

Karen men's group project



Project overview

The City of Wyndham has one of the largest settlement programs for refugees and humanitarian entrants in Victoria.

Multilingual case workers for the settlement program identified a group of socially isolated men from the Karen (Burmese) community.

One of the case workers was also a respected Pastor for the Karen community with strong connections within this community.

Project description

A consultation between the settlement coordinator, case worker and 12 seniors from the Karen community was held over a sausage sizzle and a roundtable discussion.

The group identified activities they wished to be involved in and agreed to commence a regular men's meeting and support group.

The Wyndham Community and Education Centre Inc then approached the local Bunnings Activity Coordinator, who agreed to attend the new group once a month to facilitate hands-on activities and supply materials.

The project included a series of information sessions, excursion and social activities.

Project model

- The project is facilitated through the settlement team at the Wyndham Community and Education Centre Inc.
- Regular fortnightly events include information sessions delivered by a wide range of local service providers, hands-on activities in partnership with Bunnings, community walks and gardening activities, and excursions to places of interest.
- Activities are based around consultation. However, activity ideas must have a focus on education, social inclusion, health and wellbeing.

Budget

Total project cost:	\$4,000
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Project challenges

Originally, the project planned to also target isolated men from Middle Eastern countries and the Indian subcontinent, however it was difficult to connect with these target communities.

The Karen community will be the focus of the group, but there is a capacity to increase numbers.

People from other communities will continue to be encouraged to attend.

Project outcomes

- A men's group of between 12 and 15 isolated Karen men now meets fortnightly.
- The project has enabled these men to interact with other marginalised men, make new friends and support each other.
- The men are now connected to mainstream service providers, including emergency services.
- The group has received education and information on healthy eating, exercise, men's health, the public transport system, banking, driving laws, safety and insurance.
- The men have participated in a community garden where they learnt horticultural skills and could take home fresh produce.
- Other outcomes include a noticeable increase in the men's self-reliance, confidence and self-esteem.

Project sustainability

The Karen men's group will continue to meet fortnightly.

New and ongoing partnerships are continually developing, enabling the group to continue.

The new partnerships include Victoria Police, Country Fire Authority, Bendigo Bank, Parks Victoria, Department of Environment and Primary Industries (Fisheries), and the Western Bulldogs Community Development team.

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