



VicHealth - State Sporting Association Participation Program Evaluation Report Year 1

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Background

Drowning within culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in Australia has been highlighted as an issue, with CALD communities identified as at increased risk of drowning compared with other communities. Potential contributing factors include: a lack of swimming ability (thought due to barriers to participation such as cost, language difficulties and cultural or religious restrictions); and a lack of water safety as a priority in the home country. This affects participation rates in aquatic recreation compared to traditional Australian communities.

VicHealth's State Sporting Association Participation Program (SSAPP) is an initiative developed to increase participation in community sport and active recreation focussing on priority populations. Life Saving Victoria (LSV) is working with people from CALD backgrounds on a number of levels to increase participation in water safety programs, swimming lessons and lifesaving clubs (LSCs). Additionally, the SSAPP aspires to build healthier State Sporting Association environments via improved inclusion, accessibility and equity for CALD populations. A series of 'actions' adopted by LSV will be completed over a three year project period that will not only achieve the above mentioned participation goal, but overall organisational change.

1.2 About this evaluation

This report summarises the overall evaluation of the first year of VicHealth's SSAPP, run at two pools: Wyndham Leisure and Events Centre, Dandenong Oasis Leisure Centre and two pilot lifesaving clubs: Edithvale and Williamstown in 2011-12. The evaluation will be used by LSV and other stakeholders to determine the value, impact and outcomes of the program, and provide input for the extension and expansion of the program within other CALD communities throughout Victoria.

This evaluation focused on two main areas:

- Parents of children participating in the program
- Key stakeholders involved in developing, running and overseeing the program including swim teachers, lifesaving club volunteers and the migrant resource centre coordinator.

The evaluation aimed to determine if the program was successful in achieving the following objectives:

- **Objective 1:** By Nov 2012, 1,855 participants will directly participate in onsite and offsite aquatic activities
- **Objective 2:** By Nov 2012, role models will be developed via training courses (15 candidates), participants in Learn to Swim courses (220 swimmers) and local swim clubs (10 competitive squad members)
- **Objective 3:** By Nov 2012 50% of surveyed participants in practical aquatic activities will indicate that settlement in their new environment improved as a result of the project.

1.3 Key findings

Participation

- Objective 1 (directly engaging 1,855 participants in onsite and offsite aquatic activities by November 2012) was met, with 2,152 children participating in pool or beach programs (this figure is exclusive of the additional 1,000 participants who swam recreationally at the host pools via the Family Card agreement between Belgravia Leisure and LSV). Good attendance across both pool and beach programs and the enthusiasm to continue beyond each program's conclusion highlight the value placed on these opportunities. Across both pools there were observed improvements in participants' water safety knowledge, swimming ability and confidence in the water.
- The cost of lessons and/or club membership fees were likely to prevent many from being able to continue their involvement, despite the value families placed on lessons.
- The Family Card for swimming pools was successful. Greater awareness of the Card within CALD communities, would likely increase usage even further.

Role models

- The project met Objective 2 of developing potential role models by engaging 15 candidates in lifesaving and industry training courses and it attracted 8 (target 10) competitive swimming squad members – all graduates of the project's Learn to Swim component. This is a positive step towards increasing the proportion of swimming industry staff from CALD backgrounds.
- All interviewees agreed that role models are an important influence on young peoples' lives and that those role models within the aquatic industry will promote involvement in aquatic activities. Therefore, by encouraging CALD participants to become qualified instructors and lifeguards, they may encourage other beach users from the wider CALD community to become involved in water-based activities in Australia.
- Parent responses about their child's participation in the program revealed that it is likely role models positively influenced CALD participants' feelings of inclusion in the program. A number of participants who met 'Minty', the first Afghan lifesaver at Edithvale LSC, were inspired to follow in his stead. Similarly, Karen children at Wyndham enjoyed having Karen swim teachers because they felt more comfortable and were able to communicate easily with them, which may have influenced some children's decision to join the Wyndham Sharks Swim Team. It is recommended that future evaluations gain feedback from the Karen swim teachers to assess their impact on the program.

Settlement

- Objective 3; that 50% of surveyed participants in practical aquatic activities will indicate that settlement in their new environment improved, was not directly measured in Year 1. However, discussions with parents, swim teachers, the SERMRC Coordinator and LSC

volunteers indicated that the SSAPP assisted in the settlement of a number of participants. This objective will be tested further in Year 2.

- Despite initial barriers such as language difficulties, shyness, poor swimming ability and a fear of entering the water, the participants soon became comfortable and confident in the pool or bay and made friends with children from other nationalities. Lifesaving volunteers in particular observed improvements in the apparent settlement of participants in the beach program.
- It was widely agreed that mixed-nationality classes were positive because CALD participants made friends with children from a variety of cultural backgrounds, developed their English skills and became accepted and involved participants in activities that are an integral part of life for Australian children.
- Parents also felt more settled in their communities because they had met new people and been made welcome at the pool. They were generally more comfortable being out in their local neighbourhood and using the pool facilities, including outside lesson times once they became familiar with staff members.
- The LSCs recognised potential long term benefits for themselves internally. These include an improved ability to communicate with and relate to a diversity of beach-goers, boosted membership and patrol numbers and the provision of role models for broader community groups.

2 Background

Inequalities for people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities are evident in many areas of public health, including their increased risk of death and disease from reduced physical activity levels (Caperchione, Kolt, & Mummery, 2009). Ethnicity and low socioeconomic status were identified as potential factors influencing youth drowning by the Task Force of the World Congress on Drowning (2002). Swimming and aquatic recreation are an integral part of the Australian lifestyle and have been shown to provide various health benefits (Warburton, Nicol, & Bredin, 2006); however, fatal and non-fatal drowning often remain neglected public health issues despite being a major cause of death, disability and reduced quality of life.

CALD communities comprise 26% of the Victorian community (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012) and they have been identified as being at greater risk of drowning than other communities within Australia (Australian Water Safety Council, 2008). This is because a large proportion reportedly cannot swim and often have little or no experience with Australian aquatic environments. There is however, limited information to determine the actual extent of drowning in people from CALD communities. In Australia, 32% of coastal drowning deaths in 2009-10, were of people of foreign ethnicity (SLSA, 2011). There was a peak in drowning deaths in CALD communities reported in Victoria in 2008-09 (23%; includes all waterways); however these figures may be much higher. It was estimated that country of birth or ethnicity was unlikely to be known in 61% of drowning victims from 2000-2010 (Life Saving Victoria, 2011).

Contributing factors to CALD drowning include a limited knowledge and awareness of hazards and risks as well as a lack of aquatic participation and skills. Barriers to participation in water safety and swimming lessons including cost, language difficulties, cultural and religious restrictions, and lack of water safety as a priority in the home country (Office of Multicultural Interests, 2009). An improved swimming ability is almost certain to be protective in a drowning situation, thus making it an important skill for new immigrants to possess. This is certainly true in a country such as Australia where access to water and water-based activities is abundant.

Water safety education also provides an ideal, safe, inclusive and supportive environment for people to gain skills in addition to developing an awareness and interest in swimming and other aquatic activities. These include increased physical activity and improved health outcomes, social skills and confidence, future volunteering and employment pathways, and inclusion within one's community. This can be especially important for newly immigrated communities, as it enhances their connectedness and sense of inclusion.

Following on from the previous VicHealth Participation in Community Sport and Active Recreation (PICSAR) program, where the focus was on increased participation opportunities for CALD populations, the SSAPP further extends opportunities for the predominantly Karen (Burmese) community of Wyndham City to learn to swim. In addition, a Learn to Swim program has been initiated in the City of Greater Dandenong which is a diverse city comprising people from 156 nations. Not simply a Learn to Swim program, the SSAPP aims to provide water safety knowledge to CALD



communities through participation in education programs such as Meet a Lifeguard, Resuscitate a Mate and beach programs.

Following the 'Everyone Wins' framework which aims to increase participation in sport by members of priority populations including CALD communities, LSV aims to further develop its promotion of inclusive practices by assisting its partnering lifesaving clubs and aquatic facilities. Project objectives include the increased inclusion of CALD participants into Nippers, Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC), Surf Bronze and Pool Lifeguard training programs.

2.1 Aims and objectives

The overall goal of LSV's SSAPP was to create 'healthier sporting environments that are safe, accessible, inclusive and equitable to support participation of CALD communities by 2014'.

Through participation in swimming and water safety programs, it is proposed that members of CALD communities are likely to experience a higher level of safe participation in aquatic and community activities, have the potential to develop into role models within their community and experience improved settlement into their new environment.

The achievement of these overall goals will be measured by an evaluation of the following objectives:

- **Objective 1:** By Nov 2012, 1,855 participants will directly participate in onsite and offsite aquatic activities
- **Objective 2:** By Nov 2012, role models will be developed via training courses (15 candidates), participants in Learn to Swim courses (220 swimmers) and local swim clubs (10 competitive squad members)
- **Objective 3:** By Nov 2012 50% of surveyed participants in practical aquatic activities will indicate that settlement in their new environment improved as a result of this project.

3 Methodology

The evaluation was based on qualitative and quantitative methods, as outlined below.

3.1 Quantitative Research

- 275 participants in the beach program component of the project were surveyed to determine their swimming ability, exposure to lessons, swim frequency and water safety knowledge.
- Frequency of participation was measured using attendance and Swim and Survive records.

3.2 Qualitative Research

3.2.1 Focus groups

- Focus groups were conducted with parents whose children participated in a pool program. They were held at Wyndham Leisure and Events Centre with five Karen parents and at Dandenong Oasis Leisure Centre with six parents from Turkey, Afghanistan, Iraq and Sudan. The aim was to determine parental attitudes toward swimming ability and water safety both in their home country and in Australia, whilst discussing their satisfaction with, and the influence of, the program on parents.

3.2.2 In-depth interviews

- Face-to-face interviews were conducted with five staff members at Wyndham and two staff members at Dandenong Oasis. Telephone interviews were held with two volunteers at each of Edithvale and Williamstown LSCs. These interviews were designed to gauge students' swimming ability and attendance, the impact of the program on the multicultural community and gain general feedback on the program.
- In-depth interviews were conducted via telephone with a staff member at the South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre (SERMRC) to understand observational outcomes of the program. SERMRC's role in the project is as a recruiter of candidates into the City of Greater Dandenong Learn to Swim component.

Discussions were audio taped and transcribed, and reviewed to identify recurrent themes and attitudes.

This study was approved by the Justice Human Research Ethics Committee.

4 Results

4.1 Participation

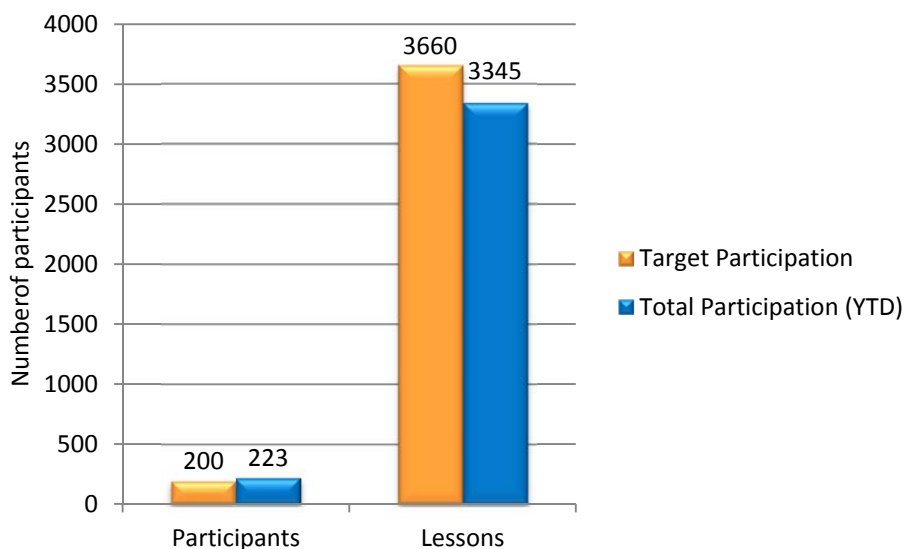
Participation by CALD students in Learn to Swim lessons and beach programs was measured against target participation levels set out by the SSAPP. The goal of directly engaging 1,855 participants in onsite and offsite aquatic activities by November 2012 was met, with 2,152 children participating in pool or beach programs by June 2012.

Objective 1: By Nov 2012, 1,855 participants will directly participate in onsite and offsite aquatic activities

Pool programs

Participation in swimming lessons across both pools met the target of 200 CALD participants (223 at June) (Figure 1). The program was well positioned to meet the original twelve month target number of lessons (3660) by November. Wyndham has met both participant and lesson targets, whereas Dandenong Oasis is nearing its targets (Target numbers- 100 participants and 1500 lessons, Current numbers- 74 participants and 1110 lessons).

Figure 1 Participation in swimming lessons measured by number of participants and number of lessons



Parent focus groups

Parents felt that their children’s participation in the pool program was valuable and they observed improvements in water safety knowledge, swimming ability and confidence in the water. Water safety knowledge and swimming ability was not a priority prior to entry into the SSAPP. Parents noted that throughout the program they also became more comfortable in allowing their children near water. One parent mentioned, “when I [first] took my son I was so scared for him to go in the water, but as soon as he started with the lessons, every day now he is asking me ‘Can we go, can we go?’ and I hope the program will continue”.

It was noted that school-based swimming programs were often too expensive for families, particularly those with several children, so they were very grateful for the opportunities this program provided and they recommended it to others in their communities. They also noted that their children enjoyed the program enormously and attended most lessons. They transitioned from fearing the water to enjoying it and wanting to go to the pool more often. A number of parents were interested in taking their children to try Nippers since they had gained basic swimming and water safety skills.

While parents highly valued the swimming lessons for their children, cost was a key barrier to ongoing participation. The cost of lessons was said to prevent many from being able to continue although their children enjoyed swimming. Parents at Dandenong embraced the Family Card, which provided participants and their families the opportunity to visit the pool outside their lesson times at no cost. At Wyndham some parents didn't know about the card and others didn't understand how it worked so it wasn't utilised as much; however, after learning more about the Card in the focus group session they were keen to try it.

Swim teacher interviews

The enthusiasm and commitment by many parents to ensure their children attended lessons contributed to the program's success. There were occasional issues with attendance marking due to mispronunciation of names and children joining the wrong class. Consequently, some participants may have been marked absent when they were actually present. Those who missed two consecutive weeks of lessons were followed up with telephone calls to determine why they were absent. The main barrier to attendance was lack of transportation to the facility and this issue should be addressed for future programs.

Participants regularly attended the pools outside their normal lesson times, indicating increased confidence and enjoyment of the water. At Dandenong in particular, a number of students used the facility after they completed their swimming program and the teachers agreed that if affordability were not a barrier, students and their families would be more likely to continue to visit. The teachers strongly supported the Family Card, which was particularly successful early on when the weather was warmer and when it presented a new experience for many CALD patrons.

Migrant Resource Centre Coordinator interview

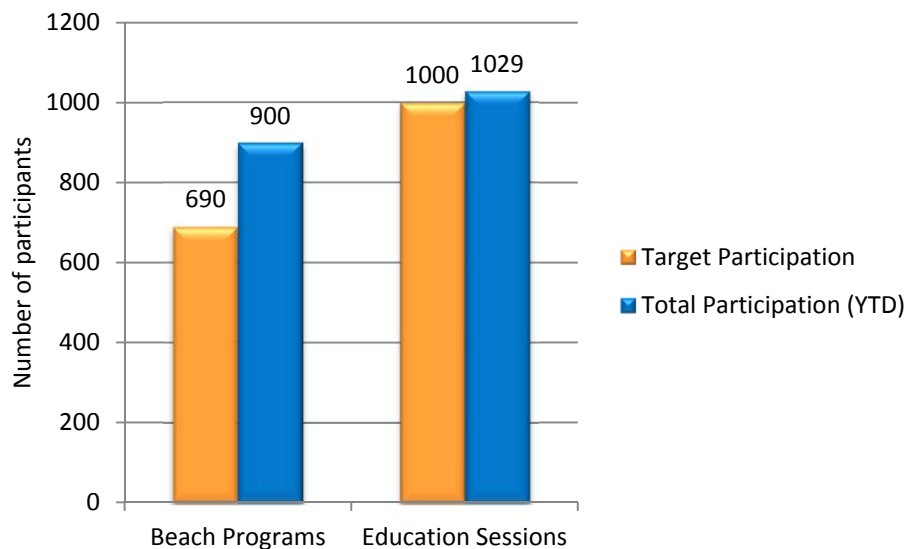
Feedback provided to staff at the SERMRC indicated that the families involved in the Learn to Swim program were very grateful for the opportunity and the majority wanted to continue with lessons beyond the 15 week program.

From the perspective of the SERMRC, cost was the main barrier to children enrolling in mainstream swimming lessons upon program completion; however parents indicated they would continue with lessons if they could afford them. Another barrier to participation in future lessons for young girls was that some parents won't let their daughters swim with boys, however segregated classes are only available to girls over 13 years.

Beach Programs

Overall participation in beach-based activities across all locations surpassed the target participation level of 690 for beach programs and 1000 for education sessions (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Overall participation in VicHealth SSAPP beach-based programs



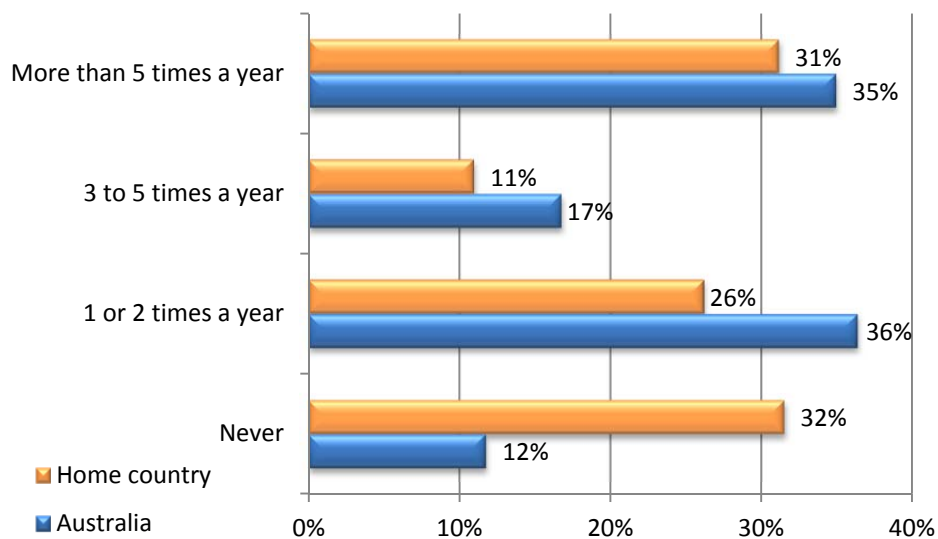
Participant surveys

In total, 275 CALD participants of LSV’s beach programs were surveyed at the end of their session. Respondents ranged in age from 5 to over 55 years and represented a variety of countries. The regions with the highest representation were African Nations (24%), Burma (20%) and Afghanistan (15%). Almost one third (31%) had been living in Australia for less than one year prior to participating in the program, with a further 29% having lived in Australia for one or two years.

One third (33%) said they could not swim and 27% self-rated themselves as poor swimmers. Just 12% said they were good swimmers and the remaining 28% rated their ability as “OK”. Similarly, one third (32%) said they never swam or visited a beach, pool or river in their home country. Since moving to Australia, this figure decreased to 12% (Figure 3).

Half (49%) had never had swimming lessons prior to participating in the beach program. This was mainly because lessons weren’t available (38%), or there was no opportunity to participate (30%). After taking part in the beach program, 81% said they would like to have swimming lessons. Finally, participants were asked to rate their level of water safety knowledge prior to the water safety talk provided during the beach program, with 32% rating their knowledge as satisfactory and the remainder rating it as unsatisfactory (38%) or non-existent (30%).

Figure 3 Comparison of swim frequency between home country and Australia



Lifesaving volunteer interviews

Lifesaving volunteers at both Williamstown and Edithvale LSCs highlighted the value of the Lifesaver and Nipper (Junior Lifesavers) programs for the CALD participants. In all cases, attendance was consistently high and participants were punctual and enthusiastic, reflecting the importance they placed on the program and their willingness to participate. Volunteers attributed the program’s success to such factors as the provision of funding so that participants did not need to pay to partake, adequate transport to and from the program and access to clearly structured sessions appropriate to participants’ skill levels. Benefits of the program included that participants learnt useful and lifelong skills, made friends, became part of a ‘family’ and for the LSCs, being able to promote lifesaving and water safety within diverse communities.

The volunteers also recognised potential long term benefits for their clubs through the provision of role models for a range of community groups, improved ability to communicate with and relate to a diversity of beach-goers and boosted membership and patrolling numbers. As the program concluded towards the end of the 2011-12 patrolling season, participants had limited opportunities to use the facility outside the sessions. However, there was widespread enthusiasm among participants to return to the club the following summer to do their requalification and join a beach patrol. Others have since heard about the program and enquired as to how they can become involved in future programs.

Participants were also considered more likely to partake in other aquatic activities following participation in the program. Barriers to ongoing participation were cost-related (membership and transport costs), access via public transport and to a lesser extent, language barriers.

4.2 Role Models

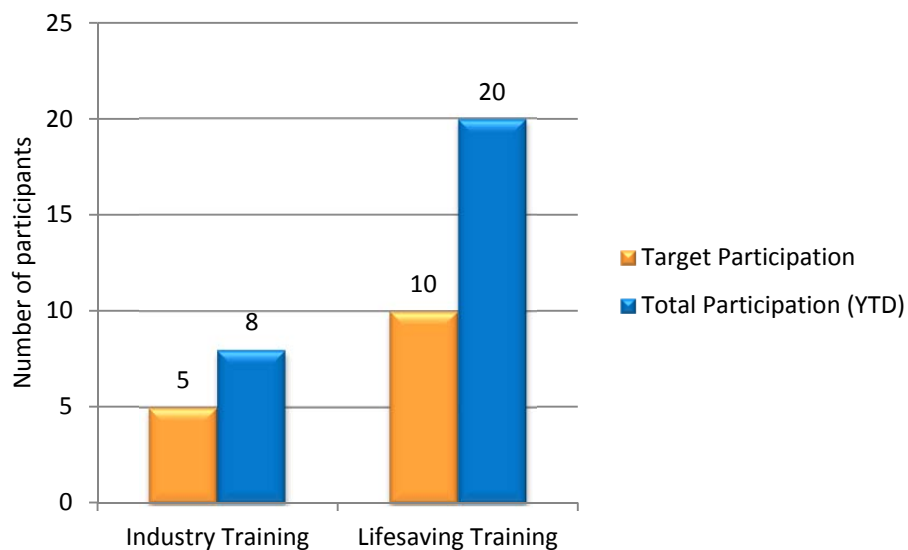
The potential to inspire other members of CALD communities to become involved in aquatics was measured by the number of project participants who undertook industry training or joined Learn to Swim lessons, competitive swim clubs and lifesaving clubs after their program’s completion.

Objective 2: By Nov 2012, role models will be developed via training courses (15 candidates), participants in Learn to Swim courses (220 swimmers and local swim clubs (10 competitive squad members)

Pool programs

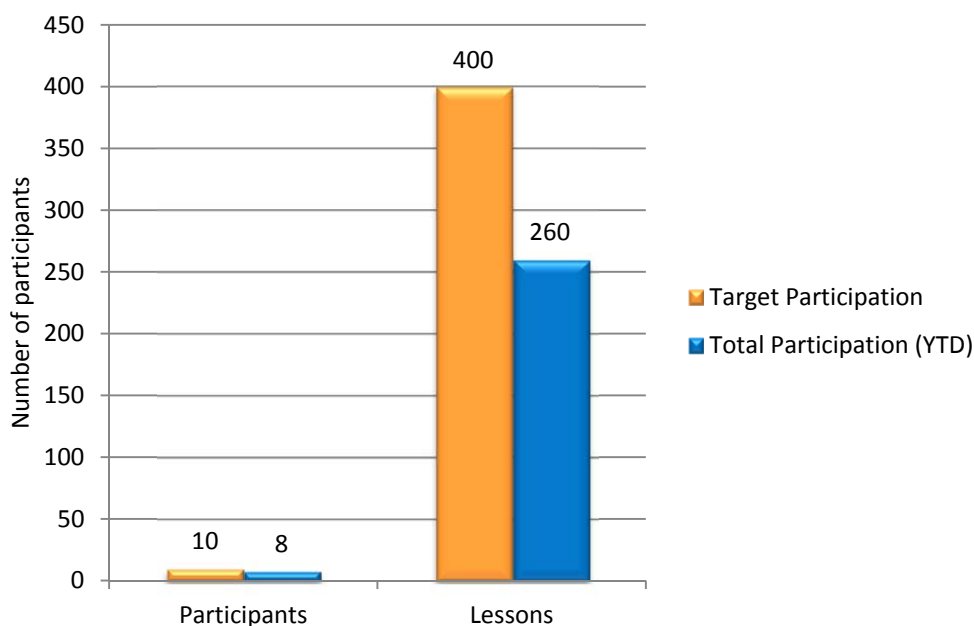
Objective 2 of engaging sufficient participants to develop potential role models for CALD communities in aquatics was achieved. The program met the target of engaging 15 participants in training courses, with 28 completions (Figure 4 **Error! Reference source not found.**). Eight students completed industry training including Pool Lifeguard, Senior First Aid and Swim Teaching and 20 undertook lifesaver training. Of these 20 students, 9 undertook Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC) training, which resulted in them becoming lifesavers and 11 participated in the Nippers program.

Figure 4 Participation in industry and lifesaving training



The target of 220 participants enrolling in Learn to Swim lessons was also met, with 223 attendees (Figure 1). The project nearly met the target of 10 participants joining local competitive swim clubs with 8 CALD students joining the Wyndham Sharks Swim Team (Figure 5).

Figure 5 Number of CALD participants that engaged in Wyndham Sharks Swim Team training and number of lessons



Parent focus groups

According to Karen parents at Wyndham, their children enjoyed having Karen swim teachers in the pool program because they felt comfortable and were able to communicate easily with one another. Karen parents saw the teachers as positive role models and said they would be proud if their own children also became swim teachers or life guards, recognising these as positive employment options. Since being involved in swimming lessons, several children have been able to represent their school in swimming competitions and a number of parents were interested in letting their children try Nippers. This may in turn lead to an increased presence of CALD lifesavers and pool lifeguards, who would form a next generation of role models for these communities in future.

Swim teacher interviews

Swim teachers agreed that developing role models within CALD communities was important for encouraging participation in water-based activities. In particular, they recognised the value of the Karen swim teachers at Wyndham. They benefited the Karen participants because they could understand instructions and questions, relate to their experiences and perhaps inspire them to become further involved in swimming.

Migrant Resource Centre Coordinator interview

The SERMRC coordinator agreed that creating CALD role models at local pools and lifesaving clubs would benefit CALD communities, particularly young girls who may be conscious of others’ opinions of them having swimming lessons. The coordinator reiterated that employing swim teachers from a specific community can help break down language barriers and highlight career paths for young participants. There is an effort underway to recruit CALD members to take the AustSwim swim teaching course in order to bridge some of these gaps.

Beach Programs

Lifesaving volunteer interviews

LSC volunteers also acknowledged that role models are very important for all communities, and that having a lifesaver from a CALD background would have a greater positive impact on participation in lifesaving by CALD groups among the beach-going community. Furthermore, they agreed that patrolling members from CALD communities can improve communication and relations with a diversity of groups. By recruiting CALD members, the wider community may increasingly perceive lifesavers as non-threatening and recognise that LSCs are inclusive of multicultural groups. This may boost their involvement in the club, and on the beach. It is likely that role models positively influenced CALD participants' feelings of inclusion in the program which may lead to a boost in involvement at the beach and within the LSCs. Some participants encouraged their families and friends to get involved in the club as well, highlighting their enjoyment of the program.

4.3 Settlement

Participants in the pool and beach programs were not surveyed on their settlement specifically. However, through the focus groups and interviews of parents and others involved in the program it was identified that the SSAPP is likely to have improved their settlement in Australia to some extent.

Objective 3: By Nov 2012 50% of surveyed participants in practical aquatic activities will indicate that settlement in their new environment improved as a result of the project

Pool programs

Parent focus groups

Parents agreed that, for their children and family, settlement in their new environment improved as a result of their involvement in the program. They met new people in their communities, they felt more comfortable being out in the area and their children made new friends. They were generally more comfortable using the pool facilities, including outside lesson times.

Parents were very grateful for the opportunities (both educational and social) this program provided for their children and would recommend it to others in their communities. They overwhelmingly wanted to continue in the program because they saw the significance of having lessons in Australia and the enthusiasm their children showed for swimming. Furthermore, they made friends and became better at socialising and communicating with other children. They all agreed the mixed-nationality classes were beneficial because their children made friends with others from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Breaking down cultural and language barriers and promoting tolerance through mixed-nationality classes was welcomed because *"we are all ... in the world, we are maybe different nationality, different culture but we are still human"*.

Swim teacher interviews

Swim teachers also observed changes in behaviour that suggested improved settlement among participants. Again, integrating CALD and non-CALD students was seen as a positive aspect of the program. As mentioned, although it may have initially been difficult for CALD students to be in unusual circumstances around unfamiliar people, they became more comfortable with their teachers and class-mates and were often excited to be at lessons. This combination meant they were interacting with different types of people and learning English, both essential steps for integrating into a new society. For the non-CALD children, it gave them an opportunity to meet people from different cultures. Some parents were also observed to have improved their English language skills when talking to swimming teachers and other parents during the programs.

Migrant Resource Centre Coordinator interview

The direct effects of the program on settlement within multicultural communities in Dandenong were difficult to measure due to numerous programs running concurrently for CALD groups in the area. However, there are other indicators of the program's impact. For example, parents have asked how they can get their families to the beach now that they have some swimming and water safety knowledge. Others enquired about how to enrol their children in a competitive swimming club. Furthermore, more CALD groups have reportedly been visiting Dandenong Oasis and the SERMRC receives numerous calls and emails per week from potential clients wanting to become involved, signifying the growth and popularity of the program.

Beach Programs

Lifesaving volunteer interviews

LSC volunteers observed improvements in the apparent settlement of participants in the beach programs. Despite initial barriers such as language difficulties, shyness, poor swimming ability and a fear of the water, participants soon became comfortable and confident in the water and included themselves more in the club. As one volunteer commented, *"the first day they are ... behind mum and dad and ... then you can see them talking to new kids, getting along with them, playing after the lessons"*. The success of their integration at each club could be attributed to participants being treated with equality and acceptance by all club members. Furthermore, combining with non-CALD children provided opportunities to make friends, improve English skills, promote an understanding between different groups and gain a sense of belonging. From a wider beach community perspective, having CALD members patrolling beaches will allow for effective communication with a greater diversity of beach visitors on water safety or in the event of an emergency.

The volunteers reported that CALD participants took pride in receiving their uniform and awards and there was a clear change in behaviour around the club. Whether or not this improved sense of settlement around the club transferred to other aspects of their lives could not be observed directly. Volunteers noted that starting the program earlier in the season would allow the children to progress further before the start of patrol season and gain even more from the lifesaving community.

4.4 General program feedback

The following suggestions were made by interviewees to improve future pool and beach programs.

Pool programs

Parent recommendations:

- *Communication:* More interaction between parents and swim teachers to gauge a child's progress and the provision of certificates to show the level achieved.
- *Adult education:* Establishment of adult swimming and water safety education programs.

Swim teacher recommendations:

- *Multicultural training sessions:* Run more cultural training sessions for swim teachers. This would be particularly useful when the participants are from a specific group (e.g. Karen) to teach basic words, pronunciation of names and cultural information.
- *Program characteristics:* Cost permitting, extension of the program beyond 15 weeks would benefit students since it is rare to progress a level in 15 weeks. Consistently recording attendance is important, so there needs to be system in place that ensures students join the correct class.
- *Facility organisation:* Teachers suggested they should be provided with specific information prior to program commencement and that facilities run information sessions for parents to improve communications. These have been actioned for future years of the SSAPP.

Migrant Resource Centre recommendations:

- *Independently-run program:* If the SERMRC could raise the funds they would consider initiating their own similar program in future, which will help fulfil a need for the huge number of migrant and refugee clients that need and want to learn to swim.

Beach Programs

Lifesaving volunteer recommendations:

- *Visual aid:* Translation of the important messages would assist understanding.
- *Manual:* Redesign the manual with loose-leaf pages and key messages translated into priority languages.
- *Volunteer involvement:* Both clubs agreed that in hindsight they needed greater involvement from the parents of LSC members during the program to make it even more successful.

5 Discussion

5.1 Attitudes towards swimming and water safety

Learning water safety and swimming skills was not a priority for CALD families upon their arrival in Australia. In their home countries, they had little or no access to water for swimming and had poor or no swimming ability and were afraid to enter the water. They felt guilty not allowing their children to enter the water but they saw it as too dangerous and that if they began to struggle the parents “*won’t be able to go and rescue [them]*”. This is not an uncommon story. Quan, Crispin, Bennett, & Gomez (2006) for example, found that parents of Vietnamese-American immigrant children rarely knew how to swim and most did not think about water in a recreational sense. These attitudes towards water safety as a low priority are reflective of the mindset of parents involved in the SSAPP.

A number of families only first considered water safety knowledge and swimming ability as a priority when they heard about the SSAPP. By the conclusion of their child’s program, parents recognised the importance of having swimming lessons and understanding water safety, particularly because water is so accessible in Australia. This highlights a positive attitudinal shift regarding the importance of swimming ability and water safety among those settling in Australia, which addresses Strategy 1.A.1 of the *Victorian Water Safety Master Plan 2012-2105*: “To continue to raise awareness of the importance of water safety through the delivery of ... community education” among at-risk communities.

5.2 Improvements in water safety knowledge and swimming ability

Formal swimming lessons have been shown to improve children’s swimming ability (Parker & Blanskby, 1997) and may reduce their risk of drowning (Brenner, Saluja, & Smith, 2003). In both the Wyndham and Dandenong pool programs, swim teachers agreed that “*any program teaching any kids how to swim is fantastic*”. They felt the program was beneficial on a number of levels. Whilst improvements were not always substantial, due to the short-term nature of the programs, participants picked up useful skills, made some progress in their abilities, were more able to answer questions about water safety and survival and became comfortable around water. The high level of observed improvement in some children is highlighted by their involvement in the Wyndham Sharks Swim Team and a willingness to join Nippers programs in the upcoming 2012-13 summer.

5.3 Participation in pool and beach programs

The first step of engaging CALD participants in the pool and beach programs has been successful in meeting participation targets. Historically, participation in recreational activities by members of CALD communities has been lower than that of non-CALD individuals (Moran 2006). Furthermore, specific CALD groups are often overrepresented in the proportion of drowning deaths, as observed in New Zealand (Moran & Willcox, 2010) and North America (Quan et al., 2006) for example.

It has long been acknowledged that children from CALD backgrounds often lack even basic swimming and water safety instruction (Royal Life Saving Society Australia, 2012). This was evident across all pool and beach programs run in this project, where initial skill levels were consistently poor. Solid participation rates across all programs highlighted their success and the value that

families placed on them. Participants seem to have gained a great deal from the program, namely, valuable swimming and water safety skills that are applicable in any aquatic environment (not simply lifesaving) and which they can communicate to other community members.

As discussed in the following sections, this program has reduced some common barriers that prevent people from CALD backgrounds from participating in physical activities that are more widely accessible to the general community. Further, the provision of access to aquatic education may have contributed to improving their health, wellbeing and integration into the community (Morgan, 2008). It is also hoped that having gained these skills, participants will continue to recreate in aquatic environments in the long term and ultimately encourage their own children to participate in water-based activities with far fewer barriers in future. The success of the program is demonstrated by a good level of positive media coverage of a number of SSAPP activities (see Appendix 1 for examples).

5.4 Barriers to ongoing participation in swimming lessons and lifesaving club membership

While it has been shown that formal swimming lessons improve swimming ability and may help reduce the risk of drowning (Brenner et al., 2003; Parker & Blanskby, 1997), there are also many barriers to accessing swimming lessons within Australia (Office of Multicultural Interests, 2009). These include, but are not limited to cost, language difficulties and lack of water safety as a priority in the home country. Other constraints to participation include social isolation, cultural differences and the psychological trauma associated with migration (Caperchione et al., 2009; Stodolska, 2000).

In Year 1 of the SSAPP, LSV has been able to overcome a number of these barriers to ongoing participation. The provision of free lessons allowed for initial access to swimming and imparted some important water safety knowledge. Parents noted their children felt more welcome in these places, having learned water safety and swimming skills and made friends with local children. This contributed to whole families becoming more comfortable around pools and LSCs, which may have encouraged them to visit their local pool or beach on a regular basis. Providing programs specifically for girls was recommended to encourage girls from specific cultural groups to continue to participate.

The biggest barrier to ongoing participation, as noted by all participants and key stakeholders was that of cost. Comments such as, *“we can’t do anything if the program stops”* and *“we hope that this program [continues] because we still don’t have money to pay for the lessons but we try to save some money for the kids because they really like swimming”*, reiterate the value of this program to the families involved. This may also be true for families wishing to join a LSC, where membership costs may be prohibitive. Some parents mentioned that half price lessons would make access to ongoing lessons feasible.

5.5 Role model development

Role models are people that influence ‘the observer’s attitudes, behaviors, or aspirations’ (Buford May, 2009, p. 450), and who are respected and exemplary members of a group (Bricheno & Thornton, 2007). People from a similar background who demonstrate they have overcome initial barriers and reached a level of success in a new country can encourage and inspire others to become involved as well (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003). Involvement in this program has exposed

participants to positive role models in the aquatic industry and opened up potential pathways to becoming qualified instructors, lifeguards and lifesavers at pools and beaches. A number of participants who met Minty, the first Afghan life guard at Edithvale LSC, were inspired to follow in his stead and become lifeguards as well. This is an example of people being more inclined to want to emulate those with whom they share characteristics including gender, age and race (Bricheno & Thornton, 2007).

Because parents do not always act as role models for their children around aquatic environments, it is important to have others who can encourage safe participation in water-based activities. Therefore, by encouraging CALD individuals to become qualified instructors, lifesavers and pool lifeguards, they may become role models for friends, family and pool and beach users from the wider CALD community, thus encouraging greater involvement in aquatic activities. The results of this program indicate that it is addressing the gap in participation in leadership roles in aquatic environments for CALD groups. This gap is demonstrated by the fact that just 7% of swim school staff in Australia identified as coming from a CALD background (Royal Life Saving Society Australia, 2012). The SSAPP hopes to contribute to expanding the number of CALD swimming instructors by introducing more young people to the industry. This could be supported with incentives such as scholarships and other financial support and mentorships. The first step of engaging CALD participants in the programs has been successful to date in meeting participation targets.

5.6 Contribution to settlement

Settlement has been defined as ‘a long-term dynamic, two-way process through which, ideally, immigrants would achieve full equity and freedom of participation in society, and society would gain access to the full human resource potential in its immigrant communities’ (Seat, 2000, p. 9). The settlement process in a new country is influenced by every aspect of daily life. Participation in sport and recreational activities by young migrants can facilitate their adjustment by assisting with social inclusion, the formation of a positive identity and the cultural transition process faced by recent immigrant youth (Doherty & Taylor, 2007). Feedback from those involved in the SSAPP supports this idea as parents, swim teachers and LSC volunteers observed a number of positive personal changes among participants during the programs.

The observed improvements in enthusiasm and confidence in the water and around instructors, as well as the formation of friendships with children from other cultural backgrounds suggests that these programs have assisted participants in settling into life in Australia in some way. Furthermore, learning important swimming and water safety skills not only helped make participants comfortable around water but gave them access to an Australian pastime. The beach programs and Meet a Lifeguard sessions introduced safe behaviours that will be applicable to future aquatic pursuits, not just the sport of lifesaving. This includes swimming, surfing, boating, fishing, camping, picnicking and school swimming sports. The SSAPP fundamentally provides CALD participants with a vital base knowledge and early positive experiences around water to allow them to begin to engage regularly in aquatic pursuits.

At the LSCs in particular, volunteers observed a change in the participants’ behaviour. With time, they appeared happier, more confident around water, more relaxed around other club members,



enthusiastic about the program and to take pride in receiving their uniform and awards – all characteristics that may demonstrate improved settlement in the community. With growing confidence in their children’s abilities, parents saw future opportunities for their children in aquatic environments. One parent mentioned that *“I always tell my kids that ... one day if you grow up and ... you can swim ... you can get a job in the pool or be a swimming teacher or a lifeguard”*. Having role models such as the Karen swim teachers and Minty at Edithvale LSC may encourage young CALD children to participate in further training and take up valuable roles within society. Those children who have since represented their schools in swimming competitions and the potential participation of CALD children in Nippers may eventually lead to an increased presence of CALD lifesavers, lifeguards and instructors who may themselves become role models for others.

All interviewees agreed that the SSAPP was an excellent and essential program for the wider CALD community. Having a greater involvement and presence around water is likely to promote understanding of the importance of aquatic education, water safety knowledge, the role of lifesavers and the opportunities available to them. The program has made CALD communities more aware of the accessibility of aquatic activities and the opportunities available to them.

6 Conclusions

The VicHealth SSAPP was successful in achieving a number of goals in Year 1. High levels of participation suggest the program was a positive experience for many of those involved. The participants were not only introduced to some important swimming and water safety skills; they were also provided the opportunity to become role models for CALD communities and took positive steps towards their integration and settlement in Australia.

With the majority of Year 1 targets met, the SSAPP is on track to reaching its primary goal, that by 2014 LSV will create healthier sporting environments that are safe, accessible, inclusive and equitable to support participation of CALD communities. There was agreement among parents, swim teachers, LSC volunteers and the SERMRC that the program has already had a positive impact on a range of aspects of participants' lives. These impacts include: being more comfortable around water, improved swimming and water safety skills, enhanced English, more confidence around others, feelings of inclusion, pride in achievements and general happiness. The high level of agreement that these positive changes occurred reinforces the positive influence the SSAPP has had on participants.

The program's success is likely to have flow on effects to the broader community. It will equip a wider range of people with water safety skills, encourage CALD individuals to become qualified instructors and lifeguards, improve communications between lifesavers and CALD communities, and encourage members the wider CALD community to become involved in water-based activities in Australia.

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8 Appendix 1: Media coverage of SSAPP Year 1

Minty goes back to the beach as volunteer

MORDIALLOC CHELSEA LEADER [LOCAL NEWS](#)
31 JAN 12 @ 06:00AM BY JESSE WRAY-MCCANN



LSV community program volunteer Minty Saberi with members of the Afghan community at Mentone Beach.
Pic: CHRIS EASTMAN

IMTIYAZ “Minty” Saberi is living proof of the success of Life Saving Victoria’s multicultural programs.

This month the Dandenong resident, and Victoria’s first Afghani lifesaver, was working as a Life Saving Victoria staff member running a multicultural beach safety session for about 50 predominantly young Afghani men.

Only a few years ago Mr Saberi was taking part in the program after migrating with his family to Australia in 2005.

Life Saving Victoria multicultural projects manager David Holland said the organisation was “very proud” of his story. “To have Minty as part of our education team means he’s come full circle through the program, which is fantastic,” Mr Holland said.

“We’re keen to get more Mintys on board because they’re great role models for people who take part,” he said.

He said the multicultural beach programs aimed to teach people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities about water safety while also helping them settle in Australia.



Casey Weekly - Berwick, Melbourne
20 Mar 2012

General News, page 12 - 130.37 cm²
Suburban - circulation 33,329 (-T-----)

ID 138365002

Teens get feet wet

CASEY teenagers from multicultural backgrounds have dived in to become the next generation of lifesavers.

The eight boys and girls aged 13-18 from Berwick, Narre Warren and Cranbourne completed their Surf Rescue Certificate training at Edithvale Life Saving Club this summer. The group will make their first patrol at Edithvale beach on Sunday.

Training every Sunday for 10 weeks, the teenagers took modules in fitness, safety and wellbeing, surf awareness skills, first aid and resuscitation, communications, rescue techniques and lifesaving patrols.

The group of nine from Casey and Greater Dandenong came from a range of cultural backgrounds, including Afghan, Thai, Turkish and East Timorese.

They signed up to the Life Saving Victoria program through Noble Park English Language School.

Life Saving Victoria multicultural projects manager David Holland said the group had little swimming experience and no experience with surf before the program started.

"None of them were what you'd call a strong swimmer, but they've improved out of sight. They've surprised me, actually.



Water safety: Hassan Raza, Jaweed Rahimi and Asif Ali charge out of the water during their lifesaver training at Edithvale beach.

"Their teachers have said it was the best outdoor program they've been involved in."

He said the state government-funded program was one of Life Saving Victoria's many multicultural projects.

LSV is also now offering a learn to swim program to the multicultural community in Greater Dandenong.

Details: lifesavingvictoria.com.au.

— James Taylor



New Aussies come to rescue

Wes Hosking

A FEW months ago, they could barely swim. Some hadn't even seen a beach.

Now five teenagers from as far afield as Afghanistan have joined the latest crop of lifesavers guarding Victoria's beaches.

The teens, who signed on for their first patrol at Edithvale Life Saving Club yesterday, are among nine Noble Park English language graduates of Noble Park English Language School. Life Saving Victoria

multicultural projects manager David Holland said the teens were part of an initiative to diversify the movement.

Eleven Burma-born children have also joined Williamstown Swimming and Life Saving Club as "nippers".

"I would like to think these kids are going to blaze a trail," Mr Holland said.

"Lifesaving clubs were traditionally designed to serve the community. (Now) . . . we've got an incredibly diverse community, so our clubs need

to reflect (that) . . . as opposed to the stereotypical lifesaver of 30, 40 or 50 years ago."

People from ethnic backgrounds are over-represented in drowning statistics, accounting for about a fifth of deaths.

Narre Warren South 14-year-old Ossify said he had never seen a beach until moving to Australia eight months ago.

"When I first came I was scared of the water," Ossify said. "Now, I'm not scared."



Next wave: Hazel, Anatomical and Enlace (above) and (below) Ashen and Anatomical, both 13, and Ossify, Enlace and Hazel, all 14.
Picture: NICOLE GARMSTON





Lifesavers dip into new culture

BY CATHERINE WATSON

SWIMMERS at Edithvale beach yesterday were in safe hands as a dedicated group of Casey lifesavers donned their red and yellow uniforms for their first patrol.

Hassan Ali, 13, Asif Ali, 14, Near Bantakij, 13, Eunice Noronha, 14, and Iftikhar Ali, 13, all students at the Hampton Park campus of the Noble Park English Language School, completed their surf rescue training at Edithvale's lifesaving club over the summer.

Training every Sunday for 10 weeks, the teenagers took modules in fitness, surf awareness, first aid and resuscitation, communications and rescue techniques.

For Asif, originally from Afghanistan, getting to meet Australians was one of the highlights of the 10-week program.

Hassan, from Pakistan, agreed. "I like the club," he said. "They spoke to us with respect."

Near said it was the first time she had really mixed with Australians. "We made a lot of new friends. They were good people."

Iftikhar, from Pakistan, said he had learnt a lot. "Now I know how to save the people. We learnt how to signal — for when you can't hear what people are saying."

Eunice, from East Timor, said she was scared the first time she went to the sea.

"I didn't know how to swim. Now I know how to swim and how to surf and how to rescue people."

Near, from Thailand, could swim before she started the program but said she was a much stronger swimmer after completing the program. "You have to swim, swim, swim."

She said that in Thailand girls were discouraged from swimming once they got to grade 3. "They worry about girls showing their body."

The other students nodded.

Asked if mixed bathing worried them now,

they all shook their heads.

"Boys, girls, fat, thin ... everyone goes to the beach in Australia," Iftikhar said.

Acting campus co-ordinator Ana Perez said completing the program was a real achievement for the students.

"They are not used to beaches and water. The fact that they've gone all the time, and succeeded, has helped their confidence.

Life Saving Victoria multicultural projects manager David Holland said the group had very little swimming experience and no experience with surf before the program started.

"None of them were what you'd call a strong swimmer, but they've improved out of sight. They've surprised me."

Life Saving Victoria is also running a learn-to-swim program for the multicultural community in Greater Dandenong.

Details: lifesavingvictoria.com.au.



In the swim: Iftikhar, Ehsan and Jaweed practise their lifesaving skills at Edithvale beach in preparation for this first patrol.





Migrant life savers

By NICOLE WILLIAMS

IT'S a long way from the war-torn Middle East to the beach in Australia, but some inspiring young students have made the journey.

Nine English graduates from the Noble Park English Language School have been keeping an eye on Edithvale beach this summer after becoming qualified patrolling volunteer lifesavers, within two years of arriving in the country.

Life Saving Victoria manager multicultural projects David Holland said the students, aged between 13 and 18, elected to do a water safety unit at school and after some beach visits expressed interest in becoming lifesavers.

Mr Holland said most of the students, from Afghanistan, East Timor, Thailand or Turkey, came from landlocked areas and had rarely been to the beach.

"Their exposure to the beach in Australia was extremely limited," he said.

"All of the kids, with two exceptions, have been in Australia less than 14 months with many barriers to overcome, like distance, language, schooling, but they have put their hands up to volunteer on a weekend to look after other Australians."

They trained every Sunday for 10 weeks and received their Surf Rescue Certificate from Life Saving Victoria on Sunday 25 March, allowing them to participate in beach patrols with Edithvale Life Saving Club.

Hazal Peker, from Turkey, said he became interested after Life Saving Victoria visited the school.

"The beach isn't scary anymore and it's a fun thing to do on the weekend," the Berwick student said.

"I am proud and happy to be a lifesaver."

Afikhar Ali, 14, moved to Cran-

bourne from Afghanistan one year ago and had never been to the beach before starting the course.

He said he now found the beach exciting and became a lifesaver "because everyone in Australia needs to be able to swim."

"I feel very proud of myself and my family couldn't believe it," he said.

Mr Holland said learning essential water safety skills and knowledge empowered the students to enjoy Australian beaches safely.

"Participating in this program is a great achievement and a great way for the group to learn new skills as well as broaden their social networks in their adopted local communities."

For more information about Life Saving Victoria's multicultural projects, visit www.lifesavingvictoria.com.au.



Asif Haydari tries on his life saving cap.



Jaweed Rahimi in action at Edithvale Beach.



Rough start for new life savers

By NICOLE WILLIAMS

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Jaweed Rahimi in action at Edithvale Beach.



April 2012

Williamstown S&LSC welcomes Karen nippers

Throughout February, some new faces were seen at Williamstown Swimming & Life Saving Club (S&LSC), as children from the Karen (Burmese) community joined in the nippers program on Friday evenings.

Karen children living in Wyndham City Council, having undertaken swimming lessons over recent years through a VicHealth funded project, were welcomed into the Williamstown S&LSC Nippers program to apply their newly developed swimming skills in a new and exciting way.

The Karen children joined the program in their own age group, learning lifesaving skills as well as mixing in alongside the local nippers.

Life Saving Victoria Multicultural Project Officer, Olivia Skillern, said the group had a fantastic time learning new skills such as board paddling and ocean swimming, as well as lifesaving beach activities like beach flags.

"It's been fantastic to see the children from the Karen community advance through swimming lessons to actually become involved in the Williamstown S&LSC nippers program," Ms Skillern said.

"All of these new activities help to further develop their swimming and water awareness skills, as well as promote the world of lifesaving to a new group."

Life Saving Victoria would like to thank Williamstown S&LSC for welcoming the children from the Karen community into their club, and VicHealth for funding the project.

For more information on Life Saving Victoria's programs for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, visit <http://www.lifesavingvictoria.com.au/www/html/804-overview.asp>





April 2012

New arrivals take on Surf Rescue Certificate at Edithvale LSC

Eight enthusiastic multicultural teenagers from Noble Park English Language School recently completed their Surf Rescue Certificate at Edithvale Life Saving Club (LSC) and are now Surf Rescue Certificate (SRC) qualified patrol members.

The six male and three female participants from Afghanistan, Turkey, Thailand and East Timor signed up to do their surf rescue certificate training after participating in a Life Saving Victoria beach program in late 2011, which introduced them to the beach environment and safety as well as the role of lifesavers and lifesaving clubs in our community.

With the help of Life Saving Victoria and Edithvale LSC members, some enthusiastic students spent an additional day at Edithvale Life Saving Club learning more about the club and trying out some of the equipment used in lifesaving.

Determined to become lifesavers, the group travelled every Sunday morning for the next ten weeks to join in with other local Edithvale LSC youth to train for their Surf Rescue Certificate, learning all the skills needed to complete their SRC and become lifesavers themselves.

Before the group undertook their assessment, they warmed up in the morning at a club carnival, before sitting their exam. Despite some nerves beforehand, the entire group successfully passed all aspects of the SRC.

Life Saving Victoria's Multicultural Projects Manager David Holland said the group had little swimming ability and no experience with surf before the program.

"None of them were what you'd call a strong swimmer, but they've improved out of sight.

These kids are terrific examples to others that lifesaving is a healthy and fun activity, open to all Australians."



The highlight of the day was the uniform presentation. The group took little time slipping on the iconic uniforms for the first time, proudly showing that they were indeed now Australia's newest lifesavers.

On her experience at her new club, Nattanicha Bantakij, 13, from Thailand responded, "They are like our family. My coach is like my mum."

Life Saving Victoria would like to thank members of the Edithvale Life Saving Club for supporting the group throughout their training and enthusiastically welcoming them into their club.

For more information about Life Saving Victoria's multicultural projects, visit www.lifesavingvictoria.com.au.

Swim lessons part of sea change for Bundoora couple

NORTHERN WEEKLY 02 Jul, 2012 04:00 AM

A Bundoora couple waited until their twilight years to discover the joy of swimming.

And it took a change of continent to get Shulan Qin, 61, and husband Wenzhi Zhang, 62, into the water. The couple moved from mainland China two years ago to be with family.

They study English as a second language at Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education, where English teacher Eleni Prineas asked Life Saving Victoria to sponsor swimming lessons at the Reservoir Leisure Centre when she discovered several students could not swim.

"The first time I swam, I am scared, not any more," Mrs Qin said. "Floating feels like flying." Mr Zhang, a former engineer, did not realise his new life would include swimming. "One day I want to swim in the sea," he said.

