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OUR PLACE

Building CALD Capacity for Healthy Environments  
Phase 1: Blacktown - An Abundant Community

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Special thanks must go to Mr Om Dhungel who has connected us so well to the Blacktown CALD community and shared his Bhutanese community's hope for "An Abundant Community."

We hope that readers will find this report informative and engaging and that it will make a difference to contributing towards a vibrant multicultural community.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage Sustainable Communities Team (OEH) are seeking to build strategic partnerships that will build momentum for place based environmental sustainability. “Our Place, Building CALD Capacity for Healthy Environments” is a collaborative partnership between Western Sydney University, the United Nations Regional Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainability Development Greater Western Sydney (UN RCE GWS) and Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) that aims to develop this agenda in Greater Western Sydney with a focus on Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities. “Blacktown: An Abundant Community” represents Phase 1 of this program. The research team mapped and analysed the current and environmental sustainability activities, challenges and future opportunities for CALD communities in the Blacktown Local Government Area (LGA). This report presents these findings.

## METHODOLOGY: PLACE AND CULTURAL WELLBEING

Places connect people and provide a link between local concerns and global issues. A Placed Based methodology was used to research CALD community perspectives in the Blacktown LGA as it highlights contested stories of the way people relate to their local places (Somerville, Brown and Mackay, 2013). A Cultural Wellbeing framework was also used to assist in understanding CALD communities values. This framework considers the influence of cultural and social values of individuals and communities on wellbeing. Cultural wellbeing acknowledges the importance of emotional and spiritual connections with others and the role of the cultural, creative, environmental and spiritual influences on communities’ wellbeing in a particular place (Mackay, 2016).

## METHODS

The project involved a combination of desktop scoping focus groups and stakeholder interviews. Consultations were conducted with 20 CALD community groups and individuals representing faith organisations, cultural associations, community networks and volunteers as well as key council service providers and environmental groups. Consultations were conducted via semi structured interview over the phone or in face-to-face interviews with individuals or small focus groups depending on participant preferences (Appendix 1). Snapshots of CALD communities in the Blacktown LGA are presented and provide insights into current activities and future opportunities for sustainability initiatives.

## KEY FINDINGS

**1.** *There are a range of opportunities to connect with environmental sustainability activities in the Blacktown LGA.*

There are a range of opportunities for local CALD residents to become involved in and connected to the environmental sustainability activities in the Blacktown LGA.

**2.** *Although there appeared to be large amounts of goodwill across Blacktown CALD communities, there are barriers to participation and as a result these opportunities are not uniformly accessed.*

The CALD participants interviewed valued social cohesion, creating a vibrant and safe place to reconnect with their cultural traditions and expressed a commitment to building shared community values. The level of uptake across all CALD demographics is highly dependent on a number of factors including: accessibility (work commitments and timing); program design (cultural appropriateness and relevance); relevance and self-determination (ability to self-mobilise).

**3.** *Social sustainability drivers were the major motivators for CALD community groups and individuals to connect with environmental activities.*

Faith and/or cultural values were the major philosophical driver for CALD communities and individuals to become involved in local environmental sustainability activities. The CALD communities consulted regarded connecting with the environment as a way to experience their individual relationships to place and cultural wellbeing as well as to enact their faith and/or cultural values. CALD participants engage in environmental activities to connect with each other and their cultural values and in the process learn about the environment.

**4.** *CALD communities in Blacktown LGA are diverse with major differences in length of time in Australia, community self-determination and identification, mobilisation abilities, organisational structures and inter-cultural knowledge.*

The wide-ranging diversity of CALD communities in Blacktown at different stages of settlement and maturity requires a more targeted, nuanced and specifically tailored approach to program design and CALD community engagement.

**5.** *Faith organisations, community hub networks and cultural associations represent an untapped reservoir for linking and leveraging environmental sustainability activities across the LGA.*

Well established faith organisations, community hubs and cultural associations had high levels of self-determination and self-reliance and were able to partially support their own activities through strong local networking and committed volunteer involvement.

## Environmental Sustainability Activities



5

local festivals yearly



7

community gardens



14

bushcare groups



30+

sustainable living workshops



200

bat survey volunteers

Blacktown LGA - 2015

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Recommendation 1**

**Acknowledge that individuals within CALD groups have very different needs and priorities.**

CALD community groups in the Blacktown LGA are highly ethnically diverse. Future sustainability programs wishing to engage CALD communities should accommodate the many competing needs and priorities effecting diverse communities by offering sustainability initiatives that offer multiple benefits and at times and places that offer convenience.

### **Recommendation 2**

**Design sustainability projects with diversity at the centre.**

Current and future sustainability programs need to be reconceptualised to reflect the diversity that is the Australian experience. For sustainability programs to succeed they need to base program design around how CALD individuals are currently experiencing wellbeing within their place. For example each program needs to at least ask CALD individuals what they already know, or don't know, about their local place.

### **Recommendation 3**

**Provide cultural awareness training for program facilitators.**

Designing professional development programs for service providers and educators across all sectors in the region is essential to address the lack of understanding of how diversity of faith/values impacts upon CALD communities engagement in sustainability initiatives. Cultural awareness programs would facilitate more engagement in current programs and promote inter-agency collaboration between groups for social cohesion.

### **Recommendation 4**

**Focus on supporting self-determination and empowerment through a social enterprise model.**

Social enterprise models will be better able to build capacity for healthy environments by focusing on multiple benefits to CALD participants, rather than solely targeting environmental outcomes. This approach builds CALD capacity in multiple ways such as financial independence, social networks and sense of agency.

### **Recommendation 5**

**Build upon social connectedness and use a Cultural Wellbeing framework to inform programs.**

A Cultural Wellbeing framework would also benefit existing programs across all sectors as it would promote deeper engagement, networking and communication with CALD faith/value based networks. A Cultural Wellbeing framework taps into the existing cultural capital of CALD communities.



## **Recommendation 6**

### **Provide systemic support, governance and networking opportunities to take pressure of small NGOs.**

Agencies should look at projects that are already working well and seek to bolster them by providing financial support alongside networking opportunities which connect related projects.

## **Recommendation 7**

### **Identify, support and promote safe community sustainability hubs.**

Identify programs and places that are already highly salient to the local population. Investment in developing one stop shop style hubs that utilise existing infrastructure will promote more efficient and locally known safe spaces for building CALD capacity for healthy environments.

# Self-Sufficiency

**BLACKETOWN**

**Abundant Community**

**Vibrant** Hubs **Empowerment** Place **Social** Environment **Diverse** Learn **Culture** Biodiversity

**Safe** **CALD** Sustainability **Inclusive** **Peace** **Faith** **Traditions**

Cleanups **Volunteering** Happiness **Share** **OpShops** **NationalTreePlantingDay** **CleanUpAustralia** **CommunityGardens** **CommunityCafes** **Bushcare** **SustainableLivingWorkshops** **Cohesion**

# INTRODUCTION

## OUR PLACE: BUILDING CALD CAPACITY FOR HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

### What is Our Place?

The Environmental Trust funded Our Place Program enables communities to care for their local environments through creating locally focused collaborations and community directed projects. The OEH Sustainable Communities Team are seeking to build strategic partnerships in Greater Western Sydney (GWS) that will support ongoing networks and collaborations to build momentum for place based environmental sustainability. Our Place, Building CALD Capacity for Healthy Environments Western Sydney is a collaborative project between the Western Sydney University, the United Nations Regional Centre of Expertise in Education for Sustainability Development Greater Western Sydney (UN RCE GWS) and the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage, NSW (OEH).

The UN RCE GWS is a sustainability education network based at the University. The governance structure provides a framework for ongoing network support including but not limited to:

1. A functioning working group structure;
2. Quarterly forums for stakeholder convened across GWS with guest presentations and access to specialist advice;
3. External grant proposal support under the RCE banner and
4. Access to student placements, internships and service learning.

The aim of the partnership project is to facilitate community participation, leadership and regional networking. The Our Place, Building CALD Capacity for Healthy Environments project was comprised of two phases:

1. An analysis of the current environment and environmental sustainability activities, challenges and future opportunities for CALD communities in the Blacktown Local Government Area (LGA); and
2. A “Photovoice Exhibition” and a community networking showcase event across Greater Western Sydney.

# BACKGROUND

## CALD COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Australia is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) 'multicultural' nations in the world (Dandy and Pe-Pua, 2013). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people account for over 500 different clan groups or 'nations', many with distinctive cultures, beliefs and languages. Today, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people make up 2.4 percent of the total Australian population (about 460,000 out of 22 million people).

As a country with a history of migration and settlement there have been three distinct waves of CALD immigration in the post World War II period:

- > 1940s and 1950s: Greek, Italians, Eastern Europeans
- > 1970s and 1980s: Vietnamese, Thai, Chinese (Cantonese) and Spanish speakers from Latin America
- > newly arrived migrants and refugees: Sudanese (Arabic speakers), Chinese (Mandarin speakers), Tamil and Hazara (Afghan) (Cunningham & Schaffer, 2012)

The proportion of Australians who were born overseas is at its highest point in 120 years, with 28 percent of Australia's population, 6.6 million people, born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2014). The largest migrant groups were people born in the United Kingdom (UK), followed by people born in New Zealand, China, India and the Philippines. This has changed from 2001 when the largest migrant groups were from the UK, New Zealand, Italy and Vietnam (ABS, 2014). The Australian government also operates a Humanitarian Program in which permanent visas are granted to some 13,750 refugees and Special Humanitarian Program migrants per year. Migrants who settle in Australia under the Humanitarian Program originate from different countries compared with entrants under other immigration programs; half the migrants in the 2006 Census were born in the 'North Africa' and 'the Middle East' regions (ABS, 2010).

Australians born overseas were more likely to live in major urban areas, with half of all migrants living in Sydney or Melbourne (ABS, 2014). New South Wales was Australia's state with the largest increase immigration, gaining 73,300 between 2013 and 2014. In NSW the Ethnic Communities Council (ECC) is the peak body for all CALD communities. The ECC's main activities are advocacy, education and community development and the organisation employs a pool of bilingual educators to work with CALD communities on a range of environment issues. A study conducted by the ECC in 2012 on household energy consumption countered the assumption that the longer migrants have been in Australia the more familiar they are likely to be with information in a range of areas. The study found that older migrants surveyed were less likely than the other groups to be aware of various aspects of energy use and conservation (Cunningham & Schaffer,

2012). In 2011 36.1% of NSW's overseas-born Australians resided in Greater Western Sydney and 47.9% of GWS residents speak a language other than English (WentWest, 2014). Greater Western Sydney is thus a target region for service providers and all levels of government seeking to engage with CALD communities.

Research findings support the positive impacts of sustainability programs such as community gardens within urban areas citing the positive benefits on physical health, mental health and well-being and socio-economic indicators (Armstrong, 2000; Corkery, 2004; Lee & Maheswaran, 2011). Kingsley and Townsend, (2009), specifically found that increased levels of social capital such as social support, connections and networking were developed through participating in a community garden. Critical to observing benefits of community based projects was a sense of 'place'. Armstrong (2000) articulates this more succinctly by stating that projects such as community gardens provide a physical location for residents to meet each other and socialise, increasing social networks and enhancing social support. The physical connection to the project was as important to the task being conducted. Community based projects create a physical location and a sense of place that enhances belonging, that enables these positive interactions to occur. Somerville, Brown and Mackay (2013) investigated how Greater Western Sydney communities engaged in sustainability projects and specifically focused upon the benefits and barriers to participation in sustainability initiatives. Findings in relation to CALD communities highlighted that there was a lack of participation of this group due to language and cultural differences. The investigation highlighted the importance of understanding and respecting the diversity within the field and for sustainability educators to get to know their communities and to engage networks as significant.

Similarly a report by CIRCA (2014) found that the wide range of organisations involved in delivering a diverse array of environmental projects for the CALD community in the Greater Sydney Metropolitan area has a limited level of involvement in most cases. Carlson, Engerbreston and Chamberlain (2006) support this, finding both the reluctance of CALD communities to participate in research and researchers' lack of penetration into the community as major stumbling blocks to successful community-based approaches. Our research indicates that there was small but significant progress engaging CALD communities in Greater Western Sydney if initiatives were culturally aware. CALD communities were not well engaged when cultural identity and tradition was not made central to the project design. What worked when engaging CALD communities was a shift from a project delivery mode to an approach where CALD communities were supported or developed their own agency to create their own projects, which had more meaning and significance for them. Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) programs such as Photovoice, where participants are active agents and capture visual images to tell their own story, can be effective to develop cultural agency. Analysis of Photovoice showed that it effectively balanced power, created a sense of ownership, fostered trust, built capacity and responded to cultural preferences (Castleden, 2008)

## CALD Communities



**36%**

overseas-born  
Australians reside  
in GWS



**48%**

GWS residents speak a  
language other  
than English



**13,750**

refugees and migrants  
settle in Australia  
annually

ABS, 2014



## Blacktown LGA



48

suburbs

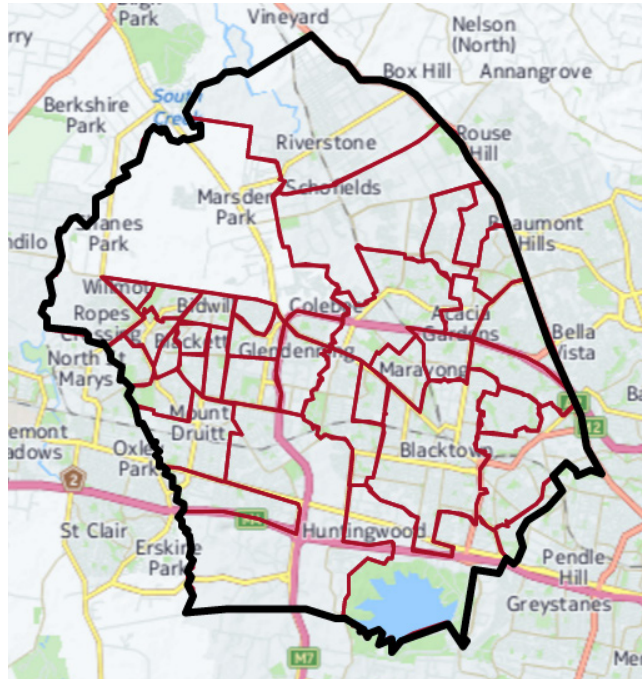


332,424

residents

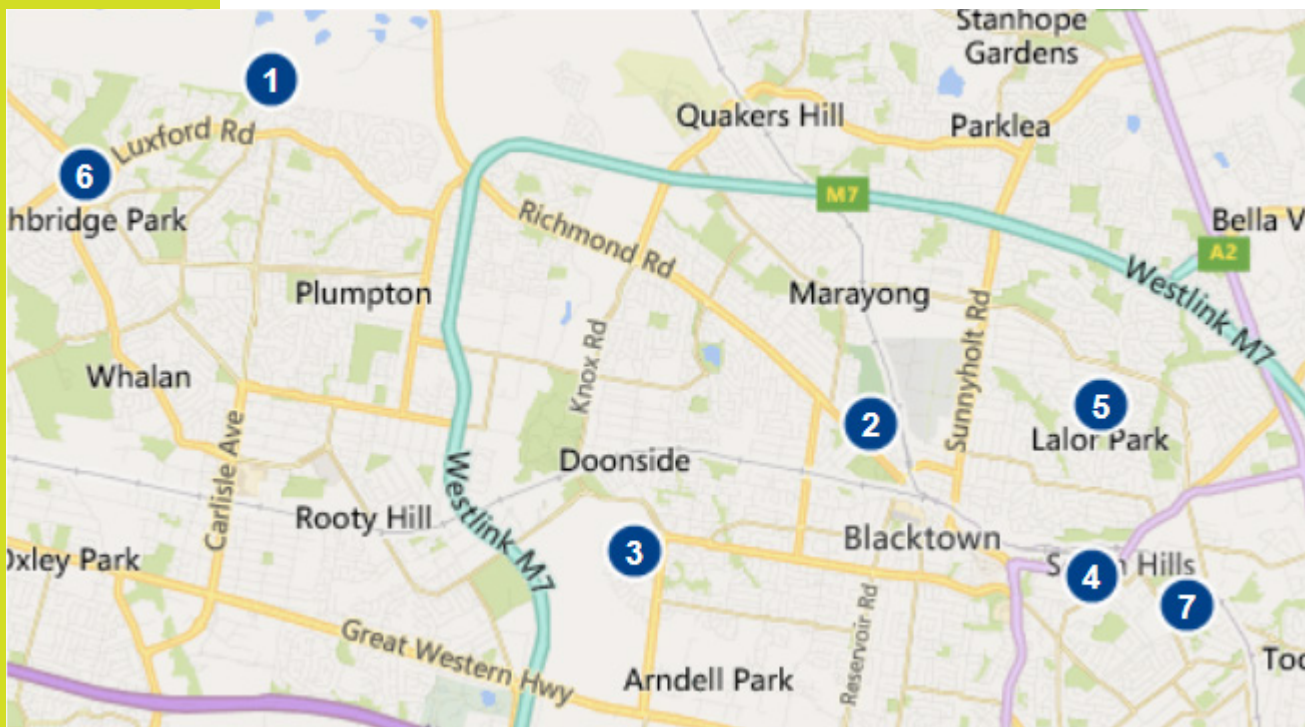
## ABOUT BLACKTOWN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

By population Blacktown LGA is the largest LGA in NSW, with 332,424 people (ABS, 2011). The LGA is comprised of 48 suburbs including a mix of older established areas and newer, developing areas. Blacktown is predominantly a residential area, with significant rural areas and substantial industrial and commercial land use. The LGA has social-economic disadvantages with high levels of unemployment, crime and health issues. Blacktown LGA has the largest urban population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Western Sydney and NSW, being approximately 8,200 people (WentWest, 2014).



### Suburbs of Blacktown:

Acacia Gardens, Arndell Park, Bidwill, Blackett, Blacktown, Bungarabee, Colebee, Dean Park, Dharruk, Doonside, Eastern Creek, Emerton, Glendenning, Glenwood, Hassall Grove, Hebersham, Huntingwood, Kellyville Ridge, Kings Langley, Kings Park, Lalor Park, Lethbridge Park, Marayong, Marsden Park, Minchinbury, Mount Druitt, Oakhurst, Parklea, Plumpton, Prospect (part), Quakers Hill, Riverstone, Rooty Hill, Ropes Crossing, Rouse Hill (part), Schofields, Seven Hills, Shalvey, Shanes Park, St Marys (part), Stanhope Gardens, The Ponds, Toongabbie (part), Tregear, Vineyard (part), Whalan, Willmot and Woodcroft

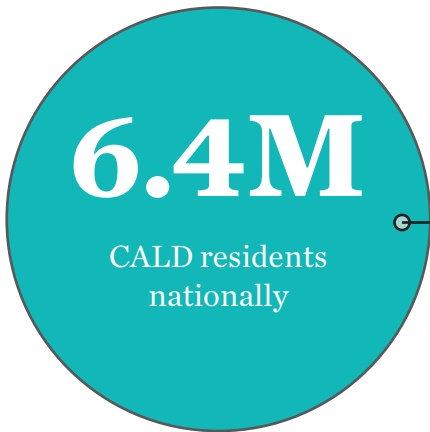


1. Bidwill Community Garden, 2. Showground Community Garden, 3. Bungarabee Community Garden, 4. Grantham Community Garden, 5. Lalor Park Community Garden, 6. Lethbridge Park Community Garden, 7. Oasis Community Garden

## CALD COMMUNITIES IN BLACKTOWN

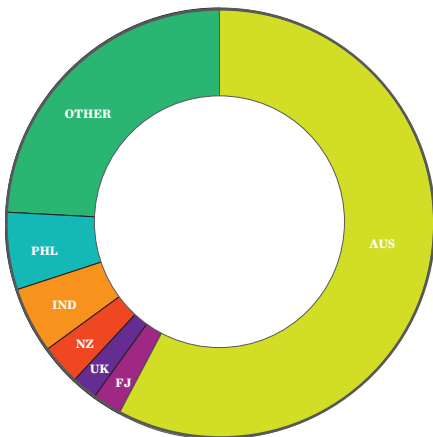
Blacktown is a diverse multicultural community, with 37.6% of people born overseas (ABS, 2011). The Philippines, India, New Zealand, United Kingdom and Fiji are the top five countries of birth for residents. Other than English, the most common languages spoken in households across the City are Filipino/Tagalog, Hindi, Arabic, Punjabi and Samoan. While the experiences of place for Blacktown’s multicultural community would be different dependent on individual’s circumstances, recent research suggests that health outcomes for refugees and migrants pose particular challenges.

*“Primary areas of concern for the health of refugees and migrants include experiences of torture and trauma, changes in family roles, separation from family members, poor access to primary health care, missing/lack of traditional support networks, settlement difficulties, unemployment and financial instability. Some of the unique health issues that refugee children under eleven present with in this area are incomplete immunisation, latent tuberculosis, parasitic infestation and rickets” (WentWest, 2014).*



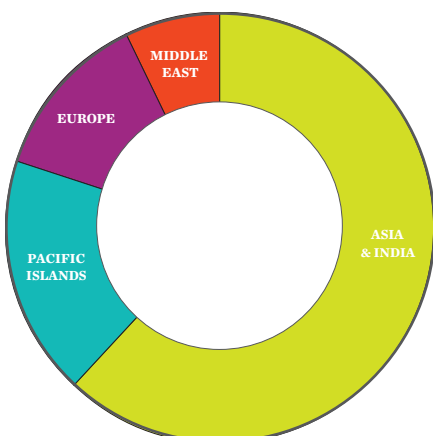
**113K**

CALD residents in Blacktown LGA (2011)



### Population Country of Birth (2011)

<b>AUSTRALIA (AUS)</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>OTHER (OR NOT STATED)</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>PHILIPPINES (PHL)</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>INDIA (IND)</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>NEW ZEALAND (NZ)</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>UNITED KINGDOM (UK)</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>FIJI (FJ)</b>	<b>2%</b>



### CALD Country of Birth (2011)

<b>ASIA AND INDIA</b> INCLUDES: CAMBODIA, CHINA, HONG KONG, INDIA, INDONESIA, KOREA, MALAYSIA, PHILIPPINES, SINGAPORE, SRI LANKA, THAILAND AND VIETNAM	<b>62%</b>
<b>PACIFIC ISLANDS</b> INCLUDES: FIJI AND NEW ZEALAND	<b>18%</b>
<b>EUROPE</b> INCLUDES: BOSNIA, CROATIA, GERMANY, GREECE, ITALY, MALTA, NETHERLANDS, POLAND AND FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC	<b>13%</b>
<b>MIDDLE EAST</b> INCLUDES: EGYPT, IRAQ, LEBANON AND TURKEY	<b>7%</b>



**38%**

of the Blacktown LGA are culturally and linguistically diverse

2011

# THE PROJECT

Our Place, Building CALD Capacity for Healthy Environments aims to facilitate community participation, leadership and regional networking through working with local partners in Greater Western Sydney. Phase 1 of the project involved mapping and analysing current environment and sustainability activities, challenges and future opportunities in the Blacktown LGA.

## METHODOLOGY

OEH has moved from a state-based (governance) approach to a place-based (regional approach) in their planning and activities (NSW 2021). This project was framed within the concept of place as this aligns with the goals of OEH, NSW 2021 and the structure of the UN RCE GWS. Places connect people and provide a link between local concerns and global issues. Building upon previous Our Place collaborations, a place-based methodology has been used in this work to highlight the perspectives of place from CALD communities in the Blacktown LGA. However place experiences and relationships are contested, and can highlight both the differences and similarities in the way people relate to their local places (Somerville, Brown and Mackay, 2013). Relevant to this place methodology for CALD communities is the concept of Cultural Wellbeing. A Cultural Wellbeing methodology considers how individuals and communities cultural beliefs and traditions influence the way they engage in relationship to place and how embodied sensations, emotions and religious/values based ideas influence their sense of wellbeing. A Cultural Wellbeing framework is able to account for the cultural, creative, environmental and spiritual nexus that influences how communities experience wellbeing in a particular place (Mackay, 2016).

## METHODS

The project involved a combination of desktop scoping and research, meetings and stakeholder interviews. Consultations were conducted with 20 CALD community groups and individuals representing faith organisations, cultural associations, community networks and volunteers as well as key council service providers and environmental groups. Consultations were conducted via semi structured interview over the phone or in face to face interviews with individuals or small groups depending on participant preferences (Appendix 1). A narrative analysis of transcripts was undertaken as well as ethnographic site visits supported by internet research.

Key questions asked in relation to the Blacktown LGA were:

- > What is the scope of current environmental Sustainability initiatives?
- > How are they supported/funded?
- > What are the challenges and barriers?
- > What are the future opportunities?
- > What does each group hope to achieve?



## SNAPSHOTS

The following snapshots of CALD community case studies in Blacktown provide insights into the capacity of communities to engage with the environment. The snapshots feature faith organisations, cultural networks, community associations and council programs.

### **“Service to Society”: the Sai Organisation and the Nurragingy Fishing Bat Project, Doonside**

The Nurragingy Fishing Bat project conducted by Blacktown City Council and supported by Greater Western Sydney Local Land Services and Department of Primary Industries has been investigating the threatened species *Myotis macropus* (fishing bat) as an indicator of water quality in local creeks and waterways. In August 2015 over 200 volunteers from the Sathya Sai community assisted in conducting habitat surveys, installing nest boxes and wildlife cameras in Nurragingy Reserve, Doonside. The nest boxes were built by volunteers from the Riverstone Local Mens Shed and Warratah Eco Works (Blacktown City Council, 2015).

*“The involvement of the Sai Organisation and its members was a broader community environmental engagement program and not specifically CALD. Many of the Sai members involved in the project were second and third generation migrants with an Asian background and the majority of the children were born in Australia. These members are part of an established Australian community and may not necessarily associate themselves as different from other Australians.”* (Environmental Officer, Sai Organisation)

### **About Sathya Sai International Organisation**

The Sathya Sai International Organisation (Sai Organisation) provides opportunities for the spiritual upliftment of its members and through the work of its members, the advancement of society. It has a presence in 126 countries and 2,000 centres including a Blacktown Centre. Members undertake all activities on a volunteer basis and activities are regarded as opportunities for members to grow spiritually and to discover the inherent divinity within. Sai Organisation membership is open to all peoples from any nationality, cultures and/or secular and religious tradition. There are no membership fees for joining a Centre and fees are not charged for any Centre activity. Officers use their own funds to cover personal expenses incurred.

A primary focus of the organisation is service to society and current service activities in Australia range from weekly soup kitchens, to nursing home visits, working with refugees and newly arrived migrants. The Sai Organisation has an Envirocare program that:

- > recognises the interconnectedness of natural systems;
- > fosters love for Nature;
- > encourages members to develop a relationship with Nature reflective of the spiritual teachings; and
- > undertakes service for the protection and preservation of the environment.

**“Future opportunities exist in making the Envirocare program a more prominent feature within the Sai Organisation. Members grow from further spiritual enquiry, from a broader understanding of environmental issues and from undertaking service activities. Ideally future programs need to cover these three components to appeal to the members.”**

Environmental Officer,  
Sai Organisation



**200**

fishing bat survey  
volunteers

**Social Cohesion in Diversity: “SEVA International is a non-religious, non-political, non-profit organisation focused on the rapidly expanding Australian South Asian community in Sydney which includes people of Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Indian, Nepali, Pakistani, Sri Lankan and Maldivian ancestry. SEVA seeks to identify and support individuals and communities of these people to work together in partnership to address identified social issues and needs of common concern.”**

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*“The Bhutanese community are currently utilising a holistic approach to refugee and community development and aim to employ their approach as a model for other refugee groups settling in Australia. By shifting the focus from outside assistance to the abilities present within a community itself the concept of an ‘abundant community’ has been utilised to ensure sustainable development”*  
Chief Executive, SEVA International

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## **Creating “An Abundant Community: the Australian Bhutanese Community Resettlement Program**

A culture of sustainability and thrift is embedded into the Bhutanese Resettlement Program and the Community Support for Bhutanese Seniors Program which is run by SEVA International and the Australian Bhutanese Association (ABA). The Resettlement Program is run by volunteers and commenced six years ago with a family-to-family volunteer model that emerged organically. Newly arrived migrant families are visited for several hours each Saturday morning by established families. As part of the Resettlement Program newly arrived families are supported by their own community members and introduced to local networks, including how to access council and migrant resources, assistance with shopping and accessing healthy food as well as in-home support including waste and recycling advice and processes. The Community Support for Bhutanese Seniors Program is run in conjunction with SydWest Multicultural Services and Riverstone community garden, where senior community members attend every fortnight and are able to cultivate their own plot and grow vegetables that they can take home and eat. This outing provides an opportunity for the community members to get outside and socialise, while also engaging with other community groups that attend the centre. Visiting the community garden reminds the seniors, who come mainly from an agricultural backgrounds, of their own farms back home in Bhutan and also acts as a therapy for them.

### **Bhutanese – Nepali Community in Australia**

The humanitarian settlement of Bhutanese refugees in Australia commenced in 2008. There are some 5,500 people settled nationally including a small population of around 500 people across Greater Western Sydney. The Bhutanese community in Sydney speak mainly Nepalese, but some also speak the Bhutanese language Dzongkha and Hindi. The Lhotshampa community is very tightly knit and connections are maintained throughout the life cycle.

The community prides itself on self-sufficiency and family networks and draws strength from the preservation of the extended family network. Senior members are described as ‘anchors’ for the community as a whole, and it is their wisdom and experience that ensures that the continued connection to their Nepalese and Bhutanese heritage is maintained. Living arrangements generally include several generations living together, as great importance is placed on the strength that is drawn from within the extended family. The community hierarchy is generally patriarchal in structure, with sons expected to take on the care of their parents while also providing financial and emotional support. The ABA takes an holistic approach to community settlement and development with the aim of empowering people and moving them away from dependence. SEVA and the ABA have active cultural and social programs with a focus on arts, education and sport (Egan & Bowes, 2013).

## **“A Cafe with a Cause”: Common Groundz Community Café, Lalor Park**

Common Groundz is a not for profit community café, committed to partnerships and projects that serve the Lalor Park community. The café was founded by a member of the Pathways Community Church. The founder Nathan Marsh was voted the Blacktown Citizen of the Year 2013 for his work with the café and the community. The café runs a variety of projects in the community beyond the café. There are training programs for disenfranchised youth and refugees to learn the hospitality trade and gain employment. Assistance with household chores and maintenance is provided to local community members. There is also an Arts program that aids the café’s goal of social inclusion by running workshops and painting murals on local buildings. Since their inception the café has attracted individuals that are community conscience and wanting to give back to their local area. The café acts as a hub for people to meet and discuss community issues. Also having a spiritual purpose in their mission, the church hosts a Café Church Group on a weekly basis.

## **Civic Pride: Glenwood Community Association**

Glenwood Community Association opened up in the late 1980’s as a response to the lack of services in the area such as public transport, parking and other infrastructure. Bob McKay and Chris Winslow (member of Greens) were the founders of the group. The focus of the association is to promote civic pride. The main activities focus on road planning and traffic issues, by lobbying the local council about the concerns of the community as well as cleaning up graffiti, picking up litter, reporting on pollution and lobbying government organisations such as Sydney Water to maintain the environment.

The Glenwood community has a large percentage of people from the Philippines and the sub-continent. Gurudwara Sahib (‘the Sikh Centre’) at Glenwood is a Sikh temple in the Glenwood area run by The Australian Sikh Association (ASA) which aims to set a high standard in serving the needs of the Sikh community, especially the community members located around North-Western, Hills and Western Regions of Sydney Metro area. In response to the multicultural Glenwood community the community association has focussed on providing local facilities to cater for the diversity of the local population. One mission has been to provide different sporting facilities that cater to the cultures of diverse groups.

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**“We believe in the value and capabilities of all persons. We celebrate diversity and promote social inclusion in all that we do.”**

Common Groundz  
Community Café

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*“The essence of what this place is about shalom; it’s about wellbeing, it’s about sensing the whole picture of community and care to the community. We don’t pretend to be that whole piece, but be a part of actively seeking the welfare and wellbeing of the community.”*

Community Participant

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**“We want to turn Glenwood from a suburb to a community village and reduce the isolation of members within the community.”**

Community Participant

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**“Clean Up Australia Day is a great initiative and we have always been part of this wonderful event. Islam emphasises personal and societal cleanliness and it teaches us to be part of every good in society.”**

AMAA President,  
Mr Imam Kauser



**120+**

National Tree  
Planting Day  
volunteers



**300+**

Clean Up Australia  
Day volunteers

## **“Continuous Involvement in Peace Initiatives, Community Services and Interfaith Dialogue”: Ahmadiyya Muslim Association of Australia, Marsden Park**

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Association Australia (AMAA) has been in partnership with Clean Up Australia Day for 25 years and the Association actively participates in other initiatives such as National Tree Planting Day, Red Cross Door Knock Appeals and blood donations. In 2015 the Association’s Marsden Park community was the largest of all volunteer groups listed on the official Clean up Australia day site with 300 registered volunteers.

### **About the Ahmadiyya Community**

The Ahmadiyya community was founded in 1889 by Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, and the community has been continuously progressing since that time with membership in 178 countries . The Ahmadiyya Jamaat in Australia was registered as the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association of Australia Inc. on the 7th of September 1987. The land for the mosque at Marsden Park (Sydney) was purchased in 1983. Most of the group’s activities are coordinated from the mosque. As part of their spiritual mission the group takes part in socially responsible activities such as Clean up Australia Day, and tree planting days that are run by the local council. Their spiritual beliefs dictate that they care for and protect the local environment that they live in. The group attracts people from all nationalities and has a very inclusive policy when it comes to attracting newer members. The predominant majority of members are from the sub-continent (India, Pakistan and neighbouring countries) as this was where the group was founded.

### **National Tree Planting Day**

*“Actually planting the tree was advice by the holy prophet Muhammad 1,400 years ago. He says there is great virtue if you plant a tree... He is the one who restricted; the trees are a sign of life. So don’t cut them without need or necessity.” (Ahmadiyya Muslim Association Australia Member)*

*“We had 120 members who participated on that day. So we visited the council and within 15 minutes all the trees were planted. We were looking for more trees, so we had to wait there for an hour-and-a-half. They went back to the council and got some new trees, seedlings and we planted them.” (Ahmadiyya Muslim Association Australia Member)*

## A Highly Engaged Council

Blacktown City Council have an active and engaged environmental and social sustainability program. Council support seven community gardens, 14 bushcare groups, up to five annual festivals and run over 30 workshops based on food and environmental and social sustainability each year. General sustainability community education programs focus on a range of 'how to' topics such as making your own bread and cheese, building gardens and saving money on energy bills. They also have a preschool and school programs with an annual schools grants program, an environmental expo, regional catchment field days and Kid's Green Day Out.

### Blacktown Council Community Gardens

There are seven community gardens located in the Blacktown LGA supported and funded by the council. Bidwill, Oasis and Shalvey Community Gardens are equally supported by Housing NSW, Community Offenders Service and Juvenile Justice. There are a few other community gardens that vary greatly in size and scope that are fully sustainable financially and operate independently of the Council. Although the gardens are aiming to be fully sustainable that is not currently the case. Community volunteers can join without cost, and the gardens are structured in different ways. Most gardens have communal plots where all produce grown is divided fairly amongst the group of volunteers.

Most volunteers join the community gardens as a way of interacting with other community members and keeping themselves occupied. The majority of volunteers are retired and have spare time on their hands. There are no requirements in terms of time and commitment to be a member and people are free to come and go as they please. There is a large turnover of volunteers, with people only staying for one to six months. The number of weekly participants vary between four to ten people at each site.

### Grantham Sustainability Hub

As an additional part of the community garden located in Seven Hills, the Grantham Sustainability Hub seeks to educate local members of the community on the issue of sustainability. They do this mainly by conducting free workshops such as worm farming and compost on site.

*"Join us at the Farmers market and family fun day on Saturday 26 September 2015 at the Sustainability Hub at Grantham Heritage Park in Seven Hills. We have a full day of sustainable living workshops on offer. There will be three sustainable kitchen cooking school workshops during the day. We will be cooking different things at each session. The menu is a surprise so come with an open mind and a healthy appetite. Bookings are essential."* (Grantham Sustainability Hub)

## Volunteering



7

community gardens



1-6

months of individual participation



4-10

volunteers participate each week



# THE FINDINGS

## Key Findings



CALD communities are diverse/different



groups of untapped opportunities



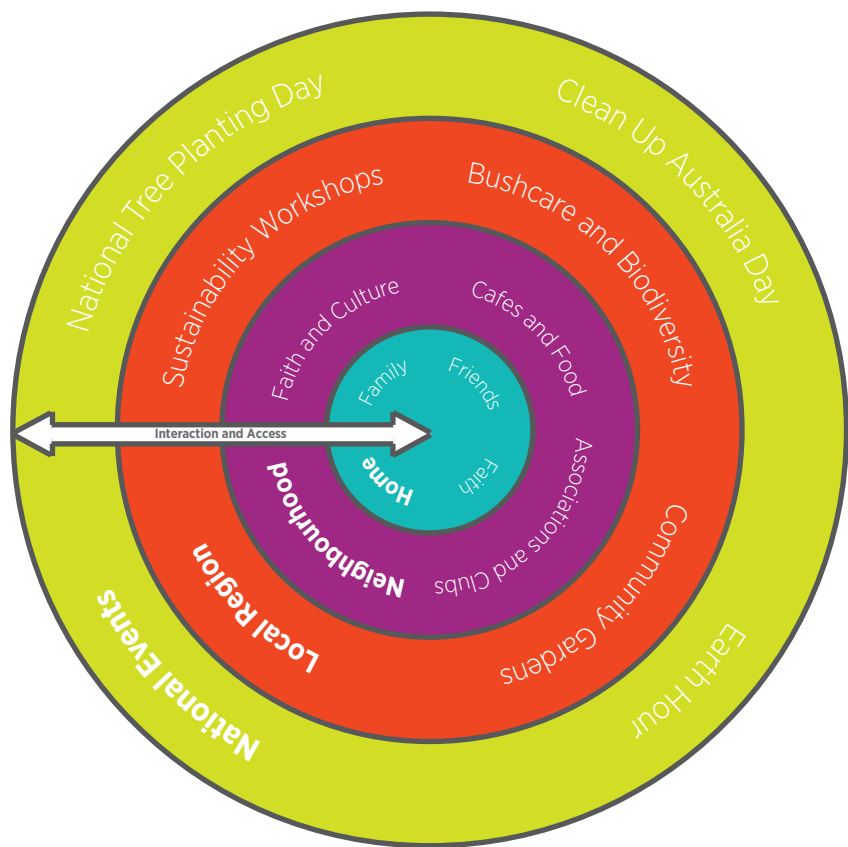
opportunities not widely access



social sustainability and cohesion as main motivator

## 1. What is the scope of current environmental/sustainability initiatives?

There are a wide range of opportunities for local CALD residents to become involved in environmental sustainability activities in the Blacktown LGA. These range from one off annual events to council workshops to weekly volunteering commitments. The level of uptake across all CALD demographics is highly dependent on a number of factors including: accessibility (work commitments and timing); program design (cultural appropriateness and relevance); relevance and self-determination (ability to self-mobilise).



**KEY FINDING:** CALD communities in Blacktown LGA are diverse, with major differences in length of time in Australia, community self-determination and identification, mobilisation abilities, organisational structures and intercultural knowledge.

As a result of such diversity there can be a disconnect between promoting and encouraging environmental sustainability activities and inviting participation that include CALD groups. The wide diversity of CALD communities in Blacktown at different stages of settlement and maturity requires a multi-faceted, nuanced approach to CALD community engagement.

## 2. How is environmental/sustainability activity supported or funded?

*“Helping them to help themselves”* (Chief Executive, SEVA International)

Levels of support and funding required varied widely from self-sufficiency volunteer and/or faith models to fully council funded programs. The social enterprise cafe was a good exemplar of multi sector support from an array of organisations including church, council for space, and arts program, volunteers and the cafe business model which could be scaled up. The Bhutanese Resettlement Program is run by volunteers and commenced six years ago with a family-to-family volunteer model that organically emerged. Newly arrived migrant families are visited for several hours each Saturday morning by established families. The community seeks different ways to tap into each other’s strengths, and members of the community try to look after each other rather than depending on the state or government for sporadic funding. Well established faith organisations, community hubs and cultural associations had high levels of self-determination and self - reliance and were able to partially support their own activities through strong local networking and a high level of volunteer involvement.

**KEY FINDING:** Faith organisations, community hub networks and cultural associations represent an untapped reservoir for linking and leveraging environmental sustainability activities across the LGA.

## 3. What are the challenges and barriers?

*“The challenge/barrier to do more environmental/sustainability work is primarily a resource constraint one. The Sai Organisation is purely volunteer-run. Members are engaged in full-time work outside of the organisation and have an active family and social life. The time they direct to the organisation has to be balanced around these competing activities. This means that the majority of the activities occur on the weekends and major events are only held a few times a year.”* (Environmental Officer, Sai Organisation).

CALD communities in Blacktown are in different states of flux as each face a range of challenges and barriers that are specific to their own relationship to place and sense of cultural wellbeing. Factors to consider for CALD communities are how long they have been living in the area, how much community support they have, available time after work and childcare commitments, proficiency in English language, desire to engage with sustainability activities and how easily they can access sustainability activities. Findings about challenges regarding constraints on time and resources support previous research findings about engaging the disengaged (Somerville, Brown and Mackay, 2013).

While there were fine examples of whole community participation in events and workshops, retirees and seniors were found to be the most engaged CALD group participating regularly in environmental activities, in most cases this was the community garden network. This finding is consistent with previous work and reports by community educators who specified that finding and engaging parents with young families was difficult:

***“Then when I retired I thought I just wanted to do something in the community. I do voluntary work at an op shop one day a week and I do two community gardens during the week as well.”***

Community Participant

***“The problem is here, Bungarribee is a new estate and all the young boys, they have no time to attend here because they are working class people – off to work, back home, bring the children here and there and so they are not very so active now unless there is some strategies .. we have to pull the youngsters in that’s a step.”***

Community Participant

***“I think a lot of the times it scares people because of the work involved... they just don’t want to get there and physically do the work and be committed.”***

Community Participant

***“We are not terrorists ... we are peaceful!”***

Ahmadiyya Muslim Association Australia (AMAA)

*“Twenty-five to forty-five year olds especially in new developing areas don’t come to workshops. They don’t come to a lot of things that we put on. They’re focused on money and family sustainability is not a priority.”* (Community Participant). A related issue was that the educators felt that they were ‘preaching to the converted’: *“People that tend to come are the older community, usually they’re the same people that come to the workshops, tend to be the people that already are doing the right thing in terms of sustainability in their homes anyway.”* (Somerville, Brown and Mackay, 2013)

For community gardens there were a range of challenging issues including vandalism and theft, lack of volunteer participation in decision making processes, low volunteer recruitment and high turnover. Participants identified unrealistic volunteer expectations as another barrier to involvement. Some organisers of community gardens cited volunteers as not wishing to do maintenance work needed in the community gardens. The gardens, which flourished, tapped into wider support networks such as TAFE training, community cafés, art programs and sustainability hubs. An interesting observation was that community gardens required work and, as a result, didn’t meet some expectations:

*“I think a lot of the times it scares people because of the work involved. They don’t want that. I find with this other garden that I’m with at Bidwill, there’s only four of us. There has been four of us for seven years. Nobody wants to work it. They just don’t want to get there and physically do the work and be committed, because, really, to me - this is my personal thing. When you’ve got something like this you’ve got to be committed to it because you’ve got to come here and water it. You’ve got to feed the chickens. You can’t just say I’ll come once a month because it just doesn’t work that way”.* (Community Participant)

Negative labeling, racism, discrimination and cultural unawareness were cited as another challenge. The Islamic participants felt they needed to continually justify their belonging and involvement as the perceptions from the broader Australian community in the current radical global environment worsen. As a diverse, multicultural community in the LGA some also cited a lack of inter cultural awareness as a challenge:

*“You might have a Filipino group, you might have the Iranian group, you might have the Indian Sikh group. As a group they’re connected, but if you bring those two groups together, three groups together, the connection is not there. It’s not that they don’t want to connect, there’s not the opportunity to connect. So that actually reflects to an extent what’s happening in the Blacktown LGA as well, the involvement of these groups. There’s an element of segregation.”*

#### **4. What are the future opportunities?**

Future opportunities hinge around community capacity for self mobilization and tapping into further networks for support. Specific opportunities included developing a community garden for the Muslim community at Marsden Park. This community sought commonalities and



expressed a desire for their continued participation in environmental initiatives. SEVA International’s resettlement program, while small, holds a viable model for other refugee groups to implement. All of the CALD participants interviewed valued social cohesion, creating a vibrant and safe place to reconnect with their cultural traditions and expressed a commitment to building shared community values. Retirees and seniors were found to be the most engaged CALD group participating regularly in environmental activities. The level of uptake across all CALD demographics is highly dependent on a number of factors including: accessibility (work commitments and timing); program design (cultural appropriateness and relevance); relevance and self-determination (ability to self-mobilise).

**KEY FINDING:** Although there appeared to be large amounts of goodwill across Blacktown CALD communities and a willingness to engage there are barriers to participation and therefore opportunities to engage are not widely accessed.

### 5. What does each group hope to achieve?

Faith and/or cultural values were the major philosophical driver for CALD communities and individuals to become involved in local environment and environmental sustainability programs/activities. The CALD communities that were consulted regarded connecting with the environment and/or nature as a way to experience their individual relationships to place and cultural wellbeing as well as to enact their faith and/or cultural values. CALD participants’ engaged in environmental activities so as to connect with each other and their cultural values and in the process learn about the environment. Participants commonly cited faith, building community, cultural values and the desire to for connection as a reason for being involved with environmental sustainability activities. This reflects the importance of incorporating a Cultural Wellbeing framework in future sustainability projects as it gives deeper understanding of how different aspects of a person or communities values influence their sense of connectedness and wellbeing and thus healthy communities.

**KEY FINDING:** Social sustainability and social cohesion drivers were the major motivators for CALD community groups and individuals to connect with environmental activities.



**“We always try to bring peace to the world, give them the peace, peace in their families, peace in the society, peace in the country, peace everywhere.”**

AMAA

**“We feel we are doing something which is going to be pleasing God and humanity of course, service to humanity.”** AMAA

*“I just want to live more sustainably. I’m at a phase in my life where I’m trying to simplify my life. I just generally look back and it’s just a blur and it was all about - it was all about gathering objects and having a home and raising children. It’s now living more consciously. I think that’s really important, and simplifying and going more back towards nature. .. I found - this place is just magic for me. It’s open air. I come Saturday morning, and I can do that now. There was a time when I was carting kids around for sports and all that stuff, so that’s all over now, so I can spend more time. I found some people in this garden are absolutely wonderful and we have been really close.”*

Community Participant

# DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While there were many success stories of CALD groups building capacity for healthy environments there were also concerns regarding how some projects/program providers focused only upon their own needs or perspectives rather than the needs of CALD communities. Lack of participation can be due to facilitators thinking that people would join the projects for the sake of the project itself. Groups that were not well attended failed to utilise and promote the largely intangible social benefits of being involved in community activities (such as meeting and socialising with others, an improved sense of self-worth or being active) and did not include religious groups or consider how individual/community values inform the motivation to become involved in sustainability issues. The deeper complexities of diversity amongst the local communities are not fully understood. Some sustainability facilitators attempting to engage CALD community groups in an effort not to discriminate against any nationality or culture used an homogeneous approach to program development and delivery. Lack of understanding of cultural differences, and probably a fear of offending anyone by acknowledging difference, lead to a lack of CALD participation as well as awkward participation.

The research team have seven recommendations to build CALD capacity for healthy environments in the Blacktown Local Government area. These were drawn from the focus groups and interviews that were conducted with participants and stakeholders as well as the research team's critical analysis of the data collected.

## **RECOMMENDATION 1: Acknowledge individuals within CALD groups have very different needs and priorities.**

CALD community groups in the Blacktown LGA are highly ethnically diverse with 38% being born overseas. While 62% of CALD residents in the Blacktown LGA were born in Asia and India, care must be taken not to homogenise the cultural values, religions, languages and experiences of communities and individuals within groups. Factors to consider when designing sustainability programs are time living in Australia, socioeconomic status, English language proficiency, opportunity to use home language with others, work aspirations, childcare commitments, time needed to upskill and find work, differences in religious beliefs, cultural values, possible tensions between CALD community groups and the level of connectedness or disconnection from their own ethnic community. It is recommended that future sustainability programs wishing to engage CALD communities consider how multi-factorial aspects of diversity impact upon involvement in sustainability programs meant to build CALD capacity. This means that language, timing and location of events need to be within the community with which stakeholders wish to engage, using language and cultural perspectives that are familiar for participants.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2: Design sustainability projects with diversity at the centre.**

Current and future sustainability programs need to be reconceptualised to reflect the diversity that is the Australian experience. Some sustainability programs in this research demonstrated difficulty engaging ethnically diverse participants even when there was the goodwill to do so. This was often because programs were designed without considering the differing needs and perspectives of CALD communities. Programs need to be designed to be more inclusive and relevant for a range of CALD and non-CALD groups to promote inclusion between groups. Programs can build into their activities a way to ask participants to share their own perspectives and experiences to inform the activity enabling collaborative learning for both participant and facilitator. For example Paddock to Plate programs might ask their participants: *“What do you already know about growing vegetables?”*, *“What do you want to know about growing vegetables?”* and *“What kind of vegetables are important to for you to grow?”*. Asking similar simple questions will give insights into cultural values and motivations of CALD community’s participation and will assist in programs that are more culturally relevant.

## **RECOMMENDATION 3: Provide cultural awareness training for program facilitators.**

The research documented the clear disconnect between the provision of some sustainability projects and the uptake by CALD individuals and groups. Facilitators of sustainability programs did not possess sufficient cultural knowledge to deal with cultural diversity. Both facilitators and participants expressed concerns about tensions between culturally diverse groups and individuals. This was most notable in the community gardens programs but also in projects that attempted to target specific CALD groups without sufficient cultural knowledge to understand why these groups were not attending or returning. This was often because the projects were not culturally meaningful, or were not able to provide a space for belonging or potential participants did not have the cultural knowledge to make sense of the activities provided. For example OEH could consider designing professional development programs for service providers and educators across all sectors including health, social workers and community development educators in the region to understand the diversity of CALD faith/values and promote inter agency collaboration linked to social and environmental outcomes. This would promote inter-cultural understanding.

## **RECOMMENDATION 4: Focus on supporting self-determination and empowerment through a social enterprise model.**

While there were many sustainability activities going on in the Blacktown LGA, uptake was uneven or often segregated between CALD groups. Many successful sustainability projects observed in the research had a goal other than environmental concern that motivated their involvement, such as desire to meet new people or gain new skills for employment, or being part

of a religious community. A social enterprise model such as a for-profit café linked to a community garden that provided a local meeting space had more success in engaging CALD community, as it concurrently satisfied several needs of training for work skills, learning about food and being part of a community. Social enterprise models that focus on multiple benefits to CALD participants will be able to build capacity for healthy environments better than solely targeting environmental outcomes. For example, community gardens that incorporate social cafés have multiple social and environmental benefits for CALD communities including refugee upskilling in collaboration with TAFE. Some also include a schools outreach program. Identifying and supporting these local efforts would build CALD capacity for all stakeholders.

**RECOMMENDATION 5: Build upon social connectedness and use a Cultural Wellbeing framework to inform programs.**

One of the reasons for participant's engagement was to gain social connectedness. Successful sustainability programs were built upon the social connectedness that already existed in their own community to further engage others and provide a sense of belonging and wellbeing. The social connectedness was built upon shared values, religious beliefs and family ethnicity ties. By accepting and understanding that faith and spirituality are key motivators for individuals or groups to be involved with sustainability projects, faith and culture should be accepted as part of the fabric of the community, instead of a purely sectarian approach to program delivery. A Cultural Wellbeing framework, which seeks to incorporate the spiritual, cultural, emotional and environmental nexus of wellbeing and healthy living, could be used to further develop a wide range of programs. A Cultural Wellbeing framework would also benefit existing programs across all sectors as it would promote deeper engagement, networking and communication with CALD faith/value based networks such as church groups. This is an area where OEH could be an organiser of events that bring people together rather than only focusing on organising sustainability projects.

**RECOMMENDATION 6: Provide systemic support, governance and networking opportunities to take pressure off small NGOs.**

Government agencies need to understand the goodwill and social enterprises that are already occurring in the local community. Rather than looking at creating more projects, that are currently not being well attended or promoted, government agencies should look at projects that are already working well and seek to bolster them - only by providing financial support, but by creating a network that connects related projects. Several project leaders felt too overstretched to be able to effectively add the networking and collaborating aspect on top of their work. They welcomed well managed opportunities for coordinated services to talk to each other. The express need was for a higher level organisation to assist them to connect with the services that they needed for their community group, such as a hub or one stop shop where they could direct participants for multiple needs. This will channel the resources more effectively and

movements will be more organic from the grassroots. It is recommended that opportunities be explored to work with government and other agencies to deliver sustainability programs and source funding opportunities. For example, networking opportunities can occur at annual events, festivals or conferences that give smaller groups a chance to celebrate their successes, and, voice their needs but also find others services they did not know existed.

**RECOMMENDATION 7: Identify, support and promote safe community sustainability hubs.**

There are already many interesting and worthwhile sustainability programs operating in the Blacktown LGA, however these more often seem to be working in silos rather than through networks. The OEH could work to identify programs and places that are already highly salient to the local population and invest in making these safe spaces for building further CALD capacity for healthy environments. It is envisaged that these hubs would be the first point of contact for smaller NGO's and community groups which could potentially provide mentoring, leadership skills, cultural wellbeing training and promote activities and education for sustainability. Having a hub to connect larger government agencies, universities, church groups and smaller community groups would bring together many groups who would not normally have the opportunity to interact. This hub could become the central place for organising events, networking and providing links to both social and environmental sustainability.

# APPENDIX 1

<b>GROUP</b>	<b>ORGANISATION/ACTIVITY/ LOCATION</b>	<b>ACTION</b>
Ahmadiyya Muslim Association of Australia	Faith Organisation: Muslim Multicultural, Marsden Park	Met/Site visit/Interview x 3 participants
Bidwill Community Garden	Council Run Community Garden, Bidwell	Interview x 1 participant
Blacktown City Council Bushcare	Council Bushcare Programs, Blacktown	Interview Educator
Blacktown Showground Community Garden	Council Run Community Garden, Blacktown	Site visit
Bungaribee Community Garden	Council Run Community Garden, Doonside	Site visit/Interview x3 participants
Cumberland Bird Observers Club	Volunteer Bird Watching	Interview x1 volunteer
Common Groundz Community Café	Faith Organisation/Church Supported Social Enterprise, Lalor Park	Site Visit/Interview manager and x 3 staff
Glenwood Community Association	Volunteer Neighbourhood Association: Filipino and Sikh, Glenwood	Phone Interview
Grantham Heritage Park Community Garden	Sustainability Hub, Seven Hills	Site visit/Interview manager and x3 staff
Lalor Park Community Garden	Lalor Park	Site visit
My Community My Environment	SydWest Multicultural Services and Dharma Karta, Blacktown	Interview
Sai Community	Spiritual Organisation, Multicultural Blacktown	Interview
SEVA International	Cultural Association: Bhutanese, Blacktown	Interview
<b>CONTACTED DID NOT PARTICIPATE</b>		
Philippine Australian Community Service	Blacktown	Contacted, did not participate
Quakers Hill Uniting Community Garden	Quakers Hill	Contacted, no reply
South Asian Women's Wellbeing Centre	Merrylands	Contacted, no reply
NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)	Carramar	Contacted, no reply
Filipino Australian Movement for Empowerment (FAME)	Rooty Hill	Facebook
Blacktown and District Environment Group (BDEG)	Blacktown	Emailed, awaiting reply



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