

# How to involve different cultural groups

From The CLEAR GUIDE v1, written by Les Robinson for Mission Australia March 2009

www.enablingchange.com.au

These tips are designed to help you communicate sensitively with people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, including Aboriginal people.

## 1) First, chat to community workers

Meet with community workers who belong to the cultural group you want to reach. Tell them about your group, your goals, and ask for their ideas on how to involve people from that culture. Also ask them about cultural protocols: ways of welcoming, talking and behaving that work best for that group. Ask them about other organisations you could talk to or partner with.

At this stage, ask questions and listen. Don't just promote your idea. Be genuinely curious: asking genuine questions about family life and culture helps you learn and build relationships.

There are important cultural differences between every cultural community, so never assume that one size fits all. There may also be strong divisions *within* communities, so keep that in mind when asking questions to community workers.

## 2) Work through trusted organisations and faces

When promoting your activity, it's essential to have a known and respected community worker, or at least someone from the same cultural background, involved in issuing the invitation. Many people are too shy, too wary or too mistrustful to come to a group unless they know the people running the group or have heard from a friend that the workers are helpful and trustworthy.

When working with CALD communities it's a good idea to work in partnership with cultural organisations. See *How to start a partnership* section. That way you benefit from their networks, knowledge and reputation.

## 3) Spend time developing personal relationships

It can take time to build relationships with people from different cultures. Before people commit their energies, they'll need to get to know and trust you as a person. This may take several meetings and conversations over a period of time.

Remembering names and the relationships between people will help you engage and earn trust.

Be generous with your advice and time. It's also a nice idea to leave books or other useful or fun things, particularly for children.

#### **4) Don't rely on written information, even when it's translated**

Many CALD groups, especially recently arrived ones, may be poorly literate in their own languages. The best form of communication will always be face-to-face conversations with people from their own cultural group.

#### **5) Make activities fun and social**

Begin and end activities with a fun activity or celebration, especially one that is culturally relevant. This puts people at ease and helps build relationships. Ask community workers about foods and celebrations that are appropriate for different cultures.

### ***Useful resources***

#### **Working with CALD families – learning from experience**

[www.mmha.org.au/mmha-products/synergy/2005No2/working-](http://www.mmha.org.au/mmha-products/synergy/2005No2/working-)

#### **Brighter Futures – Engaging with Aboriginal Children and Families**, Department of Community Services

[www.community.nsw.gov.au/DOCSWR/assets/main/documents/BRIGHTERFUTURES\\_ENAGAGING\\_ABORIGINAL.PDF](http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/DOCSWR/assets/main/documents/BRIGHTERFUTURES_ENAGAGING_ABORIGINAL.PDF)

#### **Strategies for increasing partnerships with local Aboriginal organisations**, Western Sydney Community Forum

& NSW Department of Community Services, Nepean

[www.wscf.org.au/uploads/File/WSCF\\_partnerships\\_Aboriginal\\_orgs.pdf](http://www.wscf.org.au/uploads/File/WSCF_partnerships_Aboriginal_orgs.pdf)