

Connecting Communities: A Public Transport Pilot South East Community Links (SECL)



Settlement
Council
of Australia

AT A GLANCE

Target participants:

Newly arrived women from Afghanistan settling in the City of Casey

Aim of program: The program aimed to better understand the barriers faced by culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in accessing and using public transport. The pilot provides both a model and recommendations for service providers to strengthen the inclusion and social and economic wellbeing of newly arrived CALD community members.

Organisations involved / partnerships:

South East Community Links and CatholicCare

Location: City of Casey

Funding:

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing;
Department of Home Affairs



Connecting communities participants

INTRODUCTION

South East Community Links practitioners and local settlement service providers recognised a consistent lack of awareness and engagement with public transport, particularly within the City of Casey, for newly arrived communities with English as an additional language. This has been an issue for some time.

Access to transport is one of the key drivers to achieving social and economic inclusion, further improving life satisfaction and financial independence. Transport difficulties are consistently identified as a factor that restricts Australian families' capacity to access services and participate in activities (Carbone, Fraser, Ramburuth, & Nelms 2004; Cortis, Katz, & Patulny, 2009).

With encouragement from our local community, SECL decided to trial a public transport training model to test the effectiveness of providing in-language resources and support to existing and newly arrived women living in the City of Casey.

This 4-week pilot brought two small groups of 30 Afghan women together to better understand and access the local public transport system in their neighbourhood.

SECL recruited bi-lingual project workers to support our SECL Practitioner to provide essential practical assistance and resources to these women as they learnt about MYKIs, studied local bus routes, caught trains and buses to frequented destinations, and increased their confidence to travel by bus, train and tram.

We focused on practical knowledge and capacity building:

- Part 1 of the 4-part program was a workshop which was delivered in-language to explain the ticketing system, concessions, the tools available such as google maps. This workshop used simple videos to explain the modes of transport available in Victoria.
- Participants were explained concession rates, eligibility and also common reason for getting fines.
- Participants who were eligible for a concession ticket were supported to convert a full-fare myki to a concession myki during the practice trips.
- Participants were taken on 3 practice trips using trains and buses with the support of the bi-lingual workers. The practice trip helped build the confidence in participants to become familiar with their local stations and bus stops and the connecting routes.
- Participants were also supported to understand the complaints reporting mechanisms available to them if they experience such behaviour and re-iterated their right to feeling safe.

This pilot project provides an opportunity for local governments and support services to consider how they can scale up or implement this model. The findings from the pilot provide strong evidence to advocate for systems change with organisations including Public Transport Victoria (PTV) and public transport operators. The subsequent report provides clear recommendations including the development of in-language resources both online and at transport locations, comprehensive customer service training for public transport staff, strengthened consultation opportunities to improve service access with disadvantaged communities and the development of a Public Transport Feedback and Complaints Register that is accountable and imbeds a continuous quality improvement framework.

POINT OF DIFFERENCE

SECL are using this pilot and the subsequent report to advocate to local and state government to review how decisions are made regarding public transport facilities and locations. SECL highlighted concerns of discrimination and racism by public transport workers in the report and has called for PTV to embed cultural safety training into the workplace.



Connecting communities participants riding public transport

OUTCOMES

All participants completed pre and post surveys which assessed their understanding of the public transport system and their confidence to access it independently. Post pilot surveys were intentionally conducted 5 weeks after the pilot finished to measure how things were tracking weeks later. The following learnings and outcomes were identified:

Empowering women

Women developed greater confidence, knowledge and skills as they learnt to navigate the local public transport system. This led to increased independence, self-efficacy and increased opportunities for social and economic mobility. It was reported that women experiencing social isolation were also more likely to engage in other activities following the program.

Increased inclusion and belonging

Participants experienced a stronger sense of belonging and inclusion within their local community.

30 women engaged across 5 weeks

70% Felt more confident in using public transport by themselves in their local area.

88% Increased their understanding of the public transport system.

80% Learned how to buy and top up a MYKI card.

100% Learned how to use a MYKI card on public transport and would recommend the project to family, friends, and other community members.

Increased sense of safety and security

The women developed greater safety awareness and knowledge of the public transport system. This comprehensive program creates safety for women and families involved, as well as the broader community.

“I feel more relaxed and safer in public transport, I don’t feel the same when I am driving, even though I drive I like public transport more.”

“It was useful for me because I did not have much confidence to top-up a myki, I learned a lot from when the worker was showing others. I now feel 80% confident.”

KEY LEARNINGS

The direct lived experiences and analysis of evaluations informed the following conclusions:

- Participants found it useful to learn how to navigate the public transport and ticketing system to carry out day to day errands.
- Most of the women said that using public transport was integral to their independence, and their social and economic participation.
- The women learned how to get to health centres, shops and community centres by public transport independently. Many described the joy of not having to wait for their husbands to return home to take them places; "This is a big change for us".
- Participants generally felt happy and found using public transport safe and secure being amongst other commuters.

“We didn’t just learn about public transport, but we also learned about different places we can go to and take our family to”.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT

You can read more about our Connecting Communities: Public Transport Pilot [HERE](#)

You can also contact:

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