

PEOPLE FROM CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS

THE AUSTRALIAN
GOVERNMENT'S
SETTLEMENT POLICY
STATES:

“Participation in the social and cultural life of Australia helps migrants and humanitarian entrants feel part of their local community. Social participation activities foster cross cultural respect, understanding and belonging. This sense of belonging is often cited by new arrivals as critical to feeling settled in Australia.”¹



OVERVIEW

People from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds is a term which includes those whose first language is one other than English, or whose family background involves migration from a non-English speaking country. It can refer to new arrivals to Australia as immigrants or refugees from non-English speaking countries as well as the children of migrant parents.

People from CALD backgrounds have a range of issues and needs that require addressing. There are significant immediate issues such as accessing language and settlement services. Furthermore there are issues around living in a homogenous community where cultural difference stand out. Some people experience racism or harassment at work or whilst studying and some CALD children also have difficulty trying to fit in at school.



IN THE BEGA VALLEY

The Shire has a long history of multiculturalism. In contrast to the myth of the 'white' colonial Australia, people from CALD backgrounds have always been part of our community. From the nineteenth century the Shire was a mix of Anglo-Celtic, European and Asian migrants. The early beginnings of our agriculture industries were founded on the labour and enterprise of Chinese market gardeners who were some of the first people to establish bean and corn crops following the end of the gold rush in the 1800s.

The 2011 Census showed that 17% of the Bega Valley Shire population were born overseas. The most common overseas country of birth in the Shire is England (4.6%). The most prevalent non-English speaking countries of birth were Germany (0.8%) and the Netherlands (0.7%). In the Shire, over 93% of people speak English at home. The other common languages spoken in homes in the Shire include German (0.6%), Dutch (0.3%), Italian (0.2%), French (0.2%), and Greek (0.1%).²

THE CHANGES

Until recently there have not been any migrant and refugee services located in the Shire to service the broader migrant community. In 2011 Council secured funding from the State and Federal governments to work with the migrant and multicultural community in the Bega Valley (The Bega Valley Migrant & Multicultural Support Service).

New and emerging communities in the area include people from African countries such as Congo and Sierra Leone, as well as Asian countries such as Thailand and the Philippines. Most recently with the development of the Sapphire Marketplace (shopping centre) there has been a visible increase in migrants moving to the area to work at the centre.

THE SOCIAL ISSUES

Support & Services

People from CALD backgrounds can experience social and cultural barriers in accessing local services and facilities. A need has been identified in the Shire to provide supportive assistance

AUSTRALIA'S MULTICULTURAL POLICY STATES:

“Australia’s multicultural composition is at the heart of our national identity and is intrinsic to our history and character.”³

with information and navigation of services, such as health, education, employment and government services. There is an opportunity to develop a Local Resource Guide for newly arrived migrants and refugees.

Language

Language barriers can be a major problem for people from CALD backgrounds. Not being able to communicate with people can make people feel isolated from their communities, as well as affecting employment opportunities.⁴

One of the principles of multiculturalism in NSW is that individuals and organisations need to make provisions for the culture, language and religion of others.⁵ However, consultations and anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a lack of localised translated information. Furthermore, there is a lack of awareness of national interpreting services available to the CALD community in the Bega Valley.

Transport

The lack of affordable transport is a concern for the broader community but is magnified for some in the CALD community due to language barriers, lack of driving experience and financial constraints. Insufficient transportation can increase an individual’s feeling of social isolation. People can become more isolated in the Bega Valley community than other communities due



to the spread of townships. There is a need to have access to a car or public transport to enable people to be actively engaged in the community. However, bus routes and timetable are limited and often not affordable options for daily use.

Accessing shops and services in the Shire is difficult for people who do not live in close proximity to the major towns in the Shire. A need has been identified to support the CALD community with the cost of driving lessons. Opportunities for migrants and refugees to get driving experience is a priority for people to be able to obtain their Australian driving licence and in turn gain greater independence.

Employment, Education & Training

Consultations have identified that there needs to be increased opportunities in the areas of employment, education, career pathways, apprenticeships, traineeships and work experience.



Recognition of overseas qualifications is an issue for migrants and refugees. Work needs to be undertaken to promote pathways to upgrade overseas qualification. Consultations have also identified a need for support in resume writing and interview techniques.

It has been identified in consultations that increasing cultural awareness amongst the business community may assist in achieving an increase in CALD employment opportunities.

Diverse Foods & Ingredients

Accessing a diverse range of foods in the Bega Valley is difficult for people from CALD backgrounds. There is a lack of Halal butchers and international grocery stores in the area. Sourcing and accessing a diverse range of foods and ingredients for traditional cooking is problematic for people from CALD backgrounds.

STRENGTHS IN THE BEGA VALLEY

A diverse community brings many social benefits to our Shire. Evidence suggests that migrants to Australia have made significant contributions to Australia's social capital.⁶ Migration has brought new skills, business and investment into the broader community and assists in developing relationships with other countries.⁷

A small number of services have been established to work with migrants and refugees in the Bega Valley. The Bega Valley Migrant & Multicultural Support Service was established to work with and support new arrivals.

Sanctuary Australia Foundation is an organisation that provides a range of support services for refugees. Locally, Sanctuary is looking at providing support to migrants as well as refugees, in recognition of the larger number of migrants compared to refugees in the Shire. Currently TAFE NSW runs an ESL (English as a second language) class at Bega for migrants.

The need for culturally appropriate social interaction was identified during consultations as a key aspect of feeling a sense of place in the community. In response the Bega Valley Migrant Social (BVMS) group was formed in early 2011.

The BVMS group offers support for migrants and refugees living in the Shire and an opportunity to celebrate cultural diversity, meet new people, organise activities and events and get involved in the community.

THE CONSTRAINTS

Living in the Bega Valley Shire can be an isolating experience for some migrants and refugees. There is a broad range of cultural groups in the Shire, however there are very few members in each cultural group.

Cultural isolation can become problematic when there are limited opportunities to speak with other people with similar



backgrounds, cultural and religious beliefs.

While the numbers of migrants and refugees in the Bega Valley Shire are relatively small this doesn't diminish the impact of limited access to support services for people from CALD backgrounds.

THE OPPORTUNITIES

There are opportunities for organisations working with people from CALD backgrounds to investigate options for an increased availability of culturally specific produce. For example, discussions could commence with local business around options for increasing local availability of culturally specific foods and ingredients. Another opportunity is to facilitate shopping trips to Canberra to access specialty foods.

People from CALD backgrounds also tend to have limited access to, and ownership of land and animals. There is an opportunity to develop partnerships between established

community gardens across the Shire and the multicultural community. This would provide an opportunity to grow a diverse range of fresh fruit and vegetables.

There are opportunities to address issues around social inclusion by undertaking a range of other activities. For example, trips to Canberra to source food could be combined to include visits to religious and cultural activities and events for people who are isolated from their communities. Likewise, becoming involved in community gardens could help promote social interaction with the broader community.

There is an opportunity to develop a type of language bank, which would act as a repository of information. The language bank would include a list of people and the languages they speak. New arrivals in the Shire would be able to access the language bank and connect with local people who speak the same language.

Consultations have identified that migrant and refugees require assistance in developing small business opportunities. There is an opportunity for organisations working with people from CALD backgrounds, to identify and use their existing skills to start up small businesses. Partnerships could also be developed with existing organisations, businesses, schools and the CALD community.

Further opportunities include working with the local community college to run courses based on a profession or cultural expertise. For example, Thai cuisine cooking classes, language classes or traditional crafts.

Reference

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SOCIAL ISSUES PAPERS

This document is part of a broader Social Issues Paper produced by the Bega Valley Shire Council. To read the document in its' entirety go to www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au

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