



Yarra Multicultural Advisory Group

Thursday 4th March 2021

6-7.30pm

Minutes

Attendees: Cr. Anab Mohamud (Yarra), Cristina Del Frate (Yarra), Laura Duncan (Yarra), June (Community Member), Ambrose (SUDD Foundation), Bich-Hoa Ha (Cohealth), Osman Mohamed (ECCV, Cohealth, Community Member), Rei Chin (Carringbush Adult Education), Penelope (Community Member), Hung (Community Member), Nem (Fitzroy Soccer Club), Hamodi (Save the Children)

Apologies: Dr. Ranko Cosic (Community Member), Yasmin Karaata (BSL)

- Welcome and Introductions

Acknowledgment of Country: Yarra City Council acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as the Traditional Owners and true sovereigns of the land now known as Yarra. We also acknowledge the significant contributions made by other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to life in Yarra. We pay our respects to Elders from all nations here today—and to their Elders past, present and future.

- **Councillor introduction and update** **(Cr Anab Mohamud)**
 - I have lived here in Fitzroy for about 17 years, joined Council because a lot of people speak about diversity but not a lot of diversity can be seen in Council. Want to have the youth looking up to us and people they can relate to. Great to have this community forum to have everyone involved and committed. If we stay committed we can make changes for our community.
- **Attendee introductions** **(All)**
 - Osman - from the Somali community, working w ECCV as State Coordinator of project called Speak My Language, also working w Cohealth as health concierge and site lead on Saturdays.
 - Ambrose - from South Sudanese community, lives in Melton and works with South Sudanese Community in Yarra. Runs the SUDD Foundation. Engaging a lot of the community in Fitzroy high rises.
 - Hamodi - Mohamad Hassan - works for Save the Children, Youth Work, been with them for 4 years. Works in Cubbies program.



- June - involved since last year with housing (north Melbourne to Richmond), not living in Yarra but it's not far, Chairperson of Chinese Business Association, lots of Chinese residents living in Yarra. Also part of the North East Region Advisory Group.
- Penelope - live on Richmond estate (7th year), single mum of 2, very interested in lived experience of residents, in particular in Richmond where we live at the nexus of drug dealing and using. Looking to make this issue much more visible.
- Rei, Carringbush - Community Dev Manager at CAE, representing an org that works with CALD community members across Richmond and Collingwood. Deliver a lot of EAP and other programs for those with low literacy skills (including digital) .
- Nem - junior coordinator of Fitzroy city soccer club, very deep roots in City of Yarra, moved from Serbia in 80s I lived in Brunswick flats, and in early teens went to North Fitzroy Primary. Not a resident currently but it's like a second home. Part of the Fitzroy city soccer club for many years, constantly in Yarra helping out in some way.
- Hung - congratulations Anabella! Happy to be hear and listen to all of the issues/circumstances from everyone. There are so many issues I'd like to bring up but I will wait for next time.
- Bich Ha (Cohealth) - work in community partnerships team as Community Programs Manager. I have been very privileged to attend some of the YMAG meetings in the past and it's done such a great job. Also congratulations Cr Anab! I think it's going to have a very great community input/influence on the committee and I'm very happy to be here.

- **YMAG Overview**

(Cristina Del Frate)

- Purpose / format

Set up a few years ago to insure we had some relationship w/ lots of CALD communities. The idea was to have an info sharing opportunity, networking opportunity, and also consulting - we wanted to hear from the community about what's important. Multicultural community is very diverse, made up of lots of age groups and cultural backgrounds. Because the meetings were scheduled during the day we had lots of people coming along from seniors groups. It was great for us to hear from them. Post-pandemic, we're now looking at other opportunities: online meetings is important, but we'd still like to continue in-person meetings as well so we don't lose those who are unable to join us online in the future. So we're hoping to do a mix of both in future.

The YMAG is different to other Council Advisory groups because members aren't 'appointed'. With the YMAG we've deliberately kept it open so anyone can join at any time, and therefore it gives us more opportunities to reach out and build relationships with Council and vice versa. We'd like to hear your thoughts on going

forward - if you like the idea of online AND in person in future?

Anab - maybe it we can have a multicultural Whatsapp group so if everyone's free to meet up in person or online we can go from there. The more things we have available to the community they will feel free to join in when they can and it's still good to hear their ideas and we appreciate them.

Ned - definitely like idea of in person and Zoom, best of both worlds. Nothing beats meeting someone face to face. Zoom's great but it's limiting in many ways.

Ambrose - last year there was a big group, Council, community, DPC/DHHS, it was really great at the time. I like the idea of meeting every 3 months to network, it's really awesome. Now we're in a digital world and it's helping us - we would have trouble to attend a meeting in Yarra as we're based in another part of the city. Big gatherings/events are great face to face. I also like the idea of sharing what other communities are doing, especially Bicultural Workers. It's really encouraging to see Anab in her new position as Councillor. Now as a community we're thinking about vaccines (COVID) and this will be a huge awareness raising campaign.

- Review of goals from previous meeting (2020)

Highlighting some of the issues that were raised at the last YMAG (November 2019) - we do a review and look forward, which we collated at the beginning of 2020. Some of the things we discussed: people were really happy about receiving info through YMAG; they liked meeting other people from different groups/orgs; they really liked to hear about Library News and from other speakers/programs (Council and other services); topics for the future: people wanted to hear about aged care services, elder abuse, pensions at Centrelink; health/legal info.

- **2020 Debrief and 2021 Planning**

(Laura Duncan)

- Yarra projects for 2021:

1. Digital Inclusion – Laura will chair a Digital Inclusion Working Group which will be looking at advocating for affordable and accessible internet for public housing estate residents in Yarra; as well as overseeing digital literacy projects that are being delivered locally (one has already commenced at The Factory in North Richmond – BANH are running a drop in session every Thursday with the support of Yarra Libraries).

2. Bicultural Worker Program – in its very early stages, but the Community Development branch at Yarra are looking to develop a Bicultural Worker Program which would aim to offer employment and mentoring opportunities



to CALD residents to support the delivery of community development projects.

3. CALD Communications – Yarra Council is actively seeking to improve how we communicate with our CALD communities and will actively consult with YMAG members and community members more widely to inform this work.

June - this is fantastic, crucial - digital communications are crucial. A lot of people want to connect with others but don't have the skills. It's not just only for elderly people, but middle aged as well. Bicultural Worker Programs are also very important, they need to reskill, this is very important. Lots of people from Chinese background would LOVE to work in community sector but they don't know how, don't know where to start. This is wonderful to hear.

Osman - really appreciate the idea of digital literacy project, and helping community members learn how to use/access computers and internet. Most of community members who are struggling / don't know how to use computers don't speak english either. SO if we can recruit community members who can speak their own language, they will benefit from that greatly.

Thank you also that you are working on BWP - it's a fantastic idea because the unemployment is a major concern within our communities. To be honest we don't have many representatives in the workplace, people don't have networks, they can't find jobs for themselves, and they may not even know how to develop their resumes, know how to represent themselves in interviews ... I just find this a major concern. We have PhD holders, people who have two qualifications from Australia and they're still struggling to find a job. Keep it up and let us work w/ community as much as we can so they can have employment opportunities. I would also like to add, I had meetings w/ elders and adults from the community who told me they are still struggling to learn basic English despite taking classes in Yarra - this is because the strategy language centres aren't working for them. They are adults who arrived here without basic English. Even those people would benefit to have language trainers who can explain the lesson in language.

Thirdly, school children - due to the pandemic, there was remote learning; kids are struggling to catch up with their learning; I'm now running program with BANH and Council in North Richmond and Collingwood: we're providing curriculum support to school children from African backgrounds. This program is helping them to understand whole curriculum. We need programs like this.

Ambrose - these programs are really encouraging; we are moving to a digital world, there's good and bad aspects to this. The bad is people don't know how to use it, and excessive screen time with children is addictive. With a family who doesn't know how to use digital device it's really hard to monitor their children's device usage/screen time. Social/emotional/academic, increase in learning disabilities. Elders, English classes - government has released a lot of funds in school program



but we don't know if kids are really benefitting. If homework support clubs can be offered through Council this would be really useful.

Nem - empowerment is perfect word, what I'm hearing is how much passion and commitment they have for our community, I'm very inspired I have to admit, everyone's got a really big heart, we all want to help and empower our community, if we can use the power of technology we can really help the less advantaged, those with low English proficiency, struggling to write a resume/get a job and feel part of the community ... empowering them is key. My own experience during COVID, especially w/ soccer club, there were a lot of clubs that pulled the pin on the season. We stuck out to the very end, which meant we had to put in place all the new policies/procedures for all of the kids. The reason we went through all of that was for the kids, bc we know the value of sport, interaction, there are so many benefits for mental/physical wellbeing and then indirectly it's great for the parents. It gives them a break and an opportunity to socialise.

Rei - all of this resonates so much with what we do at Carringbush, with low digital/English literacy but high levels of literacy/education from their country of origin. This idea of Bicultural Workers is something I'd love to see developed further. There are so many places where BWs could be really empowering and useful in supporting people to develop their digital literacy skills, cyber safety/security, job skills ... I wonder if Yarra Council could employ some BWs who could connect w/ community orgs who work w/ community on the ground, who have some resourcing - e.g. Carringbush, where we have existing programs/equipment - we're working hard on but having a BW to come and provide additional support would really enhance the work we're trying to do. We're not doing 100% of a fantastic job.

Cr Anab - digital inclusion, when COVID first happened, working as a Community Liaison Officer at Fitzroy Primary School, I only speak one other language, so it was easier to train those that new the same language as me but everyone else that didn't ... we had to find ways to communicate. It just showed how much our elders, parents and many others that don't have that advantage of knowing how to use technology, how much they needed it.

Bich - Cohealth, w BWP and Health Concierge, and also with the BWP, it's a training/education program, giving them the capacity building on different topics so they can build up different capacity/knowledge.

Ambrose - hobbies for kids, interests, outdoor/indoor activities for screen free time. Kids who have hobbies tend to attend their friends hobbies as well.



- **Community Vision – Deliberative Panel**

(Laura Duncan)

See attached PDF presentation

- **Information sharing**

(All)

Anab - next Tuesday, behind 140 building Atherton Gardens, 4.30pm, advocating for recycling for be put into public housing buildings. Advocating to the Minister of Housing to have recycling available.

CDR - Community Resilience training, lead by Sustainability team, all around climate change - will send through Whatsapp / Email groups. An opportunity for community members to attend training around climate change and sustainability.

Rei - we came across fantastic curriculum developed by Community Learn Local org, targeting education around sustainability that's really practical - e.g. recycling and how that works, at home practices people can implement. We didn't really feel that we had a group of community members who would be interested, especially in the CALD community groups who are busy w/ so many other things - climate change is often not on their radar. Do we know what the awareness level is at the moment? What work needs to be done to raise that awareness and investment?

Anab - from what I know, I don't think a lot of community know anything about climate change/emergency at all; we need to start taking slow steps in terms of recycling, waste management. Everyone is a parent, so speaking to them in a language they can connect/resonate with (e.g. child safety).

Rei - I will send flyers, BANH's Community Development workers and Carringbush are co-delivering the Richmond Estate Action-Led project, for Richmond estate residents, capacity development project on leadership - CALD residents to come and share with us any project/event ideas, we will be there to support them through the process of realising those goals. Also open to residents who don't have a specific idea but would like to come along and help others develop their projects. Program aiming to build capacity of residents to lead actions for positive change on richmond estate. We're recruiting to start a small group and start w/I next few weeks, and will be about a semesters' worth of time. Community members will be compensated for their time.

Bich - we have the Lunar New Year event coming up, we're planning to have it on 23 March, Tuesday, at Collingwood NH, 11.30am. All are welcome!!

CDR - is anyone holding any CDW events?

Nem - it was brought up, what we would like to do is create a soccer tournament and invite various communities for a bit of a game. Bring a plate of food from your culture. We're having a committee meeting tonight to confirm if it's something possible to run this year.



CDR - don't forget there's Yarra's Small Project Grants of up to \$1,000 and the new Annual Grants round opening in June/July for bigger projects.

June - I think this year most events will be held online, if anything comes up I will share.