



# ACHRH

Australasian Centre for  
Human Rights & Health

EVALUATION REPORT

## Mutual Cultural Respect Pilot Training

Prepared by Effective Change Pty Ltd  
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## Author

Clare Keating, Director, Effective Change Pty Ltd

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84A Sydney Road, Brunswick, Victoria, 3056

T: 03 9388 1661 | E: [effectivechange@effectivechange.com.au](mailto:effectivechange@effectivechange.com.au) | W: [www.effectivechange.com.au](http://www.effectivechange.com.au)

ACN: 066 652 980 | ABN: 63 215 796 155

# Contents

Introduction .....	5□
The evaluation .....	6□
Program design .....	7□
Background and context .....	9□
Training delivery.....	10□
The participants .....	11□
Participant feedback.....	13□
Key informant reflections .....	18□
Success factors .....	21□
Conclusions .....	23□
Recommendations.....	25□



# Introduction

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The migration experience brings with it a complex combination of losses and opportunities. The migrant leaves their homeland, family and friends, the familiarity of cities and towns, traditions and culture. Migrants arriving in Australia can access a range of supports during their settlement period, such as language training. But there are few opportunities for migrants to learn about the new culture and legal system they are entering, or more particularly about where and how culture and legal matters may intersect.

The Australasian Centre for Human Rights and Health (ACHRH) identified this gap and successfully applied for funding under the Department of Social Services' Families and Communities Programme to design and deliver 'Mutual Cultural Respect' training, in pilot form.

## The Families and Communities Programme

The Families and Communities Programme aims include strengthening relationships, supporting families and increasing participation in community life. A range of service activities are funded under the program. The Mutual Cultural Respect training is funded under the 'Multicultural Affairs' component of the 'Strengthening Communities' stream. The two main aims of these grants are to:

- w develop the community capacity of specific communities with the purpose of building social cohesion capacity
- w promote respect, fairness and a sense of belonging for Australians of every race, culture and religion, focusing on the promotion of inter-community harmony and understanding.

## Aims and objectives of the Mutual Cultural Respect training

The aim of the Mutual Cultural Respect training is to begin the process of educating new migrants to Australia on a range of topics including respect for women and women's equality both in the home and in the broader community, honesty and cultural diversity. The objectives of the training are to:

- w increase the number of migrants sensitised to Australian cultural expectations of respectful behaviour towards, and equality of, women
- w build respect and tolerance for cultural differences
- w build knowledge of, and respect for the rule of law.

# The evaluation

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Effective Change was appointed to evaluate the Mutual Cultural Respect pilot training. The evaluation commenced in September 2014 as the program was in its development phase and concluded in November 2015.

To undertake the evaluation, the consultants:

- w developed an overarching evaluation framework
- w participated in and observed the pilot testing and facilitator training sessions
- w developed a short plain English, post-training questionnaire (see Attachment 1), using a five-point, Likert-type scale:
  - 1 = No, not at all
  - 2 = Not much
  - 3 = Somewhat
  - 4 = Yes, a little
  - 5 = Yes, very much.
- w observed the majority of training sessions
- w conducted rapid 'reaction' discussions with a sample of participants directly after most training sessions, to ask about their reactions and impressions of the session
- w collated and analysed the 212 post-training questionnaires
- w developed post-training focus group sessions for participants, facilitators and key stakeholders
- w conducted five post-training focus group sessions with:
  - members of the Indian Senior Citizens Group who participated in the training

- a sample of students from the Victorian Institute of Culinary Arts and Technology (VICAT) who participated in the training
- Dental Health Services Victoria staff
- VICAT teaching staff
- ACHRH training facilitators.

Additional focus groups with participants were planned, but unable to proceed due to conflicting commitments.

The post-training questionnaires and follow-up focus groups were developed using the framework of the 'Kirkpatrick<sup>1</sup>' Model of Training Evaluation. They focus on the evaluation of 'Reaction' (Level 1) and 'Learning' (Level 2). These are appropriate levels for the evaluation of this training program.

Information from the range of sources was collated and analysed.

This evaluation report has been prepared from the analysis of this information.

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<sup>1</sup> Kirkpatrick, D. L Evaluating Training Programs The Four Levels, Second Edition, Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc, San Francisco, 1998

# Program design

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Numerous imperatives guided the design of the Mutual Cultural Respect training program – it needed to be engaging, suitable for people from multiple cultural backgrounds and with mixed English language skills, and able to be used with small and large groups. More importantly, the program needed a structure that would encourage the discussion of complex issues, sensitively and openly in mixed group settings.

## Program development

The Mutual Cultural Respect training design built on previous initiatives undertaken by the ACHRH, using a case study discussion format. Previous use of this format indicated that the approach worked well with mixed groups of participants.

To refine and develop the training, a series of draft case studies and discussion questions were developed. These were tested with a group of approximately ten volunteer facilitators, taking on the role of participant. Following the case study discussion, the group then critiqued the case studies and the discussion questions. This testing process was repeated twice to further refine the suite of case studies and discussion questions.

## Program structure

The program commences with a whole group introduction to the discussion. Participants are welcomed and introduce themselves, stating their country of birth and how long they have lived in Australia. The facilitator introduces the session, pointing out to participants that as migrants to Australia, they are joining migrants from more than 200 different countries. The purpose of the session – to learn about Australian values and cultural norms is

explained, noting that the differences in etiquette and lifestyle can be difficult to interpret and navigate for new and longer-term migrants alike.

The bulk of the session – approximately 30 – 40 minutes - is then allocated to discussion of a series of case studies.

When suitable to do so, each member of the group reads a couple of sentences, then passes to the next person. While challenging for some participants, this approach is chosen deliberately, as it allows participants to process the information.

### The case studies

The six short case studies cover:

- w Bringing up teenage daughters in Australia – exploring differences in parenting girls and boys, discipline, Child Protection and mandatory reporting requirements of professionals
- w Gender etiquette in social situations – exploring cultural norms and the potential for miscommunication and misinterpretation of friendliness
- w Family violence and gender equity issues – exploring types of family violence, family

violence laws and the role of the police in family violence matters

- w Elder abuse
- w Daughter-in-law abuse
- w Driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs and road rules approach.

The case studies outline a scenario in four or five paragraphs. They stop at a critical point – such as police arriving to intervene in a family violence incident, advice that child protection authorities have been notified, or confrontation by an Australian housemate or friend. The facilitator then invites participants to discuss the scenario, with a series of open-ended questions, such as:

- w Why do you think she/he reacted that way?
- w Why do you think she/he felt that way?

Each case study is paired with its own facilitator notes, with questions tailored to the particular case study.

Participants are invited to reflect on and analyse the characters' behaviours, discuss some of the cultural norms surrounding the behaviours, and discuss how and when private behaviours cross into the public arena. The case study on family violence, for example, illustrates that abusive (and illegal) behaviours include psychological abuse and financial abuse, as well as physical abuse. The relevant legal protections in Australia are also discussed. Participants compare differences in cultural norms at play, not only between their country of origin and Australia, but across and within countries, including differences between urban and rural communities, and also challenges for new migrants within their host country.

To conclude the case study discussion, participants are provided with information about resources and supports relating to the scenario, such as family violence support services or parenting supports.

## Implementation in different settings

The program format can be adapted to the group setting. For large group settings, the format begins with the lead facilitator introducing the session. Participants are then divided into smaller groups in table settings. The groups work on different case studies. Currently, seven different case studies can be used. An appointed facilitator guides the reading of the case study and asks the group the discussion questions. Each small group nominates someone to take notes and report back on the discussion. At the end of the discussion period, a plenary session is held. A panel is formed with one person from each small group reporting back to the plenary with an outline of the case study discussed and the issues covered in the group discussion. The facilitator guides the plenary discussion and can take comments from the wider group.

The session is then finalised, with participants completing a post-session questionnaire and being thanked for their participation.



# Background and context

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The genesis of the Mutual Cultural Respect training lay in the emergence of tensions and concerns for the mental health wellbeing of international students.

## Background research

The deregulation of the education industry in the late 1980's significantly increased the number of foreign students studying in Australia.

While a boon for the Australian economy, it was not necessarily an easy transition for the international students. Peak community groups were aware of stresses in the student community.

In the mid-2000's there were a series of vicious attacks on Indian students in Victoria and New South Wales. Serious concerns were raised in the international media questioning Australia as a safe destination for international study. This became a watershed moment.

Aware of the escalating problems, the Australia India Society of Victoria (AISV) commissioned a study on the problems faced by Indian students, with a report produced in conjunction with the Federation of Indian International Students (FISA). Amongst the problems highlighted included racial discrimination, harassment, criminal assault and a range of settlement issues such as housing, isolation, loneliness, depression and poor quality of education.

Cultural differences were acknowledged as creating a sense of exclusion and loss of harmony with the host environment. On a personal level, the results included loneliness, lack of support and mental health issues such as depression and high suicide rates.

## Government response

A range of government-led inquiries were established to investigate the issues, including a Senate inquiry led by the Senate Standing Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (EEWR) References Committee in 2009. In its report the committee recognised 'the particular difficulties encountered by overseas students as they prepare to live in another country, by themselves where the culture as well as the language may be very different. On arrival in this country, students face the tasks of securing suitable accommodation and finding employment. They are in need of help and advice, even in doing simple, daily chores. The committee is concerned to ensure that credible information and appropriate support services are available to assist students in their studies and in everyday life in a foreign culture.'

## Community response

In response to these issues, and supported by a large body of research suggesting that acculturative stress is correlated with anxiety and depression, especially in the first months of arrival, and more so if prejudice and discrimination is commonplace, a team led by Dr Manjula O'Connor of the Centre for International Mental Health (School of Population Health, University of Melbourne), the Victorian Indian International Students, the AISV and the Culture Training Company devised and conducted the early iteration of this training, called 'Australian Cultural Awareness Course'. This course was piloted in 2010 with 50 students.

# Training delivery

The pilot Mutual Cultural Respect training was delivered seven times in 2015 between February and September.

The Mutual Cultural Respect training session was delivered to a range of groups including:

- w Students enrolled in formal vocational training
- w Students enrolled in post-graduate studies

- w Participants involved in short courses in the community, targeted at new migrants

- w Formal community groups

- w Informal community gatherings.

The groups varied in size from ten participants up to 74 participants.

Table 1: Date and place of training

Date	Group / Place of training	Number of participants
26 February 2015	Participants in local English language courses, City of Melton Library, Caroline Springs	10
8 March 2015	International Women's Day Community Forum on Prevention of Domestic Violence by Australian-Indian Community, Preston	33
26 April 2015	Indian Senior Citizens Association of Victoria, Ashwood	57
13 May 2015	Overseas Trained Dentists Course participants, Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne, Dental Health Services Victoria, Carlton	10
15 May 2015	Indian Community Group, Glen Waverley	15
10 July 2015	Students, Victorian Institute for Culinary Arts & Technology, Spotswood	74
11 September 2015	Overseas Trained Dentists Course participants, Royal Dental Hospital of Melbourne, Dental Health Services Victoria, Carlton	13
	Total	212

# The participants

More than two hundred people participated in the pilot Mutual Cultural Respect training. These participants came from a diverse range of backgrounds.

212 participants

33 countries of origin

37 languages spoken

## Participant demographics

### Gender

Male and female participation was reasonably balanced. Just over half of the participants were female, and slightly less than half were male.

Table 2: Gender

Gender	%	Count
Female	54.2%	115
Male	45.3%	96
No response	0.5%	1
Total		212

### Age

The majority of training participants were below the age of 40. There were more participants in the 18-29 years age range (32.1%) than any other age group. However, participants aged between 40 to 80 years were well represented, and a small proportion of participants were aged over 80 years.

Participant ages are presented in the following table.

Table 3: Age

Age	%	Count
Under 18	1.4%	3
18-29	32.1%	68
30-39	22.6%	48
40-49	10.4%	22
50-59	9.0%	19
60-69	10.8%	23
70-79	9.0%	19
Over 80	2.8%	6
No response	1.9%	4
Total		212

### Length of time in Australia

Three quarters of the participants (74%) have lived in Australia for less than ten years, and almost half (49%) have lived in Australia for less than five years. One quarter of participants have lived in Australia for more than a decade. Eight per cent of participants have been living in Australia between 11-15 years, and six per cent of participants have lived in Australia for more than 30 years.

### Residential status

Most participants were either permanent residents (42%) or students (36%). Seven per cent of participants were citizens, five per cent were on visitor visas and four per cent were Temporary Resident 457 visa holders. Four per cent of participants were Australian-born. The balance of participants (representing two per cent) were either on a bridging visa, had refugee status or were on a partner visa.

### Country of origin

Most participants were born in India (51.4%), followed by those born in Nepal (11.4%) and Pakistan (4.8%). Three per cent of participants

were born in Australia. The remaining participants came from twenty-nine countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, the Pacific and South America.

### Language spoken

Participants spoke a total of 37 different languages. The most frequently spoken languages were Hindi (37.4%), English (17.5%), Punjabi (13.6%), Nepalese (11.2%) and Urdu (5.3%). Included amongst the other 29 languages spoken by participants were Arabic, German, Hebrew, Indonesian, Kurdish, Malayalam, Mandarin, Persian/Farsi, Portuguese, Tagalog and Vietnamese.



# Participant feedback

Participants provided feedback on the training immediately after the sessions. Follow-up focus groups were conducted some months after the training with a sample of participants.

## Post-training reaction

The post-training questionnaire (see Attachment 1) asked participants six simple questions, taking into account the need for a plain English feedback tool. The questions covered:

- w enjoyment of the course
- w learning new things
- w improved knowledge of Australian laws
- w improved knowledge of community standards
- w understanding of other people's cultures.

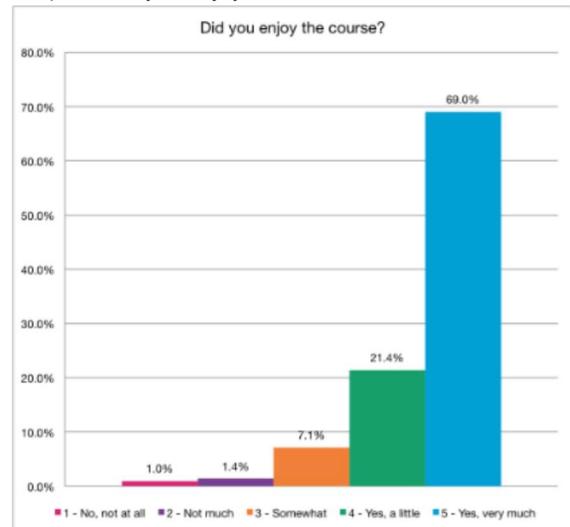
## Enjoyment of the session

The course was almost universally enjoyed, with 69% of participants reporting that they enjoyed the course very much and 21% that they enjoyed it a little. In total, 90.5% of

participants reported that they enjoyed the course.

As Graph 1 below shows, a small proportion of participants – around 2% - did not enjoy the course.

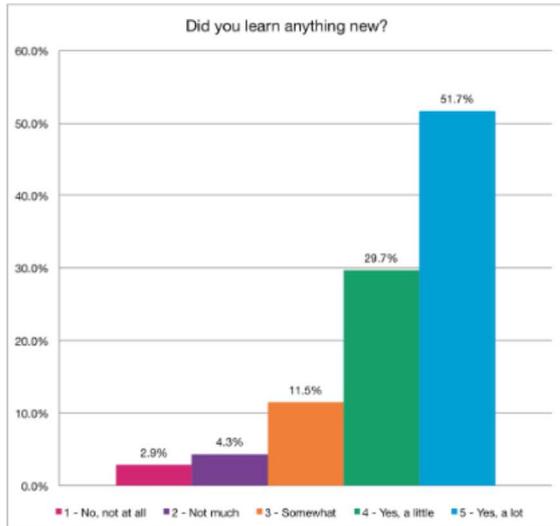
Graph 1: Did you enjoy the course?



## Learnt new things

The majority of participants learnt something new through the course, and over half felt that they had learnt a lot (52%).

Graph 2: Did you learn anything new?



Examples of new learnings reported by participants included:

- About human rights
- Gender difference and gender inequality

## Knowledge of Australian laws

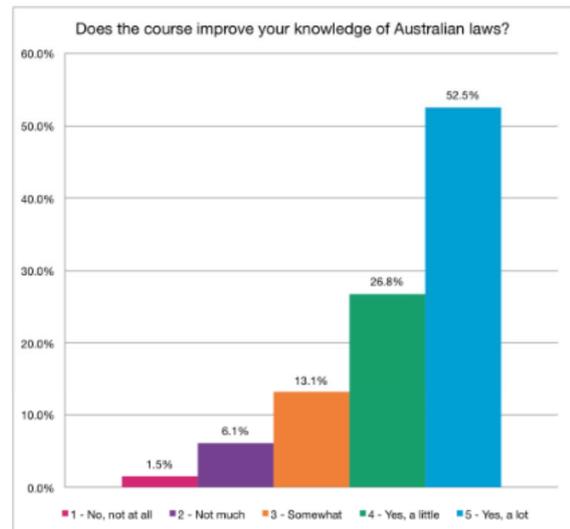
Most participants (79%) felt that the course improved their knowledge of Australian laws. A further 13% felt that their knowledge improved somewhat, and as shown in the following graph, around eight per cent felt that their knowledge of Australian laws did not improve at all, or not much. Participants mentioned learning about laws relating to:

- child protection



- driving (drink driving, speeding)
- elder abuse
- family violence
- human rights
- sexual harassment.

Graph 3: Does the course improve your knowledge of Australian laws?



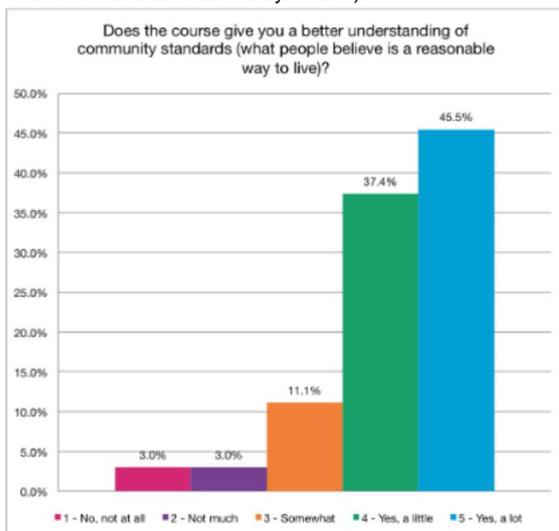
Participant comments included:

- About Australian rules and regulations in sectors like domestic violence, driving, sexual harassment plus in Asian countries which is pretty different
- Aware of most laws and issues due to work but well run course and the info gathered will be very helpful for new families.
- In Australia, you have a right to complain about abuse of any kind and seek redress.

## Understanding of community standards

Eighty three per cent of participants felt that the course improved their understanding of community standards, either a lot or a little. Around six per cent reported little change, and 11% somewhat of an improvement.

Graph 4: Does the course give you a better understanding of community standards (what people believe is a reasonable way to live)?



The following comments provide examples of how participants' understanding of community standards were enhanced through the session:

- w Australia is multicultural country, so there are different cultures and traditions, the most important thing is to study law of the country so that you can know what is right and what is wrong to the community
- w Bringing up children in multicultural environment and how people with different backgrounds perceive same situation different ways
- w Great opportunity to share values

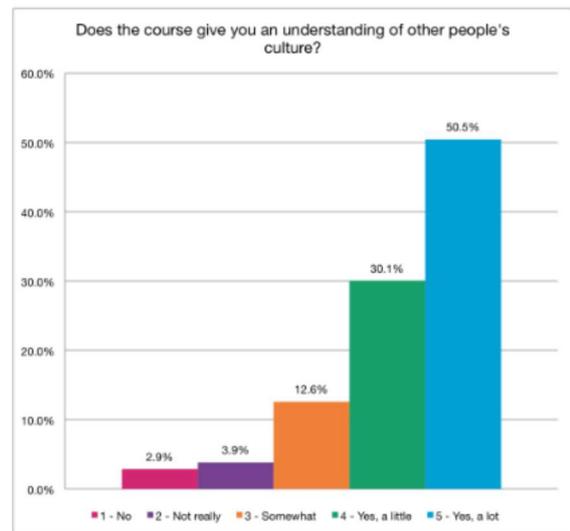
*We come across situations like this on a daily basis. This training gives us a chance to discuss and build our confidence.*

*Student participant*

## Understanding of other people's cultures

Following the pattern of previous results, most participants gained an understanding of other people's cultures through their participation in the course (81% reporting that their understanding improved either a lot or a little).

Graph 5: Does the course give you an understanding of other people's culture?



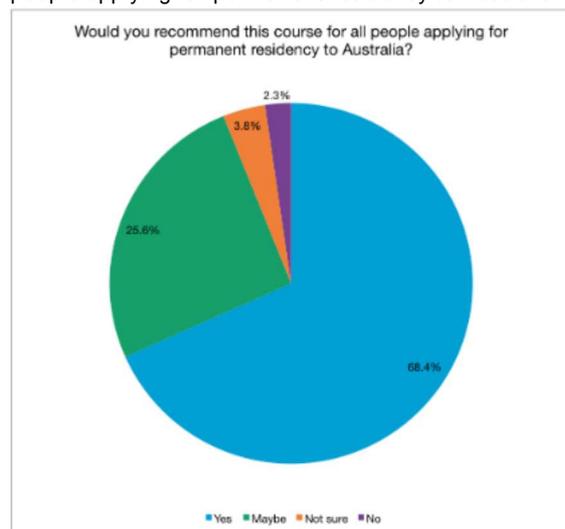
Examples of what was learnt about other people's cultures included:

- w Comparison (of) culture between our own country and Australia, in friendship expectation, domestic cultures and driving licence
- w Cultural dialogue on all sides useful for all
- w Cultural differences, biggest challenges to face in Australia
- w Culture backgrounds, religion and laws in our country and other countries to be considered
- w Gave me an understanding of how the Indian culture is different from Australian culture and how we can help new migrants to bridge the gap.
- w I came to know about things like something normal in one culture may be totally unacceptable/different in other culture

## Recommend the course for permanent residency applicants

Most participants would recommend the course for all people applying for permanent residency (68%) and one quarter (26%) would 'maybe' recommend the course. A small proportion of participants were unsure (4%) and two per cent would not recommend the course.

Graph 6: Would you recommend this course for all people applying for permanent residency to Australia?



Participant comments endorsing the session included:

- Great interactive session. Should be compulsory for all migrants
- This is an excellent programme
- Young people should be taught this

*There is no 'cultural induction' for migrants...nothing that addresses the way of life, rights of all, including women and children, education, working safely, driving..minimum standards and community expectations...Often, we don't know what we don't know...*

*Participant, community session*

## Participant focus groups

Reaction focus groups were held after most sessions, and two follow-up focus groups were held a few months after the training, one with a sample of seven VICAT students and one with eleven members of the Indian Senior Citizens Club.

Participants were consistently positive in the discussions directly after the sessions. They appreciated the opportunity to:

- tackle complex and challenging topics
- discuss in a meaningful way, tensions and pressures facing new migrants, often playing out in family and personal relationships
- discuss challenges for parents, with children wanting to 'be with, and like their Aussie mates' and parents torn with wanting to maintain their cultural norms and traditions.
- discuss challenges in understanding of gender roles.

Some participants reported not only appreciating the opportunity to discuss challenging topics, such as family violence, but also 'to see each other speaking up' as this motivates more people to speak up.

At the post-training focus groups, all of the students could recall the training, but less than half of the senior citizens could immediately recall the session (but also stated that most seniors 'could not recall what happened last week.')

Messages recalled by participants were:

- discussions about Australian culture, 'how to cope' with cultural differences
- respect for all cultures
- rules and regulations
- 'saying no' to domestic violence
- understanding issues.

All of the students and about half of the senior citizens reported that they learnt more about Australian culture and community standards.



Examples included learning about how to approach government agencies for help.

All of the students and the senior citizens who could recall the session reported that the training encouraged a sense of mutual respect and promoted social harmony. Participants could recall:

- w an emphasis on discussing issues openly
- w working on a dramatic presentation of one of the case studies
- w 'it gave us a chance to get to know other people...everyone came, and everyone participated. We kept talking about it afterwards.'
- w interesting conversations
- w understanding cultural differences – use of language, gestures ('We shake hands, but here it is okay to kiss people as a greeting')
- w 'realistic examples of miscommunication'

All of the students would recommend the training be conducted for new migrants, as did about half of the senior citizens.

Suggestions for improvements included:

- w more frequent training, and repeat sessions
- w giving students the chance to choose the topics for discussion
- w providing repeat sessions.

*We migrate here physically, economically..but we don't always migrate here in our minds...Cultural continuity is extremely important, but it has to keep changing and adapting.*

*Participant, Community session*

# Key informant reflections

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Mutual Cultural Respect facilitators, teachers at VICAT, the participating TAFE college and coordinators at Dental Health Services Victoria were consulted to collect their reflections and observations about the impact of the training on participants.

## Educational institutions

### VICAT

Teachers reported that the VICAT students found the Mutual Cultural Respect training informative and enjoyable, particularly the group discussions and role-plays. Indications of student engagement include:

- w the large number of participants (72)
- w all students remained for the full session
- w students participated actively in the discussions
- w after the session, some students remained to continue discussions raised during the session.

Since the session, teachers reported that some students have enquired whether there will be any further sessions.

Teachers felt that students gained more information and insights in terms of Australian culture and community standards. They reported that these young people do not get the opportunity to discuss or seek advice on some of the new situations they face in their daily life as international students. They felt that the discussions about domestic violence and sexual harassment were very important for them as young people, often without family supports or friendship networks. In particular, the teachers felt it was important for the young women and men:

- w to understand that domestic violence includes more than simply physical violence
- w to understand that there are legal, as well as social restrictions, on abusive behaviours
- w that the police, support and legal services are available for people caught up in abusive situations
- w to understand, that while the Australian lifestyle can appear casual to migrants from more formal societies, it is important that this is not misinterpreted, particularly in male / female relationships, and that migrants need to take time to understand and respect new social mores
- w to understand the human rights' foundation of our legal system, and that rights apply equally to men, women and children, and are enforced by police and other services
- w to understand the importance of the road rules, and the serious implications of transgressions, irrespective of whether someone is not a permanent resident.

The teachers felt that the discussions were conducted in an environment of mutual respect.

## Dental Health Services

Two Mutual Cultural Respect sessions were conducted with students from the Orientation Training Course (OTC) at Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV). This course is designed for international dental graduates, including dental hygienists and therapists, to refresh their knowledge and skills before sitting the Australian Dental Council examination. (The course is open to participants meeting other criteria, e.g. dentists requiring skills development in a specific area of practice.)

The coordinators noted that this cohort of students does not receive training of this kind on social and community expectations and issues. Participants' primary focus is on their clinical skill development and passing their examination. While DHSV wants to raise some of these issues with students, it can be a challenge to find a 'hook' to engage students who are so focused on their examination.

They observed that participants were highly engaged in the sessions and participated fully in the discussions. The interactive, adult learning approach worked well with the participants, and it allowed them to raise questions that they hadn't had other opportunities to discuss. For example, in one session, discussions turned to questions of finding the right balance between formal and informal approaches with patients, with participants wondering about the appropriate language to use when greeting patients, or whether it is appropriate to acknowledge a patient, outside of the surgery.

The coordinators felt that from the session participants understood that there is no single set of rules on 'how to be Australian', but they understood clear messages about tolerance and acceptance of different views.

Participants gained an understanding of cultural norms in Australia, and that they may need to adapt some of their expectations, values or modes of behaviour. The case study on bringing up teenage children reinforced the need to communicate with teenagers, and that

some new boundaries may need to be negotiated. It also provided the chance to discuss ways to deal with tensions that can arise in the family structure through the migration experience. Other case studies triggered important discussions around gender roles and expectations, as well as dealing with the topic of domestic violence and explaining the legal framework in Australia.

The discussions offered a range of opportunities for participants. While some topics raised matters that some had not previously considered, others found that the discussions were affirming, and that they did have a good sense of cultural mores, but they had not had the chance to confirm this in any other setting. Participants were also able to discuss the strategies they employed to check what is / isn't acceptable / appropriate in their day to day life, for example, discussing issues with parents of their children's school friends. Using the discussion to exchange strategies such as these was useful for all participants.

Participants also enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about the cultural backgrounds and traditions of their fellow students.

The coordinators observed that the sharing of information gives participants insights into each other's experiences which in turn helps the classes work better. With the chance to talk about issues, cultures, values, the coordinators observed that it was almost possible to 'visibly see participants relax. Talking about issues that may be making them anxious...helps to build their confidence.'



## Facilitators

Mutual Cultural Respect facilitators observed that the sessions:

- w provide participants with a solid introduction to mainstream culture, laws and services
- w allow participants to understand that women have clearly prescribed rights, which are upheld by the court system
- w allow participants to understand that even when on bridging visas, people in abusive circumstances can seek help and assistance
- w provide the opportunity for participants to learn about Australian laws and expectations in areas which could have massive ramifications for individuals (e.g. driving, matters of family violence, understanding definitions of abuse against a child or partner, understanding definitions of sexual harassment, understanding the penalties, the role of the police)
- w by using the case study approach, provide participants with the chance to discuss the same hypothetical situation in a non-judgemental setting, and when ready,

move into sharing stories and information from their own experience and culture.

Facilitators observed that without the training, there are limited opportunities for participants to learn about many of these matters, and certainly limited opportunities to discuss matters. It was found that despite differences such as length of time in Australia, visa type or residential status, age, or educational background, most participants had not experienced any courses or training that simply allowed them to learn about community standards and expectations of their host nation. Nor had they had opportunities where they could share their cultural traditions and expectations with other people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

*It takes the lid off Pandora's box...(and) encourages people to compare experiences, share their own knowledge and wisdom. It becomes a cultural exchange. The respect comes from listening and understanding the other person.*



# Success factors

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Participants and key stakeholders identified a number of common factors that contributed to the success of the program.

## Process

With the training session structured around case examples, participants begin on an equal footing, considering a realistic life example. When many participants may not know each other well, or at all, discussion is aided by talking about a hypothetical situation.

## Flexibility of the program

The Mutual Cultural Respect training is flexible on a number of levels.

The case study approach lends itself to endless discussion topics. The program currently has a 'bank' of around ten, tested case examples, with accompanying discussion questions. However, additional case studies could readily be prepared to fit with new issues.

This approach also means that the session can work equally well with one small group, or with large groups working on multiple topics.

The training was also tested in a range of settings – from small and large community settings, with mixed multicultural groups and with Indian community groups, and in small and large educational settings – and worked well with all groups, sparking lively discussion.

The training worked equally well for new migrants, and people who had lived in Australia for many years, highlighting this training as a gap in the migration experience.

## Non-judgemental approach

The discussions are conducted in a non-judgemental way, whilst also clearly providing information on Australian laws and expectations. Participants were able to ask questions about life in Australia – often simple lifestyle questions – Do I shake hands? Do I use someone's first name? or Who do I talk to because I am worried about my son / daughter? etc – primarily because they have not had the occasion to ask these questions at other times.

## Engagement and encouragement

The case example approach successfully engages participants in discussions. The evaluator observed most sessions, and without exception, participants were engaged in lively discussion at each event.

Participants were engaged because they entered into a discussion that was hypothetical and did not involve any personal disclosure. Discussions then move to one that seeks opinions and experiences, people start to share their thoughts on the scenario and their own relatable experiences.

## Mixed language levels

While English was not the first language for most participants, the session is well-paced and people have time to consider the issues as the case studies are read. People of all English language abilities were able to participate and contribute.

## Platform to explore complex topics

The case studies open up the opportunity for groups to move to complex discussions on gender relations, parenting, cultural norms, marriage, or family dynamics. For many people, these opportunities are clearly not available – at least not in a mixed group, and participants were highly engaged in discussing complex topics.

## Facilitation

The success of the training relies on skillful facilitation, particularly with large groups. There is the potential for discussions to move off point, or to move into difficult or contentious territory. With the pilot training, Dr Manjula O'Connor's facilitation skills came to the fore. She was able to skillfully facilitate sessions from ten to seventy participants. Dr O'Connor was able to keep the discussions on track, and on-time, encourage all participants to have a say, and to bring sessions to a conclusion with providing resources and information on the relevant topics. Dr O'Connor also brings with her professional skills in psychiatry, from which she can draw for examples during the discussion, and also her personal experience as a migrant to Australia.

In addition to Dr O'Connor as the key facilitator of the program, a pool of around ten people have been trained as facilitators. Additional facilitators were involved with some of the large groups. On those occasions, facilitators were able to ensure that all discussions went smoothly and to time. The use of the plenary session worked well with the large groups.

The additional facilitators came from a mix of backgrounds, including Australian and Indian. It was observed that having both migrant and Australian voices involved in the facilitation was useful. Often the Australian facilitators could point out that the way of life, and cultural norms in Australia have been changing rapidly over the past three or four generations. It was often reassuring to participants to hear that the same life challenges were faced, and that different generations faced different struggles.

## Mutual cultural respect

Through the sessions, people are encouraged to share and reflect on their cultural norms as a counter-point to Australian cultural norms. This was often one of the most interesting sections of the conversations, and people welcomed the opportunity to share their own traditions, and to hear about those of other participants.



# Conclusions

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The pilot Mutual Cultural Respect training has been tested in multiple group settings, small and large, with multicultural and single community groups, with young people and senior citizens. In each setting it has been found to work well, engaging participants in challenging but important topics relevant to their new life in Australia.

## A program that works

The pilot testing of the Mutual Cultural Respect training has shown that this simple program, within the space of 30 – 40 minutes, can have a group of strangers engaged in meaningful discussions about driving laws, parenting or family violence. It can achieve this with not much more than an invited group of people, a room and a skilled facilitator. With planning and preparation and partnerships, this can be multiplied to a large setting with up to one hundred people. The program provides a strong platform for challenging and important discussions, and works with a mixed range of cohorts.

## Need for the training

The experience of the Mutual Cultural Respect pilot training demonstrated that there is an enthusiasm and a need for this type of session for recent and long-term migrants to Australia. Participants enjoyed the sessions, and reported that it was a new and welcome experience for them. Those in educational settings with international students found it particularly useful. They observed that these discussions are of great importance to students, but they have not been available to them. The Victoria University's 2010 Scoping

Study into Community Safety of International Students in Melbourne<sup>2</sup> noted that 'the key implication of naming racism in the provision of education and training services is greater recognition that the needs of international students are different from domestic students.' Priorities identified for education and training institutions included 'comprehensive and regular monitoring and understanding of student characteristics, needs and experiences.'

## Potential for development

The testing of the Mutual Cultural Respect demonstrates that it has potential to be further developed and to be implemented widely.

The flexibility of the structure suggests that it could be implemented in many settings, such as English language classes, higher education settings with international students, through providers supporting refugee settlement or to be used in community groups.

From participants' feedback, it is also clear that follow-up sessions could be developed.

Similarly, there is scope to tailor sessions for

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<sup>2</sup> Barbican, H Prof et al 'The Community Safety of International Students in Melbourne: A Scoping Study' Institute for Community, Ethnicity and Policy Alternative (ICEPA), Victoria University, February 2010

the needs of particular organisations, such as tailoring a course to include relevant case examples. This could work in bridging courses for international students re-training to enter various professions, with health professions being a priority.

The approach could continue to develop by providing follow-up sessions, as requested by both educational institutions involved in the pilot.

Participants in a number of settings were keen to participate in follow up sessions.

### Resource requirements

The sessions have worked well, but much has relied on the skills and experience of the facilitators involved, in particular Dr O'Connor. If support was provided to extend the training, it would require suitable trainer resources, a full set of case examples and discussion questions. Trainer resources would need to be developed with clear advice on the facilitation role, and tips on handling potentially difficult situations.

Participants and stakeholders identified the opportunity to substitute the written case examples with short film clips. This would be an excellent development. It would overcome any challenges with written language and could even be subtitled. It would require computers or televisions in the training situation, but mobile phones and tablets could

also be used. This would introduce an excellent level of quality control, and would even further increase the level of engagement for participants.

### Next steps

The pilot Mutual Cultural Respect training has undergone useful testing with over 200 participants in a wide range of settings.

Subject to the funder's considerations, there is great potential to enter into a next stage in the development of the program, preparing a training package that could be implemented on a wider scale.

### Conclusion

The aims of the 'Strengthening Communities' funding which supports the Mutual Cultural Respect training are to:

- w develop the community capacity of specific communities with the purpose of building social cohesion capacity
- w promote respect, fairness and a sense of belonging for Australians of every race, culture and religion, focusing on the promotion of inter-community harmony and understanding.

The evaluation of the pilot training has found that the program more than meets these aims and has great potential for further development.



# Recommendations

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1. It is recommended that funding is allocated for the further development of the Mutual Cultural Training. This funding is required to develop resources including:
  - w Trainer manuals and resources, including advice on developing case studies specifically for particular settings (such as health professional training courses)
  - w Participant resources, comprising case studies and discussion questions and outlines for follow-up sessions
  - w Short film clips which can be used as case studies
2. It is recommended that funding is allocated for further training of key facilitators, able to implement the course. This should include staff from a selection of:
  - w English language providers
  - w higher education
  - w community groups
3. It is recommended that funding is allocated for the implementation of the training with priority groups including:
  - w international students attending Australian education and training institutions
  - w refugees
  - w migrants entering Australia under all visa types
4. It is recommended that funding is allocated to develop an implementation plan for the next phase of the training development, and to consider wider implementation in the longer term.



## MUTUAL CULTURAL RESPECT POST COURSE SURVEY

1. Did you learn anything new?

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>No, not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Yes, a little</i>	<i>Yes, a lot.</i>

2. Did you enjoy the course?

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>No, not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Yes, a little</i>	<i>Yes, very much.</i>

3. Does the course improve your knowledge of Australian laws?

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>No, not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Yes, a little</i>	<i>Yes, a lot.</i>

4. Does the course give you a better understanding of community standards (what people believe is a reasonable way to live)?

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>No, not at all</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Yes, a little</i>	<i>Yes, a lot.</i>

5. Does the course give you a better understanding of other people's culture?

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>No</i>	<i>Not really</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Yes, a little</i>	<i>Yes, a lot.</i>

If so, which ones?

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6. Would you recommend this course for all people applying for permanent residency to Australia?

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>No</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Maybe</i>	<i>Yes, a lot.</i>

## MUTUAL CULTURAL RESPECT PARTICIPANT

The information you provide in this survey will not identify you. The details will be held by Effective Change, the independent evaluators of this course.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender:  Female  Male

Your age:  Under 18  50-59  
 18-29  60-69  
 30-39  70-79  
 40-49  80 years or older

Years in Australia:  0-5 years  21-25 years  
 6-10 years  26-30 years  
 11-15 years  More than 30 years  
 16-20 years  Whole life

Resident status:  Student  Temporary Resident 457  
 Permanent Resident  Visitor  
 Refugee  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Country of origin: \_\_\_\_\_ Native language: \_\_\_\_\_

Job: \_\_\_\_\_

### THANK YOU

This course is funded by:



This course is being evaluated by:



