

Newly arrived migrants

Partner Organisation	Multicultural Australia
Budget	\$11,550.00
Date	July 2022

Where, when, who.

The Volunteer Roundtable (Recent Migrants) was held on 12 July 2022 in Kingston, Queensland. It was hosted by Multicultural Australia on behalf of Volunteering Queensland.

It was attended by 33 community leaders from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds (23) and sector representatives from volunteer involving organisations (10).

Discussion points:

How are organisations linking recent migrants with meaningful and skills-based volunteering opportunities?

- The upskilling process can provide someone who speaks English as a second or additional language with various learning opportunities. Amongst these include an improvement of communication skills, confidence, cultural understanding and networks within an Australian context and in some cases support with the volunteer's recruitment into a paid position. These factors all support the wellbeing and settlement outcomes of the individual.

What engages you and your communities in volunteering?

- CALD communities are driven by empathy and are motivated to support the wellbeing of others based on a mutual understanding of trauma and hardship. The relationships in their communities that are built through shared experiences and cultural understandings also support collective mobilisation in times of need.

Challenges and barriers:

- National definitions of and traditional beliefs about volunteering are not always aligned with current understandings and attitudes of volunteering within CALD communities.
- Lack of knowledge about Australian volunteering culture and recruitment process for volunteering
- Lack of digital knowledge/ digital exclusion
- The circumstance of foregoing household obligations to participate in volunteering may be difficult to coordinate and ultimately place additional pressure upon the migrant household that may not have extended family networks to draw upon. Migrants who are unfamiliar with the Australian cultural landscape may be unwilling to leave children in childcare facilities.
- Lack of guidance in how or why to formally volunteer with organisations.
- In the case of refugees, traumas experienced.
- Experience of exclusion or isolation

Motivations and purpose

- Experiencing safety and a sense of belonging
- Improvement of communication skills, confidence, cultural understanding, and networks within an Australian context and in some cases support with the volunteer's recruitment into a paid position.
- These factors all support the wellbeing and settlement outcomes of the individual.

Racism

- Diversity is not reflected in volunteer organisational structures and supports a cycle where CALD communities are excluded from participation and decision-making processes.
- Treatment from individuals who represent a volunteering organisation shapes the experience for volunteering participants and can further impact their reputation. Some organisations lack cultural awareness over practices that differ from traditional westernised attitudes in Australia. Additionally, volunteering organisations that lack cultural competency may fail to implement policies that accommodate the integration of volunteers from different faiths or CALD migrant backgrounds.

Awareness and training

- CALD migrants are not always aware of how volunteering can help them learn skills that may support the development of their social capital and employability.
- Newly arrived migrants may lack understanding towards the concept of volunteering and how their conscious participation in volunteering can assist their settlement journey and further their career goals.
- Lack of communication between CALD communities and volunteering organisations inhibits understanding of what it means to be a volunteer in an Australian landscape and the individual, community, and societal benefits of volunteering.

Financial barriers

- Recent migrants may be restricted in their access to income and transportation.
- Within the recruitment process, individuals may be faced with expenses such as police checks, travel expenses and Justice of the Peace signature fees (footnote: JP services are meant to be provided for free).
- Some organisations may have processes in place that cover some fees, it is not always clear that communities are informed or made aware of these supports.
- Recent migrants with CALD backgrounds may not be aware of supports due to a lack of linguistic diversity in their current workforce and a lack of funding to hire accredited translators and interpreters beyond a small number of languages.

Recommendations

1. Broaden the current national definition of 'volunteering' that Volunteering Queensland upholds and adopt a definition which recognises CALD community practices and multicultural perspectives to recognise that individuals in CALD communities commit their personal time, both within their own communities and across the broader community.

2. Build understanding, empathy, respect and recognition for the cultural obligations and commitments already being undertaken by cultural leaders.
3. Promote and celebrate diversity by promoting the good work CALD individuals are doing through formal and informal volunteering in their communities, with a focus on the benefits that flow for both the CALD community and the broader community.
4. Volunteering Queensland to develop a holistic CALD volunteering strategy (incorporating the additional recommendations below) for promotion to and adoption by volunteer organisations with a goal to foster diversity and inclusion, to facilitate trusting relationships between volunteer organisations and CALD community leaders, to identify shared purposes and values, to nurture connections and to create reciprocal partnerships.
5. Volunteering Queensland to advocate for and source funding and support to volunteer organisations who need translators to widen the reach of people with whom they can communicate.
6. Volunteering Queensland advocate and source funding for cultural capability training for volunteer organisations' administrative staff and long-term volunteers to enhance and increase their ability to create welcoming, safe, and inclusive volunteering environments for CALD community members.
7. Facilitate changes to the operating environment of volunteer organisations to create more welcoming, safe, and inclusive volunteer environments:
 - a. Create volunteer cultural liaison roles or champion roles that assist CALD communities and those who are not confident in their English-speaking skills and/or digital literacy to support engagement in volunteer sign up processes – provide practical peer support with navigating electronic systems, websites, and phone conversations.
 - b. Engage with CALD community leaders to identify the most effective ways to inform their community of volunteering opportunities.
 - c. Volunteer organisations develop and send communication/media forms that can be easily shared through existing community networks and events, including audio and videos with editable captions.
 - d. Increase visual representation of CALD community in advertising and recruitment drives for volunteers.
 - e. In the recruitment and training process for volunteers, use educational materials which reflect people from CALD backgrounds.
 - f. Diversify platforms and channels for information sharing – face-to-face, written communication, online presentations, social media posts.
 - g. Develop processes and provide support and assistance to minimise process barriers – such as Police Checks, Blue Card applications, insurance requirements and JP signatures.
 - h. Provide transportation options to increase participation for those who do not hold a driver's license or own a vehicle.
8. Undertake volunteer education and promotional activities within CALD communities, sharing the benefits and supports available for volunteering activities to increase awareness and uptake of volunteer opportunities.