

# MIGRANT YOUTH IN AUSTRALIA:

SOCIAL NETWORKS, BELONGING  
AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP



SUMMARY REPORT

# MIGRANT YOUTH IN AUSTRALIA: SOCIAL NETWORKS, BELONGING AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP (SUMMARY REPORT)

## Research Undertaken by:

The Centre for Citizenship and Globalisation (CCG), Deakin University and Monash University  
In partnership with:  
Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) and Australian Red Cross

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## Acknowledgements

This project involved industry partners that are at the cusp of challenges associated with migrant integration and adaptation.

CMY is a Victorian not-for-profit organisation supporting young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to build better lives in Australia. Through a combination of specialist support services, training and consultancy, knowledge sharing and advocacy, CMY works to remove the barriers young people face as they make Australia home.

Australian Red Cross provides a range of services for recently arrived migrants and asylum seekers and seeks to articulate its unique approach to youth issues in a partnership framework that links it to other agencies working with migrant youth, such as CMY.

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DEFINITION: THE TERM 'MIGRANT YOUTH' IN THIS PROJECT IS DEFINED AS 15-23 YEAR OLDS, BOTH OVERSEAS AND AUSTRALIAN BORN OF MIGRANT BACKGROUND.

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

This report presents research findings from the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project "Social Networks, Belonging and Active Citizenship Among Migrant Youth in Melbourne and Brisbane", conducted over a four-year period from 2009 to 2012 (LP0989182).

### Our aim

The overarching aim of this project was to investigate the extent to which young people use formal (e.g., government agencies and non-government support services) and informal (e.g., family) networks to develop a sense of social connectedness and belonging in a multicultural society.

### Our objectives

- To investigate the extent to which young people are involved in networks both within and beyond their cultural community
- To understand how these networks impact on young people's sense of belonging
- To examine the barriers that young people face in network engagement, and
- To determine the extent to which young people are involved in activities such as volunteering, leadership roles and accessing services

### Our sample

The definition of migrant youth adopted in this project cuts across generational definitions of migrants (Skrbis et al 2007) and practitioners' requirements for a comprehensive and inclusive treatment of the category of youth.

Late adolescence and early adulthood are significant periods psychologically because it is during this stage that individuals commence the process of integrating identities into coherent wholes (Damon and Hart 1988) and developing a sense of the self.

Young people involved in this study belong to three broadly defined communities in Melbourne and Brisbane: 'African', 'Arabic-speaking' and 'Pacific Islander'. These groups were chosen for participation in this project as arguably some of the most vulnerable and marginalised ethno-cultural groups in Australia.

Research shows that 'Arabic-speaking' youth have experienced a heightened sense of marginalisation since 9/11 (Mansouri 2005; Mansouri & Kemp 2007; WW & Marotta 2012). African youth have been described recently as problematic, unable to integrate and potentially a major threat to social cohesion in Australia (Hobday 2007). Young people from a Pacific Islander background account disproportionately for higher rates of crime (White, Perrone, Guerra & Lampugnani 1999).



I SPEND A LOT OF TIME WITH MY FAMILY,  
WHETHER IT'S MY IMMEDIATE OR EXTENDED  
ONE (PACIFIC ISLANDER, FEMALE, BRISBANE)

## SAMPLE

Data for this project was gathered through 484 surveys and 57 interviews with young people in Brisbane and Melbourne. The sample consisted of a relatively even distribution of the participant groups. Characteristics of each of the three groups are described below:

**African:** African participants were mostly relatively recent arrivals to Australia. For the African youth surveyed, the most common country of birth was Sudan (46%), followed by Ethiopia (14.3%) and Kenya (6.6%). Other represented nationalities included: Burundian, Liberian, Somali, Congolese, Ugandan, and Sierra Leonean.

**Pacific Islander:** The majority of Pacific Islander participants were from Samoan, Tongan and New Zealander backgrounds. Survey data showed that the leading recorded country of birth was New Zealand (42.4% of this group), followed by Australia

(40.4%) and Samoa, where 9.8% of this group were born. Pacific Islander young people were the most likely of those born overseas to have lived in Australia for more than ten years (53.2%).

**Arabic-speaking:** For this group, Australia was the most common country of birth, with 50.6% of the group born in the country. This was followed by Iraq (22.9%) and Lebanon (6.6%). It is worth noting that 4.8% of the Arabic-speaking group were born in Sudan, and we included them in the Arabic-speaking sample following their self-reported 'culture'. A majority of 64.5% of the Arabic-speaking youth were Muslim, while 32.5% were Christian. Brisbane and Melbourne samples differed in regards to religious compositions, with the Brisbane sample being predominantly Muslim (91.3%) whilst in Melbourne only 37.8% of Arabic-speakers were Muslim.

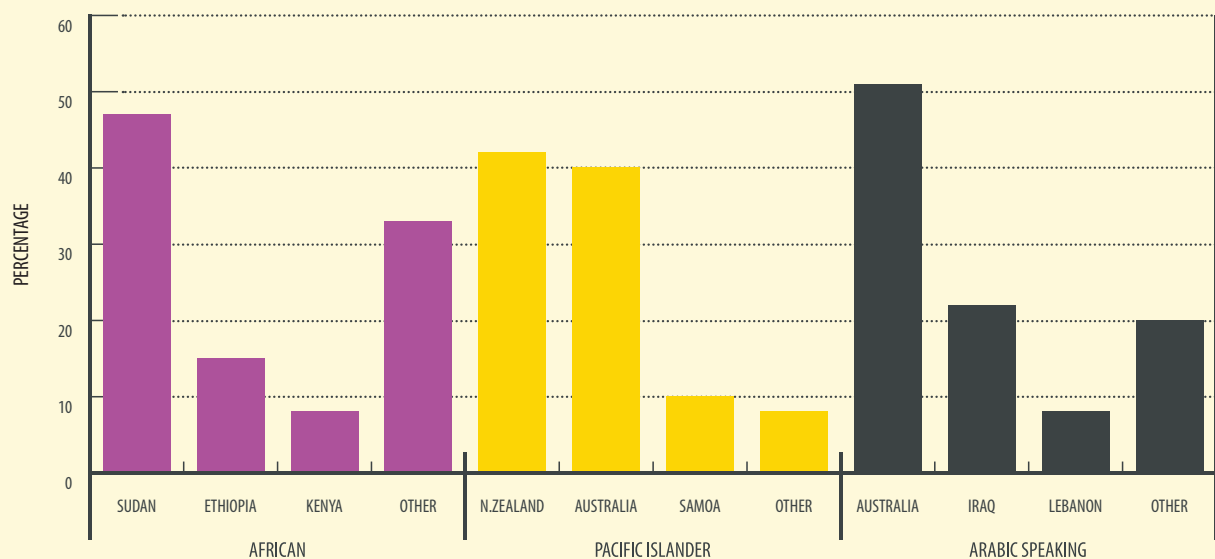


Figure 1: Most common country of birth for participants

## THERE ARE A LOT OF MULTICULTURAL THINGS FOR PEOPLE AT SCHOOL, BUT ONCE YOU LEAVE SCHOOL, IT'S JUST US (PACIFIC ISLANDER, FEMALE, BRISBANE)

## TYPES OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

Participants in all three groups were involved in a diverse array of networks, both formally and informally. The most commonly used networks accessed by the three groups to meet new people were school (69.8%) and family (and family friends) (61.2%). Arabic-speaking and African young people find it the easiest to meet people through school, while for Pacific Islanders the easiest way is through family and family friends. Other venues, such as social networking sites (33.1%), places of worship (33.1%), recreation clubs (30.8%), workplaces (26.2%) and popular hangout spots were also used.

Religious groups were the most commonly nominated vehicle for involvement in social activities among young people in the overall sample (44%), followed by school-based (43.0%) and recreation groups (39.5%). However, there were some differences between the two states. Melbourne-based young people in general were less likely to participate in religious groups, while in Brisbane the frequency of such participation by young people was much higher. The highest participation rate in religious organisations in Melbourne was recorded among the Pacific Islanders (46.9%) and Africans (37.9%). A considerable lower interest in participating was found among Arabic speakers – 20% said 'Yes' to being involved in a religious group. By comparison, in Brisbane 73.4% of Africans and 59.2% of Pacific Islanders were participating in religious groups in the last year, but there was lower participation in such groups among Arabic speakers (33.8% chose this option).

Insights from the qualitative data provide a more nuanced understanding about the network choices within and across the three groups. Pacific Islander young people reported extensive involvement in church and cultural activities, including culturally based dance groups, choirs, art classes, and language classes. Young people also reported their involvement in formal sports teams, most often rugby. These 'sports-based' networks also typically had close ties to other established networks and thus member composition was often intermixed within the various existing networks. Across Melbourne and Brisbane, the vast majority of formal networks within which young Pacific Islanders engaged were relatively local, with the exception of their use of social media to connect with family and friends overseas. Looking broadly at informal networks of Pacific Islander interviewees, references to informal sports, music, family and friendship groups were most common. Interviewees placed importance on their time with and involvement in family-based networks.

Looking broadly at formal networks of African interviewees, references to church groups, settlement service activities (homework clubs, camps, etc.), and sports teams were most common. The African interviewees, as previously mentioned, were relatively recent arrivals (less than 10 years in Australia) and from refugee backgrounds. As such, for this group of

interviewees, network engagement was typically framed around accessing services that are specifically designed and funded for refugees, humanitarian migrants, and/or asylum seekers, and supported either by state or federal governments, corporate partners, philanthropic organisations or individuals. As formal network participation was often facilitated through engagement with service providers, network member composition was often pre-determined through that mechanism. For this reason, particularly during the early stages of settlement, African interviewees predominantly engaged with other Africans who were also utilising services and with whom they could communicate.

Arabic-speaking interviewees were active in both formal and informal networks. Engagement in formal networks was particularly high, with young people participating in activities ranging from volunteer work (e.g., Cancer Council), formal social clubs (Al-Nisa Women's group), formal sporting associations (Rugby and Tennis), and networks within their specific place of worship (e.g., church or mosque). Participation in informal networks was also commonly mentioned throughout the interviews with Arabic-speaking young people. Interviewees were active in friendship groups, informal sporting activities and social media networks.

### Where social networks are situated

In their own neighbourhood, the 'Shopping Centre' was the most popular place to spend time (56.8% of the sample liked to go there the most), followed by the 'Park' (47.9%) and 'Movie Theatre' (45.9%). Church, mosque or place of worship followed after that (40.3%), preceding 'Sports Facilities', 'Library', 'Community Centre' and 'Other'. When respondents were asked to identify places they liked to go outside of their own neighbourhoods the most preferred place overall, across states and groups was 'church, mosque or place of worship' (with 49% of the whole sample ticking this option). A shopping centre was only slightly less popular (with 48.8%). It was followed by the 'library' (47.7%), 'sports facilities' (36%), 'movie theatre' (34.4%), 'community centre' (25.2%), 'park' (23.6%), and 'other' (21.3%). Comparison between the two states shows that participation in the place of worship was higher among all three groups in Brisbane than in Melbourne. As more than three-quarters of young people surveyed (76.4% of the overall sample) visited places outside of their neighbourhoods every day, almost every day or at least once a week, these are highly relevant and attest to the relative mobility of young people in fostering and maintaining informal social networks.

### Who is involved in the social networks?

Overall, a significant number of participants were interested in being involved in activities within their family and ethnic group. For Pacific Islander young people, both formal and informal networks were closely tied to their family and ethnic groups.

For example, the same people with whom young people attended church, were also on their rugby team, in their choir, etc. Certain networks, typically church- or culturally based (language, dance, etc) were sometimes differentiated by specific Pacific Island regions. While some formal networks were ethno-specific, others were not. Young people tended to perceive their places of employment and study as being more multicultural than their mono-cultural Pacific Islander networks.

For African interviewees with family living in close spatial proximity, engagement in family-based networks was high. The same was true for those living in areas with receptive local, neighbourhood networks or who lived relatively close to an established 'ethnic' community through which informal connections were made. Without these resources being accessible, interviewees typically relied on formal networks to shape informal connections.

For Muslim interviewees in Brisbane, all participation in formal networks was facilitated through their ties to their mosque. As a result, network member composition was typically the same across networks (both formal and informal), meaning that

the same groups of young people were spending substantial amounts of time together (though doing many different activities). For the Muslim sub-group, formal networks could be gender-specific or mixed, depending on the particular activity. For the group of people participating in the Arabic-speaking focus group in Melbourne, formal network participation was not limited to those facilitated through their place of worship. In fact, several interviewees rejected any religious-based activities (aside from church services). This finding is supported by the quantitative data, which showed that 20% of Arabic-speaking respondents were participating in a religious group. By comparison, a higher proportion (almost 34%) was participating in such groups in Brisbane. As a whole, this group participated in significantly more heterogeneous formal networks. Again, as with the formal network participation, informal network members were also members of their mosque with whom they also participated in formal networks. While the 'source' of networks varied for this group, both Christian and Muslim Arabic speakers noted how their 'background' (however they defined this) influenced, and in some circumstances dictated, the type and extent of formal and informal network involvement.



MOST OF THE COMMUNITY WON'T GO CLUBBING OR GO TO BARS. SO THAT'S NOT A NETWORK CHOICE. WE'LL ENGAGE WITH EVERYONE BUT SOMETIMES IT'S DICTATED BY YOUR BACKGROUND (ARABIC-SPEAKING, MALE, BRISBANE)



# ATTITUDES ASSOCIATED WITH SOCIAL NETWORKS

## Social resources

Participants in the survey were asked whom they would seek help from if they were sick, if they needed to talk about a serious personal matter, if they were feeling sad and wanted to talk to someone, or if they urgently needed money. 'Family member' was by far the most preferred category to seek help from in case of illness, personal matter or if in urgent need for money. However, if they were feeling sad they would more commonly go to a friend rather than to family members to seek consolation. Almost 95% of the overall sample responded that they would seek help from a 'family member' in case of illness. This result was consistent across all participant groups: 99.3% of Pacific Islanders, 93.4% of Arabic speakers, and 91.0% of Africans. A neighbour would be the least likely person to go to in case of illness. In the case of 'a serious personal matter', among Pacific Islander and African youth, asking for help from a friend (62.3% among Pacific Islanders and 58.1% among Africans) was almost as common as asking for help from a family member (64.2% among Pacific Islanders and 59.3% among Africans). Again, asking a neighbour was the least preferred option.

## Family expectations and family values

A majority of respondents perceived 'doing well at school' as the most important value or expectation of their families. 'Doing well at school' was by far the most cited answer and was consistent across all groups, with 86.5% of the overall sample indicating this as important to their families or guardians. 'Doing well at school' was followed by 'that I behave well', which was also consistent across all three groups, with 70.6% of the overall sample thinking this is important to their parents. 'That I am a good person' was next at 68.3%, followed by 'that I practice my faith' (54.2%). Thus, though they did not seem to favour connecting with faith-based groups, practicing faith as an important value of their parents proved to be somewhat more important to Arabic speakers than to Pacific Islanders and Africans.

## Personal expectations and personal values

When respondents were asked about their own expectations, 'doing well at school' was, again, the most important (79.5% of the overall sample), and this was important especially among the African group. Participants also thought that 'being a good person' was very important, with 70.5% agreeing with this option, followed by 'that I have a job' (66.7%) and 'that I behave well' (66.3%). 'To practice my faith' was important to 54.2% of the overall sample. Getting involved in their community was comparatively less important (34.3%). However, among Pacific Islanders in Brisbane, community involvement was much more important than among Pacific Islanders in Melbourne. A similar difference appeared in the 'practice my faith' option, where significantly more Pacific Islanders in Brisbane responded with 'Yes' compared with Melbourne, where the distribution of responses was basically reversed. Respondents were also asked about their perception of what they get out of connections with people (e.g. family, friends, neighbours, groups and associations). A big proportion of the overall sample chose 'friendship' (75.2%). Preference for having 'friendship' as a result of connections with people was followed by the 'feeling of security' (68.2%), and 'meeting people with similar interests and backgrounds' (49.4%). This latter theme was more important for Pacific Islanders than it was for other two groups.

## Happiness

Finally, the survey explored the levels of happiness among the respondents. A majority of participants in the surveys said they were either 'very happy' (55.2%) or 'rather happy' (37.8%). Only a small percentage of the overall sample declared they were 'not very happy' or 'not at all happy'. There were no big differences between the groups in the levels of happiness. The African group appeared to be the happiest, closely followed by the Pacific Islander group and the Arabic group. The highest level of happiness ('very happy') in Melbourne was displayed by the African group (70.2% answered 'very happy'), whereas in Brisbane those reporting feeling the happiest were Pacific Islanders (66.7%).

## NETWORK TRENDS

### Interconnectedness of formal and informal networks

The qualitative data revealed that the involvement of young people in social networks across the three groups is characterized by a strong degree of interconnectedness and cross-pollination between their formal and informal social networks. This interconnectedness was most apparent within the Pacific Islander youth group. Interviewees among this group consistently reported a blending of different networks, from formal to informal and vice versa. It should be noted that for most interviewees, while network involvement was expansive, network members were predominantly limited to other Pacific Islanders (or Tongans or Samoans, etc. depending on the specific network and context). Furthermore, parents or other relatives from the same family often cooperated in the formal networks with their children, thus adding another informal layer to their involvement in formal networks.

LIKE WHEN I FIRST GOT HERE, IT WAS JUST ME WITH DINKA PEOPLE. THEN THE LONGER I GET HERE, THE SLOWER I MOVE OUT. THE LONGER YOU HERE, THEN THE MORE RELAXED YOU GET. BUT WHEN YOU GET HERE, YOU ONLY BE WITH THE PEOPLE THAT YOU ARE NEW WITH. YOU TEND TO STICK WITH THE PEOPLE THAT YOU HAVE COMMON GROUNDS WITH (AFRICAN, MALE, BRISBANE)

For the African youth, the interconnectedness of networks was less prominent though still strongly noticeable. As mentioned, with the majority of African interviewees being relatively recent humanitarian arrivals, there was a strong dependence on service providers not only for practical settlement assistance, but also to facilitate network-building. Several interviewees noted that it was through their involvement with formal service providers that informal (mainly friendship) networks were developed. In an interview with a young African man who came in Australia on his own (without any members of his family) and spent the first seven months in immigration detention, there was a noticeable transition from formal to informal networks, even though these involved the same people. Among the interviewee's first contacts in Australia were people visiting immigration detention casually, but were at first still perceived more as formal than informal. Later on, some of these visitors and volunteers became 'good friends'. In the interview, he called this circle of people his 'family' as they helped him the most when settling in the new environment.

For the Muslim sub-group within the broader Arabic-speaking youth group, interviewees in Melbourne tended to participate in the activities targeted for all Arabs, rather than for Muslims. For participants in Brisbane, mosques served as central venues from which their involvement in the formal and informal networks primarily stemmed. For the Muslim group, there was only one mention of non-mosque related networks (this was university/career related) and for the vast majority of interviewees, all networks (even if raising money for a nationwide initiative, e.g. the Cancer Council) were organized and facilitated through mosque-based networks. In Melbourne, activities that were specifically or exclusively tied to religion generally did not get such strong support among interviewees and focus group participants who identified with either Christian or Muslim religions. With the exception of one interviewee who was teaching in an Islamic Sunday school, religion did not play a significant role in their networking or network participation. This interviewee had a range of other activities, but the majority of these were not connected to religion. This does not mean, however, that religion was not important in the personal lives of participants.


### Network change over time

Network change over time was mostly reported by African youth. As the majority of African interviewees were relatively recent arrivals, they had very limited knowledge of English, and significant settlement challenges. Consequently, much of their early network involvement was limited to opportunities offered through service providers and family members (if applicable), and typically consisted of engagement with other African refugees. Indeed, qualitative analysis suggests a strong relationship between the duration of settlement and the types of formal and informal networks in which young Africans participated. As the duration of respondents' settlement increased, with arguably concurrent improvements in English language and settlement navigation competency, the types of networks in which young Africans participate underwent some transitions. Along with these improvements, interviewees also reported an increased mobility by using public transport, which enabled them to participate in non-local as well as local networks. African young people reported gradual changes in the types of their networks. Many interviewees sustained engagement with earlier networks, including service provider networks.

### Cross-cultural engagement

The study found that participants from Pacific Islander, African and Arabic-speaking groups all expressed a clear desire for cross-cultural engagement. This was evident in both the qualitative and quantitative data. However, the reasons for wanting to engage and the degree to which this was desired varied considerably between the three groups.





THEY HELPED ME TO LEARN ENGLISH - COZ I  
DIDN'T KNOW. EVEN LIKE JOB OR STUDY, ALL  
THAT STUFF. SO I JUST GOT INFORMATION  
FROM THERE - COZ EVERYTHING IS NEW.  
EVERYTHING IS NEW FOR ME. THE SYSTEM  
IS NEW, CENTRELINK, SCHOOL, EVERYTHING.  
EVEN CROSSING THE ROAD. EVERYTHING IS SO  
DIFFERENT (AFRICAN, MALE, MELBOURNE)



**INITIALLY THE REASON I GOT FACEBOOK WAS SPECIFICALLY TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS OVERSEAS; JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN SEE THEIR PICTURES YOU KNOW AND WHAT THEY GET UP TO EVERY DAY. SO IT'S DIFFERENT TO JUST TALKING TO THEM ON THE PHONE. THEN I HAD TO ADD ALL MY FRIENDS IN AUSTRALIA AS WELL BECAUSE THEY HAD FACEBOOK. (ARABIC-SPEAKING, FEMALE, BRISBANE)**

The African participants understood cross-cultural engagement as a form of cultural competency. That is, the more multicultural their networks became the more 'Australian' they felt. For the Pacific Islander participants, the desire for cross-cultural engagement was a response to the perceived homogeneity of their networks. Despite their desire to engage cross-culturally, Pacific Islander participants had neither the time nor the ability (given practical and social barriers) to engage with people outside of their group given that they were so heavily involved in their community and their church. For the Arabic-speaking participants, cross-cultural engagement was a way of countering stereotypes and teaching others about their religion and culture.

Participants reported a number of barriers to cross-cultural engagement. However, for all three groups finding a balance between community expectations and time was the biggest barrier to cross-cultural engagement. Although participants reported that parents were generally supportive of activities outside of their family/ethnic group, the qualitative data suggests that community demands made it difficult for participants to engage cross culturally even if the idea was not explicitly disapproved of. This also correlates with the data on being too busy which suggests that participants are too heavily involved in their own communities to be able to participate in any others. Quantitative data showed that 37.7% of Africans, 34.3% of Pacific Islanders and 36.7% of Arabic speakers were 'too busy' to participate in cross-cultural activities.

Interestingly, unlike many African and Pacific Islander interviewees, Arabic-speaking participants did not appear to resist their parents/communities input nor feel resentment towards them. Several participants noted that while parents were actively involved in shaping life and network choices, it didn't necessarily present a problem.

#### **Use of social media**

Generally speaking, Pacific Islander, African and Arabic-speaking groups reported use of computer technology, with Arabic-speakers demonstrating the most frequent use of social media and African respondents the least. Below, we discuss the varying uses of social media as a form of local, national and transnational networking. Survey data on meeting new people showed that although social media (such as Facebook) was used to varying extents by all three groups it did not represent an avenue to meet new people. Overall, only 33.1% of respondents indicated that they found it easy to meet people through social media whereas 66.7% said 'No'. Africans (73.1%) and Arabic-speaking background youth (68.7%) were more likely to say that social networking sites are not a particularly easy venue to meet people than Pacific Islanders (57.6%).

For Pacific Islander youth, use of social media was a way to communicate with friends and family in Australia and overseas. Because many Pacific Island youths spent their childhood and teenage years in New Zealand before moving to Australia, strong ties are maintained with their family and friends in

New Zealand. Interviewees also used Skype for contact their friends and families. Pacific Islander families placed a great deal of importance on maintaining familial and trans-community connections, therefore the use of social media for this group was high. In addition to transnational communication, Pacific Islander youth used social media (in particular Facebook) as a way to socialise with local peer groups. Given the extent of involvement of parents, aunts, uncles, etc. in daily life and the coordination of activities for youth, Facebook seems to provide a sense of autonomy and privacy for Pacific Islander youth and gives them a sense of 'closeness'.

For African interviewees, use of social media was relatively low. This finding is linked to the high number of practical barriers reported by this group, specifically, issues around access to the technology required (i.e. computer, fast internet connection) to participate in online networking. Additionally, as most participants were relatively new arrivals, computer competency was lower than for the other groups. Typically, online networks' members were limited to those living in close spatial proximity and whom they also saw on a regular basis at school and in church. Given the pre-migration context (refugee camp, rural settings), young people were often unable to communicate with friends and family living in Africa, with the exception of contacts via landline phone calls. As with other networks for African participants, with increased time in Australia, improved English proficiency and practical information technology skill development, their participation in social media and online networking increased.

**[I AM BUSY WITH] RUGBY AND SAMOAN SCHOOL AT THE SAME TIME EVERY WEEK. SO EVEN THOUGH I TRAIN WITH MY TEAM AND I WANT TO BE GOOD AT RUGBY AND BE THERE FOR THEM BECAUSE I HAVE A PART TO PLAY I CAN'T ACTUALLY... BECAUSE I HAD AN EARLIER COMMITMENT TO SAMOAN SCHOOL (PACIFIC ISLANDER MALE, 16, BRISBANE)**

Findings indicate that Arabic-speaking interviewees had relatively sophisticated online networks. Interviewees in this group were using social media to keep in touch with their friends and extended family members in Australia and overseas. However, most often, social media was used to keep in touch with people with whom they also had face-to-face contact. For young people who settled in Australia more recently email or phone usage was more common in their communication with friends and relatives overseas while social media was used less frequently.

# BELONGING AND ENGAGEMENT

Feelings of belonging had a huge impact on the types of networks young people wanted to be involved in and the ones they actually participated in. Making friends and meeting people with similar interests were important for participants from all three groups.

In the Pacific Islander group, engagement in networks was closely tied to young people's feelings of belonging within and beyond their own ethnic group. During the interviews, Pacific Islander young people discussed engagement within their own community as well as outward engagement as a means to foster feelings of belonging across cultural contexts.

Similarly, for the African group, the network member composition played an important role in influencing a sense of belonging. While some young people embraced associations with other African Australians, others rejected them entirely. These conflicting feelings were tied to fluctuating perceptions of intra- and inter-group belonging, specifically notions of being 'Australian' and the 'Australian way of life' (Melbourne).

The Arabic-speaking group also experienced context-specific types and levels of belonging. In Melbourne, Australian-born interviewees or those with longer settlement periods were typically more engaged across groups and experienced a degree of belonging both within and beyond their ethnic communities. For the recent arrivals and younger Arabic-speaking interviewees, engagement in family- or ethno-specific networks appeared to be the context in which their belonging was sought and cultivated. Among the Muslim interviewees in Brisbane, formal and informal networks centred almost exclusively on the mosque. As such, the belonging that network participation fostered was tied to being a Muslim.

## Belonging and network participation

Participants were involved in a number of networks that presented varying feelings of belonging. In the Pacific Islander group, while the majority of interviewees reported an intra-group tension at times due to over-commitment, perceived unrealistic expectations, etc. They also reported that being around people of the same backgrounds provided a sense of comfort, support and belonging. Several interviewees managed to seamlessly engage in, and 'belong' to, a diverse array of groups while others felt various degrees of anxiety in moving between these two realms.

For newly arrived interviewees, specifically those from African backgrounds, network participation was often initiated through accessing settlement services that facilitated further formal and informal networks. Ability and need to access services was partly determined by specific migration pathways and visa types (e.g., UNHCR versus family sponsorship). Interviewees also described engagement in ethno-specific networks as a way to seek comfort in uncertain times, feel connectedness and belonging with those from similar backgrounds. These networks also brought a sense of familiarity.

For the Arabic-speaking interviewees, first and foremost, family and 'community' played a significant role in informing their network engagement. Arabic-speaking background Muslim interviewees reportedly engaged predominantly with other young Muslims. The alignment of values and morals of network members was a frequently cited reason for network engagement amongst this subgroup.

WHEN I HEAR THEM SPEAKING LUGANDAN I GET A BIG SMILE, LIKE 'OH MY GOD, SOMEONE LIKE ME.' IT FEELS SO GOOD. (AFRICAN, FEMALE, BRISBANE)

A LOT OF PEOPLE SAY THAT CULTURE DOESN'T MAKE A PERSON; IT'S CULTURE THAT DOES MAKE A PERSON. I'M NOT PICKING OUT ANYTHING. I'M NOT A RACIST OR ANYTHING, BUT I'M SAYING I WOULDN'T JOIN ANYTHING THAT HAS – IF I KNOW THAT THEY HAVE BASICALLY BAD MORALS FROM THEIR BACKGROUND OR WHATEVER – I WON'T JOIN (ARABIC SPEAKING, MALE, 21, BRISBANE)

# SOCIAL BARRIERS TO NETWORK ENGAGEMENT

Given the importance of network engagement for fostering feelings of belonging, it is also important to understand the barriers that young people face in engaging. The two main barriers outlined below are racism and trust. The impact that these two barriers have on the lives of young people are significant in line with previous research that revealed that racism and discrimination can have a negative impact on young people's health and well-being (Mansouri et al 2009).

## Experiences of racism and self-exclusion

Participants in all three groups identified a variety of experiences that led them to disengage or exclude themselves from certain networks. For African and Arabic-speaking young people, direct experience of overt racism was the greatest single factor for social withdrawal. For Pacific Islanders, most experiences leading to self-exclusion were related to collective stereotyping and more implicit forms of discrimination.

COULD YOU IMAGINE YOU ARRIVE AT A  
NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH AND YOU'RE THE  
ONLY OLIVE COMPLEXION ... COMPARED TO  
THE OLDER GENERATION WHO SPEAK 100 PER  
CENT PERFECT ENGLISH ... THERE ARE THOSE  
BOUNDARIES THERE, YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE  
DIFFERENT ... THEY DON'T HAVE THE SAME  
VIEWS AS ME, THEY'LL REJECT EVERYTHING I  
SAY (ARABIC SPEAKING, MALE, 21, BRISBANE)

For the African participants verbal assault most often occurred while using public transport or while occupying public spaces (often in groups with other Africans). Young people reported being told 'go home' or 'sickness comes from Africa' among other slurs. For other interviewees, perceptions of being different/being a visible minority indirectly hindered or prevented participation in certain networks. Participants had preconceived ideas of how other people would react to them and as such entered certain contexts feeling like they would not succeed in forming a network. As a result participants felt more comfortable with people who were of the same or similar background to them.

Similar to the experiences of racism reported by African interviewees, 'external pressures' for Arabic-speaking interviewees ranged from explicit to more discreet forms of racism. Specific incidences of racism and discrimination mostly involved being singled out in a group based on appearance, ethnicity, and/or religion, and most perpetrators linking individuals to 'terrorists'. As such 'anticipatory exclusion' was a common experience for all interviewees, especially among the Brisbane sample. Of the three groups, Pacific Islander interviewees reported the fewest incidences of racism and discrimination. However, several interviewees reported having interacted with people or networks that held stereotypes about Pacific Islanders, which subsequently impacted their ability or desire to engage with these people or networks. It is likely that these perceptions compounded existing barriers to accessing and participating in certain formal and informal networks.

## Trust

Of the overall sample, 45% of participants indicated that 'people can be trusted'. Nearly a quarter of the sample (24.4%) said that they 'can't trust anyone' while just over a quarter (28.7%) indicated that they 'don't know' how to answer this broad question.

In terms of the three participant groups, Pacific Islander youth displayed the greatest levels of trust in people with 58.9% indicating that 'people can be trusted', while only 14.6% said that they 'can't trust anyone'. 'People can be trusted' was also the most common answer among the African respondents, though to a lesser degree with 44.3% of this group indicating as such and 19.2% indicated that they 'can't trust anyone'. A marked difference is seen in the responses of the Arabic-speaking youth, with more than a third of this group (38.6%) responding that they 'can't trust anyone' and 33.1% of this group responded that 'people can be trusted'. This finding necessitates further exploration of its causality. It may be a reaction to the perceived barriers described above.

Overall, respondents indicated that they trust their family the most, with 78.4% of Africans, 84.1% of Pacific Islanders and 72.3% of Arabic speakers completely trusting their family. Respondents indicated that of all the groups suggested, they are least likely to trust two groups of people: 1) people they meet for the first time, and 2) politicians. Of the total sample, 36.8% indicated they did not trust 'at all', 35.8% indicated trusting 'somewhat' and less than 3% of respondents indicated trusting 'completely'.







OH MY GOD, THAT WAS REALLY DIFFICULT ... I WAS THE ONE WHO WAS MORE SCARED INSTEAD OF THEY WERE SCARED. BECAUSE I THOUGHT "I'M BLACK" AND THEY'RE GOING TO – BECAUSE IN SUDAN YOU HAD THE ARAB PEOPLE AND THEY'RE WHITE, AND I THOUGHT THEY WERE THE SAME PEOPLE (IN AUSTRALIA). SO EVERY TIME I SEE ANY WHITE PERSON I JUST RUN TO THE BATHROOM AND HIDE MYSELF (AFRICAN, FEMALE, 17, BRISBANE)

### Being too busy

Quantitative data showed that the most common barrier to engagement for all three groups was 'being too busy', with 37.7% of African, 34.3% of Pacific Islander youth, and 36.7% of Arabic speakers saying they were too busy. Among the African and Pacific Islander groups, 'being too busy' was more likely to be a barrier to cross-cultural engagement for 15- to 17-year-olds. In the African group, 42.9% of 15- to 17-year-olds, and 34% of those 18 years old and over cited being too busy as a barrier for engagement. In the Pacific Islander group, 35.7% of 15- to 17-year-olds and 30% of those 18 and over reported being too busy. The Arabic-speaking group differed in that it was the 18 and over group that was more likely to be too busy with 44% of them as opposed to 26.2% of the 15- to 17-year-olds, saying that being too busy was a barrier to cross cultural engagement.

Across all three groups the percentage of males who reported being too busy was higher than the percentage of females. 41.5% of African males felt they were too busy as compared to 34.5% of females. In the Pacific Islander group, the difference was smaller, with 34.4% of males and 32.2% of females feeling they were too busy. Among the Arabic-speaking group 41.8% of males and 32.6% of females were too busy to engage in cross-cultural activities.

Across all three groups, being too busy became less of a hindrance with an increase in the length of residence. Among the African group, 40.5% of those who had been in Australia for less than 5 years, 39.7% of those that had been in Australia for 6–10 years and only 20% of those that had been in Australia for more than 11 years cited being too busy as a barrier to cross cultural engagement. Of the Pacific Islander group, 50% of those participants that had been in Australia for less than 5 years, 39.1% of those who had lived in Australia for 6–10 years, 29.3% of those that lived in Australia for 11 or more years, and 26.7% of those that were born in Australia were too busy. In Arabic speaking group, 42.4% of the newly arrived, 40% of those that had been in Australia for 6–10 years, 38.1% of those had been in Australia for more than 11 years and 32.5% of those that were born in Australia reported being too busy.

### Community expectations

When asked about the main things that stop them from getting involved, from the list of eight options only a small number of participants agreed with the statement that 'Family wants me to stay home' as a reason for not participating in social activities. The largest group who indicated this as a reason was the African group (13.8%). Only 13.2% of Pacific Islander youth and 10.8% of Arabic speakers said that their family prevented them from more active participation in social events. A much larger percentage of Muslims (13.2%) than Christians (5.6%) found this to be a barrier to participation in cross-cultural groups. Several Pacific Islander participants reported that parents did not understand their desire for cross-cultural engagement. Interviewees indicated

an ongoing struggle to balance family and community expectations with personal desires around network engagement. One interviewee described how his obligation to church choir, which prevented him from playing rugby, left him 'feeling devastated ... [because he] ... really wanted to play.' He went on to say that if he could play he would 'feel happier because you get more friends and you meet more people' (male, 16, Melbourne). This example was repeated by a number of participants who felt restricted by their community obligations.

African interviewees reported high levels of inter-generational tensions related to network choices and network engagement even though underlying reasons differed. For several interviewees, the need to assist their parents in resettlement in Australia placed constraints on their time and ability to engage in other non-family related networks.

Many African young people also felt that their families were culturally different to Australian families and that this created a barrier to engaging cross-culturally. These differences were expressed in a number of ways; some simply said that they were more comfortable with other African people who shared their culture. Others explicitly mentioned difference as a barrier to cross-cultural engagement.

Unlike many African and Pacific Island interviewees, Arabic-speaking participants did not appear to resist their parents'/communities input nor feel resentment towards them. Several participants noted that while parents were actively involved in shaping life and network choices, it didn't necessarily present a problem. Although they felt that their parents and their community had a great deal of control over their decision-making, they did not appear to resist it. One participant explained that this was because he shared his parents' ideals. Some interviewees acknowledged differences between their lifestyle and the expectations of their parents. Some mentioned that their life was different from their parents' life experiences at the same age. This created some challenges. However, the participants did not talk about many family tensions.

This quote exemplifies differences in lifestyle expectations

IN EVERY ASPECT PARENTS ARE HEAVILY INVOLVED. THEY HAVE A BIG SAY. BUT YOU GOT THE SAME AIM, THE SAME GOALS, SO THERE'S NO POINT TO REBEL AGAINST IT. (MALE, BRISBANE)

that young people perceived to exist between two generations of parents and children.

YOU GET A POSITIVE FEELING, LIKE YOU'RE  
HELPING PEOPLE. YOU GET TO INTERACT WITH  
OTHER PEOPLE AND LEARN MORE ABOUT  
THEM AND THEIR OWN LIVES  
(ARABIC-SPEAKING, FEMALE, BRISBANE)

PARENTS HAVE THEIR OWN TROUBLES. THE  
PARENTS' VIEW IS THAT YOU SHOULDN'T  
HANG OUT WITH ANYONE BECAUSE THE  
SOONER YOU LEAVE, THE MORE THEY ARE  
ALONE. AND THEY HAVE THEIR OWN WORRIES  
(AFRICAN, MALE, BRISBANE)





## VOLUNTEERING

In 2011, the Australian Government adopted the National Volunteering Strategy which states that people aged 18–24 years old volunteer less (27%) than the Australian average (36%). However, some groups are markedly under-represented in data on volunteering because they contribute to their communities in ways that they do not see as volunteering. ‘Culturally and linguistically diverse communities and Indigenous communities, in particular, often give large amounts of time to supporting others but report lower rates of formal volunteering’ (National Volunteering Strategy, 2011: 28). The Strategy (2011: 12) suggests that flexible, project-based roles, meaningful work with room for autonomy, innovative use of technology and rewarding social connections are vital in attracting today’s young volunteers. Participants in this study volunteered in a number of ways, including through participation in school-based groups, ethnic community groups, recreation groups and religious groups.

Recent national statistics on volunteering in Australia show that in 2010, 6.1 million people (36% of the population) aged 18 years and over in Australia participated in voluntary work. People in the middle age groups (35–44 years to 65–74 years) were more likely to volunteer than those in younger and older age groups.<sup>1</sup> Young people in general volunteer less than older people, but the number of young volunteers is rising. The rate of volunteering by young people in Australia, for instance, increased from 16% in 1995 to 27.1% in 2010 (Volunteering Australia, 2012). The figure of 36.8% derived through our research is considerably higher than the national young people’s volunteering average. Our figure was relatively consistent across all three participant groups, with the Arabic-speaking group having the highest participation rate. Among Arabic speakers in our study, 40.4% said they were involved in a volunteer group in the last year; 36% of African participants and 33.8% of Pacific Islanders also said that they were volunteering in the last year.

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1. In the General Social Survey (GSS) a volunteer is defined as someone who, in the previous 12 months, willingly gave unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, through an organisation or group. ABS notes that some people do unpaid work under some form of compulsion because of employment (for example, work for the dole) or as part of study commitments. Such work is excluded from ABS measures of volunteering (ABS 2010).

### Significance and motivation

We measured the significance of community involvement by asking two questions. First, participants were asked if it was important to their family or guardian that the respondents get involved with their community. Second, we asked if it was important to the respondents themselves to get involved in their community. Among African young people, 33.7% said it was important to their parents and 36.5% said it was important to them. Of the Pacific Islander young people, 35.1% felt that community involvement was important to their family and 36.4% felt it was important to them. In the Arabic-speaking group 38.6% of young people felt that community involvement was important to their family and 30.7% felt it was important to them.

This study showed that young people volunteer because they want to get involved in the community and they have a desire to belong. Participants in this study viewed involvement in ‘volunteer groups’ as a way of addressing broader, systemic social justice issues. By being involved in volunteer groups they got actively engaged in the debates about larger systemic inequalities. There were two main motivations for the increased tendency towards ‘social-cause services’: desire and/or expectation of a broader social change, and positive self-affirmation. Determination, agency and action had, in general, positive effects on self-affirmation, because being involved in and contributing to social change (often by being involved on more local levels) made people ‘feel good’; they also got to meet new people or developed their social networks, which contributed to their increased employment options.

There were differences in volunteering between young people born outside of Australia as opposed to Australian-born. As most young people involved in volunteering groups thought that their volunteering contributed to social change (social-cause volunteering), higher volunteering rates among overseas-born young people may reflect their challenges of belonging, which contribute to a strengthening of their beliefs that social change is needed. Seeking engagement with broader, systemic social justice issues comes also from the desire to be accepted in the context of the national space and relates to the need to be active outside of one’s ethnic group.

## LEADERSHIP

Strong leadership is an important factor in promoting social cohesion, fostering feelings of belonging and encouraging participation, particularly within migrant communities – especially those that are vulnerable. However, leadership is a contested concept and our study shows some interesting differences between the three groups about what leadership means to them and why it is important. Leadership in this report is defined as a set of ‘relational practices’ that are similar to ‘mentoring’.

According to the project participants, the most sought after characteristics of a young leader are a capacity to be a ‘role model,’ and ‘respect for others’. For Pacific Islanders, being a ‘role model’ is more important, whereas for Africans and Arabic-speakers ‘respect for others’ is more significant. ‘Resilience’ or ‘having a firm opinion’ is the least valued characteristics of a young leader across the three groups. Surprisingly, ‘raising youth issues’ does not seem to be an important characteristic of a young leader across the three groups. Pacific Islander youth approaches the concept and practice of leadership in a particular way that is different from the perspectives on leadership of the two other groups. Conventional leadership among Pacific Islanders is not popular especially in Melbourne where young people challenge the perception that leadership entails a hierarchical structure.

Most of the data on leadership came from qualitative interviews. However, the survey referred to leadership issues in two different ways: from a group perspective and individual perspective. From a group perspective, questions explored involvement in solving local problems or issues with other people in the local areas. Overall, 34.3% of all respondents in the study have been involved in solving problems or issues with other people in their area. The strongest participation was recorded for Africans (40.1%), and slightly less participation was recorded for Arabic-speakers (31.9%) and Pacific Islanders (30.5%).

From an individual perspective questions were asked on identifying characteristics of a good youth leader. According to the qualitative data, there are two processes accompanying individuals who have been characterised as leaders, the need to ‘prove yourself’ (especially among African youth in Melbourne) and the need to ‘give back’ to your family and/or community.

**MUM DOESN'T REALLY LIKE IT WHEN I'M GOING TO TOO MANY MEETINGS, LIKE AMARAH [AUSTRALIAN MUSLIM ADVOCATES FOR THE RIGHTS OF ALL HUMANITY] OR WHATEVER, SHE DOESN'T LIKE THAT (ARABIC-SPEAKING FEMALE, 21, BRISBANE)**

## ACCESS TO SERVICES AND NETWORK PARTICIPATION

Time constraints, location and the lack of cultural sensitivity were reported as barriers to accessing service providers across all groups. Not getting information about services was also mentioned as a barrier, in particular among Arabic-speaking and Pacific Islander youth. Generational conflicts also influence the ways young people are involved in networks and how they communicate with service providers. African youth in both cities and Arabic-speaking youth in Brisbane (groups of youth who were born overseas, but have lived in Australia for some time) expressed most concerns about generational differences.

Data was gathered about access to services in the survey by asking three questions: whether the participants trust service providers, whether they felt that their networks provided a specific service or help, and what barriers they encountered in accessing networks and participating in communities.

The overall reported experience with service providers was positive. The highest level of satisfaction with service providers was expressed by African youth. However, only a small number of respondents felt that their community networks provided a specific service or help. This was especially so among African young people (only 18%). Relatively more Pacific Islander young people (24.5%) and Arabic-speakers (20.5%) accessed a specific service or help through their networks. There was a slight difference in respect to the two religions within the Arabic-speaking group: 21.5% of Muslims and 18.5% of Christians had accessed a specific service or help through their networks.

Across groups, young people mentioned the importance of cultural sensitivity or how important it is that services understand the way they feel. Lastly, relations within families substantially influence the ways young people are involved in networks and how they communicate with service providers. Misunderstandings and different ways of association cause migrant youth to experience difficulties in accommodating their own wishes and plans with the plans and wishes that their parents have for them. Nevertheless, persons who would be first on the list to talk to if young people experienced difficulties or if someone challenged their sense of belonging, are their parents or close friends. This was recorded across all groups and both cities.

However, seeking help from parents did present some issues for young people. One interviewee in Melbourne, a female born in Australia to Lebanese parents, had some troubles in asking her mother for help or advice, because she felt her mum is not so ‘open-minded’. Some African young people came to Australia by themselves, without their parents, and therefore speaking to their parents about challenges in their day-to-day lives was not an option. These interviewees were all based in Melbourne. Other people to whom our respondents would turn for help include: religious and community leaders (including youth leaders) and some members of community organisations. This was especially the case among African youth, where the sense of ‘community’ was, in general, the strongest.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the empirical findings of this project. These recommendations are aimed at improving the quality of services provided to Australian migrant youth in the direction of strengthening their sense of community belonging, social inclusion and general wellbeing.

Recommendations relating to youth participation and engagement	
Giving voice to young people of diverse backgrounds	Having opportunities to voice their experiences and be heard was found to be of foremost importance for young people of diverse backgrounds. Young people experienced a need to communicate the everyday realities of living as young and multicultural people to a wider Australian public. They felt marginalised when referred to through the label of 'migrant', 'refugee', or 'CALD' youth. These labels often impeded them from publicly voicing their experiences for mainstream audiences. This study found that increasing the number, variety and quality of opportunities for young people to express their views and be heard by the mainstream population is essential. Such opportunities can include multicultural programs and events, youth forums and festivals showcasing successes and young people's achievements and involving mainstream media exposure.
Improving media representation of young people of diverse backgrounds	Relating to the previous recommendation, our findings support strengthening representation and participation of young migrant people in the mainstream media – which remains an area of trenchant discontent and critique for this study's participants, as well as a common theme found in other similar studies. Government and the service providers should place a particular focus on creating and promoting media opportunities for young people. Training programs for migrant youth and in particular emerging youth leaders should include skilling up in media engagement so that migrant youth are able to function as creative contributors to media outputs and not merely as passive recipients of media attention.
Engaging youth through diverse activities	The study findings show that mainstream recreational facilities, such as sporting places or parks, were not very popular across all participant groups. Among the three groups, sports facilities were slightly more popular among African respondents, but were particularly unpopular as a place to go for some Arabic-speaking youth. This particular aversion to going to sporting places and parks can be explained by cultural preferences. This finding is counter to so many programs that seek to engage young people through sport as part of a social inclusion and community belonging agenda. The forms of social and recreational engagement for migrant youth need to go beyond sports, parks and other mainstream activities. Culturally sensitive forms of engagement need to be promoted and resourced as part of an active citizenship model for migrant youth.
Promoting volunteering experiences	Volunteering experiences of young people in their diverse cultural forms need to be promoted and acknowledged. The research revealed that young people tended to be involved in a range of formal and informal volunteering activities within and outside their communities for a variety of culturally specific reasons. Government and service providers should provide more encouragement and different forms of motivation and support for this form of bridging social capital.
Cultivating youth leadership qualities	This project found that ongoing support is needed for cultivating leadership qualities among multicultural youth. The findings revealed that young people were eager to take on leadership roles and to participate in leadership development events. This was of particular significance to the African and Arabic-speaking groups and, to a lesser extent, for Pacific Islander youth. Government and service providers are encouraged to organise more culturally sensitive programs, events and other opportunities to enable young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds to participate in youth leadership training programs, leadership forums and related leadership skills building activities.



## RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED →

Recommendations Relating to Service Provision	
Cross-cultural engagement	The research findings demonstrated that young migrants were deeply appreciative of the social activities organized by the local government agencies that bring multicultural youth together and foster intercultural learning and exchange. Programs aimed at sustaining cross-cultural engagement and social cohesion need more public support, funding, and policy focus. The research revealed that young people from Pacific Islander, African and Arabic-speaking backgrounds had a clear and expressed desire to engage with young people from other cultural backgrounds. Young people are in a position to both transform the capacity of future generations around cross-cultural engagement, and at times to positively influence attitudes and beliefs amongst older generations of migrant Australians. Developing well targeted programs, providing sustainable funding arrangements and maintaining a clear policy focus in this area of cross-cultural engagement will contribute to strengthening social cohesion in the Australian community now and in the future.
Inclusive school environments	Creating a culturally sensitive school environment needs to be maintained as a policy priority for state governments. This study suggests that while in general young people tended to have good relations with teachers and other school staff, they still felt a constant need to 'prove themselves' outside the school environment. They felt that 'Australian' values were prioritised and their individual needs were – often unintentionally – suppressed. It is recommended that State and Federal governments pursue, support and fund intercultural understanding as a cross-cutting learning competency. Moreover, culturally sensitive programs, initiatives and events need to be implemented in order to create a more inclusive and supportive school environment for young people of diverse backgrounds.
Family-focused approach	Some project participants reported having problems gaining support or understanding from their parents for their personal and community network involvements. It was of particular concern to African youth and was related to activities that did not directly relate to measurable educational outcomes. Relationships that young people have with their parents represent an important influence on the level and frequency of their participation and involvement in social groups. They can also impact their strategies of involvement in social networks. Service providers are encouraged to ensure that a culturally specific and family-focused service delivery approach is taken when engaging with young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.
Locality and service provision.	The majority of reported reasons for young people's lack of involvement in different social and community programs related to distance from services. This is often amplified by the lack of information about services. Qualitative data in this project show that location of services is the most commonly mentioned barrier to active participation in the programmes of service providers. Quantitative research findings, reveal that another important barrier to participation is time constraint. Young people tend to be more involved in groups and programs nearby close to their places of residence. Government and service providers, therefore, need to incorporate an awareness of this issue of locality and accessibility into the provision of programs for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations Relating to Building Networks, Trust and Social Cohesion	
Strengthening belonging and engagement	The research revealed that young people experienced the highest level of belonging and engagement when involved in social networks associated with their own communities. At the same time, they expressed a desire to reach out and engage across all communities but sometimes were faced with barriers to this form of engagement. Belonging, trust and community engagement are the cornerstones of social cohesion. Therefore, government and service providers are urged to deliver more programs and initiatives that encourage and support trust building and community engagement. Equally, more research is needed to identify the most effective approaches for building and strengthening belonging and engagement.
Building trust and social cohesion	There is a strong need to build trust and social cohesion among social networks. Amongst the three groups, trust levels of Arabic-speaking background youth are the lowest, with survey data showing that more than a third of this group thinks that they can't trust anyone. This is not surprising given the current socio-political climate with its concern with domestic security and international conflicts in Muslim-majority countries. But youth from all three groups indicated that they trust their immediate family the most, though this is not necessarily extended to their distant relatives. A comprehensive, culturally appropriate family approach adopted by service providers could deliver some positive outcomes in this regard.
Supporting social inclusion and active citizenship	Interviewees from all three groups reported a range of 'exclusionary practices' that prevented them from participating in social networks. These 'exclusionary practices' ranged from explicit, targeted racism to more implicit or covert discrimination or social exclusion. As illustrated in the literature, social networks act as vehicles for active involvement and engagement in practices of citizenship. There is, therefore, a need to develop innovative civic strategies and social programs to prevent discriminatory practices and alienation of some groups. These strategies and programs should be aimed at proactively promoting social inclusion and nurturing participative citizenship practices across diverse groups.

WELL I HAVEN'T REALLY LOOKED INTO IT TOO MUCH SO I CAN'T REALLY SAY. I REALLY WANTED TO JOIN CMY BECAUSE THEY PROVIDE REALLY GOOD SERVICES TO YOUNG MIGRANTS, AND I WANTED TO BE PART OF THIS PROGRAM THEY HAD GOING, FOR LIKE A COURSE. AND THEY PROVIDED A GREAT OPPORTUNITY. BUT I FOUND THE PLACE TOO FAR SO I COULDN'T JOIN (MALE, MELBOURNE)

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