

# Partners in Wellbeing

## CALD Advisory Group Report



Partners in  
**Wellbeing**

# Partners in Wellbeing

Neami National is a community-based recovery and rehabilitation service supporting people living with mental illness and psychiatric disability to improve their health, live independently and pursue a life based on their own strengths, values and goals. We provide services in almost 40 locations, ranging from the inner-city and suburbs to regional and remote parts of Australia.

Partners in Wellbeing is a Victorian government initiative that rolled out in 2020. The program provides short-term support to assist people experiencing increased levels of psychosocial distress or anxiety due to the impacts of COVID-19 and beyond. The service was designed with a wellbeing focus and limited eligibility criteria to encourage access across the community.

The program also involved a significant focus on current engagement with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, employing three CALD Engagement Workers for this purpose.



## The CALD Advisory Group

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CALD Advisors work with individuals and communities with whom they share similar cultural experiences and understanding. They consult with and share information in relevant languages and in culturally appropriate ways. They are employed to use their cultural knowledge or lived experience to negotiate and communicate between communities and their employing agency; acting as a bridge, they facilitate mutual understanding of stakeholders' interests and needs. CALD Advisors are advocates and speak to barriers, challenges and discrimination faced by their communities and advocate for change.

The CALD Advisory Board was initiated to engage with members from CALD backgrounds, including small business owners, industry peak members, community leaders, faith-based leaders, and international students. The aim was to seek input from advisors on culturally sensitive ways to

encourage better access to mental health supports within CALD communities, reduce barriers to help-seeking behaviour and ultimately facilitate and/or promote referrals as needed.



The project was initiated by the Partners in Wellbeing (PIW) CALD engagement team in January 2022. The purpose of this project was to engage with community leaders ranging from various backgrounds to identify supports and needs around access to mental health services to better support people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The CALD Engagement team identified the importance and value of having input from community members and leaders to improve engagement practices and gain insights and understanding into community needs.

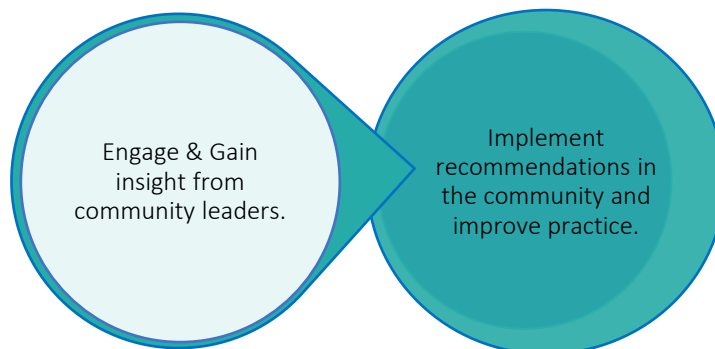
The primary focus of the project was to collaborate with advisors to identify and respond to key issues identified within these communities. The aim was to ultimately encourage help-seeking behaviours, eliminate barriers to access and provide more tailored, culturally safe and responsive support moving forward.

The CALD Engagement team invited members to submit their expressions of interest to take part in the advisory group. Selection criteria were based on the member's interest in taking part in the project, language, strengths demonstrated, and barriers faced in their community towards accessing mental health services. Previous experience in CALD engagement projects was also considered.

As a result, eight members were selected, and the CALD Advisory Group was formed.

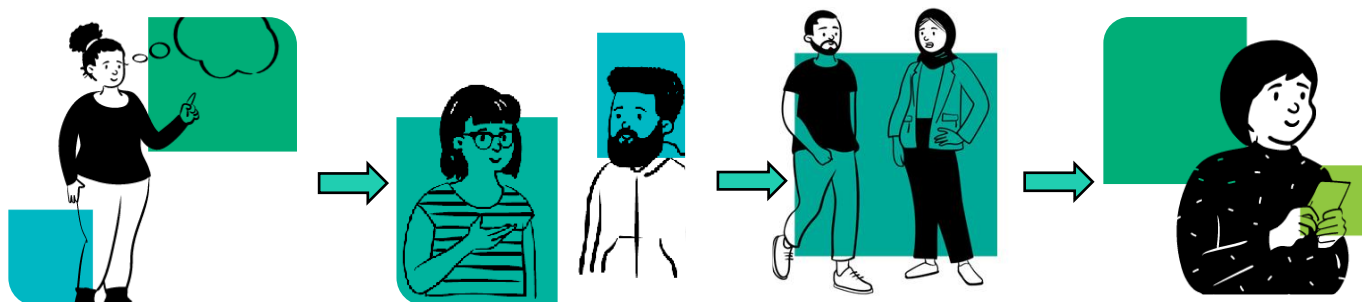


**The project was carried out across two phases:**



The advisors selected ranged from various communities, which included the Islamic Council of Victoria, Migrant Workers Centre, Study Melbourne/Business Owner, IndianCare, Responsible Gaming Advisor (Crown Melbourne), Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council and African communities.

Four monthly meetings were conducted and discussions were based on the following:



Main themes that you have encountered that reduce help seeking behaviour.

Suggestions on how to improve engagement practices.

Overcoming stigma associated with mental health support amongst CALD communities.

Review of translated materials as well as Partners in Wellbeing website.

Tools for appropriate and effective engagement practice.

Types of engagement practices that can be seen as culturally inappropriate.

Tools to encourage cultural safety in our practice.

Other communities we could form.

How we can best promote PIW offerings in CALD communities.

Promotion strategies for Partners in Wellbeing and how advisors can help.

Advocacy efforts within the community, how we can best access hard to reach community groups that are rather isolated.

Consolidating information gathered.

Discussed emerging themes across communities.

## Recommendations from CALD Advisory Group

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### **Reducing barriers to encourage help-seeking behaviour/Breaking down the stigma associated with accessing mental health services**

Stigma and shame surrounding mental health is prevalent in CALD communities.

- Connecting with community leaders and having bi-cultural workers can help with encouraging better access to mental health support. Faith-based leaders can support to deal with the stigma and shame.
- Proactively reaching out to faith-based leaders and educating them about PIW, encouraging them to spread awareness can reduce stigma attached to mental health. Additionally, by promoting the advantages of the types of mental health services available to CALD communities by the means of workshops, putting up a stall at places of worship, facilitating group sessions can create a positive pull.
- Subconscious bias may exist when mental health workers assume people from specific backgrounds are prone to certain issues, therefore non-bias needs to be instilled in the first instance.
- Challenge stigma by promoting benefits of counselling and therapy, particularly through the lens of a lived experience worker.
- Concerns that privacy and confidentiality are not protected when accessing services. A fear of information divulgence through roles of interpreters also exists and contributes to already existing stigma and discrimination associated with mental health. To tackle this, information and myth busting with in-language translations is essential.
- Overall, it's important to acknowledge the stigma associated with lack of engagement in mental health services. This can be tackled through an increased presence in community.
- Provide a connection and awareness between government bodies and CALD communities to understand each other and reduce barriers, i.e., in the case of child protection agencies removing children from care.
- Acknowledge that short-term funding doesn't establish long-term, meaningful connection and care.

### **Resourcing is required to address language barriers**

- Language is a significant barrier; it helps to have in-language translation and bilingual staff that can be connected to participants, providing appropriate language translations.
- Communication becomes harder with an interpreter who gives inappropriate advice and goes over the professional boundaries. This can be a big factor for discomfort for participants.
- It's essential to use appropriate language to talk about mental health to reduce stigma. Using words like wellbeing, stress to make it easier for individuals and communities to relate.

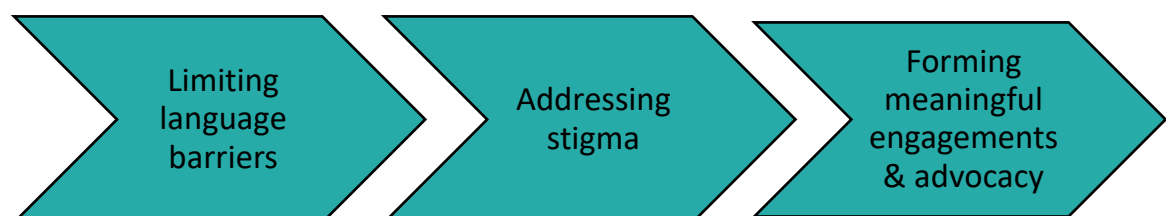
- Easy language and creating positive pull - navigating and accessing supports can be daunting in general, but specifically people from CALD communities are more vulnerable to feeling overwhelmed while navigating through the system. Hence, communicating in easy language, using simple terminology can help them understand and access supports accordingly. Facilitating education sessions by inviting experts from various mental health organisations can create a positive pull.
- Understand cultural perceptions of mental health and how they may differ across communities. One size does not fit all.

### **Tailor programs to be culturally responsive and safe.**

- A bi-cultural workforce to help defuse any cultural misunderstanding in communication.
- Lived/living experience workforce to provide insight into their journey to accessing mental health support.
- Effective communication with use of appropriate language to meet specific needs.
- Awareness regarding diversity within CALD communities with the aim to inform practice, policies, and procedures.
- Systemic changes to encourage longer-term funding which allows for improved connection and building trust in the community.
- Reassuring confidentiality and safety. Eliminating assumptions that services are not confidential as well as addressing concerns of information divulgence through roles of interpreters. This is essential for building rapport.
- Connect with the community leaders to create easy access to established groups.
- Eliminating bias that exists in the community and building trust.
- Meeting specific needs to improve access to supports, i.e., catering for childcare needs to encourage attendance.

## **Actions and implementation of recommendations**

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Throughout the course of the program, the Partners in Wellbeing (PIW) Engagement team have implemented the following:

- Proactively engaged with local council authorities/LGA's in promotion of PIW and spreading awareness about various mental health services.
- Increase presence and promotional activities on social media to drive better engagement. Promoting events, social gatherings, religious activities, and other CALD-specific events which has brought about positive engagement.
- Ramping up engagement efforts by having a presence at places where communities get together such as libraries, places of worship, art spaces, fitness groups, religious and cultural groups.
- Creating social events for CALD communities to engage in activities like hikes, wellbeing workshops that include inputs from specialists like dieticians, psychologists, yoga instructors. A tailored approach has been adopted to ensure different cohorts within these communities are having their needs met, i.e., youth.
- Sharing food to engage - this can be a source of comfort and allows people to get together and interact. The team have incorporated this into their workshop sessions as a mean to engage and build rapport.
- Creating a social event calendar to highlight festivals and social gatherings for CALD communities. This way community members will come to know the program and be able to promote it to the wider community networks. This may reduce barrier to access supports.
- Proactively organising CALD-specific seminars and inviting prominent guest speakers such as community leaders, ethno-specific leaders, and talking about breaking social taboos around accessing mental health supports.
- Frequent and active promotion - through posters, flyers, brochures that can be distributed to GP clinics, migration education centres, TAFEs and universities, community housing, places of worship, shopping centres and community festivals.
- The Partners in Wellbeing website is now translated into 11 different languages. The program has also developed 42 in-language resources which are accessible via the website. This ensures that the material and resources, with appropriate use of language, are available when engaging in community settings.
- The CALD Engagement team have actively worked on addressing stigma in the community through delivering workshops and adopting a person-centred approach. This has helped in creating a safe space for community members to talk about mental health and wellbeing. This space allows people to start a conversation which can also continue outside the space.
- Providing a free and confidential service with interpreter support is a step towards reducing barriers to accessing support, thus eliminating assumptions regarding confidentiality. The CALD Engagement team ensures interpreters are briefed before any session or interaction and communicate clear expectations.

## Summary

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It is important to employ strategies that effectively tackle the stigma that exist in CALD communities. In return, this will assist with building awareness in the community, breaking down barriers to accessing mental health supports and allow services to cater for varying needs within the community.

Engaging with CALD communities is essential for forming connections, fostering a sense of belonging and promoting cultural awareness. It's also important for individuals and organisations to approach engagement with CALD communities with sensitivity, respect, and willingness to learn about different cultural practices and perspectives.

Consultation with the community is vital. We need to understand community needs first and, in the process, empower individuals and community groups to have conversations about wellbeing and help-seeking behaviour.

Another important factor is consultation with community leaders, grassroots organisations, and faith-based leaders. This helps to ensure cultural safety and responsiveness in the community. Given perceptions of wellbeing and stigma towards mental health differ across CALD communities, early consultation can support the creation of safe spaces to talk about mental health and wellbeing.

We've concluded that short-term funding limits the effectiveness of community engagement. Connection, knowledge, and relationships are lost when services and CALD Engagement positions end due to funding. This presents as an ongoing barrier to building trust in CALD communities and offering continuity of support. Recruitment of lived and living experience CALD Engagement Workers is essential in reflecting the diversity within Victoria's communities.

Overall, an increased presence, advocacy and awareness are needed in the community to overcome barriers to access and break down the stigma that exist in the community.

**For further information please reach out to the Neami National Partners in Wellbeing CALD Engagement Team on 1300 375 330**