

Youth Leadership Program Area



CENTRE FOR MULTICULTURAL YOUTH (CMY)

OVERVIEW

The Youth Leadership Program Area at CMY has evolved over a period of 10 years. It uses an experiential learning process which provides a platform for multicultural youth to:

- build their confidence
- grow their skills and knowledge about the issues that impact them
- expand their networks and improve their social capital
- increase their sense of belonging and connection

CMY uses a recruitment and induction process to get young volunteers involved across multiple programs. It considers the interest of the young people and takes various approaches to participation. Hence, programs at CMY are either youth informed, or youth-led or have been co-designed with young people.

As a result, the young volunteers can have various responsibilities based on the degree of participation:

- they can be advisors (for instance in mental health programs),
- they can co-deliver training (for instance in sector capability programs),
- they can co-facilitate/lead initiatives (for instance sports and recreation programs for newly arrived groups)



“Participation has made me more confident in going out there and owning my story and sharing it with the world.”

Quote from a Young Person

Programs in this area : **14**

Upcoming Programs : **6**

Current volunteers : **60**

New volunteers to join : **70+**

“I’ve made amazing personal connections with fellow mental health advocates, now calling them friends rather than colleagues or participants, so thank you!”

Quote from a young person

THE CHALLENGE

CMY recognises that society places several barriers on multicultural young people that prevents meaningful access and information to services. Culturally responsive service responses are needed for issues such as:

- understanding of the migration system
- registering with essential services
- accessing health and mental health services
- comprehending Australian social systems
- accessing education, training and employment pathways
- linking into sport and recreation opportunities
- dealing with family issues
- accessing accommodation and housing support
- navigating financial or legal difficulties
- accessing material aid

OUTCOMES

CMY has observed positive outcomes across across all their youth leadership programs. The outcomes are classified into four broad areas:

- Greater confidence and communication skills
- Increased opportunities to develop as active citizens
- Increased capacity for self and community advocacy
- Felt connected to their culture

In recent evaluations of these programs, young people have reported 80-95% satisfaction in each of these outcome domains.



“The biggest impact for me participating in this program was identifying the skills in helping clients from migrant backgrounds and giving them clarity on how to solve their issues in their families and communities.”

Quote from a young person

“I've learned a lot about the youth sector, youth participation, ways to influence policy and programs and issues experienced by migrant and refugee young people.”

Quote from a young person

KEY LESSONS

What works?

Recognising young people as change-makers – CMY moved from youth development work to a youth leadership model as the latter recognises the value and contribution of the young people. They are not just passive recipients of services but with adequate and enabling environments young people can participate and bring about change in their families and communities.

Being culturally responsive – Acknowledging the diversity of cultures which acknowledges various beliefs, backgrounds, customs, values, knowledge, worldview, lifestyle and social behaviours is vital for the model.

Safety – It is essential to provide a space where third culture young people who have multiple identities and diversity of thought and experience, can engage safely.

Capacity building – Taking a strengths-based approach and providing an experiential learning process to young people leads to incidental connections between peers and others. It also improves their future educational and career opportunities.

What does not work?

Tokenism – Young people are quick to recognise this. Therefore, it is vital that programs question their approach to youth participation – why are we involving young people? How will we engage them? What would be the level of the participation?

Short time-frames do not work – Genuine youth-led programs require time and flexibility. There is a need to invest time and resources to support authentic and intentional youth engagement models.

Digital divide – During COVID-19 lockdowns, although there was an increase in online engagement due to reduction of travel time, the digital access was a huge problem for multicultural young people. Limited number of devices shared among multiple family members and access to high-speed internet surfaced as the most common issues at this time.