

# Cherry Blossom project



## Project overview

Japan Australian Community Carenet (JACC) is a voluntary not-for-profit community group for seniors from a Japanese cultural background.

The community group is volunteer based and encourages community participation that assists Japanese elderly to overcome isolation and loneliness.

The Cherry Blossom Project Community Inclusion Activity consisted of several social participation initiatives for Japanese seniors across all metropolitan Melbourne regions, including:

- Natsumero monthly community singing program
- JACC choir visits to aged care facilities where there are Japanese residents
- Ikebana activity (Japanese flower arranging)
- an outing to celebrate Japanese New Year.

Fifty-four seniors participated in the project.

## Project description

Studies suggest that listening to music may have positive health benefits such as assisting with relaxation, elevating mood and improving general health and wellbeing.

Through the Participation for CALD Seniors Grant, JACC developed the Natsumero singing program.

Natsumero is an interactive Japanese music and sing-along session that targets seniors from a Japanese cultural background.

Monthly sing-along sessions were held at a central Melbourne location, enabling seniors from all over Melbourne to participate. The project brought seniors together to socialise, listen to music, sing songs and connect with others.

The sing along sessions were organised by a project coordinator together with a music teacher, both working in a voluntary capacity to support and implement the project. Together the project organisers selected songs from different time periods and musical genres that best capture the diverse age ranges of seniors participating in the project. Seniors attending the project ranged from 60 years of age to 96.

The project allowed seniors to converse, reminisce about the old days, share memories and revisit favourite songs from the past.

Project participants expressed feelings of improved wellbeing and happiness and enhanced connection with others.

## Project model

- Monthly sing-along session from 11 am–1 pm held on the third Saturday of the month.
- Holding the project on a Saturday was important, as it enabled more seniors to attend.

- A central venue was booked for the project in Melbourne’s CBD. This made the project accessible for seniors traveling from various metropolitan locations.
- JACC was able to identify isolated Japanese seniors by word of mouth and also targeted promotion by linking in with other Japanese community groups.
- The project is organised and implemented through the assistance and support of volunteers.
- The project coordinator (volunteer) together with the music teacher (volunteer) worked together to select the songs and organise monthly sessions.
- Music for each month is selected from different time periods, and with songs that are easily recognisable by participants.
- JACC volunteers provided assistance with transport for seniors who would not otherwise have been able to attend the project.
- Songs are played using the venue’s multimedia system and the lyrics projected via PowerPoint to encourage group participation, discussion and reminiscences.
- Program intermission was planned, with light refreshments and the opportunity for seniors to converse.

## Budget

<b>Total project cost</b>	<b>\$4,200</b>
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## Project challenges

Sourcing a disability-friendly central venue that was close to public transport and available on particular days was a challenging task. The project organisers allocated adequate time in the preparation phase of the project to research and secure a venue.

## Project outcomes

- Seniors are identified, connected and engaged in a culturally appropriate activity.
- The project provided an opportunity to socialise and converse in participants’ primary language.
- The benefits of music, singing and connecting with others all promote seniors’ health and wellbeing.
- The project provided an opportunity for seniors to reminisce and reflect on different time periods, fashion and musical influences.

## Project sustainability

Given the successful uptake of the Natsumero singing program, the program (with some adjustments) will continue to operate for Japanese seniors.

Going forward, the program will be auspiced by Australia New Elderly.

Both the music teacher and the Natsumero singing program coordinator will continue to volunteer their time and assist in running the monthly sing-along sessions.

A small contribution will be requested from attendees participating at each monthly session, which will go towards the running costs of the singing program.

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