

EVALUATION OF THE PLACE-BASED TARGETED CRIME PREVENTION GRANTS

FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

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URBIS

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym/abbreviation	Meaning
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CCC	Community, Culture and Connections
CC	Cultural Connections
CRG	Connect, Refresh, GROW!
DDACL	Dandenong District Aborigines Co-Operative Ltd
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
GHC	Growing Healthy Communities
JSS	Jesuit Social Services
MITH	Mentoring in the Hood
MNB	Moonda Nerran Briel
SCC	Strengthening Community Connections
TEP	Tertiary Entry Program
VACCA	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
WFTD	Work for the Dole
YSAS	Youth Support and Advocacy Service

SUMMARY

This is a summary of the key findings from the process and outcomes evaluation of the Place-Based Targeted Crime Prevention Grants program (the grants program) conducted by Urbis for the Department of Justice and Regulation (the department) Community Crime Prevention Unit (CCPU).

THE PLACE-BASED TARGETED GRANTS PROGRAM

The grants program was launched in 2015 to support locally based partnerships in reducing the risks of crime and increasing community safety in areas experiencing high rates of crime and disadvantage. The program provided funding of between \$50,000 to \$200,000 to twelve grant projects aimed at reducing crime in disadvantaged areas.

The program had a specific (but non-exclusive) focus on supporting initiatives addressing young people and other particularly vulnerable groups, including Koorie people and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD). The program sought to:

- **promote development and delivery of integrated crime prevention initiatives** as part of a strategic approach to increase community safety in particular local communities
- **support local communities to develop collaborative approaches** to reducing the likelihood of crime in areas with high rates of crime and disadvantage
- **build capacity and capability in local communities** to apply problem-solving approaches to develop tailored, evidence-based crime prevention initiatives.

Place-based crime prevention grants projects were delivered to local communities in eleven disadvantaged areas across Victoria including Brimbank, Corio Norlane, Doveton, Frankston North, Hume, Latrobe, Laverton, Mildura, Shepparton, Wendouree and Wodonga.

The grant program utilised a two-staged process to award funding. In the first instance, applicant organisations participated in a competitive Expression of Interest (EOI) process (Stage 1). Stage 1 applications were assessed by a team from the department, including representatives from the region in which the project would be implemented. Applicants approved to progress to Stage 2 then submitted a final grant proposal that extended and built upon the crime prevention concept submitted during the EOI process (Department of Justice and Regulation, 2015).

The primary expected outcome for the grants program was to strengthen the capacity of communities to address the underlying social and environmental causes of crime in their local areas. Urbis was engaged to conduct a process and outcomes evaluation of the

overarching program, and to provide evaluative capacity building support to the twelve funded projects.

WHY A PLACE-BASED CRIME PREVENTION APPROACH?

Crime prevention describes a wide range of strategies used by governments, communities, and individuals to reduce the incidence of crime and crime victimisation (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2012). Primary crime prevention aims to address the underlying social and environmental factors that give rise to offending and victimisation. Initiatives with a prevention focus have the potential to be highly effective in reducing the likelihood of individuals making inappropriate choices, diverting young people from criminal activity, and strengthening community networks. Place-based approaches to crime prevention are utilised because some places experience a high proportion of crime and others are virtually crime free (Eck & Guerrette, 2012).

The causes of crime are multifaceted and complex. A wide range of factors influences the likelihood of crime occurring and make some communities more vulnerable to crime and victimisation. These factors can relate to individuals and to the broader social and environmental context. Communities are usually aware of existing local crime problems and generally have strategies to address them. However, a lack of resources or processes for sharing crime prevention knowledge can undermine local crime prevention efforts and addressing the causes of crime is often beyond the scope of any one group.

The 12 local partnership projects funded through the grants program each aimed to reduce the risks of crime and increase community safety in locations across Victoria known to have high rates of crime and disadvantage. While each project was tailored to the specific circumstances of the local area, the grant program guidelines encouraged all projects to develop crime prevention strategies aligned to areas of focus identified for each 'place' (Department of Justice and Regulation, 2015), informed by the risk and protection factors for social crime prevention articulated by Farrington, Loeber, and Ttofi (2012).

Collectively, the outcome focus areas identified for eleven funded locations (two of the grants projects were delivered in Doveton) map broadly to six domains of expected impact:

1. increasing positive acceptance and self-awareness of cultural identity
2. strengthening interpersonal connections
3. building educational attainment and economic participation
4. improving characteristics of the neighbourhood
5. strengthening social cohesion
6. increasing the accessibility of services and supports.

PROCESS EVALUATION (APRIL 2017)

The first stage of the evaluation assessed the processes involved with the grant application and partnership development process. An initial report of the process evaluation was completed in April 2017, informed by a survey of all organisations that participated in the EOI stage and a survey of steering committee members of the twelve funded projects. Urbis also examined a range of documentation supplied by the department, including process documentation, applications for funding, and project development materials including program logics, evaluation plans and reporting.

The grants program reached a diverse range of Victorians, many who have experienced long-term disadvantage. This included people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, long-term unemployed, people with low levels of education and people experiencing homelessness.

The process evaluation found that the grant development process was well documented, and a good level of training, support and information was provided to regional department staff by CCPU throughout the process. Initial selection of shortlisted projects from the 63 EOIs received was informed by a structured assessment that led to shortlisted applicants receiving support to develop final proposals, of which twelve received funding. Overall, key stakeholders reported a very high level of satisfaction with the support provided by the department via CCPU and regional offices during this phase.

The strength of early partnerships with funded projects was also explored during the processes evaluation, and we found

a high level of confidence in the presence of a shared vision, a clear authorising environment, and capacity to implement the three enabling factors required for successful partnerships.

Shortcomings in conceptual clarity concerning the theory of change underpinning some projects were identified within the process evaluation, and these may have impacted on the eventual project development and delivery of these projects. Early findings also noted several projects experienced challenges with participant recruitment, which remained a theme over the course of the funding period.

The process evaluation identified significant variability in the technical capacity available to projects to facilitate development of project logics and evaluation plans – the foundations of evaluative and reporting efforts.

OUTCOMES EVALUATION

The outcomes evaluation provides an assessment of the success of the grants program in the 12 communities awarded grants in facilitating successful partnerships amongst local organisations and the overarching crime prevention outcomes achieved.

Approach

The outcomes component of the evaluation was informed by a comprehensive set of data sources collected over the course of the two-year grant program, including a survey of steering committee members of funded projects conducted in March 2017 and May 2018, cyclic examination of reported project data and documentation, and key informant interviews with grant project leads and department regional representatives. We also examined a range of documentation from the SmartyGrants portal, including grant milestone progress reports, applications for funding, project development materials, activity plans, evaluation plans and reporting. An integrated analysis of information from all data sources was conducted to assess the overarching impact of the grant program.

Key findings

Collaboration, communication and partnerships

A key emphasis of the program approach was to enable project delivery through collaborative partnerships at the local level. We explored the establishment, maintenance and effectiveness of these approaches, and found that:

- Diverse membership formed project steering committees, and key stakeholders who held influence over project outcomes were generally appropriately represented. While some variability occurs across projects, purposeful relationships and partnerships have been established.
- high agreement among surveyed steering committee members (sustained over 2017 and 2018) that a shared vision to guide partnership activity had been developed, a sound authorising environment was in place, and the partnership had the capacity to implement its vision.
- Steering committee members who provided lower agreement scores indicated this related to factors such as variable engagement by the partners over time, and conflicts of philosophy (community-driven or agency-driven). Sub-scales and qualitative commentary also reveal a decrease in some partnerships of active leadership by key organisational decision-makers, which in some cases reveals challenges sustaining senior involvement and engagement while retaining clarity around delegations. Several partners also reported their organisational role to be limited within the project, with partner organisations treated as 'participants' rather than decision makers.
- However, overall, the grants program has created a platform for agencies to engage with each other, both at the project governance level (via the steering committees) and, to a more limited extent, at the operational level. On the practical level, the focus on funding projects that require multiple stakeholders' input to achieve their goals (e.g. delivery partnerships, participant recruitment referral) created a vehicle for relationships to develop.

The grants program facilitated the development of a diverse range of partnerships. A broad range of different organisations formed partnerships to collaboratively oversee the development and implementation of the twelve place-based crime prevention grants projects in disadvantaged regions across Victoria. A diverse range of organisations participated including local councils, community organisations, local businesses, education providers and Victorian government departments.

Capacity building

A focus of the grants program was building community capacity to address social factors contributing to crime. In this respect, the grants program proved to be (appropriately) a 'stretch' project for many organisations involved.

We found that development, implementation and evaluation of the projects required a broad range of skillsets and capabilities that were not always readily available in the funded organisations, and most projects experienced challenges. In this context, projects report useful learnings: designing 'theory-based' projects that conform to models of social crime prevention, expressing the program approach in a structured program logic model, implementing and administering the program effectively within a partnership-based and stakeholder-dependent context and developing, collecting and reporting data on outcomes.

Risk/protective factors for social crime prevention

All funded projects sought to address the underlying social and environmental causes of crime in their areas. As is expected for a place-based approach, there was considerable variation in the approaches developed and implemented.

“These projects have addressed multiple risk factors and have given participants [multiple opportunities]. Outcomes not only benefit the participant, but [the] region and community as a whole. It was overwhelming hearing some of the case studies and good news outcomes achieved by the projects.”
(Regional department stakeholder)

In exploring the extent to which these efforts were successful, we found that projects were generally able to show evidence of **impact at the participant level**, where most data-collection efforts were focused, but were generally less able to tell a data-driven story of impact at the community level. In the context of the small scale – short effective duration, and complexity of context for most projects – this is unsurprising. However, case-based or story-based evidence and feedback provided for several ‘low data’ projects show strong signs very real and tangible impacts have been created.

Overall, we observed a pattern of **greater success where projects had a narrow focus** on a particular social crime prevention domain, rather than trying to impact many areas. Other factors influencing success were projects targeted to a well-defined and understood target group, and projects led by organisations that had specific capabilities in the targeted domain working with the targeted cohort.

A pattern was observed of stakeholders attributing less successful results to failings at the partnership or relational level, rather than to a flawed program theory. The insight this offers lies in the limitation of the grants program pilot structure as a vehicle for testing specific interventions to address social crime prevention, and conversely, the centrality of successful partnerships to implementation.



Capturing project level impacts on **culture and identity** provided to be challenging, although this domain was a focus for half of the funded projects. Projects led by cultural organisations, or projects that formed successful partnerships with cultural organisations, provided the strongest evidence of increased connections to culture. Achievement of cultural-strengthening outcomes stemmed from early and consistent collaboration with cultural partners.

“In my 40 years of working in, and across, Indigenous programs and with Indigenous people, in the AOD, mental health and justice sectors the Journeys’ Program is one of the most innovative and effective services I have come across. This is because of its cultural integrity, vocational focus and passionate commitment to the community it seeks to serve.”
(Program stakeholder)



Most projects nominated a focus on **education attainment and economic participation**; however, in many cases this domain was largely tangential to the core activities. Given the complexity of economic exclusion’s underlying drivers, the resultant lack of impact in this domain was unsurprising. For those projects where this domain was ‘front and centre’, some positive results were evident, including re-engagement with the education system and the delivery of practical training activities to help participants develop vocational skills and future employability.



All projects sought to strengthen **interpersonal connections** for participants and the local community, and across all projects this domain was observed to have the greatest investment of effort and the strongest evidence of positive outcomes. Our hypothesis is that this result reflects the fact that most of the lead agency organisations are social services organisations for whom working in this space is ‘core business’.



Only three projects had a specific ‘place-making approach’ that focused on improving **neighbourhood characteristics**. These three projects were able to report positive results – potentially because the more tangible nature of the intervention and outcome made them more visible and readily measurable. We also observed that two projects working in this domain were able to leverage the outcomes from their grant project to attract additional funding from other sources.



Social cohesion proved to be the domain that was least understood by projects, with few able to report concrete gains –likely partially a result of the intrinsic challenges of measuring impacts in this space. Gains were reported in those projects that built trust with the community and increased the capacity of target cohorts to participate in community activities.



Ten projects reported a focus on strengthening **access to local services and supports**. Positive outcomes correlated to highly effective steering committees in which the networking platform provided was leveraged to improve referral- and service-access pathways.

Sustainability

A key area of interest to the evaluation is the extent to which the gains made through the grants program are likely to be sustainable beyond the funding period. In exploring this issue with stakeholders, we found:

- It is not possible to make a definitive finding in relation to the durability of **outcomes achieved for individuals**; however, the short-term changes reported by projects indicate the beginnings of a positive trajectory in some cases.
- Where projects have delivered **infrastructure** in some form (e.g. cultural meeting place, a cultural walking track or neighbourhood beautification), these will continue to provide ongoing benefit to the local community.
- The more successful **relationships and partnerships** formed as a result of the project are likely to continue in one form or another – based on positive reflections from key stakeholders.
- **Specific project activities** which have been directly funded by the grants program are most at risk of cessation; however, the process of designing, implementing and evaluating these programs leaves stakeholders with a model that may be able to attract further funding. For example, one project is pursuing funding for continuation, while another has already secured industry funding to continue particular activities.

“We had a lot of kids that were disconnected from community ... we connected them with a positive peer group ... we had young kids coming through from Child Protection or Youth Justice and we were able to introduce them into a leadership-mentoring program with positive role models, kids their own age, and those relationships will be enduring.”
(Program stakeholder)

A summary of the key evaluation findings, insights and recommendations for future departmental investment in place-based crime prevention initiatives is provided overleaf.

IMPACT ON INTENDED OUTCOMES

EVALUATION FINDINGS (WHAT WAS OBSERVED?)

The funded projects were generally able to show evidence of impact at the participant level, where most data collection efforts were focused, but less able to tell a data-driven story of impact at the community level.

In the context of the small scale – short effective duration, and complexity of context for most projects – this is unsurprising. There was, however, case-based or story-based evidence and feedback provided for several 'low data' projects, demonstrating that they have created very real and tangible impacts.

It is not possible to make a definitive finding in relation to the durability of outcomes achieved for individuals; however, the short-term changes reported by projects indicate the beginnings of a positive trajectory in some cases.

Where projects have delivered infrastructure in some form (e.g. cultural meeting place, a cultural walking track or neighbourhood beautification), these will continue to provide ongoing benefit.

Specific project activities directly funded by the grants program are most at risk of cessation. Conversely, the process of designing, implementing and evaluating these programs entrusts stakeholders with a model that may be able to attract further funding.

INSIGHTS (WHAT DOES IT MEAN?)

Limitations in the quality of the data and the short duration of the pilots mean definitive findings cannot be made concerning the effectiveness of the grant program approach as a crime prevention strategy.

Community-level impacts were unlikely to be realised within the grants program timeframe and, in context, the impacts reported at individual level are encouraging.

There is support within the broader literature for place-based approaches to addressing complex social problems. Place-based approaches are also consistent with present government policy in other domains. For example, [Children and Youth Area Partnerships](#) and [Place-Based Education Plans](#)).

RECOMMENDATIONS (WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?)

1. **Place-based, partnership-driven approaches should be retained as a targeted strategy to reduce risk factors and promote protective factors for crime prevention in specific areas.**

COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES

EVALUATION FINDINGS (WHAT WAS OBSERVED?)

The grants program has created a platform for agencies to engage with each other, both at the project governance level (via steering committees) and, to a more limited extent, at the operational level. On the practical level, the program focus on funding projects that require multiple stakeholders' input to achieve their goals (e.g. deliver partnerships or facilitate participant recruitment referrals) has created an ecosystem for relationships to develop.

Steering committee respondents less positive about their partnerships indicated that this related to factors such as variable engagement by the partners as the project progressed, and conflicts of philosophy (community-driven or agency-driven).

Findings also reveal a decrease in the active leadership and perceived support from key organisational decision-makers over time, which highlights challenges in sustaining senior involvement and engagement and, in some cases, retaining clarity around delegations.

Several partners also reported their organisational role to be limited within the project, with partners treated as 'participants' rather than decision -makers.

INSIGHTS (WHAT DOES IT MEAN?)

Some of the key challenges to successful partnerships included differences in vision, values and roles. Project-specific partnership approaches are best suited to addressing problems where a stakeholder is unable to tackle the presenting issues alone, and the complexity of the shared problem is related to the intensity of collaborative effort required (White & Winkworth, 2012). In areas of community need and common interest, there is also a place for durable, proven local partnerships to operate as a 'platform' for multiple projects to be conceptualised and delivered.

Conversely, where presenting problems can be principally addressed by a single agency, collaborative partnerships may quickly lose relevance for members. In these contexts, more effective and efficient approaches to engaging stakeholders may be achieved through co-design strategies or advisory functions.

Building partnerships and working collaboratively is time consuming and resource intensive; it is important to ensure the right stakeholders (with complementary, necessary capabilities) are working on the right problem (with clarity of shared vision and purpose) and in the right way (efficiently leveraging each stakeholder's capabilities in service of the problem).

RECOMMENDATIONS (WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?)

2. Collaborative partnership approaches should be encouraged where the presenting problems specifically require a multi-stakeholder response, and where there is a clear and ongoing role (and commensurate responsibility) for each partner within the model.

BUILDING ON AND SUSTAINING PARTNERSHIPS

EVALUATION FINDINGS (WHAT WAS OBSERVED?)

In tackling place-based issues, the program sought to drive development of new local partnerships. Less successful projects showed a pattern of stakeholders attributing failings to the partnership or relational level, rather than to a flawed program theory.

Most projects were confident in the soundness of the core mechanism of change at the heart of their intervention approach. Challenges in executing the intended intervention were commonly associated with a lack of clarity around partners' roles in the process. For example, unmet expectations in a partner organisation's ability to drive referrals to the program.

Consistent and effective stakeholder engagement was a key enabler to successful project implementation and collective achievement of outcomes. Conversely, poor engagement and management of stakeholders was a significant barrier to the formation of successful and sustainable partnerships.

Based on positive reflections from key stakeholders, the more successful relationships and partnerships formed as a result of the project are likely to continue in one form or another.

INSIGHTS (WHAT DOES IT MEAN?)

A key limitation of the grants program pilot structure as a vehicle for testing specific interventions to address social crime prevention lies in the emphasis on the formation of new partnerships. The untested nature of these relationships introduced a significant new variable, impacting the success of each project.

The risk of project failure due to breakdown in a partnership (rather than a flawed intervention model) is mitigated by strong relationships between project stakeholders.

Conversely, where relationships among key players are not strong, additional investment of time and resources will likely be required. Effective partnerships are a necessary (if not sufficient) precondition for successful place-based program delivery.

Investment of time and resources in relationship building is particularly important when seeking to influence change for targeted cohorts. Successful outcomes are more likely when the partnership creates a platform for representatives from the target cohort to be actively involved in project design, delivery and oversight.

RECOMMENDATIONS (WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?)

3. **Given the importance of successful partnerships for place-based, partnership-driven interventions, grant assessment processes should include a robust evaluation of the strength and sustainability of the consortium making a submission.**
4. **Where established, effective community networks and relationships exist within an area, funders should seek to enable and leverage this platform to accelerate program development and implementation of place-based crime prevention initiatives.**
5. **In cases where critical partnerships are not yet established, or there is low trust between key stakeholders, an early focus of funding placement should be on partnership development, providing a robust foundation for program delivery.**
6. **In cases where place-based crime prevention initiatives are seeking to influence change for targeted cohorts, project governance structures should create a platform to give agency to representatives from the target cohort to be actively involved throughout the project design, delivery and oversight.**

EVIDENCE BUILDING CAPABILITY

EVALUATION FINDINGS (WHAT WAS OBSERVED?)

One of the goals of funding pilot programs was to generate evidence for effective approaches to place-based crime prevention. The process evaluation identified high variability in the technical capacity of funded projects, in terms of developing project logics and evaluation plans.

INSIGHTS (WHAT DOES IT MEAN?)

In the context of a pilot program, explicit evaluative focus and capability is necessary to ensure learnings are captured and documented, and the full benefits of testing new concepts can be realised.

Conversely, programs focused on deploying well-established proven approaches require significantly less evaluative effort as they are generally testing a delivery/implementation mechanism rather than the underlying intervention itself.

RECOMMENDATIONS (WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?)

7. Grant programs that are focused on supporting innovation or piloting new approaches should include guidance to potential grantees on the apportionment of at least 10–15 per cent of the grant budget to program design, data collection and evaluation.

TECHNICAL GUIDANCE AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

EVALUATION FINDINGS (WHAT WAS OBSERVED?)

Development, implementation and evaluation of the projects required a broad range of skillsets and capabilities not always readily available in the lead agencies.

A number of strategies were adopted at the program level to address lower capacities of technical evaluation and data collection across the projects – and assist project personnel to build their ability to ‘think evaluatively’. This included a program logic development workshop, provision of written evaluation guidance focused on qualitative and quantitative data-collection techniques and case-study development, as well as one-on-one coaching to develop evaluation plans, select best-fit indicators aligned against social crime prevention domains and design data-collection strategies.

Projects report useful learnings from: designing ‘theory-based’ projects to conform to models of social crime prevention, expressing the program approach in a structured program logic model, implementing and administering the program effectively within a partnership-based and stakeholder-dependent context and developing, collecting and reporting data on outcomes.

INSIGHTS (WHAT DOES IT MEAN?)

Projects that have access to the right skillsets and technical knowledge to support development, implementation and monitoring/evaluation over their lifecycle can potentially:

- streamline development by applying sound partnership development and project management processes
- increase efficiency through learning from others’ prior or concurrent experiences
- increase effectiveness by drawing on existing evidence of effective interventions.

However, with the exception of two early program logic/evaluation planning workshops and subsequent limited evaluation-support provided by Urbis, funded projects did not have access to expert guidance or a ‘peer project’ knowledge exchange.

RECOMMENDATIONS (WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?)

8. **Localised grant programs with significant commonalities in process or focus should be provided with access to expert-curated technical support and guidance material. This could include technical guidance on partnership building, project planning/management and monitoring and evaluation, along with theory-based guidance towards evidence in support of place-based interventions, collective impact, and social crime prevention.**
9. **Localised grant programs with significant commonalities in process or focus should be provided with structured opportunities to share ideas-learnings with each other through a community of practice or network.**

LINKING SCOPE AND FOCUS TO CAPABILITIES

EVALUATION FINDINGS (WHAT WAS OBSERVED?)

Across the twelve funded projects, we observed a pattern of greater success where:

- projects understood the social crime prevention domains targeted by the program, and were familiar with strategies and interventions addressing these domains
- projects focused on a particular social crime prevention domain rather than trying to impact many areas
- projects targeted a well-defined and understood target group
- projects were led by organisations that had specific capabilities and experience working in the targeted domain with the targeted cohort.

INSIGHTS (WHAT MIGHT IT MEAN?)

Social crime prevention theory reflects the complexity of the problems that crime prevention interventions seek to address.

While sophisticated, broad-based and longer-term approaches are potentially suited to tackling multiple domains (e.g. collective impact), the short intervention period and level of resources available to the pilot programs constrained what was attainable over the grant period.

In this context, to produce observable impacts a case may be made for narrowing focus, containing scope and managing expectations.

Equally, it is important to ensure that the program administration and potential grant recipients share a common understanding of the aspects of social crime prevention theory that the program is seeking to address – and a shared understanding of what constitutes success in addressing aspect or domain.

RECOMMENDATIONS (WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?)

10. **Grant programs that seek to address complex, place-based social problems should be funded over an extended period with built-in exit points for underperformance, mitigating funder risk. For example, base period + options for funding extension, subject to performance.**
11. **Where localised crime prevention programs are operating under shorter timeframes (< two years), to enable testing efficacy the programmatic focus should be tightly targeted by cohort or social crime prevention domain.**

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Appendix A PROJECT SUMMARIES

GROWING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES – BRIMBANK

Lead agency: Brimbank City Council

About the project

Growing Healthy Communities (GHC) sought to increase community engagement, social cohesion and the community capability of young people, women and CALD communities residing in the Brimbank area through a community food sharing and garden program. The project applied a public health approach and provided hands-on horticultural training to participants – to grow and harvest fresh produce and share food with local community organisations. Participants used produce grown in the garden to prepare meals to share amongst themselves and with vulnerable community members in need.



Implementation

Participation

The GHC project successfully engaged with 113 Brimbank locals, including 88 participants from CALD backgrounds, 90 women and 18 young people aged 16–25 years. Characteristics common to all participant groups included low educational attainment, low social and economic participation, food insecurity, interrupted schooling, long-term unemployment, poor literacy and numeracy skills, poor social and employability skills and health issues from poor diet and nutrition.

Recruitment challenges: Locals involved with the justice system were the most difficult target cohort for GHC to reach. Establishing a process to facilitate regular referrals into the project through the youth justice system was challenging, and engagement with this cohort was much lower than expected. Eligibility requirements also impacted on the number of men recruited through Corrections, with men over 25 years not eligible to participate. Recruitment of young people into the program was also lower than expected, hindered by the location of the Westvale Community Centre (central meeting place for the project) away from Brimbank's main urban centre and difficult to access via public transport.

Activities

GHC successfully delivered all planned project activities. This included construction and maintenance of a community garden at the Westvale Community Centre (a Brimbank City Council neighbourhood house), 89 community lunches with vulnerable population groups and delivery of a horticultural hospitality-and retail-training program (through the Jesuit Community College). The program also engaged guest speakers from organisations including Victoria Police, Relationships Australia and Brimbank Library to talk to program participants about a range of topics such as drug and alcohol issues, healthy relationships and the local services available to the community.

Goal achievement and sustainability

Almost all GHC stakeholders who responded to the partnership survey (10 of 12) agreed the project had achieved 'most' or 'all' of its goals. Just under half (5 of 12) agreed that 'most' or 'all' of these achievements would continue to benefit participants and the Brimbank community beyond the project period.

"... this project overall did an excellent job in reaching its objectives and outcomes, despite

taking some time for the project to begin receiving referrals ...”
(Project stakeholder)

Partnerships

A strong partnership between Brimbank City Council (the lead agency) and program partners Jesuit Social Services (JSS) was a key contributing factor to GHC achieving its overall goals. The partnership was supported by a clear governance structure, agreed terms of reference and regular meetings between partner organisations to collectively address issues and develop solutions.

Partners reported a willingness to continue their partnership, but qualified that sustainability of the partnership was dependent on having a champion to drive collective efforts and on securing ongoing government or philanthropic funding to fund the ‘champion’ role.

“JSS and Brimbank City Council continue to have ongoing discussions as to how the program can continue now that funding has come to an end ...”
(Project stakeholder)



Crime prevention risk/protective factors

Summary of project impact on crime prevention risk/protective factors



- Evidence indicates the project had a positive impact
- Quality/lack of reported data limits ability to assess the project's impact
- Evidence indicates the project had little or no impact
- Crime prevention risk/protective factor was not identified as a focus of this project



1. Cultural identity

Strengthening cultural identity was not identified as a key focus for this project.



2. Interpersonal connections

Evidence indicates **GHC connected with people experiencing social isolation and contributed to increased confidence and self-esteem**. Through regular group activities such as cooking and gardening, social interactions increased and friendly relationships developed between participants. The project's collected survey data captured self-reported 'sense of engagement with the local community' from a proportion of participants. Almost all surveyed (27 of 29) believed participation in GHC had helped them to feel more engaged or connected with their local community.

Program staff witnessed positive engagement between the GHC participants and socially isolated participants from the local Men's Shed program. GHC participants cooked meals for Men's Shed in exchange for assistance with repairs and maintenance of the community garden.



3. Education/economic participation

GHC delivered practical training activities to help participants develop their vocational skills and future employability.

Through the Jesuit Community College the program successfully connected 76 Brimbank locals with pre-accredited training courses. Survey data indicates these locals attained new horticultural and food preparation skills – one of the key GHC objectives. Almost all (26 of 30) participants surveyed by the site reported they had 'learned new skills in relation to growing vegetables and gardening'. More than half (18 of 30) agreed that they had 'learned new skills relating to the preparation of food'.



4. Neighbourhood characteristics

Improving neighbourhood characteristics was not a primary focus for this project. However, the construction of the community garden, and the high volume of fresh produce grown and shared through community events, had a **positive impact on the characteristics of the surrounding neighbourhood**. Just under 200 participants congregated at the garden to participate in the preparation and distribution of food, while over 1,200 community members are reported to have accessed food and meals during the funding period.



5. Social cohesion

GHC appears to have made a **positive contribution towards improving social cohesion for members of the local community** who participated or interacted with the project. Almost all participants surveyed (27 of 29) by the project said GHC had helped them feel more engaged or connected with their local community. Project stakeholders identified 'feeling

connected with their community' and 'increased self-esteem and confidence' as key project outcomes, not only benefiting the individuals, but the wider Brimbank community.



6. Accessible services and supports

GHC improved referral pathways between local services and fostered collaborative partnerships between local services in the Brimbank area.

Fourteen different agencies referred participants into the project, and a further 61 agencies interacted with participants through in-kind contributions, guest speakers and attendance at community lunches.

Most participants (24 of 29) surveyed by the project stated the program helped them to increase their level of awareness about other local programs or services. Around two thirds (19 of 29) agreed that GHC had helped them to access these local services.

Key achievements

The GHC project successfully raised participants' awareness of the importance of eating healthy food and, by extension, their families and the broader Brimbank community.

"In this way the project followed the educative messages and examples set by Jamie Oliver and Stephanie Alexander by empowering 'ordinary' people to take control of their health, nutrition and their environment."
(Project stakeholder)

Key lessons and reflections

Narrow the focus of the project to concentrate on one or two disadvantaged cohorts. On reflection, the project reported that the range of target cohorts specified in their grant proposal – young people, women, CALD communities and individuals involved in the justice system and/or at risk of involvement in the justice system – was too diverse. This broad scope made it difficult for the GHC partnership organisations to be developed and implemented, or for programs to effectively meet the diverse and complex needs of the target cohorts.

COMMUNITY, CULTURE AND CONNECTIONS – CORIO NORLANE

Lead agency: City of Greater Geelong

About the project

Community, Culture and Connections (CCC) sought to reduce the risk of crime and increase community safety in the Corio Norlane area. Employing a place-making approach, the City of Greater Geelong formed partnerships with local organisations to engage Koorie and CALD young people in the development, design and delivery of a cultural walking track in Corio Norlane. The project aimed to promote cultural respect in the community, increase social cohesion and strengthen participants' cultural identity, leadership and educational levels. The CCC project received an extension, so had not submitted a final outcomes report at the time writing.

Implementation

Participation

CCC successfully engaged 58 young people. 26 identified as being of Koorie heritage and 32 were from a CALD background. In addition to the 58 participants, CCC worked closely with ten young mentors and creative practitioners throughout the project period. Participation was facilitated through two partner organisations – Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative and CALD organisation Diversitat.

Activities

CCC successfully delivered most planned activities, though construction of the physical walk was delayed. The project delivered 23 workshops to its young participants. Workshops used a variety of hands-on activities, active-learning and theory-based learning to strengthen participants' co-development and leadership skills. The intent of these workshops was to support young CALD and Aboriginal participants to design and fully develop a 'cultural walk' concept for

the Corio Norlane area, to be implemented by the City of Greater Geelong. Workshops were delivered to the two participant cohorts separately to ensure content was tailored and culturally appropriate. The two groups completed final walk concepts in October 2017, which were showcased at a celebratory event in November 2017.

The project reported that they underestimated the amount of time required to develop, design, approve and implement a capital works and landscaping project of this nature. Construction was due to be completed in August 2018.

Goal achievement and sustainability

Almost all CCC stakeholders who responded to the Urbis partnership survey (10 of 13) agreed the project had achieved 'most' or 'all' of its goals. Nine of the thirteen also agreed 'most' or 'all' of these achievements would continue to benefit participants and the Corio Norlane community beyond the pilot period.

Partnerships

Partnerships formed with Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative and Diversitat were crucial to the success of the project in achieving its goals. Stakeholders' **views on the strength and potential sustainability of these partnerships varied.** Some partners were confident that strong and ongoing partnerships had been formed, supported by open communication with Geelong City Council, from the CEO to youth workers involved in project delivery. Others suggested the partnership model was not fully inclusive and could have been strengthened by providing greater opportunity for cultural partner organisations to contribute in developing and designing the project approach.

Crime prevention risk/protective factors

Summary of project impact on crime prevention risk/protective factors



- Evidence indicates the project had a positive impact
- Quality/lack of reported data limits ability to assess the project's impact
- Evidence indicates the project had little or no impact
- Crime prevention risk/protective factor was not identified as a focus of this project



1. Cultural identity

Members of the CCC project steering committee were concerned about the project's planned approach to collect cultural-identity information directly from young Aboriginal participants. In response to these concerns, the project opted not to report on the project's impact on connections to culture.

"The sticking point with this project [is] related to measuring improved cultural connections of participants as this is a personal journey and difficult to measure."
(Project stakeholder)

However, final outcomes data (not collected at the time of writing) was expected to provide qualitative evidence to demonstrate the positive cultural strengthening aspect of the project.



2. Interpersonal connections

Evidence indicates CCC improved interpersonal connections for project participants. When asked "What has the experience been like so far?" and "What surprised you about it?", participants surveyed indicated that **group activities and learning experiences facilitated by the project were enablers of positive social interactions between participants.** "I enjoyed sharing lunch together as a group, it was a good way to get to know people" and "I learn about other people and made new friends". One partnership stakeholder also commented that, "interpersonal connection goals will be mostly met", providing further evidence of the project's positive impact in this domain.



3. Education/economic participation

The project positively **influenced education/economic participation outcomes** for at least one participant. The project lead explained that this participant decided to undertake an apprenticeship in landscaping because of their involvement in the project. One partnership survey respondent suggested the project was less successful in achieving its educational and economic participation goals, "as the relevant stakeholders were not engaged early".

Qualitative feedback from project stakeholders suggests an education- and employment-workshop – run late in the project – was particularly successful in engaging participants. Some participants communicated early signs of intent to pursue education and employment pathways.

"... one of the most successful parts of the project – I know it was successful because young people engaged really well."
(Project stakeholder)



4. Neighbourhood characteristics

The key output for the CCC project will be the planned walking trail in Corio Norlane, which will reflect a chronology of

Australian history. Partnership stakeholders who responded to the Urbis partnership survey reported that it was too early to assess the impact of the project in this domain, given the walking trail was yet to be constructed at the time of writing.

“Changes to the environment – time will tell if they are actually positive, if more people use the space and things like that ...”
(Project stakeholder)

However, stakeholders noted that the potential role of place in promoting pro-social behaviours was important and a good indicator that the walk will produce the desired result.

“We know that if you make a place more usable and more pleasing, people are more likely to use it and respect it ...”
(Project stakeholder)



5. Social cohesion

Data to assess the project's impact in this domain is limited. Results from qualitative interviews with project stakeholders (to be undertaken by Deakin University researchers) are yet to be provided by the site.



6. Accessible services and supports

Accessible services and supports was not identified as a focus for this project.

Key achievements

CCC successfully achieved high engagement with local students from CALD and Koorie backgrounds. Through the project, these students were provided with valuable leadership development opportunities, and exposure to employment and education pathways, including architecture and landscape gardening.

While yet to be constructed, the cultural walking track and physical transformation of the space will be an enduring legacy of the participants' involvement with the program.

Geelong City Council's decision to re-prioritise the area around the walking-trail site for further improvements was another, though unintended, positive outcome from project.

“... even though it is difficult [to develop and implement a capital works project in this way], it has been good, because it directed internal departments [within the local council] to focus on the area ...despite all those challenges, at least it got the ball rolling and we did the hard work.”

(Project stakeholder)

Key lessons and reflections

On reflection, the project did not adequately allow the time and resources required to deliver a capital works project. Both time and effort were under-estimated in the project proposal, resulting in delayed delivery of the final output.

During the development phase, the project would have benefited from greater investment in fostering partnerships with local cultural organisations. In designing the project, facilitated input from the targeted communities would have ensured that opportunities for cultural engagement were maximised.

LINKING LAVERTON

Lead agency: Latitude – Directions for Young People

About the project

Linking Laverton sought to increase community safety and connect young people in the region with existing sport, recreation and life skills programs. Targeted at young people aged 16–25, the Linking Laverton project sought to facilitate skill development in managing behaviours, communication and consequential thinking within the context of the programs. Target groups for the project included young people who identified as Koorie, and those from CALD backgrounds. The Linking Laverton project received an extension, and therefore had not submitted a final outcomes report at the time of writing.

Implementation

Participation

Linking Laverton successfully engaged 108 people in the project, including 51 young people – 15 from CALD communities and four who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Young men were the predominant cohort engaged, many of whom had accessed homelessness support, had children and were living in the local neighbourhood. Other common characteristics across all participant groups included socioeconomic disadvantage, unemployment, low income and low levels of education or disengagement from education.

Recruitment challenges: Establishing an effective process to facilitate referrals into the project from external organisations. For a target group that “is extremely disengaged”, this was a big challenge. Project stakeholders also noted that it was difficult to get buy-in from corrections officers, the primary contacts with the facility to offer young men the opportunity to participate in Linking Laverton upon leaving the corrections system.

Activities

Linking Laverton successfully implemented three skills-development programs during the grant period. Not all programs were

delivered to completion within the grant timeframe. (See below for details.)

Food Angels

Twelve disadvantaged young people from the Laverton region participated in the Food Angels program – a nine-week program to develop skills in cooking, shopping, food storage and food safety, along with financial management and planning. This program aimed to provide participants with foundational skills to transition into further education and employment pathways.

Wynbay Football program

Over 60 local people were involved in the Wynbay Football program, including disadvantaged young men from Koorie, Sudanese, Lebanese and Burmese backgrounds. Most of these young men had been through the youth justice system prior to involvement in the program. The football program facilitated connection and inclusion through being part of a sporting team, and incorporated leadership development sessions to help the young men learn to communicate positively and develop consequential thinking skills. The second season of the football program is currently underway, and is scheduled to be completed by 30 August 2018.

Young Men’s Mentoring program

Twelve young men from a variety of backgrounds – including Koorie, Sudanese and Burmese – completed the 2 x ten-week Young Men’s Mentoring and Behaviour Change Program. The disadvantaged young men partnered with positive male role models. Participants engaged in multiple behaviour-awareness-development sessions, including equine therapy, choices, consequences and positive participation learning, and respectful relationship/violence-against-women awareness.

Goal achievement and sustainability

Almost all Linking Laverton stakeholders who responded to the partnership survey (9 of 10) agreed the project had achieved 'most' of its goals, with only one respondent stating they were unsure. Just over half of the respondents (6 of 10) agreed 'some' or 'most' of the project's achievements would continue to benefit participants and the community beyond the pilot period.

Partnerships

Qualitative insights provided by project partners indicate the partnerships established during the project will remain supportive beyond the pilot period, but not necessarily collaborative, noting that:

"Partnerships already existed...the partnerships were strengthened by this process ... they will revert back to what they were ..."
(Project stakeholder)

Partner organisations identified a competitive funding environment as the primary barrier to ongoing collaboration.

Crime prevention risk/protective factors

Summary of project impact on crime prevention risk/protective factors



- Evidence indicates the project had a positive impact
- Quality/lack of reported data limits ability to assess the project's impact
- Evidence indicates the project had little or no impact
- Crime prevention risk/protective factor was not identified as a focus of this project



1. Cultural identity

Limited data was available to determine the impact of the project on the cultural connectivity of individual participants. Survey data collected by the site provides an indication of the project's positive impact in this domain, with two thirds (24 of 34) of the local participants surveyed agreeing that:

"The program allowed me to be connected to cultural identity."

While this is a positive outcome, the lack of qualitative insights and reflections from participants makes it difficult to determine the success of the three Linking Laverton programs in this domain. One project stakeholder reflected that many participants "did not understand culture all that well or did not have a specific cultural belief", highlighting the challenges of measuring positive movement in this domain and also the limited cultural focus of this particular project.



2. Interpersonal connections

Involvement in **Linking Laverton strengthened interpersonal connections for participants**. Almost half of respondents surveyed by the project (14 of 30) had taken on a leadership role, and more than two thirds (23 of 30) agreed they had developed stronger relationships with peers since being involved in a Linking Laverton program. A case study (see next page) describes the pathway of a young man who participated in the Young Men's Mentoring program and demonstrates the program's role in helping to improve his communication and engagement with peers.



3. Education/economic participation

Linking Laverton **provided young participants with the necessary practical**

and behavioural skills to facilitate participation in further education or economic pathways. Eight participants commenced and completed a pre-accredited or accredited training program. Project stakeholders also reported several participants found employment during the grant period. A case study provided by the site (see over page), outlines how the Food Angels program helped a young single mother to successfully attain a Food Handler Certificate.



4. Neighbourhood characteristics

Strengthening neighbourhood characteristics was not a primary focus for this project.

5. Social cohesion

As the site collected limited data, it is not possible to determine the overarching impact of the three programs on improving social cohesion amongst participants in the Laverton area. However, qualitative insights from project stakeholders indicate that the Wynbay Football and Young Men's Mentoring programs both **enhanced community engagement and facilitated social cohesion for the young men involved.** The programs



fostered development of pro-social behaviours and positive relationships between participants, facilitated by an environment, which discouraged alcohol consumption and drug use and rewarded positive interactions.

"You can see [the young men] have increased their ability to communicate with [each other and] the local community."

(Project stakeholder)



6. Accessible services and supports

Linking Laverton sought to increase awareness and facilitate connections to local support services for disadvantaged participants. Three quarters (11 of 16) of respondents surveyed by the project had accessed health or recreation services since being part of the project. **Qualitative insights indicate the project had a positive impact,** with one project stakeholder reporting that participants "... have been able to move

forward and connect with other services in the community that aren't as welfare focused ... helping them continue to move forward with their development."

Key achievements

Linking Laverton successfully implemented three skill foundation programs, each demonstrating a positive impact across multiple crime prevention domains for the vulnerable young people of the Laverton area. Achievements included:

- delivering a **positive community experience** for over 50 vulnerable and disengaged young people from a diverse range of backgrounds
- developing a **sense of belonging for socially isolated young men** –, many recently released from incarceration and experiencing homelessness – through the inclusive team environment of a football club
- **promoting acceptance of difference** amongst the diverse cohort of participants.

All participants surveyed by Linking Laverton agreed that involvement in the programs can assist in reducing involvement in criminal activity. Data was collected through a participant survey, which included the question, 'Do you believe the skill foundation programs can assist with tackling and reducing people's involvement in criminal activity?'. The project reported these findings were a significant boost of confidence to Latitude's programs and organisational aims.

Key lessons and reflections

On reflection, the main challenge for Linking Laverton was setting up the relationships necessary for effective referral processes into the programs.

"... buy-in and access from partners was critical to the Linking Laverton referral process, and at times [the lack of buy-in] hindered the ability of the individual programs to obtain sufficient referrals. A positive in this process was the support we received from the Department of Justice in trying to improve this challenge and we were [eventually] able to balance the success of the referral process."

(Project stakeholder)

Linking Laverton Case Study 1 – Young Men’s Mentoring program

A young man, Daryl*, was referred into the Young Men’s Mentoring program as part of a support plan developed with his correctional worker. Daryl had a long history of contact with the youth justice system. Through the Linking Laverton program, Daryl participated in a series of leadership sessions on topics including the impact of social violence, respectful relationships, choices – good, bad and ugly, and family violence. Daryl became a vocal participant in these sessions, demonstrating insight and knowledge about the issues being discussed and, importantly, into the impact of social violence, bad choices, relationship and family violence on his own life experiences.

Daryl’s communication and engagement dramatically improved through ongoing interaction with the mentors in the program and the Linking Laverton support staff working with him. Since involvement in the program, he reported an increased awareness of his own behaviours and is now able to articulate the impact of previous choices and consequences.

Exposure to the leadership development sessions contributed to Daryl’s increased self-awareness. However, the young man stated that the greatest impact for him has been the influence and support of the positive male mentors he met through the program and the support from the agencies aligned with the program.

When asked by project staff about his experience with Linking Laverton, Daryl stated that the program had been a positive and encouraging experience that he would recommend to other young men in similar circumstances and would participate again if given the opportunity.

Subsequent to his involvement with Young Men’s Mentoring, Daryl gained full-time employment and had not re-entered the youth justice system.

Linking Laverton Case Study 2 – Food Angels program

A young mother, Alex*, was referred into the Linking Laverton Food Angels program by a local community correctional service, with support from a youth homelessness support agency. Food Angels was identified as a potential pathway for Alex to help build up her confidence, provide foundational skills in food handling in order that she eventually move onto further education. At the time, Alex was living in short-term transitional housing. The homelessness agency incorporated Food Angels into her case management plan as a lever to strengthen Alex’s social and interpersonal connections and provide skill development, while gaining access to services and supports in the area.

Prior to commencing the program, Alex lost her job and was struggling with broken family relationships. She had few positive influences in her life. Alex identified the Food Angels program as a key positive experience, at a time when she was dealing with many uncertainties. Alex said Food Angels helped her to budget more effectively, which was important to her as a single parent and sole income earner. Alex also said that she could now recognise healthier and more cost-effective ways to prepare meals for her daughter and was more confident about preparing nutritious meals. Since completing the Food Angels program, Alex and her daughter eat more serves of fruit and vegetables daily. Alex also says she feels more confident accessing local medical, health and welfare services.

Through involvement in Food Angels, Alex developed a keen interest in preparing food and completed a Hygienic Practices for Food Safety (Food Handler’s) accreditation certificate. This achievement gave Alex the confidence and motivation to engage with further training and to seek out further opportunities. For example, she recently agreed to assist Latitude in providing catering services to 220 local Rotarians for their annual Christmas party. While Alex was nervous and anxious at first, she drew on the skills she had developed through Food Angels and was able to participate confidently and efficiently throughout the day.

Alex’s caseworker and pathways coordinator continue to assist her to identify opportunities for re-entry into employment and explore future pathways for ongoing training and accreditation.

*Participant’s name has been changed to ensure anonymity.

CONNECTIONS DOVETON

Lead agency: Jesuit Social Services

About the project

Connections Doveton was a pro-social cultural-engagement program developed to engage young Koorie people aged 15–24 in increasing protective factors that influence offending. Connections combined workshops, positive role modelling, outdoor therapy and music and performance activities with themes of identity, culture and restorative justice principles. Jesuit Social Services (JSS) were the lead agency for this project, and worked in partnership with Casey Aboriginal Gathering Place, Dandenong and District Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd and Yalukit Marnang to deliver:

- the 11-week Kulcha Konnect Koorie youth cultural awareness and leadership program
- skills development to assist 30 young people to deliver cultural awareness training
- a capacity-building program focused on engagement and consultation with Koorie youth
- facilitation of pre-accredited and accredited training and employment opportunities for young Koorie people.

Implementation

Participation

Connections Doveton successfully engaged 26 young people who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Of these, seven resided in Doveton, and 18 reported a strong connection to Doveton through family members living in the suburb.

Connections originally included a focus on strengthening social connections in the Maori and Pasifika communities in Doveton. At the request of the department, the scope was expanded to support young members of the Doveton Koorie community. The project faced challenges maintaining both partnerships and

implementing tailored solutions for each cohort. United Pasifika Council of Victoria (representing the Maori and Pasifika community) withdrew from the program during the implementation stage. In May 2017 the department approved a variation to the program, refocusing all project activities on young Koorie people living in the Doveton area.

Activities

Connections successfully delivered all but one of the planned activities for the 26 young Koorie participants. The final element – a cultural-awareness training package for youth service providers – was not able to be delivered within the grant period.

“... [in the end] we couldn’t engage the partners or a Koorie contractor to do the last component.”
(Project stakeholder)

Goal achievement and sustainability

No steering committee Connections Doveton members responded to the partnership survey.

Partnerships

Qualitative insights from project stakeholders indicate that the expansion of project to include the Koorie community made it difficult for the lead agency to establish a shared vision or authority amongst partners. However, the stakeholders consulted agreed that after a challenging start, strong relationships were eventually developed and were likely to remain strong, with potential for future collaboration evident.

Crime prevention risk/protective factors

Summary of project impact on crime prevention risk/protective factors



- Evidence indicates the project had a positive impact
- Quality/lack of reported data limits ability to assess the project's impact
- Evidence indicates the project had little or no impact
- Crime prevention risk/protective factor was not identified as a focus of this project



1. Cultural identity

Evidence indicates that **Connections Doveton helped to improve connection to self, family, community and culture** for the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants. Activities delivered by partner agencies DDACL and Yalukit Marnang, and supported by the Building Strong Aboriginal Youth Regional Coordinator, helped to develop capabilities, capacities and cultural competence for participants.

The number of participants surveyed by the project who agreed to feeling 'connected and proud of their culture' increased after participating in project activities. Connection to family, culture and community also facilitated leadership and mentoring components of the project.

"... going to Dreamtime at the 'G [was a highlight] ... I [got to] see people [I] haven't seen for a while – friends and cousins. Seeing brother, Uncles dance on the 'G."
(Project participant)

A case study provided by Connections tells the story of one participant, who explored their connection to self, family and Indigenous heritage through cultural strengthening and awareness workshops in the Kulcha Konnect program (see over page).



2. Interpersonal connections

Evidence indicates that **Connections Doveton successfully influenced development of stronger social connections** for participants. Just under half of participants surveyed by the project (6 of 13) strongly agreed they had made a new connection through the project. This is supported by qualitative commentary, demonstrating the value of the connections being formed.

"... getting to know everyone better and what they like and do not like ... it has made me more confident and brave around others."
(Project participant)



3. Education/economic participation

Improving education and economic participation was a secondary focus for Connections – with the project's theory of change targeted on improving cultural and interpersonal factors. In turn, it was anticipated these factors would lead to improved education and economic participation. Qualitative feedback collected by the site indicates early impacts in this domain for some participants; seven of twelve have improved school attendance since starting the project.



4. Neighbourhood characteristics

Neighbourhood characteristics was not a focus for this project.



5. Social cohesion

Due to the withdrawal of the Koorie Youth Council from the program prior to final data collection, limited data was

available to determine the extent to which the program led to increased social cohesion for participants.



6. Accessible services and support

Limited data was available to determine the extent to which the project led to increased access to services and supports for participants. Again, this was due to the withdrawal of the Koorie Youth Council from the project prior to final data collection.

Key achievements

Building relationships with local Koorie community leaders and organisations during the pilot period. The project lead reflected that even after a challenging start, and non-completion of one element, the greatest achievement of this project was the relationships formed between local Koorie community leaders, Koorie organisations and the lead agency. As a place-based targeted grant, the importance of building relationships with local Koorie organisations, cultural leaders and respected ‘champions’ was central to the project’s success in engaging with young Koorie people and affecting change.

A key relationship formed between JSS and the Building Strong Aboriginal Youth Regional Coordinator and, in turn, the Casey Aboriginal Gathering Place. Through this relationship, the project was able to reach and engage the 26

young Koorie people residing in the Doveton area, and facilitate insights and better understanding into their aspirations, needs and interests.

Successfully connecting young Koorie participants to their culture through project activities and the Casey Aboriginal Gathering Place in Doveton.

The project lead noted that the main benefits for the young people who participated was a greater connection to self, family and culture, and development of positive interpersonal relationships. These gains are likely to continue beyond the grant period, and are proven key protective factors against crime.

Key lessons and reflections

Building relationships and trust between partners at the onset of the project is crucial to its successful implementation.

A key lesson learned through Doveton Connections is the importance of establishing a shared vision, and authority to implement this vision at project establishment. Projects of this nature cannot be implemented without a common sense of purpose, trust and commitment amongst partners. As noted by the project lead, “this takes time and [the process] can also be unpredictable”.

Connections Doveton Case Study

Oscar* was a 17-year-old Indigenous man residing in Doveton. At the time he was referred to the Kulcha Konnect program at the Casey Gathering place, Oscar had not been enrolled in an educational setting or been employed for over three years. Due to the young people he spent time with, Oscar was known to police and was at a high risk of becoming involved in the justice system.

Oscar attended the Kulcha Konnect program weekly over a 12-month period. During that time, he received support from Auntie Emma, Building Strong Aboriginal Youth Regional Coordinator, a male youth worker from the Dandenong District Aborigines Co-Operative Ltd (DDACL) and from other young Koorie people attending the program.

The program provided Oscar with a culturally safe space to explore his connection to self and his family and, more broadly, his Indigenous culture. Oscar responded well to the cultural strengthening and awareness workshops and discussions. Over time, he explored more about where he comes from, his language group, tribe and clan.

Program staff observed a shift in Oscar's behaviour. At first, he sat back with closed body language, kept silent and retreated from group discussions. Towards the end of the program, he talked more freely, his body language opened and he actively engaged in discussions, asking questions and keen to learn more about his mob. Oscar became more vocal in the topics he would like to learn about and discuss.

Nathan, the youth worker from DDACL, engaged Oscar to assist with the pre-program setting-up activities each Monday. Initially, Nathan called Oscar at around 2 pm and then picked him up to purchase the food for the program. In preparing the weekly program sessions Nathan gave Oscar specific directions in setting up the room, preparing the food and cleaning the kitchen. Eventually, Oscar started calling Nathan on Mondays at 2 pm himself and began taking responsibility for the shopping and room set-up. As his self-confidence improved, Oscar demonstrated more initiative, increased personal responsibility and active participation in the program.

Towards the end of the program, Oscar initiated discussions with Nathan about returning to school and future work. Through the program, Oscar was connected to a Department of Education-funded Reconnect program at the local TAFE to receive further support and assistance in continuing his education along with a jobactive provider to aid Oscar to enter the workforce.

Observable benefits of Oscar participating in Kulcha Konnect program include:

- participating in pro-social activities e.g. homework club
- spending less time with the young people who are engaging in high-risk behaviour.
- initiating conversations around returning to education and engaging with a jobactive provider
- increasing his Indigenous cultural knowledge and understanding of connection to self and family
- exposure to positive role models
- connection to the broader service sector, including as Ngwala, Centrelink, jobactive, Chisholm TAFE, and The Gathering Place
- Oscar's family now has stable housing, and he is back living with family.

**Participant's name has been changed to ensure anonymity.

BREAKING THE CYCLE – DOVETON

Lead agency: TRY Australia

About the project

Breaking the Cycle sought to address disadvantage for disengaged young males in the Doveton area who are at risk of becoming involved in crime. With the integrated support of 11 partner organisations, the program aimed to introduce a validated group-mentoring strategy through the successful TRY Mentoring in the Hood (MITH) program and deliver it within a peer support model. Weekly contact was provided through a range of recreational activities, creating a platform for the formation of positive, reinforcing relationships between trained volunteer mentors and mentees.

Implementation

Participation

Breaking the Cycle successfully engaged with 30 young men from the Doveton area.

Most of the young men came from single-parent families, and others were in residential care situations. Participants had a range of cultural backgrounds, including Sudanese, Turkish, Burmese, Samoan, Maori and those who identified as Aboriginal. These young men were disengaged from education and employment. Many had experienced family violence, family dysfunction, parental mental health issues, parental drug dependency, the death of a parent or family breakdown – with a high incidence of mental health issues prevalent amongst participants.

Recruitment challenges: Project staff reported challenges recruiting participants during the first year of funding. Barriers to referrals identified included corrections case workers not consistently following through (despite providing in-principle support), the restrictive nature of the eligibility criteria (which was eventually relaxed) and difficulties in establishing relationships and building trust with the targeted communities within the grant program time constraints.

Activities

Breaking the Cycle successfully revised the planned project approach to increase project reach and ensure that activities delivered met the needs of the target cohort. Planned weekly recreational activities were replaced with the delivery of pre-accredited training in carpentry, gardening, literacy and numeracy. Participants identified employment pathways as the primary objective for agreeing to participate in the program.

To increase participation rates, TRY Australia recruited a group of young men through an existing program, TRY Build. Breaking the Cycle was adapted to include a structured learning program, comprising two days of hands-on skill development activities at the TRY Build factory site and one day of literacy and numeracy education at the Doveton Neighbourhood house. Participant data collected by the site indicates the refocus led to an increase in referrals, with the program reaching its target of 30 young males.

Goal achievement and sustainability

Just over half of the seven Breaking the Cycle stakeholders who responded to the Urbis partnership survey (4 of 7) agreed the project had achieved 'most' or 'some' of its goals. Two thirds (5 of 7) were uncertain the achievements of would continue to benefit participants and the community beyond the pilot period. Reasons for this uncertainty related to the short timeframe of the pilot grant in which to develop a program or influence change, and the one-off nature of the grant funding.

"Insufficient time to really establish the connections. One year and two-year programs can only achieve a little. Support over five years is more realistic."
(Project stakeholder)

Partnerships

While there was uncertainty about sustainability, feedback from project stakeholders suggests that through shared vision and common goals, **TRY Australia successfully established strong partnerships to deliver Breaking the Cycle.**

Partner organisations reported a willingness to continue their association. Identified as barriers were the needs to find an ongoing funding source and the ongoing coordination aspect.

Crime prevention risk/protective factors

Summary of project impact on crime prevention risk/protective factors



- Evidence indicates the project had a positive impact
- Quality/lack of reported data limits ability to assess the project's impact
- Evidence indicates the project had little or no impact
- Crime prevention risk/protective factor was not identified as a focus of this project



1. Cultural identity

Evidence indicates that through positive mentoring relationships, Breaking the Cycle provided pathways for some of the young men involved, and increased their understanding of their own cultural identity. Data collected by the project suggests that relationships developed between

the young men and the mentors led to more participants knowing 'where to go' and 'who to talk to' if they wanted to connect with their culture. There was also an increase in the proportion of participants reporting they had someone they felt "comfortable with to teach me about culture".



2. Interpersonal connections

Evidence indicates the integrated response delivered through Breaking the Cycle **successfully strengthened the interpersonal connections for the disadvantaged young men.** Almost all participants (7 of 9) surveyed by the project agreed that the other participants inspired them and offered support. Qualitative feedback from project staff suggests the young men showed more pro-social behaviour, which in turn positively impacted their interpersonal connections.

"... [we saw an] increase in participants reporting more positive influences and supports in their lives and [participants] felt they were making more of a contribution to society."

(Project stakeholder)



3. Education/economic participation

The Breaking the Cycle delivery model was refocused to provide pathways for the young men to transition into education and economic participation. **The project successfully produced positive outcomes in this domain.** Half (15 of 30) of the participants completed the Certificate II in Construction and Building, two participants completed other studies and one participant commenced paid work.



4. Neighbourhood characteristics

Improving neighbourhood characteristics was not a primary focus for this project.



5. Social cohesion

Evidence indicates that the project **helped young men to develop stronger social connections and demonstrate positive behavioural changes** when interacting with each other, and within the local community.

Qualitative feedback from project stakeholders suggests that for some participants the positive peer-relationships fostered through the program, along with exposure to positive role models, contributed to a diversion from antisocial behaviour.

The young men also became more involved in the local community, with 22 participating in volunteer community projects – through construction and horticultural work.

As the program continued, project staff reported observing an increase in the level of engagement and positive behaviour demonstrated by participants in weekly construction and horticultural classes.



6. Accessible services and supports

Breaking the Cycle provided participants with information about the availability of local support services relevant to their needs, as well as facilitating access to these services – through ongoing engagement with participants' case managers and family members. Through this project, 30 young men were offered support for resumé writing, court support letters, referrals to headspace, university open days, Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS) programs, Salvation Army crisis support, Afri-Aus Care Inc, Youth Links and Avocare.

Key achievements

Breaking the Cycle **developed and delivered an integrative and collective response to support a group of disadvantaged and disengaged young men**. This approach, incorporating peer support, mentoring and skill development and learning approaches, successfully supported over half the participants in transitioning to other educational programs and paid employment.

“I would recommend TRY Build to other Navigator clients who show an interest in building and construction as the program appears to be very needed for those young people in the community who may not be suited to TAFE.”

(Project stakeholder)

Key lessons and reflections

Importance of delivering activities that meet participants' interests and needs.

Through the first year of the project, Breaking the Cycle did not receive sufficient referrals. Project partners listened to feedback received – that the project was not enticing to young men who could not see the immediate benefits of a mentoring program – and the partners collectively agreed to change the program delivery mechanism to meet the needs of the target cohort. Adapting the focus of the program – to highlight tangible education and employment outcomes – ensured that more young men were recruited, regularly attended the program and were positively engaged throughout the duration.

CULTURAL CONNECTIONS – FRANKSTON

Lead agency: Frankston City Council

About the project

Cultural Connections sought to facilitate culturally safe and competent pathways for young people from Aboriginal, Maori and Pacific Islander backgrounds who were disengaged, or at risk of being disengaged, from existing pathways to education, training and employment. The project design included provision of individual wrap-around support to address the complex needs of these cohorts. Cultural Connections aimed to establish or re-establish individual connection to culture and community, identify individual education and employment goals and develop supporting pathways to achieve these goals. The wrap-around support model was facilitated by the establishment of a collaborative multi-agency partnership of secondary schools, training and employment agencies and businesses, as well as service providers and local cultural organisations in Frankston North.

Implementation

Participation

Cultural Connections successfully engaged with 21 young people from Pasifika and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. The project initially engaged with each participant individually, then connected with their immediate families, extended community and social groups within Frankston North. This 'village' approach enabled Cultural Connections to implement holistic support for participants. This included forming a youth leadership group by engaging an additional 13 young people from the Frankston North community to provide mentoring to the 21 participants from disadvantaged backgrounds.

To reach target numbers, the eligible catchment area was extended from Frankston North to include the broader Frankston area, and participant age requirements were lowered to include those aged between 15 and 25 (from 17–25).

Activities

Cultural Connections successfully delivered the wide range of planned activities to provide holistic and wrap-around support to the young participants.

This included a youth leadership program involving leadership camps, group sessions and volunteering at cultural events such as NRL Harmony Day and a NAIDOC Awards Ceremony dinner, summer water-safety and fitness programs, and hands-on training in food handling, barista-ing and responsible service of alcohol. The project venue, the Frankston North Community Centre, was identified a key enabler of the program's success.

"The [Frankston North] Community Centre created a safe access and connection point for participants, their families and the broader community."
(Project stakeholder)

Goal achievement and sustainability

All Cultural Connections stakeholders who responded to the Urbis partnership survey agreed the project had achieved 'most' of its goals. All respondents agreed that 'most' or 'all' of the project achievements would continue to benefit participants and the community beyond the pilot period.

Partnerships

Strong collaboration between Frankston City Council and the 16 partner organisations was a key contributing factor to Cultural Connections achieving its goals and creating benefits beyond the grant period. Frankston City Council invested a significant amount of time establishing and maintaining the partnerships. The project lead reported that success came down to developing trust between agencies.

"... even with the statutory organisations you need to allow for trust to build...it took over 12

months for referrals to happen organically.”
(Project lead)

Partners reported a strong willingness to continue the partnership, with stakeholders noting that the relationship, along with some Cultural Connections elements, are likely to continue in some capacity beyond the pilot period.

“... the partnership will continue to some extent ... and even though we no longer have funding, we have work going on out there.”
(Project stakeholder)

Crime prevention risk/protective factors

Summary of project impact on crime prevention risk/protective factors



- Evidence indicates the project had a positive impact
- Quality/lack of reported data limits ability to assess the project's impact
- Evidence indicates the project had little or no impact
- Crime prevention risk/protective factor was not identified as a focus of this project



1. Cultural identity

Cultural Connections recognised that disconnection from culture has profound negative personal, social and community impacts and sought to work at both an individual and community levels to address the complex needs of participants.

Evidence collected by Frankston City Council indicates that, for most participants, the project successfully increased:

- individual connection to culture and community
- knowledge of language, customs and traditions
- engagement and participation in community life.

Project stakeholders observed that many participants actively participated in cultural practices, workshops and/or activities – often for the first time. Amongst other achievements in this domain, **to cater for the unique needs and engagement requirements of individual participants Cultural Connections created a cultural network of organisations that provided a variety of cultural influences.** Cultural Connections brought together local groups that specialise in traditional language, creative arts, performing arts, martial arts, health and fitness and outrigger water sports.



2. Interpersonal connections

Cultural Connections strengthened interpersonal connection between participants, cultural Elders, case managers and other community members. The proportion of participants who agreed they had a good relationship with their family/Elders/case managers increased from five (of 19) at program commencement to all (21 of 21) by the end of the program. As evidence of the project's impact on interpersonal connections, project staff reported that 16 participants attended behaviour-change programs such as anger management, mental health or sexual health workshops.

Through the Youth Leadership Program, Cultural Connections successfully brought together youth from multiple cohorts within the Frankston region to develop as leaders and mentors and foster cross-cultural understanding.



3. Education/economic participation

Evidences suggests that **Cultural Connections played a vital role in re-engaging participants with training and employment pathways.** The proportion of participants attending education/training programs increased from one of 19, to eight of 21 by program completion. Cultural Connections reported that six (of 21) participants also found employment in hospitality or commenced apprenticeships. One apprenticeship was the direct result of a new Aboriginal Apprentice Scheme established by Cultural Connections with partner organisation Air Master.

While there were many reported positive outcomes in this domain, feedback from project staff noted challenges in facilitating support for some participant cohorts. This included barriers to supporting participants with complex behavioural issues linked to past experiences of trauma, along with New Zealand migrants who did not qualify for Centrelink, thus limiting referral opportunities to job search agencies.



4. Neighbourhood characteristics

The neighbourhood characteristics domain was not a focus for this project.



5. Social cohesion

Evidence **that can be attributed to the Cultural Connections program indicates a positive change in the social cohesion domain.** At commencement, only six of 19 participants surveyed by the project reported positive relationships with their cultural Elders, mentors or the community. By program completion, this increased to almost all participants experiencing positive community relationships (20 of 21).

Cultural Connections was reported to have spearheaded increased collaboration between Maori/Pasifika, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and to have fostered cultural and social understanding that is improving

social cohesion between the different Indigenous groups in the Frankston area.



6. Accessible services and supports

There is evidence to suggest that the Cultural Connections partnership- and project-model facilitated improved awareness of, and access to, services for participants. Specific achievements highlighted by the lead agency include:

- linking participants to Frankston City Council's broad network of service infrastructure, including Pines Pool, Peninsula Aquatic Recreation Centre
- creation of a close working relationship with Victoria Police and other support agencies
- local agencies acknowledging the importance of a positive cultural environment, leading to more young people being referred into the project.

The proportion of participants who experienced positive engagement with services reportedly increased through involvement in the project.

Key achievements

Cultural Connections **successfully implemented an integrated and holistic support model that commenced with promotion of safety, trust and cultural awareness,** and progressed to address trauma reduction and cultural dignity. The project appears to have been very successful, with outcomes reaffirming the value of traditional cultural practices in healing the trauma of young people from populations experiencing entrenched disadvantage.

The value of the cultural approach underpinning Cultural Connections was recognised by other support agencies, including the Child Protection Service, who approved an initial trial to take one young Cultural Connections participant back to New Zealand to reconnect with their culture, family, tribe and traditions.

Key lessons and reflections

On reflection, Frankston City Council recommended a **longer project-implementation-period between three to six months to facilitate success outcomes** from this type of multi-agency, wrap-around support project. An extended implementation period would allow sufficient time to build the foundations of the project post-grant approval, including formalising partnerships, sourcing referrals and initial engagement with participants.

Another lesson learned through this project related to the age of the target group. The project recommended extending the eligibility criteria to enable young people aged between 11–14 years to participate. Initially, the program only allowed participants aged 15–25. The inclusion of younger people is supported by Victoria Police and other community support agencies, who suggest that the age at which young people are engaging in negative and criminal behaviour is lowering.

DARDI MUNWURRO JOURNEYS – HUME

Lead agency: YSAS (City of Hume)

About the project

Dardi Munwurro Journeys sought to empower young Aboriginal men and divert them from the criminal justice system by supporting them through a healing journey. The program aimed to directly address underlying issues often experienced by young Aboriginal males by engaging participants in a 12-month program, including an intensive camp followed by fortnightly, then monthly, follow-up sessions from a mentor. Dardi Munwurro Journeys supported each participant to set a personal vision and goals, build resilience, facilitate behaviour change, heal their spirit, make strong connections with the Aboriginal community, build up the life skills and competencies they needed to engage in education, employment and/or training pathways, and develop pro-social behaviours. The target cohorts for the program were at-risk Aboriginal men from the Hume area and surrounds, aged 13–17 and 18–25.

Implementation

Participation

Dardi Munwurro Journeys successfully engaged with 38 young Aboriginal men.

Thirty-one were aged 14–17 and seven were aged 18–25. Project staff reported the older group were more difficult to engage and tended to be reluctant to participate in the group components of the Journeys program. Numbers of the older cohort were lower than anticipated due to a reluctance to participate in the group mentoring component of the model and preference for one-to-one support.

The project engaged six mentors and four Aboriginal Elders to provide support to the young men in the program, attend camps and participate in organised culturally focused activities.

Eligibility criteria specifying that men needed to be from the Hume region was cited as another barrier to participation – with Aboriginal nations

and family groupings not well aligned to the department's regional boundaries.

Activities

Dardi Munwurro Journeys successfully delivered the planned activities to 31 young Aboriginal men aged 14–17 years old. This included intensive camps, one-to-one mentoring support and fortnightly group mentoring. Successful implementation of program activities varied between the two age cohorts. With only seven young men aged 18–25 recruited, the numbers were too few to deliver the planned monthly group sessions.

Goal achievement and sustainability

Almost all Dardi Munwurro stakeholders who responded to the Urbis partnership survey (5 of 6) agreed the project had achieved 'most' or 'all' of its goals. Two thirds (4 of 6) were 'unsure' whether the achievements would continue to benefit participants and the community beyond the pilot period.

Partnerships

A key contributing factor to the project achieving its goals was the strong partnership between YSAS (the lead agency) and Dardi Munwurro (the Aboriginal organisation that designed and delivered the Journeys program).

Both key partner agencies are committed to continuing to work together and collectively are looking to identify future funding sources to continue the Journeys program.

"In my 40 years of working in, and across, Indigenous programs and with Indigenous people in the AOD, mental health and justice sectors, the Journeys program is one of the most innovative and effective services I have come across. This is because of its cultural integrity, vocational focus and passionate commitment to the community it seeks to serve."

(Program stakeholder)

Crime prevention risk/protective factors

Summary of project impact on crime prevention risk/protective factors



- Evidence indicates the project had a positive impact
- Quality/lack of reported data limits ability to assess the project's impact
- Evidence indicates the project had little or no impact
- Crime prevention risk/protective factor was not identified as a focus of this project



1. Cultural identity

The Journeys program is reported to have **successfully increased the cultural and community connectedness for the young Aboriginal males involved in the program**. Insights from case studies demonstrate how participation in the project has increased cultural connections and the positive outcomes that have followed. (See page 27 for full case study.)

The project also reported that participants have maintained positive and ongoing connections with Aboriginal mentors.



2. Interpersonal connections

Project staff identified disengagement from family and the Aboriginal community as a common feature amongst the target cohort. Three case studies provide evidence of the project's positive impact on strengthening interpersonal

connections. These include specific examples of improved relationships between one participant and their mother, one participant's re-engagement with pro-social activities and one participant making new friends at school.



3. Education/economic participation

Dardi Munwurro again drew on case studies to tell the story of **the program's positive influence on participants' education and economic involvement**. Stories of successful engagement in this domain include:

- with the support of a project staff member a young Aboriginal man decided to return to the education system through the Return to Education and Vocation (REV) program. At the time of writing, this young man was completing three VCE subjects
- a young man has re-engaged with education through the specialist Baltara School and reports that he has "made some new friends at school"
- a young man, previously at risk of re-entering the youth justice system, regularly attends school and actively models positive behaviour learned through engagement with the project worker and mentor role-modelling activities.



4. Neighbourhood characteristics

Neighbourhood characteristics was not a primary focus for this project.



5. Social cohesion

Case studies outline the positive contribution of the Journeys program in the social cohesion domain.

After his involvement in the Journeys program, one young man's relationships with his peers improved substantially – to the extent that he has expressed an interest in supporting other young people, and possibly becoming a mentor in the future.

Another participant came into the program with an elevated level of distrust for others, stemming from a history of transient support

workers and discontinued support. The Journeys mentor worked closely with the young man to help him to confront his trauma and, with the support of the young man's mother, encouraged him to seek professional help.



6. Accessible services and supports

One of the objectives of the Journeys project was to support the participating young Aboriginal men to address their health and wellbeing issues by linking them to appropriate support services, including AOD services provided by lead agency YSAS. **Project stakeholders report successfully establishing a range of partnerships to facilitate access to services for participants**, including with schools, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), headspace, YSAS alcohol and drug programs. The Journeys program also reports having built strong working relationships with these local organisations to support referrals into and from the program for young people who need additional services.

Key achievements

The Dardi Munwurro Journeys program successfully engaged and empowered the participating young Aboriginal males. In the words of one project stakeholder, these men were “some of the most complex Aboriginal young people in Melbourne [and] in the program” and the program was successful in “diverting them from [criminal activity and] the justice system”.

Project staff reported that the program contributed to the following improvements for young Aboriginal men who participated in the entire 12-month Journey:

- increased cultural knowledge and pride in their Aboriginality, and increased connection to community
- an education in anti-social behaviour, particularly in public places
- re-engagement with education
- increased self-esteem and confidence

- increased connections to relevant support services
- increased evidence of healthy relationships and healthy lifestyle choices.

Another key achievement for the Journeys program was the strength of the relationship formed between Dardi Munwurro and YSAS, with the two organisations committed to continuing to work on the Journeys program together.

Key lessons and reflections

On reflection, the group elements of the Journeys program were not suitable for the older group of men. Future healing and behaviour-change programs targeted at this older cohort would be more effective if options were provided for one-on-one support, rather than group work.

The project also reflected that future iterations of the program model would benefit from allocating more resources to engaging with participants' families as well as providing additional guidance around parenting and role modelling to the young people involved.

Andy's Story – How kick-to-kick helped a young fella get back on track!

Andy* was 16 years old and living with his mum when he was referred to the Journeys Program. Andy had a history of mental illness and several serious health issues arising from abuse of alcohol and prescription drugs, and a poor diet. Andy was disconnected from support services and staying in bed late most days, shutting himself in his room, and rarely leaving the house. He had a long history of poor school attendance and had recently decided to drop out of school. He had very low self-esteem, poor hygiene habits and was drinking up to 15 energy drinks a day.

Andy's mum was concerned he was becoming increasingly withdrawn and felt that he would benefit from positive contact with male role models. She referred him to the Journeys Program, saying, "He needs to be around good men."

After a meeting between Andy, his mother and the Journeys Worker, Andy reluctantly agreed to join the Journeys Program. Andy attended the Journeys camp in early 2017, but he found it hard to engage with the other participants and lacked motivation.

The Journeys Worker then initiated regular one-on-one contact with Andy just to "catch up for a chat". Andy had mentioned that he used to like playing football; they started to catch up regularly for a kick-to kick in the local park. The Journeys Worker also supported Andy to attend the gym at the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service to increase his fitness.

The Journeys Worker having established a good rapport and trust, Andy eventually asked for support to re-join his old footy club. The Journeys Worker helped organise registration and accompanied Andy to the first training session. "When I picked him up for the first training session, he clearly hadn't showered for a while. I told him he couldn't go to training like that and said I would wait in the car while he had a shower." When they got to training "he was extremely anxious and did not want to be there, but with a bit of encouragement and support he began to relax. In the car on the way home Andy told me that he had enjoyed it [the training] and would go again the following week."

After being in the program for three months Andy told the Journeys Worker he "hadn't missed a training day as he wants to get back to a good standard of football again". Andy mentioned that a big highlight was his first football game back at the club, where he kicked a goal. Andy's mother also noted that, "He was getting up and out of bed earlier and spending less time inside on his computer."

While initially needing intense one-on-one support, after a few months in the program the program workers began to reduce their contact with Andy, encouraging him to take more responsibility. At a regular catch-up Andy told the Journeys Worker that he was looking after himself more and had cut down on the amount of energy drinks and fast food he was consuming.

The Journeys Worker began discussing options for re-engaging in school, distance education or TAFE with Andy and his mother, noting that Andy was "bright and thrived on mental stimulation". Andy, with the support of his mother, enrolled in the Return to Education and Vocation (REV) Program run by the Austin School.¹ Since completing the REV Program, Andy has enrolled in TAFE and is now completing three VCE subjects.

Andy still contacts the Journeys Worker for a chat over the phone from time to time. The Journeys Worker reflected, "I am very proud of the progress this young fella has made in such a short time. It's due to the support of his mother, and the way the Journeys Program provides a safe and relaxed environment for him to express himself."

*Participant's name has been changed to ensure anonymity.

¹ REV is an eight-week part-time program, for young people aged 15–17 years. All young people who participate in the program are clients of Austin Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The aim of the small group-program is to re-engage students in a positive learning environment while enhancing skills that will enable them to reconnect with an appropriate educational or workplace setting.

MOVING ON UP, MOONDA NERRAN BRIEL – LATROBE CITY

Lead agency: Berry Street

About the project

Moving On Up – Moonda Nerran Briel (MNB) project was a cross-sectional crime prevention program targeted at young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 10–17 at risk of involvement with the justice system. The program involved a youth outreach team from Berry Street working with the young people to develop Standing Strong Plans to bolster connection to peers, family, community, education, training, recreation and social engagement, and empower young people to participate in articulating and achieving personal goals. The MNB employed a highly tailored, targeted and responsive model to assist young people to help themselves through goal realisation.

Implementation

Participation

MNB successfully engaged with 33 young people who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and one participant from a CALD background. Of these participants 19 were primary school aged, 11 were in mainstream secondary schooling, seven were in alternative schools, four were not engaged in the education system at all, and two were involved in the local Koorie TAFE unit.

Working with the Department of Education was critical to high levels of engagement, enabling the young people to return to, or remain in, school. Establishing local relationships with Koorie education and schools also helped to facilitate greater engagement with local young people.

Activities

MNB successfully delivered most planned project activities. These included Standing Strong Plans developed for all participants, a

series of 'Day Taster' activities such as cultural dance, music, singing and art, and the establishment of the weekly Koorie Youth Group at The Gathering Place, a culturally safe space where program staff were able to offer cultural and educational support. In partnership with Morwell Neighbourhood House and through instrumental funding provided by Latrobe City Council, the project delivered a street art activity featuring two local artists and a Melbourne-based artist. Together, the organisations, artists and young people worked to promote positive educational messages around graffiti and create beautiful murals upon an allocated area of the Whittaker Street Underpass, Traralgon (see image below).



While two action camps were originally proposed for the program, the two Day Taster excursions to the snow and the beach were delivered in their place.

Goal achievement and sustainability

Almost all MNB stakeholders who responded to the Urbis partnership survey (6 of 7) agreed the project had achieved 'most' or 'all' of its goals. Almost all (6 of 7) respondents also agreed that 'most' or 'all' of these achievements would continue to benefit participants and the community beyond the pilot period.

Partnerships

A key contributing factor to the project achieving its goals was **the strong partnership** between Berry Street (the lead agency) and program cultural partners including The Gathering Place. The foundation of these relationships was in place prior to program commencement, with stakeholders reporting that the project proposal was a collective effort from the outset. "We had an existing relationship that we have fostered". Through the street art activity, Berry Street has also established a strong relationship with Latrobe City Council. Stakeholders indicated that these partnerships would continue beyond the pilot period, with several projects currently in development.

Crime prevention risk/protective factors

Summary of project impact on crime prevention risk/protective factors



- Evidence indicates the project had a positive impact
- Quality/lack of reported data limits ability to assess the project's impact
- Evidence indicates the project had little or no impact
- Crime prevention risk/protective factor was not identified as a focus of this project



1. Cultural identity

The foundation of the project approach was the development and implementation of Standing Strong Plans, which are, in themselves, cultural identity

tools. With each of the 34 participants having a Plan in place **cultural identity was integral to all project activities and outcomes.**

"... this plan is now owned by the young person and has created a positive identity connecting them to culture, which will go with them on their spiritual journey to strengthen cultural connections."
(Project stakeholder)

Project stakeholders also noted that participants who "achieved connection with culture were linked to other culturally appropriate programs so the positive impact [of the plan] will continue". The Gathering Place and Koorie Youth group were key enablers in providing participants with opportunities to connect and immerse themselves in their Aboriginal heritage.

2. Interpersonal connections



Evidence indicates that the project has had a positive impact on interpersonal connections for the young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants. Participants surveyed by the project reported that through involvement in the program they felt 'more connected to their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander friends'. A case study (see page 33) tells the positive story of one socially isolated participant who was able to meet new people through the Taster events run by the project over the summer holidays.

3. Education/economic participation



Moonda Nerran Briel was successful in improving education and economic participation outcomes for participants. All 34 young participants identified and worked towards education and employment goals in their Standing Strong Plans. The MNB project successfully assisted 22 of these participants to increase their engagement with education or employment – mainly through direct engagement with the local Flexible Learning Options schools and school welfare teams.



4. Neighbourhood characteristics

Neighbourhood characteristics was not a primary focus for this project.



5. Social cohesion

The MNB project fostered social cohesion through The Gathering

Place, a culturally safe space where participants, Elders, mentors and community members gathered to participate in culturally focused events, the weekly Koorie Youth Group and the Street Art project. MNB connected participants with peer groups and fostered increased social cohesion. Berry Street has successfully secured funding for the Koorie Youth Group to continue beyond the grant period, ensuring that social cohesion will continue to foster and grow for locals.



6. Accessible services and supports

Through development and support to deliver Standing Strong Plans, **the MNB project facilitated increased access to suitable services and supports** for the 34 young people engaged in the program.

Key achievements

Through MNB, Berry Street strengthened existing relationships between the support agency and local Aboriginal organisations. The extensive utilisation of The Gathering Place and the Koorie Youth Group are ensuring project outcomes will continue, nurturing social cohesion for young Aboriginal people in the Latrobe region.

The Standing Strong Plans and supporting activities have encouraged in 34 young people a greater connection to their culture and

strengthened identify within the local community, increasing positive interactions and reducing their risk of engaging in criminal activity.



Key lessons and reflections

While strong relationships developed between the partner organisations, this was not without challenges. On reflection, stakeholders noted that crucial to the success of the partnerships was a large time investment in order to establish cultural trust with the Aboriginal workers and the communities, and make clear that they would be the beneficiaries of the work. There was also evidence that the project could have benefited from more time spent coordinating project steering meeting committees to enable better engagement from the community.

Moving on Up – Moonda Nerran Briel Case Study

Kiarlah* is a 14-year-old girl who relocated with her mother as a three year old to Victoria and the outskirts of Melbourne. A few years later, Kiarlah and her mother moved to regional Victoria, where Kiarlah attended the local mainstream primary school. Kiarlah continued with her schooling until she was expelled in year 8 due to non-attendance and attitudinal problems. Kiarlah and her mother moved to another town where Kiarlah commenced year 9, until she once again began to have bouts of non-attendance, and “just stopped going to school”.

Kiarlah felt isolated and began visiting the city on her own, often for days at a time. Her mother became more and more concerned. Kiarlah went missing and, after a few months, the police eventually tracked her down in the city. Returning to the country with her mother contributed to the isolation that Kiarlah felt. Kiarlah’s mother’s concern increased and she initiated a referral to the Moonda Nerran Briel (MNB), Beyond the Moon and Stars project.

Kiarlah and her mother met with the MNB coordinator, and it was here that a safe space was created for both mother and daughter to communicate. This was a space where they could be honest with each other, express their fears and sadness, and, through listening and understanding, commence the healing.

An agreement was reached as to how the MNB coordinator could engage and support Kiarlah to move forward in her education and set goals. Kiarlah was advised of the educational options available to her within the Gippsland region. She expressed a desire for ongoing support. Together the MNBI coordinator and Kiarlah explored options and met with Louise, the local educational Koorie liaison officer. Kiarlah requested to enrol in the local Koorie TAFE unit. However, she was a year short of required enrolment age (15 years), and Louise advocated to the Education Department on Kiarlah’s behalf.

After a six-week period, Kiarlah was able to enrol full-time with the VCAL students. She was given an individualised program commensurate with her learning level. When Kiarlah faced a financial barrier due to her family being unable to pay the TAFE enrolment fee, the MNB program worked collaboratively with local services to secure funding support.

Kiarlah has described her experience at VCAL as being different to everything that she had ever experienced in the education system. She reported being able to work at our own pace, and to work to her own specific learning requirements. While her attendance is not perfect, she contacts the Koorie Unit when she doesn’t go in, and has begun to be responsible for her own non-attendance.

The MNB project enabled Kiarlah to be supported and empowered, and to give her voice back. She is now being listened to and people value her opinion. In addition, MNB has connected Kiarlah to additional activities and services. She attended the Taster days over the summer period, where she was able to meet new people and form positive relationships. In Kiarlah’s words, when asked about the MNB project she said it was, “Good, but then great!” She enjoyed the support and she spoke positively of the both the Moonda Nerran Briel project, the MNB coordinator and Louise the local educational Koorie liaison officer.

*Participant’s name has been changed to ensure anonymity.

CONNECT, REFRESH, GROW! – MILDURA

Lead agency: Mallee Sports Assembly

About the project

Connect, Refresh, GROW! (CRG) sought to improve social cohesion and community pride amongst residents in the Mildura East End housing estate. To achieve this, the program adopted a place-based focus that aimed to promote pro-social behaviours by changing the environment. This comprised two components: a streetscape project helping residents in the East End community landscape their homes and youth leadership and community activities that supported young residents to increase their employment opportunities by returning to study and learning new skills. The program targeted Aboriginal and CALD residents in the East End public housing estate.

Implementation

Participants

Through the self-help initiative to beautify their front yards, **CRG successfully engaged 20 households in the streetscape project.**

Over 3,000 locals attended community-gathering events hosted by CRG during the project pilot period. The project was less successful in facilitating a return to study for young East End locals, though six young people were involved in the leadership/coaching training component run through East End Community House.

Activities

CRG sought to support members of the East End community with complex needs that showed a willingness to contribute. Project components were informed by the needs and interests of those who participated. In the end, **CRG successfully delivered streetscape improvements within the East End Housing Estate and a small youth leadership program.**

“... about ten community houses were completed ... it was small scale, felt really warm and fuzzy with a positive vibe.”

(Project stakeholder)

CRG was working with a highly disadvantaged population. Many residents were from families that had experienced intergenerational disadvantage. The community was severely distrustful, and the project was challenged by inconsistent attendance of community programs; some weeks attracted a large turnout while other weeks had no attendance.

Goal achievement and sustainability

Almost all CRG stakeholders who responded to the Urbis partnership survey (9 of 10) nominated the project as having achieved ‘most’ or ‘all’ of its goals. The same proportion agreed ‘most’ or ‘all’ of the project’s achievements would continue to benefit participants and the community beyond the pilot period.

Partnerships

Strong partnerships between Mallee Sports Assembly (the lead Agency) and key partner organisations, including Mildura Rural City Council, DHHS Housing and local police, were key enablers for achievement of the project’s goals. Stakeholders reported that the project solidified and built on established relationships.

"Mildura Rural Council are proud to have been a project partner of the CRG Project. Strong local leadership was demonstrated by Mallee Sports Assembly and all project partners over the term of this project. The steering committee not only engaged community members with generating ideas but were also involved in project activities. The CRG project strengthened relationships between residents and service providers and it's great to see the sense of community pride amongst everyone involved. The best outcome of all was to hear the wonderful feedback from residents, from building new social connections to gaining new skills."

Partnerships were fortified through effective communication and a shared goal to support the East End community. The project lead was

confident the partnerships will endure beyond the life of the project, reporting that the agencies involved were already seeking ways to extend and develop opportunities that had arisen through CRG.

Crime prevention risk/protective factors

Summary of project impact on crime prevention risk/protective factors



- Evidence indicates the project had a positive impact
- Quality/lack of reported data limits ability to assess the project's impact
- Evidence indicates the project had little or no impact
- Crime prevention risk/protective factor was not identified as a focus of this project



1. Cultural identity

The CRG approach did not adopt a specific focus on addressing issues of cultural identity or strengthening connection to culture.



2. Interpersonal connections

A strengthening of interpersonal connections was a key element of the CRG approach. Residents involved in the streetscaping program worked collectively on improving their gardens. Project stakeholders reported that East End residents who had not previously talked to each other were working side by side and sharing gardening tips, and that there was general perception that more

people were becoming involved in the local community.

One of the challenges of working to enhance interpersonal connections in the East End is overcoming entrenched isolation. Many East End residents experience multiple barriers to building relationships with those in the neighbourhood. The project noted that empowering this cohort to attend community gatherings is extremely difficult.



3. Education/economic participation

Six local young residents completed the CRG Leadership Training program. Project stakeholders reported that one participant went on to become involved in landscaping and nursery work, and three participants took part in the East End Work for the Dole program – with one participant eventually gaining a paid staff position.

Qualitative insights indicate that through the delivery of courses such as first aid and coaching, the project laid the foundations for additional pathways and training opportunities for the young leaders.

“Two of the leaders [are] now looking into further education at TAFE, one of the aims of the project – one [is] looking into business, the other into child care.”
(Project stakeholder)

While the CRG originally hoped some East End residents would enrol in study during the project, this did not eventuate. The project lead reflected that it would have been beneficial to have a mentor involved with CRG – to support people into training, and help people through an education enhancement course to enable enrolment at TAFE.



4. Neighbourhood characteristics



East End house 1 before CRG streetscaping

Through the streetscaping program, CRG successfully improved characteristics of the surrounding neighbourhood. Qualitative insights indicated that both residents and visitors noticed the difference, and positive changes have occurred because of CRG. Project stakeholders noted that residents whose homes were not involved in the streetscaping have expressed eager interest in having the opportunity to landscape their own yards in the future.

“... there is a tangible sense of pride in the East End neighbourhood.”
(Project stakeholder)



East End house – after CRG streetscaping



5. Social cohesion

CRG has made a positive contribution towards improving community interactions and enhancing social cohesion in the East End area.

Landscaping and activities, for both local adults and children, were reported to have had a positive impact on the East End community. CRG facilitated the building of a community garden, which expanded throughout the grant

period as residents contributed their own plants.

Project stakeholders reported a sense of a shared vision – “even if that vision is vague. i.e. we want our area to look nicer” – that drew locals to work collectively on their gardens to enhance the appearance of the neighbourhood. Partners noted that locals who were not directly involved in CRG have since taken it upon themselves to maintain and improve their gardens. A sense of shared vision has enhanced social cohesion.



6. Accessible services and supports

Reported community survey results suggest that participants had greater difficulty accessing local services at the start of the program than at the end of the program. A total of six referrals from other agencies to CRG suggest that the program is connecting participants with local services. Project staff also reported three participants requesting assistance from other services as evidence of the project’s impact in this domain.

Key achievements

The CRG project successfully worked to improve social cohesion and increase community pride amongst locals in an area that has experienced entrenched disadvantage. Though only a small number of households officially participated in the streetscaping, evidence indicates that CRG has had a flow-on effect, with locals wanting to be involved and even donating their own money to ensure the project’s success.

Key lessons and reflections

While CRG reported great success improving the physical space and encouraging interactions and social cohesion amongst East End residents, the project was less successful in connecting these residents to educational opportunities. The project lead reflected that to provide comprehensive support to facilitate learning outcomes the project would have benefited from the inclusion of a dedicated educational support officer and a mentoring scheme.

Connect, Refresh, GROW! Case Study

For two years Lewis* has lived in the East End housing estate with his partner, daughter and his partner's two daughters. He identifies his cultural background as Australian.

Lewis became involved in CRG through the Work for the Dole (WFTD) program. Lewis had been part of WFTD for 18 months prior to becoming involved in CRG. Lewis was initially engaged as a WFTD participant but when a paid worker was no longer able to work on CRG, Lewis accepted the offer of paid work.

Since being involved in CRG, Lewis has completed front-yard landscaping on several houses in the area, developed his own vegetable garden and landscaped his front yard.

Lewis reported, "seeing the community coming together" since being involved in CRG. He has noticed that residents are engaging more with each other by talking about their gardens, and that the neighbourhood has "definitely changed". Lewis also commented that since becoming involved in CRG he eats more vegetables and is outdoors more often.

Lewis feels more connected to his community as a result of being involved in CRG and has met new people in the area. Lewis commented that CRG has helped him by "getting out of my own skin".

Lewis said that he has not attended any more community events since being involved in CRG; however, he did attend the final gathering dinner. Lewis's feelings of safety have not changed over the last few years as Lewis said he felt safe to start with. He also pointed out that he lives in an outer area of the East End housing estate and that this area feels different because he is not stuck in a section hemmed in by lots of neighbours.

Lewis reported that his sense of cultural identity has not changed since being involved in CRG.

Lewis commented that he believes CRG has made a "big difference" to the East End area.

In relation to studying to increase his work prospects, Lewis indicated that he would be prepared to undertake study as long as it is a goal he wanted to achieve, and not imposed on him by others.

Lewis commented that he thought CRG was "a really good project and it should keep going". He also noted that the area "doesn't look like housing commission anymore". Lewis mentioned that the program has helped people get started on improving their environment, and "shows them there are nice people around that want to help". He also said that when CRG workers visit the neighbourhood, people come out of their homes and help for a couple of hours rather than just sitting around at home. Engaging in communal gardening was particularly important for those who don't get out to the shops or go to other places – it gives them a purpose. Having CRG provide the materials and assistance helps people make a start on their garden. Lewis also commented that because CRG staff are willing to come back, residents feel supported. Since CRG, Lewis has expressed an interest in doing volunteer work to make a difference in the community.

*Participant's name has been changed to ensure anonymity.

CULTURALLY CONNECTED COMMUNITIES – SHEPPARTON

Lead agency: Ethnic Council of Shepparton

About the project

Culturally Connected Communities sought to increase social connectedness, facilitate community capacity building, and develop cultural connections between generations and ethnic communities in Shepparton. The Ethnic Council of Shepparton partnered with local agencies – Greater Shepparton City Council, Kildonan Uniting Care, Goulburn Valley Community Legal Centre, Goulburn Ovens (GO) TAFE, Victoria Police and St Pauls African House – employing a consultation approach to deliver activities. Activities focused on strengthening community engagement, promoting awareness of local services and supports, and providing linkages to education, training and employment opportunities. Young people from CALD backgrounds were the target group for the project.

Implementation

Participation

Culturally Connected Communities successfully engaged 340 young people from CALD communities. Most of the participants engaged were young Afghani women. The project also engaged with people from other newly arrived refugee communities, including Iraqis and Syrians. The African Community Garden attracted a large proportion of participants with Sudanese, Congolese and Burundian backgrounds.

Activities

Culturally Connected Communities successfully delivered all but one of its planned seven project activities for the CALD community in Shepparton. (See project summary box for details.)

Friendship Cafés

Targeted at socially isolated young women from CALD backgrounds, the 12 Friendship Café events provided a safe space for participants to establish friendships and connections with each other, participate in activities, and develop essential life skills. Partner agencies facilitated the cafés; GO TAFE together with La Trobe University ran a 'Planning Your Future' session and Kildonan Uniting Care delivered a 'Craft Activities' session. Also delivered were two successful 'guest speaker' cafés with the local mayor and Federal Member of Parliament.

Police Tour

In December 2016, 62 people, including 6 children (aged 12 years or under) and 43 youths (aged 13–25 years), undertook an interactive tour of the local police station and learned about the station's operations and the roles and responsibilities of personnel. The participants developed an improved understanding of the role of police in the community and, after the tour, were more confident in speaking to police.

Sing English

The Sing English activity was designed to promote the teaching of English through singing. While the project successfully delivered a Sing English training workshop for 19 local teachers, the second planned component of the activity – a community performance by young people – did not eventuate due to staffing changes on the contractor's side.

Mini Justice program

In 2017 the Mini Justice program introduced young people from CALD communities to the Australian legal system via a series of

workshops. Delivered by Goulburn Valley Community Legal Service, the workshops focussed on a variety of topics, including legal rights and responsibilities, criminal offences, information about the courts and provided information.

African Community Garden

In partnership with St Pauls African House, Culturally Connected Communities successfully engaged 23 participants in the planning, construction and maintenance of an African community vegetable garden. While originally intended to engage African youth, the garden is currently used by the wider African community as a community space.

Clay and Fibre

Twenty women enrolled into the 3-month Clay and Fibre activity – an arts-based program designed to increase social cohesion and cross-cultural understanding for women from recently arrived refugee communities. Delivered over 10 sessions in 2016, Clay and Fibre facilitated increased connections between participants who worked together to create piece of art using clay and fibre techniques. The activity was successfully delivered through a partnership between GO TAFE and local indigenous arts enterprise and gallery Kaiela Arts.



Parenting in a New Culture – Youth sessions

The Parenting in a New Culture sessions sought to strengthen family relationships, reduce the risk of intergenerational conflict and promote family and social cohesion. Culturally sensitive and appropriately trained youth workers from the Australian Muslim Women's

Centre for Human Rights delivered the sessions to the two target groups: young women from Sudanese and Afghani backgrounds. The sessions were organised by Kildonan Uniting Care and focussed on topics such as self-esteem and navigating across cultures. Participants were taught skills in negotiating and dialoguing with parents.

Goal achievement and sustainability

All Culturally Connected Communities stakeholders who responded to the partnership survey (3 of 3) agreed the project had delivered 'most' or 'all' of its goals. All three agreed that 'most' or 'all' of these achievements would continue to benefit participants and the Shepparton community beyond the project period.

Partnerships

Stakeholders also reported that inter-agency collaboration was new to many of the agencies involved in the project. While most partners knew each other well, the agencies involved more commonly found themselves competing for grant funding rather than collaborating. The place-based crime prevention grant gave these agencies the vehicle to trial a collaborative approach. Evidence indicates that through the success of the partnership, seeds have been sewn for future collaboration.

Crime prevention risk/protective factors

Summary of project impact on crime prevention risk/protective factors



- Evidence indicates the project had a positive impact
- Quality/lack of reported data limits ability to assess the project's impact
- Evidence indicates the project had little or no impact
- Crime prevention risk/protective factor was not identified as a focus of this project



1. Cultural identity

Data to determine the impact of the project on cultural connections for individual participants is limited to the African Community Garden initiative. Initial signs of **increased knowledge of language, customs and traditions of other cultures** attributed to Culturally Connected Communities are demonstrated by qualitative commentary: “[the African Community Garden] ... has generated discussions of which vegetables African families traditionally like to grow for consumption ...”

Project staff also report that engagement with the community garden has led to participants engaging in other social activities in the local African community, which in turn has “... increased their sense of connection and belonging to this community facility [St. Paul’s African House] and the African community”.



2. Interpersonal connections

Evidence indicates Culturally Connected Communities activities contributed to an **increased sense of community and belonging** by connecting socially isolated young people. Qualitative feedback from participants of the Clay and Fibre activity included, “The main thing about the program was women supporting each other – we loved it ...” and “We learned to talk with different [people from different] ages”.

Project stakeholders also witnessed enhanced interpersonal connections at Friendship Café events, which facilitated a safe space for young women to share their experiences, seek assistance and receive advice from both peers and invited speakers. This is further supported by one participant’s response when asked what they enjoyed the most about the Friendship Café event, “I enjoyed a lot about knowing the community. The day was good with good people”.



3. Education/economic participation

Culturally Connected Communities successfully delivered activities that increased participants’ knowledge of training and employment pathways. This included the ‘Planning for your Future’ Friendship Café event delivered by career advisors from GO TAFE and Latrobe University, and African Community Garden activities. Case studies (see page 42) describe how one participant obtained a plumbing apprenticeship through positive relationships with African Community Garden staff, while another participant is receiving mentoring and support from an African Community Garden supervisor in order to undertake tertiary study via the Tertiary Entry Program (TEP).



4. Neighbourhood characteristics

Neighbourhood characteristics was not identified by the site as one of its focus social crime prevention domains.



5. Social cohesion

There was limited data collected by this site to determine the

overarching impact of the seven activities on social cohesion amongst participants in Shepparton. However, one project stakeholder observed that the project did not strengthen social cohesion but rather **reaffirmed an existing strong sense of community**. “I get the feeling that there is already a strong sense of community, these little programs would have only supported that strong sense of community”.



6. Accessible services and supports

Project stakeholders reported that the Mini Justice program **increased participants’ knowledge about where to get legal information or help**. Feedback provided in the Urbis partnership survey indicated an increase in the number of CALD community members, specifically women, contacting their community legal organisation for assistance. The respondent cited that “the project clearly informed them of the services available and also gave them reassurance to seek them”.

Key achievements

Through activities such as local Friendship Café events, CCC successfully encouraged socially isolated and disadvantaged young women to participate in social activities. These activities successfully fostered interpersonal connections and social cohesion, and many of these relationships are continuing to grow. The Friendship Café events received widespread media coverage in the Shepparton community, and have been praised for allowing young women to “... connect, learn and grow so they can feel empowered to achieve whatever they want to”.



The police station tour provided an opportunity for local police to foster positive relationships with young people from newly arrived CALD communities. Following the success of the tour, other community engagement activities involving Shepparton police have taken place, including a police-focussed Friendship Café event and a police-led excursion to the Islamic Museum of Australia for young people.

Key lessons and reflections

On reflection, some stakeholders suggested that the division of the Shepparton grant across so many partner organisations and such a variety of small-scale activities may have diluted the project’s overall positive impact, and its potential for sustainable outcomes. Increased collaboration between partner agencies – to collectively identify a specific community need and co-design corresponding intervention – may have produced stronger outcomes for the Shepparton area.

Culturally Connected Communities Case Study 1 – African Community Garden

In approximately 2011, Phillip* came to Shepparton from the Democratic Republic of Congo, accompanied by his mother and four siblings. His family have faced many challenges settling into Australia, including a period when his mother suffered a significant illness. He became involved in the African Community Garden project for about two months in 2017, enthusiastically assisting in the construction of the garden beds.

Through positive relationships developed with the garden supervisors and manager, Phillip obtained a plumbing apprenticeship. He has also been assisted to gain his driving L-plates and to trace a lost visa, which is urgently needed to obtain a tax file number for employment purposes. Phillip has proudly given back to St Paul's African House and St Paul's Church by helping to install the watering system.

For Phillip, involvement in the African House community and the garden development has realised positive outcomes in all four indicator domains: he feels connected to his cultural community, he has developed interpersonal connections both with his peer group, other members of African community and non-African supervisors/mentors, he has gained employment and he has increased knowledge of how to use local supports.

Concurrently, Phillip has participated in the social activities at African House. He talks about his decision to live a positive life, to turn away from the negative lifestyle some of his peers engage in and to support his family.

Culturally Connected Communities Case Study 2 – African Community Garden

Arriving with his wife and child in early 2017, Deng* has been actively supported by the African House community to resettle in Shepparton. From a day-to-day living perspective, the community at African House (community members, paid staff and volunteers) has assisted Deng and his wife to purchase clothing, household essentials and furniture, and linked them to Shepparton's Foodshare service. The African House community has involved Deng and his family in the cultural, recreational and sporting activities held at African House and the affiliated site of St Paul's Lutheran Church.

Deng has showed great keenness for the garden development project, and through his involvement he has developed skills in purchasing building materials, and using small power tools and carpentry equipment.

One of the garden supervisors has offered him further support by offering an area of his large garden for Deng to grow vegetables, as well as giving him driving lessons and enabling him to obtain his L-plates, and supporting him to enrol in, and mentoring him through, the Tertiary Entry Program (TEP). As a condition of his enrolment into the Bachelor of Building and Construction Management course, the supervisor has agreed to officially mentor Deng through his tertiary study, which will start in 2018.

*Participant's name has been changed to ensure anonymity

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS – WENDOUREE

Lead agency: Wendouree Neighbourhood Centre Inc.

About the project

Strengthening Community Connections (SCC) sought to 'shift the needle' towards a significant and sustained improvement in positive social cohesion and address high intergenerational unemployment within the Waratah Grove neighbourhood. To improve community participation with a long-term approach, the project increased the capacity of local organisations through existing services, programs and activities. SCC sought to build trust and social connections, understand the needs of residents, address barriers, and offer opportunities for residents to learn interpersonal and life skills. The focus of the project was families with children aged 0–24 years who reside in the Waratah Grove neighbourhood.

The Strengthening Community Connections project was extended to 30 September 2018 and final outcomes were not available at the time of writing.

Implementation

Participation

The SCC successfully engaged with half of all households (76 of 153) within the Waratah Grove neighbourhood. This equated to over 640 engagements through SCC events and activities with individual community members and visitors. During the project development phase, high-level community buy-in was facilitated by Wendouree Neighbourhood Centre staff, who walked the neighbourhood and invested significant amounts of time to explain to residents the intent of the project and engage with them. This allowed trust to build with the neighbourhood residents and increased engagement with other stakeholders of the project, including project subcommittees and walking groups.

Activities

SCC successfully delivered all activities proposed in the project's activity plan. Key project activities delivered over the course of the grant included:

- a community-questioning component during establishment to inform the next stage of project activities which collected information on residents' perceptions and experience of local services, programs, activities and facilities
- the Waratah Grove Neighbourhood Activation program held nature-strip tree planting and locally organised community events
- development and implementation of the Strengthening Community Connections Action Plan and accompanying Strategic Understanding, Prioritising and Planning.

Goal achievement and sustainability

Only three SCC stakeholders responded to the Urbis partnership survey. However, all three agreed that the project had achieved 'most' or 'all' of its goals and that that 'most' or 'all' project achievements would continue to benefit participants and the community beyond the pilot period.

Partnerships

Strengthening of established partnerships between local organisations underpinned the SCC approach. The project was the first delivered by **Alliance Wendouree – an existing collaboration between the partner organisations** – and cemented these relationships. The Alliance continues to meet regularly and is focusing on influencing positive change across a broader geographical area of the Wendouree community. The project helped the Alliance to develop a clear focus on which areas a measurable impact

could be achieved. The Alliance will continue to seek funding opportunities to enhance social cohesion through place-making and partnerships.

Qualitative feedback provided by project stakeholders indicates that two factors were crucial to the success of the partnership: a clear process and vision of what working together would look like, which combined with buy-in from influential stakeholders such as City of Ballarat, DHHS and a local community health provider.

Crime prevention risk/protective factors

Summary of project impact on crime prevention risk/protective factors



- Evidence indicates the project had a positive impact
- Quality/lack of reported data limits ability to assess the project's impact
- Evidence indicates the project had little or no impact
- Crime prevention risk/protective factor was not identified as a focus of this project



1. Cultural identity

Cultural identity was not identified as a focus for this project.



2. Interpersonal connections

Qualitative feedback from project stakeholders indicates the **project was successful in enabling positive social**

interactions throughout the Wendouree community.

The immersive and inclusive approach of the lead agency created multiple opportunities for local community members to connect, interact and form relationships. A key exemplar of this is the number of local community members who joined the 'community action group' established by the project, which continues to meet and develop initiatives to maintain the momentum created through SCC.

"The biggest outcome is that the community were able to re-establish trust with council and support services, and no longer felt invisible ..."

(Project stakeholder)



3. Education/economic participation

Education and economic participation was not a specific focus for the project. Rather, SCC sought to increase capacity of residents to engage in meaningful volunteering activities. The project lead reported that **SCC created 131 volunteering opportunities for community members and 59 opportunities for local school students to contribute to neighbourhood activities.** Data provided by the project also indicates that community members were actively engaged with the Community Working Groups established by the project, with 24 community members reported to have participated in at least one working-group meeting.



4. Neighbourhood characteristics

SCC successfully facilitated neighbourhood enhancement activities and a high level of local engagement during these activities. Just under 60 per cent of all households in the Waratah Grove neighbourhood were reported to have participated in the project's tree-planting initiative, with many participants continuing proactive maintenance of the trees. The project also facilitated the enhancement, and ongoing increased use, of a local reserve.

"... [the reserve] was so underutilised ... but people are [now] using it – having picnics and

walking dogs.”
(Project stakeholder)



5. Social cohesion

Social cohesion and social connectedness was at the forefront of the SCC model. Qualitative insights provided by project stakeholders suggest the project positively contributed to building trust amongst the local community and increased the capacity of residents to participate in community groups and activities. The formal launch of the recreational reserve is a key example of increased social cohesion in the community.

“... [there were] so many people there ... lots of adults of the neighbourhood, kids from the local school, community members from other parts of Wendouree ...”
(Project stakeholder)



6. Accessible services and supports

SCC facilitated increased collaboration between local organisations and the improved alignment of local services, programs and activities. This is demonstrated by the continuing operation of the Wendouree Alliance, and the formalisation of future community activities and projects through the Strengthening Community Connections Action Table. The project lead reported an enlarged awareness in the community about local programs and services, which was enabled by more frequent dialogue between the partnership organisations. Crucial was the project’s understanding of what each of the services offered, followed up by

“thinking about how we could support each other”.

There is also evidence to suggest residents are engaging more with local support services and programs. The project lead noted a significant increase in the number of Waratah Grove neighbourhood residents enrolling in Wendouree Neighbourhood Centre courses since the project’s commencement.

Key achievements

Wendouree Neighbourhood Centre successfully developed and implemented a genuine place-based approach, bringing the local Waratah Grove community together and strengthening their connection to each other along with local community organisations and support services.

The project created a legacy, both physically – through enhancements to the local environment – and socially – through the facilitation of groups and networks, some which have already evolved beyond the projects.

Key lessons and reflections

On reflection, the Wendouree project would have benefited from increased project administration and project management support. There is no doubt that the approach and application delivered strong (and sustainable) results for the local community. However, the resources and time required for capacity- and relationship-building presented challenges for project partners, especially the lead organisation

BURRAJA KOORIE YOUTH AND YOUNG PEOPLE – WODONGA

Lead agency: Gateway Health

About the project

The Burraja Koorie Youth and Young People (Burraja) project sought to engage with young Aboriginal people from the Wodonga region to reconnect with culture and develop a sense of identity, pride and belonging through positive engagement with Elders and the Aboriginal community. The Burraja project developed age-appropriate programs for two cohorts of young Aboriginal people aged 10–12 years and 13–16 years. Programs were delivered over two years, in collaboration with project local partners and incorporated support from the local Aboriginal community (including Traditional Owners, local Elders and community leaders), education providers and representatives from various social sector agencies.

Implementation

Participation

The Burraja project successfully engaged with 135 young Aboriginal people from the Wodonga region, with 113 participating in the education components of the program.

“By the numbers, we achieved what we had to do ... had double the amount of people through that we were supposed to engage.”
(Project stakeholder)

Strong recruitment was enabled by the relationships developed between Burraja staff, Aboriginal community members and local students and teachers. The project implemented a relationship-based recruitment strategy to make up for initial delays in recruiting key project personal and the establishment of the Cultural Reference Group – to provide endorsement of the cultural content underpinning the learning approach.

Activities

The Burraja project successfully delivered nine of the ten planned activities (with one program element cancelled due to insufficient numbers). Burraja developed school electives-style programs that ran for 6–10 weeks within the

school term. Aboriginal students from partnering educational institutions were able to select an appropriate program for their age and participate during the term – though the programs were not formally embedded in the school curriculum. The Burraja curriculum incorporated a mix of learning strategies including:

- storytelling, dance and music
- cultural-site visits and exploring the local area
- teaching about bush tucker and medicinal plants
- guest speakers
- interactive cultural activities and traditional games
- practical workshops and cultural-skills development.

Activities were initially delivered at the Burraja Cultural Centre, and then from the partner schools to maximise access and participation.

Challenges to delivering activities noted by the project stakeholders included time clashes with other key events and school curriculum requirements (e.g. NAPLAN testing).

Goal achievement and sustainability

All Burraja stakeholders who responded to the Urbis partnership survey (10 of 10) agreed the project achieved ‘most’ or ‘all’ of its goals. Just under three quarters (7 of 10) agreed ‘most’ or ‘all’ of these achievements would continue to benefit participants and the community beyond the pilot period.

Partnerships

The facilitation of strong partnerships by the Gateway Health (lead agency) cultural programs coordinator was a key contributing factor to Burraja achieving its goals. Enabling relationships were developed with local schools in Wodonga, local Elders and the Wodonga council.

The program coordinator built effective relationships through school wellbeing officers,

progressing to engagement with school principals (whose authority was required to secure partnership). Local Elders are reported to have been incredibly supportive of the project, and Wodonga Council played a key role in the ongoing running and maintenance of the Burraja Cultural Centre – providing basic utilities and infrastructure, such as kitchen and hot-water facilities.

Qualitative insights from project stakeholders indicate the partnerships with local Elders and council will continue through the operation of the cultural centre. It was less certain whether relationships with local schools would continue after the funding period. Gateway Health and its cultural partners remain committed to the project and are working together to identify alternative funding sources to keep the project running.

Crime prevention risk/protective factors

Summary of project impact on crime prevention risk/protective factors



1. Cultural identity

Strengthening the cultural identity of participants was one of the project's key objectives and, for the young Aboriginal participants, the project evidently made a significant impact in this domain.

Qualitative insights from project stakeholders outline how students who were previously disengaged during classes and lacked confidence demonstrated positive shifts in their behaviour because of the project.

“... they are now more confident, proud of their culture, went back to school and shared information and helped recruit [others].”
(Project stakeholder)

Key successes highlighted by project stakeholders include:

- increase in student pride and confidence. Students too shy at the beginning of the Burraja program to engage are now confident to stand up and talk to their entire school about what they learnt, and to proudly thank people at their graduation
- students have a sense of belonging due to feeling more comfortable at school, having improved relationships with teachers and being more involved in class
- students are more connected to Aboriginal people in the Wodonga community.

The project was able to provide quantitative evidence of a positive change in this domain for participants across several indicators, including increased understanding of Aboriginal culture and heightened connection to their Aboriginal identity.



2. Interpersonal connections

As outlined above, the cultural focus of the **Burraja curriculum positively impacted on the interpersonal connection for the young Aboriginal participants.** The project reported positive changes in interpersonal behaviours amongst participants. Evidence of strengthened relationships between participants and school staff and local authorities further demonstrates the project facilitation of improved interpersonal connections.

“Students from the Wodonga Middle Years College were always at school on the days the Burraja program was running.”
(Project stakeholder)

“Students that were involved in the program engaged more with school.”
(Project stakeholder)



3. Education/economic participation

Increased education participation was central to Burraja's approach in strengthening protective factors for the young Aboriginal people who engaged with the program. The project reported increases in school attendance rates, and levels of positive engagement with school staff as a result of the program. This was supported by qualitative feedback gathered from teachers at partnering schools, who agreed that the project resulted in significant positive behavioural change amongst their students.

"Students seem to have a greater respect towards her [the teacher] as they appreciated her facilitating their involvement in the program."
(Project stakeholder)



4. Neighbourhood characteristics

Improving neighbourhood characteristics was not a primary focus for this project.



5. Social cohesion

Project stakeholders report that Aboriginal students who participated in Burraja are also engaging more with local programs and the local mainstream community. This positive outcome is further supported by survey data collected by the project which indicates that the number of community events attended by students increased from 37 at the commencement of the project to 49 at its conclusion.



6. Accessible services and supports

There is limited evidence to suggest the project increased accessibility of local services and supports for participants. However, survey data collected by Burraja indicates that awareness of services increased amongst participants. Project stakeholders also reported that the average proportion of participants who accessed services increased after engagement with the project. Qualitative insight provided by project stakeholders indicated that a lack of transport was a barrier to participants accessing services and support.

Gateway Health engaged with the local Aboriginal community and Elders to develop and deliver a high quality and highly successful program to increase cultural connections for young Aboriginal people. This project filled a need that was not being met by the available curriculum or by services within the Aboriginal community.

"It is the sort of project that speaks to be in terms of what we should be doing ... meeting an unmet need and it was pretty successful. Was clear to me that it resonated with community groups and the others involved ..."
(Project stakeholder)

A key enabling factor for the Burraja approach was effective development of relationships with key partners, including the local Aboriginal community and engagement of cultural partners in the design and delivery of the program.

Key lessons and reflections

On reflection, Burraja project stakeholders noted that the engagement with education providers could have been strengthened – to ensure the program was well aligned and easily integrated into the local curriculum. The stakeholders noted that establishment of a transition plan to secure ongoing support and funding for the project was an opportunity missed. The project identified the following key considerations for future applications of this type of grant project:

- concentrate project recruitment efforts on local school students
- involve school principals and wellbeing officers in the grant submission to ensure appropriate targets are set and the project is integrated into curriculum planning
- seek a five-year submission to allow program results to be tracked for a longer period, which will enable a more accurate trend in tracking change markers.

Key achievements

Appendix B REFERENCES CITED

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