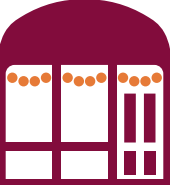
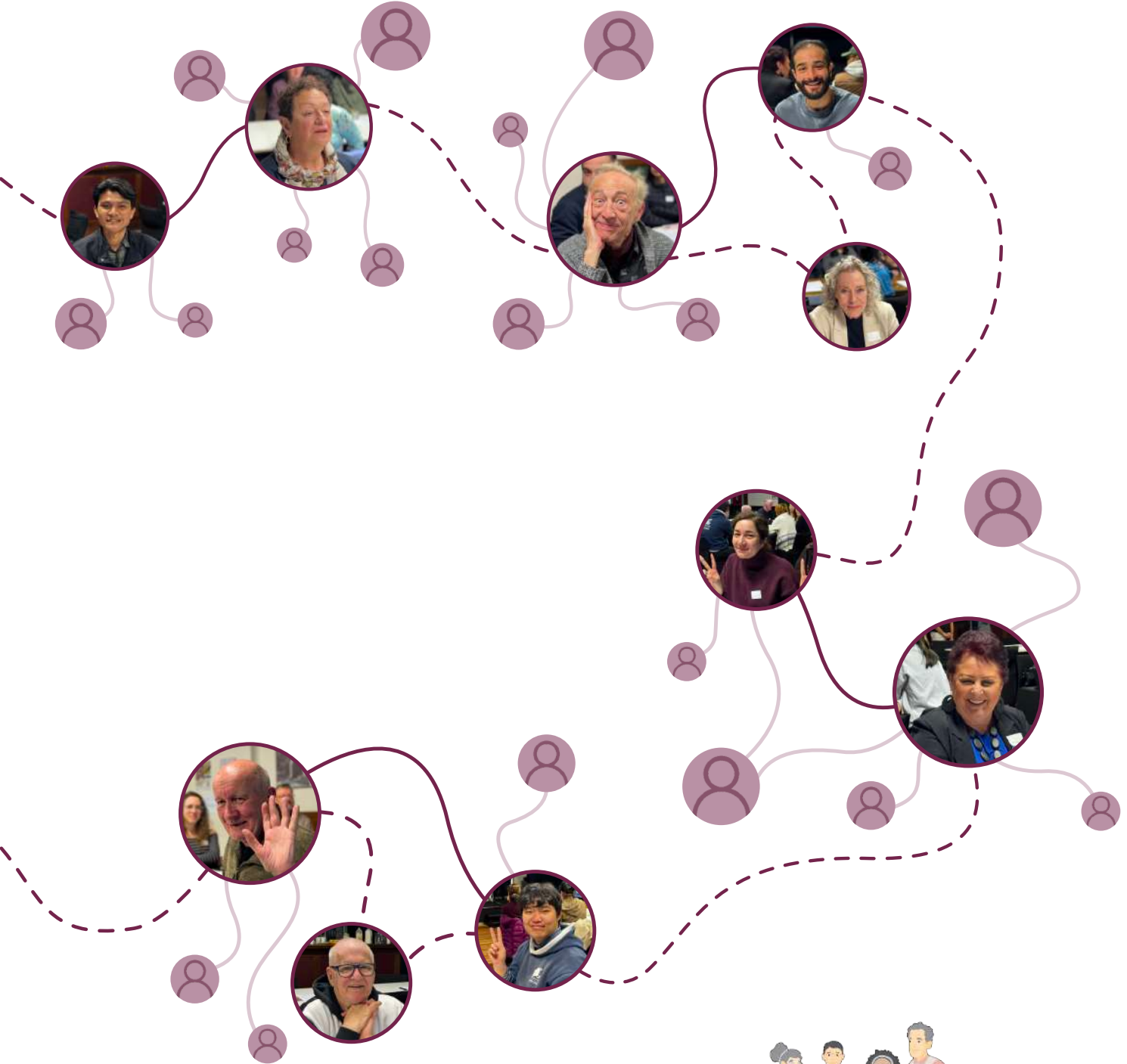


Being a Melburnian Report 2025



North & West Melbourne
Neighbourhood Centre

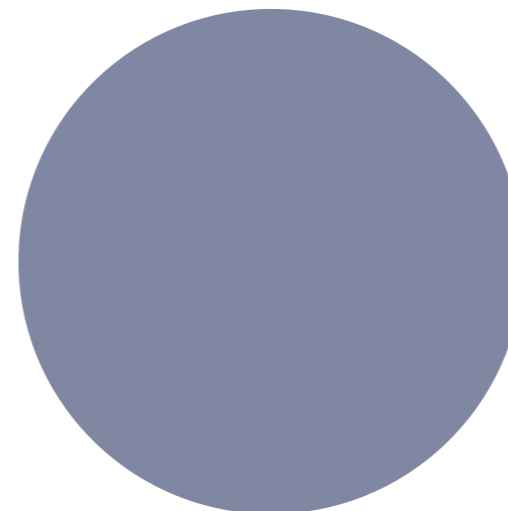


Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the unceded land on which we work, learn and live: the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong peoples (Burnley, Fishermans Bend, Parkville, Southbank and Werribee campuses).

The University also acknowledges and is grateful to the Traditional Owners, Elders and Knowledge Holders of all Indigenous nations and clans who have been instrumental in our reconciliation journey.

We recognise the unique place held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the original owners and custodians of the lands and waterways across the Australian continent, with histories of continuous connection dating back more than 60,000 years. We also acknowledge their enduring cultural practices of caring for Country.



Program Team

This initiative was proudly hosted by the North and West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre (NWMNC) and supported through funding from The University of Melbourne Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) Grant, with a contribution of \$20,000.

We gratefully acknowledge the dedication of all contributors, including mentors, coordinators, and staff who made this program possible.

Program Leads, Mentors and Facilitation Team



Peiqi (Kevin) Shi

Program Lead

B.Des-Architecture grad,
GD.Art- Philosophy



Nava Lok

Program Co-lead

B.Des- Urban planning grad, Urban
planner at VPA



Dr Ashrafal Alam

Program Mentor

Senior Lecturer in Social Planning,
Faculty of Architecture, Building
and Planning



Arnab Goyal

Program Staff

M.Arch-Architecture grad, Outreach
Officer at North & West Melbourne
Neighbourhood Centre



Ariel Valent

Program Mentor

Director, North & West Melbourne
Neighbourhood Centre

Support and Volunteer Team

We also gratefully acknowledge the dedication and enthusiasm of our volunteers:

International Students:

Naim Ahamed, Tri Julianti, Amir, Arie Judanto, Hongyi Liu, Soraya Anggarawati, Shilin Yuan, Hafiz Anshari, Shabnam Afaghi, Seint Htoo Htoo, Pavanrat Sakulsacha, Yifan Cao, Tianyi Lu, Annie Fang, Yujia Gu, Zhiyu Huang, Siying Chen, Andrea Derungs, Joshua Chou, Pavithra Veena, Yimiao Zhang, and Yake Wang.

Local Melburnians:

Michael Taylor, Peter Greening, Ian Woodruff, Alan Cooke, Laurence Angwin, Jim Weatherill.



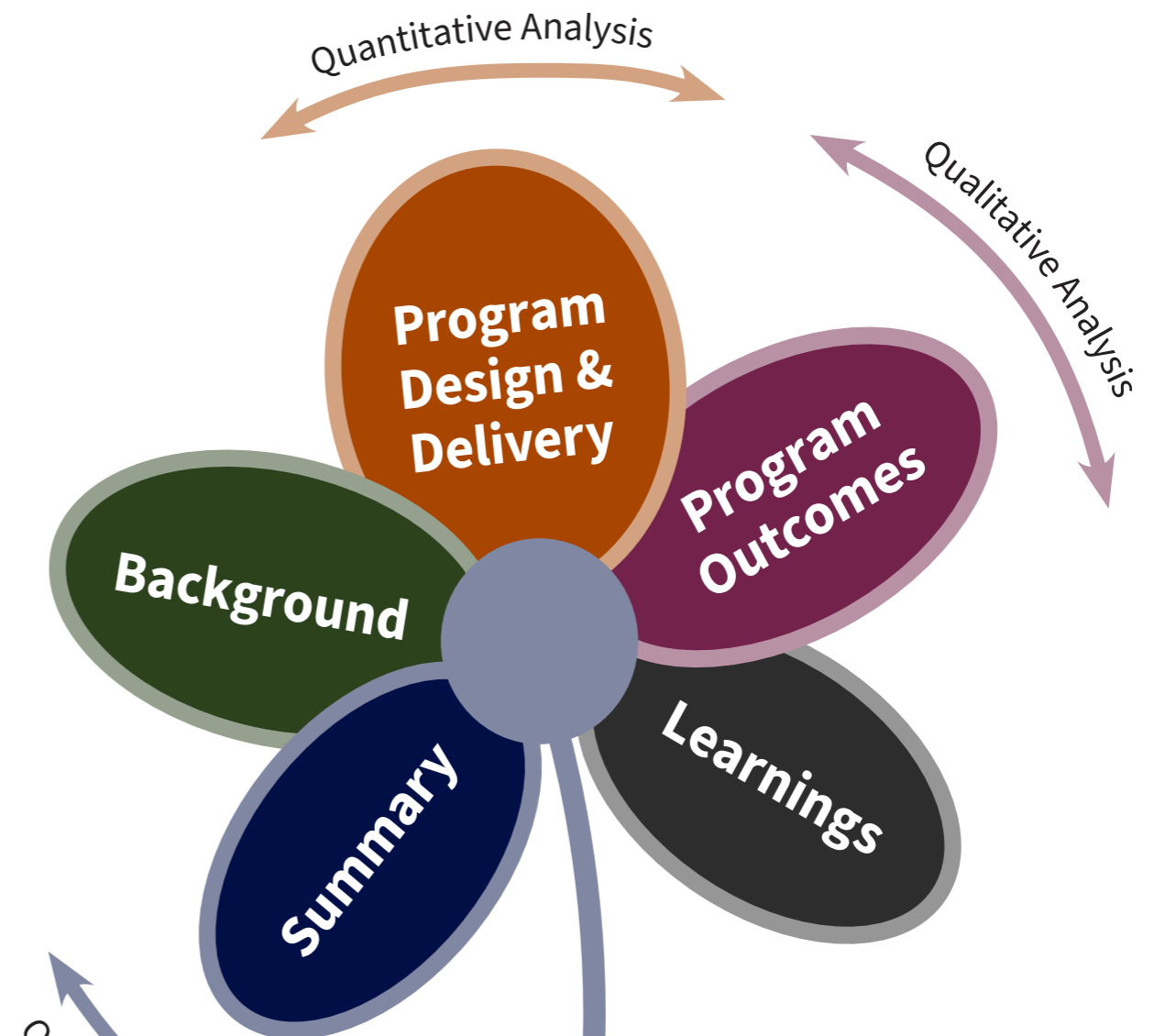
Session 1 Group Image with student volunteer team and staff



Session 5 Group Image. Photographers details: Jim Weatherill (jimweatherill@hotmail.com)

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How to Read This Report

The report offers two reading paths. For a quick overview, start with Part 1: Summary, which outlines the program’s goals, milestones, and achievements in 2–3 pages, supported by highlighted achievements.

For a deeper understanding, follow the full narrative: Part 2 explains the background and audience; Part 3 details design and delivery; Part 4 presents outcomes with stories and data; Part 5 shares learnings and future opportunities

Part 1

1. Program Snapshot



Summary



2. Objectives & Significance



3. Achievements

Program Snapshot

Peiqi (Kevin) Shi, an international student at the University of Melbourne and a board member at the North and West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre, has designed a program to connect two often-overlooked groups, international students and older Melburnians, through conversation, connection, and cultural exchange.

Hosted by the North and West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre and supported by the University of Melbourne Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) Grant Funding, “**Being a Melburnian**” is a program that offers a safe, welcoming space where respectful engagement is the priority.



The concept grew out of a gap Kevin noticed during his volunteer work both at the University of Melbourne and in North and West Melbourne: international students often face isolation, cultural adjustment challenges, and uncertainty, while many older Australians seek meaningful ways to engage with their community. Without a link between the two, valuable life experience goes untapped, and students can struggle to feel at home in Melbourne.

Research confirms the need for such initiatives. **Ending Loneliness Together’s 2023** report highlights that loneliness affects people of all ages, with both international students and older Australians at particular risk. **The City of Melbourne’s Great Place to Age strategy** also emphasises the benefits of intergenerational engagement for building stronger, more inclusive communities.

Running from August to September, “Being a Melburnian” is more than a series of gatherings. Instead, they are designed for one-on-one conversations and focus on meaningful cultural exchanges. With topics on food, language, and sports, participants are encouraged to share everyday stories and cultural insights, from navigating Melbourne’s laneways to understanding Australian humour, building trust and belonging in the process.

The goal is not only to ease students’ transition into Melbourne life but also to give older Melburnians rewarding opportunities to contribute. Over time, these connections are expected to grow into long-lasting friendships that extend far beyond the program.

In a city celebrated for its diversity, “Being a Melburnian” transforms that diversity into genuine human connection, one conversation at a time.

Objectives

The project aims to create curated sessions that bring together two diverse groups International Students and Older Melburnians, in ways that are mutually beneficial.

Kevin's inspiration comes from his own experience with one-on-one tutoring after school. Unlike the time-pressured, large-classroom setting, those sessions gave him space to explore ideas more deeply and build genuine understanding. He recognized the value of personalized, one-on-one interaction as a way to foster learning, connection, and growth.

Applying this insight, "Being a Melburnian" is designed not as a teaching or tutoring program, but as a mutual exchange. Older participants are not positioned as teachers; instead, the program creates space for shared stories and experiences, with sessions structured around universal themes such as language, food, and sport. Group activities are intentionally broken down into smaller, one-on-one or paired conversations, for meaningful connections

The goal is to create a platform where both groups can learn from each other, build trust, and form lasting connections, turning cultural diversity into an opportunity for genuine exchange.

We were fortunate to see several accomplishments as shared below in **Achievements**

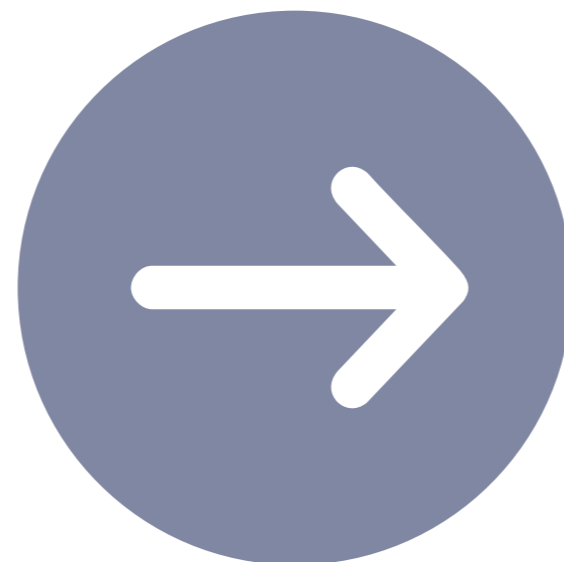


Significance

The objectives of "Being a Melburnian" carry significance well beyond the program itself. By intentionally creating spaces for one-on-one and small-group exchanges, the project directly addresses isolation, cultural adjustment, and intergenerational disconnection, issues identified as pressing in both research and community consultation.

- For international students, the program provides more than social interaction; it offers a sense of belonging and practical cultural understanding, support with casual work and food insecurity, elimination of language barriers and improvement in their emotional intelligence, which can ease their transition into life in Melbourne.
- For older Melburnians, it creates an avenue for active participation, meeting new people and sharing their adventures, and meaningful contribution to their community, recognizing their life experiences as valuable resources.

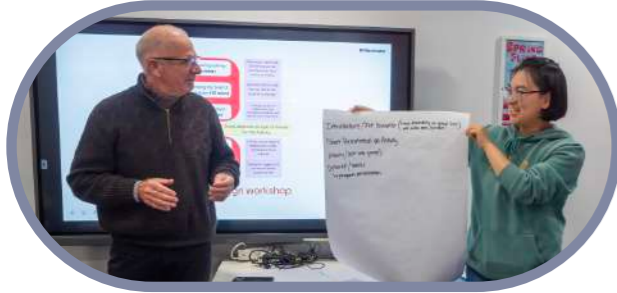
At a broader level, these goals align with the City of Melbourne's aspirations for inclusive, connected neighbourhoods and demonstrate how simple, structured conversations can foster resilience and empathy across generations.



Achievements

Please read Part 4: Program Outcomes for details about these Achievements

Co-Design



Collaborative workshops gathered community insights to design inclusive sessions with them, aligning the program's structure with shared goals and aspirations.

Yuezhang and Alba initiated a group visit to the North Melbourne Football Club's AFLW event, where participants connected, received merchandise, and met players, celebrating Melbourne's vibrant community spirit.

AFLW Match



Sports



Nature Trips



Wayne and his wife drove Arie and Ana to Weeroona Cemetery in Greenvale, where they saw rare wild albino kangaroos, and a brown snake. It is known for its Aboriginal significance.

Amirali, once a shy international student, gained confidence through mentorship from Laurence at the homework club, improving his public speaking, peer mentoring skills, and ability to connect with others.

Confidence



Language

Socializing



Participants joined the North and West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre's lantern-making workshop, forming friendships and finding that connection helps ease loneliness.

Queensberry Cup



Sports



International students from "Being a Melburnian" volunteered at the 2025 Queensberry Cup, participating in billy cart racing, supporting event activities and strengthening their connection with the North and West Melbourne community.

Participants joined a local community choir, discovering how music builds confidence, bridges cultures, and brings people together through shared rhythm, harmony, and the joy of singing.



Choir

Food



Home Meal

Participants enjoyed traditional pies from Bread Club, a local favourite suggested by Alan, a Melburnian who fondly recalled eating them during AFL matches and road trips.

Participants met at the Queen Victoria Night Market on a Wednesday evening. They walked through multi-cultural food stalls and shared stories, and reflected about the sessions.

Night Market



Coffee



Participants continued meeting for coffee after the sessions, sharing stories and support. Social media posts and an active WhatsApp group kept the friendships and community spirit alive.

End of Program Party



Part 2

1. Research



2. Precedent Study



3. Target Outcomes

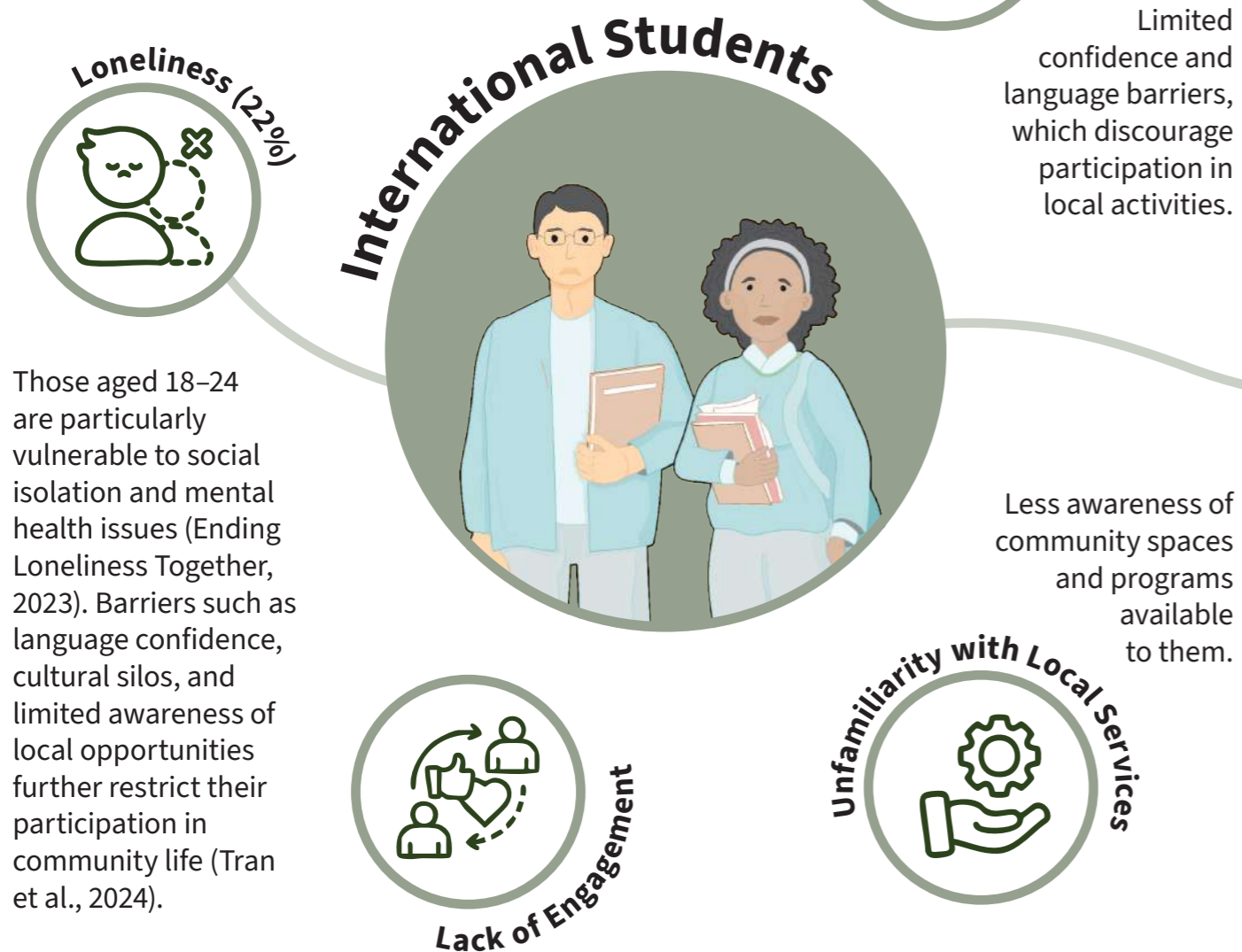
Background

Research

Loneliness and social isolation have emerged as critical social issues across Australia, particularly affecting young adults and older residents in urban areas such as North Melbourne. The Social Connection in Australia 2023 report by Ending Loneliness Together reveals that nearly one in three Australians experience loneliness, with the highest rates among those aged 18–24. This disconnection has serious consequences—loneliness is linked to a fivefold increase in depression and social anxiety, and to significant declines in life satisfaction and health outcomes (Ending Loneliness Together, 2023).

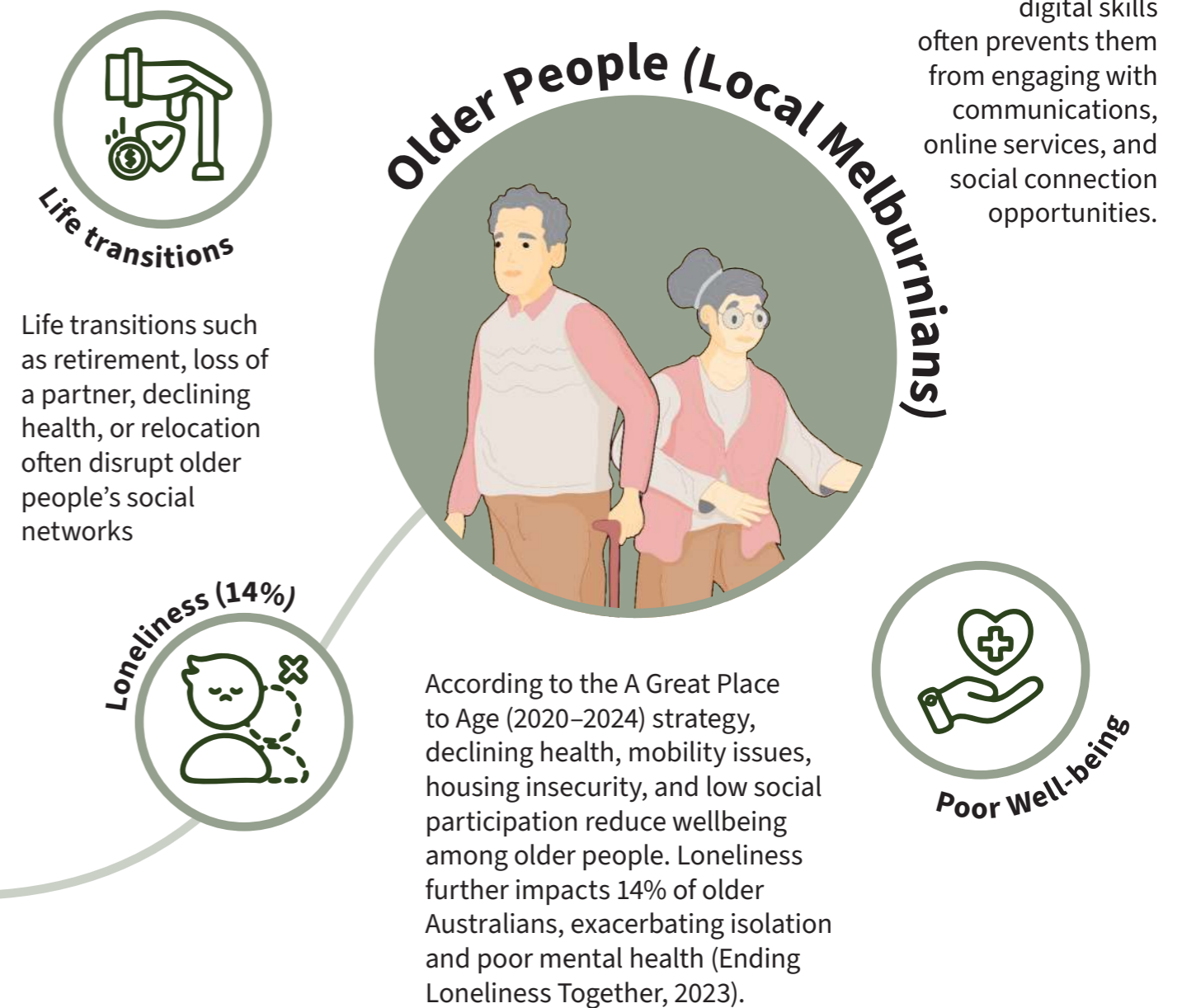
Key Challenges Facing Different Groups

International students often encounter unique barriers that prevent them from building social support networks. The Guide for Enhancing International Students’ Intercultural and Community Engagement (Tran et al., 2024) identifies challenges including:



Those aged 18–24 are particularly vulnerable to social isolation and mental health issues (Ending Loneliness Together, 2023). Barriers such as language confidence, cultural silos, and limited awareness of local opportunities further restrict their participation in community life (Tran et al., 2024).

Older Melburnians face persistent risks of loneliness and social isolation, reflecting national trends identified in Ending Loneliness Together (2023) and priorities in the City of Melbourne’s A Great Place to Age (2020–2024) strategy. Key barriers include:



Reference List

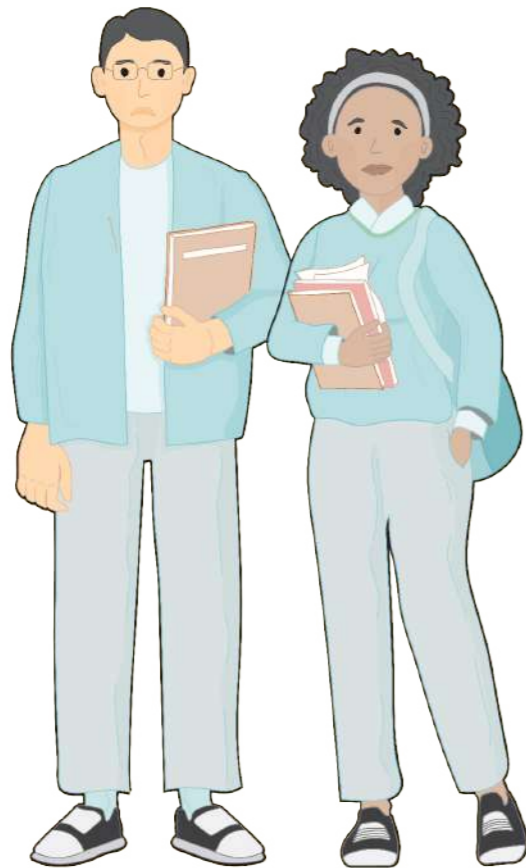
City of Melbourne. (2020). Melbourne: A great place to age (2020–2024). City of Melbourne. <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/olderpeople>

Ending Loneliness Together. (2023). Social connection in Australia 2023: A deep-dive into loneliness and social isolation. Ending Loneliness Together. <https://www.endingloneliness.com.au>

Tran, L., Blackmore, J., Hartridge, D., Forbes-Mewett, H., Aldana, R., & Nguyen, D. (2024). Guide for enhancing international students’ intercultural and community engagement. Australian Government Department of Education. <https://www.education.gov.au/international-education/resources-education-providers-supporting-students/best-practice-international-student-engagement-guides>

Research

International students and older residents often live in proximity yet remain socially distant. International students face language barriers, low confidence, and limited awareness of local networks (Tran et al., 2024), while older Melburnians experience shrinking social circles and reduced intergenerational contact (City of Melbourne, 2020). These parallel experiences of isolation contribute to loneliness and weaken community cohesion (Ending Loneliness Together, 2023). The “Being a Melburnian” program seeks to respond to this problem.



Most of International students who travel to Australia struggle with the experience of isolation and cultural adjustment

Problem Statement

There is no defined bridge between the two groups, so seniors' knowledge and guidance is not utilized and students remain unsupported. This divide stops possibilities for belonging and community from developing.



Most of the older Australians are searching for engagement opportunities.

Divide

Precedent Study

The Melbourne Peer Mentor Program (MPMP), developed by the University of Melbourne, is a structured peer-to-peer initiative designed to support new bachelor's students, both international and domestic, in adjusting to academic and social life at the University. Delivered through five progressive sessions, the program pairs first-year students (mentees) with experienced student mentors who facilitate small-group activities to foster a sense of belonging at the university, cross-culture community engagement, and academic confidence. This precedent illustrates an evidence-based model of intercultural engagement that aligns strongly with the principles proposed in Guide for Enhancing International Students' Intercultural and Community Engagement, particularly in relation to embracing cultural diversity, promoting shared learning, encouraging participation, and providing ongoing support

Pedagogical Structure

The Melbourne Peer Mentor Program (MPMP) demonstrates strong alignment with the Guide for Enhancing International Students' Intercultural and Community Engagement (Tran et al., 2023). Its structure reflects five key guiding principles as stated below:

| Guiding Principle | MPMP Practice | Key Outcomes |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| 1. Embracing Cultural Diversity | Mixed groups of international and domestic students; storytelling, tours, shared activities | Builds mutual respect, cultural exchange, and inclusive community spirit |
| 2. Promoting Shared Learning | Peer-led, small-group discussions and reflection | Encourages reciprocal learning, empathy, and intercultural engagement |
| 3. Preparing Students for Study | Orientation activities on study skills, academic expectations, and resources | Supports academic readiness, reduces anxiety, and improves adjustment |
| 4. Encouraging Student Participation | Interactive games, shared meals, and mentor progression via Melbourne Plus | Fosters engagement, leadership, and experiential learning opportunities |
| 5. Providing Ongoing Support | Continued contact through group chats, social media, and service referrals (Stop 1, Academic Skills) | Maintains long-term connection and institutional support networks |

Reference List

Tran, L., Blackmore, J., Hartridge, D., Forbes-Mewett, H., Aldana, R., & Nguyen, D. (2024). Guide for enhancing international students' intercultural and community engagement. Australian Government Department of Education. <https://www.education.gov.au/international-education/resources-education-providers-supporting-students/best-practice-international-student-engagement-guides>

The University of Melbourne. (2025). Melbourne Peer Mentor Program: Session 1–5 guides. Student Life.

Melbourne Peer Mentor Program



Getting to know each other



Campus tours, interactive icebreakers, introductions. This helps to build trust, rapport, and social cohesion; mentors model inclusivity and active listening

Settling In



Group discussions on study habits, time management, and campus resources. This reduces transition anxiety; strengthens academic confidence and independence

Thriving at Uni



Exploration of services (MU Sport, UMSU Clubs, Melbourne Plus) which promotes balance between academic success, self-care, and community participation

Staying on Track



Builds resilience, consistency, and accountability in academic progress

Looking Forward

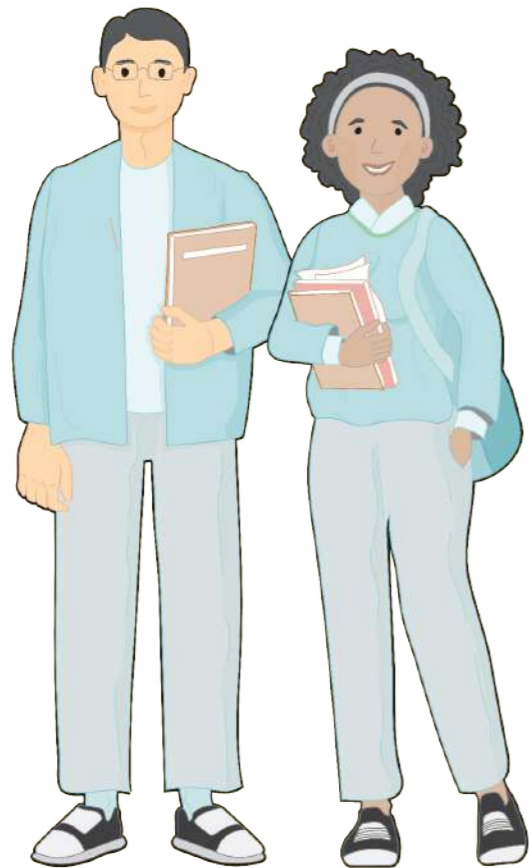


Encourages self-reflection, recognition of achievements, and sustained engagement

Target Outcomes

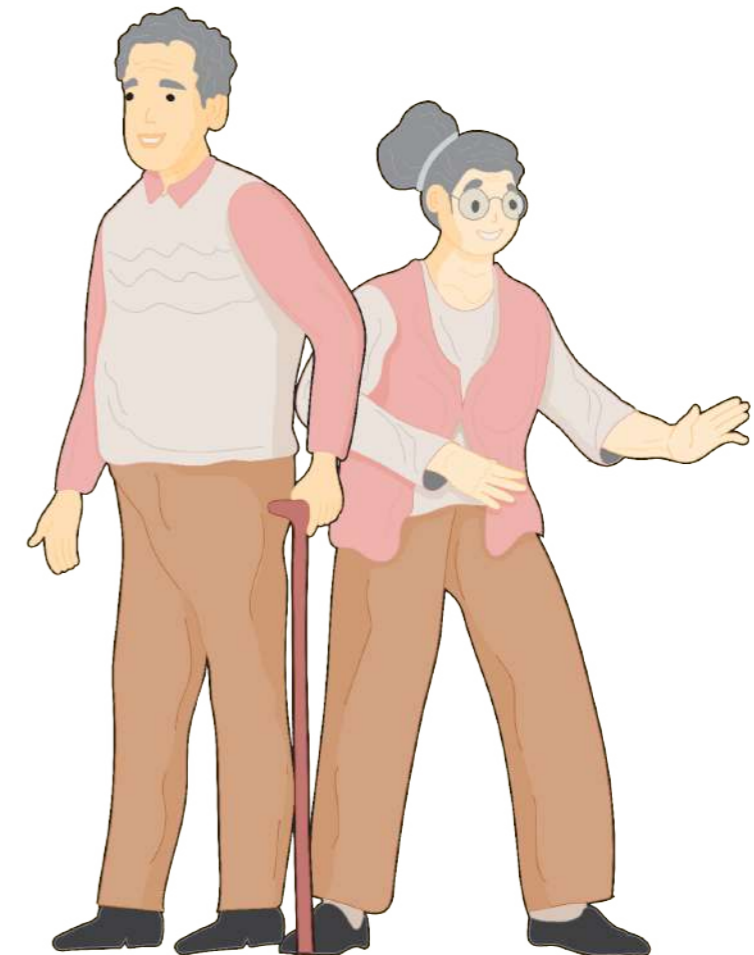
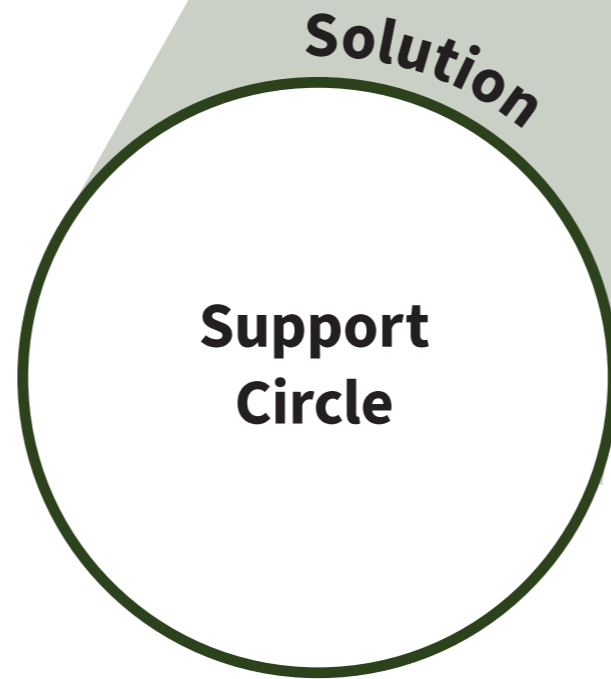
“Being a Melburnian” brings together international students and older Melburnians to build friendships, share experiences, and learn from each other. The program aims to reduce loneliness and create a support circle.

Through recurring sessions centred on sports, language, and food; the initiative aspires to cultivate belonging, strengthen wellbeing, and demonstrate how intergenerational and intercultural connection can become a lasting model for community resilience in Melbourne.



International students will make friends, practise English, improve wellbeing, and feel more connected in Melbourne, reducing loneliness and building confidence through shared activities and local interactions.

“Being a Melburnian” defines a social circle between the two groups, so seniors’ knowledge and guidance is utilized and students remain supported. This circle starts possibilities for belonging and fosters community.



Older Melburnians get an interesting chance to share their stories, connect with younger people, and stay active in their community. It helps reduce loneliness, build purpose, and strengthen relationships across generations.

Part 3

1. Program Design



2. Session Design



Program Design & Delivery

Program Design

The program evolved across five phases:

1. Idea foundation
2. Applying for the grant
3. Partnerships and Collaborations
4. Co-Design & Session Structure
5. Facilitation.

Peiqi (Kevin) Shi volunteered at the North and West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre for more than three years, building strong relationships with the local community.

Through conversations with older Melburnians, he discovered their genuine interest in connecting with international students and sharing experiences across generations.

Volunteering



Kevin's Observations

Kevin noticed a clear gap between international students and older Melburnians. After engaging with local Melburnians, he sought to share that sense of community with his peers.

Research



Research literature:

- Ending Loneliness Together (2023)
- City of Melbourne (2020–2024)
- Tran et al. (2024)

Kevin got inspired by these guides which created a program's focus on reducing loneliness and improving intercultural connections.

2. SSAF Grant Application



Student Representatives



Student representatives evaluate applications to ensure proposals reflect genuine student needs and aspirations.

The panel reviews project impact:

- Campus life
- Enhances wellbeing
- Strengthens the sense of community connection

This stage helps ensure that student perspectives remain central to the program's funding priorities.

Belonging and Access

"Being a Melburnian" began as a student idea brought to life through the Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) Grant Program, which funds projects that enrich campus life and strengthen community connection. Each application passes a two-phase review.

University Selection Panel



Composed of academic and professional staff members and checks alignment with University strategy

The panel reviews project impact:

- Advancing Melbourne 2030 plan
- Equity and diversity goals
- Sustainability
- Feasibility

Applications are ranked according to their clarity of purpose, inclusivity, and demonstrated capacity for successful delivery.

Reference List

Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF) Grant Program | Current students | The University of Melbourne. (2025, June 13). Students. <https://students.unimelb.edu.au/careers/get-career-ready/leadership-and-employability-programs/fund-your-idea-with-a-student-grant/student-services-and-amenities-fee-ssaf-grant-program>

With academic mentorship from **Dr Ash Alam**, Senior Lecturer in Social Planning at the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning. His research on migrant belonging and community-building informed the program's intercultural approach and social impact framework.

Arnav Goyal, serving as Community Outreach Officer at the North and West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre, led the creation and delivery of the "Being a Melburnian" program, shaping its vision, structure, and implementation.

Together with Program Co-lead **Nava Lok** and a dedicated team of student volunteers, the initiative demonstrated how community collaboration can bridge cultural divides and foster authentic intergenerational connection across Melbourne's diverse communities.

Older people in the community played a central role in shaping the program "Being a Melburnian", bringing valuable perspectives:

- Community- local vendors, venues and interested people
- Connection- activity beyond the main program

Through co-design workshops, they expressed a preference for routine, familiarity, and face-to-face engagement, valuing spaces where they could share stories and local knowledge in a relaxed, conversational setting.

Their input guided the program's tone, activities designed to nurture trust, encourage participation, and celebrate their lived experiences within North and West Melbourne's diverse community.

University Mentor



Project Support



Local Melburnians



shared ideas



International Students

3. Partnership and Collaborations



4. Co-Design & Session Structure



For newly arrived students, the program became a space to build confidence, belonging, and cultural understanding in a supportive local environment.

They contributed ideas that made each session interactive and expressive:

- Themes like food-sharing activities to sport and language focus
- Traditions from their home countries.

This process encouraged dialogue and gave students an opportunity to connect beyond academic settings.

By collaborating with older Melburnians, students developed a deeper sense of place and community, discovering Melbourne not just as a city to study in, but as a shared home.

Community Centre



The North and West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre (NWMNC) director, **Ariel Valent** helped in creating community connections. He also helped with marketing and recruitment of participants.

The program was co-delivered with the community centre, which brought deep experience in community engagement and intergenerational programs.

Two participant groups were engaged through targeted outreach

- Older Melburnians via neighbourhood centres, libraries, and local networks
- International students through University programs, newsletters, and social media.

Marketing used warm, people-focused tone with easy to understand visuals

Posters, flyers, and pull-up banners with QR codes were placed across campus and community venues, sparking spontaneous interest and conversation.



All financial operations were managed in line with SSAF Grant Program requirements, ensuring transparent use of funds and detailed recordkeeping.

The project operated within tight financial constraints and included:

- Venue hire
- Catering
- Printing
- Staff and support

All expenses were tracked with receipts, and regular reviews kept spending aligned with project goals for an accountable delivery.



5. Facilitation



Consistent reporting was maintained to meet University and SSAF compliance standards.

Data and Progress Tracking:

- Attendance data
- Participant feedback and reflection
- Expenditure

The structured reporting process helped demonstrate the program's outcomes and accountability.



Supplier coordination covered all Venue, Catering, Printing, and Operational overheads, ensuring smooth delivery of every session.

The team got the references of these suppliers during the co-design stage:

- Food: Catering was provided by **Bread Club (breadclubofficial)**, a local bakery offering pastries, pies, and snacks. We served famous melbourne pies- meat and vegetarian options
- Venue: Sessions were held at **Sokol (https://www.sokolmelbourne.com.au/)**, a centrally located community hall that was easy to access for both students and older people.
- Printing: All marketing materials, including posters, flyers, and pull-up banners, were produced through NWMNC or Officeworks, ensuring a consistent visual branding.

Despite financial constraints, careful supplier coordination and transparent communication ensured that all services were delivered on time, within budget, and to a high standard, supporting the program's inclusive and welcoming atmosphere.

Key Reflections

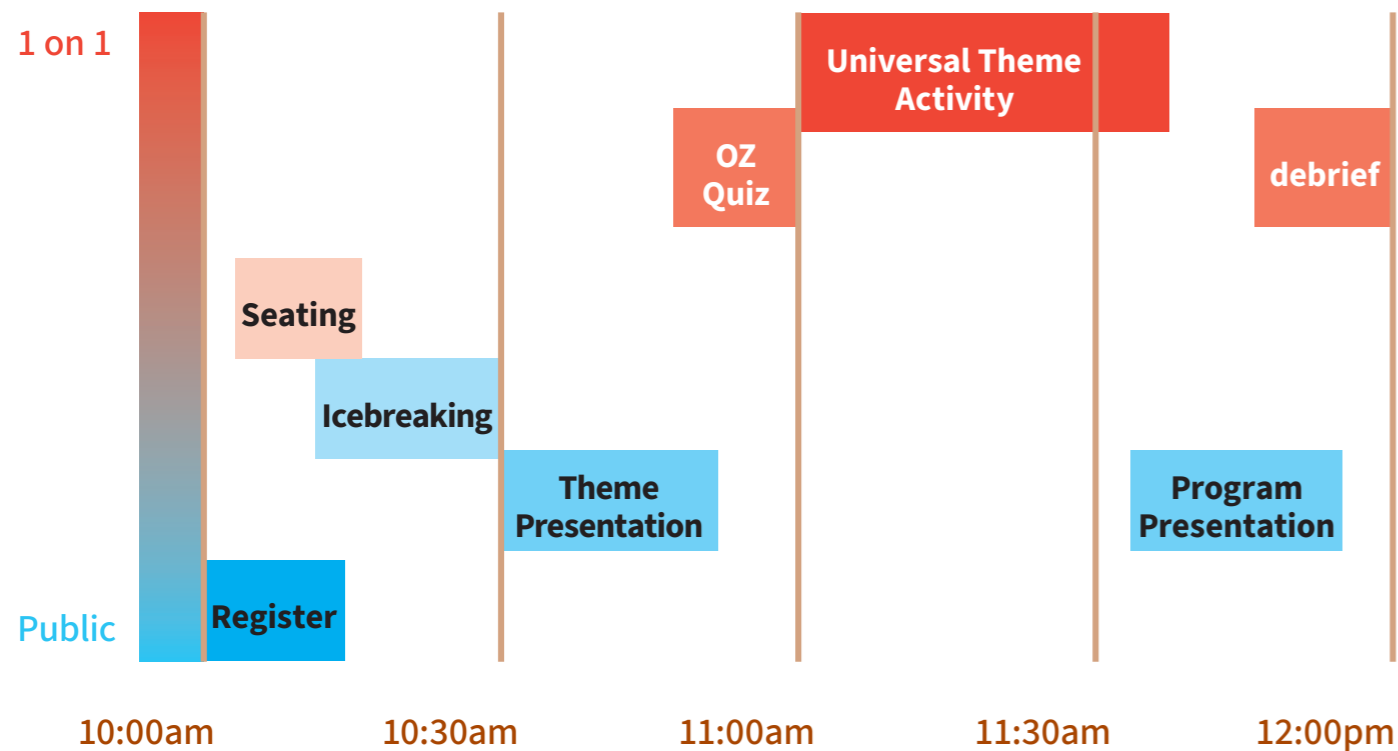
“Being a Melburnian” program revealed how small, genuine gestures can transform community connections. The program's impact can be understood through three guiding pillars:

- **Co-Creation:** The program grew through collaboration between international students and older Melburnians, ensuring activities reflected shared interests and mutual respect.
- **Community Partnership:** Working alongside the North and West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre and University mentors grounded the project in trust, accessibility, and feasibility
- **Human Warmth:** Simple themes of sharing food, laughter, and conversation became bridges across cultures and generations.
- **Activities beyond the sessions:** Participants continued to meet, volunteer, and support one another, extending the program's spirit of connection well into the wider community.

Session Design

“Being a Melburnian” program is composed on 6 sessions.

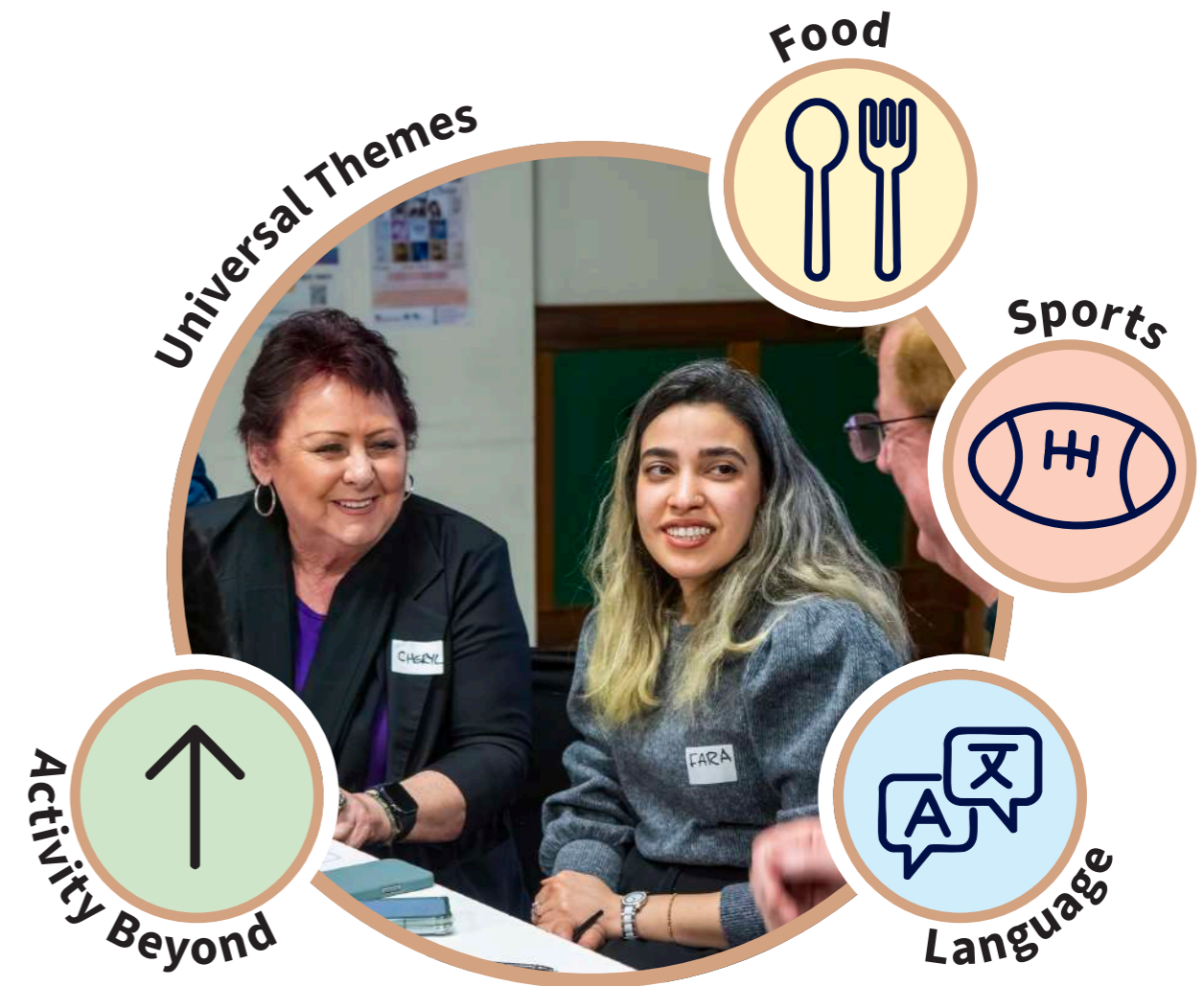
These were designed during the co-design process of program design and encourage more one-on-one conversations and deeper engagement.



Each 2 hour session followed a consistent structure:

- Icebreaker: Participants began by sharing something interesting about themselves related to that week’s theme. Then, a pair of a student and an older person from each table was invited to the stage to share their discoveries, helping everyone feel familiar and connected.
- Presentation & Trivia: A short, interactive presentation introduced the topic, followed by a light-hearted trivia quiz to reinforce learning and spark conversation.
- Hands-on Activity: Games or creative exercises made each theme experiential
- Reflection & Conversation: Sessions concluded with relaxed chats over food and chocolates, deepening relationships in an informal 1-1 setting.

Program Context: At the end of each session, the facilitators briefly shared the purpose behind the program, offering context and encouraging participants to return for future sessions.



Across all six sessions, “Being a Melburnian” balanced structure and theme. The date and time were all planned based on Co-design responses which helped us plan the following sessions:

- Sports themed sessions:
 1. 01 Aug – Kick. Run. Score
 2. 22 Aug – Aussie Sport Spirit
- Language themed sessions:
 1. 08 Aug – Talk Like a Local
 2. 29 Aug – Aussie Accents
- Food themed sessions:
 1. 15 Aug – Oven Baked Tradition
 2. 05 Sept – Brewed into the City
- Activity Beyond

August 2025

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | | | | | | |

September 2025

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

This design allowed both international students and older Melburnians to experience the best of community learning: curiosity, kindness, and connection in action.



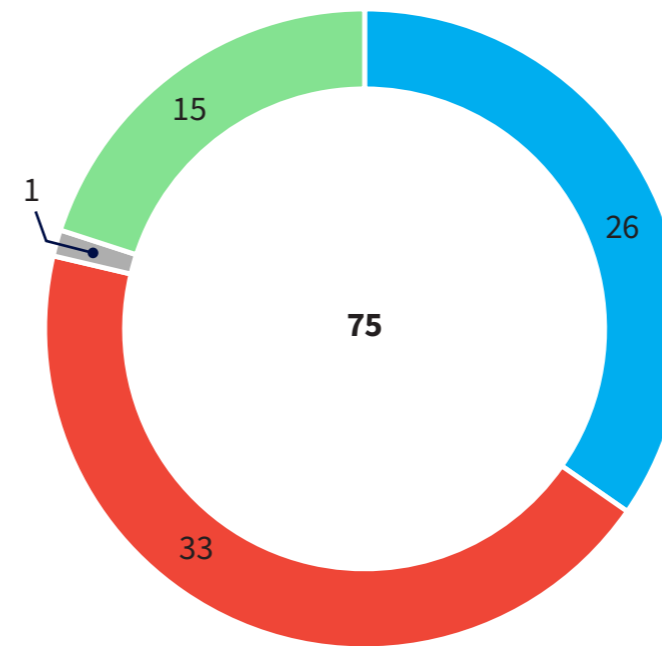
Session 1 Image captured by student volunteer Hafiz of participants enjoying the game of Footy Feud and understanding the game rules

Session 1. Kick. Run. Score.

The program began with the excitement of Melbourne’s favourite sport, Australian Rules Football.

- Ariel and Kevin opened the program with a short welcome, introducing the stakeholders and outlining the program.
- Participants shared their favourite sporting memories as an icebreaker.
- A 15-minute video explained the rules of Footy, common terms, and how to play the Footy Feud card game.
- An Oz Quiz added excitement and helped everyone learn more about the sport.
- Participants then played Footy Feud in groups of four to understand the AFL point system through teamwork and Kevin and Arnav used the Sherrin football to give everyone a hands-on feel of the official game ball.

The cheerful atmosphere encouraged laughter, learning, and teamwork, setting a positive tone for the sessions ahead. Though people enjoyed the card game, many participants preferred to have more interactions post 1 game then playing several rounds.



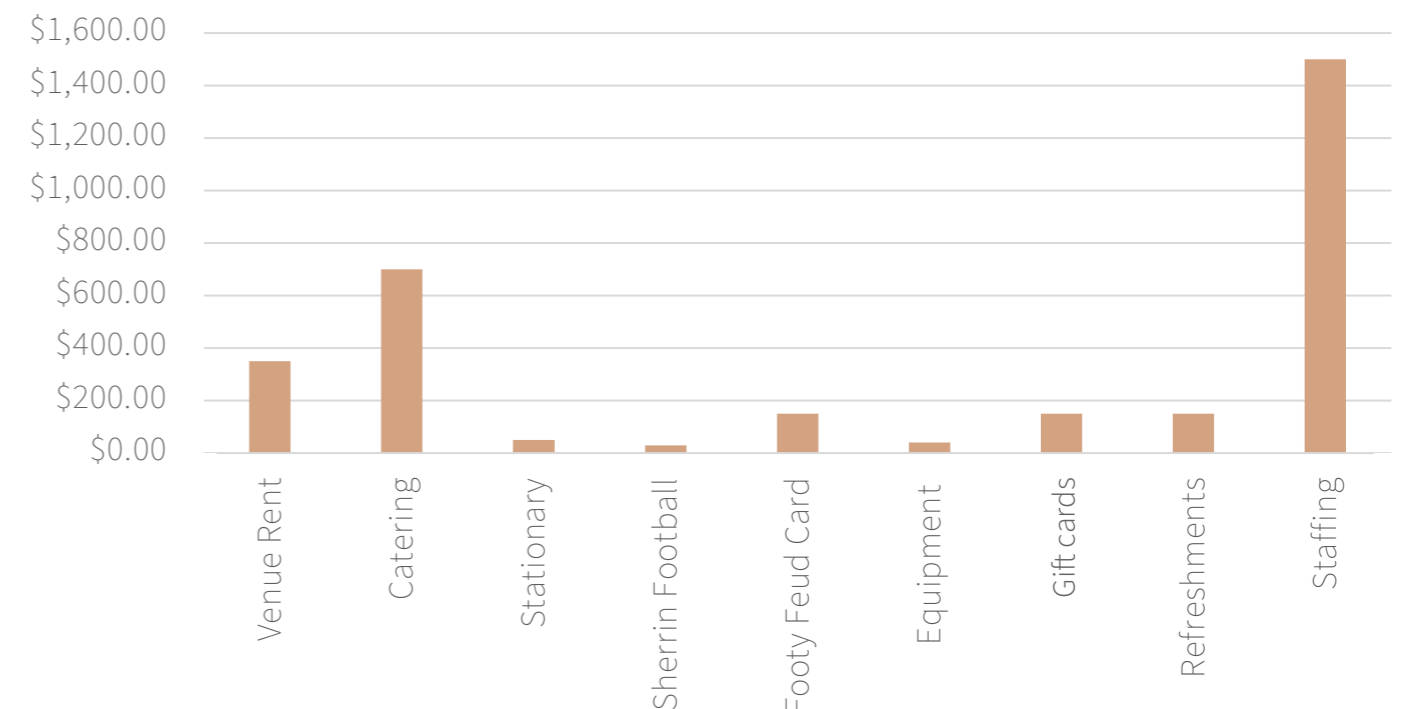
We invited around 60 participants for the first session, keeping in mind the venue’s capacity, along with 15 volunteers to support the event.

There was strong interest from international students, and we also welcomed a few walk-ins from local Melburnians on the day.

- Older Melburnians
- International Students
- Volunteer Students
- Absent participants

Survey results showed that 87% of participants said they would join a similar program again in the future, while 13% responded with “maybe.”

Among participants, 16% were aged over 76 years, and 18% were between 30 and 44 years old. Jocelyn was the oldest local Melburnian who was around 90 years old.



The first session attracted strong interest and was delivered within a total budget of \$3,120, covering venue, catering, materials, and facilitation.



Session 2 Image captured by student volunteer Soraya of participants enjoying the Slang Bingo game and understanding the Local Melbourne slangs.

Session 2. Talk Like a Local

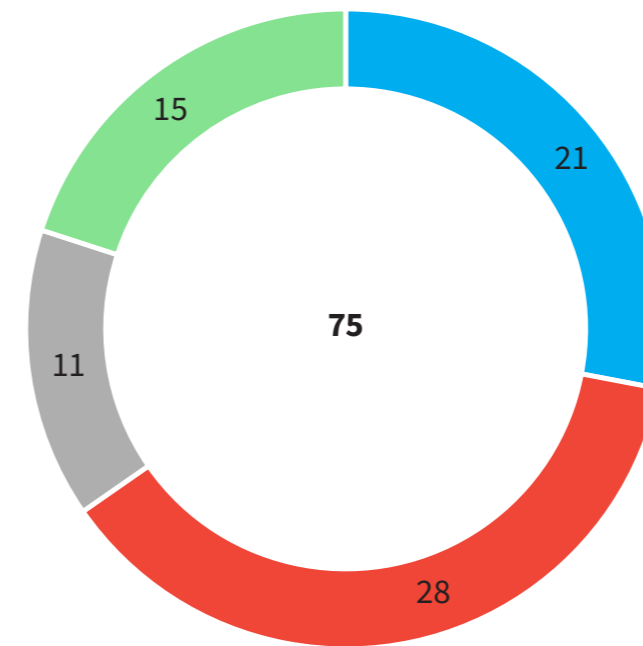
The session focused on language as a bridge between cultures.

- Participants shared funny or confusing phrases they'd heard around Melbourne.
- A 15-minute video shared interesting Aussie slangs and also their meaning and origins.
- An Oz Quiz added excitement and helped recite these slangs and explain its meaning.
- Everyone played a custom Slang Bingo game, learning Aussie expressions like barbie, sunnies, and chockers through play and repetition.
- Some participants stepped on stage to act out their favourite slang words, building confidence in public speaking and celebrating humour across cultures.
- Kevin closed the program with a short presentation outlining the program.



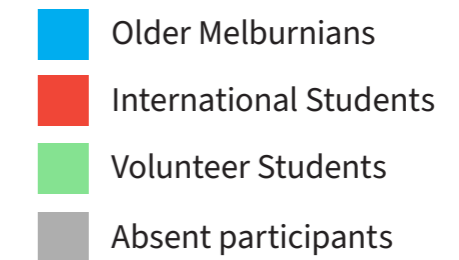
Participants greatly enjoyed the language-focused session, describing it as both fun and confidence-building.

The Slang Bingo activity sparked laughter and curiosity as everyone learned Aussie phrases in an easy, playful way. Many shared that acting out slang words helped them overcome shyness and improved their comfort with everyday English, while also exchanging phrases from their own cultures.



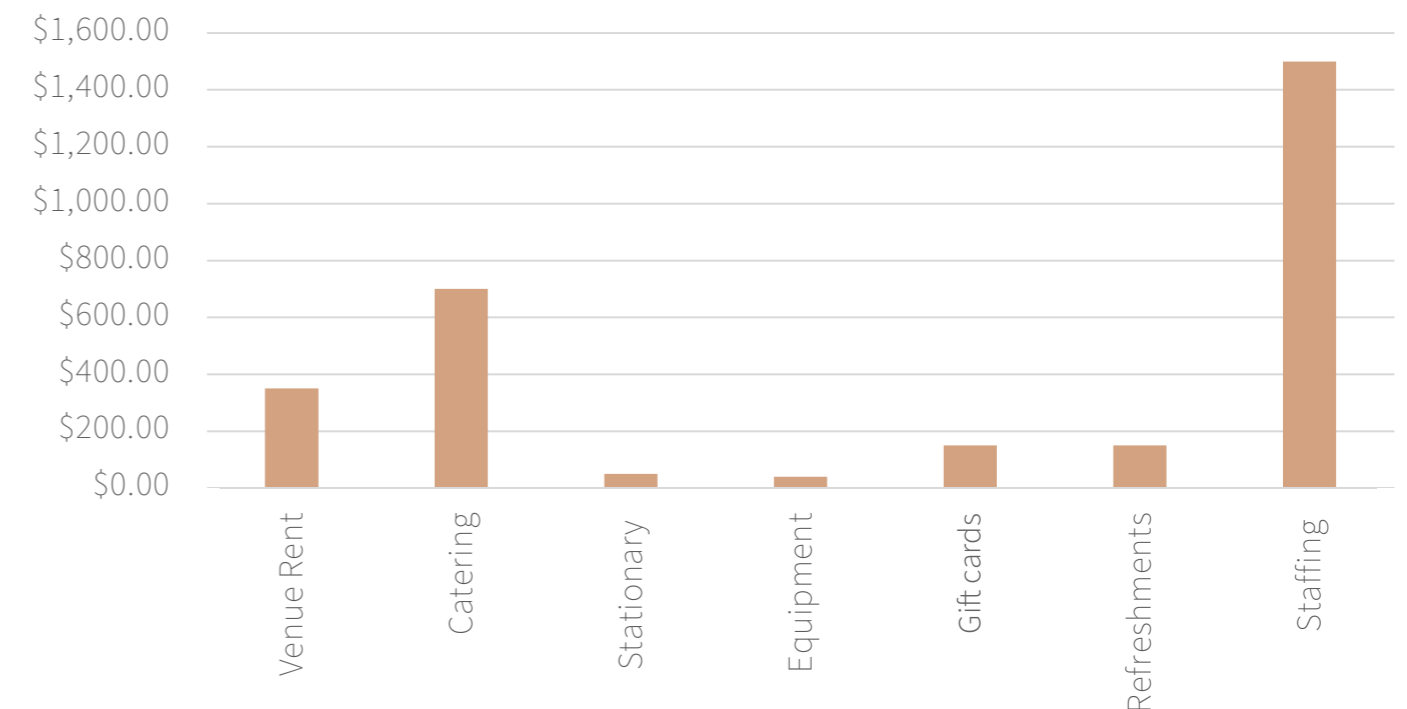
Session 2 brought together 49 participants, 21 older Melburnians and 28 international students, supported by 15 volunteers.

Despite 11 absences caused by duplicate student bookings, many familiar faces returned from the first session.



95% of participants wished to attend future sessions, though some students couldn't join due to study, or work commitments.

North and West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre received a generous donation of Australian slang books, which were distributed to international students.



Out of Total Expenditure: \$2,940, a portion of the budget supported creative games like Slang Bingo, showing how simple, low-cost activities can spark laughter and learning.



Session 3 Image captured by student volunteer Soraya of participants enjoying a Meat/Vegetarian Pie and talking with each other to build connections.

Session 3. Oven Baked Traditions

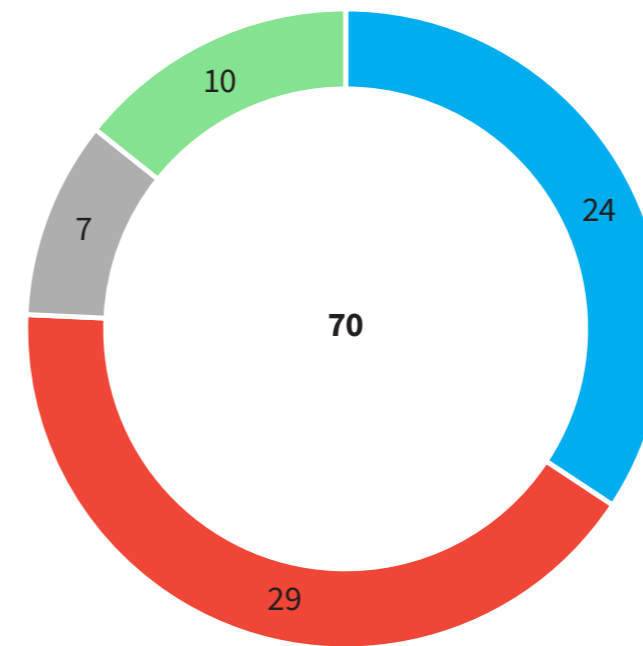
Food took centre stage for our third session and this also focused on roundtable interactions.

- Participants shared their favourite comfort dishes and food stories in Melbourne.
- A 15-minute video detailed the origin and manufacturing of Meat Pies and Vegemite.
- A food themed Oz Quiz generated energy and focus in the session.
- Everyone tasted both foods, sparking lively conversations about flavours, childhood memories, and cultural similarities.
- The open-table setting encouraged relaxed chats and bonding over any topic.
- Kevin closed the program with a short presentation outlining the program.

Food is the quickest way to someone's heart and we wanted them to get in love with Melbourne's traditional food.

Tasting familiar and new dishes opened up conversations about culture, memories, and daily life, helping both international students and older Melburnians find common ground.

The experience strengthened friendships, encouraged cultural curiosity, and reminded everyone how food can bring people together beyond language or sports.



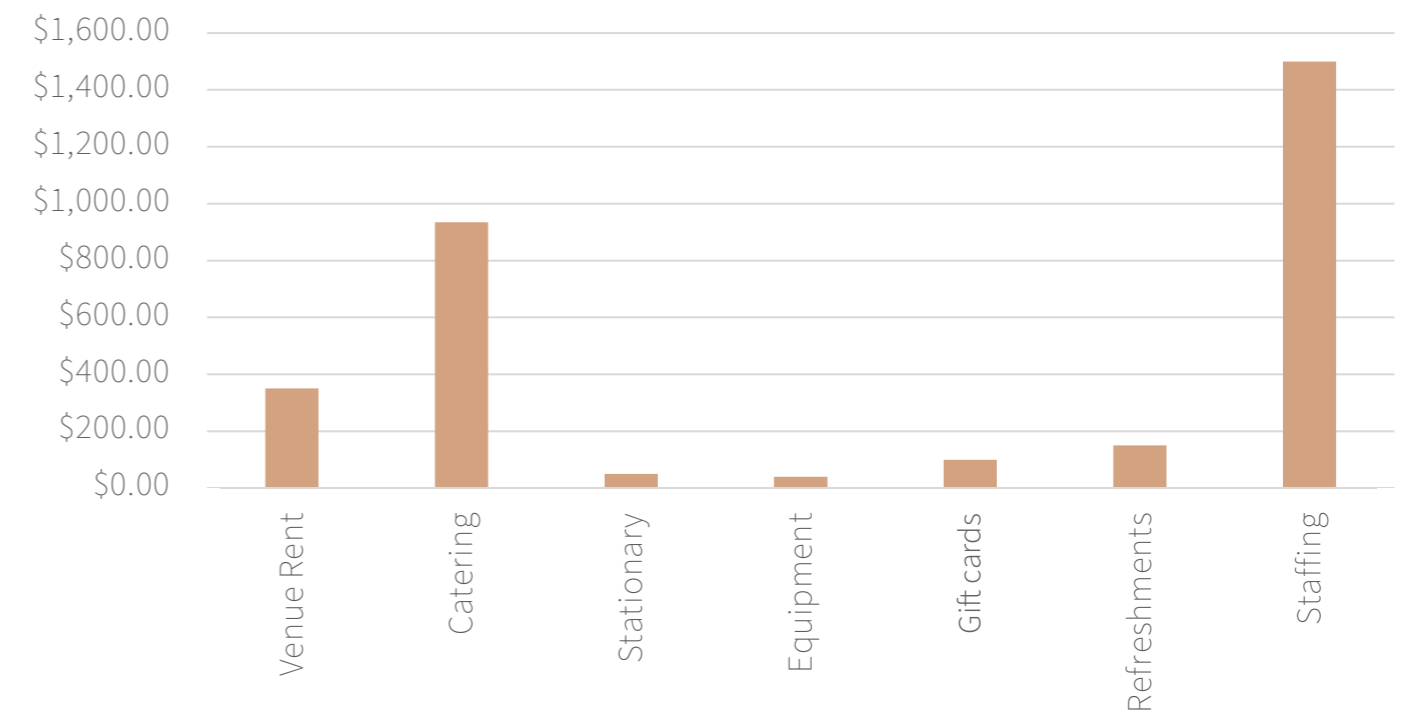
To comply with venue capacity limits, volunteer numbers were reduced by five, allowing for 70 registered participants.

Despite this, Session 3 saw a strong turnout of 53 participants, showing how the food theme continued to attract enthusiasm and connection.

- Older Melburnians
- International Students
- Volunteer Students
- Absent participants

Survey results showed that 72% of participants were happy with the program's new structure. Many older Melburnians preferred longer one-on-one conversations over quick themed activities.

Interestingly, 20 participants requested traditional meat and vegetarian pies for future sessions, a tasty suggestion that even influenced upcoming budgets!



A large part of the \$3,125 budget for Session 3 was devoted to catering and refreshments, reflecting how food became the heart of the program.



Session 4 Image captured by student volunteer Hafiz and Shabnam of participants enjoying the Mascot Design Challenge and understanding the spirit of footy.

Session 4. Aussie Sport Spirit

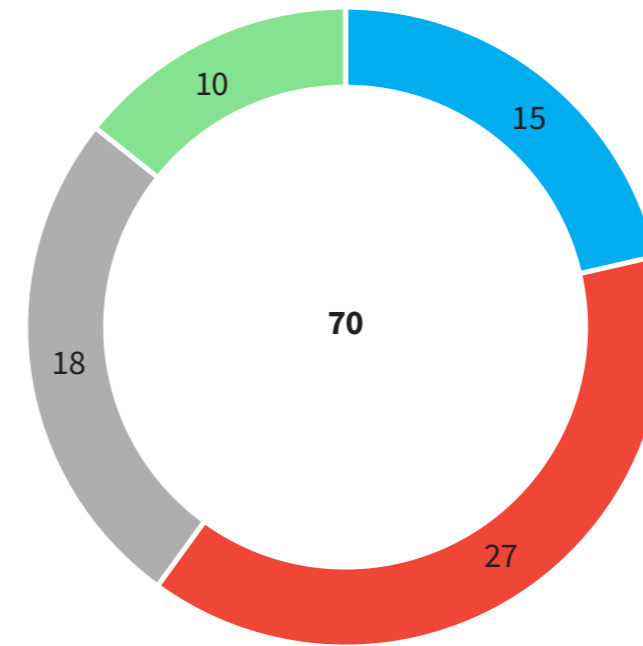
This session dove deeper into the values and history of Australian sport, highlighting teamwork, resilience, and community spirit.

- Participants began with an icebreaker, sharing their favourite mascot and why?
- A 15-minute short presentation introduced iconic Australian teams, Mascots and achievements, followed by a lively sports trivia challenge.
- The highlight was the Mascot Design Challenge, where small teams created mascots with names, backstories, and drawings.
- Then Arnav and Kevin shared activities beyond and gave everyone a hands-on feel of the official game ball again.
- Kevin closed the program with a short presentation outlining the program.

Through the Mascot Design Challenge Participants discovered that collaboration and friendly competition build confidence and connection just as strongly as structured dialogue.



(BYASHIXA)



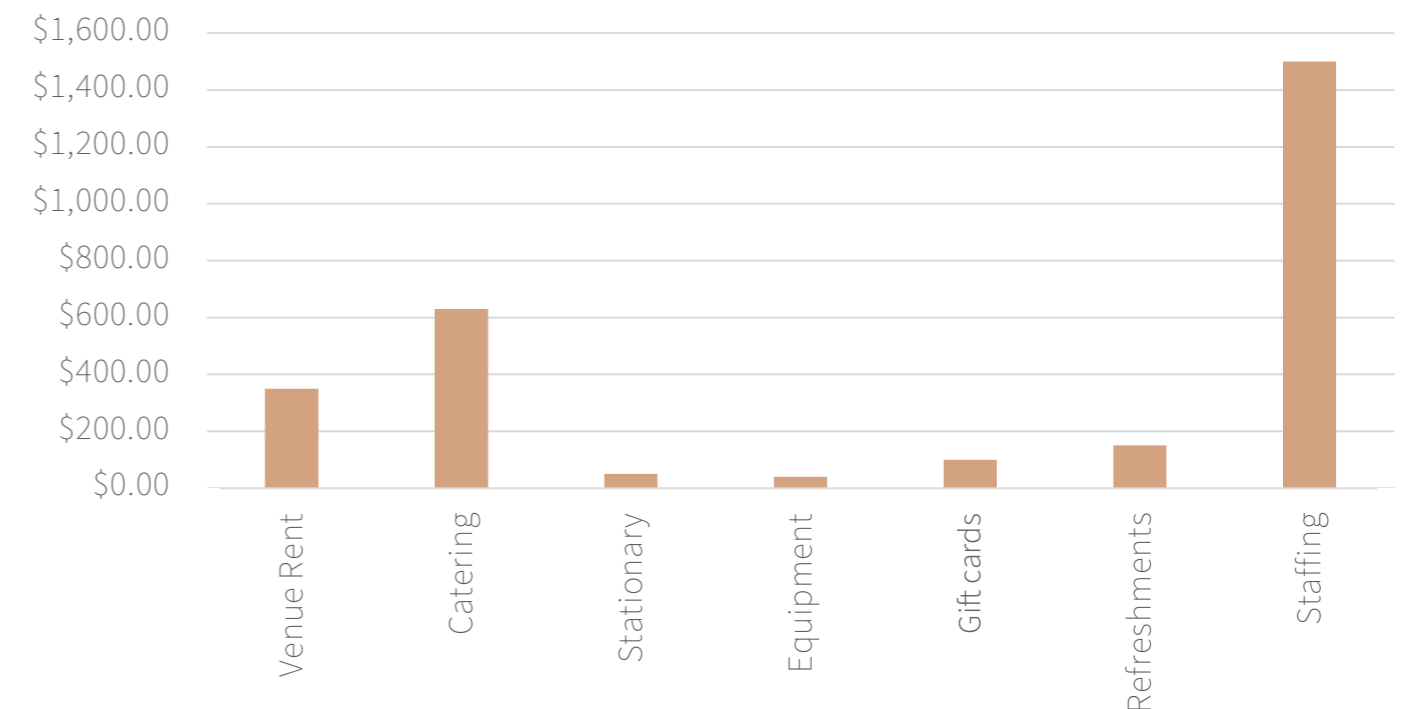
Session 4 was attended by 42 participants.

Attendance from older participants was lower this week due to prior commitments and medical appointments, though all informed the team, showing ongoing enthusiasm for the program.

- Older Melburnians
- International Students
- Volunteer Students
- Absent participants

About 60% of international students admitted feeling swamped with assignments but called the session a much-needed recharge.

Jocelyn and a few seniors missed upcoming sessions due to medical appointments yet promised to return



Session 4 was the most cost-efficient session, with a total spend of \$2,820.00. Most costs went toward staffing and catering, showing that a creative and engaging session can be delivered on a modest budget.



Session 5 Image captured by Local Melbourne volunteer Jim of participants enjoying the Slang Bingo game and understanding the Local Melbourne accents.

Session 5. Aussie Accents

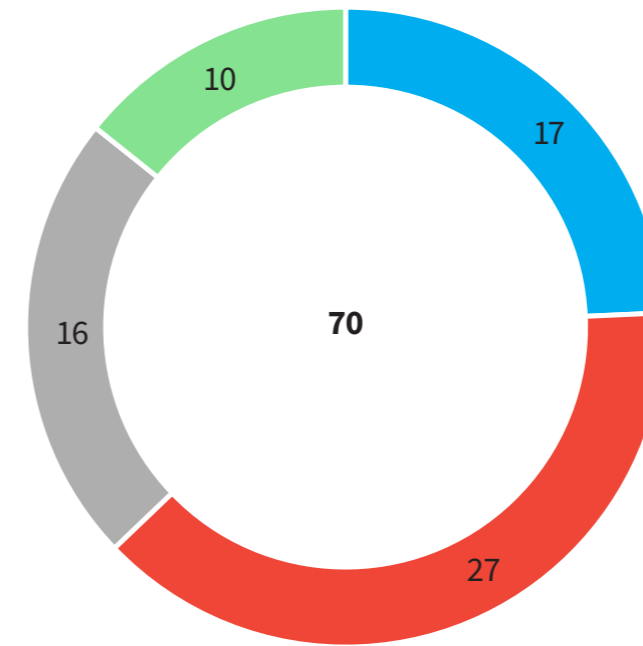
Language returned with a twist, exploring Australian accents and pronunciation.

- Participants began with sharing their use of slangs and sharing stories.
- A short 15 minute presentation covered the multicultural influences on Australian accents.
- An Oz Quiz added excitement and helped revise the information from the video.
- Slang Bingo made a return with new phrases and idioms to expand everyone's vocabulary.
- Short video interviews were recorded to capture participants' reflections, insights, and personal growth. This also helped us for establishing the network.
- Kevin closed the program with a short presentation outlining the program.

Participants realised that accents reflect Australia's diversity, and understanding them builds inclusion.

Repeating phrases and playing Slang Bingo improved pronunciation and listening skills, while video reflections helped participants appreciate their progress and growing ease in everyday English conversations.

"I feel more comfortable talking to people in Melbourne now after learning from Laurence and talking with locals"
- International student participant Amirali

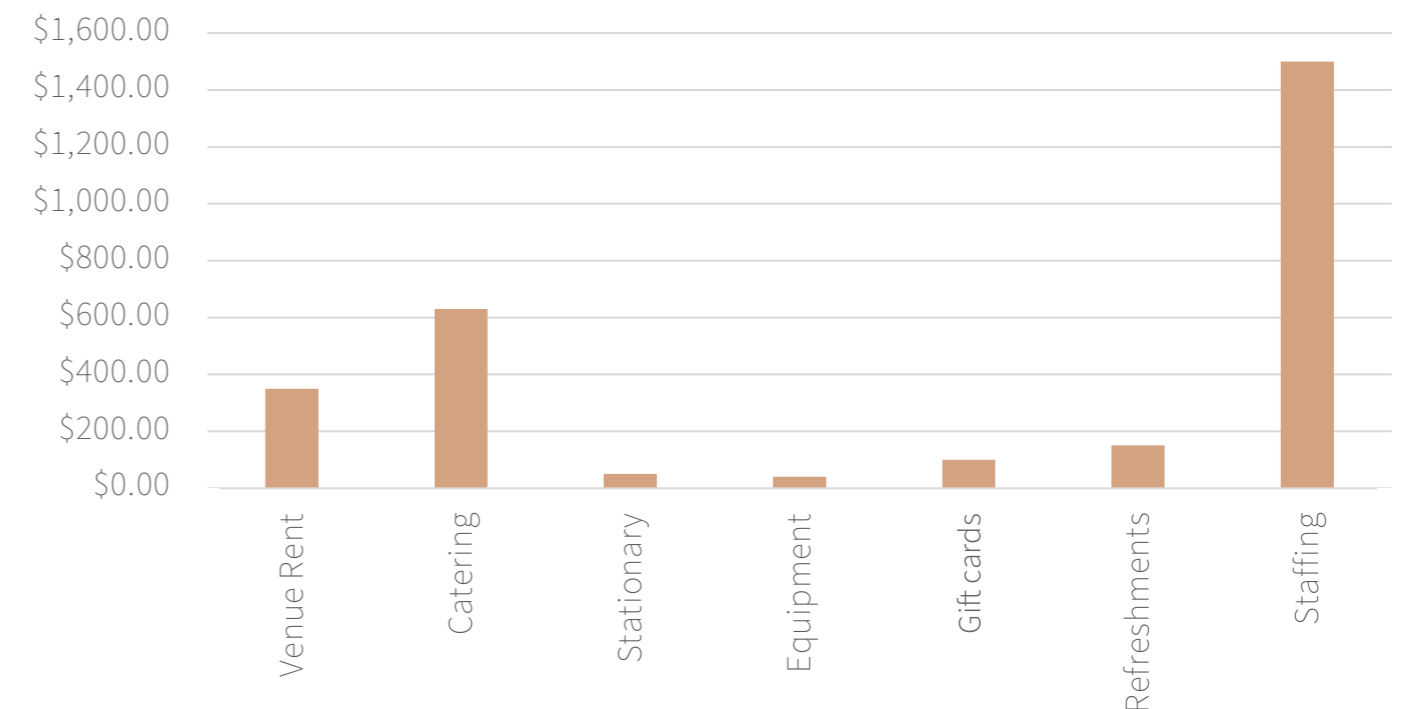


Session 5 welcomed 44 participants, and reflected consistency and similarities to the previous session.

While 16 participants were absent, we could see some deep networks and connections. This motivated us to construct a participant network and create a social channel.

- Older Melbourne
- International Students
- Volunteer Students
- Absent participants

82% of participants attended most sessions, showing just how strongly the program inspired ongoing connection, curiosity, and commitment among participants



Session 5 matched the previous session in cost, with a total spend of \$2,820.00. Using planned savings, the team decided to surprise participants with coffee vouchers for the final session, an attempt to extend connection and engagement beyond the formal program.



Session 6 Image captured by Local Melburnian volunteer Jim of participants enjoying the round table interaction and bonding.

Session 6. Brewed into the City

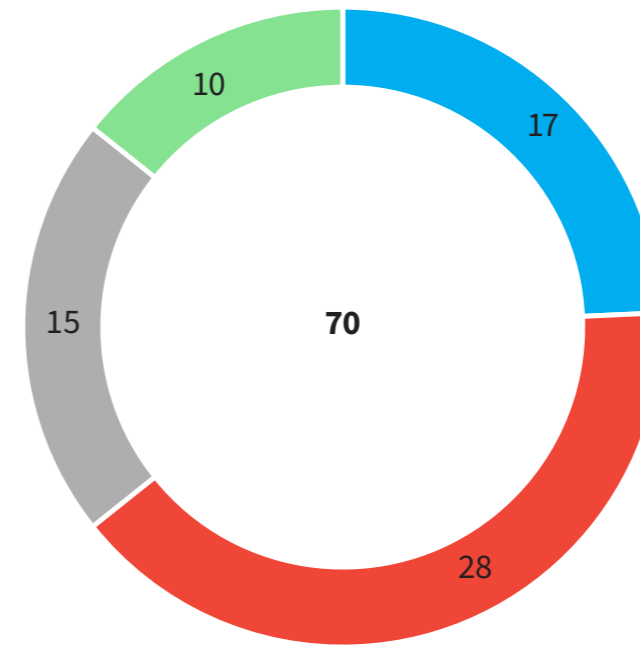
The final session celebrated Melbourne’s coffee and chocolate culture, symbols of the city’s social life.

- Participants began with an icebreaker sharing their favourite cafés and drinks.
- A short 15 minute presentation explored the history of the Freddo Frog chocolate and Melbourne’s iconic café scene.
- A lively food-themed trivia round added fun and friendly competition.
- Short video interviews were recorded to capture participants’ reflections, insights, and personal growth. This also helped us for establishing the network
- The session ended with a warm gesture, participants paired up and received coffee vouchers to continue their friendships beyond the program.
- Kevin closed the program with a short presentation outlining the program.



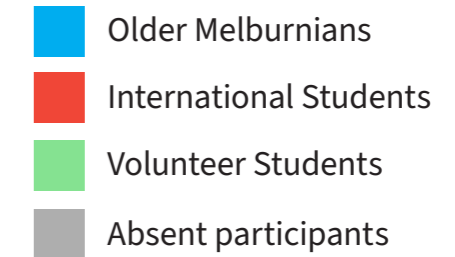
The final session beautifully demonstrated that connection extends beyond the program itself. Sharing stories over coffee encouraged participants to carry their new friendships into everyday life.

The coffee vouchers became more than a gift, they symbolised continuity, trust, and a shared sense of belonging that lasts well beyond the sessions.



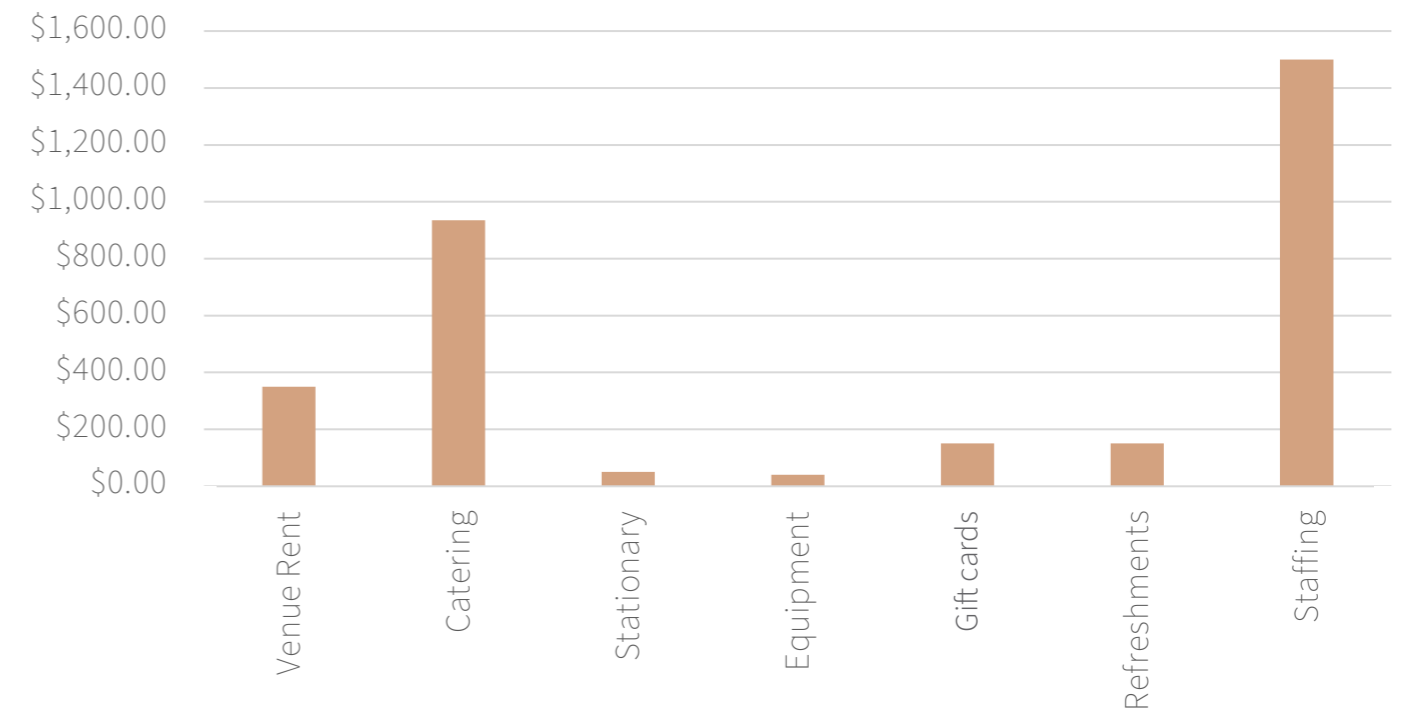
Session 6 welcomed 45 participants. With many participants sending heartfelt messages explaining prior commitments or scheduling issues.

Even in the final week, over 75% of participants returned, proving how strong the bonds had become.



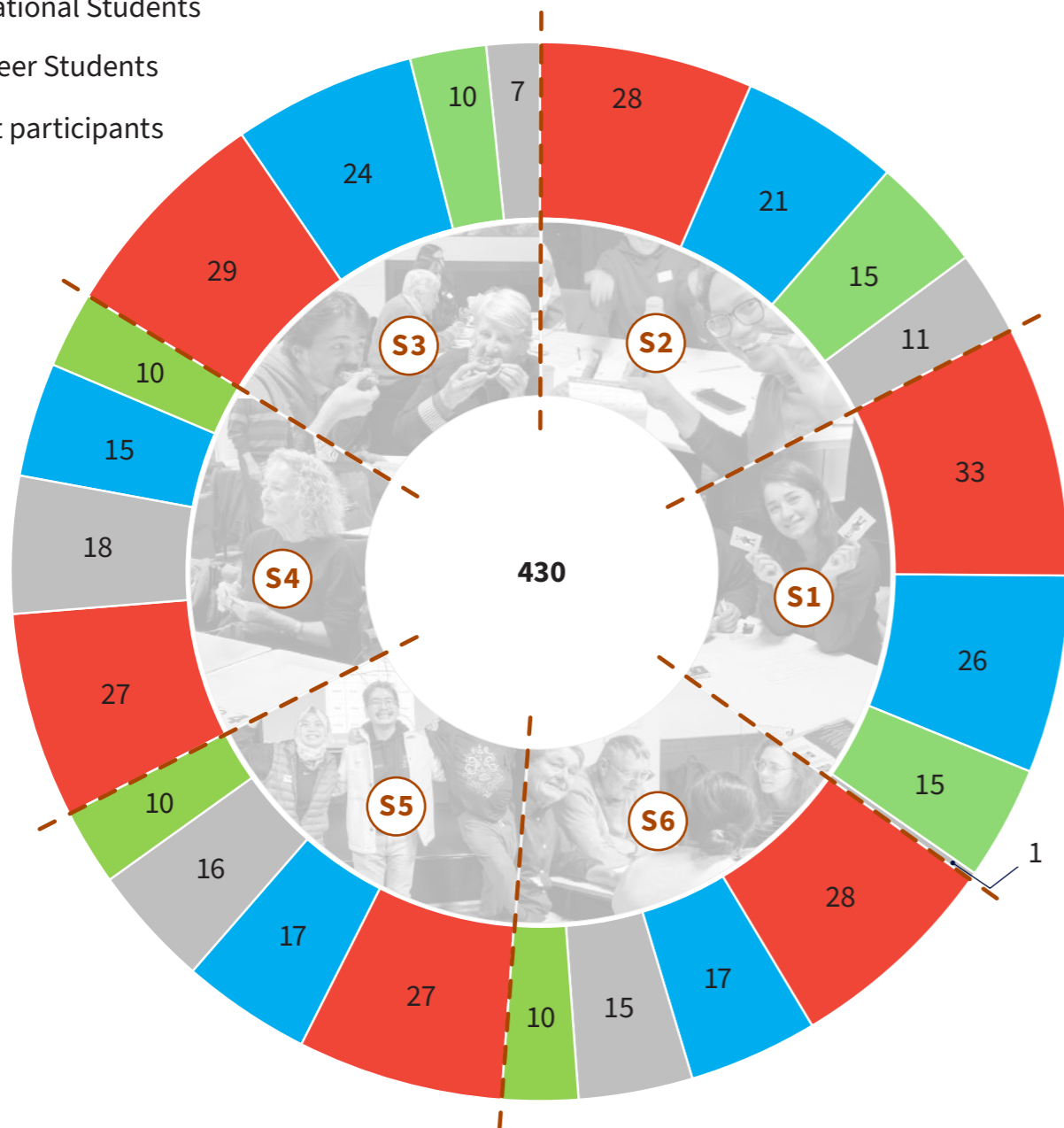
Many participants, both students and seniors, shared that they didn’t want the program to end and hoped it would run again next year

Their enthusiasm and feedback showed how “Being a Melburnian” program had grown beyond a series of sessions into a community people truly wanted to keep alive.



Session 6 had a total expenditure of \$3,175.00, with most of the budget dedicated to coffee vouchers. The gesture encouraged participants to meet again over coffee catchups, turning new friendships into lasting connections.

- Older Melburnians
- International Students
- Volunteer Students
- Absent participants



End. Analysing all the Sessions

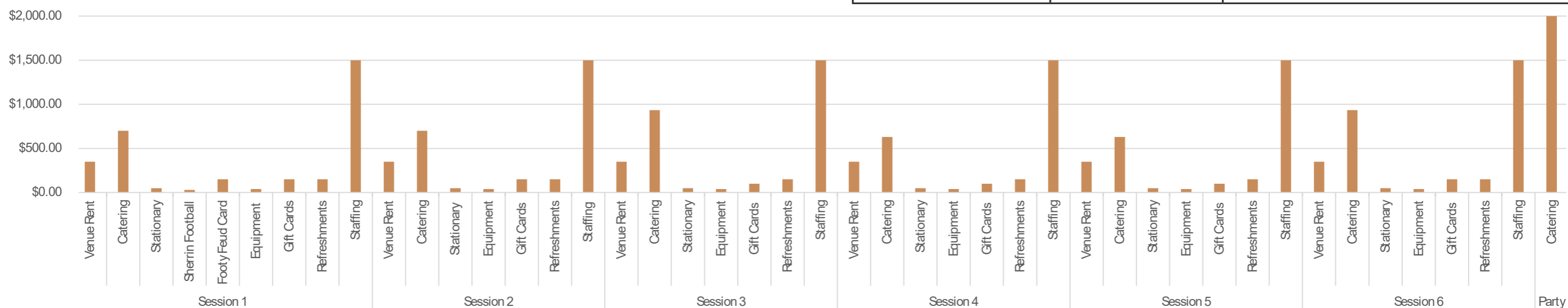
Participant attendance overview

| Participant | Avg attendance | Highest attendance | Lowest attendance |
|------------------------|----------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Older People | 20 | 26 (Session 1) | 15 (Session 4) |
| International Students | 29 | 33 (Session 1) | 27 (Sessions 4 & 5) |
| Volunteers | 12 | 15 (Sessions 1-2) | 10 (Sessions 3-6) |
| Absent | 11 | 18 (Session 4) | 1 (Session 1) |

- 70-75% of students who attended the sessions and are in their first year in Melbourne.
- Average attendance per session: 60-65 participants, showing steady engagement
- Session 1 had the highest turnout (75 participants) due to strong promotion.
- Attendance dipped slightly mid-program (Sessions 4-5) but rose again in Session 6 with unique activity beyond and coffee-voucher incentives.
- The End-of-Program Party drew 61 attendees, confirming strong retention.

Financial Summary (Total SSAF Grant Funding: \$20,000)

| Category | Approx. Cost (AUD) | Notes |
|-------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Venue Rent | \$1,500 | \$250 × 6 sessions |
| Catering | \$6,700 | \$700-\$935 per session + \$1,000 Party |
| Stationery | \$550 | \$50 + \$40 per session |
| Gift Cards | \$750 | \$100-\$150 per session |
| Refreshments | \$900 | \$150 per session |
| Staffing / Facilitation | \$9,600 | \$1,600 per session × 6 sessions |



Part 4

1. Community impact



2. Achievements and Activities Beyond



**Program
Outcomes**



3. Participant Network

Community Impact

“Being a Melburnian” is a social inclusion program run together by the North & West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre (NWMNC) and the University of Melbourne (Student and Scholarly Services). The program brings international students and older Melburnians together to share experiences and build friendships through themed, co-designed sessions.

Each session explores a part of Australian culture, from sport and slang to food and friendship, through fun games, conversations, and creative activities. The program helps students feel more connected, confident, and involved in the Melbourne community

Program Impact

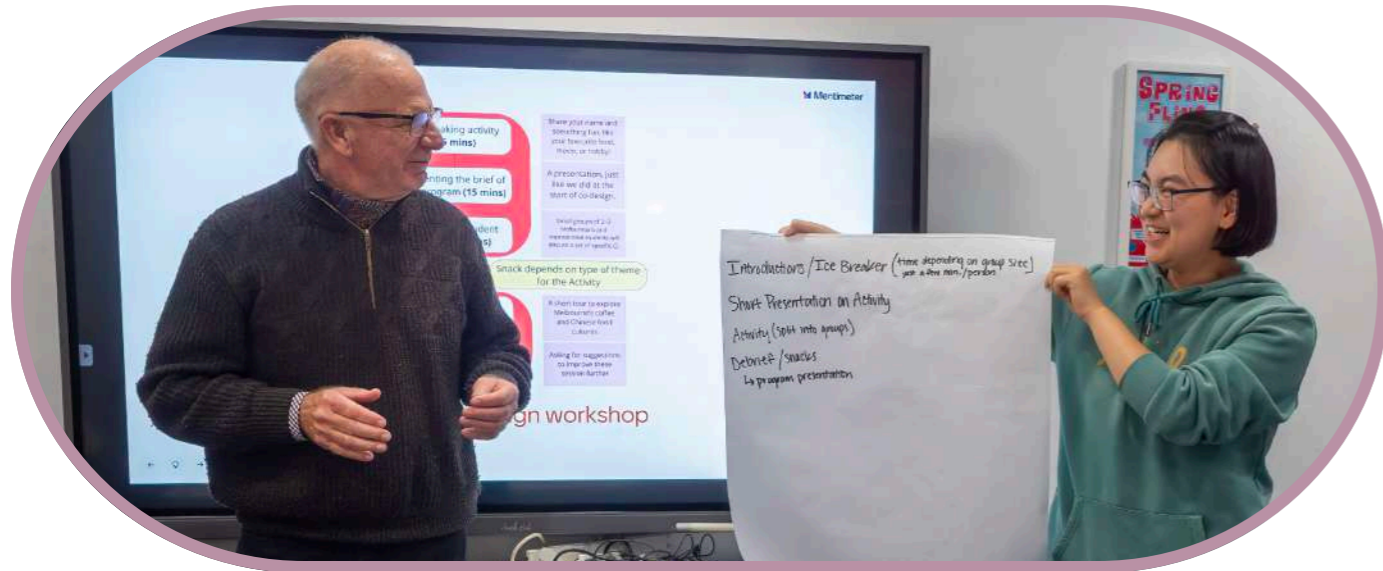
| Grant Question / Criteria | Concise Response |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Student Wellbeing Issues | Addresses social isolation, cultural adjustment, and limited local connection among University of Melbourne students and older Melburnians. Connects students with community members and peers through intercultural exchange, language confidence, and friendship-building activities. Builds belonging, wellbeing, and long-term integration into Melbourne community life. |
| Target Students & Inclusion | Engages 200–300 students from the University of Melbourne and surrounding institutions. Open to all, with emphasis on those experiencing isolation or transition. Students co-design, deliver, and evaluate sessions such as Slang Bingo and Footy Feud. Activities use plain English, visuals, and cultural sharing to ensure inclusion and engagement. |
| Support for Education Community | Establishes a replicable model for university–community collaboration. Builds student leadership, communication, and cultural intelligence. Strengthens the University of Melbourne’s role in promoting wellbeing and inclusion while enhancing Melbourne’s reputation as a welcoming, globally connected study city. |

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Partnership & Delivery | Led by North & West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre with the University of Melbourne guidance and support. Partners bring strong international-student and community-program experience. Clear MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) defines roles, NWMNC manages staffing, recruitment and facilitation, and UniMelb leads financial support, mentorship and technical expertise. |
| Progress & Reporting | Tracks impact through surveys, attendance data, and reflection boards measuring belonging, confidence, and connection. Includes mid-point and final reporting for accountability. Budget allocates funds for evaluation; NWMNC has a proven record of responsible program management and transparent acquittal. |



Community Impact and support circles created during the “Being a Melburnian” Program

Achievements and Activities Beyond



Session structure design by the team of Tianyi Lu, Annie Fang, Alan Cooke, Andrea Derungs, Patricia Harwood. Photographers details: Jim Weatherill (jimweatherill@hotmail.com)

1. Co-Design Process & Community Consultations

The co-design journey, guided by community consultations, was both engaging and insightful. It offered practical and creative solutions that helped refine and simplify the structure of each session.

The goal was to co-create the program with the community—ensuring participants not only understood the vision but actively shaped a framework that was inclusive, holistic, and mutually beneficial.

Through interactive tools such as brainstorming activities, word clouds, polls, and questionnaires, we gathered valuable feedback on aspects like attention span, preferred venues, and effective communication methods.

Milestone 1 marked the completion of the collaboratively designed session structure. This achievement reaffirmed the program's alignment with community aspirations, strengthening its foundation and shared sense of purpose.



International students and local Melburnians enjoying a game of AFLW together

2. Teams participating in AFLW match

For the second milestone, participants formed small teams to attend the North Melbourne Football Club – Welcome to AFL event. The initiative was led by Yuezhang Zhou (Cancion) and Alba, a local Melburnian, who encouraged others to join and experience the energy of an AFLW match together.

What began as a simple idea quickly grew into a vibrant group outing. Participants from diverse backgrounds bonded over shared curiosity, learning the rules of the game, cheering for the players, and soaking in the excitement of the crowd.

Alba later shared her delight at receiving club merchandise and meeting some of the AFLW players, moments that made the experience especially memorable.



3. Nature Excursion

The third milestone became an unexpected adventure, thoughtfully planned by Wayne and his wife, Louise, who kindly offered to drive Arie and Ana to the Weeroona Aboriginal Cemetery in Greenvale, a serene place where contemporary design and Country intertwine.

As they wandered through the quiet landscape, the rustle of grass revealed wild kangaroos grazing nearby. To our astonishment, one was completely white, an albino kangaroo, rare and mesmerising. Moments later, a brown snake glided through the undergrowth, sparking a captivating discussion about native wildlife, instincts, and ecological balance.

Louise, a journalist with a keen eye for storytelling, and Wayne, both well-versed in nature, shared fascinating insights that deepened our appreciation of the landscape.



Wayne, Ana and Arie learning about kangaroos, snakes and vegetation at the Weeroona Aboriginal Cemetery in Greenvale



4. Confidence Building to Open Opportunities

The fourth milestone focused on confidence and personal growth. Amirali, an international student who once struggled with shyness and self-expression, found an unexpected mentor in Laurence, a local Melburnian and coordinator of a community homework club. Through regular interactions, guidance, and encouragement, Laurence helped Amirali discover his voice and potential.



Amirali and Laurence sharing their troubles, challenges and how they overcame those by improving their soft skills and teach children at homework club. Photographers details: Jim Weatherill (jimweatherill@hotmail.com)

5. Making Better Connections and New Friends

The fifth milestone celebrated the friendships and meaningful connections formed through the program. Many participants expressed a desire to stay involved with the North and West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre beyond the sessions, signing up to participate at upcoming community events such as the Lantern Making Festival.

What began as casual participation grew into genuine companionship. Participants enjoyed collaborating, sharing stories, and creating together, finding joy in the company of both peers and locals. Several shared that these experiences helped them overcome loneliness and feel more connected to the community.



Lantern making workshop

6. Community Choir

This activity explored how music can connect people beyond words. Participants joined a local community choir, coming together each week to sing, laugh, and share stories. The choir's open and welcoming spirit allowed newcomers to feel at ease, regardless of experience or background.

Through group rehearsals and casual performances, participants built confidence, improved communication, and discovered how singing in harmony fosters teamwork and trust. The simple act of raising voices together created a shared rhythm that bridged cultures and generations.



Participants singing and enjoying at the community choir at Sokol

7. A Homely Meal Memory

This milestone celebrated the comfort of sharing food and stories around a table. During one of the sessions, a local Melburnian suggested Bread Club, a beloved bakery known for its uniquely crafted traditional pies. Intrigued by the idea, the team decided to feature these pies for the community food event.

For many international participants, it was their first taste of a classic Melburnian pie, a blend of flaky pastry, hearty filling, and the feeling of home. This milestone reminded everyone that sharing a meal, no matter how simple, can bridge cultures and turn strangers into friends.



Participants enjoying meat and vegetarian traditional pies from Breadclub

8. Victoria Night Market

Participants discovered that food connects memory, identity and voice: an international student might recognise the spice mix while a local Melburnian recounts numerous visits.

They walked through food stalls offering dishes from many cultures, trying everything from dumplings to churros. The mix of smells, sounds, and people made the night fun and relaxed. Participants talked, laughed, and learned more about each other while sharing meals and stories. For some, it was their first visit to the market and a great chance to experience local life outside a formal setting.



Participants enjoying multicultural food at Victoria Night Market

9. Coffee Catchups

The ninth milestone focused on keeping the connections alive beyond the formal sessions. After building strong bonds through shared activities, participants began meeting at Errols.

Many participants posted about these catchups on social media, celebrating friendships that grew from the program.

A dedicated WhatsApp group, created to help participants stay connected, remains active with shared event ideas, photos, and plans for future meetups.



Participants enjoying coffee and continuing this bond at Errols

10. End of the Program Party

To celebrate the journey and connections built throughout “Being a Melburnian”, we hosted an End of Program Party during the students’ mid-semester break at the Errol’s. The event was designed as a warm reunion, giving participants the chance to reconnect, reflect, and share how the program had enriched their lives in Melbourne.

Invitations were extended to everyone who attended more than four sessions, a total of 34 international students and 27 local Melburnians joined the celebration. The smaller turnout of locals, was majorly due to the time allocation of the late evening for the party.

Participants spoke about feeling more confident, connected, and at home in the city. The evening marked not an ending, but a continuation of community, a reminder that small, consistent interactions can lead to lasting bonds and meaningful change.



Participants enjoying End of the Program Party at Errol's



11. Queensberry Cup

Following the success of the “Being a Melburnian” program, several international students continued their involvement with the North and West Melbourne Neighbourhood Centre as active volunteers. One of the highlights was their participation in the 2025 Queensberry Cup, a much-loved local event that brings the community together through billy-cart racing, food stalls, and cultural performances.

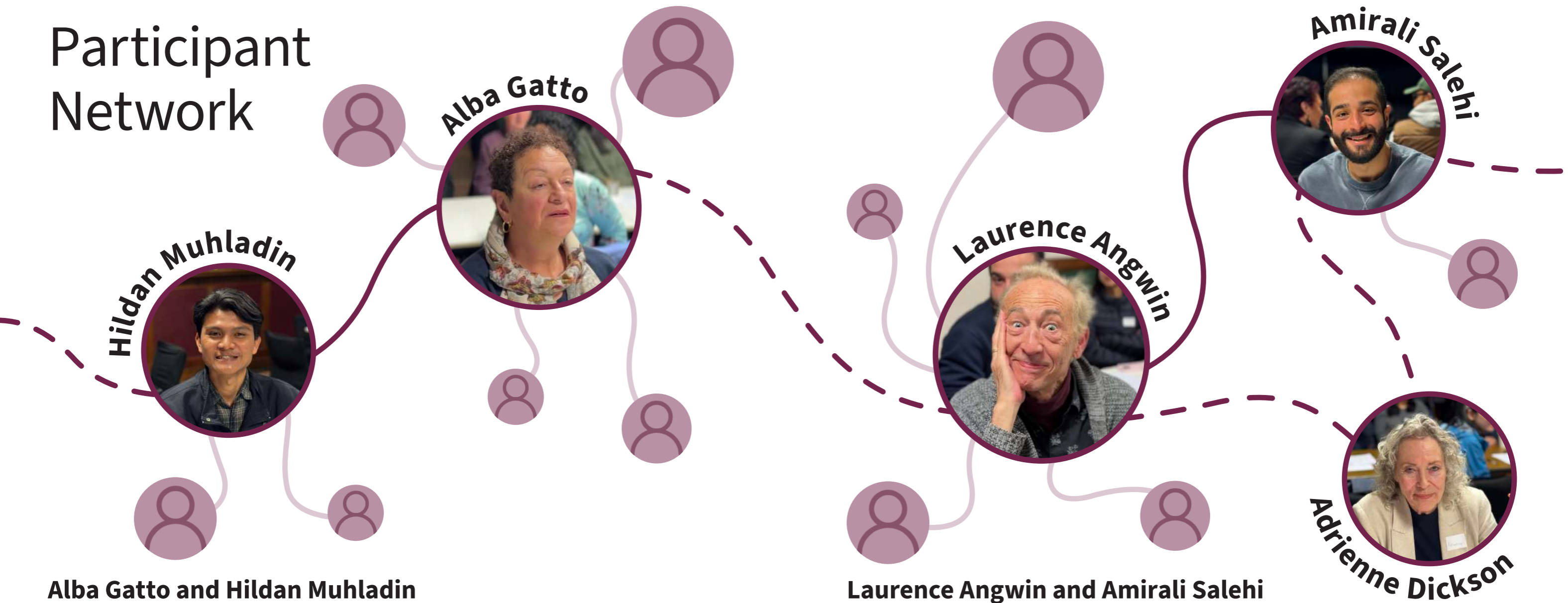
Students participated in the race, assisted in event setup, coordination, and participant engagement, working alongside long-time residents and staff. The experience provided valuable exposure to local community dynamics and strengthened their sense of belonging.

For many, volunteering at the Queensberry Cup represented a turning point, from being participants to becoming contributors within the community.



International students volunteering for the Queensberry Cup 2025

Participant Network



Alba Gatto and Hildan Muhladin

Alba's Experience:

- Most fascinated by connecting with people from diverse backgrounds.
- Inspired by Hildan's volunteer work in Indonesia, which reminded her of Laurence's "Homework Club" in Melbourne.
- Saw it as "beautiful to see experiences from one place spark opportunities in another."

Hildan's Transformation:

- Found the program transformative, helping him understand Australian language and accents.
- Gained confidence in tutorials and daily interactions.
- Credited Alba for linking him with Laurence and helping expand his outlook.
- Alba noted how confident he seemed from the start, surprised he was once shy.

Shared Vision for the Future:

- Both aim to continue through volunteering and casual catchups.
- Alba believes local support networks can ease homesickness and challenges for students.
- Coffee meetups and volunteering seen as powerful tools to maintain connection.
- Hildan echoed that "even a simple coffee chat" helps them stay connected.

Laurence Angwin and Amirali Salehi

Laurence's Reflections:

- Found it inspiring to see international students confidently speaking in English, often their second language.
- Learned about Amir, Adrienne's and Ilnaz's educational backgrounds and reflected on differences in teaching styles, priorities, and principles between systems.
- Enjoyed hearing their stories and seeing how different cultures shape learning.

Amirali's Growth:

- Gained confidence through speaking on stage and sharing his challenges.
- Felt motivated by Laurence's and Adrienne's encouragement.
- Enjoyed learning about Melbourne's history, more about sports and language during the sessions, which deepened his connection with the city.

Shared Vision for the Future:

- Laurence plans to involve Amir and other students in his "Homework Club," seeing it as a way to build multicultural collaboration.
- They shared contact details to stay in touch and volunteer together.
- Both wish to keep their friendship and continue learning from each other.



Cheryl Markham and Elnaz Dehghan Gordeh

Cheryl's Observations:

- Felt a strong sense of harmony meeting people from diverse backgrounds.
- The program helped her break barriers and connect deeply with international students.
- Enjoyed learning about different cultures and building new friendships in her own neighbourhood.

Elnaz's Growth:

- Usually finds it hard to meet people due to study pressures but saw this program as a refreshing change and an insightful experience.
- Gained confidence in socialising and improved her soft skills.
- Learned about footy and Australian accents, which helped her connect better with locals.
- Found value in hearing an older person's perspective for guidance and decision-making

Shared Vision for the Future:

- Cheryl and Elnaz built a warm friendship through the sessions.
- Plan to meet again for coffee catchups and outings like the Wednesday night market
- Both cherish their bond, describing it as comforting and filled with mutual respect and affection. Often start meetings with a warm hug that reflects their shared love language.

Ian Andrew and Kazuki Ihara

Ian's Reflections:

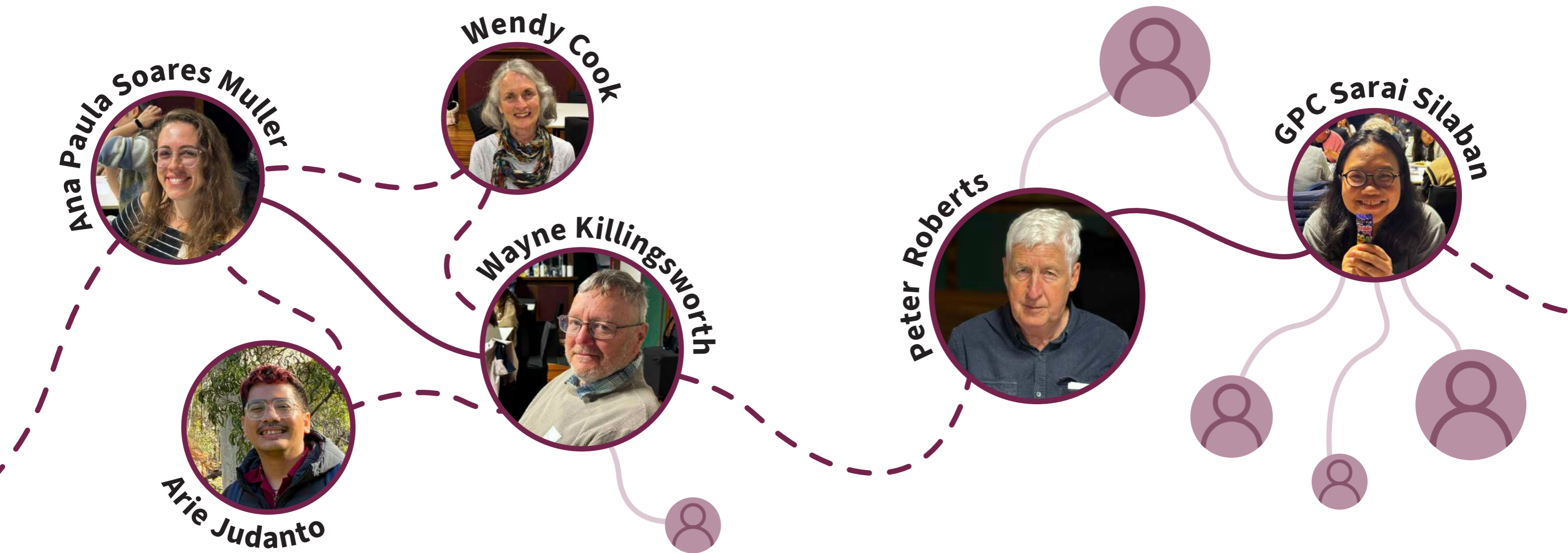
- Felt happy to see international students eager to meet people and learn about the area.
- Enjoyed learning about different foods, customs, and students' philosophies toward careers and everyday choices from Peter and Kazuki.
- Found the sessions eye-opening and a great way to understand new generations.

Kazuki's Transformation:

- Loved talking with locals and exploring the mix of cultures shaping Melbourne's identity.
- Improved his English and communication skills through the program.
- Learned about Australian culture, sports, and diverse communities from Peter and Ian.
- Felt it helped him grow as a global citizen and connect across cultures.

Shared Vision for the Future:

- Plan to meet for lunches, football matches, and casual catchups.
- Ian hopes to introduce Kazuki to his favourite Lebanese and Thai restaurants.
- Kazuki appreciated how Ian remembered his love for Thai food, seeing it as a sign of genuine friendship
- Both believe sharing food is a wonderful way to build friendship.



Wayne Killingsworth and Ana Paula Soares Muller

Wayne's Reflections:

- Enjoyed meeting energetic participants like Ana, Wendy and Arie, who showed great curiosity and enthusiasm for understanding more about life experiences and travelling.
- Admired Ana's dedication to her PhD on electric vehicles and learned new things about technology through their chats.

Ana's Reflections:

- Loved the welcoming environment of "Being a Melburnian", which made her feel at home. Especially having a friendship with Wendy, Wayne and Arie.
- Learned a lot about Melbourne's natural and cultural sites during a visit to Weeroona Cemetery in Greenvale with Wayne and his wife.
- Found the trip memorable, spotting wild kangaroos, an albino kangaroo, and even a brown snake sparked fascinating conversations about nature and culture.

Shared Vision for the Future:

- Ana and Wayne exchanged contact details and plan to explore more places together.
- Wayne hopes to take Ana, Arie, and others to new travel spots around Melbourne.
- Both share a love for nature, travel, and learning eager to continue their friendship

Peter Roberts and GPC Sarai Silaban

Peter's Experience:

- Enjoyed learning about the students' journeys and challenges they faced.
- Found the mix of people refreshing, some connections happen naturally, and that's part of the experience.
- Appreciated Sarai's openness and humour, creating an easy and friendly connection.

Sarai's Reflections:

- As an international student, sometimes feels anxious, but found the "Golden Melburnians" warm, kind, and understanding.
- Felt supported and accepted, like being part of a family away from home.
- Appreciated the care shown by others, being checked on after missing sessions made her feel valued and included.

Shared Vision for the Future:

- Peter and Sarai plan to keep in touch through messages and casual coffee catchups.
- They joked about sharing a meal together, with Peter warning she might have to "put up with his cooking."
- Both see their bond as more than just part of the program.

Learnings

3. Future Directions



1. Challenges



2. Team Management



Challenges

The “Being a Melburnian” program faced a few key challenges despite its overall success:

1. Scheduling Conflicts

- Challenge: Students’ class timetables often overlapped with seniors’ daily routines, making it difficult to find mutually convenient times.
- Suggestion: Future iterations will use early calendar invites to secure attendance.

2. Catering Sensitivity

- Challenge: Dietary restrictions such as vegetarian or low-salt preferences required quick on-the-spot adjustments. Especially more specific requirements for older people.
- Suggestion: A pre-event dietary survey will be implemented to ensure inclusive and suitable catering for all participants.

3. Communication Barriers

- Challenge: Varied levels of English fluency occasionally made it difficult for a few students.
- Suggestion: Bilingual volunteers will continue to promote and assist facilitation, helping bridge linguistic and cultural gaps.

4. Venue Acoustics

- Challenge: Ensuring adequate sound quality
- Suggestion: Future sessions will include pre-event acoustic checks and improved coordination with service and maintenance teams to ensure all facilities are up to date.

Key Lesson: Anticipating participant comfort is as vital as designing program content.



Team Management

From inception to execution we learned the essence and importance of teamwork:

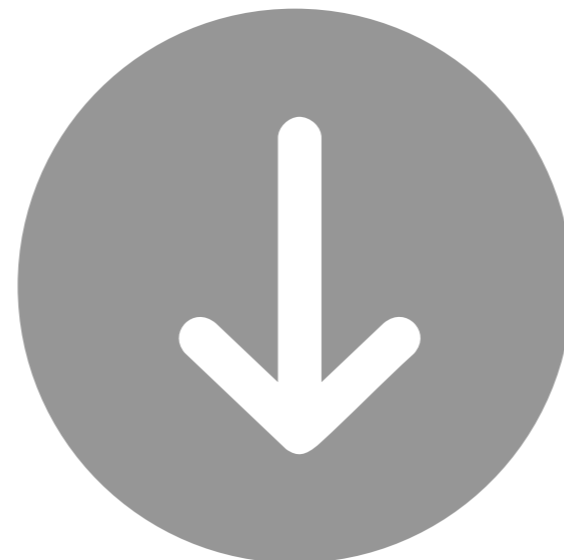
1. Planning Systems:

- Using Monday.com for weekly tracking and a shared drive for resources showed how digital tools can simplify coordination and prevent miscommunication.
- Quick post-session debriefs helped us learn continuously, turning challenges into small, actionable improvements each week.

2. Stakeholder Communication:

- Regular check-ins with NWMNC, UniMelb staff, student leaders, affiliated organizations and volunteers reinforced that transparency builds trust.
- We learned that involving partners early in decision-making creates smoother collaboration and shared accountability.

Key Lesson: Effective teamwork grows through reflection and flexibility, every adjustment, whether in planning or communication, became a learning moment that made the program stronger and more inclusive.



Future Directions

The “Being a Melburnian” program has laid a strong foundation for intercultural and intergenerational connection and community wellbeing, and the next phase aims to build on this momentum.

Future opportunities include expanding the model to regional Victoria through partnerships with local Neighbourhood Houses and universities, allowing more students and seniors to benefit from shared experiences.



Past participants will be trained as facilitators, creating clear leadership pathways that align with SMIP’s goal of developing community leadership and intercultural capability. A new digital storytelling stream will showcase participants’ journeys through short videos, amplifying their voices across Study Melbourne channels. There is also strong potential to embed the program within university orientation and wellbeing weeks, making it a lasting part of student life.

Why Further Funding Matters:

Continued investment is vital, as the program directly supports SMIP’s six aims:

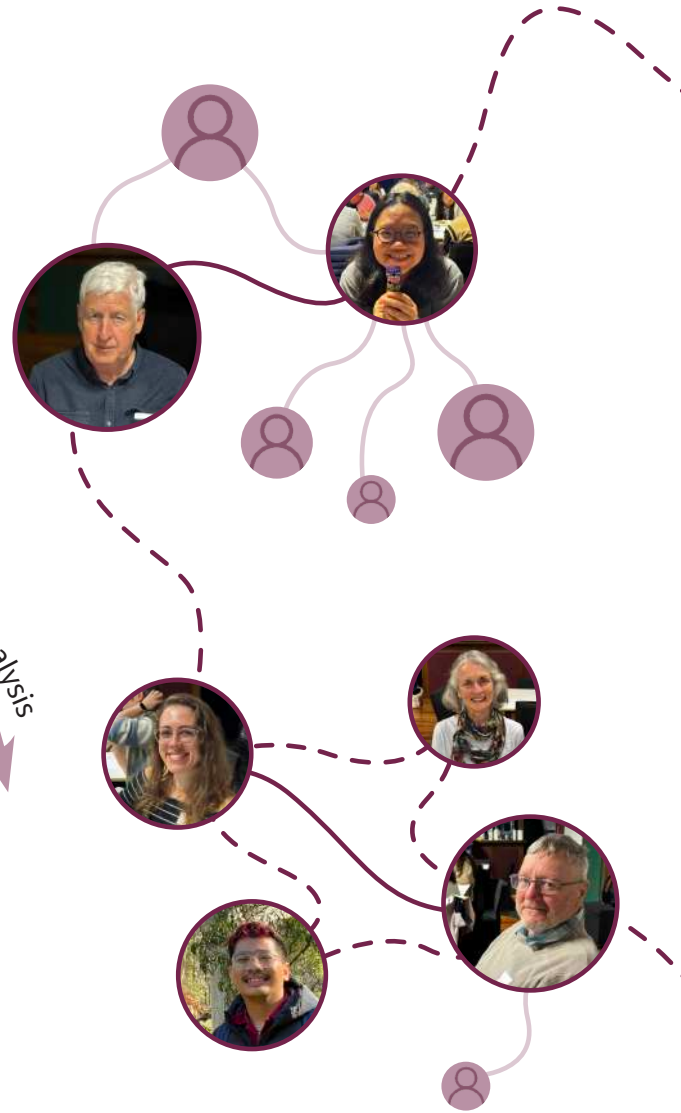
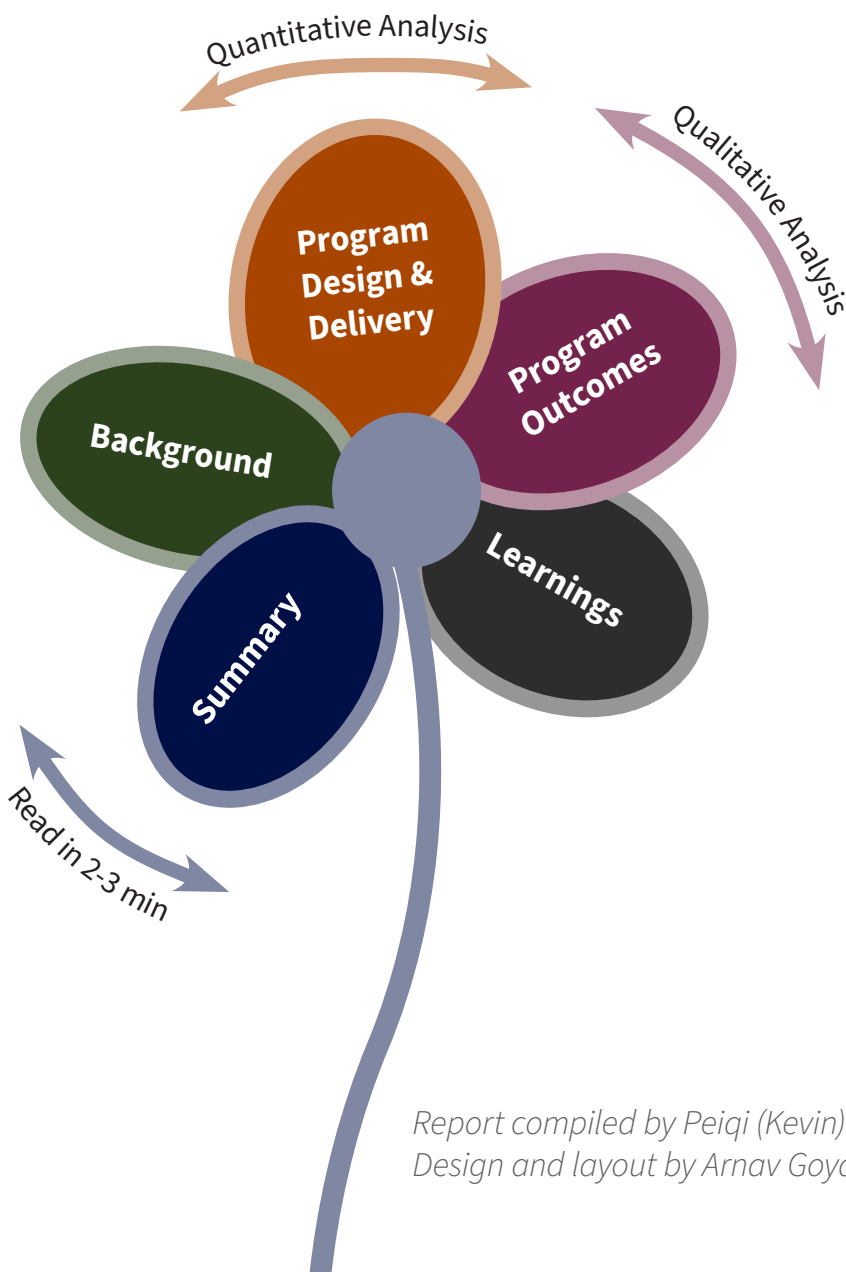
- Fostering wellbeing
- Collaboration
- Awareness
- Inclusion

With additional funding, this proven model can be scaled across Victoria, extending its reach and reinforcing the state’s reputation as a global leader in student-community connection.

How to Read This Report

The report offers two reading paths. For a quick overview, start with Part 1: Summary, which outlines the program's goals, milestones, and achievements in 2–3 pages, supported by highlighted achievements.

For a deeper understanding, follow the full narrative: Part 2 explains the background and audience; Part 3 details design and delivery; Part 4 presents outcomes with stories and data; Part 5 shares learnings and future opportunities



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