

# Participatory Needs and Opportunities Assessment



## Community Café Dialogues

*-Supporting a well-connected and welcoming Brisbane community*

**By University of Queensland Consultant Group**

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## Executive Summary

Community Café Dialogues (CCD), as part of the Peace and Conflict Studies Institute Australia (PaCSIA), approached the University of Queensland (UQ) and requested a UQ consultant group conduct a Participatory Needs and Opportunities Assessment (PNOA). The PNOA was held on 15 May 2014 at the Romero Centre in Dutton Park and its purpose was two-fold. Firstly, the PNOA aimed to better understand the role that CCD has played in the lives of its participants. The PNOA was used as a means to evaluate both the strengths and weaknesses of CCD, as perceived by its participants. Secondly, the PNOA was used to identify future topics for discussion during CCD. These topics were raised if participants felt that they had not yet been addressed in past events.

This report aims to articulate some of the key findings that have emerged from the PNOA in relation to both of these guiding objectives. In doing so, the report identifies the needs of participants and future opportunities for CCD. The report concludes with a number of recommendations to aid in improving and building CCD, to better meet the needs of its participants.

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## Abbreviations used

CCD	Community Café Dialogues
PaCSIA	Peace and Conflict Studies Institute Australia
PNOA	Participatory needs and opportunities assessment
UQ	University of Queensland

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## **1. Introduction**

CCD provides a forum where members of the community, including Aboriginal, Torres Strait Island, migrant and refugee communities, new and emerging communities, and firmly established communities in Brisbane, can come together to converse. These conversations are held in a safe environment and encourage diversity through hearing and learning from a range of voices and perspectives. The aim of CCD is to create a more cohesive community through developing stronger relationships and connections between different cultures and individuals. This report will examine the effects of CCD through the feedback provided by CCD participants in the form of a PNOA.

The first section of this report will provide background information on CCD as part of PaCSIA, justify the appropriateness of a PNOA, and identify the objectives of the study. As there are two components to this study, both a reflective emphasis and a forward-looking purpose, the methodology and findings of the PNOA will be divided into two separate parts.

The second section of the report will present the methodology used to conduct the evaluation of CCD and the discussion of future topics. The third section will then present the findings and results of each methodology. The report then concludes with a summary of the findings, which inform the report's future recommendations. This section also includes a personal reflection from each of the facilitators. Finally, there are various limitations to the study and these will be acknowledged.

### **1.1 Background of PaCSIA and Community Café**

#### **Dialogues**

PaCSIA is a not-for-profit organisation based in Brisbane, Australia. PaCSIA designs and conducts research that focuses on the causes and dynamics of social conflict through participation and dialogue. As part of PaCSIA, CCD was created, as a means to address the expressed community need to learn more about different nationalities, ethnicities, cultural backgrounds and faiths. This need is particularly significant in Brisbane, as the city represents a multicultural hub, with an increasingly diverse population.

More than four years later, CCD continues to provide regular opportunities for a diverse range of individuals to come together and share food, information and ideas. The events provide a platform to discuss questions and topics that are important to individuals and communities.

CCD has expressed the need to reflect on their work so far, but to also look at continuing to expand the organisation and determine a way forward. This has resulted in the proposed PNOA.

## **1.2 Participatory Needs and Opportunities Assessment**

### **Rationale**

As participation is central to CCD, the use of a PNOA is closely aligned with the organisations values and worldviews. The overall purpose of the PNOA is to encourage participants to reflect on their own experiences and have their own say in order to identify the needs of participants and various opportunities for CCD.

Integral to this process is ensuring that individuals are empowered through voice. Voice refers to “the expression of a distinctive perspective on the world that needs to be acknowledged” (Couldry 2010: 2). The PNOA aims to not only enable voice, but to also ensure that these expressions and contributions are valued, allowing for a deeper level of participation (Couldry 2010).

Various techniques and methodologies are used in the PNOA to encourage participation, including an initial stakeholder analysis, brainstorming and discussion. Inevitably, smaller narratives and personal stories emerge as part of the PNOA. This PNOA aims to harness some of these stories through a storyboarding process, and examine how these narratives reflect wider themes within CCD. Stories are used as part of the methodology because it is a way in which people make sense of their life and give meaning to their experiences (McAdams 2001; Singer 2004). From these stories, the PNOA can examine both the literal experiences of individuals and larger metaphorical meanings of CCD.

## **1.3 Objectives of Participatory Needs and Opportunities Assessment**

This PNOA aims to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) Evaluate the role that CCD plays in participants' lives through examining its strengths and weaknesses.
- 2) Identify future topics that need to be addressed at CCD.
- 3) Recommend possible opportunities for CCD to further explore.



## **2. Methodological framework of PNOA**

It is important to understand the framework that underpins the methodology of PNOA. The aim of a PNOA is to create an environment that enables participants to identify and share the opportunities, weaknesses and needs of CCD. This qualitative study embraces a participatory-as-an-end communication framework, which enabled each participant to openly share their ideas (Penderis 2012). In order to achieve this, a variety of methodologies were utilised.

### **2.1 Overview of methodology**

PNOA methodology was designed around the key objectives outlined by PaCSIA. The methodology implemented embraced the participatory communication framework: to enable the voice of all participants. This means that it took various potential cultural, language and social barriers into consideration into its design and implementation (Chambers 2012). This is outlined below.

#### **Part I: Objective One- Evaluation of Community Café's**

The first part of the facilitation session was designed to evaluate the CCD, which was the first objective stated by the client. In order to extract what the participants identified as the positives and negatives of their experiences at CCD the values of the methodology of participatory video were encompassed.

Participatory video “provides a platform for considered and critical reflection, a space to consider the significance of what is and of what could be” (Milne et al 2012: 35). It is considered as a research process that inspires or creates social change (Milne et al 2012: 1). Participatory video involves a process that requires participants to critically analyse the topic they are presented with and assess what are the most important parts of this topic.

This is a great tool for evaluation as it enables participants to critically think about what parts of the topic are positive and negative and what this means for them. It also allows them to express their personal story in relation to their experience of the topic (Zoettle 2012).

In this PNOA process an adapted version of this methodology was implemented. Due to some ethical constraints, such as the visa status of participants, the use of video and photography was limited. Therefore the methodology used adapted

the participatory video methodology to suit the needs of the participants. This involved a process of brainstorming, discussion, story boarding and reflection. This follows the same process of participatory video, just omitting the video-making process (Milne et al 2012).

## **Part II: Objective Two- Topics to be discussed in the future**

This part of the session was designed to reach the second objective of the PNOA, which was to formulate ideas for topics to be discussed at future CCD. This was done in two parts; the first enabled participants to identify topics that they want to discuss at future CCD, the second allowed them to define what they value in a topic for discussion. The results of these two processes can be analysed to create not only a list of topics, but also a criteria for creating topics for the future. This has been expressed in the results section of this report.

A more direct methodology was implemented for this part of the participatory session. A solution-orientated brainstorm methodology was implemented in order to create topics that could be used for future CCD. The brainstorm was conducted individually and then discussed as a group. This was done to hear each participant's individual ideas, but also allows more ideas to be explored and developed through group discussion.

This discussion was facilitated to create a second discussion-led-brainstorm process, which elicited participants to identify what they value in a topic of discussion.

## **2.2 Implementation of methodology**

The methodology described above was implemented in close collaboration between the research team and the PaCSIA organisation.

The research team organised two two-hour facilitation sessions to be held on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014 and the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014. It was designed to involve small groups of 8-12 participants at each session. The methodology described above was implemented in these sessions in order to reach the objectives prescribed by the client.

This process is described in detail below.

### 2.2.1 Participants

The PaCSIA organisation used their contacts from Community Café's to invite participants who wanted to be involved in the PNOA. Community Café's encompass a large range of people from all economic, cultural and social backgrounds.

The first session encompassed eight participants. This included three participants with a refugee background and five Australian-born participants. The age of participants is estimated to be between 20-70 years of age. This consisted of seven females and one male.

Unfortunately the second planned session did not eventuate due to unforeseen circumstances.

### 2.2.2 Venue

The facilitation session was held at the Romero Centre in Dutton Park. This location was chosen due to its quiet, private space and its ease of access to participants.

*Image 1: The Romero Centre*



### 2.2.3 Facilitation Process

Using the methodology described, the facilitation process involved group-led discussions, paired activities, personal reflections and group reflections. Facilitators assumed a coaching or guiding role to engage participants and stimulate discussions. The facilitation process followed a “show-tell-do-follow up” model to explain to the objectives and processes involved (Malouf, 2003). This was followed up with reflections and discussions on a group level.

*Image 2: The facilitation process*



Each of the session was broken into two separate parts, which aimed to address each of the objectives defined by the client. The process is outlined below.

## **Part I: Evaluation of Community Café's**

The first part of the session was devoted to an evaluation of the participants' experiences of CCD. This embraced the methodological proves of participatory video. However, due to many ethical constraints an abbreviated version of this methodology was implemented. This process is outlined below.

### ***Brainstorming***

The first process used was brainstorming. The lead facilitator asked each participant to write down five words that described their experiences at Community Café's. These were then discussed in order to establish similarities and differences that could be used to define themes. These themes were then used to create stories about Community Café's that the participants would create later in the process.

### ***Story Boarding***

After clearly defining themes that portray each participants' experience at Community Café's the group of eight participants were asked to work in pairs. In these pairs, and some as individuals, the participants were asked to create a storyboard that reflected their experiences at CCD. Participants were asked to draw a six frame story that reflected their experience of CCD. This process produced very creative and diverse results.

### ***Reflection***

These storyboards were then shared with the class. Each group had the chance to share their story with the group and explain what it meant. This was a great process as it demonstrated the great variety of experiences from each participant.

## Part II: Topics to be discussed in the future

### *Brainstorm: Topics to discuss in future Community Café's*

Participants were asked to write down topics that they would like to discuss in future CCD. They were invited to write down as many as they wanted to. These were then shared with the group and discussed.

### *Discussion: What makes a good topic?*

Through the discussion process, the lead facilitator posed the question to participants; “why are these topics important? What makes a topic important to be discussed at Community Café's?” This led to a discussion led brainstorm that produced a variety of reasons as to what participants value in topics that are discussed in CCD.

## **2.2.4 Data collection**

The research team collected the data in a number of ways in order to collect valid and reliable data. The data collection methods included:

- Observation
- Note taking
- Personal reflections
- Photographs
- Raw data of storyboards
- Discussions

Each of these data collection methods were used in collaboration in order to attain the valid and reliable results that truly reflect what the participants expressed through the PNOA process. These results are expressed below and in appendix i.

### **3. Results**

This section will present the results obtained by the research team from the PNOA process.

The results are presented and discussed in two sections in line with the objectives of the PNOA which were firstly to conduct an evaluation on the effectiveness of CCD and, secondly to develop future topics of discussion.

#### **3.1 Results: Part I - Evaluation of Effectiveness of Community Café Dialogues**

The evaluation of the effectiveness of CCD is based on the reflections of participants through the presentation and discussion of personal storyboards. With the exception of one pair who opted to 'role play' rather than draw a storyboard, the storyboards constructed all reflected diverse experiences and approaches.

The key learning from the results shows that based on their personal experience of CCD, each pair or group evaluated the idea of CCD by focusing on one specific aspect.

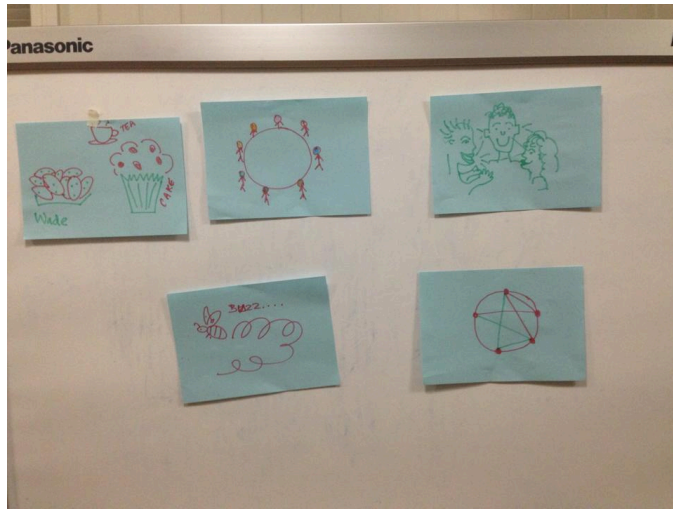
The following key themes emerged through the presentation and discussions:

- Social.
- Connecting.
- Narrative.
- Practical support.

The themes are discussed further in the analysis of each storyboard below.



## Storyboard One: “The experiences of Community Café Dialogues”



*Image 3: Storyboard One- “the experiences of CCD”.*

### Description

CCD is an occasion that brings everyone together. They create a platform or space for dialogue and discussion where people can talk, hear and listen to each other. Everyone communicates differently and is offered a space to do this in CCD. For example, sometimes in the dialogical process there may be barriers such as language and disability, which means you have to use alternative ways of communicating. The atmosphere is always ‘buzzing’ with energy. It is a noisy and busy process and it’s all about connecting, exchanging, communicating with people and making connections.

### Analysis

Participants view CCD as more than just an event. It is an ‘occasion’ to celebrate and come together. There is an underlying feeling or sense of belongingness that the café atmosphere creates through food being the main ‘celebratory’ item. The dialogical process is evidently an important aspect of the cafés as it provides a platform for participants’ voice to be valued by exchanging stories. Central to the dialogical process is how participants perceive the idea of ‘space’ as a recurring theme throughout the storyboards. CCD not only create the opportunity for voice to be amplified (heard) but also provide a form of legitimacy for their voices to be acknowledged and valued through dialogue and building relationships with others.



## Storyboard Two: “Game of Chinese Whispers”

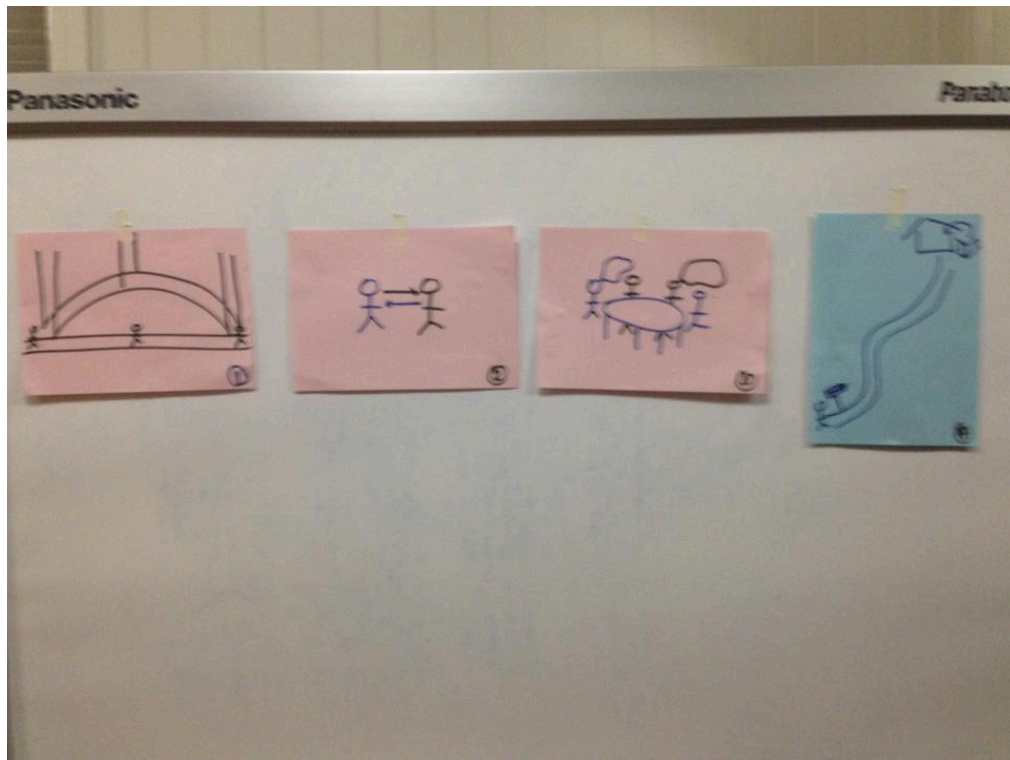
### Description

This pair opted to act out their story rather than draw it. They used the analogy of the game ‘Chinese whispers’ to demonstrate the idea of ‘getting to know’ someone where messages and stories are shared and exchanged as a way of getting to know someone. Everyone may hear the same message or story, however, it is adapted and changed in the manner that it enables people to share and connect with each other.

### Analysis

The role-play demonstrated the importance of the act of ‘listening’ in the process of making social connections while also highlighting the freedom to adapt and apply messages and discussions within the community café to personal situations as a strategy to build relationships. The dialogical nature of CCD enables people to come together in a way that enables listening, sharing and adaptation of information in order to find issues of common interest while respecting differences.

### Storyboard Three: “The Journey of Community Café Dialogues”



*Image Four: Storyboard Three- “The journey of CCD”.*

#### Description

The experience of CCD is a journey of ‘building bridges’ and crossing cultural and linguistic barriers where we sit together and accept different views and ideas – and everyone has different ideas! It is about the connection of getting to know each other. CCD is a long road to learning. People come from far away and are trying to get somewhere and CCD is one way to get there. It is a road or path to knowledge, and seeking knowledge.

#### Analysis

This storyboard compared the experience of CCD to the metaphor of a ‘bridge’ that enables people to make the ‘cross’ over between cultures and different worldviews. The ‘double-metaphor’ in this storyboard of CCD as a ‘bridge’ and a ‘pathway or road’ implies both a connection and a movement towards an aspiration. The idea of integration is evident in this storyboard as the metaphors were used to show on one hand the ‘bridging’ of people and cultures, and on the other a means or ‘road’ to knowledge as one way to reach aspirations through knowledge and understanding.

## Storyboard Four: “Single Story”



*Image Five: Storyboard Four- “the single story”.*

### Description

This storyboard chose to focus on one story out of the many they heard at CCD. The story was based on the narrative of a young Iranian girl who left her parents and sister. The young girl, without telling her parents had fled Iran to escape a pending arranged marriage and arrived in Australia as an asylum seeker with no visa and family. The story highlighted the complex emotional struggle that asylum seekers face with feelings of guilt, fear and doubt as to whether they have made the right decision to seek safety in another country. This story also emphasized the ‘ripple effect’ of the layers of uncertainty that asylum seekers often contend with between feelings of happiness and sadness compounded by the uncertainty of not having any contact with family back home. Although CCD have been a positive experience, they are not necessarily always a happy place to be as stories are never simple and are often layered with deep emotions and moral questions.

## Analysis

This narrative brings out some of the emotional complexity of stories shared in CCD and the impact of real life stories and issues that are addressed on participants. The story also points out some underlying emotions that emerge as questions and issues of concern where participants feel safe and confident. The story also depicts the real human side of the highly politicised issue of asylum seekers and brings to fore an understanding that what may appear to be superficial is often plagued with deep emotional and sometimes moral questions which are often only shared through forums such as CCD.

## Storyboard Five: “Practical Elements of Community Café Dialogues



*Image Six: Storyboard Five- “practical elements of CCD”.*

### Description

The final storyboard focused on the practical aspect of CCD in terms of helping participants meet and overcome some of their initial needs. For example, the social side of CCD enables people who are new to Australia to share food, immediately make connections or engage with other people who may provide language or communication assistance. The cafés create an opportunity for people to connect and develop multicultural networks, which offer language support for people seeking jobs while creating other unique opportunities presented by the network. The advantage of establishing networks through the cafés is that it provides an additional form of support service (e.g. communication and language tutoring) in helping people overcome some practical problems in addition to those already available through the process of community café dialogue.

## Analysis

CCD affords more than a social opportunity for people to connect and build relationships with each other. One of the benefits beyond the social connection is that the cafes create an opportunity for self-determinism where participants or individuals are able to intuitively draw additional support from their social networks outside of the café environment such as assistance with learning English or preparing for a job interview. The networks foster capacity building in a sense and function in a self-deterministic manner where problems or needs are shared between individuals within the group in order to leverage the groups resources and knowledge to resolve it, as in the case of job hunting.

## 3.2 Key Themes From Part I of Session: Evaluation of Community Café Dialogues

The analysis of the evaluation of CCD have been summarized into key themes with corresponding overview of some strengths and weaknesses of the community café dialogue which emerged through the reflection process of the storyboards. This is demonstrated in the below table.

*Table 1: Key themes in the evaluation of CCD*

Key Themes	Key Learning/Description	Strength	Weakness
<b>Space</b>	<p>Space was defined in terms of allowing and creating the opportunity for a viewpoint to be expressed.</p> <p>In other words, space was communicated as the act of listening and respect by allowing someone to have a say and not necessarily (or specifically) the dialogical nature or process of community cafes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible, free space to talk and share openly</li> <li>• ‘Space’ in community cafes is attitudinal – i.e. respect and listening.</li> <li>• Discussions in peace and harmony despite the many differences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If space is defined in terms of listening – you need to listen to understand and learn something new, problem if this does not occur.</li> <li>• How do you engage learning and understanding in alternative ways?</li> </ul>
<b>Voice &amp; Narrative</b>	<p>Used interchangeably to indicate personal stories, viewpoints and perspectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing ideas, platform that is open to everyone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voice and narrative limited to what is ‘already heard’ within community cafe.</li> <li>• What about the stories not being told or heard? i.e. those not part of or outside community cafes?</li> </ul>
<b>Social</b>	<p>Referred mainly to the ‘celebratory’ nature of community cafes, food, energy, ‘buzz’ of the atmosphere</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They (community cafes) have a good feeling that is active and engaging.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be crowded and noisy. Concern for elderly participants or those with special physical needs.</li> </ul>

Connecting		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Represents the freedom and opportunities that Brisbane has to offer.</li><li>Welcoming atmosphere</li></ul>	
	Expressed as the ways in which people build relationships and establish networks and generally interact with different people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Vastly different cultures and walks of life coming together and we have great discussions.</li><li>Experiencing other people’s culture through learning and experience.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>More often, people have to overcome their own personal barriers of judgment and prejudice before building relationships with others.</li><li>CCD doesn’t reach the members of community that need to be involved in the discussion in order for true change to occur. Participants identified this as a weakness as “CCD are preaching to converted”.</li></ul>
Practical Support	Defined more in terms of the network support and services that community cafes provides and also creates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Helps to provide network to newcomers.</li><li>Helps people get skills – capacity building and sharing.</li><li>Helps people find jobs through networks.</li><li>Helps people to overcome establishment problems for newcomers mainly.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Great support for new comers – risk of becoming too dependent.</li><li>Support services appeared to be targeted more towards new comers/settlers. What about long term (more than 6-12 months) settlers?</li></ul>
Education	Was expressed in relation to the learning experiences that community cafes provide and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Helps make perspectives more clear and informed.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Line of sight – people learn and understand the concept of</li></ul>



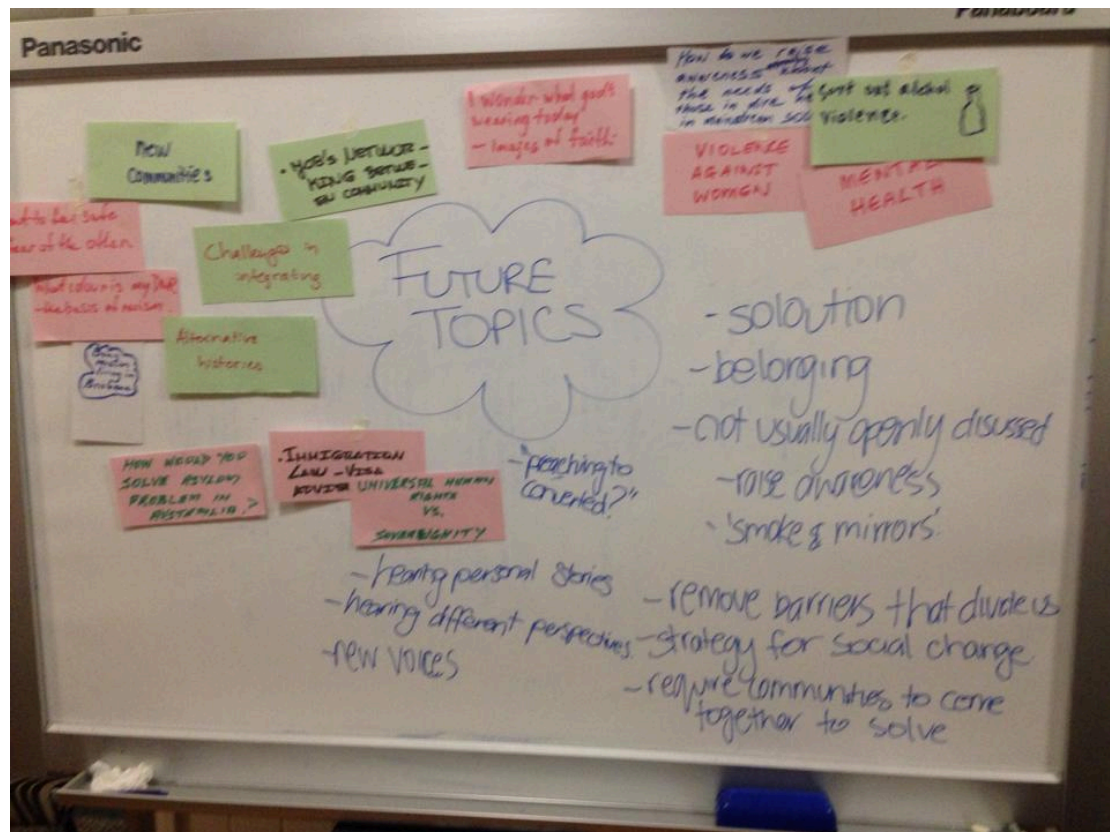
Communication & Language	understanding not only differences in cultural practices but also differences generally in life situations, world views and appearances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always learning something different because there's always something new being discussed or shared</li> <li>• Seeing things through a different lens – different perspective.</li> </ul>	<p>community cafes however there may be some skepticism in relation to its impact on social change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question of 'how is this making a difference?'</li> </ul>
	Used often to refer to the language and communication barriers between culture and people and how community cafes helps people overcome language and communication difficulties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps to improve language</li> <li>• Language assistance/coaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could be an area for improvement, or opportunity to strengthen current language building program of CCD.</li> </ul>
	Social Networks	Referred to the circle of contacts established through the community cafes process as a form of support outside of the cafes environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Example - interacting at the community café opens up opportunities for jobs and many other things.</li> <li>• Consider what kind of additional support people are getting from their informal networks and incorporate them into the services provided by the community cafes.</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Results from Part II of Session: Brainstorm of Future Topics

Participants identified a number of different topics that they perceive to be important to be discussed in future CCD.

#### Results

Image 7: Brainstorming of topics to be discussed in the future



These topics were expressed in the form of specific questions, general themes, specific issues that directly effect their community, and larger social problems. A full list of the topics, as expressed by the participants, is displayed in the figure below.

*Figure 1: Full list of topics participants expressed a need to discuss in future community café's.*



## Analysis of results

These results displayed in Figure 2 demonstrate the list of topics as named and framed by the participants. The topics reflect the very different range of people who attend CCD and their very different life experiences.

The topics identified by the participants were expressed in a number of different ways. These include; specific questions, specific topics areas, broad social issues and abstract discussion points.

However, a close analysis of the various topics identified by the participants, show some broad themes that can be used by the organiser's of PaCSIA to develop future CCD.

The themes identified by an analysis of these topics include:

- **Skill development**
- **Abstract discussions**
- **Problem solving discussion**
- **Sharing of personal experiences**

These four broad themes overarch the specific topics that were identified by the participants. These themes are defined below in Table 2 with each topic area categorised within the themes. There is some overlap identified between the topics and the themes they encompass.

*Table 2: Identification of themes in the topic areas identified by participants*

Theme	Description of theme	Topics identified by participants
<b>Skill development</b>	These are topics that will help participants learn and develop tools that will help them in their everyday lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job vacancies in the community.</li> <li>• Networking skills for job seeking.</li> <li>• Immigration law and visa advice.</li> </ul>
<b>Abstract discussion</b>	This theme reflects topics that encourage the discussion of issues on a larger, more complex level. Discussion may not lead to any resolutions of an issue, but they do allow participants to gain new perspectives about an issue and even learn about an issue they didn't know much about.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is democracy?</li> <li>• New communities.</li> <li>• Fear of the other.</li> <li>• How would you solve the asylum problem in Australia.</li> <li>• Universal rights vs sovereignty.</li> <li>• New communities.</li> <li>• How do we raise awareness about the needs of those in the outer of mainstream society?</li> </ul>
<b>Problem solving discussion</b>	These topics open up discussion about issues in society that participants identify as a problem. These are issues that require problem-solving framed discussion, which may or	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health.</li> <li>• Domestic violence.</li> <li>• Alcohol violence in the community.</li> <li>• Challenges in integrating.</li> <li>• How do we raise awareness about the</li> </ul>

**Sharing of personal experiences**

may not lead to the resolving of problems for participants.	needs of those in the outer of mainstream society?
Topics in this theme allow participants to share their personal experiences to widen the perspectives of participants and allow them to learn something new.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fear of the other.</li><li>• Domestic violence.</li><li>• New communities.</li><li>• Immigration law and visa advice.</li><li>• Challenges in integrating.</li></ul>

These themes demonstrate the great potential of CCD have on participants lives and how the topics discussed can change their lives. This can be in the form of learning something new, gaining new skills or simply gaining some perspective on a complex issue.

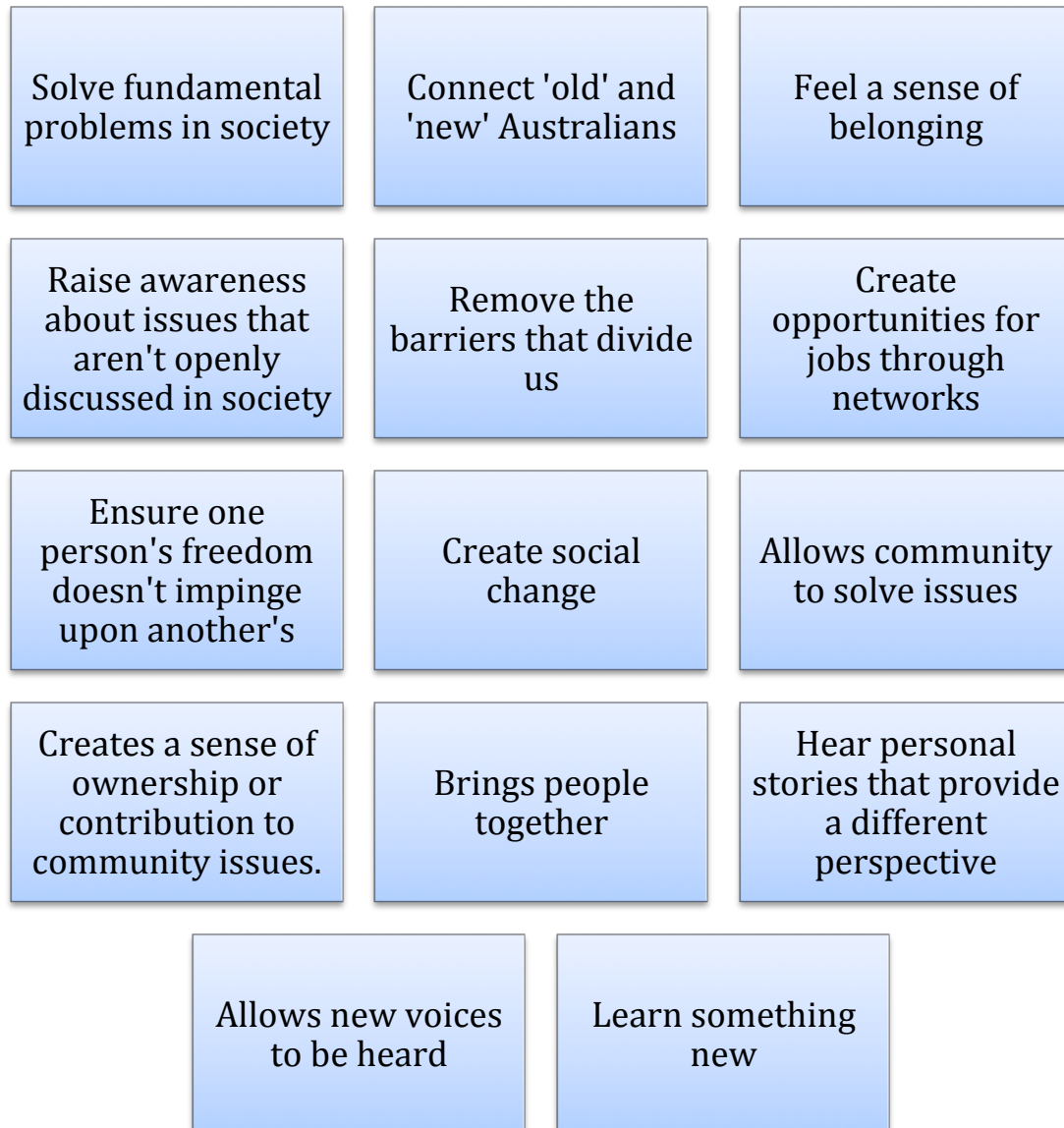
During the facilitation process the participants also identified what makes a topic important enough to discuss at CCD. The results of this discussion are displayed below.

### 3.2 Results From Part II of Session: Why These Topics?

Once the participants had brainstormed a list of topics, we facilitated a discussion about what makes a topic important. We questioned the participants about why they thought that their list of topics, listed above, are important and why they wanted to discuss them at future CCD. The results of this discussion are displayed below.

## Results

*Figure 2: Reasons provided by participants about what makes a topic important for discussion at Community Café's.*



## Analysis of results

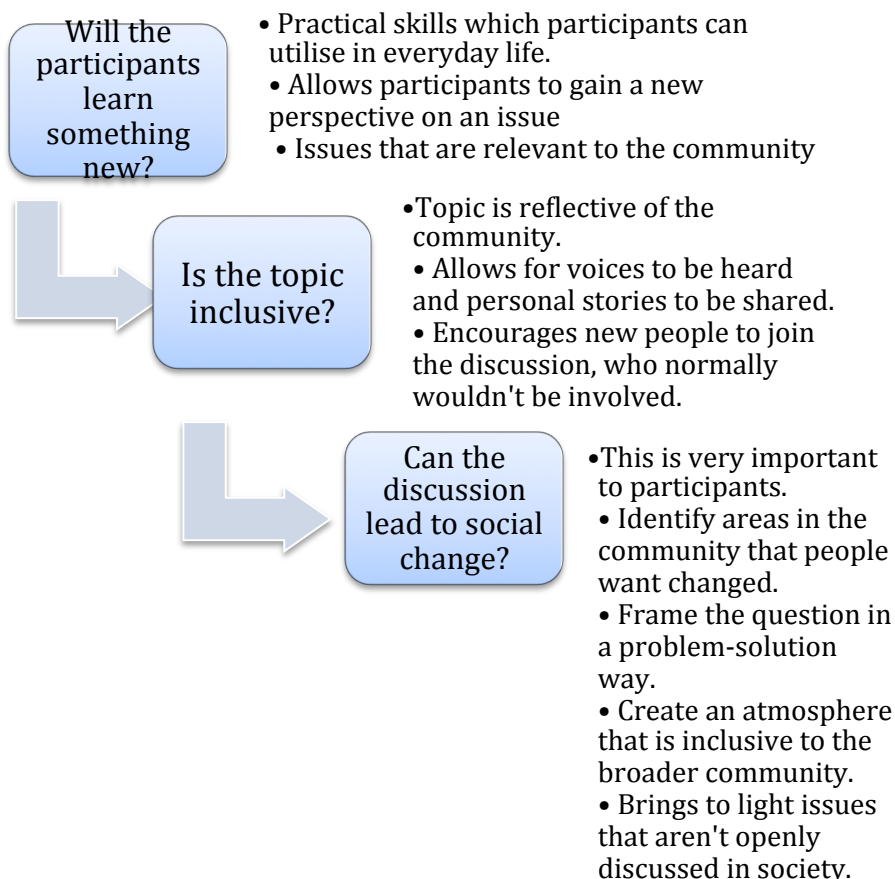
The results of the discussion about what makes a topic important to participants of CCD are important and insightful into the needs and opportunities that they represent to the community.

Just like the topics identified by the participants, these thematic ideas of what makes a topic important, are reflective of the various backgrounds that the participants come from.

The results from this discussion are important for the future of CCD. The themes that participants identified as being essential for a good topic for discussion at the Café's, can allow for the organisers of CCD to produce topics in the future that are both relevant and important to participants.

Figure 2 lists the reasons provided by the participants in full. However, through deep analysis completed by the research team strong themes can be created to identify topic areas for the future. A criteria has been developed and provided in the flow-chart below, to help organisers develop topics for future Community Café's that express the needs identified by the community.

*Figure 4: Criteria for creating topics for future Community Café's*





## 4. Recommendations

Based on both the analysis and conclusions presented, this report makes the following recommendations

- Elderly participants expressed that the CCD environment can be noisy. These participants should be shown consideration and the room set-up should allow for quiet spaces, if participants are in need of a break.
- Participants would like more information regarding employment opportunities in Brisbane. It may be useful to include this component in future topics, or include a section on employment opportunities or vacancies in the newsletter, on a regular basis.
- It is inherent from the PNOA that participants do not readily make the link between CCD and social change. Perhaps it would be beneficial to include a story or example in CCD conversation that demonstrates how social change has come about as a result of CCD.
- It was agreed amongst the group of participants that the people who need to hear and learn from these dialogues most, do not currently attend CCD. It might be beneficial to look into a communication strategy that addresses this gap.
- It appears that people are using the informal networks from CCD to meet some of their initial establishment needs. There is an opportunity for CCD to better understand how people are using these informal networks. This will allow CCD to develop and strengthen the current services they are providing.

## **5. Limitations of the PNOA**

Despite the quality of the information received and recorded, it is important to acknowledge several limitations of the study. Due to strict time constraints, the facilitation processes had to be confined to two sessions. This limitation was further impeded by the cancellation of the second session due to unforeseeable circumstances. As a result, the ability to generalise the results is somewhat constrained because the sample group was small and not representative of all voices and stories.

In addition, a majority of the participants in the PNOA were settled Australians and this is not necessarily representative of the diversity of backgrounds of CCD participants. Therefore, future study would be beneficial to further engage a wider range of stakeholders and voices from minority communities. For example, Aboriginals and Torres Strait Island communities were not present in the PNOA process.

## **6. Conclusion**

The results demonstrate the CCD has played a positive role in strengthening community relationships, encouraging diversity and connecting people. The effects of CCD are multi-leveled, where participants are involved for a number of reasons. For example, whilst some individuals expressed the practical purpose of CCD, such as improving language and finding employment, others expressed a deeper desire to understand different people and cultures in order to improve society.

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## Appendixes

### Appendix i: Key Direct Quotes from Participants

Below are some interesting comments that were captured in relation to participants' views and experience of CCD;

- "I've never met an Aboriginal, an African, a policeman before we met and we spoke for a great amount of time and there was no conflict and I learnt so much; it was true peace."
- "Everyone interacting openly without fear and with respect. It was very accepting. It could been a rabble but it came out like a song."
- "Helps me understand others perspectives but also helps me understand my own perspective."
- "We truly have the spectrum of humanity. It is pretty amazing to get that in one room. To bring all together in one room in peace and harmony is the biggest achievement of community café."

## Appendix ii: Personal reflections

The following is a personal reflection statement from each member of the research team on the facilitation process, as requested by the client PaCSIA. These statements are a reflection of the personal thoughts, opinions and observations of the individual, and should be considered in this context only.

### 1. Personal Reflection of Eadie Hancock

#### *Process, performance and limits:*

In general, I was pleased with the effectiveness of the brainstorming and storyboarding. Each process ran smoothly, with all members of the group contributing, participating and sharing. Perhaps important to note was the initial resistance of Abdul (older, male refugee) who was hesitant to draw pictures during the initial 'ice-breaker' activity. However, with a little time and encouragement from another group member, Abdul eventually became involved, which was integral to the ensuing storyboarding activity.

In terms of our role as facilitators, I think the processes were explained adequately and the group understood what was required of them. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that the participants were predominantly competent in English and our success may have been at least in part, aided by this factor. Perhaps if this had not been the case, some of the activities may need to be explained more succinctly, and greater time allowed for questions and queries.

#### *Content and findings:*

I was incredibly satisfied with the wide breadth of data that we received from the group. Everyone had insightful reflections about the role that CCD has played in their own life, but also in their community more generally. These different stories spoke of the multi-levelled nature of the dialogues. Whilst some people focused on the practical purpose of the event, others spoke of the deeper, underlying effects of hearing stories of agony and pain.

These stories and reflections largely represented the many positive effects of CCD which is shown in our data. So perhaps it is interesting to note that one of the only concerns, which surfaced in the session was the speculation that these cafes may not create significant social change. The group suggested that the

people, who truly need to hear these different perspectives, do not currently attend the events. Whilst this is not necessarily a criticism because the organisation is based on voluntary participation, it may be beneficial to look into potential ways to address this issue.

The final part of the session saw the emergence of a number of different topics for future cafes. The discussion of these topics led to positive debate within the group. Most notable during this session was the agreement that the meaning of democracy and the tension around freedom needs to be discussed and debated further.

## **2. Personal Reflection of Jordan Tredinnick**

Overall I believe that we were able to truly encompass the participatory communication paradigm in order to reach the objectives outlined by PaCSIA. This was a very rewarding experience, as it felt like we were mere enablers in allowing people to use their voice to share their experiences.

I learnt a lot from this process, not only the participants, but about myself. It was a fascinating experience to hear each participants share such different and unique experiences in their own voice. I found this particularly fascinating in the storyboard process of the session. It was amazing what each group created! They all produced something completely different, even though the instructions provided was the same for each group. Their creativity was amazing and really reflected some amazing insights into their experiences at Community Café.

The process of facilitation was also extremely interesting and rich in learning. As a research group, we prepared and planned for many different scenarios. We thought about what would happen if language was a large barrier, if only some people would participate, if some people dominated the session, if only a few people showed up or if a large group arrived. We planned a basic script, based on responses we thought we might receive. However, the experience that we had was completely different to what we ever could have conceived. The responses we received were so different to what we expected, which was fantastic! The amazing group dynamic made the whole process flow like a big conversation. Although some people had the tendency to be more extraverted and control the conversation and others were more quiet and shy and needed some

encouragement; the conversation just worked. The members of group seemed to recognise this about themselves. The louder participants would recognise when they were dominating the conversation and would take a step back, allowing the quieter members of the group to speak.

One aspect that I feel could have been improved on, if this process was to be repeated, would be to have a greater variety of participants. It was disappointing that the second session fell through due to unforeseen circumstances. I feel that even with this one additional session could have added a lot more to the data collected and the conclusions made.

Overall the experience was a rewarding experience that enabled all members of the session to participate. This led to some great discussions, which I hope, enabled all of those present to learn something new and to gain something from the experience.

### **3. Personal reflection of Imelda Griffin**

The biggest thing learnt from this experience was to always be prepared to change, adapt and be flexible with a facilitation plan. I thought we could have used a think we could have used a technique to get people to be more critical of their experience or framed the ice breaker question differently to prompt critical thinking. Even though the activity asked people to consider positive OR negative experiences of living in Brisbane, all participants opted for a positive story consequently resulting in a one-sided perspective. I also learnt a lot of things about working particularly with a highly sensitive group with specific ethical considerations. For example writing and drawing was a challenge for one participant. I learnt that as facilitators we needed to always have a strategy on how to manage or engage participants with certain difficulties or concerns which I think we did not manage very well but by resolved itself when another participant offered to assist the individual.

The room was not conducive for running a workshop style session, i.e. the room set up and limited space was highly restrictive even though the group was small. I think a more open space would have worked better. The Romero Centre has a great set up for informal social activities, with very clean facilities for users. PacSia provided excellent support in terms of coordinating the venue and

managing participant invitations for the workshops. Although, the second workshop did not eventuate due to non-attendance of members the first workshop provided sufficient information and data to conduct the PNOA. I did not see it as a failure but as a learning of the reality of working with communities. It has been an invaluable experience.