

South Eastern LDAT summary report

Prepared by IndianCare, June 2020

IndianCare implemented a successful Local Drug Action Team (LDAT) in the South Eastern region, funded by The Alcohol and Drug Foundation. Focusing on young people and seniors from the South Asian communities, it aimed to increase community connections, resilience and improve physical, mental and social wellbeing of participants.

South Eastern LDAT, known as SEAT, was an evidence-informed, preventative, community program, bringing together six organisations

- IndianCare (lead agency),
- SEWA senior's groups
- Indian Senior Citizens Association of Casey (ISCAC),
- Bellfield Cricket Club,
- Australian Multicultural Community Services (AMCS)
- Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre (SMRC).

Community Action Plans tailored to the local needs were co-designed and implemented. Goals were largely exceeded and even when impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown, the project pivoted to individual consultation and online activities to successfully complete the plan, with participants individually assisted to use online platforms, where needed.

The project was truly a team effort, led by the dedication and passion of staff, board members, volunteers and students from IndianCare and other partner organisations. Other factors contributing to its success include the close, trusting community relationships; strong buy-in from community; respect and inclusion of all voices.

150+ people were involved in the various face-to-face and online activities during 2019- 2020.

Some key achievements were as follows:

10 conversational English classes conducted by SMRC for 15 Indian seniors from SEWA and ISCAC, at SMRC building, Dandenong. This program aimed to reduce isolation and develop social connections with local community by increasing participants' English language skills.

High number of attendances shows the program was popular. 71% of participants indicated that their English level has improved since they joined the classes. 57% people indicated in the surveys that they feel connected to the local community as they are more confident to communicate in English now. A 66-year-old male said, "I can make doctor's appointment on the phone by myself. This program helped me to learn basic conversational English."

An adventurous day outing was organised in partnership with AMCS' *Moving for Life* program, at YMCA Manyung Camp, Mt Eliza, for 24 seniors of ISCAC and SEWA groups. This program was extremely popular among Indian seniors and helped increase awareness of the benefits of a strong and connected community, bringing the two groups together. It also brought awareness of the benefits of an active life on their physical, mental, and social wellbeing.

A second outing was cancelled due to COVID-19 crisis. Instead, an online exercise program was introduced for 40 Indian seniors from SEWA and ISCAC. A series of gentle exercise videos were shared and were appreciated by members, especially during COVID restrictions when there are not many sources to keep physically active and socially connected.

75% participants stated that they noticed improvement in their mental and physical wellbeing, and felt happier and more connected to the group members. An 82 year old Indian male said, "Enjoyed with friends and it felt like I am young again." A 66-year-old male said, "We all are stuck at home and these videos are very useful to break the boredom of my life. I feel energetic after the workout."

6 Healthy Lifestyle information sessions were organised in collaboration with SMRC's Life! program, for 20 Indian seniors from ISCAC and SEWA, to increase their knowledge of healthy lifestyles and preventable diseases. The sessions were conducted face-to-face and online.

After migrating to Australia, some Indian seniors reported they struggled to maintain a healthy diet and this program assisted them to increase their knowledge about chronic diseases and nutritious food as well as the impact of alcohol and other drugs on their physical and mental wellbeing.

73% of people indicated that these sessions increased their knowledge about the importance of a balanced diet and staying active. 62% agreed that they learnt about the harms of risky drinking after attending these sessions. One 60 years old Indian male reported that he is more conscious about his diet and exercising more than ever, as he is learning new healthy tips from these sessions. Another 72 year old Indian male said, "I knew that alcohol is not good for the body but now I realise that we need to be careful how we drink."

1 Family resilience session was conducted in collaboration with IndianCare's Family Violence prevention project, with 11 young male members from Bellfield Cricket Club. This session covered 'Effective communication and conflict resolution' skills, with lively discussions on managing stress and creating a healthy environment in the family.

Participants demonstrated they understood conflict management strategies such as being assertive instead of being aggressive. It was an interactive session, with strong engagement and participants sharing their personal experiences.

An online psycho-educational survey was completed by 8 young Indian members from Bellfield Cricket club. This survey collected data to measure the impact of COVID-19 on Indian community members and supported their mental well-being by educating them about ways to manage stress and anxiety during lock down, as well as anger management and the benefits of low alcohol intake.

This survey results indicate that COVID-19 impacted the life of each person, 76% lost their job or their working hours have been reduced significantly. 76.9% are worrying about their families back home. 84% demonstrated that their knowledge has increased about the benefits of responsible drinking. 92% participants agreed that the videos enable them to manage their stress level and 76.9% indicated that they can practice anger management better now. As a participant said, "Anger management, sleep and how to overcome stress is well explained."

This project was highly appreciated by community members. It was interesting to witness the enthusiasm and 'have a go' attitude by Indian seniors in the outdoor adventure camp. Full attendance in all the senior's programs was an indication of its success.

As with all projects, success always brings some challenges and complications. Online sessions were trailed with some limited success due to limited digital literacy and the level of comfort to use online platforms and the closing of senior groups, cricket clubs due to Covid-19 lock-down.

Conclusion

The project was able to complete successfully despite of COVID-19. There is still on-going need, however, due to the vulnerability of our senior participants to COVID-19, there are no current plans to start the another LDAT till the danger is over and people are able to meet together again.