



Settlement
Council
of Australia

AT A GLANCE



Target Participants
AMEP Students in
Melbourne



Aim
To provide students with
opportunities to develop
their health literacy and
prepare them for future
employment in the
sector



**Organisations
Involved**
Melbourne
Polytechnic, Department
of Health, Northern
Health and Whittlesea
Community
Connections.



Location
Victoria

CASE STUDY

Health Navigator Project Partnership

Melbourne Polytechnic's Health Navigator Project was a collaborative project which embedded a 6-week health education elective unit into the English as an Additional Language curriculum. The course supported students to navigate the health system, increase their health literacy and feedback their own experiences. Pathways to employment were facilitated through collaboration with local health and settlement services, including volunteering positions and work as Bicultural Health Navigators. The Health Navigator Project was developed by MP in partnership with the Department of Health, Northern Health and Whittlesea Community Connections, and drawing from internal partnerships.

Description

Melbourne Polytechnic (MP) initially identified a high level of interest from their students in transitioning to further study and/or employment in the health sector, as well as significant growth and demand for workers in the health sector. This need was initially scoped through a survey and subsequent student focus groups conducted in 2020.



Northern Health approached Melbourne Polytechnic to take part in a research project to better inform their Emergency Department and primary health services for people of CALD background. The MP EAL curriculum unit engaged in a Co-design and Co-delivery model with Northern Health leading to offering a 6 week Health Navigator elective offered to high level EAL students with past work experience or study in the health sector.



Throughout the course students navigated the health system, increased health literacy, fed back experiences of interacting with the health system in Australia through a cross-cultural lens and explored pathways in the sector including volunteering, entry level work and bi-cultural worker opportunities. All students were assisted in applying to become Northern Health Volunteers through support from the Volunteer Tutor Scheme Tutor.

Whittlesea Community Connections (WCC), the local SETS provider joined the partnership and were able to secure a state government grant to offer 6 casual positions for Bi-cultural Health Navigators in their organisation. These positions were filled by Melbourne Polytechnic EAL students who had completed the elective. The Health Navigators organised and lead community conversations regarding COVID safe practices and information relating to COVID-19 vaccinations. They commenced this work at Melbourne Polytechnic, facilitating a student information session online presented by the Head of Infectious Diseases at the Northern Health Public Health Unit, Dr Abotlins. They have continued to present information and lead discussions with Melbourne Polytechnic students and community groups throughout Term 2 and 3. Dr Abotlins is available to update the health navigators on any evolving changes or questions.

The Health Navigator elective will be offered to EAL students in Term 4. Adjacent to this PCM facilitated a COVID 19 information session facilitated by the Department of Health for Melbourne AMEP providers and Settlement Services Providers in the contract regions and coordinated 'Train the Trainer' workshops delivered by Murdoch Children's Research Institute on gaining confidence in discussing COVID 19 vaccinations.

Melbourne Polytechnic is continuing to develop collaborations with health and community partners with a shared endeavour to build knowledge and capability and offer legitimate pathways. This includes valuable industry consultation, volunteering opportunities, work-placements and employment. In the immediate, this collaboration is focused on supporting the Federal and State government COVID-19 vaccination roll out, but Melbourne Polytechnic has already been contacted by other organisations (Cancer Council, Foundation House (Early Start Kinda) to develop similar models of engagement that lead to information sharing and pathways for EAL students.

Challenges

The development and coordination of the elective required a concerted effort – allocating an EAL teacher to undergo the co-design work with Northern Health in preparation for the elective, VTS team to coordinate Volunteer matching to support students to complete the Northern Health volunteer applications and training, Community Liaison and Engagement in driving the identification and recruitment of Health navigators and coordinating subsequent opportunities for health navigators to pass on COVID-19 safe practices and vaccination messages.

Outcomes

- Students enhanced their knowledge on how to navigate the health system, improved their health literacy and learnt about potential pathways to employment in the Health sector.
- 6 Students have been employed by Whittlesea Community Connections as Health Navigators, and to further develop digital literacy and communication skills, as well as their understanding of the Australian workplace. They have received on-going professional development and training from health experts, communication and facilitation skills training through MP.



- The Health Navigators have confidently undertaken their roles, having presented to over 30 groups of students and community groups from June-mid September 2021 on vaccines and how to remain COVID-safe.
- This activity has contributed to the North East region of Melbourne vaccination rollout.

Key Learnings

This experience has generated three key learnings:

1. AMEP students have been very receptive to hearing COVID messages from experts, from teachers, and from fellow peers such as health navigators.
2. Students have appreciated hearing key information in a distilled form through the Health Navigator presentations and being given the opportunity to ask questions in the community conversations that the health navigators have facilitated often in community languages.
3. Being exposed to the information more than once, in different ways, including from peers, has been a key factor to building confidence and receptiveness to the key public health messages.

