurred in public places such as the shopping centre, the medical centre, and government offices (e.g., Centrelink, Medicare).

I mean, you’re always going to get racism. You might be with a family [client] and someone will have a crack, ‘go back to where you came from...’ blah blah blah...

I’ve had it in hospital, hospital waiting rooms, once taking a family to Medicare and some guy went right off, and swearing and rude. So they’ve usually been one-off incidents. But in public places, in
shopping centres, you know, I've seen people, even in Mirrabooka, just deliberately getting in the way or any opportunity to have a dig.

As this second interview extract illustrates, more subtle forms of discrimination were also observed, in which migrants or refugees were not served in shops, or were not acknowledged or spoken to when an English-speaking person was with them. KIs also described how people from some cultural groups were often treated with suspicion in the shopping centre ('You have an allocated security guard following you if you're a Middle Eastern, African or Aboriginal person').

The Focus groups gave several accounts of discrimination and racism. (Note that discrimination has already been discussed in previous section, e.g., under employment, education, housing, and excluded groups.) Most participants believed there was racism in Australian society, even in Mirrabooka, with some participants feeling that disrespect was prevalent.

Tell me what respect is nowadays! What way you find respect nowadays? I don’t think you find it. We lost the meaning of respect. And it’s easy to talk, talk is easy. (Italian male)

A most frequently reported aspect emphasised in racist behaviours is religion or indicators of religion, such as the cross for Christians, and the headscarves for Muslim women.

..like at the bus station, there’s always, well not always, but when I go there more often than not there’s someone like yelling like abusive stuff at the Muslims walking past... (Anglo female)

I wear a cross (shows cross to group), I am a minister. I walked through a shopping centre the other day and was spat at because I wore a cross. And if we’re going to multiculturalism, and if multiculturalism is ever going to work, it’s going to have to work on equal basis and I mean for Australians too. Much to my shame, my cousin wrote up the thing for multiculturalism, and she will not allow anybody to say anything that’s wrong. Now, that in itself is prejudiced against us. (Anglo Senior female)

I think the suburbs are different. Where I live honestly, most of the people, unfortunately have quite a high nose and when they see me as a Muslim, a covered woman, I don’t see the sort of smiley faces, as you see it maybe in other suburbs where they are more humble and they are more sort of into other cultures, so yeah I’ve noticed that definitely. Because I used to live in Morley and I live in Dianella, but my kids go to Mt Lawley, so it’s just very different. And they do, they give you the look that you’re different. And some of them give you the look that you’re not welcome, which I get very, very annoyed, but I ignore it. I’ve been sworn at by Australians, and people in their cars have been making fun of me, shouting, swearing and it’s really awful. And there was this girl, she talked to me while I was going to my car and, I don’t remember what she start saying but I just ignored her and I kept on going. And all of a sudden she stared to swear! And bringing bad words such as the ‘f’ word, and I was like, ok this is too much. And I told her, excuse me, come back here, why are you swearing at me? She said, we’re in a free country, why are you wearing like this? And I said, well if this is a free country, you’re supposed to wear whatever you like to wear. So I think it’s obviously the education and the ignorance that makes them like that. Because I think anyone that’s like that is full of hatred, but they should look at themselves as well. Yeah. (Iranian female)

Another basis is the colour of the skin or non-European/Anglo-Celtic features, i.e., Asian or Middle Eastern features.

I’m from Sydney and my husband was an overseas student here, and he said coming here was a lot of a, what do you call it? I can’t get the word out...look at you as a different culture, and when I came with him, people stare at you as if...why are you here? Or, you’re not welcome. (Vietnamese female)

Maybe in the world most of nationalism, some people look at that way, and they hate other nation, for example different colour, sometimes it’s happened, and if you don’t speak properly they always keep the distance. It usually, in any country can happen. In here, I think maybe not openly, they not telling you anything, but you look like a stranger. (Macedonian male)
To summarise the racist behaviours from the above examples, they were: being spat at, verbally abused, ignored, looked down on. Some were quite subtle, covert but they could feel it.

...colour and all that. Colour and sometimes even religion. And sometimes you not do anything, not looking to anybody, not doing anything, but you feel it. Even if you want to come and park near somebody, want to grab something, you always have very bad looking, or maybe talking, sometimes the swearing, something like that. (Sudanese female)

...not to your face, but as soon as you turn yourself you can hear them. They don’t really show love or something. (Macedonian male)

I think a lot of Muslims, people who come as refugees. And there’s not a very accepting... people don’t really accept them, they’re kind of like ‘the boat people’, and I think it would be tough for that group of people as well as the Aboriginals. (Anglo female)

The perpetrators of racism were varied—‘mostly white people’, Asians (‘especially Chinese’), non-migrant (‘You cannot discriminate against others when you are an immigrant’),

The participants shared with us the ways they coped with discrimination and racism. Most of them preferred the inaction approach, such as ignoring them (while hurting and feeling bad/helpless inside or doubtful that anything could be done).

I’m trying to teach my daughter who is nine years old now, I’m trying to make her wear scarf from now, because our religion said it has to start from nine, but it’s really hard at school to face the whole school with the scarf, she’s the only one who wears the scarf, and everyone ask her every day, ‘what’s this?’ ‘why you putting that?’ Even her teacher said,’you look ugly with this’. So I decided not to make her wear this year. It’s really hard to face the whole community if you don’t believe in it. With myself, I feel strongly. (Iraqi female)

I think if you try and live with it, you basically ignore it and put it behind your back, it will be less stress than if I go out and expecting people to look at me, that look that what’s that disgusting thing you’re wearing. That will definitely influence on your personality and your life and basically everything. We already alone here, we have no family, I believe most of us, and you already in a terrible big pressure, so if that comes along, definitely that person will have later on depression and that sort of thing, and maybe mental problems. (Iranian female)

**Legitimacy**

Because legitimacy refers primarily to government policies, structures and systems, this was not a focal area of our fieldwork. Nonetheless, we included questions concerning trust and confidence in government departments and services.

**Trust in government departments**

From our KI interviews in Mirrabooka/Balga, there was a perception that some community members had a lack of trust in government departments, particularly the Department for Child Protection (DCP). This was regarded as stemming from a lack of awareness of the role of the department, and a lack of understanding of Australian cultural norms and laws (and the difference between them) regarding the disciplining and supervision of children among some African community members in particular.

They come into the country and they say, ‘In Australia you can’t beat your children. You have to discipline them in another way.’ Now they’ve been disciplining them the same way for hundreds of years... it’s just so totally foreign.

They don’t like DCP, and that could be their perception of DCP—that they are there to take their children.
I guess it’s a different perception of parenting, so this is where culture and parenting, sort of have a conflict.

Indigenous Australians and refugees were believed to have lower general trust and/or confidence in government departments in general (not only Child Protection).

I think the Indigenous groups have far less trust of official organisations.

I think, like the Aboriginal community, there’s just a distrust of government.

The experience that they’re [refugees] coming here with, is not to trust.

Because the community is such a hub for newly arrived communities of refugee backgrounds and a lot of them have had negative experiences in their home country, with persecution, that whole refugee experience destroys trust.

The distrust of the DCP or DCS (Department for Community Services) was also brought up in the focus groups at Mirrabooka. There were accounts of migrant/refugee women who got distressed with the threat of the department taking their child/ren away for using a culturally-based strict strategy for disciplining their child/ren.

Here, if they are 18 or 12 years old, ‘I don’t need to live in my house’—sleep over, come back, after mum says ‘don’t do that’ and they run away, call the police, the police comes, take the mum to court and everything. A lot of stuff like this. My aunty, her daughter now has run away, and not happy, all the family, but my aunty still go to court. And now [her daughter] is not in the Child Protect[ion]. Just walk around. Sometimes, some people at the park fighting, some big people. We not happy, but we can’t do anything. Because already is not in our law. (Sudanese female)

...the government come and try to stop her from him. This is too much. She’s thinking, ‘what exactly does the government want to do with those kids? They want to have another bad society? Or want to kill them and leave them?’ Because now she’s feeling like she’s dead in her life because she cannot do nothing for them. Even she said that to the judge, ‘I do this, I do this for my baby and after all this, you stop me from him... if you want to do this, since we came here, why you not taking him, taking him straight away and leave me alone?’ Because it’s hurting her and killing her from inside. And they’re always, ‘if you do this, and do this, and do this, we’re going to come and take all the rest’. We have to tell the government to leave us alone, and to leave our kids alone, to discipline them, to get a good society. (Sudanese female)

There was also distrust of or dissatisfaction with other government departments/services, such as Social Security (who assumed social security fraud was committed by migrants), and Immigration (who let people from war-torn countries come to Australia, spent a lot of money on refugees). Some commented on politicians attitudes (e.g. dominated by self-interest rather than the good of the country).

They truly have got blinkers on, all our politicians, whatever side. They do not look at the problem, they don’t want to look at the problem, only what’s in their interest... ‘are we getting another rise?’ Y’know, what do we pay them for? They’re not looking into the problems of this country, they’re really not. They leave it for the civil servants to do it, ‘I’ll pass it down the ladder’, they’ve done this for centuries, but it’s time they start and get out there, these Ministers, and say ‘now look here, what’s wrong with this? let’s get this system fixed’. (Anglo Senior female)

...they[refugees] should be fighting in Afghanistan or wherever they come from. Why should we have to have them? Now, there’s something wrong with our immigration department. Sadly wrong. (Anglo Senior female)

And Christmas Island, when the boat crashed on the rocks, the government spent millions. (Anglo Senior female)
Every couple of months, we have the man from Social Security going on and on about social security abuse. I’m still waiting to see the first Muslim, or anybody that isn’t white up there being abused, and yet we have a man in Queensland who never worked for 24 years, has 3 wives, 7 kids trying to blow up Melbourne. (Anglo Senior female)

There were suggestions that more information should be provided to the wider community from government departments, for example from Immigration to explain the status and circumstances of ‘boat people’. Also, there was a suggestion on individual self-reflection which was opined to be key to changing the government.

I would like very much to get a high up immigration official to come and explain to us how they set the rules, who interviews these people, and by what criteria they were let off the boats to start with. Because in the main, when we’ve seen photographs of them, a lot of them are young, strapping young people. (Anglo Senior female)

You and me, we are the government, we decide who to go. And in so many years, say 2000 years of civilisation, we still do not learn that the fact that we must introspect ourselves and say, ‘I am honest, I am right to judge that man or that woman who is on top there’. When I reach my introspection, and see myself, and achieve what I should deserve to be, then I can change the government. (Italian male)

For others, they simply did not know much about the government.

...especially for myself, I can’t understand the government. (Macedonian male)

❖ Trust in the Police

Views on trust in the police were more positive, although mixed—some KIs thought the local police had built good relationships with African and Indigenous Australian communities whilst others thought that African community members’ trust in the police was low. For migrants and refugees this was believed to stem from experiences in their home countries, as with trust in government institutions in general.

Often the newly arrived migrants are a bit scared of the police, if they come from places where people in those sorts of power, positions, have abused the position.

But there is fear and there is reservation from some of their own countries. Whereas Mr Policeman is not a friendly person, he’s sending military from the junta. First thing he’ll say hello is with a big stick; he’s corrupt etc.

It was believed by some KIs that this distrust dissipates with time and with more positive interactions with local police.

They initially have mistrust of the police, because with dictatorship and within their countries the police and military have been used to enforce that. However, they found the police system to be more reliable...so they formed a positive image.

The attitude towards the police was also mixed among focus group participants. On the positive side, they noted how helpful the police was in responding to residents’ call for assistance, for example with burglary, attack on property;

The police is alright because one day when I had a trouble in my home, somebody threw the bricks, and broken my glasses in front of my house, about 3 o’clock in the morning. I called the police, and the police very, very good, very good. Yes, good response. (El Salvadoran male)

On the other hand, some participants complained that the police was nowhere to be seen, or was slow to respond to calls for assistance.

You won’t see police around anywhere, they’re supposed to go around places, but you won’t see them. You have to call them if something happens, but you know... (Italian male)
I don’t experience myself, but just hear from my friends that, one of our friends had something stolen from their house and when his wife comes to the house and see everything is a mess and just call the police, after about 10 hours then the police comes (laughs). And she said, I'm afraid to go into the house and everything is bad, and police just come [after] 10 hours. And also I heard from other ones, that they didn’t respond good and every time I fear about these things. (Iranian female youth)

Social division and conflict

In our KI interviews, we asked specific questions about the extent to which there was social division and/or conflict in the community, and what factors contribute to division and conflict. Because social division is often regarded as opposite to social cohesion, many of the sub-themes within this section overlap with other sections (e.g., Belonging and Recognition). Sub-themes for the Mirrabooka data were intergroup tensions, within-group tensions, youth aggression, and safety and crime.

In general Mirrabooka/Balga KIs reported that social conflict was low in the community, but identified elements of tension and division. On the other hand, only a few focus group participants commented on the extent of social conflict and division in their community but many told stories of such.

Intergroup tensions

In Mirrabooka/Balga, KIs identified a history of conflict between some African and Indigenous Australian residents, as evidenced by incidents between African and Indigenous Australian youth at the local secondary school and in the streets.

It’s mainly those Aboriginal and African that I’ve seen, physical display of aggression and violence.

I think there is a fair bit of tension between the African and Aboriginal community.

Well, the African and Indigenous don’t get along really well.

However, the KIs reported that the school had made significant efforts to address these tensions and relations were improving.

[school name] is quite unique because it has quite a high Aboriginal population and high refugee population. So we’ve worked really hard to get the two to mix together in school. Didn’t work at first but now it’s working.

Before, there used to be fighting on the street and also on the park, between the migrant communities and also the Aboriginal young kids. But that time, both sides decided to come together and to sort it out. And it was like, it was [a] really good day.

The KIs also mentioned a specific day that was organised to address the issues between the African and indigenous community members. They also identified other intergroup tensions, between different migrant groups such as the southern Sudanese and some Arab communities. However, these were mentioned far less frequently.

The focus group participants spoke of fights between Anglo and Indigenous Australian youth; and general fights taking place between different groups.

There’s definitely division in the suburb. I don’t really think it's any different to any other suburb, to be honest. Because they are places where people have to interact, like the bus station is one of those places, often times there are fights and security guards have to get involved with people being rowdy. Also, because that place, it’s sort of like a hangout—mostly for Aboriginals actually, but also there are Africans, there are white people, they are all going there, and there are often fights. And also it’s difficult because like the Aboriginals have their way that they talk to people, or the Africans have their
way that they talk to people, and when they talk too differently, it is seen quite like violent, but just verbal mainly. (Burmese-Anglo female)

**Within-group tensions**

KIs challenged the assumption that social tensions were primarily between ethnic or cultural groups by identifying divisions within ethnic communities, sometimes along tribal, political or religious lines.

Even within their own community, it’s fragmented again.

Take me for example, I’m from Somalia. We speak one language, we’ve got one religion, we have one land, yet we are so diverse, because of tribe. ‘Your tribe is different from my tribe. You came from Perth, I came from Sydney, therefore my city is better than your city.’ Such a stupid mentality.

We do see conflict, but there are different groups that form...there have been people who, back at home, they were at war with.

One comment from a focus group participant alluded to intra-group tension involving ethnicity and religion, and related to the war in their home country.

My Egyptian friends are quite upset and worried about it, because they’re Christians and they know that they’re going to be the first ones in the firing line. (Anglo Senior female)

**Youth aggression**

Many KIs accounted for social tensions and violence in the Mirrabooka/Balga community as the result of youth aggression rather than interracial tensions or ethnic ‘gangs’.

It’s got nothing to do with gangs...it’s just what the age you’re at

I think we have a lot of low socio-economic youth in the area...and they’re just bored and they’re hanging out, and conflict arises out of that.

You might have fights outside the shopping centre on a Thursday night, but it’s usually youth, kind of, teenage issues.

The migrant/refugee focus groups also talked about young people being ‘wild’, and uncontrollable. And they were very quick to attribute these to the influence of Australian society/culture. That is, this society allowed them freedom to express themselves in whatever way they wanted, freedom to go against their parents’ wishes, and then youth misunderstanding what this freedom really meant. Again, the theme of cultural difference in the area of disciplining children was very strong here. Bad company and social issues (e.g., poverty, unemployment, social housing) were also cited as reasons for youth aggression.

She said for herself, she has no problem, she likes the area here and all the community, and participating and everything around here, but the problem is the kids. Because the kids, when they’ve been around the area here, they going wild, they bring the problems for themselves and for them [parents] too. Yes, very, very difficult because you can’t control them, they just become wild, and they use the freedom word...freedom, they always understand it wrongly. So, they’re always saying, oh you know, ‘I’m free—I can do whatever’. When you try and discipline them, they always bring the trouble to you. And they’re always going to the police and lying and say ‘my mum she’s going to kill me’. They don’t understand that you, you want the goodness for them. And you want to put them in the right things. Because you always mentioning that—take the good things from the culture, most cultures, Australian culture and our culture, because from the religious law and cultural law, with us, we have to discipline them, even with hitting. So when they came here ‘oh, you are free’. When we came—and they’re listening to that ‘you are free, you are a teenager, you can do whatever’. The misunderstanding is the using it against themselves and against us. Which makes a lot of trouble.
So, yes, they are facing a lot of problems - escape from the house, and shouting and doing those things. (Sudanese female)

This is another problem, the influence of other kids, bad kids. Because always the kids are trying to be involved with them, be friendly to them. And when the mum see that and telling them not to go with those kids, because those kids are very bad attitude, very bad discipline bla, bla, bla. They always saying 'I don't care about you, I'll go with them'. Like her son (another participants), he is 12 years old. She's trying to stop him from them, and he just escape with them. Three days he didn't come back. (Sudanese female)

It's because of all the things you've just written down, the housing, the social housing, the poverty, the unemployment, they have nowhere to go, they have loads of energy, and roam at night. (Irish male)

Today, these system of things, it's allowed everything to the young people especially, people involved in the drugs and everything. And after to satisfy their need for drugs they robbing, and people do not trust each other. They do not trust each other like neighbours. (Macedonian male)

School was not spared of 'problems' with youth.

...and at school...but they won't go to school. See the problem is, as a teacher, you have one of these guys in the class and come Monday or Tuesday and not come for another week or two, and they go walkabout and they can't pick up on where they left off in mathematics, or English or anything, and then they're behind everybody else, and then they're angry as because they're not as good as everybody else. They're not getting the marks. It's the whole thing about the downwards spiral again. They're not consistent. We made the point before of productivity and work—they don't have that. And their parent don't know where they are, haven't seen them in two or three weeks. Because there is not cohesion in the family. (Irish male)

Safety and Crime

As discussed in the section pertaining to the community’s reputation, earlier, many KIs commented on the perceived lack of safety in the community and how that contributed to social division.

When clients that live in Mirrabooka or those very closely surrounding suburbs...they talk about it not being safe to walk around their suburb. They wouldn't go for a walk.

I think you've got your events and stuff, but if you get broken into 3 or 4 times a year, you couldn't care less about social activities. You want to make your home safe.

Remember, there's a big crime rate in this area, so generally people are not trusting.

The focus group participants talked about actual experience of being victims of crime, or of feeling unsafe. For example, fearing that someone would follow them to their car after they withdrew money from the bank or the ATM; feeling a need to lock their cars; fights (physical or verbal); theft and robbery; a man exposing himself to a woman. Some did not attribute this to ethnicity, believing that it’s more about Mirrabooka, or that it is actually happening everywhere, and especially during night time. Some believed drugs and alcohol, individual personality characteristics ('crazy, selfishness, egoism') and the lack of police presence contributed to the crime and lack of safety.

I work in Kingsway, I’m a hairdresser and there's always brake-ins um purse-snatching, money stolen, so you just got to be careful. (Vietnamese female)

My philosophy has always been, whenever I’m confronted with an issue, I ignore it, but the thing is that there have been times where it’s been forced upon me, like a guy exposed himself. I was just walking down the street one day. And he asked me for money and asked could he use my phone and
when I said no, he went to pull down his pants and I had to just like bolt (laughs), but you can’t always ignore it! (Burmese-Anglo female)

I must say myself, being in Mirrabooka, I have experienced a little bit of fear, because I’ve gone to the shopping centre, and I went to the shops to get some money out of the machine, and I thought I was ok, but I took a lot of money out, so I sat in my car, and I don’t know why, but for the first time, I did this, I locked my car door, and then two minutes later, somebody came knocking on my windscreen. ‘Open the window’, I go ‘no’, ‘open the window’, I’m there thinking ‘go away’. He did it about three times and then he went for the door, to open the door, lucky my door was closed, and I was really scared. I thought, he was watching me, y’know, I never used to be scared, y’know. But that was the first time I got scared in the shopping centre, and then I started my car, and I started reversing slowly, and he wouldn’t let go and I thought, I’m going to kill this man! And I went slowly, slowly and then he let go of my car, and then he was a very naughty man he gave me a gesture with the finger. (Croatian female)

But others linked the crime and safety issues directly to certain ethnic groups in the community, or to the fact that there were many different cultural groups.

Well, it’s a low socio-economic suburb, so you know, there are people from cultures…it’s not even a cultural thing, but there are issues with like stealing, we’ve been broken into, my car got stolen, things like that, so that’s an issue. And there’s also conflict as well. There might be diversity but there is also conflict between cultures. (Burmese-Anglo female)

The places of crime or environment considered unsafe included around the shopping centres, bus station. Many participants though said they felt safe in Mirrabooka. One in fact said that the crimes have reduced in the community.

In the last few years, it has gotten better and there’s a lot less conflict, there’s a lot less…it’s just the same as any other suburb. And even in the media, you’re starting to hear less about this suburb and more about Dianella and stuff that’s going on there, other suburbs. I mean, in any suburb there’s going to be dodgy people that live there, like drug dealers or whatever. (Anglo female)

Media use and influence

KIs and focus group participants were asked how much they thought people in the community used the media, particularly the internet and social media, as well as the potential influence of the media in terms of intergroup relations and social cohesion. Unsurprisingly, they indicated that internet and social media use was much higher among the younger members of the community, people who had been living in Australia longer, and people with higher levels of education and/or literacy. There were mixed views on the impact of social media such as Facebook; it may bring young people together but ‘they may be coming together for the wrong reasons’, said one KI (alluding to anti-social activities such as crime and gangs). A focus group participant pointed out the benefit of social networking which was communication with people who are far away, but warned against the risks, such as misunderstandings, unintended publicity of materials that may affect people’s reputation, and unexpected influence on people’s opinions.

I think a lot of people communicate via the internet instead of communicating in person, and a lot of the problems start, like big fights start because someone has posted it on someone’s wall and then somebody else has seen it and passed it on, and I think a lot of stuff is passed through social networking. But at the same time, a lot of good can come out of it, you can keep in contact with people who are away who don’t live here. But yeah there’s also a lot of negatives. Like everything else, there’s good and bad about it. Y’know, everyone can have their say on social media or like social networks. And it doesn’t really matter whether they’re right or wrong or biased or unbiased, they’re still spreading their messages, whether it’s racial or racist comments and things like that. It still has a power to influence other people. (Anglo female)
Media stereotyping of Mirrabooka and refugees

Our KIs in Mirrabooka and Balga agreed that the mass media contributed significantly to the promulgation of negative stereotypes about ethnic and cultural minorities, and ‘refugees’. Some informants thought this situation was improving, and reported they had developed positive relations with editors of local and state newspapers which had led to a reduction in racial or ethnic group labelling of alleged offenders (in crime reports). Nonetheless, many KIs highlighted the role of commercial television media in promoting perceptions that refugees receive preferential treatment in terms of state housing, financial support from Centrelink and other ‘privileges’. The constant debates on television and radio about the asylum seekers issue, highlighting the negative always, have been bad for refugees/humanitarian entrants’ morale.

A lot of criticism of refugees comes out of the media, and it’s sort of really, going out and dispelling myths.

And you hear some reference on talk-back radio or in the press about the 7 or 8 year wait on the HomesWest list and all these refugees are coming in and getting houses.

Especially when it starts talking about all boat people are coming here, they’re taking jobs, and taking our money, our tax money, our hard-earned money and all that. It doesn’t help.

And refugees are shown almost always in a negative light.

This was also the observation of focus group participants who felt that the media had prejudged refugees, Muslims and other groups.

I believe number one is the media. They already give that look to us, Muslim. And maybe other cultures as well—they are thieves, they are killers, they are such and such. Even though out of ten people, maybe half a person is that. And maybe some cultures, nine out of ten are good. So I think people should just not be judgemental. Yeah, that’s what my daughter says. She says don’t judge a book by its cover, so also don’t judge a person by the way they look. Do not judge them till you get into their shoes and see how... and I think education is the main thing. Yeah.

Some participants said they would just avoid watching television to avoid being affected by all the negative stereotyping and prejudices showing in these media.

...and also with all the talk about boat people and things like that. Jumping the queue or something, stealing our resources. I don’t really watch TV and I don’t really watch the news. If I get information usually, it’s from the paper but I try and avoid it because I don’t find it very helpful. They’re a bit prejudiced about normal people, like the West Australian and things like that. If I want information maybe The Australian. People have prejudices. (Burmese-Anglo female)

In addition, KIs in Mirrabooka highlighted the negative perception of the community that was portrayed in the media.

You only ever hear negative stories in the media, when something goes wrong...only negative stories are spoken about Mirrabooka.

All the stories about Mirrabooka are always bad stories about violence or home invasions or drugs or gang fights.

I think the positioning of the area is very much heightened, that there is the perception that it’s dangerous, that it’s unsafe. You just need to go on Youtube and type in ‘Mirrabooka’ and the first thing that drops down is ‘Mirrabooka fights’.

Some focus group discussions reiterated this.

The media shows what sells. When I tell people that I meet that I’m from Balga, they’re all like ‘Oh, Balga’ (said in a negative tone). That’s because of all the negative reporting associated with Balga, like...
murder, people stealing, just the fact that it’s a low socio-economic suburb. As soon as something happens in Balga, everyone knows about it, but if something happens in Peppermint Grove, you don’t really hear anything. (Burmese-Anglo female)

The propensity of media to sensationalise issues or events was observed by some focus group participants. Thus, the distrust of media was also expressed.

Let me put it this way, a friend got caught up with the law and the charges were dismissed and the media got a hold of all of this, blew it up so much and he said ‘I’m going to sue you’, and they said, ‘you can’t, we haven’t mentioned your name’, and he said, ‘you’ve mentioned my group’, and they said ‘we only have to tell a story, we don’t have to tell the truth’. I’m sorry, I don’t have nice things to say about the media. (Anglo Senior female)

The media that most people get their information from is probably TV, especially in this area. TV networks are owned by one or two companies, so those companies have a lot of power. Especially people who are not educated in the role that mass media can play, that’s all they have, they don’t have any information, anything else to go by, and people who are low-socio and don’t have resources, they don’t really have any other opportunity. And it’s a minority of people who do have that opportunity, who do have that education. My area of study...I’ve had quite a few units on mass media and I just find it difficult to trust a corporation that is owned by one person who owns everything, so I don’t know. It’s just my education, but yeah. (Burmese-Anglo female)

Media influence and relationship with media

KIs in Mirrabooka agreed that the media’s influence was predominantly negative, and in particular, this contributed to negative perceptions of the community and of cultural diversity in general. This was seen to be a major contributor to negative perceptions among people living outside of the community—‘it creates division with the rest of the population’.

Nonetheless, some KIs described how they had been successful in challenging journalists and editors to present positive stories, particularly in the local media (newspapers).

Look, any time we’ve held something, the media have come along and supported it.

Like promoting the really goodwill stories, where your CaLD people have gone and done something back for the community.

Like when we have multicultural events like Harmony Day, the media does come in. They take pictures and say ‘look, they’re getting on really well, you know, it’s a cohesive community.’

One focus group participant observed that the media coverage of Mirrabooka has improved.
Appendix C-2  List of news articles used for the media analysis in Mirrabooka/Balga


(1) Sudanese student killed in street brawl (Aja Styles, April 22 2010, WA Today)

Five men are being questioned by police after a Sudanese student was stabbed to death and another man left in a critical condition following a mass brawl in Mirrabooka last night. Police rushed to the intersection of Northwood Drive and Australis Avenue about 9.50pm yesterday after receiving multiple calls of a large group of men fighting in the street. Police spokesman Sam Dinnison said up to 20 people were involved in the fight. Police are not saying whether race was a factor in the brawl, but they are speaking to representatives from the local Afghan and Sudanese communities.

Superintendent Mark Gilbert said four or five men, believed to all be of Sudanese background, were walking along Australis Avenue when they approached by a vehicle and a brawl broke out. The brawl spilled over for several hundred metres along the street in what police describe as a ‘melee’. ‘I understand there were a number of weapons involved, the details of which I don’t know and will come out in the fullness in time,’ he said. When officers arrived they found the body of 20-year-old student Asama Manyang, who had been stabbed several times. Another Sudanese man, aged 27, was found seriously wounded. The injured man was transferred to Royal Perth Hospital, where he remains in a critical condition. Officers from the tactical response group raided a Ballajura house and took five men into custody, who are suggested to be of Afghan background. ‘These members are no more a members of a gang than a few mates walking along the road so I don’t think it is gang-related,’ Superintendent Gilbert said. ‘...There's no information to say it's racially motivated.’ He said tensions have not bubbled up between the communities but police were taking a cautious approach. ‘If I get any reasons to believe there are tensions, and I have no reason to believe that at this time, then what I will do is step up our patrols and increase our activities in the work that we do to reassure the community,’ Superintendent Gilbert said. He said crime in the area had significantly decreased in recent months. ‘Incidents of this nature are really unusual—it is completely out of character for people to be stabbed in the street like this.’

Victim an 'honest young man'—Sudanese community leader Simon Dang said he had spoken to the family of the deceased man. He said the student was walking to the shops at the time of the attack and wasn't involved in gang violence. ‘He was an honest young man, he was never involved in any type of crime, he just died for no reason,’ Mr Dang said. ‘He was caught on the street. He was just walking—just to go to the shop, get something for yourself, then walk home.’ He said the student’s death not only hurt his family but the Sudanese community. ‘It hurt me,’ he said. ‘For the Sudanese community and the wider Western Australia if we don’t deal with it responsibly there will be a lot of problems on the street and in public places.’ He said the Sudanese community had no issues with other racial groups. ‘This is the very first case for our community.’ A friend of the deceased man, who wanted to be known only as K.D., described him as a ‘good man’. ‘I just met him in about 2004, he went to Sydney to see his family, so I (saw) him three months ago at a birthday party. After that day I haven't (see much of him) and I just got a call last night at about one or two to say he had passed away,’ he said. The police major crime squad and forensic officers were investigating the scene this morning, and a large section of Northwood Drive remains blocked off.

'I heard two dreadful bangs'—Local resident Olwin Stone, 86, said she heard three loud bangs at the time when the street fight happened. ‘Between 9.30pm and 10pm, I couldn't quite place the
time, I heard two dreadful bangs. Right after it I heard another, and I thought to myself 'is that fireworks?', Mrs Stone said. 'Then I realised it sounded like one car bumping into another because it has happened here on this corner so many times and I thought 'I'm not going out there because I'm too old.' When asked if it could have been gunfire, Mrs Stone replied: ‘it could have been, to be quite truthful; the thought went through my mind, who knows, but by god they were loud and that was over my television.’ I thought ‘if that's true, they've had it’. ‘It wouldn’t have been a revolver; it would be more like shotgun.’ A nearby resident, Wendy Moe, said she heard running and men swearing. When she eventually looked outside, a police car had pulled up at the roundabout of Australis Avenue and Wintersweet Ramble. ‘I have been here 21 years so it's never happened like that, so I was quite shocked when I heard (the news) this morning.’

(2) Man charged over brawl death in Perth (WA Today, May 17, 2010)

West Australian police have charged a 23-year-old man with murder and attempted murder after the stabbing death of a Sudanese student during a wild brawl last month. Police were called after two groups of Sudanese and Afghan migrants were seen fighting with weapons in the northern Perth suburb of Mirrabooka at about 9.30pm on April 21. Two men were found with serious stab wounds at the scene, near the corner of Australis Avenue and Northwood Drive, with about 20 other people involved. Twenty-year-old Sudanese student Asama Manyang died of his injuries, while another Sudanese man, aged 27, was critically injured. Police said the brawl was not gang related. The charged man will appear in Perth’s Stirling Gardens Magistrates Court on May 26.

(3) One dead, one critical after Mirrabooka street brawl (Chris Robinson, PerthNow, April 23, 2010)

A 27-year-old man involved in a violent brawl in Mirrabooka remains in a critical condition after undergoing emergency surgery for multiple stab wounds and head injuries. Police are still interviewing five men in relation to the brawl which left one man dead. Police were called to the incident at the corner of Northwood Drive and Australis Ave just before 10pm on Wednesday, where two groups of males were involved in what police described as a ‘running brawl’ along the road. A 20-year-old man, a Sudanese student, was fatally stabbed in the fight. Police and the Tactical Response Group raided a Ballajura home yesterday morning, where they took five men to Mirrabooka Police Station for questioning. Supt Mark Gilbert, from the West Metropolitan District Office, said a group of men in a vehicle approached another group of four or five men that were walking along the road when the assault took place. He said he did not believe the incident to be gang-related and said there was no information that it was racially motivated. ‘These men are no more members of a gang than they are a few mates walking along the road,’ he said. ‘It’s completely out of character for the area to have people stabbed in the street like this.’ He said officers were liaising with the community and community groups ‘as a matter of routine’ and not on any suggestions the attack was racially motivated. The nature of the weapons used was not yet known, he said. Sudanese community leader Simon Dang described the man who died as ‘an honest young man’ who died ‘for no reason’. He said the man had been part of a group of people walking to a local shop when the incident occurred, and insisted he was ‘not part of a gang’. Police are appealing for witnesses to contact Crime Stoppers with any information about the incident.
(4) Man charged over Sudanese student murder (Chalpat Sonti, May 17, 2010, WA Today)

A man has been charged with the murder of a Sudanese student following a mass street brawl in Mirrabooka. The man, 23, will also face a charge of attempted murder following the April 22 incident which saw Asama Manyang, 20, stabbed to death and another Sudanese man, 27, seriously wounded. It followed a fight involving up to 20 people at the Northwood Drive-Australis Avenue intersection. The brawl spilled over several hundred metres of road. Mr Manyang was dead when police arrived at the scene. The arrested man is due to appear in Stirling Gardens Magistrates Court on May 26.

(5) Murder charge after street fight (PerthNow, May 17, 2010)

A 23-year-old man has been charged with murder following a violent street brawl in Mirrabooka. Police were called to the incident at the corner of Northwood Dve and Australis Ave just before 10pm on April 21, where two groups of males were involved in what police described as a ‘running brawl’ along the road. A 20-year-old man, a Sudanese student, was fatally stabbed in the fight and another was critical injured with multiple stab wounds and head injuries. The man has been charged with Murder and Attempted Murder, and will next appear in the Stirling Gardens Magistrates Court on 26 May 2010.

(6) Teen charged over Mirrabooka murder (Chloe Johnson, May 25, 2010, WA Today)

Two people, including a 16-year-old, have been charged in relation to the murder of a Sudanese student in Mirrabooka last month. Police said Asama Manyang, 20, died after a fight involving up to 20 people broke out on Australis Avenue on April 21. Another Sudanese man was left with life-threatening injuries. Police have charged a 23-year-old man with murder and attempted murder. He will appear in court tomorrow. They have also charged a teenager with perverting the court of justice after he allegedly attempted to influence the investigation. He will appear in the children's court on May 28.

(7) Teen charged after fatal brawl (PerthNow, May 25, 2010)

Police have charged a 16-year-old youth in connection with the fatal brawl in Mirrabooka. A 20-year-old man was killed and a 27-year-old suffered serious injuries after a minor traffic dispute on Australis Avenue in Mirrabooka turned violent last month. A 23-year-old man will appear in Perth Magistrates Court tomorrow to face charges of murder and attempted murder. The charged teen is alleged to have attempted to influence the police investigation and has been charged with attempting to pervert the course of justice. He is due to appear in Perth Children’s Court on Friday.
The man accused of fatally stabbing a 20-year-old man during a Mirrabooka street brawl last year told his cellmate in prison that ‘it felt good’ to stab someone, a Perth court has heard. Moreed Noor, 24, is on trial for the murder of Asamh Mantino Manyang, who died after he was stabbed in the neck during a fight between two groups of men in April 2010. The brawl on Australis Avenue started after a car carrying one group of men was struck by something. State prosecutor Dave Dempster called Mr Noor’s former cellmate to the stand as the first witness at the District Court trial this morning. The cellmate, who shared a room with Mr Noor at Hakea Prison, told the court he and Mr Noor had known each other before sharing the cell and were ‘like brothers’. He said Mr Noor repeatedly told him he was innocent, but broke down and confessed he committed the crime one evening. ‘He told me what he did, pretty much,’ the cellmate said. ‘I asked him how it felt to stab someone. ‘He said it felt good.’ The cellmate said Mr Noor admitted to him that he had not planned to stab Mr Manyang but wanted to protect his brother. He said Mr Noor told him at another time that he was concerned about the knife used to stab Mr Manyang. ‘He told me he was concerned about a knife, he didn’t get rid of it properly,’ he said. ‘He said he chucked the knife in the drain. The cellmate said he told police about Mr Noor’s confessions after they asked him to hand over his car for investigations, because he believed his brother may have ‘done something stupid’ and he wanted to protect him. ‘He only reason why [I talked to police] is I thought my brother was involved,’ he said. During cross-examination, defence lawyer Jeremy Scudds asked the cellmate if he had told police about Mr Noor’s alleged confession because he wanted to have his charges dropped in return, which he denied. ‘I wouldn’t lie about it because at the time he was like my brother,’ the cellmate said. Mr Scudds played a recording to the court of a telephone call from the cellmate while he was at Hakea Prison to a cousin, in which he allegedly talked about having a debt of ‘like $80,000’ to a member of the Coffin Cheaters. Mr Scudds told the court the cellmate was in debt, concerned about his safety, and concerned his car would be confiscated, so he sought a letter of comfort from police on July 16, 2010, because he wanted to get out of jail. The cellmate said he never asked for a letter. The trial continues.

(8) Prisoner tells how murder accused said fatal stabbing ‘felt good’ (Katie Robertson, PerthNow, August 16, 2011)
Appendix C-4  Mirrabooka/Balga social cohesion programs

Leadership

- **Sasa Youth Mentor Project**
  Organisation: City of Stirling (funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship)
  This program relates to: youth; mentoring; leadership.
  Sasa youth mentor project is for youth (12-18 years old) who have recently arrived in Australia and who live in or regularly visit the Mirrabooka, Balga, Nollamara and Girraween areas. It focuses on:
  - How to deal with the challenges that result from growing up in two cultures
  - Becoming a leader or a role model in your community
  - Building positive relationships at school, in the workplace and in the wider community
  - Using non-violent communication
  - How to deal with conflict and working well within a team
  - How to make decisions now which will help you in the future

- **Youth Leadership and Development**
  Organisation: Edmund Rice Centre Mirrabooka
  This program relates to: leadership; youth; sport; media.
  The Edmund Rice Centre Mirrabooka Youth Leadership Group aims to encourage young people to become good and moral role models that others will look up to. They will be given comprehensive training and support so that they can reach their full potential. They will also be given training in many different areas including coaching, refereeing, media and other important life-skill. The Leadership Group aims to be a positive alternative to the many negative lifestyle choices available to young people. The leaders are taught to recognize that to change others they must first change themselves ([http://ercm.org.au/programs_activities/programs_activities.html](http://ercm.org.au/programs_activities/programs_activities.html)).

- **Lead Program**
  Organisation: Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs).
  This program relates to: leadership; youth; capacity building.
  The aim of the LEAD youth leadership program is to empower young people (16 to 25 year olds) to learn about their own capacity and to builds leadership skills. The LEAD Program can offer:
  - Leadership skills training
  - Information and links young people with MMRC's other youth projects
  - Assistance for community groups to develop their own projects ([http://www.mmrcwa.org.au/programs](http://www.mmrcwa.org.au/programs)).
Art

- **Multicultural Youth Creative Music Program**
  Organisation: Edmund Rice Centre Mirrabooka
  
  This program relates to: art; youth.
  
  Its aim is to teach young people from different backgrounds how to build computers, and write and produce songs on their PCs for free. First of all, the young people learned how to write songs. They learned how to come up with an idea for a song, how to brainstorm and write down what they want to talk about, and how to make the lyrics meaningful and powerful. The participants then learned how a basic beat is made and got the chance to sit at a computer in pairs and make a beat using Linux Multi Media Studio software. The final part of the sessions focused on inside of a computer, learning how to fix hardware problems.

- **Women Together Program**
  Organisation: Edmund Rice Centre Mirrabooka
  
  This program relates to: women; art; participation; cooking; sewing.
  
  The aim of this program is to provide an opportunity for women from refugee and migrant backgrounds to socialise with each other with the focus on cooking, sewing and hand crafts, as well as enjoying outings together (http://ercm.org.au/programs_activities/programs_activities.html).

- **Indigenous Children’s Outreach Programs**
  Organisation: Edmund Rice Centre Mirrabooka
  
  This program relates to: art; Indigenous youth.
  
  This program of after-school activities is provided for Indigenous children between the ages of 7 and 10 years. The aims of this program, which is conducted by Indigenous adults with the support of volunteers, are to foster positive social interaction and to promote the Indigenous culture through story, dance, music and art (http://ercm.org.au/programs_activities/programs_activities.html).

Driver Education

- **Practical Driver Education**
  Organisation: Edmund Rice Centre Mirrabooka
  
  The Centre provides a Driver Education Program for Humanitarian Entrants who have been in Australia between six months and five years. The course includes 30 driving lessons, weekly language-for-driving lessons and language classes for the passing the driving test, as well as 25 hours of accompanied driving and log book completion, and special assistance with preparing for the ‘Hazard Perception Test’ (http://ercm.org.au/programs_activities/programs_activities.html).
Computer Education

- **Computer studies (first and second click)**
  Organisation: Edmund Rice Centre Mirrabooka

  The Computer Studies Program offers classes in First Click and Second Click for people with English as a Second Language as well as for seniors. Computer classes consist of a maximum of 20 hours for 12 students at a time and are structured to cater for beginners as well as for the more advanced students. First Click is designed to teach computer literacy to Humanitarian Entrants and seniors who have no computing or internet skills. Second Click is a more advanced computer course which aims to develop those skills learnt in First Click. Students are introduced to the full Office Suite, and are encouraged to learn other skills such as digital photography. The students are enabled to discover the internet and all it has to offer, building on their emailing skills and their ability to ‘surf the web’. For the more advanced students, the Centre offers an ‘Unlimited Potential Community Technology Skills’ program of eight weeks after the students have successfully completed Second Click ([http://ercm.org.au/programs_activities/programs_activities.html](http://ercm.org.au/programs_activities/programs_activities.html)).

- **First Click Basic Computer Skills Training**
  Organisation: MercyCare Employment & Community Programs (funded by the Department of traineeship and workforce development).


Health

- **Sharing Stories, Sharing Support**
  Organisation: Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre

  This relates to: education; health; youth.

  Sharing Stories is a unique project in community health. Targeting relationship education and sexual health, Sharing Stories involves migrant young people using theatre as a way to gain new understanding of services and support as well as educating their peers in regard to these services. Sharing Support aims to increase migrant parent’s awareness of ways to support young people through the difficult and unfamiliar landscape of relationships and sexual health understanding ([http://www.mmrcwa.org.au/programs](http://www.mmrcwa.org.au/programs)).

Volunteering

- **Volunteer Program**
  Organisation: Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre

  This relates to: volunteers; interaction; participation; inclusion; education.
Volunteer support to Humanitarian Entrants and refugees play a pivotal role in delivering humanitarian settlement services. Volunteers play a role in:

- Reducing the sense of isolation and disconnection that many refugees experience on arrival in Australia
- Making refugees feel welcome and help them establish contact with their neighbours, places of worship, sporting organisations and their particular ethnic associations
- Helping refugees to develop social networks and make them feel part of the broader community.

The scope of volunteer assistance to support newly arrived refugees includes: socialisation and community contact; emergencies (teach new arrivals how to call police and ambulance in emergencies); instruct on how to contact the Telephone Interpreter Service; living skills; financial arrangements; transport; medical appointments; schooling of children; English courses for adults; Centrelink; housing([http://www.mmrcwa.org.au/programs](http://www.mmrcwa.org.au/programs)).

**Education**

- **Family Talk Program**
  Organisation: Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre (funded by the Attorney-General’s Department).

  This program related to: education; families; schooling.

  The Family Talk Program provides young people and families from migrant and refugee backgrounds, with individual outreach mentoring, group support and information on social, legal and cultural expectations of the education system in WA. It provides information and support to families from migrant and humanitarian backgrounds making their transition from primary to high school and from the Intensive English Centres to mainstream schooling. The program provides a range of supports that include individual mentoring, counselling and group sessions. The information sessions will cover topics such as: the education system in WA; school culture; parenting and intergenerational conflict; communication; problem solving; issues that arise in the process of settlement ([http://www.mmrcwa.org.au/programs](http://www.mmrcwa.org.au/programs)).

- **Life Skills for Living in Australia**
  Organisation: Edmund Rice Centre Mirrabooka (funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship).

  This project relates to: education; settlement.

  Research data from consultations informed the development of 10 modules covering topics including:
  - the right foods to eat and drink, school lunches, cooking simple and cheap meals
  - rental accommodation issues
  - using household appliances
  - safety at home and at the beach
  - looking after the house and garden
  - hospitals, doctors, pharmacy and medical benefits.
Each module has a nutrition component. The first two or three modules explain the types of fruits and vegetables participants might see in shops and supermarkets. The students are given an opportunity to taste the food and advice on how to cook and prepare foods that may be unfamiliar to them. Early in the program, there is a visit to a local supermarket to explain the different foods available and food labelling. A teacher, working with bilingual workers, delivers the 10 modules over 20 weeks in a culturally sensitive way. Program modules are held three times a week in different locations in the Perth metropolitan area. Participants are able to start the program at any time and at any stage of the 20-week period. This flexibility was needed to accommodate a constant influx of new arrivals and also accommodates participants attending English classes. Classes are held weekly at the Centre as well as at two other locations. The Centre has a bus that can be used to transport participants to some activities.

A project coordinator was employed for three days a week to work on the project once it had begun with continued funding from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. A teacher assists for two days a week, a bilingual worker for 11 hours a week, and a casual bus driver assists with activities outside the Centre as required. Four volunteers are also involved in the project. All the volunteers and the bilingual workers at the Edmund Rice Centre are given formal training in cross-cultural communication, boundary setting with clients, presentation skills, self care and working with people who have suffered torture and trauma. Originally, community nurses and Intensive English Centres referred participants to the program. Due to its ongoing success, there are now many word-of-mouth referrals from past participants. Funding for the program is now provided solely by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship under the Settlement Grants Program. Centrecare and Communicare are partners in the project.


Empowering refugees

**Employment**

- **Visiting Sisters**

  Organisation: ISHAR (funded by the Department of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs).

  This program relates to: employment; health; social participation; education.

  The program aims to economically empower migrant/refugee women, to increase social participation, impart health education and help women develop sustainable plans to continue their economic independence. The program has introduced other craft activities such as art on terracotta pots, fresh flower arranging, painting boxes and making artificial flowers.

  These goals are being achieved initially through the employment of ten bilingual workers from the African, Middle East and Asian communities. They were provided with training in areas of interview skills, family values and women’s health and visited women in their communities. The participation of women in the classes is successful through self-referral, and referrals from other surrounding service providers such as social workers, psychologist as well as friends and neighbours. In the span of the project, approximately 100 women have registered in the craft
classes. Some women have been with the program since the beginning while others have left for employment or training.

- **Job Readiness Course**

  This is a 2hr weekly class and includes: researching jobs available; writing a resume; answering advertisements; preparation for job interviews.

- **Workforce Development Centre**
  Organisation: MercyCare Employment & Community Programs (Mirrabooka), delivered in partnership with Multicultural Services WA (funded by the Department of Training and Workforce Development).

  The Workforce Development Centre at Employment and Community Programs is designed to assist CalD clients of any age (high school and above) and at any point throughout their life to make educational, training and work choices. The Workforce Development Centre helps clients receive information on training and opportunities to use skills or learn new or additional skills. The aim is to help them manage career choices in the local labour market. Activities include:
  - Screening process to establish needs
  - Information on training options and labour market
  - Career guidance
  - Develop achievable career action plans including work experience, voluntary work and other opportunities
  - Computer assisted career guidance


- **Women Searching for a New Beginning**
  Organisation: ISHAR (funded by the Department of Training and Workforce Development).

  The program is for women from Africa, Middle East and Asia. Four hour training sessions cover topics such as: identification of barriers to employment, education and training; interview skills; job search techniques; time management; job matching; resume writing; goal setting; English in the workplace; understanding Australian workplace; employee rights and responsibilities; health and safety.

- **Wonder Woman Going Back to ‘P’ Work**
  Organisation: ISHAR (funding from the WA Department of Education and Training)

  The project commenced in July 2008 and with further funding for 2009, continued to offer assistance to women from African, Middle Eastern and Asian backgrounds to develop and adapt their job search skills to the Australian context. There are a total of three series of workshops. The sessions include information on resume writing, job search and interview techniques and addressing selection criteria amongst other relevant topics. Further, the project provides
individual assistance by a local Employment Service and by the Project Coordinator. The program also offers a crèche facility for women with young children.

To date, the project is progressively achieving its objectives of providing training sessions to the three regional women’s groups—African, Middle Eastern and Asian. The Department of Education and Training continues to provide support at the training sessions thereby reinforcing its commitment. Attendances in the women’s group continue to increase and the quota of each regional group is achieved. The individual support program is tailored according to their needs with the training organisation—Mercy Community Services (former Mercy Employment Services)—and all members of the groups have attended their appointments with Mercy (http://www.ishar.org.au/#childbirth).

School Programs

- **Racism No Way**
  Organisations: Office of Multicultural Interests, Mirrabooka Senior High School, Embleton Primary School.

  This program relates to: anti-racism strategies; youth.

  This is a national program run by heads of education departments and various school organisations. The project was initially funded by Government, State and Territory and Catholic education systems, and the Department of Immigration & Citizenship ‘Living in Harmony’ initiative. An individual project example is the Racism in Schools projects in WA which has plans and evaluation tools for WA schools, and is being piloted in Perth (Francis & Cornfoot, 2007; www.racismnoway.com.au).

- **Integrated Services Centre**
  This program related to: schools; health, psychological, social and community needs; education

  The ISCs provide culturally appropriate and holistic service to support Humanitarian Entrant students and their families with their health, psychological, social and community needs. ISCs are located at Parkwood Primary school and Koondoola Primary School. The Multicultural Community Liaison Workers and Administration Officer at both centres are employed by the Edmund Rice Centre, Mirrabooka.

- **Intensive English Centre (Balga Senior High School and Mirrabooka Primary School)**
  The program population is newly arrived migrants and refugees. The program focus is: to provide the literacy, numeracy, social and behavioural skills to allow students to succeed in a mainstream system. Priorities and needs: the social, emotional, physical and mental well-being of students and their families is a priority for the IEC team. Additional support both within the school and in the local community is provided by the pastoral care coordinator, school psychologist, nurse, student support worker, chaplain and many external agencies.

- **Swan Nyungar Sports Education Program (Balga Senior High School)**
  The Swan Nyungar Sports Education Program (SNEP) commenced in 2002 aimed at providing Indigenous youth in the district with an opportunity to study football and netball alongside the school curriculum. The SNEP program targets Indigenous Australian students in the North East
Metropolitan Area with the goal of improving education outcomes by using sport (Australian Rules football for boys; netball for girls) and dance as the medium to engagement and achievement. It also offers cultural affirmation (e.g., Nyungar language and culture classes offered on gender specific lines). Lower school SNSEP students engage in a Multi-Aged Grouping strategy for English, Maths, Science and Society & Environment for the first part of each day. This ensures students work at a level that best meets their academic needs.
Appendix D  Social Cohesion in Blacktown (NSW): Detailed Findings

❖ ‘The community’  
Key informants from Blacktown characterised the community in several ways, including as highly culturally diverse, as socio-economically disadvantaged and as densely-populated (‘you line up 74 Australians, one of them live in Blacktown, we like to think of ourselves as a microcosm of Australia’; ‘it’s a very big LGA and populous’). Discussion centred around three themes: socio-economic disadvantage in the community, the physical environment and public space in the community, and the community’s reputation as being unsafe or full of crime. There were fewer comments about public space compared with the Mirrabooka/Balga KI interviews, and they tended to be about development and housing. In general, the tenor of constructions of the local community was more positive than those for Mirrabooka and emphasised strategies to improve the community or the benefits of the community’s diversity. Diversity, and the fact that no single cultural or ethnic group dominated, was seen as a strength of the community.

You can go anywhere you want and you can have great cuisine, different restaurants, cafes; it’s fantastic.

One of the strengths here I believe, is that we don’t have a dominant culture.

We had the Mayor coming out and talking about the successes of our multicultural community, that has been multicultural since European occupation, and even before then, the many different tribes of the Aboriginal communities would meet and gather.

❖ Socio-economic disadvantage  
Many KIs began the interview by explaining the extent of socio-economic disadvantage in Blacktown, which was concentrated in particular areas such as Mt Druitt.

The eleven suburbs of the Mt Druitt area which are some of the most disadvantaged suburbs in Australia...

...where the Department of Housing, for instance, place people, and people in disadvantaged places often live together; that then increases the disadvantage in places.

It is obviously a lower socio-economic. We say that we have 5% unemployment but I’m sure that in Blacktown, there’s much more than that.

❖ The community – public space  
KI comments about the physical environment in Blacktown centred around housing development and the shopping centre. It was recognised that the construction of large blocks of small apartments may have contributed to social problems, and that public housing should be less concentrated to reduce socio-economic segregation.

...to resolve all the social issues of that community, will only occur when we break up the built forms... while you have big giant super blocks and the only people living in them are Housing NSW clients who come from such social disadvantage, such low socio-economic background, have got significant social issues, that are third and fourth generations...

KIs linked the physical environment and infrastructure in the area to social inclusion explicitly:

And where city assets do their job well, it’s about social inclusion, it’s about building physical spaces that allow people to participate in a meaningful way.
Your high concentration of Mt Druitt housing, which Housing is working on, and try to beautify suburbs, or stop to create integration among communities...

There were also several comments about young people congregating in and around the local shopping centre, and the problems this was causing because other community members found it threatening. This is discussed in more detail under Social Division, later.

**The community reputation**

As with Mirrabooka/Balga, Blacktown was perceived to have a negative reputation in the wider Sydney and Australian community. This was largely associated with the social disadvantage and public housing in the area, as well as perceptions regarding crime. KIs regarded this as unfortunate and an unfair representation of the community.

And also public opinion of, you know, you said like ‘Blacktown’ or ‘Mt Druitt’ and people like ‘oh’. They’re turned off.

There are all that attitude that all people in Mt Druitt are druggos, you know.

Every time a crime statistic comes out, Blacktown is number 1. But it’s Blacktown Local Government Area. Blacktown Local Government Area is largest in the state by population, 320,000 people, so per capita, if you look at the boxed out stats, you’re more likely to be robbed at Strathfield.

**Belonging**

**Overall evaluation—which community are we talking about?**

As with the Mirrabooka/Balga community, there were mixed views on the extent of belonging to Blacktown. KIs tended to distinguish among sub-groups within the community, referring specifically to the migrant and/or refugee communities, or the Indigenous Australian communities. Thus, discussion centred around the themes of defining community and excluded groups. With regard to defining community, KIs described the multiple communities and identities to which Blacktown residents might belong.

I think you have to be careful when talking about part of the community, because I think we’re all part of many communities.

I would say there is a sense of belonging for certain community groups, even though when I say sense of belonging, the communities that are new are trying very hard to belong.

But within the community, the network is there. Like for example, with Africans, they have core associations, different associations, community associations. And this community association is the area where they come together and meet and socialize... and what is now remaining is social connection with others’ community—it’s the area where we have bit of challenge, simply because of language barriers.

In particular, it was pointed out by KIs that there is diversity within the Indigenous Australian community of Blacktown because residents came from different Indigenous Australian nations and tribes but also because they might identify with a smaller geographical area within the LGA.

I don’t call it the Aboriginal community, I changed the language to Aboriginal communities, because we have key communities in certain areas that we have to consult with...there’s these little groups that want to be consulted—well, want to be seen to have their own identity. And they might be the same tribe or be representative...

The multicultural feature nature of the community Blacktown was the point most talked about in the focus groups. ‘Knowing each other’s cultures’ that this feature allowed was what gave many participants a sense of belonging to Blacktown. The friendliness of this multicultural community, the
peacefulness, and the availability of good services added to that feeling of satisfaction and belonging. It reduced isolation and ‘homesickness’ for many participants.

Near shopping centre, and school, TAFE, multi-culture, all different people... different country. All very nice. (Bhutanese female)

Blacktown I like because multi-culture, I see lot of faces, like Muslim faces, white faces, Asian people, and African people. All people mixed up. So it's a little bit homely. You don't feel that you come to a new place, where you feel like I'm only the white people or only the black people, or all other face. So if one raises faithfully a family, I feel especially, I feel familiar in Blacktown because a lot of people from different countries. And now I started driving everywhere, and I feel like local now. Before, I stayed one year in Parramatta, it take time for me to understand Parramatta. All people settled to Blacktown area and most of our most closely related here. So yeah, I like Blacktown. (Bhutanese male)

It's not really peaceful, but substantially peaceful. (Bhutanese male senior)

It feels like you don’t get homesick because you have a lot of your fellow countrymen. (Filipino female)

My experience here is good because everywhere I go, someone will say ‘Are you Indian? Chinese?’ They can relate to me. (Filipino female)

Everyone gets along with each other. ‘Cause, you know, we all came from—we’ve all experienced hardship and all that stuff. So, we all understand each other. (Bosnian male youth)

Because of the near for my home, and the TAFE and the hospital, and shopping centre, and I’m coming everyday to class, good teacher and good community and all student very nice... all people is different country... Multi-culture class. Very good teacher, loving, and all student understand. I like Blacktown. My life is Blacktown. (Afghani female)

... we used to come from our community, Bhutanese community. If the people in Football United are from Bhutanese community, we can invite some people, and from Afghan community, from other African community and stuff. In Football United focusing on soccer, and if the people from other community came and like what they want, what other sport they want, what other things they want. If we focus on that it might be good for the future. (Bhutanese female youth)

For some participants, the ethnic welfare organisation or community worker provided the sense of community, which in this case meant their ethnic community. They acknowledged that they had several adjustment problems when they first arrived in Australia, and it was their organisation or worker that gave them a lot of information, and a place/space to come to and meet some other people from their ethnic groups. They said that in the midst of too much diversity, sometimes it was difficult to know who the authorities for certain things were. The community organisation and worker provided that bridge, and the ‘home’ or safe place to come to at the end of a very difficult day or experience

We see PACSI (Philippine-Australian Community Services Inc) as the very home to go back to. Just like when we were young and still in school, we looked forward to going home each day. Outside the home brings difficulties, but home is always peaceful. When I come to PACSI, it’s like having a mother to come home to. PACSI gives us that refueling for the emotion. No matter how highly educated you are, you can still feel lost because of the harsh realities of life. It’s the people in PACSI who make this place ‘home’. (Filipino female)
**Excluded groups**

According to KIs, language barriers were a common reason for some groups feeling a sense of belonging or connection to others in the community. This was particularly the case for recently arrived groups:

With the connection now, especially with the new arrival, one of the issue that they have is language barrier...when you talk about social connection, to connect with someone you need to have good language skill. English is the big thing.

I think another barrier is their level of education and the level of communication, the language barrier

KIs also identified that visible difference, particularly for the African migrants, was a barrier to connecting with others in the community:

But because of their obvious appearance and their lack of language, and the lack of knowledge from the other side from where these people are coming from...there’s a hesitance of coming together

**Residential Stability**

In the KI interviews and focus group discussions, less was said regarding the role of residential stability in contributing to belonging. When stability was mentioned, it was stability linked primarily to the migrant and refugee communities, with the observation that longer residence (or being second-generation) was related to greater sense of belonging and connection to the community:

...actually it will happen in time, not immediately, the belongingness (KI).

At the beginning we were thinking maybe we can, we will go back soon. Not feeling like we are connected. Now we lived here for few years so we feel like, oh yeah, this is the place, we have to live here. (Bhutanese female)

**Inclusion**

Social inclusion was a major topic of discussion in the Blacktown KI interviews. As with Mirrabooka/Balga, access to housing and employment were of significant concern, and were seen to reflect the socio-economic disadvantage of the area relative to other parts of Sydney and Australia more generally. Access to employment was the main area in which ethnicity or race was seen to be a factor. KIs also discussed access to healthcare, education, and identified groups within the community who may be socially excluded.

**Housing**

KIs in Blacktown identified that it was hard for lower income families to find affordable housing. This most affected the migrant and refugee families because they had larger families. Competition for government housing was also an issue.

I think you are looking again at rental properties; it’s been very competitive for rental properties. You’ve got high housing, high Department of Housing areas, so there’s competition to get into that.

Accommodation is a big problem for new arrivals, especially for refugees. There are two reasons. The first one is the family system. Most refugees came from extended family system. The extended family system is a big family: 5 to 7 children. Sometimes, we got cousin and whoever, part of the family. Getting appropriate accommodation is a big issue.

Well, it’s been very difficult for them to find houses for 8-10, 8-12 kids. So they tend to be 3 bedrooms, 4 bedrooms, they don’t tend to make 6 bedroom houses anyway.
Housing is, there is a great challenge because of the rent price has gradually increased so that’s a
great challenge for the migrant.

Government should tap initiatives also to build affordable houses for these communities, for these
families who are suffering, who are not able to compete in the market to get appropriate
accommodation.

Apart from a lack of housing that could accommodate large families, some KIs thought that
there was discrimination against migrants and refugees in the private housing market because of
their lack of proficiency in English and illiteracy, and some beliefs held by real estate agents that
some groups (e.g., Africans) were bad tenants.

Housing is the biggest because nobody will give them because their English language is less and they
can’t speak much. And because of the English language proficiency they can’t get work, most of them
are unemployed or low paid work like cleaning, factory work and everything. So they really will get
some difficulty when they apply for housing. And most of them are living in very substandard rental
apartments and houses...the landlords, the real estate agents are taking advantage of their illiteracy.

Discrimination is there, but people will not talk about it. It is not discussed. It is hidden... there is some
feeling from some real estate agencies that African refugees are bad tenants. They don’t take care of
the house...so that is hidden.

These difficulties in finding suitable accommodation and the experience of discrimination were
echoed in the focus groups.

- **Healthcare**

Access to healthcare (or lack thereof) was not a major concern for Blacktown KIs. Also, the focus
group participants seemed to be satisfied, and quite appreciative of the Medicare system. However,
KIs highlighted the problems associated with language barriers for patients from non-English
speaking backgrounds. There was discussion of use of interpreters, mainly around some services
avoiding getting interpreter services for their clients because it would take time to book them, and
the interaction with the clients, through the interpreter, would be twice as long.

In health services, the issue is interpreting services... I understand that the health system, especially
when we come to the GP practitioners. Some of them, they don’t want to use interpreting services.
This is simply because time is a factor. And they don’t want to waste their time.

Access to mental health services was also identified, particularly a need for bi- or multilingual
counsellors to assist refugees.

I need counsellors. I need more counsellors... I need counsellors that speak the language because I
have a lot of all these mental things, you know.

- **Education**

Blacktown KIs did not highlight access to education as a problem for the community, although
KIs identified a need to improve literacy among young people and to target programs earlier. This
was seen to be a problem for all members of the community, associated with socio-economic
disadvantage and contributing to problems in obtaining suitable employment (and thereby
perpetuating socio-economic disadvantage).

I suppose education is the big one. If I start right from the beginning, I firmly believe that the biggest
barrier to being included is what is happening to you when you’re from zero to 8 years old... certainly
if you can see that those children in zero to 8 start to their literacy level are far more likely to, by the
time they get to the end of primary school, be able to read and write, and that’s far more likely to
mean they’re gonna be able to gain some skills in their high schools, that would lead to meaningful
employment which would have a lot of changes for their world.
Literacy was seen to be a significant problem for some of the refugee children, especially those who were in refugee camps for a long period, and who have arrived in Australia recently.

Until something is done about pushing or educating the new communities, providing more support for them and gain access to higher education.

Yes, it’s a problem of literacy. It depends on how long they’ve been in the country, if we’re talking about refugees.

Of course, literacy is an obvious one, everyone knows that. For refugees and for multicultural societies, that difference in expectations of cultures affected their success in work, which actually also affected their success in study as well.

Several KIs commented that the government schools’ approach to place children from new communities in age-appropriate school levels might hamper their educational level since they might not have the academic preparation before they came to Australia.

One of the things the refugee community would like is to be able to slot their young people in their level based on their academic ability, not their age. But schools can’t have an 18 year old that hasn’t had much school and sitting with fifth grade kids.

They place you at school based on your age. It’s not based on your academic background so they assess you, and then know the level that they should put you into... if you are 13, they look at which year you shall be that’s age 13, then you go in there. Then when you put them there, obviously there are gaps so it’s hard for them to cope... and sometimes they’ve been ridiculed or their friends muck them around. Yeah, so that in itself will impact on their performance.

Some KIs thought that there should be more education about and encouragement for refugee children and young people to participate in TAFE, rather than pushing them toward the HSC (Higher School Certificate).

But the thing is that there are horses for courses. And the horses in this area are probably more suited, because of the cost, because of the access, and I mean transportation... they are more probably suited as a pathway to come to TAFE.

Some KIs identified approaches to programs that had been successful in engaging Indigenous Australian students in school, at the primary level, such as exposing them at an early level to positive role models, to industry, so they could set goals for the future.

So they include a program for all the fifth grades and sixth grade kids knowing that programs for them will positively help the Aboriginal students. They’re having a work in a garden, and succeed working with the hand, ‘cause school is more academic so they need to let school be interesting.

A few issues related to education were raised in the focus groups. Because of the two-year waiting period for newly arrived migrants and refugees to avail of government assistance, some adult participants could not study at university if they wanted to without having to pay the fees. This has affected not just getting local qualifications but their job prospects as well.

I was teacher of University of (name of university in Iraq), College of Fine Art. I come to Australia 1 year ago, and I studied in Macquarie. I’ve reached Certificate, now I study in NTC. Actually, I have too much problem here because I can’t work my job because I’m painter. There’s too much reason, make me, to don’t work because first, my home is very small for painter. I have to work big pictures... I want to study art. But I have this language problem. I want to study in University, but I don’t know how to begin. I have a visa problem because I’m temporary, I must wait 2 years to become permanent. I have spouse-visa. This is my story, I must wait. It will take 2 years until I can study. (Iraqi male)
Discrimination was cited by two participants: A TAFE teacher doubted her English ability even though the assessment of the migrant’s skills was done in front of the teacher. Another teacher judged prematurely that the work of the Asian participant was inferior.

The TAFE teacher detained me until 5pm because she was trying to check whether I really knew how to compose an essay. She thought that all my submissions, I downloaded from the internet. I found out that in TAFE, they need not do a Masters and they can become professors. My dream is to pursue a doctoral degree in the future. They were trying to contain me. Just because I’m a Filipino, they assumed that I could not write, just because I don’t speak up much in class. She questioned the way I wrote and was surprised that I can produce the exact composition that she wanted me to do. She even said, ‘Are you sure you wrote this?’ I said, ‘Ma’am, you were in front of me when I was typing this.’ (Filipino female)

When I was studying at TAFE Blacktown in 2008, my teacher did not like Asians. I can feel it. When I submitted my assessment, he has not even looked at it and she immediately put a cross and said, ‘Repeat!’ I shut my mouth, and went to the head teacher who defended him. But my white classmate had the same answer and passed. I learned later that that he liked black people but not Asians, because he was previously married to a Filipina. I felt discriminated. (Filipino female)

Some participants were pleased with the quality of education in Australia and grateful that their children would succeed in the future because of this.

Fantastic. Very good education. I never imagined that she would pick such—I always longed for that. Because in my country, in the class I attend, at least I studied, we had very good system of education. Not like that of Australia. You can’t compare with the developed world. But only with a couple of other things with Nepal, India, South Asian countries, Bhutan is currently better off in education. We had English education. But when we as a refugee came to Nepal, I was worried about my kids’ education. At least I finished class 10. What will my kids do? Because Nepal is literally very poor, poor English knowledge, local institutions. But when we come here, it’s good, education is very good. I’m happy, and I think everyone’s happy. (Bhutanese male)

**Employment**

Access to employment was a major sub-theme of inclusion for Blacktown KIs. There was discussion of the links between education and employment (and English language education for new communities), difficulties in having overseas qualifications recognised, needing local experience and problems with the job network. Participation in meaningful employment was linked to other dimensions of social cohesion such as belonging and participation, and seen as a preventative factor in social conflict and division.

And if you get a job in a shopping centre, excuse me, I know I swear too much but there is a saying from my youth...you don’t shit in your own nest...no bird does this. So now you’re working there, are you going to allow other people, your friends to vandalise it? You take pride. It’s meaningful participation.

If kids thought that their future relied on getting a job over there, or in junior school hallways instead of sitting out in the street, if they were given a job at the local Coles or Woolworths, what that does is potentially they realise it’s their backyard. They’ve got some ownership for themselves.

Employment is the most important thing in human life. The more you are employed, this depression, this social isolation—all stuff like that—are reduced. If you are employed, you will have good network and you socialise also with other people.

KIs identified some successful initiatives to employ young people locally but there was a view that more support was needed for people from refugee and migrant backgrounds, who lacked a community network to find employment.
The support in job network is not adequate. Because for someone who doesn’t know computer, to
tell him and go and access job on computers, it is very terrible, someone with limited English, giving
them newspaper to read and whatever, is also a problem. Therefore all these things have to be looked
at in order to support and to assist Humanitarian Entrants and refugees.

We need to make more people to become resourced in their own networks so that we need to put
more money... so maybe that goes back to the question of helping newly-arrived to become more
linked, more networked.

Underemployment, due to English-language difficulties, lack of recognition of overseas
qualifications and a preference for people with ‘local’ experience, was identified as a problem for
new communities.

They will only put them if the job is physical. Yeah, and does not involve a lot of skills. So some of
them [employers], I think they are still thinking that ‘I’m not sure if this one...’ some of them are
stereotyping. So I think a lot of education has to be done on the side of the employers.

When we talk of employing and recruiting more people in the workforce, we are not saying, give them
jobs in factories and all that, based on their skills, ‘cos you cannot say that the entire migrant or
refugee population, they’re only good for factories; they’re good for other things. What work can we
do to help them get into those other things they’re good at?

The recognition has to improve. It has to be more expedient. And if we want people to be employed
and employed in their rightful profession or trade, we need to be a little bit more – also streamlined
about recognition of overseas qualifications.

The focus group participants cited difficulties in finding employment, describing the long
process (e.g. years) of constantly trying. Or they were able to get only jobs that were lower than
what they had trained for. Prospective employers were known to look for local experience, but
participants felt that if no one was prepared to give them a job, when would they get that local
experience? Many felt that employers immediately assumed they could not handle the job, instead
of giving them a chance to prove themselves. Opening up these opportunities, even on a trial basis,
or an internship would be helpful, the participants said.

I have to do something about the employment issue. I attend many meetings and all they said, ‘we
will do something, employment’ and unfortunately, I think, nothing. I’ve been 2 years in Australia. I’m
raising the issue, but nothing happen. (Palestinian male)

My suggestion is, companies should set up internships, or on-the-job training (OJT). Places like
Breakthrough were set up to help us find jobs. But what they do is just take our credentials and hold
on to them, instead of passing these on to companies. Classic example, I’m prepared to do cleaner
job, I told them. I have been practising already. I haven’t even received an offer for OJT, or volunteer
work. I have told them cleaner is okay for me. But still nothing! (Filipino female)

I know a Filipino accountant. She’s been trying to find a job, not successful. She said to the employer,
‘Why don’t you let me work for you for free. And if you’re satisfied, hire me’. (Filipino female)

Many participants identified the lack of English skills and the non-recognition of their overseas
qualifications (not to mention the cost of having these qualifications recognised) as the main barriers
for not accessing employment opportunities. For some who have lived in refugee camps for so long,
they have come to Australia at a stage in their life (age 45-60) when learning a new language have
become difficult. This then lead to difficulties in upgrading their skills or applying for suitable jobs.

(via interpreter) Maybe because of the language we are behind in employment, and as well as to
bring the people like relative. (Bhutanese female)
But I can’t speak much English. There in my country and my community, many years I taught my language, Nepali, 31 years I taught but no skill here. I upset how to do some work...very difficult. (Bhutanese male)

It’s very very challenging. My old people, I work with them for 6-7 years. We lived in refugee set up, we leave the country and stay there for 10, 20 years in Nepal. We stayed in a small house, Nepal house. We get weekly rations, food, and other things. But life is not just for eating and staying at home. You need to build your social circles and engage your mind. If this goes off, everything is gone. Physical fitness is not enough. Depressions, frustrations. You don’t engage your brain in the right way. So that was one of the things in the camps in Nepal. And so some more people started having their home kind of business or kind of working, economic activities. So now the people are in the same situation here, in Australia, Blacktown. Young boys, they’re going to school, college. They’re doing fine. Yeah? But we have other group like the women group here who are mostly housewives and they didn’t have English knowledge, didn’t have time to study. Now they have put in a lot of time in getting English knowledge. And most of them they are picked up. But I think, you can mix up with more people, but their level of understanding is now circulated. How will you teach them now, from that level, they can’t go up, because at 45–50, who have never been to school, how much can you learn at this stage? You can’t learn. But they have communication skills. They can understand you. You speak to them, but they’ll not be able to express themselves freely. But they can learn the certain things, small things. (Bhutanese male)

Sometimes there were perceived misunderstandings or lack of appreciation by services of the urgent need and desperation of refugees to find employment, and why it was important for them to have a career.

I think government is doing its best. We are very grateful and thankful for the Australian government because for our future because we’ve had no future, and they invested so much, brought us here, started out, giving education, everything. But that is not enough now we have become permanent residents. Government should mix up the migrants with all sorts of activities in terms of career. Job. Job yes. I’ll give my example to you. I talked to Centrelink. I talked to Salvation’s Army. Tuesday, I did 18 days training there. Everyday. Every week I have to go there two hours. My interest, I told them, because I never had time to build up my career. Where can a refugee build a career when you don’t have a government? When you studied as a refugee in somebody’s country, you don’t have any rights. And when you don’t have any rights, you don’t get a job. When you don’t get a job, you never had experience, and without experience, you don’t get knowledge for a job here. I finished education. I work as part time sometimes as a teacher, sometimes in an NGO helping people. So we didn’t have time to become a professional. 20 years, not most of us, with few exceptions. So we have come here, to set up career, it is very difficult. I said I want to go to railway, they ask me, you have experience in this field? I said no. I don’t have experience in this field because in my country, there’s no train, no rail. I just want to make history, someone from Bhutan wants to join the railway. I’ll be the first one. With this level of English, give me some signal somewhere else. Because I’ve got some interest to doing that. So I’m telling them, let’s go for training for this and that instead of sending me to TAFE, or something else; give me 6 months or 1 year training so that I can have skills. I can work. (Bhutanese male)

Discrimination in employment was also a common theme in the focus group discussions. Many of the experiences were in applying and finding a job. This could be based on age, or ethnic background, or the lack of English proficiency. Or it could be because of the threat that someone with higher qualifications posed on existing staff.

I finished university and was a language English teacher in Ghaza. My wife is an accountant. My job is steel furniture, antique. I went to one factory, they said ‘we would like to see what you are able to do.’ I worked one day and got a couple of jobs. They said it’s more than perfect. ‘So we’ll call you later if we would give you a chance for job.’ And they call and said ‘Look, you’re 55, sorry we can’t give you a job.’ That’s discrimination. (Palestinian male)
I have a Masters degree. The pre-school teachers did not even attempt to study Masters. They finished TAFE only. I think they felt threatened. The principal was only a TAFE graduate. (Filipino female)

The frustration at not finding a job or adequate employment was discussed as having affected the participants’ self-esteem, relationships with their spouse and children; or they felt their abilities and skills were being ‘wasted’; some felt unsettled.

So these groups, like you have women groups, they can be involved in groups – group activities for employment. You know, like choose 4 or 5, yeah. Make one a leader there. That particular person will lead. Put them in some sort of jobs. It’s going wasted because people are unemployed. When you’re unemployed, you don’t contribute to taxes. And you can’t contribute to development. You’re simply a burden. (Bhutanese male)

I like to involve myself in my spare time. My wife is making her career, she’s busy with her own stuff. Myself, I’m kind of lost what to do. I’m trying my best. I’m not yet still settled. So partly still settling. If everything goes well, with the work casual work. So I said. okay I’m not settled down yet. (Bhutanese male)

There was some advice given by participants to help migrants and refugees find a job: consider volunteering in order to gain the local experience and have people who would act as referees for future job applications, for the government to be more considerate in assessing overseas qualifications, to give migrants and refugees a fair go.

- **Excluded groups**

  KIs pointed out that excluded groups in Blacktown were Indigenous Australians, and refugee and migrant communities that had poor English skills and/or traumatised backgrounds. For KIs, the social exclusion of Indigenous Australians was obvious, based on statistics of employment, home ownership and health. Thus, aspects of exclusion were interlinked and seen as contributing to each other.

  So there’s ways of disconnection to people, it’s a huge issue. Some occurs to people who are long-term unemployed (and that affects a set of Indigenous people as well). They can’t learn English, they haven’t got the money to go out, you haven’t got a car, and you haven’t got a license. You haven’t got those contacts for work, then your network is... and you don’t just travel into town to meet people and talk and make networks, you can’t afford that.

  Ok, with Pacific Islander young people, there’s a range of strategies around them but not enough. They’re obviously a newly arrived community, high levels of social and economic disadvantage and low levels of skills, so because they’re an un-highly skilled workforce, they’re struggling financially, most of them are in social housing...they’re overrepresented in the criminal justice system, particularly young men.

  Ways to enhance inclusion for Indigenous Australians included respect for Indigenous Australian customs and culture:

  If you build relationship, you pay respect, opportunities will occur for you to close the gap....we go to the community and you build a relationship with them and then you respectfully allow them to dictate a model and a framework, then an opportunity occurs for something...so, in terms of Aboriginality, it is clearly a barrier in this country to people being included.

  Finally, problems with English and understanding Australian systems, contributed to exclusion for migrant communities.

  But they don’t know how to talk to Centrelink. Or to apply for housing, or talk to banks...or just read a simple instruction of what you need to do...in English sent by a service provider.
In this regard, some participants pointed out that migrant elderly are doubly disadvantaged because of their age and lack of English skills.

Another issue that we must let the government know is about the ageing population because many of our elderly do not speak English. Staff in nursing homes don’t understand our culture. How can the give our elderly quality of life experience? That’s why many of our fellowmen dread the nursing homes because they don’t have anyone to talk to there. With the food—can you really make the old people eat their food for example? They are not the food they’d like to eat. Of course they will look for the food that’s familiar. So the staff need to be educated. (Filipino female)

**Participation**

There were mixed views on community participation among our KIs in Blacktown. Some felt that participation around social and/or cultural events was quite good, and that participation within ethnic and/or cultural communities was strong. KIs indicated that interactions across groups (migrant and refugee, Indigenous, and Anglo-Australian) were less frequent. This is addressed in Recognition, subsequently.

**Community participation**

Young people were seen to be more likely to get involved, which was related to community participation (‘I think it’s because young people tend to engage in more activities’). Older adults were seen as being busy with work and other tasks that prevented them from getting involved, although KIs acknowledged that there was informal participation within communities (see Volunteering, below).

Blacktown KIs spoke positively of Harmony Day activities, identifying that it brought diverse members of the community together.

I think these Harmony Days and multicultural events, they’re very good in a sense that they bring certain communities together, say, like the Maltese, the Filipinos...all those the migrant communities. However, KIs also spoke of the need to engage Anglo-Australians in Harmony Day activities and events.

But the problem is, because of the minority... the ones that are being here longer and that see themselves Australians are very much reserved. They don’t come to these Harmony Day events... so why don’t the Aussie kids come and tell us what harmony means?... what does it mean for them?... so maybe we need to look at that for the Harmony funding that we give each year.

The youth focus group participants felt that being involved in community activities such as sports programs helped make them feel belonging to the community, since these were where people from different groups met and got to know each other. These sports programs were regarded as even more useful when they included leadership training and camps that involve skills and awareness training for participants. The youth also mentioned activities run under the Youth Off the Streets (YOTS) program, the culture choir in school, ‘Aboriginal community of wrestlers program’, sport festival. For future, they suggested swimming, kung fu/self-defence classes, dance and multicultural days. They even have a strategy in mind to encourage more participation among youth of different groups: start small, involve community (youth) leaders, and then expand.

Involving different kind of interests because you can’t just use one interest because not everybody’s the same. So you gotta keep yourself open minded. For others to accept you. (Sudanese male youth)

Alright we have this thing in our school right? It’s called culture choir. They mix Polynesian people with African and then they pool it together. And we sing these songs, and if you’re Australian, you can put in a word in your language into the song. (Sudanese male youth)
They give us training of leadership so that we can lead all the young people from our community and other communities. I’m coaching here, and even he’s coaching Football United. (Bhutanese female youth)

Everyone has their own groups that they belong to. I can get along with everyone, but everyone has their own group. Like, there’s guys that play soccer like us, and there’s guys that play the NRL. They get along more but still—we can still coexist. So, yeah, that. (Bosnian male youth)

We have to start from small thing to big thing. We can’t just call everyone at a time cause they might come or they might not come, so everything’s gonna be wasted. First of all, we have to know one leader from each community and then get along with them first, and then later on, organize some activities, ask them, get solution from each other, and then try to organize community—try to organize community events. Like what we did, as Bhutanese, we organized a soccer game with the African community, and then we had a game, and later we had another game, and then we had other games with other communities like Nepalese community and Burmese communities. And they’re so organized now. When you know each other more, you can organize a big game. (Bhutanese female youth)

Other participants identified a number of community activities that they participated in: bowling, events organized by community organizations, special courses, playing cards,

Some participants raised concern over the lack of activities for middle-aged refugees who were not retired yet and still had capacity to learn and be involved. Also, for newly-arrived refugees who would not readily mix socially. Cultural activities were said to attract the young and the elderly, but not necessarily the middle-aged.

- **Political participation**

Political participation in the form of voting in state and federal elections was something that had been targeted in the Blacktown community, due to a high number of invalid papers previously.

The Electoral com—the electoral board worked together with us last time just to organise sessions to educate people and help people, but what I say is that we have to strengthen all this education, you know, systems, where people can actively involve, to exercise their political rights.

For migrants and refugees from some countries, political involvement or interests from their country of origin were a source of within-group tensions. For example, one KI said of the Burmese community,

...and then it’s also affect[ed] still in Australia. So some of the Burmese group, they’re more close to their current regime, some are opposition, so these groups are not much, they didn’t ‘touch’ each other, they like to stay away from each other even in Sydney.

Some focus group participants talked about the importance of expressing their views and letting their community workers know of issues that should reach the local government, so that things can be done to address problems.

- **Volunteering**

Volunteering was not a major sub-theme of discussion of participation in the Blacktown KI interviews. Nonetheless, through activities such as the street walk (in which the police patrol the community together with ethnic community leaders and representatives), English classes, and driver education, many Blacktown residents were actively volunteering in the community. These activities were seen to contribute to interaction and mixing across different ethnic groups within the community.
Some of them [Anglo-Australians] are coming in as volunteers, like we have public speaking sessions. The talker is an Australian and yeah, they come in, sometimes they share their experience... and then in the homework program also you have volunteers.

Blacktown community works to help and to support... That’s why we have English classes, we have got volunteers. For the driving things, we have got volunteers. It is for the community that they support and help.

The value of volunteering was recognized by the Filipino participants: making a contribution to others’ welfare (individuals as well as ethnic community); learning things, developing skills, and increasing familiarity with the services system; and gaining work experience that could be used for future job application. Some volunteers learned through this how certain problems could be solved, including their own.

I am just a volunteer. Someone said ‘You just volunteer?’ You don’t get paid?’ I said ‘No.’ ‘Why do you work with no pay?’ They don’t know what I volunteer for. I help a lot of different people. Filipinos just think of money. If you’re a salaried employee, you can take the day off. If you’re a volunteer, you can’t take the day off because no one is there to replace you. (Filipino female)

You can hear about other people’s experiences here. Oh, my experiences are nothing compared to others. If you’re alone, how do you solve your problem? You don’t know if it is light or heavy. If you talk to a lot of people, you can prioritise these. (Filipino female)

**Enablers and Barriers**

Enablers for participation included: confidence in speaking English; and having programs and events that were culturally sensitive and aware (e.g., for the Indigenous Australian community), were based locally and easily accessible to the community, and involved shared interests in religious and sporting activities, and individual. For example, one KI praised the Football United initiative (described under programs, subsequently) as bringing people together, both youth and their parents. Therefore, sports could break barriers to community participation.

What we ended up doing was set up a place wherein families and kids knew that every Saturday, for example, from 9 to 12, there was going to be football opportunities. You could come once a month, you could come every week. You could come as often as you want.

But one thing that has the potential to break those barriers, I think sports can do that. If you look at the basketball at the Blacktown PCYC, originally it was just Africans. Or maybe Sudanese, then slowly, slowly, you have other Africans from other communities also, they started going there, and then you have other Asians, Filipinos... so once they have that shared passion for the sport, I think that could be an instrument in breaking the barriers.

KIs identified barriers to participation as cost, transport, migrant families being busy with multiple jobs and shift work, and lack of English language confidence.

Focus group participants elaborated on these barriers, and added a few more. For example, the lack of English language skills was related to the age at the time of arrival in Australia and to the readiness to learn new things. Apparently the youth would find it easier; but the elderly would not be ready to make major adjustments to their life, and thus could be alienated from community and political participation. Having said that, the lack of English skills and the low level of participation could serve as ‘blessing’ in that they could also be sheltered from the problems and issues affecting migrants and refugees. They could also be oblivious of the discrimination and racism around them, or the demands of familiarising with the new environment if their recourse was just to stay within their ethnic group, where they could communicate in their native language effectively. The dissonance of whether to maintain or give up their native culture in order to become integrated in
Australian society was felt by some participants. Another participant offered a solution to this dilemma, that is, to become multicultural.

Maybe because of the language we don’t speak to them. But as a whole when we see from outside we see maybe they are living in harmony ‘cause we don’t see any fighting on the street or stuff like that. (Bhutanese female)

In terms of culture, I’m really in the middle of the two—neither can I go inside nor can I go outside. If I really follow my children, my children can end up Australian way of culture, and also they might come to my culture also, there’s no guarantee. But to me, I can’t follow my child because my culture is my culture. So culture became one of the big issues here. And as a parent, we really want to preserve our culture. So while trying preserving culture, sometimes people like us would be in the middle, where to go? Either to follow them, or not to follow them. Because children adapt very quickly but people like myself, we are not readily go and adapt with children. (Bhutanese male)

My father and mother, one part, one side and myself another And we still have to learn there about different way of lifestyle. There’s a difference between us and my culture. Everything in eating, even in food, housing, and all. Children can adjust because they understand the background in school and others but it’s very difficult for me and my parents to convince to adjust. The system here is different. The elderly people got their own way, children have got their own way, and people like you got their own way. It’s not that much big problem. The problem is, sometimes I’m worried that my son or other children might copy the neighbour children that they are doing something bad; that is my concern. (Bhutanese male)

Community integration is not only one-way. It’s not only we adopt the Australian life or culture. For example, my first daughter in law, she’s an Australian here. She learned to cook all our traditional food, we had the wedding on our style, then her brother gets married, they organized the wedding similar to our way. They adapt our way. The celebration, exactly like. Another example is 2 years ago, Iraqi soccer team played with Australian, they came here. And my daughter in law she raised the Israeli flag. So it’s not only one-way, we adapt Australian life. If we can give the Australian people our tradition, our custom, our food, they will have some. That’s why we say multicultural country. (Iraqi male)

The frustration over not being able to communicate because they did not speak English was expressed poignantly by one Bhutanese male participant when he said, through an interpreter,

People like you, we need and would like to talk to you. Lot of worries from the human part of us. They all get stuck over here [throat]. I really want to express my feeling, but because of my language I can’t. (Bhutanese male)

But most participants spoke of how hard they tried to learn English, and how committed they were to continue improving their English skills. They were aware that not having these skills was a major reason for not making friends with other groups, and not being able to participate fully in Australian society.

For me, it is not easy, but then when you speak with them [Anglo-Australians] I find them a bit of compassionate, they can understand us more, they understand. But I don’t find it easy to mix up with them. It’s not easy. I don’t know whether is it because of me? The fault is because of my accent, my nature. Or is because of them—a little bit distance there. A lot in Australia, I feel like that. But once you talk, speak with them, I find it very friendly than other people. But normally, only is a hi-hello relationship, not that close. I stay in unit with a lot of people. I don’t go there and then speak in the community, just in the weekend. We have cultural programs, we invite them. They really mix, I like the way they mix up with the people. Occasions only. (Bhutanese male)

The culture issue extended to discussion of cultural differences around the relationship between parents and children—regarding friendships (e.g., children’s behaviours of hanging out with friends), the issue of trust (e.g., parents towards children), and setting rules. Parents’ encouragement was seen as important for young people to fully participate in community activities.
They live in a different age, they won’t even leave back the old school way, the way they used to live. So it’s kinda hard for them to understand like what sort of things the youth are into these days. So they try to keep you grounded on that. (Sudanese male youth)

There are some parents that are modern, they let you go out. My parents are old-fashioned. I think that also has an impact on the children. (Bosnian male youth)

Actually, we should have rules. Like, my rule was for boys, all of them like, teenagers, I say ‘look, go with your friends, but by midnight I want everyone to be home. 12 o clock. No more than 12 o clock. Before 12 o clock you should be home. If you be late 10 minutes or more, you have to give me a call.’ So, we have the power, especially dads and mum. We should put rules in our house. They’re living with us, we provide everything for them, so we may set the environment for them to live, to study, to do everything. We should put rules suitable to us and to them. (Iraqi male)

The good idea to build trust between us and our kids especially the teenager because that’s the only thing we can control, their trust, their communication between us, we can manage them, otherwise we’ll lose them. Sometimes, our kids will invite their Australian friend to come over to our houses; as a parent, we shouldn’t refuse that. We should accept the other culture of other people. At the same time, when friend coming to our houses, we discover our culture, way of life; at the same time we teach them our culture. We are not dangerous, Australian culture, and the parents should welcome the kids’ friends. Anytime you had a doubt about your kids’ behaviour, call our school, their teachers, and ask. (Palestinian male)

My son is a teenager and he start to go out and came home a bit late, later than what we say, 6 o clock, 7, come home. And what I say to him that the way you do like that is not fair. Because myself, or your mother, when we come late, we call. So to be fair, you got to do the same thing. And from that day, he would always call me if he come home late. (Vietnamese male)

Language (not just English) and communication were cited as enablers and barriers to community participation. For example, some youth participants believed that it is important to speak English, as a common language, when different groups are around (e.g., in school), rather than speak in an ethnic language which could alienate non-speakers of that language. On the other hand, some participants defended this behaviour, saying that joining their own ethnic group and speaking in their language could provide the sense of security so they could communicate, especially if they have poor English skills.

That’s what pisses me off. I mean, we’re all in the same school, we’re all learning the same thing, we’re all in the same community, and we live in Blacktown, and they, when you go to ‘em, when you go to ‘em, they speak their own language. But when you go to a different group, like for example Africans, they don’t. (Iranian male youth)

What I think is, it depends on the school. Especially in [name of high school]. I’ve been to there. When we come there, we are new, and then we follow the people who we know and who speak our language. So we have to go with them, otherwise there’s no option to speak, ‘cause we don’t speak English at all. (Bhutanese female youth)

That’s understandable. You can’t speak English, so you speak your language. But high school. We’re talking about high school. (Iranian male youth)

Community organisations and the church were regarded by many participants as instrumental to bringing different groups together and encouraging community participation.

The only way to cement the identity among Australians regardless of your nationality, the best channel for this is the church. Each parish, they do some kind of cultural, social gathering where they allow all members to participate. (Filipino female)
Recognition

Recognition is a complex construct of understanding and respect for others, and not surprisingly, the KIs had mixed views about the extent that there is recognition in Blacktown. Sub-themes were intergroup attitudes (and interaction), perceived competition for resources, lack of acknowledgement of and respect for Indigenous Australians, and discrimination and prejudice.

Intergroup attitudes and behaviours

In general, KIs thought that intergroup attitudes were positive in Blacktown (‘I don’t see when I’m out at the schools, an animosity or friction that’s ethnically based within the schools’). Some commented about negativity toward Muslims, contributed to by stereotypes in the media such as associations with terrorism. Others spoke of community members’ initial fear of African refugees, particularly the young men. It was acknowledged that a contributing factor was the tendency for these young men to ‘hang out’ in public spaces, which many people found threatening, and that this may have a cultural dimension.

Communities were complaining about the groups of big black African men. They’re intimidating, they’re all in the shopping centres, they’re all standing in the stairs, they’re all blocking their path, and they’re always in groups or gangs as people define them.

In some of the African cultures, people talk a lot in the street... they see you, they shout your name...maybe that’s not too comfortable for those who have lived there for long...

They congregate, maybe 3 or 4 or 5. They just walk around without causing any troubles, right? ...that situation is not comfortable to the police.

It was mainly a mixture of population all of a sudden confronting these 7 foot tall, black. They were terrified.

KIs also expressed concerns that Anglo-Australians avoided getting involved and this may be due to negative attitudes towards refugees.

And possibly they’re afraid that maybe if they become the one not leading the country, they might get into trouble, they maybe all these things. There’s a lot of unknown that they need to also start asking, start accepting that, ok...

Many focus group participants spoke of different groups getting along just fine. Some factors that caused this were: common interests, common experience of being migrants/refugees; similar experience of disadvantage, and respect accorded to people with high educational background.

Most of the time I mingle with my own friends, but that doesn’t mean I don’t mix up with other friends from African country; I have few of those friends. And I worked for 8-9 months in a multicultural setup of people—Samoa, Philippines, Fiji, Cambodia. But I feel that I should make more friends, by going to events like culture, or sports. (Bhutanese male)

I got friends from Fiji coming here, and then Nepalese place, we speak Nepali for talking. But we don’t call ourselves Nepalese. We say us, Bhutanese. We speak Nepali because we’re in Bhutan. But our nationality is Bhutanese. Ethnicity and language is Nepali. (Bhutanese male senior)

Filipinos here are well-respected. People know that there are many university graduates among us. I’m the only Filipino in my workplace. My officemates are very multicultural. (Filipino female)

They have friends of different communities, but still there was kind of racism between each other. But in Mitchell High, the school I’m going now, it’s totally different. Filipino has Aussie friend, Indian friends. I have a lot of friends, and I have a certain group that I go with, but they have different friends, and then we speak to everyone, but we stay to a certain group when we eat and... (Bhutanese female youth)
Some participants spoke of getting along more with people from the same ethnic background.

It’s easy... I mix very well with current Burmese community because I knew their problem before, and we had the same problem. And the middle name also makes a lot of difference B B, Bhutan Burma. These cultures are like that. And when I see these guys I think more of home because I understand them. (Bhutanese male)

A participant spoke happily about having good neighbours, mainly also because she had gone out of her way to be a good neighbour herself.

Some participants suggested that for Anglo-Australians and migrants/refugees to get along, there must be mutual acceptance, and both parties must be prepared to adjust, and to initiate reaching out to each other; also avoid staying just within their own group.

Sometimes you can disrespect somebody’s religion because you don’t know what they’re talking about. And then you just come and you have no idea what you’re talking about. And you disrespect their religion. And that’s where the fight come in. (Sudanese male youth)

Sometimes, I found out too...a lot of black people, once they arrive in Australia they still cannot accept the fact that they’re in Australia, because of what happened where they came from. Apparently, they’ve been put in camps. Once they arrive here, is this it? They’re still thinking, is there another camp? They still have to adjust themselves. Once they actually realize ‘Ah yeah this is Australia’ but at the same time they don’t even know, do these Australians really want to speak with us? At the same time, the Australians are still thinking, do they want to speak with us? So it’s both sides. Not just them, it’s the Australians too. Sometimes, just a smile will do a lot with any nationality. That’s what I’m doing with my class; it’s understanding other people’s cultures. (Filipino female)

After that, you can go out, you get along, once you start get to know each other, you get into a group, you get everyone to bring like their own cultural foods, and you can experience everything. It’s just like a festival, just involving everything, not just sports... (Iranian male youth)

Resource competition

As with Mirrabooka/Balga, several Blacktown KIs identified that there were perceptions in the community (among Anglo and Indigenous Australian residents in particular) that migrants and refugees were taking resources that were limited, and thus, others were missing out. In general, however, our KIs did not regard this kind of perception as a major issue in Blacktown.

Lack of awareness and acknowledgement of Indigenous Australians

The subtheme of lack of acknowledgement of Indigenous Australians was not as prominent in the KI interviews and focus groups in Blacktown as those in Mirrabooka/Balga. Blacktown has a Reconciliation Action Plan, Aboriginal community workers and a number of other initiatives to enhance recognition of indigenous Australian issues. Nonetheless, several KIs mentioned that more work was needed in this area, such as showing them more respect, and adjusting to their peculiar ways of involvement in developing programs for them.

It’s showing respect for the people that are there. It’s just those little things like that.

I think that the Aboriginals still feel like they are looked down upon... yeah I think that they still feel like... a lot of them, like they're second-rate citizens

Discrimination and Prejudice

People from Muslim, African and Indigenous Australian backgrounds were identified by KIs to be the most common targets of prejudice and discrimination. As discussed earlier, this occurred in contexts like applying for housing and employment, but also in public spaces—receiving unfair treatment.
I heard about, you know, African young people waiting at a train station at 10 o’clock at night getting interrogated by either the local police of the station authorities just because they were waiting for their trains.

Another KI described a young African girl receiving a fine for not having a valid train ticket when she had purchased one, but forgot to validate it.

(Discrimination in employment and education was previously discussed.) The focus group participants shared stories of prejudice and discrimination also, for example, a Filipino being given the bad look by an Indian shopkeeper, suggesting some suspicion of shoplifting. Some were quite direct in calling Anglo-Australians as racist.

They’re the Australians. They’re the kind of people who just don’t like anyone but Australians. They don’t want to be involved with any other culture or race. They’re the kinda racist ones. (Male youth)

Some racist behaviours mentioned were: name-calling, malicious teasing based on race, bullying, making fun of people’s cultural attire. The effect of these racist experiences was: lowering of self-esteem and self-confidence.

- **Legitimacy**

- **Trust in government departments**

As with trust in the police, confidence and trust in government departments depended on migrants’ and refugees’ previous experiences. KIs commented that this would improve with time.

In the long run, when they understand the system, when they know the system, when they learn about the system, they will see that they are in the safest place ever.

They don’t have the confidence, but the educated ones, they have been very happy to say that the second generation is really doing well.

Trust was also identified as an issue for Indigenous Australian residents, connected with interventions such as the Stolen Generations and the Northern Territory intervention. Some KIs also mentioned problems with understanding the role of the Department of Communities, in relation to removing children from families. This, however, was not as big an issue as in the Mirrabooka/Balga community.

The focus group participants were very grateful for the financial support and services that the government provided.

When we came to this country, at the beginning, we were depressed because there’s isolation. For me, we thank Australian government because they could consider everything. The government of Australia gave us some support, income... (Iraqi male)

- **Trust in police**

In general, Blacktown KIs thought that trust in the police had been built through positive initiatives such as the ‘street walk’ and other community collaborations (‘doing really good work to bring the police with young people together and doing joint patrols and things like that’). It was acknowledged that trust was slower to develop among some ethnic and cultural groups, due to previous experiences in their home countries:
And some of them, they do fear the police, because in their former countries, or in their country of origin, police are not protecting, but sometimes they arrest, they intimidate people. You know, they’d talk about atrocities being committed by people in uniform. So they don’t differentiate between a police uniform and a security uniform. And sometimes on the side of the young people, also, some of them their experience with police overseas is not good...because police sometimes can be corrupt, dishonest.

- **Social division and conflict**
  Blacktown KIs spoke of social divisions primarily in terms of socio-economic differences, or strategies that had been developed to address tensions between ethnic, cultural or religious groups. With regard to the latter, then, it was represented as something that had been resolved in the main, or was being addressed presently. Referring to the COM4Unity program (discussed subsequently), one KI said:
  
  As far as between the young people themselves, we don’t see any racial, cultural difficulties, probably because we foster a platform where that’s not tolerated and people come knowing that

- **Intergroup tensions and youth aggression**
  Blacktown KIs spoke of previous tensions between young people from Pacific Islander and Sudanese backgrounds, particularly on ‘fight night’ (young people—mainly young men—coming together on Thursday nights in Blacktown to fight). We'd have 2000 people over here and there was… rolling brawls—the African and Pacific Islanders.
  
  We knew of some of the racial problems amongst the older male young people between Islander background and particularly Sudanese background.

  These tensions were attributed to territorial disputes and testosterone (I think sometimes it’s access to public space, everyone think ‘Oh I’m the toughest. I’m the hard guy’) but also convenience: the transport hub meant young people from across Sydney were coming together in Blacktown; they were not only Blacktown residents. Other potential reasons included concerns that the girls from one group were flirting with young men from the other, and a lack of strong male role models in some of these communities. Several KIs challenged the assumption that the conflict was racial in origin, characterizing it as simply ‘young male violence’.

  The focus groups provided a number of observations about intergroup tensions and youth aggression. One was that there were a lot of groups sticking to their own ethnic groupings, which then alienated other groups and were likely to be a source of intergroup friction. There were also some ‘posturing’ behaviours of showing ‘power’ over the other groups, trying to provoke a response. Sometimes this was due to disrespect for others’ religion. Also, the participants suggested that there were less (or hardly any) of these kind of youth tension in some particular schools (e.g., selective and private schools).

  You got a view of the diversity in the school and the community, but once again you’re just gonna be excluded through...these people are gonna go eat their food from their country. No one’s gonna try anything new. They’re just gonna stick to their normal old routine. (Iranian male youth)

  The thing is, I think the only way for them [Indigenous Australian youth] to get along with you is by just calling you names... That’s pretty much what they do. If you’re with them, they like to call you names because they think they’re with their friends, you’re not going to do anything about it. So they just love to do it, and that’s not right. So it end up not working out anyways. (Sudanese male youth)
They can’t be gangsters. They’re trying to be gangsters. It’s not just their dressing, it’s the way that they talk to people, it’s the way that they accept no one. You come to our school, all you see like, if you’re Asian, first day there, you get into the Asian group straight away. Not all Asians, it’s just the Filipino, all of them will be excluded from society. They’ll have their own world. They choose to not accept anyone but Asians. And I’m not saying that’s a bad thing. I’m just saying it’s their way, but I mean, seriously, you live in a community—it’s multicultural. You can’t just say, ‘Oh, this guy is better because he’s Asian and he’s Filipino, whatever, than this guy, he’s a wog.’ But if you go to a Filipino group, all they do is speak their own language in front of each other so you just feel left out. You feel like, they just don’t want you around them. (Iranian male youth)

The Aboriginal kids seem to get along with the Australians than with the migrants or the refugees. (Male youth)

Intergroup tensions could be due to a number of factors, as some focus groups shared: peer pressure, wanting to fit in; previous rivalries and conflict in the countries of origin; misunderstanding of each other’s cultures (which was said to be a natural part of multiculturalism).

Like you got, ah who cares because binge-drinking it’s cool, I’m gonna get accepted by my mates. But in the end you’re gonna end up as a teenage mother at 16, like MTV has shows that show kids pregnant. I mean, what kind of life is that. You barely lived your childhood and you’re pregnant and taking care of your child; you’re a child yourself. And this is why I like Football United, takes us away from all this stuff. I think that’s one of the biggest soft spots for people nowadays. Like teenagers to get involved in all the bad bad things, like taking drugs, drinking alcohol. And Football United takes you away from all that. (Bosnian male youth)

Well, depends on where you’re raised, though. ‘Cause if you’re raised within the times of the conflict, then obviously, it’s going to affect you. But if you’re not raised through that, then. (Sudanese male youth)

Well if you come from a country, and you see someone else that you hated that’s from a different country, you’re obviously gonna have a fight with them ‘cause your country was at war. They’re still going on about it. (Iranian male youth)

In Blacktown, there’s still a problem with the Sudanese people. Because when I first opened the English conversation class in Blacktown last year, I was told by the manager that if there’s any Sudanese in there, they have to be referred to the Sudanese organisation. In my last term, I had a Sudanese woman. That’s the first time it happened. So in this area, the Sudanese are still in their own area. They’re isolating themselves; they’re not opening so we still have to wait until they are ready, when they are ready. (Filipino female)

That’s part of multicultural diversity—misinterpretations and misunderstandings between cultures. (Filipino male)

There were some suggestions to prevent intergroup tension and aggression, including not fighting back but simply walking away; for the government to be stricter with youth aggression.

Take the first step in doing the right thing. Don’t hold back and say, oh, he didn’t do it, so I’m gonna hate him, I’m gonna do the exact same thing. If he’s gonna bash you, just say you’re stronger, that’s it. I quit, you win, better. (Iranian male youth)

I know the hindrances why the community cannot work. They’re spending so much on juvenile delinquency. The elderly and the middle aged are neglected. (Filipino female)

- **Within-group tensions**

  Blacktown KIs questioned the tendency to view ethnic and cultural groups as homogenous, and highlighted differences of opinion and disputes within groups. These were not presented as outright conflict per se, but tensions and division. For example, the diversity within the Indigenous Australian
community was commented on—‘communities’ instead of ‘community’, defining who the Darug people were, and so on.

There’s a lot of politics in the Aboriginal community itself... that you can’t get someone to come from the mountains to do Welcome to Country here. Who’s the Darug people, who’s not?

Look, we’ve encountered a lot of complexities around culture, myth making, what is culture you know?... a lot of it is kind invented by certain leaders.

In addition, divisions within the Burmese community, along political, ethnic and religious lines, were mentioned.

I find that the Burmese community is very much split up, according to politics, and beliefs, and cultures and religion.

There were also signs of intergenerational conflict occurring in some migrant communities, as the children of migrants adopted more ‘Australian’ ways (‘we have a session where the older and the younger generation were split up. This was requested by the young people’).

The fine details of subtle intra-group tensions were openly expressed by Filipino participants when they talked about the tendency of co-nationals to gossip, not presenting a united front, conflicts within families, and inequality of treatment even within the same community. The suggestion here was that this could apply to any community in Australia; and that it was difficult to tell who was right and who was wrong in their views.

Even within our family, we have conflicts. Sometimes, we Filipinos don’t help each other. We only help those who we like to help. Same thing within the community, we have favourites. If you really want to help someone, no matter who he/she is, you have to treat them equally. I’m not generalising this to the whole community but, we all came here in Australia for a reason. So what happens is, when we come here in Australia, we become different. (Filipino female)

Safety and crime

As discussed under Community Reputation, earlier, KIs identified that Blacktown had a reputation for being a crime hotspot. When there was a police strategy to address ‘fight night’, police discovered a large number of weapons around the shopping centre. In general, though, KIs did not feel that Blacktown was an unsafe area and recognized that the statistics reflected the size and density of the population, but were usually misrepresented by media in such a way as to portray Blacktown as a place of high crime.

Some focus group participants did talk about personal experience of crime and feeling unsafe in Blacktown. One spoke of her husband being harassed at the train station; another of their house being broken into (which came as a shock because she thought these things do not happen in Australia). Some witnessed drugs and alcohol; phone grabbing at the train station; vandalism; and fights in public places.

My husband was working at the Blacktown train station early in the morning when a black person harassed him. ‘I hate these white people!’ he told him. He didn’t say anything because he did not want any trouble because there were only two of them there on the platform. (Filipino female)

My garage was ransacked on the eve of my first anniversary here. I forgot to close the roll-up door. When I woke up, all the exit gates were open. I didn’t think anybody here in Australia would steal. Now I feel that the same amount of care and attention should be given here as I did in the Philippines. I thought it isn’t that bad in the Philippines. There are many thieves here too. (Filipino male)
Sometimes, there are problems in your surrounding area—like people who use drugs. There was a man who lived near my home who planned to kill me. He’s Anglo. Two days after I left, he killed his girlfriend. He slit her throat. He was imprisoned. (Filipino female)

Media use and influence

As with the Mirrabooka/Balga interviews, Blacktown KIs indicated that social media use was high among the younger members of the community.

‘Til only recently, the youth worker had to actually have permission to go and use the youth cafe, because all her youth engaged in social media... that’s the tool to be using and, really, if you’re not already, you’re actually left behind a little bit.

I’m not sure if I know of any young person who is at school now that is not on Facebook!

One KI also thought that social media offered means of social connection for migrants, although there were also concerns that young people needed to be educated about their safety online. Other forms of media that migrants and refugees were thought to access included commercial television, community radio, and ethnic-language newspapers.

The focus groups gave some comments about mass media. The good points were related to the media being a venue for expressing opinions, reporting news, and predicting future events or issues; also, accuracy of reporting. The bad points were: judgemental and opinionated, biased, sensationalism, breach of confidentiality (which could have a devastating effect on the affected party. They believed that the media must have a sense of responsibility.

It’s good because you can air your grievances, say what’s happening and things that will happen. It’s bad because people can get judgemental. Some people write sensitive information just to sensationalise the news. (Filipino female)

There are biases in the media. We had a client who was named on the newspaper. The community, which he was a part of, got wind of it. That information should’ve remained private and confidential, especially since the cases we handle are often about domestic violence. (Filipino female)

The internet and social media were also discussed, with the cited positives being the capacity to widen friendship networks, ability to bring family and friends in touch, support in promoting/marketing goods and services. The negatives were related to irresponsible use by young people which could get them into trouble.

You can see pictures and videos on Facebook. A lot of kids are on Facebook. You should alert them because there are stuff on Facebook that are not meant for children. (Filipino female)

The impact of stereotypes

Consistent with our findings from the Mirrabooka/Balga community, there was a widely-held perception that the media contributed to the promotion of negative stereotypes that were detrimental to social cohesion. These included stereotypes about Indigenous Australians, Muslims and asylum seekers.

Because of the global media, the Islamic community are looking as like a terrorist community. This is really bad thing for... terrorists are a few number, not all of Muslim are terrorists but because of the global media, the image is like this.
The media. If they always target refugees and migrants, especially publishing sad stories, bad news, what’s the perception you think the society will have about these people?

Mainstream media is a total farce. And young people know that, with its own political agenda, this white middle class Australian agenda. So it’s been very damaging to Islamic communities, to Aboriginal communities, the language of the media is skewed.

Media influence

Blacktown KIs regarded the local media positively, indicating they had good relationships with editors and journalists who were interested in representing diversity positively. In particular, KIs described an incident in which community leaders had influenced the local media to not publicise a potential race riot. Community members had learned of a proposed anti-African rally, being put forward by a number of the same people who had been involved in the Cronulla riots. The council, the police, the Department of Premier and Cabinet all came together to persuade the paper not to publish the advertisement, that it would not be in the community’s interest. A story by the ABC on 7.30 in 2011 that highlighted the positive initiatives in Blacktown, was also discussed by KIs as a significant positive representation for the community (See http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2012/s3402882.htm?).
Appendix E-1  Social Cohesion in Murray Bridge (SA): Detailed Findings

A. The ‘community’

As noted earlier, this theme refers to comments regarding the community in an abstract, more general sense including community reputation and physical features of the neighbourhood. However, in contrast to our data from Mirrabooka and Blacktown, KIs and focus group participants in Murray Bridge focused less on the reputation of the area and spoke more about the town’s identity. The tenor of these discussions tended to be more neutral or positive, and conveyed a strong sense of community identity—typically as a ‘country town’. KIs also described it as:

...a cross between a country town and Adelaide

Part city...part country

The sense of ‘a lot quieter than the city’, ‘more relaxed’, and ‘close enough to town’ were echoed by the focus group participants. Most acknowledged that Murray Bridge is a ‘tiny place’. Many expressed being happy living in Murray Bridge—people were friendly, the pace of life was relaxed.

...a lot quieter than the city. I’m used to the city life, I lived in the city most of my life. Moving down here is more relaxing. I had a baby so I moved out here and it’s better for her because my family is around. (Ngarrindjeri female)

Living here, you just see this little tiny part of the world, and you know everyone, and I guess a lot of people want to get out and experience, y’know. (Anglo female youth)

When I first came, I’d go into a shop in Murray Bridge and they’d say ‘hello, can we help you’ and all that sort of stuff. We weren’t used to that. (Anglo Senior male)

Many participants talked about the features of the place such as the beach, the swimming pool, the river, the ferry, the churches, ‘a nice little picture theatre’, the town hall, bowling facilities, clubs, hotels; and the many activities that can be done. However, some commented that there was not much to do in Murray Bridge by way of entertainment.

...many churches. Shopping. There are places here for activity, social activities like the river, the swimming pool. When we arrived here, it was near summer. The people from church took us to the beach, to see the beach and to swim. And we enjoyed it, it was good. And we see the friends, friendly; show us the different things, the new things in the different places. Like Mannum mission, near the hotel. It is beside the river. On the ferry, we travel the ferry, Callington. I saw many, many places here.(Congolese male)

Yeah, good in that way that you’re not restricted, you don’t have to be involved in things. Well when you live in little communities like Raukkan and places like that—you live restrictions and stuff like that, but not when you’re living in a main town. (Ngarrindjeri female)

...a skate park and a cinema and that’s it. But there’s nothing to do in Murray Bridge. You can go and see a movie, you can go to the pool, or down the skate park, y’know. Especially during the holidays, ‘what are we going to do today?’...might go bowling, and then it’s packed and there’s nothing to do, and especially in winter when it’s cold. (Anglo female youth)

There is no night life whatsoever. The shops are shut and nothing comes open, and so everyone just goes home. (Anglo female youth)

Some participants talked about the difficulty of transportation if they wanted to go to the University or to Adelaide. In fact, for many things such as studying and getting specific items (e.g.,
for photography), Murray Bridge presented as a distance away from modern requirements. Even within Murray Bridge, getting from one place to another could be a problem, according to the focus group discussions:

Yeah there is no transport. Well, there is a bus, but it takes forever to. It would take me three hours to get to Adelaide. Coming from Murray Bridge, you have to get off at Mount Barker and change a bus to go to a different bus to go to Currie Street and then go to Magill and then come back into the city and catch the bus route back. And the buses only run at certain times out here. And so because I have a lecture that finishes at 9 o’clock at night, there’s no bus that runs out this way. (Anglo female youth)

I guess I also go there [Adelaide] to buy all my camera gear, because I have a hobby with cameras and stuff. You can’t get anything like that here. To print photos, I have to go to Adelaide. Stuff like that. Even clothes shopping, you go to the mall. Because there’s not a lot here right now. We’ve got Jay Jay’s and Target and a few stores down the main street, but that’s really expensive, and the surf shop and some modern mystic thing. (Anglo female youth)

There’s a huge issue with the whole traffic and bikes as well. And so they’re trying to look at ways to make it safer for kids to get to school. Because no-one walks to school; everyone gets dropped off. There’s no one riding a bike; there’s no one doing anything. So, they’re obviously looking at options that they can do. Because at the moment, I was at a meeting before, building a bike path out past Bunnings, with a natural vegetation and that kind of thing, so looking at other ways...safer options that kids can go to school. (Anglo female youth)

Change and development in the region were also part of this discussion, for example one KI referred to Murray Bridge as ‘a community that’s learning and growing together’. Changes identified as significant included the arrival of new migrant and refugee groups and also population growth in the area, and local commercial developments such as the new shopping centre, and proposed Equine Centre. In general, KIs regarded such changes as positive, offering new employment opportunities for the community. There were however some concerns expressed by focus group participants regarding the modernisation of the place, for example, traffic congestions, while acknowledging the benefits of modernisation, e.g., modern highways that made Murray Bridge more accessible to Adelaide and vice-versa.

Yeah, it’s great actually. I mean, once they built the freeway, that was the makings of Murray Bridge really. For me, you get the best of both lifestyles. Little farm down the other side of the river there, that’s wonderful. And I can come here and get access to anything I like. I go to Adelaide to pursue some interests that I have down there and things like that, and I wouldn’t be anywhere else, to be honest, it’s great. (Anglo Senior male)

The new Mall is pretty exciting, but with it brings problems and advantages as well, I guess, because there will be more traffic and stuff, the council needs to sort that out, and sometimes, this town strives to be a big town, but then they still want to keep the country. (Anglo female youth)

**A1. The community – public space**

Very few KIs mentioned public space within Murray Bridge. One KI noted that recently-arrived migrants and refugees were not geographically segregated in the community but that their residences were dispersed throughout the community. This was attributed to the rental accommodation arrangements of the major employer, T&R Pastoral, and regarded positively. The only segregation of note in the community seemed to be a north-south divide, which was largely along socio-economic lines (there was more public housing in the southern end of town).

In terms of human landscape, Murray Bridge was described in some focus groups as first a place that attracted retirees. Then Indigenous Australian people came, relocating from more remote areas. Then modernization overtook the whole community.
...affordable, the weather for me. I retired here, Mount Barker’s too cold. Hahndorf is too expensive, where I come from. I retired to here and I joined the computer group here first and then something else here was a camera group. (Anglo Senior male)

First up it was sort of for retirees, from the farm mainly, coming here. But then it got a bit rough here when they sent people from Elizabeth out here, and then the Aborigine community come out here. I think they sent the wrong ones, bludgers, but it’s settled down now...well, you still have problems. I reckon it’s a really good place. And now you’re getting this new Big W and everything coming here. But it’s close here to go to Mount Barker. You can still go to Adelaide. My daughter’s in Adelaide, I go there quite often. It’s still handy. (Anglo Senior male)

A2. Community reputation – ‘a prison town’

Some KIs identified that Murray Bridge had a ‘bad name’ because of its proximity to Mobilong prison and because it had higher than average levels of unemployment and socio-economic disadvantage. Because of a lack of affordable transport to Adelaide, many families of prisoners—who are often from lower socio-economic groups—re-locate to Murray Bridge. In addition, house prices were cheaper than in Adelaide and there were many government houses. Thus, the town was attractive to people on low incomes, and this led to its reputation as a welfare town, according to some KIs:

...in the 50s, 60s there were a lot of unmarried mothers here, and all these trusts houses were built...so they’ve had to come from a low base.

...a lot of single mothers and all the other things that have changed in lifestyle, there was a need for social housing and Murray Bridge seemed to have a lot of it at the right place at the right time.

We still have areas of housing trust [state government housing] where it is very well known in Murray Bridge what those areas are; there are higher crime rates, more domestic violence.

Some focus group participants talked about the reputation of Murray Bridge as a place that was ‘unsafe’—where kids could not be allowed to walk to the corner store without risk of being ‘grabbed’; where young women could be raped; where drugs and alcohol were common.

I’m really protective of my family too. About the person that’s preying on young girls, there’s not enough of that in the papers, especially in the local paper. And there’s not enough in the media around that. Because you live in a country town, you tend to think the shop’s just up the corner, so you think the kids can just walk up the corner and grab the milk or whatever, and you think it’s a safe environment. The perception is that it’s a safe environment, but it’s not. (Ngarrindjeri female)

No one walks around the TAFE area, or around the soccer oval, because people have got raped. During the day it is, and Murray Bridge people do know that. It was brought up in the 2020 [Summit]. They’re trying to look at how to make it a safe place and actually have a night life. But either that’s looking at installing cameras at the bar, or, but then everyone’s feeling like they’re watched; so trying to look at another way to feel safe in the community. So it’s not...cause they know too that there is no night life and no one is out past 7 o’clock, 6 o’clock. (Anglo female youth)

Fights do happen, but it’s over exaggerated as well. And I don’t like to go to Adelaide and say I’m from Murray Bridge. Alcohol, drugs. Drug addicts, people who steal, that kind of stuff. (Anglo female youth)

Such reputation of being ‘unsafe’ was apparently held more by people outside Murray Bridge. And some participants were amazed at how many people in Adelaide did not know where Murray Bridge was.

Going to uni in Adelaide, no one knows where Murray Bridge is; it like, it’s weird. (Anglo female youth)

I got changed to a Lutheran school... a lot of people are very judgemental, like, even if you walk a certain way or talk a certain way, hang out with certain people. I got so much crap, like saying that it’s
from the high school, I said jokingly ‘oh, yeah we carry knives in our socks’ as a joke. And they were like ‘Really? Were you scared for your life everyday?’...people’s perceptions are really wacked and out there. There’s one boy who refuses to walk down the street, he won’t come to Murray Bridge, he lives out on (name of town) because he’s afraid he’s going to get bashed. (Anglo female youth)

Many youth participants expressed frustration over the lack of activities and future prospects for them of Murray Bridge, so much so that they wanted to leave the place when it was time—another sense of the place being like a ‘prison’.

...because there’s nothing to do. I see no future here. People get married, have kids, stay here, just do their job over and over again. And I don’t want to be a person like that, personally. I understand how some people like that. I don’t want to be like that. I want to get out and see the world. And even my parents have said, ‘I wish I travelled more; I wish I had done things different’. And you see so many people that are older who say that, and you don’t want to do that. And the thing with Murray Bridge, yeah, everyone knows everyone. You do one thing wrong. Or like people judge you on the way you look. Like people with tattoos – ‘you must be a ruffian’ or people piercings or whatever. (Anglo female youth)

B. Belonging

B1. Overall evaluation: which community are we talking about?

Murray Bridge KIs described Murray Bridge as a warm and welcoming town in which residents had a high sense of community belonging. However, they acknowledged that there were sub-groups and social divisions in the community. For example, one KI said:

I still think that there’s pockets... when I say ‘pockets’, you’ve still got your white collar worker, you still have your meat work type class workers in Murray Bridge, and also quite a lot of young people we have here, and also the older retiree people, and the unemployed.

In particular, there were seen to be socio-economic divisions, as identified above, and that some minority ethnic or cultural groups ‘stick to themselves’ (although this view was disputed by others). KIs were in general agreement that sub-groups such as the sporting clubs and the churches provided a strong sense of belonging and connection to their members, including refugee families:

I know the ones who are involved in the church—I think they probably feel more a part of our community so I think the church has played a big part and that would be your Sudanese and the Congolese.

I mean, we’re members of the local church so that’s another area that you get to know people.

I guess being a church goer myself, I think, y’know, there’s quite a large church community in Murray Bridge.

For many focus group participants, ‘community’ refers to the multicultural community of Murray Bridge where people of different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds co-exist. There were also several religious affiliations.

We’ve got a lot of coloured, Aborigines, older people, Sudanese, blacks. And I make a point of saying g’day to everyone that walks past. As kids walk past, Chinese, Asian or something, they walk past and look like misery, and I’m out there doing something. I’m the old bloke and I’m ‘g’day mate! Off to school again, hey?’ They’re ‘what, what... oh hell, he spoke to me!’ (Anglo Senior male)

We got 10 or 15 different religions, I think, in the area. (Anglo Senior male)

28 different churches (Anglo Senior female)
We’ve got Arabic religions, Sudanese and Muslims and they’ve got their own place here too. Actually, the thing that I really love about Murray Bridge, in the last four years, all our asylum seekers have settled here. And the makeup of the community has so totally changed. When they initially arrived, there was tension, a little bit, particularly between the New Zealanders and a few other groups. And there was a little bit of lack of understanding initially, but then things settled down, things did really settle down. And the new settling centre helped out in a lot of ways, but then people started joining groups, and people started taking people along. Up until 8 years ago, I was very much involved with the Murray bridge high school, on the Parents and Friends, and Board and the whole thing. And we had various groups go through the school, and barriers started to break down. Even here we have a new settlers group, we have a group that come from TAFE, and they’re all Sudanese, Bhutanese, all nationalities; they use our computers here. And a really happy group of people. And we have numeracy and literacy classes here, which compliment what is happening at the Migrant Resource Centre. You see, the more classes, the more groups that you can have, the better it is. (Anglo Senior female)

For some, ‘community’ is Australia, that is why their sense of belonging related to how they were made welcome in Australia, how they were initiated to the life in Australia through the Australian Orientation Program while they were still in refugee camps, how grateful they were to be receiving settlement assistance from the Australian government.

I arrived here November 2010 only, with four families, Congolese, from Congo. We found many, many things are good. Because before coming here, we had the teaching from other people from here, I think down from the Australian government, from immigration there, at the camp. Teach us about Australia. Because you are the new people in Australia, you take a new life here. And the rules about driving, road safe. Told us about how to live in society: the law, the good the bad. If bad, you can be punished. And if not, someone can touch you, you have a secure. Or the houses on the road. I think here is easy, easy democratic country. Because when I arrived here, our life changed. We were in the refugee camp. We had nothing in our life. We eat...the food no good and the houses. But when we arrived here, I think we have the life like before, when we were in our native home, our native countries. Yeah, the good things here is the safe. (Congolese male)

The sense of belonging to a community was also related to the small town features where most people knew each other—something that Murray Bridge apparently had, despite it being a big town. There was active involvement of residents with each other’s lives, either through the church, community organisations or loose networks of friends and neighbours.

For a big town, I think it does get on well, because you get little communities...because I’ve been travelling around in different sized towns and that. In a little community, just about everyone knows each other and you get on better, but for a big town, I think this does get on well. Different organisations and that. (Anglo Senior male)

We’ve all become close friends, really. Somebody’s wife has a heart attack a week or so ago, and most of us knew about it within a couple of hours of it happening, things like that. (Anglo Senior male)

It’s groups like this that stop people from falling within the cracks. You read from time to time in the papers about some poor lonely soul’s been found dead and nobody’s even noticed they were missing for months. And hopefully that’s not going to happen in a place like Murray Bridge because people are involved in groups and there’s been a lot of work put in by people and a lot of work sought by people from the council. The current mayor is a terrific bloke and we try to make this a human community. That’s one of the reasons why I like it in Murray Bridge. People are people, they’re not just statistics and numbers. (Anglo Senior male)

Churches are a big part of this community too, y’know. And that’s a real connector with a lot of people. And some of the Chinese and Asians tell me that the best way to get involved in the community is the three or four of them to go along to an activity, like Tai chi classes. I had an enquiry from an Asian lass about Tai chi classes. She took two of her other friends along to the Thai chi classes. And she found it quite comfortable when it was just her and another girl there, and the other
one dropped off. But that was alright, because by that time, they knew the people in the group.
(Anglo Senior female)

**B2. Excluded groups**

KIs indicated that groups who may feel excluded or experience a lower sense of belonging to Murray Bridge community included the Ngarrindjeri residents, people of lower SES, people who were learning English and the Chinese migrants. The Ngarrindjeri were seen to have strong connections to place and within their community, but not necessarily a sense of belonging to or trust in the broader, or mainstream community. KIs spoke of a ‘hidden’ Chinese community as if it was possibly fictitious because they rarely saw Chinese residents:

> It could be anywhere between 200 and 300 [Chinese] people here. But she’s right, you don’t see them out in the street. I mean, you see a few, but don’t see the 200, 300 people that are here in Murray Bridge at the moment.

> I’m not sure about the Chinese community because a lot of Chinese workers come up for the Meatworks, but from [what] someone said the other day, I’m assuming they’re all living in the one area and so I can’t say I’ve seen a lot of them.

> I have heard and I suppose I notice because I’ve been told that the Chinese community aren’t very noticeable in the community...there’s apparently a big population but you never see them.

Some KIs attributed the lack of visibility of the Chinese workers to their shift work at the meatworks: ‘but I guess, y’know, part of that is that a lot of them work out at the meatworks. And they work shift work and that’s pretty full on work out there’; whilst others saw the Chinese families as choosing to be separate: ‘I think they’re sort of a separate little entity, or community’.

The only focus group that spoke of the Indigenous Australian group being excluded were the Ngarrindjeri women participants. They talked about a Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority that existed but was not recognized.

**B3. Belonging – Residential Stability**

The issue of stability of residence and its relationship to belonging was raised among Murray Bridge KIs. However, the kind of stability discussed here was quantitatively different from the sub-theme in Mirrabooka/Balga; instead of neighbours changing in a matter of months, KIs talked about years and generations of living in the local area:

> I remember someone saying ‘You’re not a local until you’ve been here for 25 years’ so you do have perhaps an elderly generation that have really firm roots here through farming and basically everyone is a newcomer to that generation.

> It was acknowledged that this view was changing, but that the more recent trend of people living in Murray Bridge and commuting to work in Adelaide (and vice versa) was an additional barrier to belonging:

> When you live here you get a feel for the place, a much stronger feel for the place I think, because you are here all hours, you are here on the weekends...you are here at night when there is night stuff on and I guess people that are commuting, particularly from Adelaide out to here, are missing out on that. The people that are going down to Adelaide from here, yes they lose so much time in travel.

> The only comment on residential stability in the focus groups was one on lots of turnover of residents which was linked to subsequent changes in neighbourhood relations.
I think neighbourhood relations change if you’ve got a lot of rented places in your street. And in my street, we have a lot of turnover of different people moving in and out. (Anglo Senior female)

C. Inclusion

KIs had mixed views on the extent to which there was equality of access to resources in the Murray Bridge community: some viewed it was generally equitable whilst others pointed out that changes in state government funding had meant the loss of some community workers such as those assisting with settlement and other assistance to migrants and refugees. Some of these gaps had been picked up by local community organisations such as Lutheran Community Care. Lack of affordable housing and higher education were seen to be problematic areas, whereas employment and healthcare were regarded as more equitable.

C1. Housing

KIs identified that a lack of suitable housing was a problem for recently-arrived groups, particularly African families with many children.

And most of them, they have fairly big families and so we haven’t always the right size houses here for them.

Some of the real estate agents in the region are a bit reluctant to give houses to Sudanese community members because they tend to have a lot of people in the house without their consent. So one thing is, these families are really big, it’s not one or two people in the family.

Finding housing was also difficult for single males.

I’m working with a Sudanese guy who’s got a wife and kids back in Kenya, in the refugee camp. And he’s been here now for about two years...he’s been boarding with another Sudanese family and that’s sort of becoming overcrowded so he’s looking to get his own accommodation and there’s huge trouble there, because he’s never rented a house before... and being a single man...

In addition, temporary or emergency housing was identified as lacking.

I know the only issue is housing here in Murray Bridge, there’s just no temporary or immediate emergency housing available.

The African focus group participants in Murray Bridge elaborated on how difficult it was to get housing in Murray Bridge. Some talked about the long waiting process. Others talked about the bias that owners and real estate agents had towards African applicants because they were known to have big families (‘many children’) and perceived to be not careful with the houses they rented. The far distance of available housing was also pointed out as a problem. There were a few stories also of how difficult temporary emergency housing could be—having to move again, and with many children too; and then finding new schools again.

It was not easy to find a house to live in. Before, six months, I apply a lot of. I don’t know why, because after two days, three days, they call me, ‘sorry’. For me I have a big family, 7 children, and my wife and me—9. Everybody has the nuclear family, smaller. Two bedrooms and one toilet is good for them. But for African family is very, very difficult to find house here. First they ask you how many in the family. She say 5, 7, it’s very, very difficult to find. Yes, we pay the rent, that is not the problem, because we receive the money from the government. (Congolese male)

Very hard to get the house here in Murray Bridge. Three years ago, when you apply, they approve it. But now the landlord will refuse. They say the migrant have a lot of children, and they destroy the house. (Sudanese male)
There is somebody, 10 kids, 4 kids, 7 kids, but they came with us. That is a problem, why we don’t get rent. (Sudanese male)

And the other thing is to move every time with many, many children. Sometimes we can find the house, very, very far from school. I have two months; when finish, I can be removed. Now not to sleep well because after these months, if I not find the houses. (Congolese male)

Regarding the family sizes of most African families, the participants gave an observation that the Australian government did not seem to understand that large families are valued in other countries.

If they know about other countries and other rules, I think maybe solve the problem. Because it is new for Australians. Example, here all guys living alone, not together. In my country, we make a big house, say 5 rooms, 8 rooms, but the big one is grandmother and grandfather. We are very respectful of grandmother; we don’t leave our grandmother and our grandfather. And grandmother and grandfather also respect our granddaughter, grandson. If the son is going to any other side, the grandmother says ‘where is he going, I miss him.’ (Congolese male)

The participants offered some useful suggestions to solve their problems with access to housing: the government would build bigger houses and the residents will pay to own these in 20-30 years.

C2. Healthcare

In general the Murray Bridge KIs thought that access to healthcare was equitable, noting the local general practitioner clinic (that had two offices), the Murray Mallee Community Health unit, and the Aboriginal Primary Healthcare unit. However, a number of KIs pointed out that access to affordable (or public) healthcare was restricted for the Chinese and other migrants who were 457 Visa holders.

I don’t believe everyone is entitled to the same. With the Chinese for instance, they’re on a different page to, let’s say, …the Sudanese and the Africans that come here on a refugee status...

When you are a new arrival or a New Neighbour 38, especially if you’re a 457 visa holder which is the Employee Supported Program and we have a large number of Chinese that are working under that scheme—they have the same access to medical care but they have to pay for it out of their own pockets.

The Ngarrindjeri women focus group was quite passionate in their discussion of access to healthcare in Murray Bridge. One big issue for them was ‘racism’—being ignored or being treated rudely at the health services; being made to wait a long time, either on the phone when making inquiries, or at the health unit. Sometimes the rudeness was perceived to apply to migrant/refugee clients as well.

Auntie went in and talked to them about whatever. But they’d still be rude, that’s how they are. But then if one of the nephews goes in there who’s got darker skin and stands next to her, they get totally ignored. And it’s the same with my daughter and her husband who has very light skin—she gets treated like she doesn’t know anything, she’s just a woman; and then when her hubby comes in, who’s younger than her by 6 months... (laughs) (Ngarrindjeri female)

So a lot of people just ignore their health issues because of it, ‘oh, I don’t want to go up there’. And it made it more comfortable when we had it up at the Nyoongars’ club, on Adelaide road. (Anglo-Ngarrindjeri female)

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38 New Neighbour is a term to describe recently-arrived migrants and refugees in Murray Bridge. It was proposed originally by a migrant but its use has since spread to community workers, council staff and others who work with the new and emerging communities.
I think there’s racism everywhere. You go to the doctor and you’re left sitting there and, you’re not treated nice at the counter, even when you ring up. I rang up three times and they just put you on hold. They don’t say, ‘can you hang on a minute?’ So I bolt in there and I said, ‘you are the rudest lot of people I’ve ever come across answering a phone’. (Anglo-Ngarrindjeri female)

The issue of representation of Indigenous Australians in health services was pointed out as another important issue related to access. Adequate representation meant not simply having Indigenous workers, but for the Indigenous Australian community to know where the worker/s came from, and then for both parties to negotiate how the community members could be engaged in the health system. The sensitivity of the non-Indigenous Australian mentors to Indigenous issues was also regarded as a core element in delivering effective services to the Indigenous Australian community.

There is a lack of appropriate representation. There is always going to be Aboriginal people that will be there, but they can always be from somewhere else. Just as long as they’ve got the Aboriginal logo thing on them. That’s one of the big issues for me—when there is representation of Aboriginal people, find out where they come from so that you can deal with that appropriately. And then where you are an employer or a community member, as a community member we can teach them. We can say ‘this is the kind of thing you need to do in order to engage our community’. You can’t come in with the other person’s interpretation of community engagement, because then you’ll just screw it up, and it will take years and years and years to get it back to where we got it to. And that’s very easily done because young people come in and think ‘hey, I got a job’, so that’s great, but the mentor that they’ve got is non-Aboriginal, somebody that’s non-Aboriginal that hasn’t lived in the community with Aboriginal people will know how they work. It just messes it all up. (Ngarrindjeri female)

The women in the Ngarrindjeri community have set up an enterprise through which they offered health and other services to Indigenous women who would otherwise not get any because of the barriers to accessing healthcare in the health services. Examples of services/program mentioned by participants were programs for young mothers (looking after children, setting up house) and counseling.

We want to get the word out that this is a business as well as the women’s group. Because we run the women’s group from here too. So we’ve got the two enterprises, we’ve got the business as well as the women’s group. We go out and we do what we can with the community, young mums, setting up house, and getting them into counselling and all that kind of stuff. So we want to be able to create an enterprise here, as well as create a new place where we can have counselling and all that kind of stuff, where our fellas feel safe, instead of dragging them up to the health services, so that the numbers go to the health services instead of the project that we’re running. So all of our projects in health at the moment go up to Murray Mallee and they get the dollars for the Aboriginal services and we get to use them. (Ngarrindjeri female)

The other focus group discussions conveyed views of both positive and negative experiences of access to healthcare. On the positive side, most participants were appreciative of having a universal Medicare system (through the ‘Medicare card’), and for having excellent facilities (e.g., fully equipped hospital, helicopter service to bring emergency cases to Adelaide), with medical staff providing equal treatment to all. Many found it easy to get a doctor’s appointment, or get the ambulance when there was an emergency.

Beautiful hospital, doctors, you got about 20 of them up there in the clinic, they all seem to be working together. Healthcare is one of the big things. But because I’m a bit over the top, and I’m in the high risk rate, they send me to Adelaide to check me out. (Anglo Senior male)

It’s a fully equipped hospital, but they’ll bring emergencies in, be they heart attacks, road traumas or whatever, stabilise them, call a helicopter, helicopter comes down and takes them Adelaide. (Anglo Senior male)
The doctors are very good in that there’s no distinction—you can walk in and have the scraggiest looking clothes on and be unemployed, and then there could bea guy in a suit sitting next to that person, all done up, but they’d still get the same amount of attention. And we are very blessed in that way. That is one thing about the Murray Bridge medical services, and surrounding areas even. There’s an equality there, that’s not always present in other situations. We have a number of employment agencies here like Madec and Workskills and a lot of CBS [Community Bridging Services] and workable solution and there must be about 8 or 9 of them, because they send clients along here to our Murray Bridge community centre and to the facilities here. I’m sure they all do a great job, but I sometimes wonder whether there’s too many of them. (Anglo Senior female)

On the negative side, some of the problems with access were: long distance between residence and health units; lack of access facilities for people with a physical disability; and unfamiliarity with the whole healthcare system.

There is obviously the drug and alcohol problems too, depression and that kind of stuff, because we’re so secluded. There are not health services that are directly accessible for us to go to. You actually have to travel to the city to get what you need. (Anglo female youth)

I had a friend who said ‘oh, I’ll go to Workable Solutions, I relate to the people they’ve got working there’. She’s on a motorised wheelchair, she has epilepsy, all sorts of things. She goes down to Workable Solutions, and guess what? She can’t get in the door! (Anglo Senior female)

They come down here, they have to pay for everything, and then they’re left, like we’re all. We had an agreement, once a client comes in, they are taken into a separate area, because of the cultural, what do you call it? They get afraid being around a mob, because they’re not used to, probably the white fellas are not used to the black fellas wherever they come from, so they get afraid and next minute, you can just see their anguish, their anxiety, the panic starts setting in. That was one of the things we spoke to the manager up there, about all these issues, how can we avoid all these issues? Especially with our clients coming in at that time, and it was guaranteed that we would have a room separate from everybody else, where a doctor would come in after, in spare time, and talk to them. And it hasn’t been happening. (Anglo-Ngarrindjeri female)

Some sensitivity was seen to be surrounding the access to mental health services in that, there was a stigma associated with accessing them, for example the program Head Space.

At night everyone comes here because there is a stigma with Head Space; it’s like a place where only people with mental health problems come. Because there’s two in the same building, so the stigma is still being attached, so the name has been changed to ‘the Station’, and they’re trying to de-stigmatise the building and what’s happening. And so not everyone comes here and they’d rather go see friends or stay at home or get in trouble at home or run away. (Anglo female youth)

C3. Employment

From our KI interviews it was apparent that the availability of employment varied across the Murray Bridge community, depending on the type of work one was looking and/or qualified for. There was plenty of unskilled or semi-skilled work available in the local horticultural industry and the meatworks, which employed many of the recently-arrived migrants and refugees.

We know with migrants that come here, come here to work because there’s work availability for semi-skilled and skilled workers; we have a luxury of a thing such as a very large abattoir.

That would probably be T&R [meatworks] and the mushrooms [mushroom farm], would be your major employers. From what I hear work is not an issue.

However, many KIs identified the issue of lack of recognition of overseas qualifications for these migrant groups.

These migrants, a lot of them hold qualifications that aren’t recognized and they might be working in an abattoir when in fact they’re a trained veterinarian.
There’s [client name] here from Iran, she’s got a Bachelor of Physics or something like that. And she said she would like to teach science. But you know, to get into that is just…

I think that would be the hardest thing coming here because a lot of people have come out with, they’ve got Engineering degrees or whatever and you come in and you’re boning sheep down at the meatworks.

KIs also identified that the issue of recognition of overseas qualifications for migrants was linked with education (addressed next), because the lack of higher education opportunities in Murray Bridge meant that many families were likely to move to Adelaide when their English proficiency improved, in order to obtain a better job and also to enable their children to have better educational opportunities:

They might be working in an abattoir...the reality is that they’re doing that because that’s what they’re prepared to do in a country... but the thing we find in research is they don’t want their children to work in those industries, they want them to be well-educated... they look at a place like Murray Bridge and say, ‘but you’ve got no future long-term education. As soon as we can we’ll go to the city’.

KIs also noted that the lack of skilled and professional employment was a problem for the community more broadly:

I just wonder you know, how long can you stay in the fast food industry for, if you want to go into admin while you’re studying or something like that?

The issue of access to employment was discussed at length in the focus groups. As with the healthcare issue, the Ngarrindjeri focus group participants pointed out that there was racism in employment at Murray Bridge, as evidenced by the absence of anyone of Indigenous background in the employment places, giving Coles and Woolworths as example. Many talked about experience of their own or of another Indigenous person of not being given a chance as soon as employers saw the colour of their skin; or being treated ‘like crap’ (especially the young people).

My baby son went over there and he got put on the lines. My son-in-law got a cadetship straight away because he’s not Aboriginal. So that’s the difference. Those stories go right through our community, so our kids don’t even attempt to go for those kinds of positions. Because they know they’re going to get knocked back. So there’s not going to be a chance. (Ngarrindjeri female)

Some of them, say when (girl’s name) went to get a job, and five were waiting to do their work experience and then go, they had places for them. But, what happened was the treatment by the managers at Woollies as staff, put them all off. So when they went and got their jobs and everything, and they were well presented and everything, and then the managers treated them like crap. And so a couple of them have resigned already. So y’know, we’re not actually treated equally, even though everybody says we are. We’re not. And we’re discriminated against in any kind of employment. And when you speak up, you’re reminded that you’re not actually here to represent the Aboriginal community; you’re here to do what we ask you to do. And yet they employ, even with me, I was employed because I was Aboriginal. But yeah, there’s still those things happening, and if it’s not happening with adults, it’s definitely happening with kids. (Ngarrindjeri female)

We don’t smell right, we don’t look right, we don’t fit—some of the kids have been told, so they don’t want to go back there for the traineeships or nothing. (Ngarrindjeri female)

(girl’s name) she went to get a job and she’s shy and all that, but just looking at her face, and said there’s no Aboriginal kids there, so I won’t go there, and it’s put her off applying for somewhere to go work. (Ngarrindjeri female)

It’s very racist and I told the mayor to his face. ‘Oh, no, no, no’ (response from mayor). Because we had lunch with him somewhere and he was on our table and I said, ‘it’s a racist town’, and he said, ‘oh no, we’re not’. And I said, ‘Well show me one black face in the shops in Murray Bridge. Tell me, one
black face in Coles or Woollies, and you say it’s not a racist town?’ I said ‘they avoid Nyoongars like the plague around here’. (Anglo-Ngarrindjeri female)

The other focus group discussions brought up some difficulties with accessing employment at Murray Bridge: employers looking for local experience when the newly-arrived migrants or refugees clearly have not had the opportunity to hold a job yet. Not finding a job along their area of training or qualification has made some participants frustrated and depressed.

You have to get an experience, but you didn’t work here. So I think they don’t approve the experience that you’ve had in your own country. I’m talking about the pharmacy, in this field. Because I have lots of friends who did their exams and become a registered pharmacist, and then they are looking to work as a pharmacist, and they said to them, you have to have experience as a pharmacist. So he have a whole year training, trainee. And then how he can be a pharmacist? You don’t give him the opportunity to work as a pharmacist. So it think it is unfair. It’s a little bit difficult to be a pharmacist in your country and work for two years, and have your own salary and everything. And then start from here from the beginning and you are nothing here, you have to start from zero. You become depressed and disappointed at first because you feel that you have nothing to do here. And even to work, you work something, not in your field, not appropriate with what you have done in your country. Have to work in a meat factory or something like that. (Egyptian female)

An Anglo youth participant expression an opinion that there was actually some discrimination against Anglo-Australians when African refugees were favoured in the meat processing industry; and they attributed this to the fact that company owners received an incentive funding from the government if they hired refugees as workers. At the same time, the same participant acknowledged that many young Australians would prefer to work in an office than at the abattoir. The youth focus group revealed that many of the difficulties faced by refugees and migrants affected youth as well, such as Murray Bridge not having enough jobs available, young people being the first to be laid off, the uncertain and unstable nature of casual work, and so on.

I find that when you’re hiring, overseas person, T&R [meatworks] get a government incentive to hire them, that’s why they don’t employ Australians to get in there. (Anglo female youth)

If there is a job here, I will be here, but at the moment there’s nothing, that’s why I took up country arts, is because I needed a job, and I went to work in Adelaide for that whole time. Because I was here for six months working for Country Arts, and they re-employed me down in Port Adelaide, so I was in Port Adelaide from Monday to Friday, as well as going to uni. I was obviously driving down, obviously staying a whole week in Adelaide. But because obviously we don’t have any work, it’s hard for us to get accommodation, so we stay at our parents’ house. So I stay at my nanna and grandpa’s house. But to get a higher income, you would have to move out of home, and then obviously get rent assistance, and you get other stuff on top of that. (Anglo female youth)

Kids at school are like, ‘oh, why like, working at T&R, why would you want to do that?’—high and mighty about it, but we need people to do those jobs or Australia won’t survive. And even picking grapevines during school holidays, Asian kids will get on a bus and go do it, like where my dad used to work, because they are willing to do it, but kids from schools wont. (Anglo female youth)

Technology has made it possible for a youth participant to be working for a company at Adelaide but be based in Murray Bridge, which she had found suitable.

From Port Adelaide, they hired me to work in Murray Bridge. We used to communicate via external FTP which is like a board where you can talk to them back there as well, which is great. And we used to Skype to my boss back there and because it wasn’t so easy for me to travel down, because they would pay for my petrol to come down, so to save cost for them, we would Skype; it was easier. (Anglo female youth)
In terms of what actions to take to address problems with access to employment, again, the Ngarrindjeri participants cited the Ngarrindjeri enterprise as a place where Indigenous Australian people can be supported in terms of getting suitable employment and advocating for them to be treated properly. Running this business, of course, was a worry for them because they needed to keep it financially viable.

Their kids are a bigger target than what we are. And that’s why we’ve got this place, we want to be able to create a working opportunity for Aboriginal people and their families. So that we’re all here working together and we’ve got something positive to show the community. Because, y’know, I had my son started at T&R, he lasted about three weeks because of the racial stuff over there. And these are people that you can’t get to come and have a sit down, have a bit of a talk to, about employment and strategies and things like that, where they can help. And they just don’t want to be a part of it. Because they’ve got this big Chinese community that they can employ for less. We’ve got a lot of people coming in at the moment, assisting with little projects, so we got work skills down there, we’re getting some of the boys doing the gardens downstairs, but it would be nice to employ a couple of them. They’re all willing to come in and help and do a short term project, but at the end of the project we want employment for some of the kids. Yeah, so we’ve got that. And employment for the elder that’s supervising them. Even if it’s only for a day or two days. So we want to create and get employment in here. But the other stuff that you said around um, building relationships with Aboriginal people and they can do that through this cultural centre. So I guess for me in particular it would be support to establish this as the cultural centre for this area. And where we can build relationships with the community as well as employment for Aboriginal families. (Ngarrindjeri female)

Within our community, it’s the only way where it’s going to be fair and equitable for everybody. And it means us getting our act together too. So being able to find, get the right information to start off with. And getting good mentors that can come in to show us how to run a business. Rather than saying ‘here’s some money’… that’s not really… and everybody else learning. Sometimes, as well-educated as you are, or as I am, I don’t understand money a lot. I know that I get paid and I pay all the bills. (Ngarrindjeri female)

Other participants suggested the following solutions to employment problems: more English classes, more job opportunities, less discrimination among employers, recognise their overseas qualifications. Many talked of hopes for more employment prospects once the planned building of a shopping centre in Murray Bridge is completed.

**C4. Education**

As discussed above, KIs identified that post-secondary education was severely limited in Murray Bridge and this was a significant problem for the community, particularly in retaining families:

We can’t always hold them here because of the education, so their main thing in life is to get the kids to have a good education, and while we’ve got good colleges here and that sort of thing, they seem to think that they want to go to university and that., so they go back to Adelaide.

I think to the end of the secondary school level is fine but—it’s one of the major issues here in Murray Bridge because we don’t have a university and we would lose all of our young people to Adelaide because they have to go there to study…I know that has been the same with quite a few of our New Neighbours, that their children reach the end of Year 12 and they want to continue their education, but the family can’t afford to support their child in Adelaide as a lot of Murray Bridge people do…the whole family will have to move.

As will be addressed in *Participation-barriers* subsequently, the issue of access to higher education was also connected with the problems of transport between Murray Bridge and Adelaide.
On the positive side, KIs thought that there was good access to English classes for those who wanted it, including tuition and assistance on the weekends for those working (provided largely by church and community groups).

Many youth focus group participants pointed out the difficulties in obtaining post-secondary education, with many knowing the need to travel to Adelaide to get a university education or go to TAFE and the costs associated with the expenses. So some of them would take a gap year\(^{39}\) after finishing high school and save money to then pursue post-secondary education. Anticipating that they would not be able to study fulltime, they expected difficulties in getting government assistance. Some other issues brought up by the youth were: fights and bullying in (high) school, with some students getting away with bad behaviours and the school being helpless in disciplining them; some students not having the support of their parents in terms of help with homework and guidance with their behaviours.

In uni you have to study 4 subjects, full time, otherwise, if you do it part time, you have to go out in to the workforce, but because you’re travelling down, that’s also classed as a subject, you still can’t get the incentives to go down to uni. Going to uni and back, two grand. And that’s not even paying for parking, my registration or my insurance. And some people can’t even afford that. And then you have to pay for books and one book is 150 bucks. (Anglo female youth)

A few positive views on education were related to adequate opportunities in Murray Bridge, and the recognition of Indigenous Australian culture (e.g. school logo having a translation in the Ngarrindjeri language).

For me, my husband...we’ve been here 20 years, my husband got transferred with his work, but we also took the transfer because at that stage I had one daughter in year 9 and one daughter in year 6 and a son in year 2, and we lived for 17 years in Port Augusta. Now the education opportunities aren’t all that great up there, your options are very limited, and we knew that at least one or two of our children would go to university because they’d been identified as bright enough for it. So coming to Murray Bridge was a very positive move. Both my daughters have gone to university, one’s got two degrees and she’s working on her MBA at the moment, she lives overseas. And my next daughter down she’s got two degrees. And my son has gone as a mature age student, and he’s studying part-time at Flinders and working at Woolworths. So, those opportunities would not have been open to them had we stayed in Port Augusta. We would have been lucky if they finished high school. (Anglo Senior female)

That made a difference: the school had already been teaching the language Ngarrindjeri, but the fact that each windcheater\(^{40}\) had ‘reach for the stars’ in Latin, plus the words ‘reach for the stars’ in Ngarrindjeri, that automatically hit a cord. And it was amazing, the retention rate went up. Each year, a couple got through that year 12 business. Some of the poor kids used to drop out in year 9, but you know, the parent’s just pointed out that ‘you are part of this’ and it’s on that windcheater, and everybody proudly wore that windcheater. And at that stage it was the first high school in Australia that had on the windcheater printed. Now, there is one in Queensland that I heard about a couple of years ago. But I think that it should be. (Anglo Senior female)

### C5. Excluded groups

Almost all the Murray Bridge KIs identified that workers on the 457 Visa were most likely to be excluded.

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\(^{39}\) A gap year is a term used to describe taking time off or ‘out’ between life stages, most commonly a delay of one year in commencing tertiary education after completion of secondary school.

\(^{40}\) a warm jacket, usually with a close-fitting knitted neck, cuffs, and waistband. Also called Windjammer US name (trademark) Windbreaker, Austral. name (trademark) Windcheater
457 Visa holders had a pretty rough deal: there’s nothing available to them except education for their children. Everything else, the federal government can’t supply, the state government can’t supply. They’ve had bugger-all support, versus humanitarian people in the main, get a hell of a lot of support...and it’s not fair.

As described earlier, this exclusion was seen as impacting upon healthcare in particular, but also access to childcare services.

D. Participation

D1. Community Participation

A distinctive feature of the Murray Bridge community is the extent to which people get involved, particularly in volunteering. KIs agreed there were many activities available to community members, through sport, churches, and local events such as the Christmas Carols, the Christmas Parade, and other community events. Arts activities were less well patronized, although it depended on the event. A council employee said that, in one round, the council had applications for community grants from 40 different individual, incorporated not-for-profit organisations. Several KIs, who came from backgrounds other than Anglo-Australian, thought that the major town events tended to be rather culturally homogenous (predominantly Anglo-Australian) and old-fashioned, and organizers were reluctant to change or experiment. There was little discussion of Harmony Day—one KI thought it was celebrated at the local secondary schools and an exhibition of students’ work at the town art gallery.

The Anglo-Australian seniors focus group participants added more activities that members participated in, such as the community lunches offered by the seniors club/group, golf club, arts club, writers group, racing club, Christmas pageant, tai chi class. They emphasised that these activities were available to everyone, inclusive of people from different ethnic backgrounds, and people with disability or special dietary requirements. They also recalled an oral history project where a number of them (the seniors) were trained to interview and document the life stories of local residents.

There was a strong racing club here before, good golf club; there are ample opportunities for people to get together and I guess to a degree groups like this perhaps pick up and help. There’s a couple of people in our writers group for example who needs to be very proud of, I sort of played a little part in it too. There are people in our writers group who’ve had real blows in life and so forth and have come on over the years and have been with us and have integrated in the group, and they have achieved things outside of the group. Had their work published or gone on and picked up courses in this that and the other at TAFE and things like that and we like to think that we’ve helped in some small way. Those of us who have had better opportunities in life than some of these people. (Anglo Senior male)

The state library, and we went down and we were trained to interview people, and compiled 25 life stories, on CD and tape and oral history project, yes. And they’ve got 25 CDs that they have produced plus photographs and books and the whole thing and some of the people that they had interviewed, because it’s been a two year project, have died and some of them are 100 years old and they’ve got migrant people that have settled here and their stories, all the stories. 25 different old people, you only had to be over late 50s to call it old. And some of the people had amazing, amazing stories. (Anglo Senior female)

The Ngarrindjeri participants added arts and crafts to the activities offered by their group. When asked whether their community participation was more with the Ngarrindjeri community instead of the broader Murray Bridge community, they explained that they also tried to engage with
everyone, for example the various organisations that connected with them. Some mentioned that the church played a significant role in bringing people out to be involved in community activities.

We try to engage, because we have different organisations that come down and work with us, and usually they are the off-shoots of the church programs, like Centrecare and AC care. They’re a bit of everybody aren’t they? And one of the good things is that two of those people sit on the Astople society, so we’ve got them engaged now. Which is good, so we’re sort of building. You’ve got to really know everybody in the community, right? And we try... (Ngarrindjeri female)

The Lutheran church over there. It’s our new settlers, I think they call it a retreat, as I recall. And they’re doing a lot of good work there, and there’s a thing going on at the moment. I, as well as being involved with this group, a couple of friends of ours that are involved in the writers group here, for quite a long time we incorporate a body called ‘stumpy festival’, and we’ve recently worked in collaboration and funding with the new settlers group. The Lutheran Church and things like that. Yeah, there’s a lot, a lot of people do a lot of work to try and smooth the integration of particularly the Middle Eastern people who are coming here, and it seems to be working. (Anglo Senior male)

The youth focus group mentioned the following activities for youth: night clubbing, music, concerts, painting, arts, photography, ‘burn-out auto festival’ (which had been banned), movie nights, sports, the multicultural day at school. They were appreciative of local businesses sponsoring some of their activities such as the art competition. But many were quick to explain that for youth above 18 years, there were not many activities, so most youth ended up hanging out with friends, and sometimes getting drunk, and getting into trouble with the police. Many would have wanted to take their activities further such as forming bands or sports groups, but they knew it was going to be difficult because it was not easy getting some funding for these.

...but for over 18’s, there’s nothing. So on Friday night, everyone goes to Dundee’s. But there’s nothing else to do! I stay home on Friday nights and watch TV because I have nothing better to do. (Anglo female youth)

The high school do a multicultural day. I remember when I was there they had this Chinese Dragon thing, and they also had an Indigenous Australian dancing thing as well. They put that on for the exchange students who come from (name of town) who come down to here. (Anglo female youth)

People go to football because they have nothing better to do. I know girls who go, purely because there’s nothing better to do. (Anglo female youth)

The skate park jam, they collaborate with them, they have free sausage sizzles and stuff and a skate competition. (Anglo female youth)

They have a concert. Gives the opportunities to play on stage and get used to have people to perform to. And they also have the drum kit stuff, that’s for everyone to use. The other great thing is the holiday program. There’s opportunities for people to help out, and people come here for work experience. (Anglo female youth)

Other social activities cited by the remaining focus groups were: visiting friends and family, going to the beach, swimming, and going to church.

The benefits of community participation could not be underestimated. For some participants (e.g., seniors, refugees, newly arrived migrants), this provided the much needed human contact to reduce the isolation. For others, this opened up opportunities to develop networks that could prove useful in their access to services, including but not limited to health care and employment.
D2. Political participation

Participation in local government—in the form of letters to the council, complaints to the paper and local radio about the council and the occasional petition—was seen by KIs as quite strong in Murray Bridge; and mentioned by youth participants as something that they have done.

They are a fairly demanding population as far as Council is concerned. They will write letters to the editor of the local paper, but you don’t see protests and that sort of activity. (KI)

Oh yes, they get together, they get grumpy about things and they write letters. (KI)

I think it was also a way for us to express what young people want in Murray Bridge to the older people. (Anglo female youth)

However, running for the local Council was not seen as something ‘attainable’, particularly among the Ngarrindjeri, recent migrant and refugee groups. In addition, KIs said that voting in local elections was restricted to ratepayers and Australian citizens, thus a significant proportion of the local community would be excluded.

Running for council’s just out of the scope for me, because there have been young fellas and really switched on and they never got anywhere. The circle of influence is really the most important for working in communities, or even considering to go into local council. You’ve got to build up that circle of influence, you’ve got to get to know all those people and I think they are absolute red-necks and they don’t want Aboriginal people. (Ngarrindjeri female)

D3. Volunteering

As with many Australian rural and/or regional towns, there was a strong tradition of volunteering in Murray Bridge.

Out of the eight towns [in the region] we were the lowest socio-economic council in the eight, and yet we’ve the highest number of volunteers. Now I think that says something...it’s not how much money you make, it’s what you do for your fellow person, you know. (KI)

Well, there’s such a range of volunteers, and I don’t know how many thousand we’ve got here, but they range from people driving cars to take people to Adelaide and that type of thing. (KI)

Yeah, there’s a lot of volunteer work here, you know, through the churches with their op shops and... (KI)

There is that general volunteer kind of attitude about Murray Bridge, y’know. (KI)

We went to zombie walk which is like the walk in Adelaide where they raise money. They ask you to donate tins of food as well. A gold coin for...so you know, stuff like that we go down for. We go to Mount Barker for the movies rather than Adelaide because it’s closer. (Anglo female youth)

Several KIs pointed out that the volunteer groups tended to be older members of the community, and therefore there was concern regarding who would take over these roles in the future. As discussed in Enablers and Barriers, below, KIs thought that New Neighbours were less likely to be involved in volunteering due to their work and other commitments, although they often assisted others within their ethnic community.

Most people, I think, are just so overwhelmed with their day-to-day stuff, there is not a huge amount of ability to do voluntary work.

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41 ‘Opportunity shop’—a shop run by a charity in which donated, second-hand goods are sold with profits going to the charity. They are usually staffed by volunteers.
They do get involved with their own community events a lot... there are a few that they volunteer in different agencies.

One KI suggested that there might be cultural differences in perceptions of volunteering, or limited understanding of the construct.

When it comes to new settlers...from China, Sri Lanka, India, Sudan and Congo who are really new to Australian society and the community, and for most of these countries, they don’t know what volunteering means even. And when we ask ‘would you like to volunteer?’, the impression they get is ‘oh well, he’s asking me to work for free of charge’.

A lot of voluntary work is happening within the community... I mean I don’t think they describe that work as volunteering, it just comes from their culture and from their ethnicity...it’s something that they do for the community within.

D4. Enablers and Barriers to participation

KI's and focus group participants indicated that barriers to participation among the more recently arrived migrant and refugee groups included English language proficiency, work hours (particularly shift work), childcare responsibilities, unfamiliarity with local institutions (such as the school system) and time.

We know a few Congolese people and we notice that the guys seem to assimilate better to start with because their language skills are a lot higher. A lot of the women haven’t got English... and some of them have got small babies.

I think that there’s the language barrier which is one of the major barriers.

It can be quite daunting, going into a school and yeah, it’s sort of an institution that they mightn’t be really familiar with.

Barriers to participation for the Ngarrindjeri community included a lack of trust or familiarity.

In the situation where there are very good relationships and understanding...the things that happen down at Pomberuk [Ngarrindjeri cultural centre] are often really well attended because people feel comfortable there, it’s a space and that’s theirs.

Cost was also identified by some KI's as a barrier to participation for the lower SES members of the Murray Bridge community.

I do believe the lower income, the families that are on Centrelink and/or split families that maybe receive a small amount of maintenance... I think because of the lower income there is definitely a lack of opportunity to join in

Transport – locally and to Adelaide- was identified as a significant barrier to Participation and Inclusion, by the majority of KI's. Most KI's and many focus group participants identified that the lack of public transport within the community was a barrier to participation in community activities, particularly for recently arrived migrants and refugees who may not have a car or drivers’ license, and even for long-term residents, including young people.

That’s why people organise lifts to help people out because it’s a lot of walking and you see the poor guys out there and the kids and mum and dad, and they’re all walking...a lot of them live right down that end of town, most of the shopping is up this end of town. (KI)

And the other one is transportation. So people who are settled in the region, they have their own private transportation, cars and things like that, but the people who are really new arrivals struggle a

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42This had been identified by Taylor-Newman and Balasingham (2009) in their study of Sudanese settlement in Murray Bridge. Clearly it is an ongoing problem.
lot. They don’t know the road rules, they are not confident to even ride a bicycle, or they have to walk for miles and miles just to access services...and if they’re sick or things like that, they tend to stay at home rather than walk all that distance because the houses they get is not based in really close to the town. (KI)

I live also in Mannum and I have to go 4 times a week to Murray Bridge and back and forward so it’s too consuming for petrol. And only my husband works and I didn’t work and we have a rent, so it’s a bit lot. (Egyptian female)

I see young people, between the bridge and our place down there, and I see a lot of young people. And I’m surprised young people...They are totally isolated. Public transport is always going to be an issue in communities this size, but I think there ought to be some bridging thing. The taxi service is unaffordable for a lot of people, and the bus service is not financially viable for a small number of people to be running all over the town. I’m not quite sure how it would be organised, but yeah, that’s an area which is lacking a bit. (Anglo Senior male)

I don’t mind getting on a bus and getting off at Mount Barker and then getting another bus from Mount Barker to Adelaide. I understand the logistics and the financial reasons, don’t get me wrong, but we had a community bus that used to run around the town too. Now, we’ve only just got a little bus now, and it runs by the hour. Before, we had a big bus and you could get on the bus at Woolworths and you could get off at the cemetery and the bus would come back and pick you up at the cemetery. You could get on the bus at Woolworths and go to the hospital, the bus pulls in to the hospital, drops you off while you get your broken leg fixed and then you’d get back on the bus. And it linked everywhere around Murray Bridge. Now they’ve only got this limited service, and I understand that it’s here to stay. It was only a small bus, and so there’s a lot of young families here, who can’t catch that bus anymore, so they put their kids in the stroller and it’s raining and pouring and they’re walking miles with their kids, and that didn’t happen before. (Anglo Senior female)

Transport to Adelaide was also identified as a problem, specifically as a barrier to inclusion (education) for the youth in Murray Bridge. According to KIs and focus group participants, Murray Bridge young people had to travel to Adelaide for university classes, for example, they need to catch several buses, it is quite expensive and is difficult after 5pm. Therefore some families in Murray Bridge supported their children going to university by renting private accommodation in Adelaide, something that is beyond the financial means of many.

I have a son that goes to uni, you know even if he wanted to come of an afternoon, he can’t, because a lot of lessons finish at 6, 7, because he’s doing engineering. Buses stop at five-thirty. So transport is a big issue. (KI)

...and to park ... we don’t have that here, you don’t pay for parking here, it’s not an issue, but then all of a sudden in Adelaide you have to pay for your car park, you gotta park there at the right time. (Anglo female youth)

An enabler of community participation was resources and money, according to the focus group participants, for example the youth participants mentioned the support of local businesses and government funding; and accommodation for visitors who attended their events (e.g., concerts, motor cross racing, the Pedal Prix43). Space was a resource that Indigenous Australian participants felt was important for community participation—a place where people could come and engage in collective activities. And government support could not be underestimated as an important promoter of participation. And this regard, there was a bit of tension regarding the perceived shift of allocation of resources and support—from the Indigenous Australians to the newly arrived migrants and refugees.

43 The Pedal Prix is the third and final race in the Australian HPV (Human Powered Vehicle) Super Series. It is held annually in Murray Bridge, with the first two races taking place in Adelaide.
I think that he’s [Mayor] doing a good job, I think that he’s not aware of everybody else in his organisation is doing and saying. But the focus has shifted too, hasn’t it? To the new arrivals. (Ngarrindjeri female)

Even with the Sudanese, they’ve got a place already, don’t they? And they’ve only been here two years, and they’ve got a community centre. I’ve seen a flyer come out the other day. Everybody that come in seems to be able to access that straight away. But if you’ve been around for a long time, you’re not considered that you need it. And have a separate place to here, where we can have counselling and legal services, so people can know their rights and all that kind of stuff as well. And that wouldn’t be able to be run out of here, we would have to have a separate place close by. And everybody’s fighting for these two places in the hills over here. So I put in a bid for them. It would be really good if they handed one of those back to us. So that we can have the women’s centre up there. The legal services are being nice to me all the time, to come down and run sessions with the women down here. And I’m saying, ‘there’s so much happening at the moment, I can’t sort of fit it in’, and because everybody’s busy it’s really hard to get a group of women together and say ‘let’s just focus on this’. I’m running blind... and I keep just putting bids in everywhere, and then hopefully people will come up and say ‘yeah, that’s a good idea’. (Ngarrindjeri female)

Even though it was performing in the city, CircusOz as well, come out to south school in the gymnasion there, they still had to pay $55 a ticket to come out and see it, when they can go see it in the city for $35. And they were like, ‘we can go out and have a family outing and drive to the city, spend a whole day like go out for lunch, go out for dinner instead of paying the extra amount to come out here’, where they may not think it’s the same class and quality, so... (Anglo female youth)

Even with the MyGen youth group, we had an event where we decided we’d go surfing for the end of year celebration and we had to find funding to get on the bus to get there, and we had to fill out all these forms and stuff for insurance. So it’s just difficult to do anything. (Anglo female youth)

A barrier to participation could be considered cultural, for example, when some cultural groups had specific restrictions on mixed-gender mingling, thus some women could refrain from participating in certain activities.

We had Afghan ladies come here too, a couple of years ago to learn English. And we had to be extremely careful, because their husbands didn’t want too many men around. So the Afghan ladies no longer come, because most of our volunteers are men. (Anglo Senior female)

We’ve got about 13 that work in the garden and 11 of those are men. So there’s no way in the world the Afghan ladies would come back because there’s too many men around and they used to bring their children too and sit on the ground while they’re learning English. But that’s ok because this Afghan community is accessing other facilities within the town. They’ve moved on to other places. This building is not all that great, we haven’t got a lot of room, but you have to be aware that...there are cultural sensitivies. (Anglo Senior female)

E. Recognition

In general Murray Bridge KIs indicated that mutual respect and tolerance were evident in the community. Most acknowledged that some members of the community were less tolerant—usually older, long-term residents who were not educated—but believed that intergroup respect was high.

I just think people have probably developed a tolerance that maybe in other communities...

I think generally like, you know, there is respect in the community for one another generally.

For some KIs, this was linked to ‘country values’ and ‘old-fashioned values’ of interpersonal respect.

Sub-themes that emerged from the Murray Bridge interviews: intergroup attitudes and behaviour, and discrimination and prejudice.
E1. Intergroup attitudes and behaviour

Consistent with the general evaluation of tolerance and respect in the community, KIs identified that intergroup attitudes tended to be positive, with one exception: relations between Indigenous and Anglo-Australians. These relations were not described as highly conflicted but rather as two communities that were ‘wary of each other’, and that the Ngarrindjeri people did not feel ‘respected and treated right’. Nonetheless, a number of KIs highlighted the Anglo-Australian support of the Indigenous Australian community when a commonwealth government consultation on changing the Australian constitution (to acknowledge Indigenous Australians) was held.

I was fascinated to see that the people they drew were probably 50/50, white and black. The support from the white people was what surprised me. That, in fact, they were right behind whatever the Aboriginal people were asking for and they did feel they would be short-changed a bit if it was only in the preamble and not in the body.

In addition, several KIs mentioned that some members of the community were suspicious of the Sudanese men.

There was more information about intergroup attitudes from the focus groups. There were many opinions that expressed satisfaction over the increasing presence of various cultural groups, and that different groups were getting along. Many refugee participants felt that Australians were friendly, and vice-versa. Many have met friends through the church, school, and community gatherings. Some have attributed the positive intergroup relations to an acceptance of each other’s cultures.

There is some Aboriginal at Meat works. Yeah the meat works. We are together, no problem. (Sudanese male)

The majority here is, I think, good. In shopping ‘how are you?’. Or before to ask you money, to pay money, you say that ‘hello, how are you? How are you going?’ That’s very good, polite, yeah. (Congolese male)

It’s interesting though because you get people who come into stores and you can’t understand accents sometimes and you try and work with them to get what they want. We have a friend (name). He’s Lebanese, and he’s really well spoken in English, and we’ve been to his house before and he was explaining, because he’s Muslim I think and they pray on the mat and because of that, we understand him a bit better and how he’s at home and stuff like that. But without that you kind of like... (Anglo female youth)

... the church and the community centre here, and people living in my street. Because we have families, we have a couple of rented houses in our street and the Bhutanese moved through there, different families. Actually it was amazing, absolutely amazing. (Anglo Senior female)

On the other hand, there were a number of issues raised in focus groups that reflected dissatisfaction with the state of group relations in Murray Bridge. One prominent theme was around the tendency of various groups to stay within their own group, or speak in their own language even when there were other people around who did not speak their language. Some examples: Chinese students in a high school staying more within their own group and talking in Chinese among themselves (which made the other kids wonder whether the Chinese were saying something nasty about them), Aboriginal youth staying within their own group in school, Filipinos speaking their own language at parties.

When I hang out with these two people who speak German, and you’re the only person who doesn’t understand German... (Anglo female youth)
If they weren’t speaking Chinese to their friends, you’re talking to them, because it makes it awkward because you think, ‘are they saying something mean about me?’, ‘is there something on my face?’ ‘is there something they don’t want to say to me, or can they just not say it?’ (Anglo female youth)

From my experience, from the high school, the Chinese kids would talk Chinese to each other and sit on their own. And it would be very difficult to try and talk to them. And then when you talk to them, they whisper something to their friend in Chinese and you feel really put-off by that. And you couldn’t really continue and have a friendship with that. It’s not just Chinese people, that’s just an example. Having different social groups and different languages. It’s difficult if they don’t want to speak English with you, and you don’t know any Chinese and they just sit on their own and it’s hard. Because you want to make friends with them, you don’t want to appear racist or anything, but at the same time they exclude themselves too. (Anglo female youth)

Some reasons were offered to explain these attitudes and behaviours: lack of self-confidence and inadequate English language skills, the Indigenous Australian students being segregated (i.e. separate classes), the lack of motivation to integrate into Australian society because of their temporary status (e.g., international students)...

...exchange students, it’s different, I think it’s a different ball game again, because they actually come to learn English, they want to know the Australian culture, they want to know more Australians, they want to have more Australian friends and that kind of stuff. Whereas Chinese people they come here to live. They don’t care so much about the Australian culture, the Australian language. Like even parents, their parents don’t speak English, they get their kids to translate what they are saying to them as well. (Anglo female youth)

It also depends on them, how confident they are to express themselves to you. Like if they just want to sit in the corner and talk Chinese they can do that and they will do that. But the people we’ve spoken to... I speak to Chinese people, I speak to a lot of Sudanese, I work with a lot of Aboriginal people as well, because of all the events that I run. But if they don’t open themselves up to take a chance to get to know you, as you want to get to know them... They’re not as open as much as us Aussies are. I think we’re more welcoming. Obviously I don’t know what they think about us, and so then you don’t know what to think about them. And so then there’s like this whole racism thing as well. (Anglo female youth)

It’s difficult though with the Aboriginal kids if you want to hang out with them, they have separate classes and stuff, they have a Noongar room where they’re allowed to go and you’re not allowed to. That’s separation as well. (Anglo female youth)

The consequences were: It became difficult for Anglo-Australians to get to know them better, and they could actually feel left out; a divide was created making it difficult to have close relationships and more meaningful social interaction;

I hang out with Filipino, my friend is Filipino, and she understands English and everything like that, but you go to a Filipino party and they all speak Filipino, and you’re like ‘what are they saying?’, but as an outcast, because I’m not Filipino obviously in that party, it’s like ‘what are they saying?’ you just kind of sit there. And they all welcome me and everything like that too, but yeah, it’s a different atmosphere altogether. (Anglo female youth)

I know me and my friends from high school, we had a few different culture friends. But we would never go visit them after school hours. Like only say ‘hi’ and ‘bye’ to them and have a chat with them in high school. (Anglo female youth)

Another theme was around neighbor relationship. There was a general feeling among the participants of being happy with their neighbours, with the following characteristics and experiences with ‘good’ neighbours contributing to this feeling: getting along; dependable especially when there is a problem; look out for each other; help each other; afforded independence and privacy despite being involved in a friendly and helpful way.
I live on a nine acre farm on the other side of the river and there’s a series of them there and we’ve become very good friends, well one side, the other side dairy and even there actually...the guy that owns the dairy (name). He just crops these paddocks on that side of us. But, I mean, if he sees something, he’ll come and likewise. His cows got out recently, so we said ‘oh (name) cows are out’ and so we went down and locked the end of the street so they wouldn’t go down to the highway, little things like that. So you do interact and to a degree; you do depend on one another on farms. And likewise the neighbours next door, they’re coming over and swapping plant with us and things like that, and so that’s one of the reasons why I like the country. You might not have the wider range of acquaintances that you do in Adelaide, but the people that are around you and your immediate vicinity, we do look out for one another. And you do relate I think, much more closely and strongly with... Because we all share the same sorts of little problems, y’know the security of the place and animals getting out and things like that so you’ve always got your eyes open. If you see something you can do, you do it. And you know that your neighbour will reciprocate. For me anyway, that’s the thing about living in the country. Having been born and raised in the city, and part of my life here, but no way I’d ever go back. (Anglo Senior male)

The other side I got Aborigines, they’re ok, always come and need something, and haven’t got much...no tools and that, always lending. ; (Anglo Senior male)

... actual neighbours, there’s none across the road, there’s a park across the road so...the old fella down the back, who I do keep an eye on who’s getting worse, yeah and I know he’s still alive because his dogs bark and I keep an eye on him a bit that way ... (Anglo Senior male)

E2. Discrimination and prejudice

KIs did not think that discrimination and/or prejudice were significant problems in Murray Bridge although they acknowledged that there may be incidents that they had not witnessed. When ethnic or racial discrimination had occurred, KIs identified the most common targets as Indigenous Australian and African members of the community:

I just remember a couple of the ones, well, a Sudanese man in particular at the Meatworks who, he’d had a few things said to him or something, you know, like the ‘go back where you came from’ sort of thing.

There’s a bit of discrimination against local Aboriginal culture...I even got that from a councilor yesterday, you know, a comment about Aboriginal people...probably the second or third time I’ve heard someone going ‘the Blackies’ and you just go ‘huh?’... so you do get that kind of thing.

I hear too many stores about there being very few, if any, Aboriginal staff in the shops in the main street. I hear stories of kids, Aboriginal kids that come from respected Aboriginal families, being followed as soon as they walk into a shop because it’s assumed they’re going to shoplift.

This discrimination and stereotyping of Indigenous Australians was talked about a lot in the Ngarrindjeri, Anglo-seniors and Anglo-youth focus groups. There was a general feeling among Ngarrindjeri participants that there was much racism against Indigenous Australians in Murray Bridge. Their experience of this in healthcare, education and employment were already discussed earlier. There were also experiences with the police picking them out as target of attention (e.g. search, stronger police presence in Indigenous events/activities). Politics was an area where their presence could make a difference, but they felt that Indigenous Australians would not be successful in getting inside this arena. Some felt that Indigenous Australian children went into undesirable activities because there were not that many positive activities in Murray Bridge. They felt they always had to justify who they were and found themselves demanding for respect, fair treatment and recognition, whether from Anglo-Australians or migrants and refugees. They felt that the multicultural services did not include them, or at least did not make them feel welcome there.
...we’re always justifying who we are. And even with [migrants]. We’re dealing with visitors to our country to start off with, and we have big issues now because people aren’t recognising that we are Aboriginal because they don’t see us as being black enough and y’know running around in little...well like hardly any clothes *(laughing)* But y’know it’s those kinds of things, and it’s sort of like we’re justifying our existence all the time. And when people marry into our family, we don’t always expect that everyone that marries into our family get treated the same as we get treated. Especially when we go to the GP’s and stuff like that. But we do expect a little understanding. And especially when we’ve already organised for our elders to be, and when we talk about our elders we don’t see the colour. We talk about the elders and our family and stuff like that. So when we go to the doctors we expect the same treatment. *(Aboriginal female)*

I don’t think we’d consider going to a multicultural centre, I wouldn’t. Somebody said, ‘I was there the other day—one of the AC care workers—said she was there for... and I said ‘where is it?’, and like I’d driven past it 1000 times, but it is only for new arrivals and half the time, because the Aboriginal community doesn’t talk as openly as they used to, nobody knows what’s happened, and you hear about it after... *(Aboriginal female)*

Schools -they have racial problems and I went to this high school as well and it was pretty bad then, and my nieces and nephews go there and it is bad. It’s a big issue here and they try and sweep it under the carpet. We’ve even had police officers being racially...cheeky back to people. In the streets and I’ve heard them say stuff back. But yet the cops shouldn’t be doing that. And even the other cop that was with him said ‘nah, he shouldn’t have been saying that’, but they let him get away with it. *(Ngarrindjeri female)*

It’s the same for white fellas too. I think there’s just a lack of awareness and understanding about Aboriginal people. *(Ngarrindjeri female)*

The refugees and migrants know nothing about us. *(Anglo-Ngarrindjeri female)*

We’ve got what we call the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority, and a lot of the time at the table there, we don’t know what’s going on because it hasn’t come through us at the authority. So, we’re very good at positioning ourselves, us women. So we know as much as everybody else. That was one of the things that we brought up before that we’ve got a regional authority that’s equal to the local council, but it’s not being recognised and the information is not being passed through. And so when it comes to working with the new arrival or any kind of development that’s happening in our community, we don’t know nothing about it. Which is sad. *(Ngarrindjeri female)*

The Anglo youth participants acknowledged the alienation that young Indigenous Australians in the community experienced. For example, the stigmatisation of Indigenous Australian kids; the very low number of Indigenous Australian kids in mainstream schools; how Indigenous Australian kids have separate classes; fights happening among Indigenous Australian kids being regarded as like a big issue when fights among ‘white’ kids occurred as often; the dilemma some kids experienced about their Aboriginality and the reputation that society has associated with it (which lead to some kids trying to deny this identity).

I don’t have many Aboriginal friends. My friend is half Aboriginal, but she doesn’t want to be associated with Aboriginals. Because I think she feels associated with it [the bad things] too. If people perceive her as an Aboriginal, she thinks her reputation may change. Because Aboriginal with that whole, Aboriginals and what they do, and is wrong. And so she’s never accepted the scholarship for Aboriginals, she’s never taken Centrelink benefits for Aboriginals, she’s doesn’t want to be associated with the Aboriginals or anything like that. And I also have another friend who works here, she’s Aboriginal too and she’s like heaps of fun... Yeah, and because my friend’s mother, she’s Aboriginal, but her dad’s Australian. Her mum is like a drug addict and everything like that, so she doesn’t want to get associated with that, because if she gets associated with Aboriginals, she gets associated with her mum, and her mum is a drug addict and everything like that. *(Anglo female youth)*

There’s one boy in school, he’s the same colour as me –pale. And he’s got an Aboriginal father, and I had no idea. And he’s like ‘I don’t like to tell people... especially at the school’, because he gets judged
for it. And that’s the other thing with it being a town where everyone knows everyone. If someone you’re related to does something wrong, then you get a bit of backlash from that. Even at school, I used to get paid out because both my brothers have Aspergers, and they were like ‘oh, you must have something wrong with you too’. (Anglo female youth)

... like there’s a stigma that most of the Aboriginal kids are always up to trouble. I don’t agree with it, but it’s there. The other thing is moving from the high school to Unity, there’s one Aboriginal boy that I know, and the rest are all like white people. (Anglo female youth)

And you’re told as a kid to accept everyone and you’re all the same and stuff, but why are they in a separate class? (Anglo female youth)

The Anglo senior participants acknowledged the problems in the Indigenous Australian community–problems with youth not staying in school and becoming involved in undesirable street activities, drugs and alcohol. The seniors participants were sympathetic, mentioning that ‘there’s a lot of good Aboriginals here’; that there were some prominent Indigenous Australian families who tried and worked hard to make sure their kids got an education; and that there was a history of Indigenous Australian people being treated badly which caused the problems of disadvantage they now faced. Some have mentioned certain programs that tried to address the problems faced by the Indigenous Australian community; or simple steps to bring out the pride in being Indigenous among the students (e.g., having the school logo translated in the Ngarrindjeri language).

There are special problems in the Aboriginal community I think, and a lot of them revolve around schooling and lack of schooling and things like that. And there are a group of good people in the Aboriginal community, who are trying very, very hard to keep their kids in school, and keep them off the streets and things like that. And I can’t speak for what progress they’re making. And to a certain degree the sporting club, the football club and that play a part in trying to get the Aboriginal boys off the streets and stop them forming gangs and getting into gangs and getting into trouble. There are special problems in the Aboriginal community with alcohol and things like that... (Anglo Senior male)

I think we treated the Aboriginals bad, and I think that’s still stuck in their mind, even though it’s later generations, and I think as soon as they can realise and move on with the community, the others will be alright too. Some have learnt. (Anglo Senior male)

F. Legitimacy

F1. Trust in government departments

Trust in government departments was not a major issue in our discussions with Murray Bridge KIs. Most of them thought that there was trust in local government, although one said that some members of the community ‘are not quite sure who the local government represents’. In addition, it was identified that some young people in the community may not have faith in the council—‘they’re not going to listen to me, I’m just a kid’.

Some focus group participants expressed appreciation for the support that the government has been giving the refugees. Some however expressed confusion over rules created by government, such as those in relation to penalty fines for a number of things; and over the system of political participation of members of society (e.g., just accepting penalties associated with the many rules on different aspects of life).

F2. Trust in the police

KIs were almost unanimous in their view that the Murray Bridge community has little confidence in the police. This was presented primarily as an issue of availability and resourcing, not
one of integrity. In particular, there was a widely-held perception that the police were unhelpful and unlikely to assist after hours.

People see them as revenue-raising on traffic matters, and not around when they need them...yeah, you try and get police out after hours.

I ring up, and I don’t know how many times I’ve done this, I’ve rung up and no one’s answered and I just can’t believe it.

You really won’t get much satisfaction from the police especially if there’s paperwork associated with it.

I don’t think the police are respected as much up here in Murray Bridge.

Some KIs thought that some groups were unfairly targeted by the police, such as Indigenous young people:

There’s a good lot of pulling them over in cars! Sorry, you tend to go, I don’t think those kids were doing anything wrong. Why have they been pulled over?

In contrast to these negative views of the police, some KIs thought the local police had been good in developing trust among members of newly-arrived groups such as the Sudanese community.

The focus groups confirmed the observation of the police targeting Indigenous and other kids; and the police being slow to respond (although some said they were quick to respond to the important calls). Some also recognized that there was a lot going on for the police to focus on, such as drugs and alcohol, ‘hoon driving’, ‘burn-out auto fest’, theft and robbery. The participants also recognized the lesser resources given to the police force in Murray Bridge (compared to Adelaide).

It seems to be more focused on the hot-spots like in Adelaide, where there’s the numbers and stuff like that. And there’s crime all the time happening. Whereas they see when you’re down here, the country town is where they can deal with their own stuff more or less. And that’s not really good, because that can create something a lot bigger. And it’s a situation where the incidence will start and it will become explosive down the track. And then everyone gets involved. (Ngarrindjeri female)

There’s gotta be the right environment too. There’s not an open environment, so that everybody feels comfortable to have their say. Y’know it’s the same way that the coppas back-chat and smart-talk to the kids. It’s not the right way to handle it. (Ngarrindjeri female)

Look at that drive by down here—it took the 45 minutes for the police to get down here. (Anglo-Ngarrindjeri female)

If you happen to call them, like the main headquarters for the police is in Mount Barker, so they have to come here, but the person, if you rang them, the person that answers the phone, you give them an idea of what situation you’re in, why you want them, and if you need them pronto, you get them pronto. But if it was just a stolen bike, you could wait for a while, they might have to wait till tomorrow to file that report. (Anglo Senior female)

G. Social division and conflict

Consistent with the view that Murray Bridge is generally a tolerant community, KIs did not identify significant sources of social division and conflict. In particular, there was a shared view that any division that was evident was predominantly socio-economic rather than ethnic, racial or cultural—‘the have and the have-nots’. This was echoed by some focus group participants as well.

I think that’s probably the socio-economic divide... and maybe racial as well but I think that’s slowly being thinned out, I don’t think that there’s much of an issue. I think socio-economic though, would be the biggest divide. (KI)
Socio-economic divisions come through and there is significant unemployment here as there is in most communities, particularly rural communities. And this divides the kids; it’s the kids who can afford cars and afford the things they want and then kids that can’t and, but I don’t think that’s exactly unique. (Anglo Senior male)

I think it’s pretty much the haves and the have not’s. That’s the biggest thing. (Anglo Senior female)

Nonetheless, some KIs identified that there were some intergroup tensions and safety was a concern for some residents.

**G1. Intergroup tensions and youth aggression**

Although there were few examples of intergroup tension identified by Murray Bridge KIs, they did mention that some Anglo-Australian residents had expressed concern about the growing numbers of ‘foreign people’ being employed locally. In addition, KIs said there were lingering tensions between the Anglo-Australian and Ngarrindjeri people, as discussed under Recognition, earlier.

For some focus group participants, the intergroup tension was more a youth thing than along ethnic lines (‘because they have nothing to do here’); however, Indigenous Australian kids were often perceived to be more involved. Youth aggression was thus pointed out, as manifested in fights in school and in public places; smoking, drugs and alcohol, even among the very young (e.g., under-10 years); unbecoming behaviour (e.g., animal cruelty).

That’s been going on, happening all the years I’ve been here. I’ve worked with the Map area for 8-9 years. And during that time we encountered a lot of young fellas that was on drugs and alcohol. And one of the police officers comments one day at the bridge port there, ‘we always knew that these Aboriginal kids would be like that’. ‘Thanks for your support’, that’s all we said that night. It had died down a lot in regards to kids. I don’t see many kids, maybe 8 years ago, really drunk and all their little faces. It’s not as bad now as it was back then. But the attitude towards the police is still the same because we get the influx of new ones that come in. And they don’t know the history or the relationship we have with the past society and things like that. So that becomes a bit of a problem that we got to again go out and obtain that relationship, build it up again. But you still get some smart assess that will go with these young kids around town. And then you wonder why half of them are doing crime in Murray Bridge, or on drugs or drinking, because there’s nothing here for our kids. The only place they got now is [name of youth drop-in centre] and the majority of kids is white, kids that go there. (Ngarrindjeri female)

Teenagers especially up in the high school, not so much primary, public school, but the high school there’s a lot of issues happening up there that we encounter as parents. So I find it a bit hard talking to and resolving things up at the high school. (Ngarrindjeri female)

At Murray Bridge High School, the students lit up a cat, which did happen. There was a major bashing there. (Anglo female youth)

Fights do happen, yeah it’s going to happen in any school. (Anglo female youth)

I knew people that were smoking normal cigarettes, when they were like 6 or 7, and then they were like taking hard core drugs, and they’d break into people’s houses to do it, before they were 10, and that’s disgusting. (Anglo female youth)

**G2. Safety**

Murray Bridge was generally regarded as a safe community although KIs described an atmosphere of growing concern and ‘caution’ in the community with regard to personal safety. Some linked this to an over-reporting of crime in the local media and noted that statistics did not support residents’ fears.
There is probably an over-reporting of crime and that tends to happen in smaller towns, that’s what you hear about... so therefore people have got this, I guess, feeling of unsafeness at night in their homes.

You hear about some bad things that happen, but percentage-wise we would be one of the lowest problem areas of the state.

There were quite a significant number of accounts of safety and crime issues in the focus group discussions which created an impression that residents probably felt unsafe and concerned about the crime situation in Murray Bridge. They cited: drugs and alcohol (which many associated with unemployment); fights between groups (Friday and Saturday nights were common periods when fights happened; altercations between Africans and Indigenous Australians were widely known), many of which have led to serious injuries, and some to death; grabbing or kidnapping of children and girls; rape; and stalking.

It’s a big town, there’s lots of incidences here all the time, everyday, and they close the police station here at night. (Ngarrindjeri female)

You go out and there’s always someone fighting, there’s always something, someone’s in trouble. Like at (name of place) on Friday night, and I haven’t been out in months, and cops come out there, and sit right in front of the door and watch everybody come out, but yet 200 metres down the road, someone got bashed, and next minute he’s in the cop car covered in blood. And the cops were there the whole time. And they were too busy watching the door, and sitting in the car watching. (Ngarrindjeri female)

She said she walked her dog, she has a massive German Shepherd and she was walking her dog and she saw this guy carrying a knife and placed down on the ground, because he’s seen her coming, placed it on the ground, and literally she walked past, she called the police. And the police did not come until one and a half hours later. She could have been stabbed or whatever. It’s kind of weird. (Anglo female youth)

I’ve had experiences where both my brothers have been beaten up. One of them was walking to the bus to go to school. Two kids beat him up and stole his wallet. And all the police could do was file a report and stuff, but we couldn’t afford to take them to court or anything. (Anglo female youth)

While not necessarily related to safety and crime, there was also concern over unwanted teenage pregnancy, and depression due to isolation.

What to do to address the issue of safety and crime was also discussed briefly in some focus groups. Some participants talked about the government’s plan to install surveillance facilities (which some felt uneasy about), actually encouraging more people to come out at night, having greater police presence, sending back the ‘criminals to where they came from’.

And when it comes to criminal action, apart of full acceptance for immigration should be that if they are actively involved in criminal, like the tribes and things like that, if they’re proved to that within ten years of them coming here they should be sent out. (Anglo Senior female)

On the other hand, a number of participants, especially the refugees who have felt very unsafe where they came from (i.e., home country or refugee camp) indicated that they felt safe in Australia, particularly in Murray Bridge.

You never feel worried about walking down the main. I mean, it’s like anywhere else; it depends where you go, but I feel quite comfortable for example going to the tele-machine at night, yeah. (Anglo Senior male)
H. Media use and influence

KIs mentioned the local newspaper *The Murray Valley Standard* as the main source of local information. The most common criticism of the paper was a perceived over-reporting of crime and negative incidents.

> When you’ve got two stories and you think, well, that’s a good story and that’s a crook story, well, the crook story will always get the front page and that’s not necessary.

> They report on crime overly.

> They tend to reflect the negative side sometimes.

Despite this criticism, several KIs said that the paper supported the local community in ‘promoting local activities’. The local paper was not seen as contributing to stereotypes about ethnic or racial groups, or contributing to local tensions. A representative from the paper was interviewed who suggested that the paper was conscious about its role in promoting cohesion, thus, an example of strategy was including various ‘faces’ in the paper, not just the ‘white’ people.

> Making sure you include other faces in the paper. Australian media is very quick to get the white politician... making sure you include people and I think when you see different faces in the paper, you accept them a bit better,

This journalist also described how the paper had stopped publishing a separate section on ‘multi-cultural issues’ and instead had moved to *blend it in with general news because we wanted to see that become just a normal part of things*.

The focus groups mentioned a few comments about the local newspaper. A Ngarrindjeri participant said that the paper had improved in that it had become more sensitive to Indigenous news reporting and featuring issues. But whenever a new staff was recruited, they would start the negative profiling again and would have to be trained again not to do so. The reduction of negative news reporting mentioned by the journalist above was consistent with the views of some participants that many crime and disturbance-related incidents had not been reported in the paper, which they pointed out as a criticism because with the under- or non-reporting, the residents did not get to know what was going on in their community. (The young people had learned to use the internet instead, with Facebook as one of the most popular, to find out about news in Murray Bridge and Adelaide.) The national media was heavily criticized for their creation of Murray Bridge as a bad place; in one instance of reporting, there was alleged misreporting and dishonesty. Such inaccuracy of reporting was also a criticism of the local paper.

> They tend to make sure they use the Aboriginal word in that section. So if you’re in trouble, they’ll identify it there in that section. And because most people will go and read that section, people find out who the trouble makers. So you know, in that section, I think they need more education around how to write that up without using the stereotypes. (Ngarrindjeri female)

> I had on my Facebook page, because I’m in a Facebook group with the SA Police, I didn’t even know there was a drive-by shooting, until it was on there. There was a drive-by shooting in Murray Bridge. (Anglo female youth)

> They tell you what you want to hear even though that information is not accurate. There was a instance saying in the paper, they all went to a meeting in the new market place, everyone was there, they had two people from The Standard, radio station, everyone. And they were saying how they’re going to change all the traffic and everything, work on the flow, whatsoever. And how they were waiting for it to open to work out what’s going to happen. And the press put out an article that they were literally talking about in there, completely changed the whole story. (Anglo female youth)
They had a video from our school. And then they asked a student who wasn’t in our school and he went and asked her questions, but they didn’t actually interview anyone from the school, what they thought, somebody who had left. And the mum was saying, ‘oh, the school never did anything about it’, but they tried and they gave the school a bad reputation. As if we didn’t have it bad enough. And most of the time it’s over exaggerated as well, sometimes its total crap, but people believe it, because they’ve had reputation from other stuff. It’s the same kids doing the wrong thing over and over again. (Anglo female youth)

Having outlined the criticisms, there were some positive comments about the local paper: very active, published regularly (twice a week), community-conscious, and cheap advertising.

It’s a very active newspaper, it’s part of the rural press group. But the management are very community conscious, very, very active. Reports on all that’s going on, the sporting results... and it comes out twice a week. (Anglo Senior male)

I’m getting quite the celebrity in the paper, her and I are getting personal mates now and friends (laughs). I get so many stories, I’ve publicised myself with my book and I want people to know who I am and that is full on, and it’s less than a dollar ten. But, look, if we’re going to have a newspaper and that’s the way they run it, ok. I’d rather have it than not have it. So I mean—the paper, the picture theatre, the radio station, the live theatre, the musicals... (Anglo Senior male)
Appendix E-2  List of news articles used for the media analysis in Murray Bridge


## Appendix F  Diversity and Social Cohesion Program, Funded Grants, 2010-2011


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of program</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Funding</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Target geographical population</th>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>Strategy/ medium</th>
<th>Social cohesion dimension BELONGING</th>
<th>Social cohesion dimension INCLUSION</th>
<th>Social cohesion dimension RECOGNITION</th>
<th>Social cohesion dimension PARTICIPATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coming Together; Creating Mutual Understanding for a Collective Future</strong></td>
<td>The proposed project project aims to encourage a better understanding and respect for all cultures and religions so as to reduce acts of intolerance and hopefully vandalism against Hindu places of worship in Auburn and Minto.</td>
<td>Hindu Council of Australia</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Local—Homebush</td>
<td>Communities, religious leaders</td>
<td>Forum, workshop</td>
<td>brings together all major cultural and religious community leaders</td>
<td>cultivate as well as strengthen within the Hindu community itself a better and deeper understanding and appreciation of other religions and cultures</td>
<td>open invitation to the public to a forum/workshop to share ideas for peace and harmony</td>
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<td><strong>Create, Engage Unite: A Blacktown Creative Arts Project</strong></td>
<td>This project is seeking to reduce antisocial behaviour in public spaces at shopping centres, Blacktown station and other places where young people congregate.</td>
<td>SydWest Multicultural Services Inc, in partnership with Playwriting Australia, Information &amp; Cultural Exchanges, &amp; other youth services in Blacktown</td>
<td>$49,915</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Local—Blacktown</td>
<td>Youth (African, Asian, Pacific Islander and other backgrounds)</td>
<td>Music, Arts</td>
<td>incorporate elements of community safety and conflict resolution training to reduce youth from participating in risk taking activities</td>
<td>focusing in music and the arts developed through partnerships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Target Group</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Funding Source</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>Harmony across Cultures Project</td>
<td>The aim of this program is to enhance the teaching and learning experience of students at Griffith High School especially the ones who are experiencing discrimination and intolerance by addressing the issues that affect cultural harmony and respect.</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>Arts, events creation of a mosaic depicting the Flag of each student's country of birth</td>
<td>Local—Griffith</td>
<td>involves the creation of a documentary style recording of the mosaic being created and students telling their stories and giving a background on their culture as they work</td>
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<td>IMAGES: Looking beyond stereotypes</td>
<td>The proposed project will bridge the social and cultural gap that exists within the community of Camden by bringing young people aged between 12 and 25 years from different backgrounds together.</td>
<td>$29,400</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>Workshop bring the young people of Camden together with the very diverse communities in Campbelltown to expose them to new ideas, people and cultures</td>
<td>Local—Campbelltown</td>
<td>stimulate discussion about stereotypes and prejudices and how they are learned in society</td>
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<td>Pacific Islander Mentoring Program</td>
<td>The project will deliver mentoring activities to Pacific Islander youth which will be implemented in three stages; Recruitment, Matching and Relationship Support.</td>
<td>$47,722</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Youth (Pacific Islanders)</td>
<td>Forums, outreach service deliver mentoring activities which will be implemented in three stages; Recruitment, Matching and Relationship Support.</td>
<td>Local—Griffith</td>
<td>focusing on the negative perception of Pacific Islanders in Griffith.</td>
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<td>Radio Media Portal (RAMP)</td>
<td>The RAMP project aims to provide Wagga Wagga with a community owned and maintained online media portal that allows for communities and cultural groups to own the way in which they are portrayed in the community.</td>
<td>$48,500</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Communities</td>
<td>Online media address the key issue of providing a space for inter-generational and inter-cultural exchange and dialogue</td>
<td>Local—Wagga Wagga</td>
<td>provide opportunities for the uploading of video, audio, images and text as well as dialogue and exchange</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Funded Organization</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Funding Source</td>
<td>Funding Details</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
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<td><strong>Rhythm 4 Respect</strong></td>
<td>The Bankstown Multicultural Youth Service project aims to reduce the incidences of racial intolerance between African and Arabic youth in the Bankstown LGA.</td>
<td>Bankstown Multicultural Youth Service</td>
<td>Bankstown</td>
<td>$10,500</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Local—Bankstown Youth (African and Arabic) Music</td>
<td>bringing the two groups of youth together in a relaxing, peaceful environment learning how to manage their anger and express their feelings through music youth taking part in drumming circles where they will learn to play African drums</td>
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<td><strong>Secret Places: a collaboration between rural and city young people</strong></td>
<td>This project will give the youth aged between 9 and 16 of Griffith and Fairfield the opportunity to form genuine relationships with young people from radically different cultural backgrounds.</td>
<td>Outback Theatre for Young People (OTYP) in partnership with Powerhouse Youth Theatre in Western Sydney &amp; Griffith Regional Theatre</td>
<td>Deniliquin</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Local—Deniliquin Youth Theatre</td>
<td>Provides opportunities to form genuine relationships with young people from radically different cultural backgrounds focus on community engagement, skills development and content generation with performances in both Griffith and Fairfield will produce joint works of theatre collaboratively created and performed by young people in Griffith and its sister city of Fairfield in Sydney</td>
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<td><strong>Sharing Information and Experiences in Multicultural Bankstown</strong></td>
<td>This project aims to provide different CaLD communities access to social service information.</td>
<td>Bankstown City Council</td>
<td>Bankstown</td>
<td>$45,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Local—Bankstown Communities</td>
<td>build bridges between communities provide accessible information and opportunities for individuals and groups to interact implementation of a cultural exchange program incorporating sporting activities, food, craft and dance</td>
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<td><strong>Speak Up, Sing Loud</strong></td>
<td>The project will provide a formal program that young people feel involved with, which allows them a freedom of expression to speak up about their experiences of social disharmony and racism.</td>
<td>The Hills Holroyd Parramatta Migrant Resource Centre</td>
<td>Parramatta</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Local—Parramatta Youth music and life skills workshops</td>
<td>young people learning from each other, about different cultural experiences and shared strengths young people will be encouraged to talk indirectly about their past traumas and current issues they are experiencing encouragement of youth to participate in a Performance Hub/Information Hub at Parramatta Mall once a week</td>
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<td><strong>Taking Responsibility—Young People Building Harmony</strong></td>
<td>This project aims to decrease inter-racial tension and conflict that has flared in various locations in Western Sydney and Inner Western Sydney between young Australians of Middle Eastern origin and young people of South Asian/Indian sub-continent origin.</td>
<td>SEVA International Inc</td>
<td>St Ives</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Local—St Ives Youth (Middle Eastern and South Asian) Dance, music, food</td>
<td>Commonality in food, culture, dance and music will be identified and celebrated through exhibitions and a festival build understanding, acceptance and harmony through the sharing of culture, experiences and histories Tours will be conducted into each other's and common shared spaces</td>
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<td>The Challenge Program</td>
<td>The Youthworks program aims to focus on the limited support for young people in the community, to address the issues of racism and intolerance of other’s cultural and religious differences.</td>
<td>Youthworks, with Community partnerships</td>
<td>$49 500</td>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>Local—Guildford</td>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>Outdoor adventure, intensive group work</td>
<td>provide positive, challenging experiences for troubled ‘at-risk’ teenagers of various backgrounds, in an environment that is emotionally and physically safe</td>
<td>addressing the issues of racism and intolerance of other’s cultural and religious differences</td>
<td>consist of a combination of outdoor adventure, intensive group work and community partnerships</td>
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| Weaving Positive Communities | The Orange City Council program looks to develop linkages between community members from the multicultural community, with a particular focus on Sudanese, and with Aboriginal and non Aboriginal community members | Orange City Council in partnership with school liaison officers, migrant support workers & other service providers | $50 000 | NSW | Local—Orange | Sudanese, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community members | Arts (weaving), meetings | After school connections for young people | aims to decrease the number of incidences of racial and social tension in the area |

<p>| Youth Voice | The project seeks to raise cross-cultural awareness between youth from refugee and Aboriginal groups and the wider non-Aboriginal non-refugee youth community and build their capability to contribute positively towards social, economic and community life. | TAFE NSW, North Coast Institute | $44 000 | NSW | Local—Coffs Harbour | Youth (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal), Refugees, Non-refugees | Multimedia | positively represent their communities to the wider community; highlight the positive contributions they can make to social, economic and community life. | develop vocational skills to increase their opportunities to participate in social, economic and community life; build their own leadership and self-advocacy skills; increase their awareness of and access to government and non government support mechanisms | explore issues of diversity, social cohesion and racial tolerance; develop vocational skills to increase their opportunities to participate in social, economic and community life |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Recipient</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Suburb</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
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<tr>
<td>Multicultural Youth NT (MyNT)—Youth Communities Harmony Facilitation</td>
<td>The project aims to work towards their vision, which is, 'With a united body of young people, we can achieve a better Territory for youth, with more opportunities and greater understanding.'</td>
<td>Multicultural Council of the NT</td>
<td>$50 000</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Sanderson</td>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>Workshop?</td>
<td>facilitating opportunities for young people in the northern suburbs of Darwin to gain experience and develop skills and knowledge working cooperatively and collaboratively on youth designed projects exploring racism, discrimination, identity, and belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity through Football</td>
<td>The AFL Northern Territory project looks to address the ongoing tension and lack of meaningful interaction between groups of African youths and Indigenous youths in the northern suburbs of Darwin.</td>
<td>AFL Northern Territory</td>
<td>$41 000</td>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>Youth (African and Aboriginal)</td>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>address the ongoing tension and lack of meaningful interaction between groups of African youths and Indigenous youths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diversiTees—celebrating cultural diversity on T-shirts</td>
<td>The proposed project will engage culturally and linguistically diverse youth (African), giving them a platform to communicate their feelings and experiences on social cohesion and cultural harmony in their schools and neighbourhoods in the Southport area.</td>
<td>African Communities Association Gold Coast Inc in partnership with Griffith University</td>
<td>$11 510</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Southport</td>
<td>Youth (African)</td>
<td>T-shirt workshop</td>
<td>giving youth a platform to communicate their feelings and experiences on social cohesion and cultural harmony in their schools and neighbourhoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logan Alive!</td>
<td>The project seeks to address the growing incidences of violence that are occurring within the Logan community particularly amongst the young people.</td>
<td>MultiLink Community Services Inc</td>
<td>$45 000</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Woodridge</td>
<td>Mainstream community, refugees, migrants</td>
<td>Intercultural forum, music and food workshops</td>
<td>address the growing incidences of violence that are occurring within the Logan community particularly amongst the young people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Multicultural Youth NT (MyNT)—Youth Communities Harmony Facilitation**: This project aims to facilitate opportunities for young people in the northern suburbs of Darwin to gain experience and develop skills and knowledge working cooperatively and collaboratively on youth designed projects exploring racism, discrimination, identity, and belonging.
- **Unity through Football**: The project looks to address the ongoing tension and lack of meaningful interaction between groups of African youths and Indigenous youths in the northern suburbs of Darwin.
- **diversiTees—celebrating cultural diversity on T-shirts**: The proposed project will engage culturally and linguistically diverse youth (African), giving them a platform to communicate their feelings and experiences on social cohesion and cultural harmony in their schools and neighbourhoods in the Southport area.
- **Logan Alive!**: The project seeks to address the growing incidences of violence that are occurring within the Logan community particularly amongst the young people.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Delivery</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting Somali Families in Townsville</td>
<td>The Townsville Intercultural Centre project aims to address the tensions that have developed between young refugees and their families from the Somali community and the broader Townsville community. Workshops, structured activities, and mentoring programs enable people to learn about Australian society and culture and share experiences with the wider community.</td>
<td>Townsville</td>
<td>$48,000</td>
<td>Local—Townsville</td>
<td>Address the tensions that have developed between young refugees and their families from the Somali community and the broader Townsville community. Activities will include workshops, structured activities, and mentoring programs, to help them connect with the mainstream community.</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Social Network</td>
<td>The aim of the project is to take year 9 and 10 students from the mainstream schools and provide them with the relevant training to become leaders. As leaders they will run activities which serve to break down cultural and communication barriers and introduce students to some of the basic norms of Australian schools. Training program establish networks and means of communication with mainstream peers. Provide them with the relevant training to become leaders. As leaders they will run activities which serve to break down cultural and communication barriers and introduce students to some of the basic norms of Australian schools.</td>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>Local—Brisbane</td>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Target Group</td>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Tree of Life Pilot Project</td>
<td>The tree of life involves children/young people drawing their own 'tree of life' in which they get to speak of their 'roots' (where they come from), their skills and knowledge, their hopes and dreams, as well as the special people in their lives. The project also focuses on building resilience to combat potential future racism, and will involve students from Africa, the Middle East, Pacific Islander and Indigenous backgrounds in order to help break down the racial tensions across these groups.</td>
<td>$33,754</td>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>Youth (Africa, the Middle East, Pacific Islander and Aboriginal), refugee backgrounds</td>
<td>Training program, arts</td>
<td>involves children/young people drawing their own 'tree of life' in which they get to speak of their 'roots' (where they come from), their skills and knowledge, their hopes and dreams, as well as the special people in their lives</td>
<td>focuses on building resilience to combat potential future racism in order to help break down the racial tensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand in Hand—Visualising our place in Australia</td>
<td>This project is a Photo Journalism production of a photo album of visual dialogue between young people of refugee background, Aboriginal young people and other young people that might wish to participate.</td>
<td>Migrant Resource Centre of SA</td>
<td>$49,475</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Local—Adelaide</td>
<td>Youth (Aboriginal and refugee backgrounds)</td>
<td>Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer Unites South Australia</td>
<td>A long term sustainable soccer program in South Australia that addresses issues of cultural, racial and religious intolerance.</td>
<td>South Australian Amatuer Soccer League, in partnership with SA Police, the SA Equal Opportunity Commission &amp; other members of the community</td>
<td>$135,000</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>Youth, clubs</td>
<td>Sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Funding Body</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meet the Street</td>
<td>The project proposes to increase social connectedness for interested refugee communities through street parties, which have been modelled off a number of already existing interstate programs in Victoria including the Port Phillip Community Group’s StreetLife program and Sustainability Street.</td>
<td>$45,500</td>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>Interweave Arts Association Inc Local—Launceston Refugee communities</td>
<td>Street party to increase social connectedness for interested refugee communities through street parties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young Women’s Multicultural Leadership</td>
<td>The Multicultural Young Women’s Participation and Leadership Program will seek to improve leadership skills, community education, and community participation through multimedia. Participants from the Afghani, Congolese, Burundi, Sudanese, Malawi, Cambodian, Burmese, Nepalese and Australian communities, will provide a mechanism for community engagement and will involve young newly arrived women in Glenorchy.</td>
<td>$9,400</td>
<td>TAS</td>
<td>Glenorchy City Council Local—Glenorchy Young women (Afghani, Congolese, Burundi, Sudanese, Malawi, Cambodian, Burmese, Nepalese and Australian communities)</td>
<td>Training program provides a mechanism for community engagement provides training sessions in youth leadership, communication, resolving conflict, group behaviour, team work, team decisions, managing meetings, participation, public speaking and coaching others</td>
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<tr>
<td>African Voices of Carlton</td>
<td>The project proposes to foster inter-cultural dialogue and cultural awareness between the Horn of Africa (HOA) Carlton Estate residents and the wider Carlton community, through encouraging active participation in a community-based African and Australian Indigenous arts and community cultural development program.</td>
<td>$46,000</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Centre for Cultural Partnerships, in partnership with major education institution (the University of Melbourne), the HOA Community Network &amp; the Carlton Estate HOA community</td>
<td>Cultural development program fosters inter-cultural dialogue and cultural awareness between the Horn of Africa (HOA) Carlton Estate residents and the wider Carlton community responds to the issues identified in the community which are increasing social, cultural and racial tensions and the future strategic actions required encourages active participation in a community-based African and Australian Indigenous arts and community cultural development program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Title</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Funding Details</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Program Area</td>
<td>Sub-Program Area</td>
<td>Activities and Programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communities Together Project</td>
<td>The Geelong Ethnic Communities Council project is proposed to build understanding and empathy across the community and to develop a better understanding of the drivers and factors that underpin discrimination within the community.</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Local—Geelong</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Identification of common themes and shared interests would be the basis for activities and programs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diversitat</td>
<td>Geelong Ethnic Communities Council (trading as Diversitat)</td>
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<td>Music, theatre, dance, art, sport etc.</td>
<td>Directs action towards reducing race-based discrimination and supporting diversity by strategies that address a whole of community response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darebin Overseas Student Association —Capacity Building</td>
<td>The result of the first year of the program was the creation of Darebin Overseas Student Association (DOSA) which aims to assist its members to better connect with the wider community towards greater social engagement and community cohesion. This next stage seeks to build the capacity of DOSA to become a self-reliant and sustainable organisation able to assist its members and to operate as an independent student body.</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Local—Preston</td>
<td>Mainstream community, youth</td>
<td>Aims to assist its members to better connect with the wider community towards greater social engagement and community cohesion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DIVRS</td>
<td>Darebin Information Volunteer Resource Service (DIVRS)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Training program</td>
<td>Supporting students to rebuild their confidence and provide coherent support systems</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter Community Dialogue for Social Cohesion</td>
<td>The purpose of the dialogue is to build inter community capacity for a deeper understanding and respect for cultural beliefs, traditions and practices using a theme that has tremendous resonance in every culture.</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Local—Bundoora</td>
<td>Community leaders</td>
<td>Build inter community capacity for a deeper understanding and respect for cultural beliefs, traditions and practices</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>Addresses the issue of the perceived failure of multiculturalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Funding Level</td>
<td>Young People</td>
<td>Project Goals</td>
<td>Additional Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kar Kulture</td>
<td>The South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre project aims to focus on racial tension that occurs in this region between refugee youth, other migrant youth and Australian-born youth.</td>
<td>South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Local—Dandenong</td>
<td>Youth (Aboriginal, refugee, migrants)</td>
<td>Workshop provides road safety workshops and provides training to young people in gaining their probationary license</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximising Female International Student's Potential</td>
<td>The project will target female international students in TAFE and private colleges in Metropolitan Melbourne for participation to enhance their connection with mainstream Australian society.</td>
<td>Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition</td>
<td>$55,000</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Local—Melbourne</td>
<td>Female international students</td>
<td>Training program enhance students’ connection with mainstream Australian society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (Australia) (MYAN)</td>
<td>The Centre for Multicultural Youths project will seek to continue the capacity building work with the states and territories—enhancing their capacity to respond in a coordinated and collaborative way, to the issues facing newly arrived refugee's and strengthening the capability of the national network.</td>
<td>Centre for Multicultural Youth</td>
<td>$120,600</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>National, Local—Carlton</td>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>Networking supporting young people from each state and territory to participate in the development of the Multicultural Youth Agenda and relevant advocacy policy processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood Harmony Trail</td>
<td>This project will respond to pockets of community intolerance and fear of ‘other cultures’ created by ignorance and misinformation at the intersection between religious, cultural and ethnic differences that make up the City of Maribyrnong's exceptionally diverse community.</td>
<td>Maribyrnong City Council, in partnership with schools, broader community, local commercial traders</td>
<td>$50,000 VIC</td>
<td>Local—Footscray</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td>research about religious affiliations and groups in the local area and key features (sites, stories, rites, celebrations) of these</td>
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<tr>
<td>Once upon a Circus</td>
<td>‘Once Upon a Circus’ will respond to the social development needs of newly arrived and refugee children aged 3 – 5 years and their mothers who have recently settled into the Brimbank municipality and have not yet joined a community group or social activity.</td>
<td>Westside Circus Inc, in partnership with Brimbank Council &amp; up to six identified playgroups within this region</td>
<td>$46,500 VIC</td>
<td>Local—Fitzroy North</td>
<td>Newly arrived and refugee children (3-5 years old) and their mothers</td>
<td>circus arts, storytelling, social activities, literacy activities</td>
<td>responds to the needs of newly arrived migrants who have not yet joined a community group or social activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLAY</td>
<td>Through 2009 and 2010, Western Edge responded to this issue through 'ON THE RADAR', a community development project that brought together young people and police and established greater rapport and understanding between the two groups through workshops, camps and artistic outcomes. The project 'PLAY' is a complex community cultural development project which will look to build on the success of 'ON THE RADAR'.</td>
<td>Western Edge Youth Arts Inc, in partnership with Western English Language School (WELS), &amp; AMES Adult Education Centre (Footscray)</td>
<td>$50,000 VIC</td>
<td>Local—Footscray</td>
<td>Youth, Police Workshop, arts, camps</td>
<td>encourages the celebration of personal traditions, beliefs and culture while learning from others</td>
<td>brings together young people and police and established greater rapport and understanding between the two groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Leader Civics and Media Training</td>
<td>The Religious Leaders Civics and Media Training project will enable religious leaders to represent their communities in a way that discounts negative perceptions and ensures balanced reporting of issues, as well as contributing to dispelling myths and inaccuracies about different cultures and religions.</td>
<td>Australian Multicultural Foundation</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Local—Melbourne and Sydney</td>
<td>Religious Leaders</td>
<td>Training program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Respect Project</td>
<td>This project seeks to respond to the increasing incidences of violence occurring in the North Richmond Housing Estate between the Vietnamese and African youth (aged 13 to 18).</td>
<td>Mission Australia, in partnership with Richmond Urban Renewal Place Management Team</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Local—Melbourne</td>
<td>Youth (Vietnamese, African)</td>
<td>Workshops, community projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voices Connect, Community Project</td>
<td>The Shepparton Art Festival project aims to build social and multicultural tolerance and cohesiveness throughout the region of Shepparton by developing links between diverse cultures through artistic projects.</td>
<td>Shepparton Arts Festival</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Local—Shepparton</td>
<td>Refugee communities</td>
<td>Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering for international students</td>
<td>The project will engage some 55 international students from Indian, Chinese, Pakistani, Malaysian, Sri Lankan and other backgrounds in short and long-term volunteering placements.</td>
<td>Australian Federation of International Students</td>
<td>$64,000</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>Local—Melbourne</td>
<td>International students</td>
<td>Training program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Amount</td>
<td>Provider</td>
<td>Local Area</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Address</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Western Mind healthy Body, Young Women's</strong></td>
<td>The Western English Language School project aims to develop social cohesion</td>
<td>VIC</td>
<td>$9,000</td>
<td>western</td>
<td>Robinson</td>
<td>Young women Networking, art, food and fashion encourage the celebration</td>
<td>addresses issues relevant to their adolescent lives in Australia such as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program</strong></td>
<td>and confidence in young women in the Braybrook area.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>English</td>
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<td>as personal traditions, beliefs and culture while learning from others,</td>
<td>body image, self esteem, health and nutrition, higher education and</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>School</td>
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<td>creating meaningful relationships with their peers, new communities</td>
<td>careers</td>
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<td>and country</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Beatball</strong></td>
<td>Beatball is a 3 on 3 basketball program played to music, targeting the</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>City of</td>
<td>Stirling (Mirrabooka, Balga, Girrawheen and Koondoola)</td>
<td>Sport targeting the challenges of respect, fairness and sense of</td>
<td>targeting the challenges of respect, fairness and sense of belonging</td>
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<td>challenges of respect, fairness and sense of belonging faced by the 12 to 18</td>
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<td>Stirling</td>
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<td>belonging faced by the 12 to 18 year old Indigenous and culturally</td>
<td>faced by the 12 to 18 year old Indigenous and culturally diverse</td>
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<td>year old Indigenous and culturally diverse communities within the region.</td>
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<td>diverse communities within the region</td>
<td>communities within the region</td>
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<td>Each member of the Beatball Ambassador Team will be trained and</td>
<td>addresses issues between Aboriginal and Maori youth such as cultural</td>
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<td>mentored by a Beatball member to present Beatball on a fortnightly</td>
<td>and racial intolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Choose Respect in Rockingham</strong></td>
<td>An innovative educational program based on community collaboration to</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>SMYL</td>
<td>Fremantle</td>
<td>Training program</td>
<td>addresses issues between Aboriginal and Maori youth such as cultural</td>
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<td></td>
<td>address issues between Aboriginal and Maori youth.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community</td>
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<td>and racial intolerance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<td>Christmas Island One Team One Island</td>
<td>The Christmas Island: One Team, One Island project aims to promote capacity and skills building whilst strengthening social cohesion, community harmony and cross cultural understanding between the three distinct cultural groups of Westerners, Malay and Chinese that make up the community of Christmas Island.</td>
<td>$19,000</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Local—Christmas Island</td>
<td>Community (Western, Malay, Chinese)</td>
<td>Sports, informal recreation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Harmony Day Recipe Collection</td>
<td>This project aims to build on the annual Harmony Day lunch by collecting recipes of the foods parents have prepared for the lunch.</td>
<td>$9,000</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Local—Tuart Hill</td>
<td>Community Recipe collection</td>
<td>Parents will also be interviewed about their families, nationality, costumes and the foods they cook at home</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>UNITE Project</td>
<td>The City of Canning project will focus on assisting African youth to integrate into the normal way of Australian living and the Australian culture.</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Local—Welshpool</td>
<td>Workshops, training program</td>
<td>deliver a series of life skills, leadership skills, team building skills and film making workshops</td>
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<td>focus on assisting African youth to integrate into the normal way of Australian living and the Australian culture</td>
<td>the project participants will be presented with opportunities to join soccer and netball teams in local competitions</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Aware</td>
<td>This project will look to address the experience of social isolation and marginalisation experienced by refugee and migrant young people due to differences in language, religion, physical appearance, cultural background, ethnicity or personal trauma.</td>
<td>Australian Red Cross Society</td>
<td>$24,000</td>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Local—Perth</td>
<td>Youth (refugees, migrants)</td>
<td>Leadership program, workshops</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>