![Settlement Council of Australia logo]

Settlement Council of Australia

AT A GLANCE

Target Participants
Multicultural Community Leaders

Aim
To build capacity of multicultural communities to identify and meet priorities and needs

Organisations Involved
Facilitated by Centacare FNQ, with a range of guest speakers

Location
Cairns, QLD.

Funding
CAMS (Multicultural Affairs QLD)

Cairns Multicultural Community Leaders Network

Centacare FNQ's Multicultural Community Leaders Network seeks to support multicultural communities to identify their priorities and meet their needs, by facilitating a platform for community associations to meet and discuss their strengths, challenges and goals; enhance social connectedness and participation; and provide opportunities for ongoing training and partnerships.

About the program:

The Cairns Multicultural leaders' network was initially established in May 2020 as an opportunity for diverse communities to meet and discuss what their regional challenges have been during COVID-19, what their priorities are for the next 12 months and to discuss opportunities for ongoing training and partnerships. A variety of guest speakers were invited to present on topics ranging from health, disaster preparedness, complex system navigation, emergency relief, and employment. Guest speakers from various sectors (both local and state-wide) including government, service providers and community are invited to engage with the network. Guest speakers have included Department of Home Affairs, Queensland Health, Human Rights Commission, Australian Red Cross, QCOSS, Cairns Regional Council, QPASTT, Lives Lived Well, Cairns Safer Streets, Carers Gateway, Census Team, COVID-19 Vaccination Team, and Cairns and Hinterland Hospital Health Service.

A major aim of the network was to build capacity in communities to develop close and meaningful links with mainstream services, so that they can refer and collaborate directly as communities. In just over one year Centacare FNQ has seen communities holding preventative health session liaising directly with QLD Health Nurses, partnering with Theatre Groups like Jute Theatre Company and making direct referrals for youth leadership programs and family support services. A second feature was to create a united and strong voice in the region for diverse communities.

This network has been critical to providing Federal, State and Local Government with valuable insight on the COVID-19 response, recovery planning and now building COVID-19 community resilience across the region. As a collective under the facilitation and coordination by Centacare FNQ the network has co-designed and co-created the In Your Language YouTube Series. This YouTube series has various playlists covering a range of social, health, economic, employment and wellbeing issues, in-language to build capacity of local CALD community members. At the commencement of the network communities came together bimonthly via Zoom, however they have now transitioned to a mix of face-to-face meetings and Zoom meetings.

The network has achieved high levels of representation from diverse communities in Cairns including established and new and emerging communities. It allows CALD community groups and service providers to cross-promote training and events, and collaborate on common initiatives instead of duplicating services. It also provides an opportunity to identify gaps and advocate with one voice strongly in the region to achieve outcomes. For example, the network has advocated for more accessible COVID-19 testing and vaccine pop-up clinics.

The network is driven by priorities identified by participants in areas including health, employment, arts and culture, and provides a platform for CALD communities to advocate directly with service providers and all levels of government around issues of importance to them.

Challenges

A major challenge in developing and implementing the network was Zoom fatigue and COVID-19 information fatigue. These issues have been addressed by diversifying guest speakers and facilitating face-to-face meetings in addition to Zoom.

Outcomes

Outcomes of the program include:

1. Building of bridging capital through bringing together community leaders from diverse communities including established and new and emerging communities – Centacare FNQ's most recent meeting had 24 participants representing 11 different cultural communities, including representatives from communities that have not accessed multicultural services regularly in the past.
2. Organisational collaboration: Promotion of grant opportunities and linking in to grant workshops organised by Cairns Regional Council and Multicultural Affairs Queensland.
3. Increased referrals into Centacare FNQ CALD Employment programs (SQW and Diverse Workforce) leading to outstanding employment outcomes for CALD communities in the region.
4. Promotion of CALD COVID-19 vaccination information days, leading to increased vaccination rates in CALD communities in Cairns.
5. Facilitation of training in response to community needs including Mental Health First Aid and joint consultation with QPASTT, thereby enhancing the capacity of CALD communities in Cairns

to meet the needs of their communities, refer to appropriate services, and provide advocacy around cultural and systemic barriers.

6. Enhanced social connectedness (bridging capital) among diverse CALD communities in Cairns as demonstrated by participation in each other's cultural events and celebrations, and also the cross-cultural support shown through COVID-19 community response and recovery.

Key Learnings

There are three key learnings for Centacare FNQ:

1. The building of social capital occurs through establishing relationships of trust with CALD communities over time – regular meetings and open lines of communication are important.

2. Community driven: It is important to respond to needs as they arise (e.g. employment, citizenship) and co-design programs to meet these needs e.g. Centacare's Diverse Workforce program, volunteer English tutoring for citizenship tests and advocacy with local MPs around citizenship issues

3. Valuing voices: It is important to provide sufficient time and space for communities to network during meetings, resulting in increased confidence and capacity of CALD communities to advocate and act on issues of importance to them and have direct links to mainstream supports.

More information

You can view the In Your Language YouTube Series here:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLq9h03MRVLAG5SWnZSbTfDbNu6D0kALte
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLq9h03MRVLAG3cU1c69pKHRs_FSdKulOO