

Driving Education to Yazidi Youth and Women (SETS) Multicultural Australia



Settlement
Council
of Australia

AT A GLANCE

Target participants:

Women and Youth from the Yazidi community

Aim of program:

To provide equitable access to driving education to refugee youth and women in Toowoomba, ultimately promoting social and economic inclusion and fostering an increased sense of belonging.

Organisations involved / partnerships:

The Department of Transportation and Main Roads
Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC)

Location: Toowoomba

Funding:

The Promoting Refugee and Migrant Women Safety Package – Multicultural Australia SETS Program.



INTRODUCTION

Multicultural Australia SETS Toowoomba, in collaboration with the Department of Transport and Main Roads and the local PCYC, initiated two tailored programs aimed at providing driving education to Yazidi women and youth settling in the Toowoomba region. The programs sought to enhance equitable access to driving education, ultimately promoting social and economic inclusion, and fostering a sense of belonging among participants, thereby improving their settlement outcomes.

1) Driving Simulator – Yazidi Youth

In June 2023, Multicultural Australia and PCYC partnered to support and empower 25 Yazidi Youth to acquire practical driving skills to obtain their 'Learners' licenses. Participants were invited to utilise the local PCYC driving simulator with the support of an instructor and a Bi-Cultural Worker to provide language support.

2) Driving Information Sessions – Yazidi Women

Multicultural Australia collaborated with the Department of Main Roads to deliver foundational driving education sessions for Yazidi women.

The program's goal was to provide a safe and culturally appropriate learning environment for Yazidi women to take their first steps towards learning to drive, and subsequently their sense of independence and belonging in their new home country. The program goal was to build the confidence of Yazidi women from Iraq where traditionally it is the male's role to drive.

An additional practical element for some of the cohort was access to vehicles with many families not owning a car or with limited opportunities to learn even if a car was owned but with only a male family member able to drive.

The intermediate to longer term aims of the program were to additionally improve pathways toward education and work opportunities and overall social and economic inclusion. In a regional setting like Toowoomba, there can be limitations on public transport that can act as barriers to such opportunities. Many jobs access by new Australians require transport due to location, the work itself and times including shift work. There can also be improved self-confidence and independence in achieving this milestone and ability to make greater choices due to transportation. The link to our funding is in improving our clients' independence, social and economic inclusion that will in turn improve communities' safety as it can address risks of social isolation and associated risks.

CHALLENGES

- **Cultural and Language Barriers:** Yazidi Youth presented with language barriers that would have hindered their engagement in the driving program.
- **Access to Transportation:** Accessing the local PCYC was challenging for some participants due to transportation limitations.
- **Instructor and language Support Availability:** Ensuring instructors and bi-cultural workers who can provide language support are available to accommodate the participants' needs.

Overcoming Challenges

- To overcome cultural and language barriers, the program involved a Bi-Cultural Worker who could provide language support and help bridge cultural gaps.
- Multicultural Australia arranged for a convenient location (Toowoomba State High School) for the program to ensure participants can access the driving simulator.
- Offered flexible scheduling to accommodate participants' availability and transportation constraints.

POINT OF DIFFERENCE

The program's distinctiveness lay in its utilisation of technology and making this accessible across language and cultural need. We were able to arrange access to a local PCYC driving simulator to support our aims toward equitable access to driving education for Yazidi youth and women. The simulator offered a controlled and risk-free environment for learners to familiarise themselves with various aspects of driving, effectively reducing the fear and anxiety often associated with real-world driving experiencing. Moreover, the simulator replicates a multitude of road scenarios, including intersections, roundabouts, and traffic lights, enabling learners to practice road rule interpretations and adherence without exposure to real world risks. The practical applied exposure also assisted with those that did not have access to a family owned car.

Addressing language barriers, the program incorporated Bi-Cultural Workers within the simulator, ensure accessibility for participants with varying language proficiencies and variable access to vehicles. This innovative use of technology made the learning experience engaging and enjoyable, motivating participants to actively participate and commit to the program.

Note – the driving simulator was available and run for sessions with Yazidi youth cohort, whereas the earlier round with adult Yazidi women worked with stationary cars.

OUTCOMES

The program yielded positive results by fostering confidence and competence among Yazidi youth seeking to obtain their learner's license. The driving simulator provided practical skills and a solid foundation for real-world driving.

Although not accessing the simulator, the women had similar outcomes in improving confidence, skills and building potential to achieve this milestone in the future.

The program was run recently over the past year, and we will attempt to monitor any intermediate to longer-term outcomes such as passing the driver's test to achieving an employment goal that can be linked to this initiative.

KEY LEARNINGS

The program highlighted the effectiveness of utilising technology, such as the driving simulator, to provide an engaging learning experience for new Australians. It demonstrated the importance of partnering with local service providers to be able to offer improved and accessible services to clients.

Cultural Sensitivity: The significance of understanding and respecting the cultural backgrounds and traditions of the participants in such programs and the role this plays towards running it successfully.

Community Engagement: The positive impact of involving local organizations, community leaders, and respected individuals in program design and delivery.

Flexibility and Inclusivity: The need for flexibility in program design to accommodate various needs, including language barriers, transportation challenges, and cultural norms.

Empowerment and Inclusion: The power of driving education in promoting social and economic inclusion and fostering a sense of belonging among marginalized communities.

Continuous Evaluation: The importance of continuous evaluation and feedback from participants to adapt and improve the program over time.

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https://www.multiculturalaustralia.org.au/settlement_services