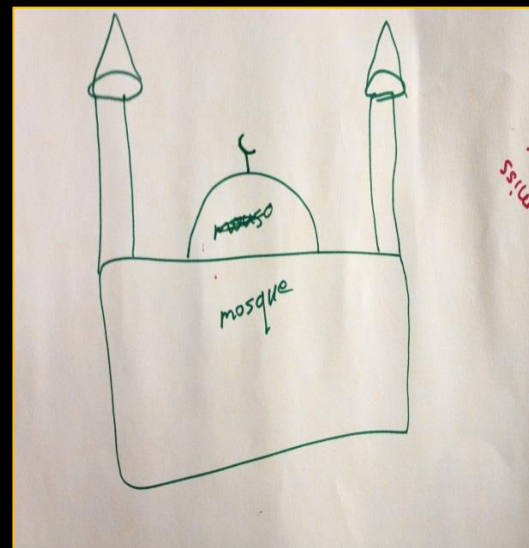
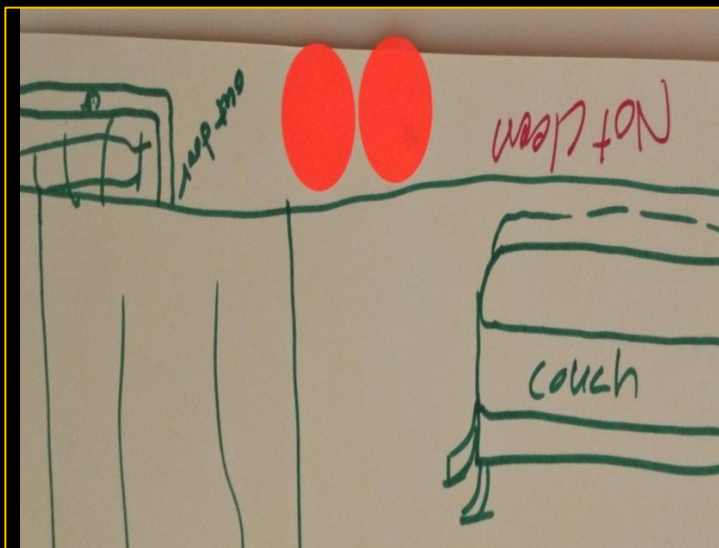


Visual voices

Life without Barrier's
Community Detention Services
Through the eyes of asylum seekers



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Assignment 1, June 2014
COMU7013 - Participatory Development Communication
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1. Background and rationale



1.1 Background

Some 45 million displaced people are currently shifting across the globe. They are asylum seekers, refugees and internally displaced people escaping persecution or civil unrest in their countries of origin, mainly in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Americas and Europe. Of these, about 30,000 asylum seekers have arrived in Australia each year since 2012.¹

Asylum seekers who arrive in Australia by boat without valid visas are called Illegal Maritime Arrivals (IMAs), and are held for an unlimited time in mandatory offshore detention centres in PNG and Nauru under 'Third Country' resettlement arrangements while their refugee claims are being processed.

Australia's immigration detention system is recognised as one of the most restrictive in the world, contravening the 1951 United Nations Conventions Relating to the Status of Refugees and 1967 Protocols. Since 2005, successive Australian Governments have concurrently shaped a more humane program of community detention and bridging visas for families with children, unaccompanied minors and vulnerable individual adults seeking asylum.² As at 31 January 2014, nearly a third of all immigration detainees in Australia were living in community detention while their refugee claims were being processed, and about half of those were children.³

Organisations such as Life without Barriers (LWB) are contracted by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) to deliver support arrangements to asylum seekers living in community detention. Services include housing, residential care for unaccompanied minors, case workers, an allowance to meet daily living costs, health care, and education for school aged children. Recent Australian Government policy changes have modified community detention arrangements, further tightening constraints on settlement opportunities for asylum seekers.⁴

1.2 Situation analysis

Life without Barriers is Australia's largest out-of-home care provider in areas of care and protection, disability, mental health, homelessness, youth justice and immigration. The organisation's Support to Refugee and Asylum Seeker Service (SRASS) supports asylum seekers who arrive in Australia without a parent or guardian through settlement, community detention, and complex case support. LWB's SRAS program is delivered nationally through a tiered service delivery model focused on 'strength based, client centred and a developmentally appropriate approach that promotes psychological, emotional and physical safety'.⁵

In South Australia, the SRAS team is overseen by an Area manager, Operations manager, and two Program managers, and is delivered on ground by a Cultural liaison officer, two Cultural support coordinators and multiple Cultural support workers.

From its Prospect service centre, the SA team provides community detention and settlement support to Under Aged Minors (UAB) and vulnerable families with young children under separate contracts with DIBP and Red Cross in the following areas:

- accommodation
- monitoring of their health and well being
- provision of life skills education
- support for recreational pursuits and community access
- access to educational resources
- education about cultural awareness and understanding of life in Australia

A core element of the SRAS program is its accommodation services. In South Australia, LWB (at the time of this report) manages 16 private rental houses for 46 asylum seekers. The houses are intended to provide a sense of 'home', and a base from which the youths can begin to negotiate their lives in Australia. Up to four people live in each house in the care of live-in Cultural support workers. The support workers are responsible for supervising meals, house maintenance, and providing general support and liaison with schools and other agencies about educational and medical matters.

In turn, Cultural support officers are supported through training and supervision by a management team and fellow staff members. Risk assessments, need assessments and care plans for each child are developed to help support their developmental, psychological, physical and spiritual wellbeing.⁶

LWB's performance is measured quantitatively through KPIs linked to turn-around times for activities such as school enrolments and accommodation placements. Qualitative service delivery is self-regulated by LWB through reporting, staff performance reviews, training, guidance, 'reflection' and client feedback.

The organisation partners with other agencies and groups to support asylum seekers under an active philosophy of building strong client and provider relationships in support of its work.⁷

1.3 Issue description

There is currently little opportunity for asylum seekers to participate meaningfully in Australian society given associated barriers and uncertainties surrounding the determination of their refugee status. Without connections to their families and certitude in their lives, high numbers of asylum seekers are reported to be suffering mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Their freedoms and opportunities are limited, and media coverage of the lives and circumstances surrounding this group of people is restricted and limited. Asylum seekers appear to be living invisibly in community detention, unheard and unseen by mainstream Australia.⁸

LWB supports its clients to speak out about their concerns through Cultural support workers and other SRASS staff. In particular, they are invited to provide comments about what they think of LWB's services through exit interviews and feedback surveys. These mechanisms are intended to help measure the wellbeing of individual clients and the effectiveness of the program.

LWB's exit questionnaires entail a series of set questions presented in a logical order about how asylum seekers think and feel about LWB services. Key focuses include daily supervision and care, health, identity, education and wellbeing. In addition, young people are asked about the effectiveness of communications with their Cultural support officers, and their freedom to practise their religion. The LWB exit form and survey are literacy and cognitively biased with some questions asking "How do you feel...."

This PNOA sought to supplement LWB's existing client satisfaction surveys and staff feedback mechanisms through workshops using spatial and visual media to gather subjective expressions about how the young asylum seekers perceive LWB's services and facilities.

The process was designed to provide a participatory space where the young clients could express their views personally and anecdotally from an experiential basis. The workshops asked similar questions as the exit surveys but drew on broader personal imagery depicting intimate facets of the everyday lives of the youths.

1.4 Stakeholder identification and analysis

1.4.1 Stakeholder identification

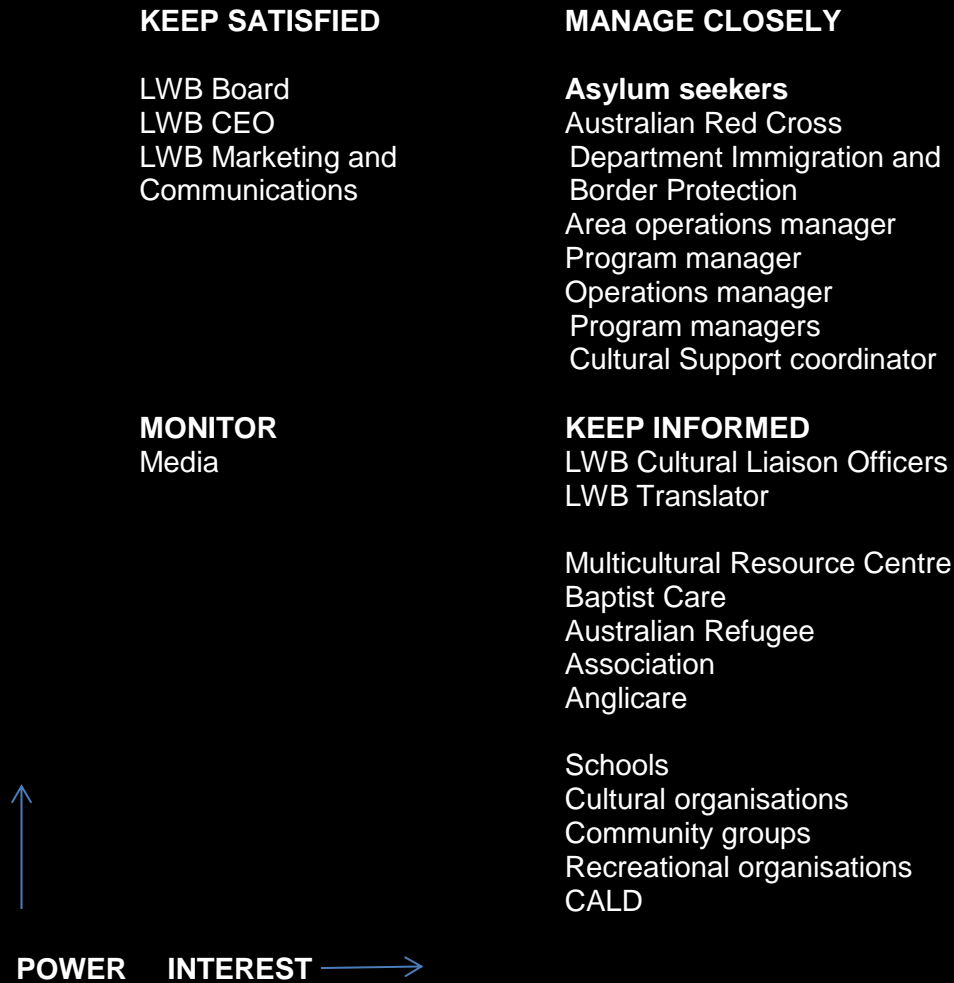
This PNOA sought the opinions and ideas of numerous stakeholders with an interest in, or influence over the SRAS program in South Australia. The stakeholders who took part in this assessment were identified by LWB's SRASS Operations manager and primarily included members of the SRAS team, and key external partners. The views of this multilogue of stakeholders provides additional context to the voices of the young people.

These stakeholders included:

Key stakeholders:	Asylum seekers
Primary stakeholders:	SA SRAS team Area operations manager Program manager Operations manager; Program managers; Cultural Support coordinators; Cultural support officers; Cultural Liaison Officers; Translator.
Partners (<i>internal</i>)	Department Immigration and Border Security LWB Board LWB CEO LWB Marketing and Communications
(<i>external</i>)	Multicultural Resource Centre Baptist care Australian Red Cross Australian Refugee Association Anglicare Culturally And Linguistically Diverse (CALD) group
External:	Schools Cultural organisations Community groups Recreational organisations
Other:	Media, general community

In the lead up to stakeholder interviews, a stakeholder analysis was undertaken to generate knowledge about the various players whose intentions, interests, conflicting interests, behaviour and resources could potentially impact LWB's SRAS program.⁹

1.4.2 Power vs interest matrix



1.4.3 Stakeholder research and approach

Stakeholder research involved email correspondence, phone interviews, and face-to-face interviews. They comprised a mix of in-depth and semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted 30 to 60 minutes and looked at SA SRAS program services, asylum seekers and communication issues: This interview approach provided a private environment for stakeholders to express their opinions. While stakeholders' comments may be included in subsequent documents for reporting purposes, their names and organisations have not been identified.

The following interviews were conducted in person.

- Operations manager x 2 meetings;
- Translator

In total, 10 people were interviewed by phone.

- State area manager
- SA SRASS manager
- Program manager
- Program manager
- Cultural liaison officer
- Cultural support officer
- Baptist Care
- Australian Red Cross
- University of Adelaide
- CALD

1.4.4 Summary of findings

The findings from stakeholder interviews were diverse and illuminated the priorities of particular organisations, while reflecting on the roles and interests of given interviewees. They revealed widespread interest in, and commitment to, the welfare of asylum seekers and refugees in Adelaide and South Australia. In general, the overriding concerns of stakeholders related to communication, mental health, trust and access issues associated with the asylum seekers in their care.

Communication was recognised as the cornerstone of efficient and effective service delivery within the organisation and sector at large. Stakeholders variously commented that good communication enables respectful and responsive relationships with service users and underpins good working relationships with other service providers and parties. It was seen to facilitate decision-making, partnerships and service delivery.

Mental health of asylum seekers was a key concern of stakeholders. Many commented anecdotally that the majority of their clients across different service providers have experienced depression and/or anxiety, and that self-harm and suicidal ideations were not uncommon. These issues were cited as due to traumatic circumstances in clients' countries of origin, separation from family, and uncertainty about the future. Stakeholders commented on the limitations of working within political and structural constraints and said current immigration policies fuel clients' uncertainty and the sense of disempowerment that contribute to psychological distress. Stakeholders recognised the importance of coordinated, stable environments and long-term client-provider relationships as important contributors to the mental wellbeing of their clients.

Trust and access issues were highlighted by stakeholders as very importance to the wellbeing of the young asylum seekers, many whose confidence in themselves and others has been compromised. The role of the cultural support officer was seen to be particularly important, given their coalface role in providing daily care, support and education to the young people.

LWB itself scored highly with other stakeholders with comments like, 'LWB is really in line with the issues' and 'I've had good experiences working with LWB.' Individual LWB staff were mentioned by stakeholders as being excellent or collaborative operators and partners. One stakeholder said that meeting youth's needs 'boils down to individual' and that 'service provision is viewed from an organisational level but actually happens on individual level.'

1.5 PNOA objectives

A Participatory Needs and Opportunity Assessment (PNOA) is the ‘diagnostic phase when developing future projects and activities, based on stakeholder driven facilitation and participation.’¹⁰ PNOAs stem from the field of participatory development communications (PDC) which seeks to ‘facilitate transformative dialogue between people and institutions’ enabling them to help identify solutions and be involved in their own welfare’.¹¹

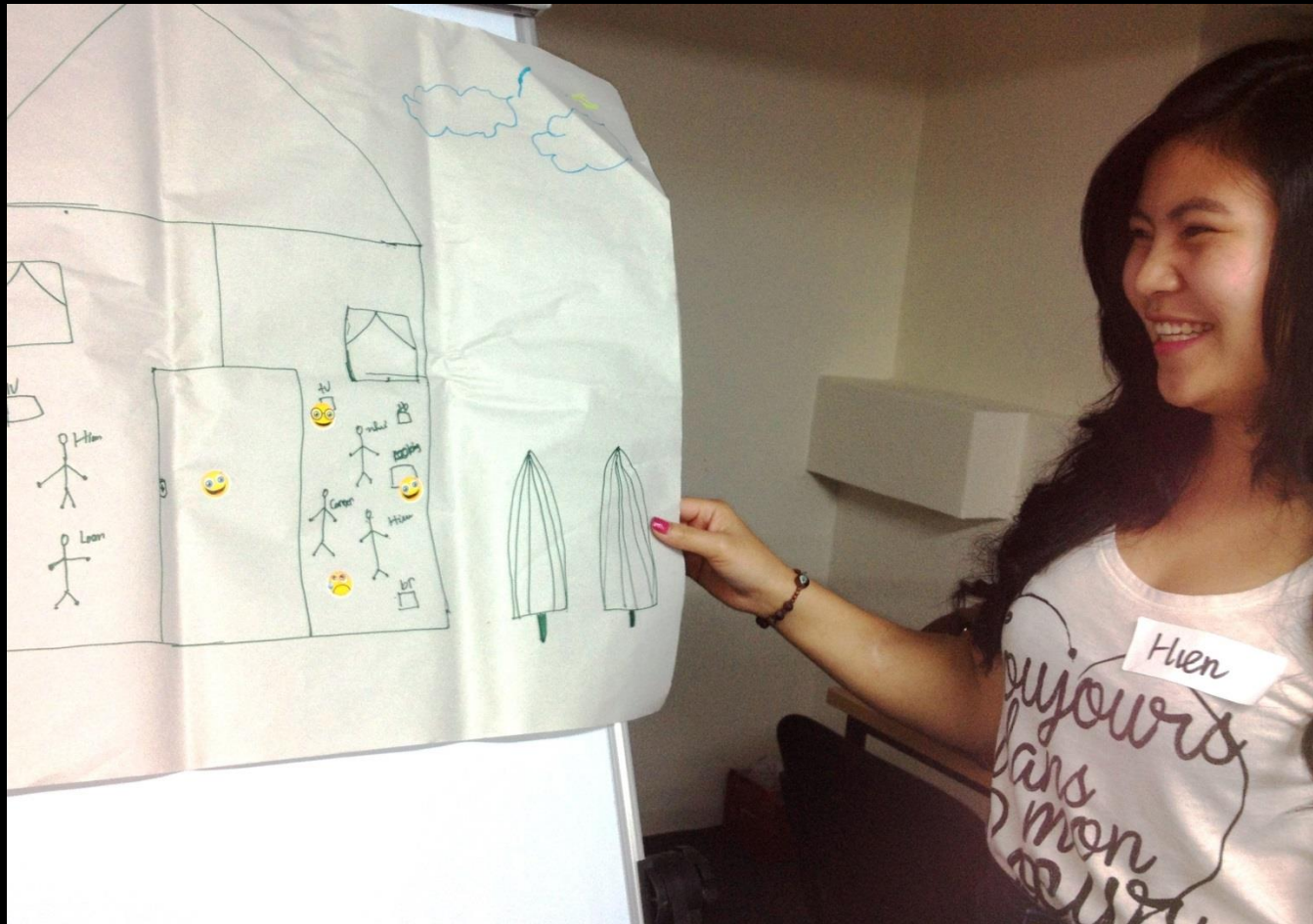
The objective of this PNOA was:

To solicit the voices of a group of young asylum seekers living in community detention, and identify needs and opportunities with regards to Life without Barrier’s services to them, including:

- *accommodation*
- *monitoring of their health and well being*
- *provision of life skills education*
- *support for recreational pursuits and community access*
- *access to educational resources*
- *education about cultural awareness and understanding of life in Australia*

LWB requested that the PNOA consider the views of the young people in general terms, rather than specifically assess all its SRAS services. This PNOA therefore aims to provide clues and insights about how clients perceived and responded to services provided by LWB, and identify gaps and opportunities to address them.

2. Methodology



2.1 Methodological framework

The assessment has utilised a number of PDC principles within a qualitative, spatial/visual framework. This approach was designed to accommodate language barriers and vulnerabilities of the client group by enabling them to show, rather than talk about the way they see their worlds. Spatial and visual methods can be more participatory than traditional research techniques in overcoming language barriers and providing non-verbal opportunities for expression. They provide avenues to describe ideas which may not easily be explained in words and reduce direct confrontation by allowing people to communicate to the image rather than the researcher. Visual participatory research is an inclusive approach which confers more ownership of the research process onto participants, enabling them to identify what is important in their environments and therefore influencing the data on which findings have been based.¹²

2.2 Methods for data collection and analysis

2.2.1 Data collection

This assessment comprised two workshops involving (a) Afghan asylum seekers who were recently granted bridging visas status and had transitioned from LWB care to Baptist Care, and (b) Vietnamese asylum seekers who were living in LWB community detention, and had not yet received a determination on their refugee status applications.

A mix of five exercises involving spatial and visual media aimed to provide stimulation and retain the interest of the young people by varying activities throughout the workshop.¹³

Spatial activities

- *House diagram*

Participants were asked to draw a diagram of the houses in which they lived, and identify who and what was in it, what they did at home, and what was missing. They were then asked to indicate which elements of the house made them feel sad, happy or indifferent by using 'emotion stickers'.

The diagrams were intended to loosely capture their responses to multiple LWB services including accommodation services, access to educational resources, education about cultural awareness and understanding of life in Australia, provision of life skills education, support for recreational pursuits and community access.

- *Community map*

The groups were then invited to sketch a map of their neighbourhood showing the people, places and activities they took visited and undertook. They were asked to add what was missing from the community map.

The map was intended to broadly capture their responses to multiple LWB services including access to educational resources, education about cultural awareness and understanding of life in Australia, provision of life skills education, support for recreational pursuits and community access and education about cultural awareness and understanding of life in Australia.

The map was ranked using coloured stickers to indicate which activities and places they most and least liked. Again, the processes aimed to identify gaps and opportunities.

Visual activities

- *Self portraits*

Participants were asked to draw images of how they saw themselves, and how they thought Australians perceive them. The exercise was intended to reflect in a limited way their sense of identity, health and wellbeing, and community access and acceptance in the Australian context.

- *Plasticine models*

Young people were provided coloured plasticine and plastic cutting tools to make firstly, something that reminded them of Australia, followed by something that reminded them of their home countries. This activity reflected on LWB's services relating to community access, health and wellbeing, and education about cultural awareness and understanding of life in Australia.

2.2.2 Preparation

Preparation for these workshops involved internet and literature research about Life without Barriers, the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, asylum seekers and refugees, and participatory visual research. In the lead up to the workshops, key staff were interviewed, workshop premises visited and scoped, a program of activities and questions developed.

Given most of the young asylum seekers attend school during the day, preliminary meetings were unable to be arranged with any of the participants prior to the workshops.

2.2.3 Implementation

- **Workshop 1 (scheduled 9 May 2014)**

Initial plans for a single workshop with a group of Afghan asylum seekers currently living LWB accommodation were cancelled when these boys did not arrive on the day.

- **Workshop 2 (9 May 2014)**

Ironically, a different group of Afghan asylum seekers arrived at LWB at the same time the workshop was due to start. These young men had recently transitioned from LWB to Baptist Care, and were willing to take part in the workshops, so permissions were sought to proceed with the workshop from the perspective of their previous involvement with LWB. This workshop was cut short an hour before it was to finish because of security issues in the building.

However, given the young people had already completed several workshop activities, it was decided to incorporate these findings in this report.

This group of four Afghan asylum seekers were aged between 17 and 18 years of age.

- **Workshop 3 (13 May 2014)**

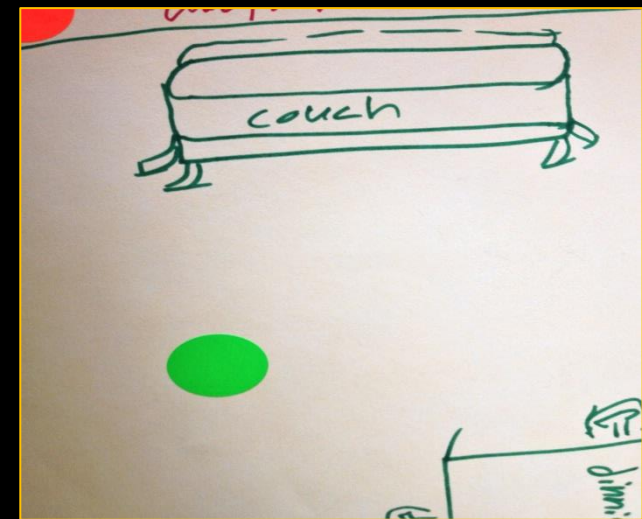
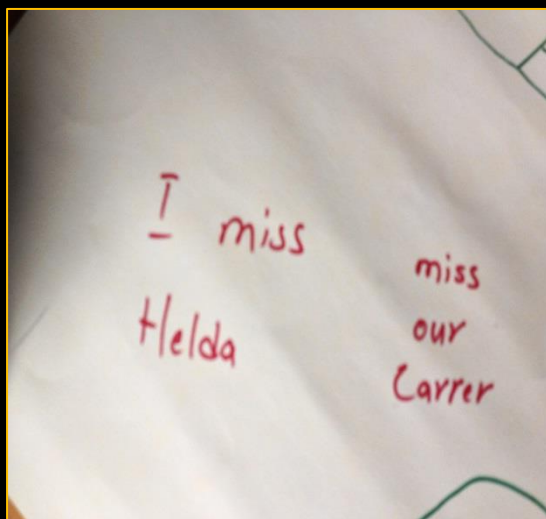
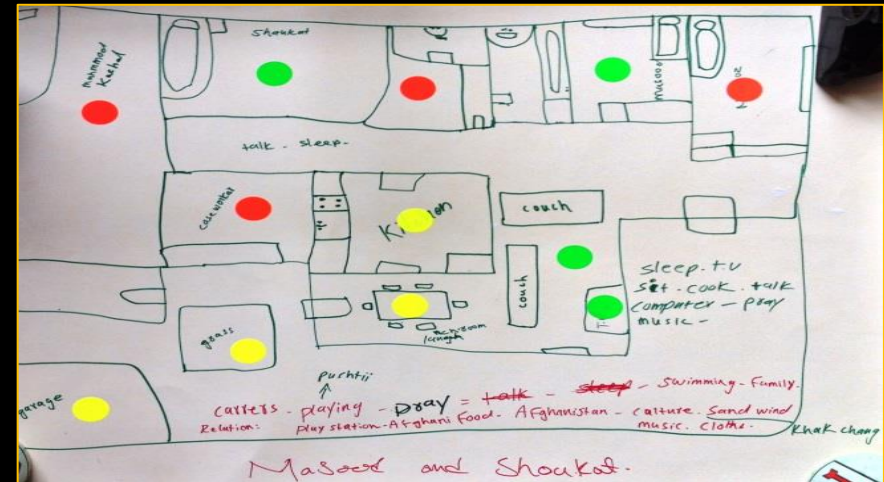
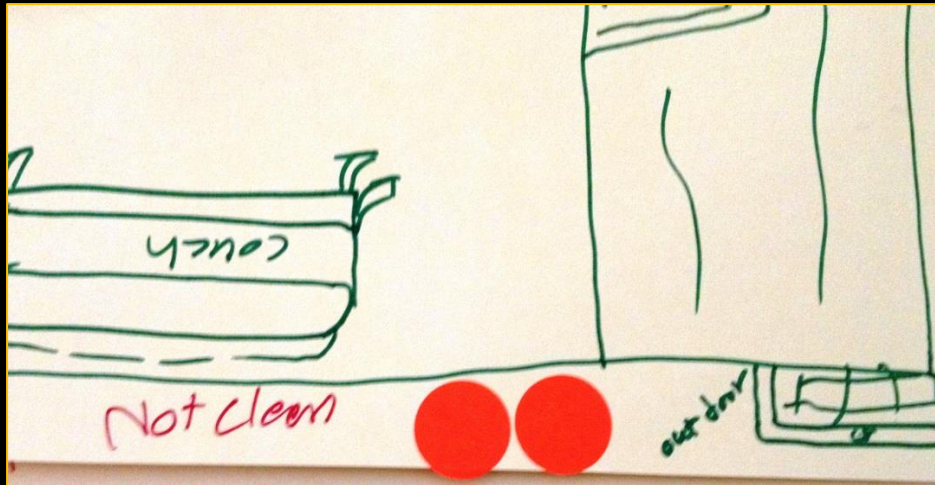
A third workshop was subsequently organised with a group of Vietnamese asylum seekers who are presently living in LWB accommodation in the Prospect area. The five women and three men are aged 18 to 25 years, and arrived in Australia between one and three years ago with friends by boat from Vietnam. This workshop was supported with the assistance of a translator who works as a cultural care coordinator with LWB.

3. Results and discussion



3.1 Presentation of workshop findings and analysis

3.1.1 Afghan group - accommodation



Discussion

- The participants identified the following elements and activities in their house: bedrooms (4), veranda, carer's room, communal space, computer (4), cooking, DVDs, X-box, garage, garden (2), Kitchen/dining x 2, music, office, praying area (2), sitting, sleeping, talking and TV (2).
- Communal areas of the house, and spending time with each other, made them happy.
- The absence of their LWB carers and former house mates made them sad. Empty, remote rooms, and the untidy office and front garden bothered them.
- The participants identified many things they wanted in their house, and most of these related to Afghanistan such as food, music and pushti (scatter rugs).

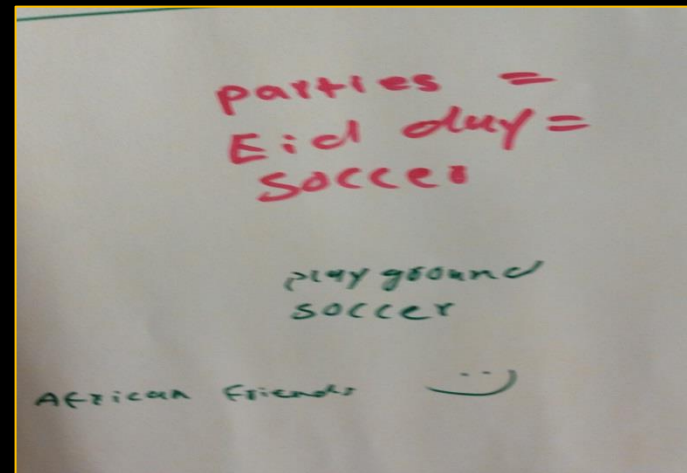
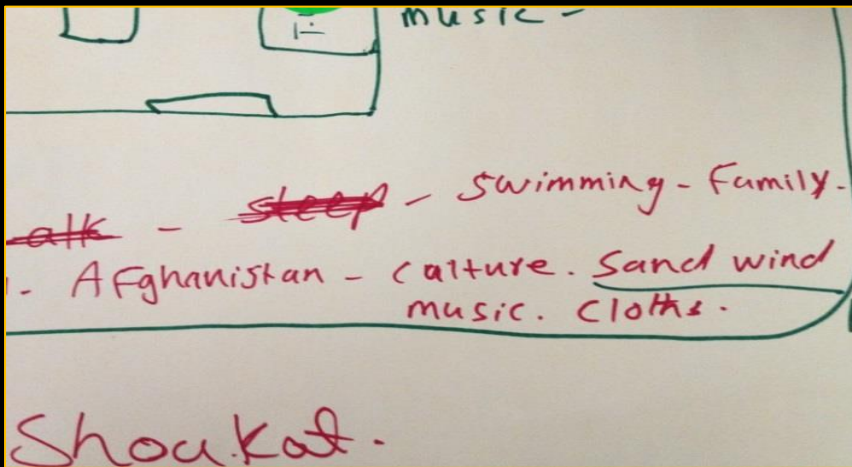
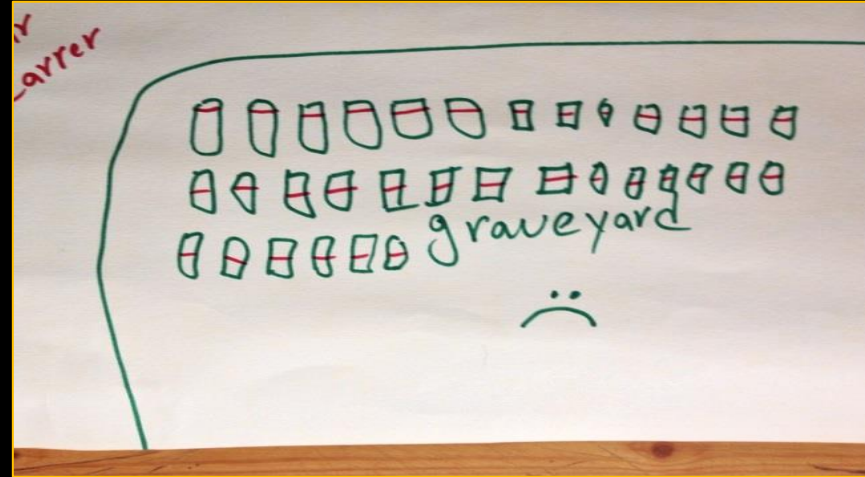
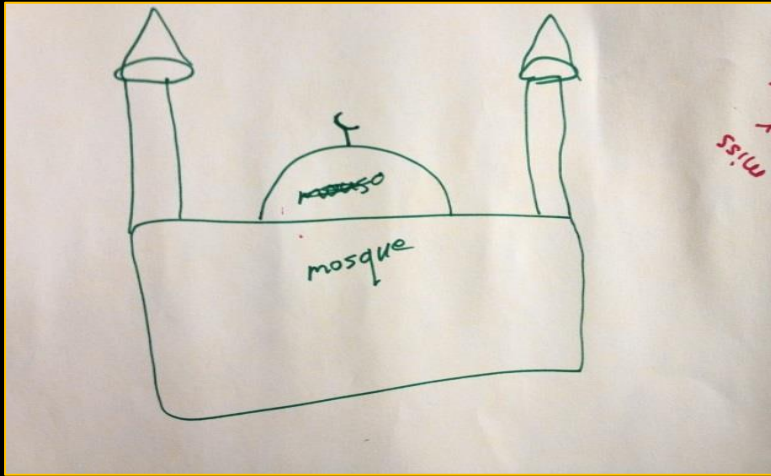
This group of young Afghan men were forthright and seemed comfortable to speak their minds. They worked closely together on their house diagrams and community map, discussing details and collaborating about design. They followed directions and took considerable time considering how to approach their plans before drawing them as a group.

They drew diagrams and maps, not pictures and were precise and seemed anxious to get them 'right'. Their house appeared to be practical and lacked connections to the world outside such as streets or external recreational areas. Activities included eating, sleeping and passive activities such as Xbox, TV and computer. They liked music, and communal activities were very important to them, with one saying 'We talk a lot, rather than watch TV.'

They seemed to dislike untidiness, and were particularly bothered by the unruly front garden and office. They also disliked the empty rooms and a remote bedroom in the house, saying that they missed former house mates. The loss of LWB 'carers' who provided support and parenting was difficult for them and one person commented that it was like losing family.

They wanted Afghanistan in their lives. One boy seemed upset when he talked about his mother and his longing for the desert winds of Afghanistan. Despite some of them living in Australia for several years, their expressions of loss and loneliness were acute.

Afghan group - community map



Discussion

- The map included Australian people, a food shop, friends' houses (Aboriginal, African, and Afghan), gym, playground, mosque (disproportionately large), soccer and RMC School.
- A graveyard near their house made one of the participants feel unhappy.
- They missed former LWB staff and carers, and also their Afghan culture and community. One boy said he wanted to learn more about 'Australian' culture

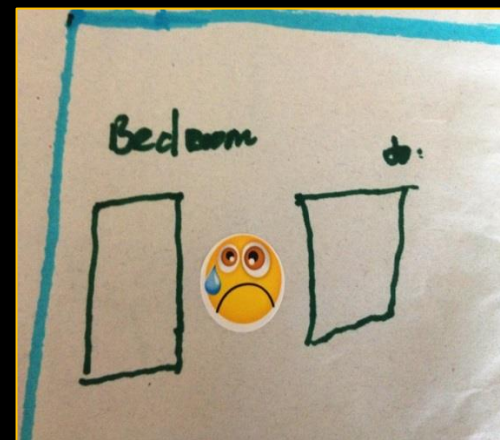
The community map showed a relatively limited range of activities, mainly centred on education, soccer, friends and the mosque.

There was sparse mention of shops, entertainment or other forms of consumerism, though the group seemed to be integrated and possess strong links to the local Afghan community through mosques and cultural networks in Adelaide.

They also appear to be forging friendships with Aboriginal Australians and Africans.

One boy said he didn't like the grave yard in their neighbourhood, and others commented that they missed their LWB carer driving them to sporting and social activities. Another said he wanted to know more about Australian culture and cited food as an example.

3.1.2 Vietnamese group - accommodation



Discussion

- Bedroom, bike, bus, train station, car, carer (2), computer (3), cooking, flowers (5 references to nature), friends, garage, garden, girl on street, gym, house, internet, people, sun – smiling, tree, trees in fruit, TV room and weight lifting.
- Things that made them feel sad were empty rooms, their carer (four mentions), and one girl said her bedroom made her sad because that was where she cried.
- They missed having more recreational equipment in the house.

Discussion

These participants were generally conceptual in their approach to sketching their houses and communities. They needed little direction, drew spontaneously and produced pictures rather than diagrams.

Their drawings were expressive and illustrative, and their houses were shown as interfacing with the external environment. Unsolicited images included trains, roads, bikes, car and a bus which connected their houses to the world around them.

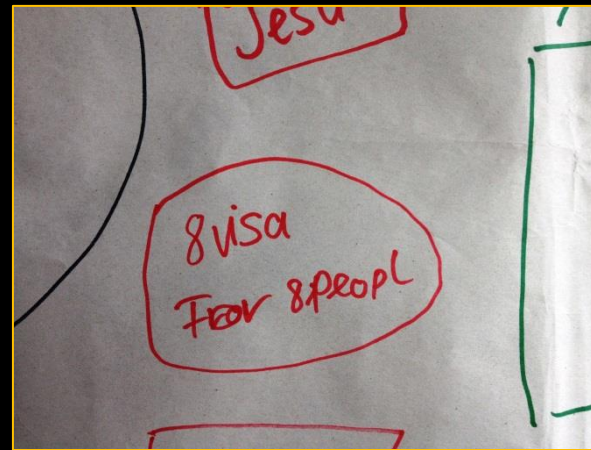
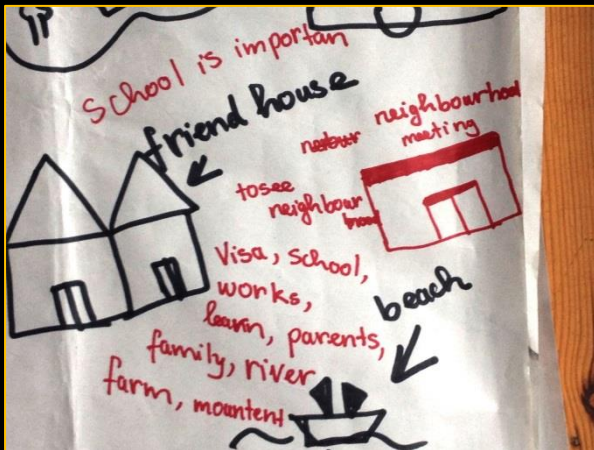
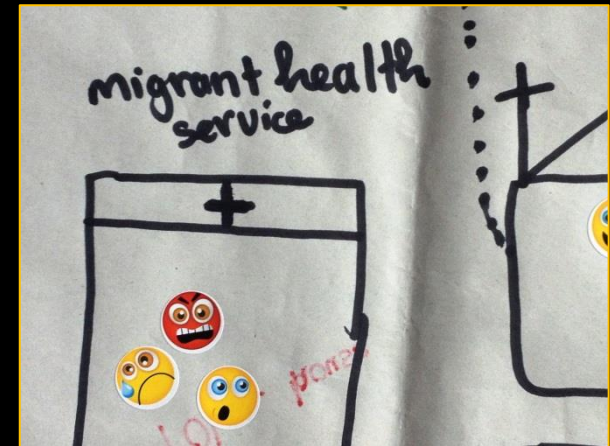
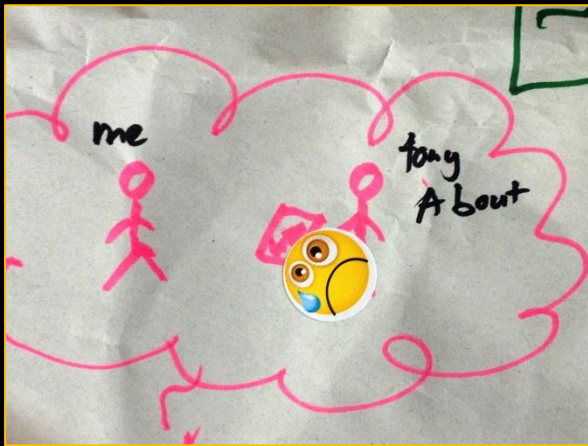
The issue of carers, or cultural support officers, was also an important theme, evoking strong comments that some carers were 'not nice', or 'too strict'.

There was also a notably strong reference to nature in the depictions of the houses – smiling sun, trees, trees in fruit, flowers and animals. The participants are all originally from agricultural regions in North Vietnam, and lived in rural areas where their parents and communities worked on the land.

The dominant and recurring theme for the Vietnamese group related to visas. All expressed the desire for their visa with one girl wanting eight visas (for family members).

Some of these young people seemed confident and happy to participate in the workshop, while others were withdrawn and appeared unhappy. A stakeholder later advised that some of the clients were depressed because they missed their families and were uncertain about their futures. There was little direct reference to their lives in Vietnam. When asked why, they said they were frightened that if they said they missed Vietnam, they might be sent back.

Vietnamese group - community map



Discussion

- The community map featured: basketball, beach (3 mentions), church (2 mentions), cinema (2 mentions), city (3 mentions), Coles (9 mentions of shops), fishing at Port Adelaide, food Asian (4 mentions), friends (3 mentions), gym (14 mentions recreation), Hansen Road, hills, home (3 mentions), market Asian (2 mentions), market, Migrant Health Centre, oval, park, people (one is 'mental), playground, recreation, restaurant (2 mentions), RSPCA volunteer work, rundle mall, school (x 3 mentions), shops, shops Chinese, soccer oval, soccer oval, swimming (x3).
- They identified church, cinema, nature, Pt Adelaide fishing and volunteering as 'happy' places and activities.
- Tony Abbott, the Migrant Health Service, their house and the train station made them unhappy.
- This group wanted their community lives to include visas, the Vietnamese countryside, Vietnamese family members, friends and communities in Vietnam.

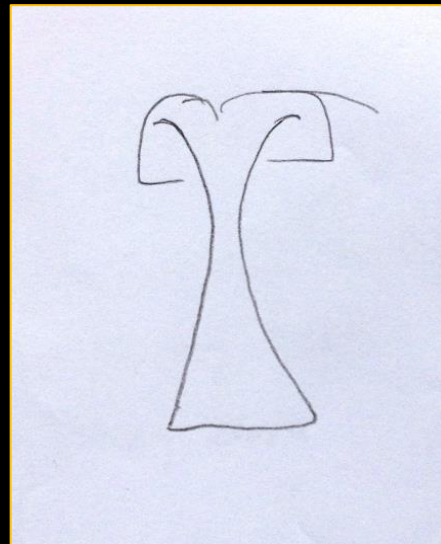
Discussion

This group was very mobile outside homes, travelling by various forms of transport to a wide range of social and recreational destinations in Adelaide. They appear to be moving around, and getting out and about. Top of this list was 'shopping' with a total of nine mentions of visiting shops of their maps – from Coles, Rundle Mall, markets, shops and eateries. They clearly enjoyed food, with several mentions of restaurants and an Asian food market. The Central Market would offer them a good variety of Vietnamese culinary choices, with Asian foods being popular and readily available across the city.

They were very active in sport and recreation with 14 mentions of recreational pursuits such as basketball, beach, gym, oval, park, soccer and swimming. One boy drew himself fishing at Port Adelaide, and later said he previously went fishing in Vietnam. One person commented they didn't like school, and a stakeholder later explained that some of the young asylum seekers are exposed to racism from both students and teachers. On the other hand, another client has won an academic award in the school.

The references to nature continued in the community map with images of cats, clouds, sun, trees, fruit and fishing. Church also featured on their community maps, with their Christian practises having found expression to Australia. Despite this, the participants did not make any references to having formed any Anglo-Australian relationships and there was no reference to Vietnamese cultural organisations. They missed their Vietnamese families, friends, communities and physical environments. RSPCA volunteer work was seen as a positive, while Tony Abbot and the Migrant Health Centre were negatives. This group very articulate about what they want – their visas and to get on with their lives.

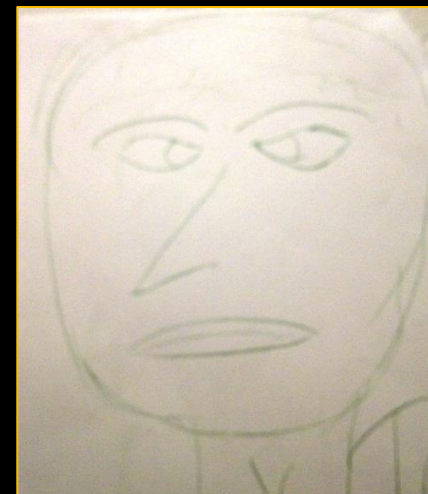
Vietnamese group - self portraits



Malta people are very good,
they look tall more than vietnamese
they are very kind.



Very thank
noth that
- they are very kind people
- they have big head
- they haveing people
- they



Discussion

How I see myself:

- Girls - smiling, reposed, attractive
- Boy's profile
- Girl with shopping bags,
- Girl in traditional clothing.

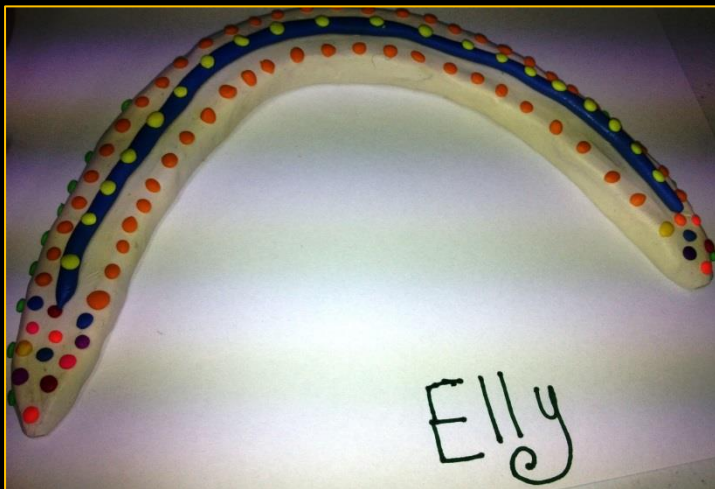
How Australians see me:

- Girl's dress without a body
- Australian boy looking towards girl
- Boy crossed eyes and frown
- text: Australians are good, very kind, tall
- text: Australians are kind, big hearted and helpful
- text: Australians are nice, tall

There was some ambiguity in these images. While their impressions of 'how I see myself' were unremarkable and showed reposed and not unhappy people, the images of 'How Australians see me' hinted at their negative interpretations of how others see them. One woman drew herself as a dress without a body, alluding perhaps to a sense of being invisible or inconsequential in the eyes of Australians. It could also allude to the emptiness expressed in other areas of the research. A boy drew himself as crossed eyed and frowning.

It is important to note that there was some difficulty in interpreting this instruction, with several people commenting that Australians and Vietnamese people were 'the same' or 'equal'. For example, this idea was expressed through words and images of two people with different coloured hair beside each other. There were several positive comments about Australians, that they were 'kind' and 'caring' and 'tall'.

Vietnamese group - plasticine models



Discussion

Something that reminds me of Australia

- Kangaroos, snakes, boomerang, map of Australia, duck.

Something that reminds me of Vietnam

- Local plants, animals and people, head of corn. Corn field, buffalo, butterfly, boy with bamboo whistle riding buffalo, water with people and boats, Vietnamese classroom with former students.

This was an interesting exercise in which the Australian ‘reminders’ were all national icons commonly associated with Australia – kangaroos, snakes, boomerangs and a map of the country. The participants appeared to be drawing on well-known popular Australia icons, rather than personal expressions of their own. They did not make any figures of people or allude to any personal associations with the country. On the flip side, their plasticine models of Australian tourist icons vis a vis their modes of Vietnamese people and real-life activities may have suggested they have yet to develop deeper, meaningful links with Australia.

Conversely, their models of Vietnamese ‘reminders’ were all drawn from their own experiences of Vietnam and revealed strong personal associations with their rural and agricultural existences in Vietnam. The models suggested links to their former lives through models of farming, landscapes, work and people. These images included local plants, animals and people, a head of corn, a corn field, a buffalo, a butterfly, a boy with a bamboo whistle riding a buffalo, a lake with people and boats. One model showed a classroom of students previously taught by one of the participants.

3.2 Critical discussion of results

The findings of this assessment are significant and identify gaps and opportunities that warrant further investigation.

In general, LWB seems to be on the right track in terms of meeting the material and functional needs of its clients. From the images, comments and rankings provided by young people during the workshops, they appear to be uptaking and using services provided by LWB as intended.

The Afghan youths commented several times that they missed aspects of their prior experiences with LWB - an indication of confidence in their former carer.

However, stakeholders observed that LWB could do more to meet the emotional and psychological needs of asylum seekers, with one saying that LWB is, '... forever learning and improving'.

'Health and wellbeing' was seen as a challenging service area for both LWB and other service providers.

This discussion below interweaves workshop findings with feedback from stakeholders to provide depth and context to issues raised by the young people.

1. Accommodation

Both groups of workshop participants appeared to be comfortable with their accommodation, although nearly all said they would like more recreational equipment in their houses. As young people are physically and mentally active, having home-based access to more recreational equipment would provide health and wellbeing benefits and an outlet for potential frustrations. This issue was echoed by LWB staff members.

Both groups use computers and TV, but enjoy socialising with each other in the home. The Afghan group in particular seems to favour interpersonal communication and perhaps facilitating these opportunities is something that could be further explored by LWB.

The Vietnamese youths showed numerous external features around their houses such as roads and buses, suggesting interconnectedness between their private and social lives, while the Afghans' house was more self-contained, hinting at a social orientation towards each other. (See below, 'Support for recreational pursuits and community access')

There is evidence in the Vietnamese youth's diagrams and artwork of their connection with nature which possibly stems from their agricultural backgrounds in Vietnam. The finding may provide opportunities for consideration in terms of their accommodation and recreation.

The asylum seekers' dislike of empty spaces and remote parts of their houses could be related to deeper underlying issues, and perhaps more consideration could be given to how community detention houses are set up and maintained. In a similar way, there may be opportunities to address the Afghans' displeasure with untidiness by developing a project that supports them to maintain these areas in a productive way.

The issue of 'carers' evoked strong, mixed references to feelings of sadness, anger and happiness. Different carers were both missed and disliked. Vietnamese youths were more unhappy than happy with their 'carers', calling them 'not nice' and 'bossy' and while the causes could be trivial, the issue warrants further investigation. LWB staff pointed to the delicate and complex frontline relationship between carers and young asylum seekers and the difficulties youths can experience with a poor carer – and conversely, the challenges of separating from a carer with whom they have formed a close attachment. One staff member said there are 'plenty of problems' and that 'not all carers are doing a good

job' but that 'it is not always easy to know who is a good or bad carer'. LWB has increased its training and induction for Cultural support workers and now ensures there is a mix of skill and culture matching in houses. However, one stakeholder indicated more training and closer monitoring is required, and another said that standards of caring have more to do with the calibre of the carer, screening processes and training than with educational qualifications and remuneration. Finding and keeping good staff may be challenging for LWB, and could require a review of job specifications and additional resources to help meet the emotional and psychological needs of youths.

The Afghan boys were expressive in their comments about missing family, friends, traditional foods, clothes, music, games and 'parties'. One boy missed the desert sand winds of Afghanistan, a unique and poignant reminder of home. These are some of the difficult realities of their circumstances that perhaps LWB could help them address through additional familiar cultural activities in their day-to-day lives.

Conversely, the Vietnamese youths were initially reticent to talk about missing their families and Vietnam because of their fear of being sent back. This non-disclosure of their emotions is a form of disenfranchised grief that could further impact on their wellbeing, and it may be a consideration for their care plans. In the same way, a review of grievance opportunities and other feedback mechanisms may help offset asylum seekers' fear of repercussions should they wish to complain about any aspect of LWB's services.

2. Access to educational resources

In terms of schooling, most of the youths indicated their attendance at either English language or high schools. However, their opinions about school varied. Language barriers were cited as inhibitors, while being disliked by teachers and other students understandably fuelled negative reactions. Conversely, another youth has won an academic award at their school. Both scenarios illustrate the potential challenges and opportunities confronting these young people in their education.

However, LWB's responsibility for providing 'access' to education may have broader implications if young people are experiencing difficulties at school. English language and education are the entry points for their lives in Australia and while monitoring and supporting English proficiency may be a function of the Cultural support officer, managing instances of racism is not. It may be an issue for LWB to address at an organisational and/or sector-wide level.

3, Support for recreational pursuits and community access

In terms of community and recreational access, the young people appear to be participating in a variety of activities outside their homes and the Vietnamese asylum seekers in particular, seem to enjoy eating out, entertainment and a high level of consumer activities. Both groups appear to have formed friendship networks primarily within their own ethno-cultural groups, with the Afghan youths gravitating to their strong local Muslim community in Prospect. A stakeholder said the youths tend to stay within own cultural groups and 'think they are not wanted'. However, while the Afghan youths are also developing links with Africans and Aboriginals, a stakeholder commented that the Vietnamese youths are integrating more effectively into mainstream Australian society, perhaps due to cultural alignment and their Catholicism contributing to a sense of religious familiarity. It is interesting to note the Vietnamese youths are from North Vietnam whereas the existing Vietnamese community in Adelaide is largely South Vietnamese. One stakeholder said this has fuelled tensions that may be exacerbating anxieties for the youths. Another stakeholder also observed a link between fallout and community connections.

There didn't appear to be evidence the youths were developing links with the wider Australian community except through volunteering, and this could be due to various factors. One stakeholder pointed to cultural differences, saying Australian culture is me-ist and competitive, while asylum seekers tend to be collective and cooperative. Others said lack of public information meant Australians in general did not have the capacity to make informed decisions about asylum seekers and refugees. LWB has published a booklet called 'I now call Australia home' which provides information and aims to help 'de-stigmatise' asylum seekers. However, stakeholders considered more could be done to help the young people integrate into the Australian community. There are also underlying differences in the way the Afghan and Vietnamese youths appear to be negotiating their lives in Adelaide. Having received their bridging visas, the Afghans have more certainty about their futures in Australia than the Vietnamese, some of whose applications have already been rejected twice and are at risk of being returned to Vietnam. This was reflected in the Vietnamese youths' preoccupation with 'visas' when asked what they most miss – or would like to have - in their lives.

4, Provision of life skills training

It would be fair to surmise that these asylum seekers possess well-honed life skills, in part due to the challenges they would have overcome prior to arriving in Australia. They are negotiating public transport, handling money, ATMs, menu planning and cooking meals under the supervision of LWB Cultural support officers, who also support them with household maintenance. LWB runs workshops about Medicare, sexual health, and living in Australia but according to one staff member, 'it all depends on their carers if they go or not'.

5, Education about cultural awareness and understanding of life in Australia

The workshop participants showed a mix of mild curiosity and diffidence towards notions of cultural awareness and life in Australia. One youth mentioned he enjoyed having English-speaking carers and another said he would like to learn Australian cooking. LWB staff said youths are taught about Australian customs and culture-appropriate behaviours, but one commented on the need to improve cultural awareness training. The diversity of cultures and different ways in which life in Australia can be experienced and understood are broad and this was seen as a source of confusion for young asylum seekers trying to understand and adjust to a country and language.

6. Monitoring of health and wellbeing

LWB's most complex service area is health and wellbeing. The workshops generated images of a graveyard and an invisible woman, and recurring themes of loss, sadness, emptiness, remoteness and uncertainty. One participant referred to her bedroom as a place in which she cried, and most expressed grief at their separation from home and family. One stakeholder said the 'majority' of asylum seekers in LWB community detention housing suffered mental health issues such as sleeplessness, loss of appetite, depression, stomach pains, and panic attacks – and that there had been episodes of self-harm and suicidal ideations. The reasons are self-evident given their histories and circumstances. When asked what they wanted in their lives, the young people talked of security in the form of schooling, visas, family members, old friends and familiar sights and sounds. Only one boy provided an aspirational response, wanting to travel around the world. The rest wanted a home in Australia.

For the Vietnamese youths, their emotional state was also underpinned by uncertainties about their refugee status applications – their core workshop theme. The Australian government has suspended granting of new Permanent Protection Visas, and according to another stakeholder these youths are on a likely return pathway home despite efforts by the LWB to link them to pro bono legal assistance and support them through court processes. This is a bleak prospect for the young asylum seekers, further exacerbating anguish and uncertainties underpinning their existing mental health vulnerabilities. One stakeholder commented that mental health issues are about visas and separation from families, rather than problems with service providers. Another said that '...once they have their visas, their minds will be stronger.' Several people noted that competitive tendering is not helping the plight of refugees with its duplication and delays, and another said government bureaucracy and processes 'inhibit and complicate things.' However, these issues were seen as outside LWB's control.

Stakeholder feedback pointed firmly to the importance of secure, trusting and enduring relationships. These relationships with LWB generally provide safety nets as the young people step from one uncertainty to another. As one said, 'People need to be more available and accessible to kids. They need navigators to help them through the systems of different cultures. We need to create access and ...get young people to trust and know us.' This also points to the importance of developing community networks to help buffer youths as they shift between agencies.

Of particular concern is the way Vietnamese youths appear to be hiding their grief about their loss of home and loved ones, and indicates both distrust in Australians and process, and the belief their truths are neither being heard nor validated. Their flattering comments about Australians in their self-portraits hint at responses contrived to please, and beg the question whether asylum seekers are being frank in their exit interviews.

All stakeholders were unanimous in their concerns about the mental health of the young asylum seekers and the need to help equip them with 'a little toolbox' of coping mechanisms. One suggested SARS 'Drumbeat' workshops with a neurobiological component as effective, cheap and easy to run'. Others pointed to the need for more self-care workshops for young people, and training in mental health and crisis management for Cultural support workers.

Finally, it is worth noting that 'monitoring health and wellbeing' is a grey area by definition. A person's state of being is subjective and therefore difficult to qualify or quantify, particularly in the context of mental health. The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as a continuum, 'a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'. So while LWB is technically only accountable for 'monitoring' the health and wellbeing of asylum seekers, the reality goes further. One stakeholder said the adequacy of LWB's quality of care may be evident in the frequency of incident reports about issues such as 'suicide ideations'. This clinical measurement of how asylum seekers feel about themselves shifts LWB's responsibility from 'monitoring' to 'delivering' health and wellbeing outcomes. At both organisational and humanitarian levels, the imperative for LWB to hear and understand and respond to the needs and perceptions of its young charges is considerable.

In summary, LWB is delivering effective and heart-felt services to asylum seekers in the eyes of its clients and partners. However, there is room to improve in the area of 'Health and wellbeing' and as one stakeholder said, 'We have to ask what capacity is needed to be flexible and sensitive to these needs in our organisation?'

4. Recommendations and further research



4.1 Recommendations

That Life Without Barriers (SA SRASS team):

- Investigate the establishment of a whole of sector peak Asylum Seeker/Refugee body in SA for greater voice, shared initiatives, improved integration, fewer duplications and identification of gaps and opportunities.
- Strengthen LWB's participation in SA Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD) to promote mental health outcomes for its clients at the sector level.
- Review the cultural support coordinator role, including selection criteria, training, KPIs, supervision and accountability to ensure appropriate performance and optimum outcomes.
- Review client survey mechanisms and grievance policy and procedures to ensure they are linguistically accessible, non-threatening and elicit overt responses.
- Review community detention houses in consultation with residents to ensure they are sensitive to emotional, cultural and developmental needs. For example consider:
 - Infilling empty spaces in houses with recreational equipment (gym equipment, table tennis, pool tables, basketball rings, soccer nets and books)
 - Supporting residents to build and maintain community gardens in their houses.
 - Setting up a shared Facebook page and holding social events to provide additional interpersonal, recreational and cultural opportunities for asylum seekers living in LWB accommodation.
 - Providing structured evening and weekend activities including inter-house workshops and training about subjects such as cooking, life skills and self-help.
- Investigate community partnerships that build community acceptance and provide sustainable social networks for young asylum seekers.
- Investigate youths' concerns around the Migrant Health Service and racism in schools.

4.2 Limitations and further research

Limitations

This research has various limitations. Some findings are subjective and while this is in part due to the nature of the assessment, the process may have benefited if participants had more time to talk about their artwork and diagrams. Findings may also have been limited by the cultural biases of an Anglo-Australian researcher working with Afghan and Vietnamese youths, however many of the images convey culture-common subjects. The assessment may also have been limited by the small number of participants who attended the workshops; a larger group may have been more representative of LWB's asylum seeker clients in general.

Further research

LWB may consider conducting similar research in future, taking into account the need for greater lead-in time, longer workshops and larger, wider sample group. Periodic reviews would establish baseline information and facilitate a longitudinal perspective of clients' concerns and wellbeing, providing LWB with an additional qualitative mechanism for monitoring and adjusting its program over time.

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