



## activities and interests

*"Rather than trying to get a separate group by culture, we did it by affinities. What affinities do people have, what are the things they have in common? Language is secondary then, people find a way to communicate and to make each other feel welcome if they have something that brings them together beyond the language."*

- SSG Coordinator

Activities offered by a SSG are the 'make or break' factor in many people's interest in attending a particular group. If a person of CALD background finds all activities on offer to be too 'mainstream', they may feel that the group is not suitable for them.

While exercise and outings are always popular, they can be costly and out-of-reach for some groups. There may be ways to combine groups and resources to make them more accessible.

Understanding clients' interests and hobbies can help overcome possible language barriers and create connections with other group participants. It is also important to recognise that not everyone has interests and hobbies, or a desire to take part in group activities.

### Tips

- Ask the new person what they are interested in, and match them with a 'buddy', or other group members, with similar interests.
- Enable clients to suggest and organise activities in which they have an interest and that may not be offered (board games, craft, etc). 'Chess has been something that has brought people together in our group. Yesterday an Asian man with very little English was playing chess with a Serbian guy. There is another language that happens between people. That whole

chess thing came out of the blue, all of a sudden there was a chess board one day and it happened.' Men's Shed Coordinator.

- Activities that require little language, such as gentle exercise, can be used as a drawcard to bring groups together: because it can be demonstrated rather than explained, exercise is easy to practice across language levels. 'When the mainstream group does exercise, all the Chinese participants join in. Exercise is universal, everyone can do it, there is no language barrier, little cultural barrier, all do exercise together as a bigger group, and when they have other activities they split.' A&S worker.
- Be aware that some activities can be seen as very 'Australian' and affect the first impression made of the group: 'The games put them off quite a bit: bingo, footy tipping... They have lived here for a long time, they are familiar with what footy is, but they are just not interested'. This may also be the case for people who have arrived in Australia in their old age and have had little contact with mainstream culture – for instance people who migrated to Australia to help look after their grandchildren.
- At the same time, activities that were once seen as representative of a certain culture (such as Tai Chi or Qi Jong) have now become mainstream and practiced

widely. You may want to think of other activities that people of CALD background can introduce the group too and which will be easily embraced by participants, regardless of their cultural backgrounds.

- Flexibility is key: in order to accommodate people's preferences, a SSG needs to offer a range of activities concurrently. Rooms can be set up to create 'flow' between activities and influence group dynamics. Going from one activity to another offers the additional advantage of making people move around, which is good physically but also encourages people to mix with others rather than stay in their familiar group.
- It is OK if people do not participate, if that is what they wish to do. Some may simply enjoy being in a room with others, without feeling the need to actively take part in any of the activities. They should be allowed to do this without pressure to join in.

### Who needs to be involved?

- The client, who may want/be able to organise the activity themselves.
- Volunteers, to support activities or 'let people be' if this is what the client prefers
- Management, to approve budget commitments

### Case study 1 - Giovanni

Giovanni is 97 years old. As the owner of a successful fruit and vegetable shop in Toorak for decades, he always managed speaking a combination of Italian and some English.

However with age he has forgotten the little English he used to know, and now speaks almost exclusively Italian.

When Giovanni's daughters first referred him to the Uniting Care East Burwood group, they were *'a bit concerned whether he would be able to interact with people. But we were so happy from Day 1, we haven't looked back.'*

Giovanni has always been an out-going person so hated being home and craved company. In the SSG, he often sits quietly watching old Italian films on an iPad, or listening to Italian music. An Italian-speaking volunteer regularly attends the group and keeps him company.

According to Giovanni's daughter Rosie, the key to her father's enjoyment of the group is how staff and volunteers really take an interest in him:

*'He enjoys this group best because it is a small group and there is a lot of interaction (...) He interacts more with the group than he does with us. When he come home, he has that little extra spark.'*

### Case Study 2 – Oakleigh Café Bazaar

Café Bazaars in the South Eastern suburbs of Melbourne are a New Hope Foundation initiative, offering social activities that are flexible and provide choice to independent, multicultural clients. Café Bazaars are open to people of all cultures. The Café Bazaar model promotes community connections, participation, social engagement and cross-cultural interactions.

The Café Bazaar in Oakleigh (funded by Monash City Council) started as result of extensive research and community consultation to address the issue of social isolation and resulting deterioration of health amongst CALD older people. It was identified at the time that the Oakleigh Senior Citizens Centre was underused and available as a venue. The Senior Citizens Centre comprises several rooms, including one with a billiard table, a card-playing room, a physical exercise space, a dining area and a kitchen, and participants are self-managed and choose their activities. Several participants are Chilean but choose to speak in English, as it is an opportunity for them to maintain their proficiency:

*'Both my children are married to Australians' explains a Chilean woman 'and my grand-children only speak English. I need to speak good English to communicate with them.'*

### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- Eastern Health Cue Cards in community languages: <https://www.easternhealth.org.au/services/language-services/cue-cards>
- Aged Care signage (25 languages): <http://www.culturaldiversity.com.au/resources/multilingual-resources/aged-care-signage>
- For a case study of the New Hope Foundation Café Bazaar model (based on the Prahran example): <http://www.cshisc.com.au/develop/quality-case-studies/industry-spotlight-case-studies/workforce-innovation-with-cald-clients-new-hope-foundation/>
- Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria strength-based training tip sheet (in 7 community languages): [http://www.eccv.org.au/library/file/projects/Strength\\_training\\_tip\\_sheet\\_English.pdf](http://www.eccv.org.au/library/file/projects/Strength_training_tip_sheet_English.pdf)

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