



Evaluation Report

Nepean Non-English Speaking
Background Food Services
Development Project

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Background

Nepean Non-English Speaking Background Food Services Development Project

The Nepean NESB Food Services Development Project (hereafter referred to as 'the Project') was funded by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care for a period of five years (2000 to 2005). The Project aimed to assist mainstream Home & Community Care (hereafter 'HACC') funded food services to increase the access of non-English speaking background (hereafter 'NESB') clients to their services in the Nepean region. The Nepean region for the purpose of this project was defined as including: Penrith; Blue Mountains; Hawkesbury and Blacktown Local Government Areas. The Project involved supporting and resourcing Food Services in relation to culturally appropriate food issues as well as working with NESB communities to increase their awareness of services available to them. The Project was to work with suppliers and providers of Food Services as well as with NESB communities.

The Project has its origin in two main challenges:

- NESB communities are ageing rapidly and have cumulative barriers that limit their access to essential services;
- Existing research shows very low number of NESB clients are using food services of any kind.

Although expressed differently in various documents, the Project broadly sought to achieve the following goals and outcomes:

- Build the capacity of mainstream HACC-funded Food Services to provide services to NESB clients;
- Decrease the barriers to Food Services for NESB clients;
- Enhance the effectiveness of the service network by increasing linkages between Food Services, migrant organisations and migrant communities.

Western Sydney Community Forum

Western Sydney Community Forum (hereafter 'the Forum') is a regional organisation providing a voice on behalf of community based and managed non-government welfare organisations across the region of Western Sydney. The Forum was first established in 1983 and has grown from a small organisation (1 part-time worker) to a medium sized non-government agency. It currently employs 12 staff. At any time, it normally has at least one time-specific project operating. In addition to core administrative staff the Forum has staff with expertise in learning and development, regional development issues, transport, and aged and disability services. Over the past eighteen years, the Forum has developed considerable expertise in the Home and Community Care program area. It currently has funding to provide: translations; service development and planning; and training and development for HACC-funded services. Staff from the Forum play an active resourcing role in regional interagencies such as HACC forums.

Evaluation framework

Conceptual approach

From an evaluation perspective, the Project is a complex social program. It aimed to intervene at the individual, group, organisation, service network and community level. At an individual level it seeks to improve the cultural competency of individual service providers and volunteers as well as increase the awareness of potential clients of Food Services. At a group level, it has sought to improve access for groups of clients from particular cultural backgrounds as well as improving acceptance of culturally diverse meals among English speaking clients. It also sought to bring about cultural change at an organisational level, working with specific Food Services as well as suppliers, about how their practices may impact on the accessibility of services to NESB clients. Through its facilitation of networks, it aimed to improve the effectiveness of the service network linking agencies across program silos (Food Services with Migrant Resource Centres, for example). And finally, it sought to generate social capital through building trust and community cohesion between English speaking and Non-English speaking people in the Nepean region.

- In recognition of the complexity of the Nepean NESB Food Services Development Project this evaluation adopts a mixed or multi-methods approach (Datta, 2001: 33). The mixed methods approach includes:
- Process evaluation - which focuses on how the program was managed, implemented and delivered. This type of evaluation measures the scope and quality of activities, who the program reached and how.
- Meta analysis – which examines the relationship between findings across various evaluations and is used to aggregate data and build theory (Success Works 2001: iii)

Evaluating the 'outcomes' of complex social programs is not straightforward. In measuring 'outcomes' we are seeking to assess the impact of an intervention on the status of individuals or a group (SCRCSSP, 2000) and the extent to which the project is securing its wider goals and objectives' (Queensland Treasury, 1997). The issue of measuring the outcomes from complex social programs, however, continues to be hotly debated (see for example Melville). Lyons (2001:24), for example, argues that the services that third sector organisations provide are intrinsically difficult to evaluate because they are not amenable to one-dimensional yardsticks such as price or consumer satisfaction. The broad goals and outcomes of the Project do not lend themselves easily to direct assessment. In particular, establishing a relationship between service outputs and broad outcomes is difficult. Providing training opportunities for staff and volunteers on multicultural service provision, for example, aims to build the capacity of mainstream HACC-funded Food Services to better provide services to NESB clients. The outcome of this specific intervention or input, however, cannot be determined in isolation from other external factors. Staff or volunteer turnover, for example, will adversely affect the impact of the training provided. In a lengthy Project such as this (5 years) it is very likely that there will be changes in staff and volunteers reducing the direct impact of the training.

Due to the difficulties of directly measuring outcomes many evaluations are now adopting an 'indicators' approach. Indicators provide a guide to performance where causal links are not obvious and where change in performance is difficult to measure directly. Whilst measures provide evidence of actual achievement of the item being measured, indicators provide evidence inferring something more general about performance indicative of broader influences. Evaluation of activities similar to the Nepean NESB Food Services Development Project suggest that indicators of change occur in three stages:

- Two to five years - decrease in barriers that inhibit access;
- Five to ten years - enhancement in positive strategies to facilitate access;
- Ten to fifteen years - a vision for a healthy, inclusive, community is embedded in the social contexts and institutions of a community (Griffiths et al, 2001).

The discussion of outcomes in this evaluation is primarily for assessment and planning purposes (AIHW, 2000). It is not to claim direct causal relationships or responsibility. Instead, it should be read as suggesting that the Project contributed to the desired outcome in some way. Broadly, the evaluation asks whether the range of interventions of the Nepean NESB Food Services Development Project achieved improvements in Food Service provision to culturally diverse communities in the Nepean region.

The Evaluation takes as its basis the production of welfare program logic, where effective human service organisation relies on four distinct but closely linked stages in the process of human service delivery: inputs, the production process, outputs and outcomes. In attempting to understand the complex interaction of government, providers and individuals/clients, over time, the approach is particularly valuable because it helps draw attention to the way in which policy is implemented and how this leads to services being delivered, the consequences of which are eventually expressed in terms of outcomes for residents, communities, providers and government. Applying this approach to the Evaluation, the scheme draws attention to the importance of focussing not just on the outcomes of the program, but on the prior stages in the process of resourcing and providing supportive services to those residents who will benefit most.

Methodology

This evaluation predominantly draws on documentation created via the Project. Key documents reviewed include:

- Original working notes in relation to the Expression of Interest
- Expression of Interest
- Correspondence between the Forum and the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care
- Steering Committee Agendas, Minutes and notes
- Consultation reports
- Surveys
- Worker Reports
- Evaluation Reports in relation to all Pilot projects
- This documentation was complemented by a small amount of primary research, including:
 - Face to face interviews with the Project Officer and the Executive Officer of the Forum
 - Telephone interviews with key stakeholders, including managers of the participating Food Services and former staff

- Mail Survey of Steering Committee members

The Evaluation also draws on existing literature and data (both Census and HACC Client Data where available).

The key research question that this Evaluation will seek to answer is:

'To what extent has the Nepean NESB Food Services Project decreased barriers to the provision of a range of meals acceptable to those members of the culturally and linguistically diverse populations of the Nepean region who are eligible to receive them?' (Evaluation Framework, September 2001).

Policy context

Food Services exist in almost every local government area in New South Wales and in general where established some 30 to 40 years ago in response to local needs and initiative (Harris and Zadro, 2004:9). This development has given rise to specific organisational structures and cultures as well as a great deal of diversity across the Network (Harris and Zadro, 2004: 9). Harris and Zadro (2004:8) trace the organisational structures and cultures to the adoption of the concept from Britain, resulting in services that are predominantly reflective of Anglo-Australian culture. This is "manifested in the type of food being provided, the packaging (which commonly accommodates the meat and two vegetables eating format) and the individualistic way the service is offered" (Harris and Zadro, 2004 :8).

Prior to 1985, home-based care services in Australia were scant and poorly coordinated. In 1984, after a succession of government reviews and inquiries, the Home and Community Care (HACC) program was announced. The aim of the new funding was to substantially improve the quantity and range of services available to frail and disabled older people living at home. Since its inception there has been massive growth in the program, with expenditure on the program doubling in real terms between 1985-1986 and 1991-1992 (AIHW, 2001). The growth in expenditure has seen an expansion of centre-based and in-home respite services, transport services, gardening and home handyman assistance as well as more traditional aged care services such as home nursing, home help and delivered meals. The HACC program now includes as part of its target group younger people with disabilities as well as older people and their carers.

Food Services are managed either through community volunteer Management Committees (67%), local government (12%) or other agencies (21%) (Zadro, 2003). Typically Food Services have core paid staff who coordinate the service and are supported by a large number of volunteers who use their own vehicles to deliver meals to client's homes. Over recent years Food Services have felt some of the same pressures other organisations reliant on volunteers have experienced (Flick et al, 2003). Supporting, training and retaining volunteers has become an important aspect of organisational focus.

Mostly meals are delivered once per day each weekday with a frozen delivery provided for weekends. Clients have some choice within menus although this is often limited, although menus are regularly rotated. Most Food Services have some form of kitchen, although few prepare meals from scratch. In the Nepean Region Food Services source their meals from

catering companies whose other clients include hospitals and aged facilities. These catering companies in general have limited diversity in their menus. Over recent years however there has been a growth in the provision of centre-based meals, which provide an opportunity for both meals and social contact.

According to unpublished HACC Service Users Characteristic Survey and HACC Service Provision Data Collection for the year 1995-1996 (AIHW, 1997):

40% of all HACC clients were aged 80 and over, with only 19% aged under 65

69% of HACC clients were women

29% of HACC clients were women aged 80 and over

66% of female HACC clients aged 80 and over lived alone

The same data indicates that over 1,000,000 meals are provided Australia wide per month to HACC clients. Centre based meals formed a much smaller aspect of service delivery with 160,805 meals provided in the same period, that is approximately 14% of all meals.

The NSW Meals on Wheels Association estimates that for 2001-2002 indicate 2,500,000 meals were provided with the support of 34,000 volunteers in 210 food services across New South Wales (Harris and Zadro, 2004:8). Despite mandatory data collection, there continues to be debate and confusion about the exact number of clients from a culturally and linguistically diverse background who receive food services. Within the food services network it is understood to be between four and five per cent. The most recent data collected for the funding body (Minimum Data Set - MDS) suggests that 12.3% of NSW HACC clients were from Non-English speaking countries. This figure, however, includes non-food services HACC clients. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimated in 2002 that only three per cent of all food service clients in NSW were from a NESB background (Harris and Zadro, 2004 :8).

All Food Services have individual funding contracts with the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) which currently administers the HACC program in New South Wales. Guidelines for Food Services funded under the Home and Community Care Program state that 'the availability of food services is critical to ensuring the eligible HACC consumers are able to maintain their lifestyles within the community and thus prevent premature or inappropriate admission to resident care institutions'. The Guidelines indicates funded organisations are responsible for:

- The co-ordination of delivered meal services;
- The co-ordination and expansion of delivered meal services to 7 day a week service provision (including all public holidays) where required by the consumer;
- Working as part of a co-ordinated network with other local HACC service providers;
- The development of food services in areas where gaps in effective service coverage have been identified;
- Ensuring access, where possible, to a range of different meal types (e.g. culturally appropriate meals for Aboriginal and ethnic consumers, meals which meet specific dietary and/or medical requirements, and vegetarian meals);

- The co-ordination and expansion of centre-based meals services to consumers eligible for HACC services via the use of day care centres, Senior Citizens Centres, church halls and other venues;
- The development and co-ordination of shopping services for eligible HACC consumers at the local level;
- The development and co-ordination of other types of appropriate food services which enhance and promote the independence of the frail aged and of people with disabilities;
- Assessment of consumers to ensure eligibility under HACC targeting guidelines and to assist in the process of referral to appropriate food services; and
- Ensuring adherence to and observation of the HACC Program National Service Standards and specific guidelines and standards relating to meal quality and food handling and storage issues. Reference should be made to the Meals on Wheels/Food Services Code of Practice as to the application of the guidelines and standards.

All services receiving funding under the HACC program, including food services, have their practice informed by the National Home and Community Care Program National Service Standards. These Service Standards were developed by the Commonwealth government in consultation with States and Territories to provide consistency in the quality and delivery of HACC services across Australia, and to provide a common reference point for agencies for internal quality control, monitoring and evaluation (Gevers, 1994). The National Service Standards are based on seven objectives which set out a broad goal of the HACC program in terms of service management and delivery to consumers. These objectives are:

Objective 1: Access to Services

To ensure that each consumer's access to a service is decided only on the basis of relative need.

Objective 2: Information and Consultation

To ensure that each consumer is informed about his or her rights and responsibilities and the services available and consulted about any changes required.

Objective 3: Efficient and Effective Management

To ensure that consumers receive the benefit of well-planned, efficient and accountable service management.

Objective 4: Co-ordinated, Planned and Reliable Service Delivery

To ensure that each consumer receives co-ordinated services that are planned, reliable and meet his or her specific ongoing needs.

Objective 5: Privacy, Confidentiality and Access to Personal Information

To ensure that each consumer's rights to privacy and confidentiality are respected, and he or she has access to personal information held by the agency.

Objective 6: Complaints and Disputes

To ensure that each consumer has access to fair and equitable procedures for dealing with complaints and disputes.

Objective 7: Advocacy

To ensure that each consumer has access to an advocate of his or her choice.

Whilst all of these objectives are relevant to non-English speaking background clients the Example Policy and Procedure Manual cited by the NSW Department of Disability, Ageing and Home Care refers *only* to interpreter provision.

Improving equity of access to aged care services generally for people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds has been a key Commonwealth and State policy objective over the past 10 years. The Commonwealth Government's Ethnic Aged Care Framework for example aims to assist mainstream service providers and communities to improve access to services (Andrews, 2002). The framework adopts a range of strategies including: training, information and resource development; encouragement of best practice; improved choice and access to aged care services; culturally sensitive assessment of aged care needs; and Ethnic Aged Services Grants. This Framework recognises a number of potential barriers concerning mainstream aged care for older population groups from different cultures, including:

- Language and communication;
- Religious and dietary issues;
- Family reluctance to change the practice of care.

In recognition of the importance of accessibility to the future of food services, the NSW Meals on Wheels Association undertook research in 2003 which concluded that NSW Food Services as a group were at a 'cultural competence crossroad' (Zadro, 2003). The research proposed organisational development and cultural change was one avenue of response, whilst ignoring the issue was another. Whilst the dichotomy response envisaged is somewhat polemic it does highlight the significance of the issue for future food service development. Zadro (2003) found that

The culture of the NSW Meals on Wheels network is based on Anglo-Australian values and charity principles. This needs to change in order for multicultural issues to be included and regarded as core issues for the network. (2003 :16).

Additional barriers to the provision of services to NESB clients were identified, including: funding agreements that restrict the piloting of new models; the lack of training opportunities for staff and volunteers; cultural insensitive and inflexible assessment procedures; and the difficulties ordering small numbers of multicultural food (Zadro, 2003). The research identified a 'major barrier' in the existence of stereotypes that 'perpetuate racism, stereotyping, prejudice and racial discrimination' (Harris and Zadro, 2004: 9)

The provision of multicultural services in the community care sector is currently and in the future a major challenge facing community care services. Food Services face particular issues, for they interact with personal, cultural and religious preferences reflected in food habits. Therefore, Food Service needs to

consider not only what tastes good or how the food is provided, but a whole array of sociological and psychological concerns (Zadro, 2003: 13).

In follow up to this earlier work, the NSW Meals on Wheels Association jointly with the Ethnic Communities Council undertook research on the cultural competency of the food services network in NSW (Harris and Zadro, 2004). The research drew on extensive research undertaken in the United States on Cultural Competency and sought to explore the usefulness of the concept to food services in Australia to achieve 'better client outcomes' (Harris and Zadro, 2004: 12-13). The research involved a survey (predominantly closed-question) to all 210 Meals on Wheels/Food Services organisations in NSW covering: background details; cultural skills; cross-cultural encounters; cultural knowledge; cultural desire; and, cultural awareness. The research draws a complex picture of cultural competency in food services, with few NESB staff, volunteers or clients, moderate levels of cultural skills, mixed experiences of cultural encounters despite strong cultural desire and cultural awareness. The research notes the various levels or aspects of cultural competency are, at least, inter-related and possibly interdependent. Thus it suggests that providing training (building on cultural desire) without considering the potential for increased cultural encounters is unlikely to be successful or 'more deeply internalised' (Harris and Zadro, 2004: 23-30). The research concludes:

A community care sector that is culturally competent would be better able to manage issues such as social isolation, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of individuals and communities. Importantly, it will also encourage the participation of CALD background communities to design and carry out services to address specific needs. Ultimately, this research has provided a timely insight into an important next step to improve service delivery for some of the most at need in increasingly diverse communities in NSW (Harris and Zadro, 2004: 34).

The NSW Transcultural Aged Care Service (2001) suggests organisations need to be 'culturally competent' to the cultural, religious and linguistic needs of their clients. Cultural competency is defined as:

A set of congruent behaviours, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective communication in cross-cultural situations.

Transcultural Aged Care Service suggests that cultural competency occurs at both the individual and organisational level and proposes the following Standards:

Standard 1:

- Respectful care – compatible with the cultural beliefs and practices and preferred language.
- A diverse staff that are representative of the demographic characteristics.
- Ongoing education and training in culturally and linguistically appropriate service delivery for all staff.
- Provide competent language assistance services (including interpreter and bilingual staff) in a timely manner.

Standard 2:

- Customer-related materials and post signage in common community languages.
- Strategic plan outlines clear goals, policies, operational plans and management accountability mechanisms to CALD services.
- Ongoing organisational self-assessments where cultural competence measures are integrated into all performance measures.

Standard 3:

- Update individual consumers' ethnicity data in service records and information systems.
- Needs assessment and planning reflect a current demographic and cultural profile of the community.
- Complaint and conflict resolution processes are culturally and linguistically sensitive.
- Participatory, collaborative partnerships with CALD communities.

Demographic context

The Australian Institute of Health & Welfare (1997), one of the key contributors to aged care policy, feels aged people of non-English speaking background “warrant particular attention in policy terms”. This policy attention derives not only from the size of this group but also from the special barriers they experience accessing services.

The Australian population today is marked by cultural diversity, flowing strongly from the immigration policies of the post-war period. In addition the population is becoming increasingly culturally diverse, with more older overseas-born Australians coming from a greater variety of countries. According to the 2001 Census 4.1 million people or 22% of the population living in Australia were born overseas and originated from some 220 different countries, while a further 3.4 million or 18% had one or both parents born overseas.

Looking ahead, the so-called ageing of the Australian population will see the aged population generally increase to around 18% of the population in 2021 (Andrews, 2002). Older Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are predicted to increase an incredible 66% between 1996 and 2011 (Andrews, 2002 and AIHW 1997). By 2011 older people from NESB will comprise one quarter of all older people, up from 18% in 1996 (Andrews, 2002). By 2011 there will also be a change in the composition of older NESB people, with the dominance of people of European background being replaced by newer migrant groups such as people from Vietnam, China and the Philippines.

Profile of the Nepean region

The Nepean NESB Food Services Development Project targeted individuals, groups, organisations and communities in the Nepean region. The Nepean region was defined as including the Local Government Areas of Blacktown; Blue Mountains; Penrith; and Hawkesbury. The profiles of these Local Government Areas differ significantly in terms of Non-English speaking background communities. These profiles provide important contextual information for the Nepean NESB Food Services Development Project and this evaluation.

Table 1: Residents from Non-English speaking countries

Local Government Area	2001 Census	% of total population	% change 1996-2001
Blacktown	65,228	25.4	17.2
Blue Mountains	4,743	6.4	3.3
Penrith	21,418	12.4	0.7
Hawkesbury	3,533	5.8	-5.0
Region	94,922	12.5	4.0
State	1,020,421	16.1	0.3

Table 1 indicates an enormous diversity within the region in terms of residents from Non-English speaking countries. One quarter of all residents of the Blacktown Local Government Area were born in a non-English speaking country compared to approximately 6% for both the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury Local Government Areas. The table also indicates that between 1996 and 2001 the Local Government Area of Hawkesbury had a reduction in NESB residents of 5% whilst Blacktown had an increase of 17%. This diversity required the Project to adopt different strategies across the region.

Table 2: Age breakdown of speakers of languages other than English by LGA

Local Government Area	0-24 years %	25-54 years %	55-64 years %	65+ years %
Blacktown	34	49	8	9
Blue Mountains	24	44	14	18
Penrith	30	50	10	10
Hawkesbury	25	51	12	12
Region	28	49	11	12
State				

Whilst the Blue Mountains Local Government Area had significantly less residents from non-English speaking background Table 2 indicates these residents were older, which is an important factor in accessing HACC services such as Food Services (Jenkins, 1996). This data suggests that Food Services in the Blacktown Local Government Area will have a large increase in potential NESB clients in the next 15 to 20 years.

Table 3: English language competency for all speakers of languages other than English aged 65+

Local Government Area	Speaks English well/very well	Speaks English not well/not at all	% speaks English not well/not at all
Blacktown	3,669	2,579	40.6
Blue Mountains	525	75	12.4
Penrith	1,463	667	31.0
Hawkesbury	283	93	24.3
Region	5,940	3,414	36.5
State			

Table 3 indicates, however, that whilst proportionally the Blue Mountains Local Government Area has more NESB residents aged over 65, the vast majority speak English well or very well. In raw numbers, over 2,500 residents aged 65 years or over in the Blacktown Local Government Area speak English not well or not at all. These residents present a significant challenge to aged service providers generally.

Table 4,

Table 5,

Table 6 and

Table 7 below indicate the main languages other than English spoken at home in the four Local Government Areas. Whilst there are a range of languages there are a number of common languages across the Areas. Italian, for example, is a main language in all four Local Government Areas. Arabic is spoken by residents in Blacktown, Penrith and the Blue Mountains. Tagalog is a significant language in both Blacktown and Penrith. These commonalities suggest some cross region or at least sub-regional initiatives are possible for Food Service providers. The number of residents speaking European languages is indicative of migrant patterns with these residents likely to have migrated in the post-WWII period.

Table 4: Main Languages other than English spoken at home – Blacktown LGA

Country of birth	2001 Census	% of LOTE population
Tagalog (Filipino)	13,065	17.7
Arabic	7,351	9.9
Hindi	4,635	6.3
Maltese	3,547	4.8
Spanish	3,043	4.1
Italian	2,937	4.0
Cantonese	2,870	3.9

Table 5: Main Languages other than English spoken at home – Blue Mountains LGA

Country of birth	2001 Census	% of LOTE population
German	469	13.7
Italian	243	7.1
Netherlandic	243	7.1
Greek	227	6.6
Spanish	207	6.1
French	161	4.7
Arabic	137	4.0

Table 6: Main Languages other than English spoken at home – Penrith LGA

Country of birth	2001 Census	% of LOTE population
Tagalog (Filipino)	2,244	9.9
Arabic	2,182	9.7
Italian	1,669	7.4
Maltese	1,447	6.4

Greek	1,432	6.3
Croatian	1,256	5.6
Spanish	1,086	4.8

Table 7: Main Languages other than English spoken at home – Hawkesbury LGA

Country of birth	2001 Census	% of LOTE population
Maltese	486	15.7
Italian	349	11.2
Macedonian	253	8.1
German	212	6.8
Netherlandic	163	5.2
Greek	157	5.1
Croatian	101	3.3

Project evaluation

This section describes the activities or outputs of the Project. The information contained in this section has been collected from interviews and the review of documents. At the commencement of the Project, an independent consultant developed an Evaluation Design. This Evaluation Design identified four key components of the Project as well as data sources and measures (boxed in the following section).

The role of the Steering Committee

Data sources:

- Minutes of Committee meetings
- Interview/Survey of Committee members

Measures:

- Number of participants at meetings and their job titles
- Frequency and duration of meetings
- Outcomes from meetings

The Project was always conceived as being a collaborative partnership between Food Service providers, the Forum and other key stakeholders. Accordingly, processes that facilitated this collaboration were central to the ability of the Project achieving its broad goals. The Project was first identified in Round 14 HACC Planning for the Nepean Area through the advocacy of the Forum's Regional Food Services Advisor. Staff at the Forum had been advocating for a project of this nature for some time and resourced a working party that initially developed a submission to the Planning Group – Met West. The then Department of Ageing and Disability called for Expressions of Interest in HACC Round 15 for "A food services development worker to

enhance the provision of culturally appropriate food services to people from non-English speaking backgrounds in the Nepean Area.” Food Service providers believed the funding would assist them develop more culturally responsive services. The desires of some of the Food Service providers at this time were viewed as ‘modest’, including information about food sources, and training for volunteers and staff.

Discussions among potential stakeholders in the Project (including Western Area Health Service, Nepean Food Services and Blue Mountains Food Services) were held towards the end of 1999. At this early stage concern was expressed about the level of participation of Food Services in the Steering Committee and the appropriateness of the Forum as the auspice body. TRI Community Exchange in Penrith was floated as a possible location which would enable better access by Nepean Food Services. At these early discussions it was decided the Project should have an Advisory Committee under the auspice of the WSCF Management Committee.

There were different perspectives about the composition of the Advisory Committee from stakeholder groups, the funding body and the Forum. This lack of agreement about the composition of the Steering Committee was an early signal of the difficulties to face the Steering Committee later in the project. Stakeholders involved in early development discussions saw the Steering Committee comprising:

- Food Service representatives;
- TRI Community Exchange;
- Mountains Community Resource Network;
- Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre;
- Ethnic Communities Council;
- Nepean Migrant Access; and
- Local Government.

The Forum gave a greater role to local NESB organisations or communities and Health in the Committee whilst at the same time limiting Food Services involvement to two representatives. This aimed to broaden the scope and potential impact of the Project. The Forum believed the Advisory Committee would ‘ensure regional ownership, contribution and participation in the project’. Potential participants included:

- One representative of NESB organisations from each Local Government Area;
- Wentworth Area Health;
- Western Sydney Area Health;
- Two representatives from Food Service organisations;
- Forum’s Regional Food Service Advisor; and
- The Project Worker.

The Department also had a different perspective, emphasising its role as funding body, and the role of the NSW Meals on Wheels Association as peak organisation, on the Committee. It also

wanted participation from clients (both carers and consumers). A point of contention with the Forum was the lack of Forum management representation on the Advisory Committee, who was also notably absent from the stakeholder proposed committee. The Department specified in the 1999-2000 Funding Agreement:

A Project Steering Committee will be formed at the beginning of the project that consists of representatives of:

- The Ageing and Disability Department;
- HACCC service provider in the area;
- NSW Meals on Wheels Association's Management Training Project Officer;
- Forum's Food Services Development Worker;
- NESB food service provider in the area;
- Carer from a NESB;
- Service user from a NESB; and
- HACCC Development Worker or Aged Care Worker.

There was also a lack of agreement about the specific role of the Steering Committee, both in practice and in documentation. The Funding Agreement is quite unclear about the responsibilities of the 'auspicing agency' (that is, the Forum Management Committee) and the Steering Committee. Under the Agreement the Forum was to produce a work plan, in conjunction with the Department. However, the Steering Committee was to determine '*the outputs of the service and the measure of indicators for enhancing the provision of culturally appropriate food services to people of NESB ... at the formation of the work plan*'. It also specified that an evaluation was to be done 'by the service to determine the effectiveness of the service' but that 'any revisions to the project are to be authorised by the Project Steering Committee'. This reveals a lack of clarity about where essential elements of the Project, such as planning, should be undertaken. It also suggests some ambivalence from the Department about where 'authority' in relation to the 'service' lies – with the Department, the stakeholders or the auspice body? There was a clear desire to facilitate collaboration between the Forum and stakeholder groups by the Department, however, research indicates collaborative approaches cannot be 'mandated' by Government through funding agreements (Rawsthorne & Eardley, 2004).

From the Funding Agreement, the Department viewed the Steering Committee as a monitoring and review body, signing off on work plans and needing to be consulted on any changes. The Draft Terms of Reference developed by the Forum for the Steering Committee, however, saw the role as primarily one of assistance, advice and support which is also reflected in the Worker Job Description.

An advisory committee, comprising key NESB organisations, HAAC Food Services, Penrith Access and Equity project worker, NSW Meals on Wheels Association and WSCF's Regional Food Service Advisor (FSA), provides support, guidance and direction to the project and worker.

Whilst the Forum recognised the need for clarity about its role as auspice and the Steering Committee, the Draft Terms of Reference may have added to the confusion. The Draft Terms of Reference could be read as delegating work management issues to the Steering Committee, although this is also within the ambit of 'employment' requirements of the Project.

The steering committee will:

- Monitor the progress of the project against stated goals, objectives, strategies, workers' job description and recommended time frames of the project;
- Respond to identified issues from services/forums regarding the project;
- Participate in the organisation of NESB open days.

WSCF Inc. as auspice body will:

- Be responsible for all financial, employment, industrial and legal requirements of the project.

The role of the Project Steering Committee was very problematic for all stakeholders. The lack of agreement about the purpose, delegation and relationship with the Forum Management Committee caused ongoing problems for the Project. Some stakeholders viewed the Steering Committee as an interagency for Food Services, providing an opportunity for information exchange, training and resourcing. From this perspective, the Steering Committee was effectively a 'client' of the Project and concerns were expressed as to why some people were 'excluded' from the Steering Committee. Others viewed the Steering Committee as the 'management committee' for the Project, to which the worker was accountable and took specific direction. On occasions this included requests in relation to the needs of individual NESB clients. From this perspective, the Steering Committee was the 'management' structure for the Project and Project worker. This perspective brought the Steering Committee into conflict with the Forum management structures, such as the Project Officer's line manager (the Executive Officer) and the Management Committee. For the Forum, the lack of agreement about the role of the Steering Committee caused a great deal of difficulty and acted as a distraction from the work of the Project. This led to a lack of clarity about the lines of accountability for the Project Worker and made relationships with Food Service Providers more complex. In 2001 in an effort to clarify the role and delegations of the Project Steering Committee the Forum adopted a new policy concerning all such committees. The policy clarified the composition of committees, the relationship with the Management Committee and Project management arrangements. This led to a change in the nature of the Steering Committee, which was perceived by some stakeholders as 'being sacked'. The changed nature of the Steering Committee caused considerable damage to relations between Food Services, the Project and the Forum. A number of stakeholders noted that their involvement in the Project reduced markedly after these changes.

The Project Steering Committee played a limited role beyond the initial establishment phase due to a lack of agreement about structural relations. This difficulty is not unique to the Project and is an experience many collaborative initiatives have experienced in other settings. The inability (or unwillingness) of partners to reach consensus and clarity about expectations, roles and purpose meant that structural problems were to some extent inevitable. Previous research indicates that collaborative projects require a commitment of time and resources to develop trust among 'partners' (Rawsthorne & Eardley, 2004). Whilst the key partners were known to each other the Project represented a significant increase in regional co-operation and collaboration. Unfortunately, efforts by the Forum to bring clarity to the role and purpose were viewed as 'heavy handed' and 'taking resources' away from services, leading to distrust.

Additionally, an impediment to collaboration is turnover of staff in key positions within partner organisations. Stability in key positions enable the development of shared history, provides opportunity for relationship development, particularly trust and provides an opportunity to address conflict constructively (Rawsthorne & Eardley, 2004). During the life of the Project, key staff changed in the Department, the Project (the project officer), the Forum (the executive officer) and Food Services (co-ordinators). In this context, in the absence of extensive and clear documentation misunderstandings were likely to arise.

The role of Western Sydney Community Forum

Data sources:

- Worker reports
- Financial reports
- Interview with Executive Officer

Measures:

- Description of Forum input into Food Services Project eg. preparing funding submissions, appointing Project Officer, managing funds, etc.

As the auspice organisation the Forum played a key role in the success or otherwise of the Project. As mentioned above, structurally the project was a complex one for the Forum. Over the length of the Project considerable staff turnover at the Forum, key stakeholders and the Department created even greater management complexity.

The appropriateness of the Forum as the 'pick up' organisation for the Project was in question from the earliest planning meetings (Minutes 1/11/1999). From the perspective of the Department it would appear that the Forum's proven record in capacity building and resourcing of non-government organisations in Western Sydney made them a suitable choice. There seems to be an implicit recognition in negotiations with the Department that the project would 'value add' to the work already being undertaken by other Forum projects such as the Regional Food Services Advisor and HACC Development Officer. Whilst it is true that the Forum plays an important capacity building and resourcing role across the region the Project differed in the intensive and targeted nature of the work to be undertaken. Effectively, the Project was to work with four Food Services and a small number of food suppliers. Such a targeted approach not surprisingly generated among these Food Services a desire for control and accountability from the Project, which other Forum projects have not experienced. There was some recognition by the Forum of this danger in early planning with efforts to make the project more generic and to impact more broadly, for example, on food provision in aged care facilities.

Some stakeholders expressed disquiet about the level of internal organisational activity or what was described as 'Forum work' undertaken by the Project Officer. There appeared to be limited appreciation among some stakeholders of the line management requirements of the Project or its organisational context. Some stakeholders felt the Forum was 'too distant' and that the Project Officer should have been based in the Nepean Region. At the time of the Expression of Interest it was envisaged that *the Project Worker will be located at WSCF office in Parramatta and have access to office space across the Nepean region eg. Blue Mountains Food Services, Nepean Food Services and Hawkesbury co-location premises*. Due to the cramped conditions in these services this vision was only partially realised, contributing to a sense of the Project Officer being an 'outsider' effectively coming to tell services 'what to do'.

Throughout the Project, the Forum struggled to gain agreement about the activities, effectiveness and direction of the Project. The Project needed to constantly negotiate the key constituencies (the Forum Management Committee, Nepean-based Food Services, the Steering Committee and the Department). This coincided with internal Forum discussions about the role and future directions of the Forum. In 2002 the Forum Management Committee developed and adopted a new set of Policies and Procedures, including a new policy framework in relation to the Roles and Responsibilities of Sub-Committees. This policy framework sought to clearly identify the powers delegated by the Management Committee and to improve structural integration of sub-committees within the Forum. Members of sub-committees, for example, had to be members of the Forum and had to adhere to all Forum policies and procedures. The Project Steering Committee, as well as other existing Sub-Committees or Steering Committees, was affected by the new policy. The new policy articulated the Forum Management Committee's belief that they were not a passive 'auspice' body for a collection of opportunistically developed projects. Rather, projects such as the Nepean NESB Food Services Development Project formed part of a comprehensive, strategic approach to issues affecting the communities of Western Sydney. This was a significant symbol of the evolution and maturation of the Forum as an organisation. It did, however, also signify a cultural shift which some (members, staff, management) took time to understand. In relation to the Nepean NESB Food Services Development Project some stakeholders (Food Services and HACC Development Workers) viewed the new policy as resulting in the Steering Committee being 'sacked'. Involvement by some stakeholders in the Steering Committee and the Project overall declined following the implementation of the new policy.

From the perspective of the Project Officer, the Forum was the most appropriate auspice available for the Project. It provided the Project with some distance from Food Service organisations and thus an ability to critically engage with these organisations. The Forum's development focus enabled the Project Officer to resist demands to become a 'NESB case manager' for Nepean food service providers. The credibility of the Project was enhanced by the ability of the Forum to recruit staff from Non-English speaking backgrounds.

The role of the Project Worker

Over the course of the Project, two staff people were employed in the Nepean NESB Food Services Development Worker position. The first, Orkun Ari, left after 15 months (September 2000 - December 2001) and the second, David Zhao, was employed for the remainder of the Project (February 2002 - June 2004). Both Development Officers were from NESB background and had significant experience in food services and/or HACC service provision.

The duties of the Nepean NESB Food Services Development Worker were to work:

- With mainstream HACC food services, on a network, group and individual service level, to increase the access to and usage of HACC food services by people of non-English speaking backgrounds.

The major objectives of the Nepean NESB Food Services Development Worker in the Job Description were:

To work with mainstream HACC food services and NESB organisations to:

- Increase the access to and usage of HACC food services for people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- Identify high need NESB groups in Nepean area;

- Develop strategies for the delivery of ethnic meals and appropriate food sources;
- Promote food services to the NESB community across the region; and
- Continue to lead pilot projects and establish strategies to achieve structural change in food provision across the Nepean region.

The Job Description of the Nepean NESB Food Services Development Worker contained both internal and external foci. Whilst the Major Objectives of the position identified in the Job Description all related externally the actual duties had a significant internal organisational focus. These included:

- Provide regular reports to the Executive Officer against workplan objectives;
- Ensure administration systems are actively maintained to meet accountabilities;
- Ensure activities are undertaken within approved budgets;
- Contribute positively to the WSCF team of projects;
- Comply with all other relevant WSCF Policies and Procedures;

Evidence of Food Services Project development, promotion and support activities

Data source:

- Project Worker reports and interviews

Measures:

- number of consultations
- participation in steering committee
- number of interagency meetings attended
- Steering Committee member comments

Consultations

As part of the promotion of the Project, it was officially launched on the 8th March 2001 by Ms. Charmaine Solomon, an international cookery writer. The launch brought together the stakeholders to discuss the challenges facing the Project and Food Services in providing services to NESB communities. Stakeholders involved in panel discussions included: the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care; Nepean Food Services; Nepean Ethnic Day Care Centre; and a carer who had used Meals on Wheels on a number of occasions. It was agreed at this meeting that area-based consultations be undertaken with Food Services, clients and carers to develop specific action plans for each Local Government Area. The aims of these consultations were to:

- Identify some key challenges in culturally appropriate food provision;

- Formalise strategies to assist us to ensure the food needs of NESB persons in the Nepean region are met;
- Brainstorm for innovative ideas to overcome some of the historical challenges faced in providing services for NESB clients; and
- Prioritise some of the outstanding issues for culturally appropriate food provision.
- In addition, consultations with consumers were utilised to:
- Increase participant's knowledge of Meals on Wheels services in their area; and
- Explore the initial understanding in the community about food services.

Participants in area-based consultations included Food Service Providers, Local Council workers, other HACC service providers and migrant services. As suggested by the profile above, the issues identified in each area were locally specific. These planning forums also developed and agreed to a number of specific pilot projects to be implemented by the Project. These sought to address the barriers identified during the consultations.

Initial consumer input into the Project was obtained via focus group discussions. Focus groups were held with: aged consumers in Hawkesbury (from the Hawkesbury Day Care Centre and local HACC services); the Dutch Day Care; the Multicultural Day Care Group; and the Arabic Day Care Group. The focus groups with the three Day Care Groups were held at St. Mary's Seniors Citizens Centre. A total of 39 participants were involved in the focus group. Cultural groups among participants included Dutch, Italian, Polish, Sri Lankan, Filipino, Greek and Arabic.

Interagencies and networking

Participation in formal interagencies and informal networking were key strategies employed to develop, promote and support the Project. The Project Worker participated in formal interagencies throughout the Project. These included: HACC forums (Blacktown, Penrith, Hawkesbury and Blue Mountains); migrant interagencies (Blacktown, Penrith and Hawkesbury); Food Services Development Workers' Network; and ADD Access Workers' Meeting. In addition to the regular formal interagencies, the Project workers attended a range of one-off events, such as:

- National Meals on Wheels Conference
- TeamWest Conference
- Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association Stakeholders Conference
- Penrith City Council Arabic Open Day
- Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre National Volunteers and Harmony Day
- Maltese Information Day

Direct contact with key players in ethnic communities was also established by the Project Workers, including:

- Arabic

- Kurdish
- Afghani
- Sudanese
- Maltese
- Dutch
- German
- Filipino

In addition, the Project Workers actively networked informally with a wide range of agencies including: migrant resource centres; community health; senior citizen centres; local government; food service suppliers; and other community organisations.

Participation in steering committee

The Project Worker acted as a resource person to the Steering Committee, organising meetings, agendas and minutes. They attended all Steering Committee meetings over the course of the Project, and provided written and verbal reports to the Committee on activities and progress. As mentioned previously, the lack of agreement and clarity about the Steering Committee created significant difficulties for the Project Worker.

Steering committee/stakeholder comments

Overall the Food Service providers were unhappy about the Project Worker and the Project. They felt badly 'let down' by the Project. Some felt the staff at the Forum did not have the skills to undertake the Project successfully. Some made complaints to the Forum about the Project Worker, and the Department about the Project more generally. Most viewed the project as a 'lost opportunity' but appeared to view this as the responsibility of the Forum and the Project Worker and were unable to reflect on what part they may have played.

In general, there appeared to be little recognition among stakeholders of the complexity of the task facing the Project Worker. It would seem that a number of stakeholders had limited understanding of developmental approaches in community work, being more familiar with individual client or casework approaches. This led to a dismissal of the liaison, networking and advocacy work undertaken by the Project Worker. Instead what was most commented on were 'events' or products that were given greater significance. The Project Workers' adapted to this reality in very creative and effective ways, for example taking hands-on roles in food preparation. Ironically, this brought the Project Worker into some conflict with Forum staff and management who viewed this as 'too direct service'.

Evidence of Project Worker input to each Pilot Project

Data source:

- Interviews

Measures:

- Successful implementation of Pilot projects
- Amount and value of Project Worker input

In all but one of the Pilot Projects the Project Worker took an active role in the development, implementation and evaluation. The one exception was the Arabic-speaking Project in Blacktown for which there was a separate staff member employed. The Project Worker was involved in developing pilots in consultation with the relevant Food Service and the other stakeholder groups (such as suppliers, NESB or mainstream clients). The Project Worker often took a very hands-on approach. Most of the pilot projects (discussed in detail below) required considerable liaison and negotiation between a range of individuals and organisations. In addition, the successful implementation required organisational, time management and research skills. Regardless of the stakeholders' perspective of the success or otherwise of the overall Project, all agreed that the Pilot projects were implemented professionally.

The Pilots – Innovative solutions

In August, 2001 the local area planning days identified a large number of innovative solutions to the provision of food services to culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Nepean. All of the Pilots placed emphasis on evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy in addressing perceived barriers. Over time some of the innovative solutions identified changed or were no longer relevant (having been addressed through other processes). This section draws on reports compiled by the Project Workers to describe and discuss the Pilots.

In addition to the Pilots discussed in detail below, other ideas for Project activities included:

- Production of multilingual brochures explaining the service to targeted communities and documenting the impact on service use.
- Cross-Cultural Training.
- Increased cooperation between local ethnic communities and Food Services.
- Increased promotion and information campaigns.
- Cooking demonstrations with popular chefs to show how Australian cuisine is a fusion of foods and techniques from other cultures.
- Conducting food displays showing examples of low fat meals from cultures that have influenced Australian eating patterns.

Pilot Project 1:

The project will assist a food service provider to target twenty NESB clients with free trial packages for three weeks. The target group will be NESB individuals who are being discharged from hospitals or whom are existing HACC clients who are not using food services. The project will strictly be evaluated and the feedback on the quality of food, cultural appropriateness of the

food, the presentation of the food will be documented. The future monitoring of clients usage of the service will also be followed up.

An action plan to implement this Pilot was developed jointly by the Project Worker and the Nepean Food Services Coordinator (Penrith). The major objective of the pilot project was to determine whether people on the trial would find the service useful, valuable and culturally appropriate. The pilot commenced on Monday 29th October, 2001. Clients received their last delivery on 18th November, 2001. There were initially fifteen clients recruited, two of whom stopped the service before the agreed time. There were two suppliers: Corrective Services Industry Emu Plains Prison Kitchen (which supplied the hot meals for the weekdays) and Tom Foster Centre – Marrickville Ethnic Food Services (which catered frozen meals).

Recruitment of people from non-English speaking backgrounds to take part in the free food trial was undertaken via existing networks such as the Penrith HACC Forum, Nepean Migrant Forum and direct contact with NESB community groups. The Pilot was evaluated via two surveys administered face to face by the Project Worker. The major findings from the Pilot evaluation were:

- The NESB clients who participated in the Pilot had very little previous knowledge of Meals on Wheels services. Alternative promotion strategies need to be developed to ensure that NESB clients have access to Food Services. Many of the clients had no knowledge of such a service in Australia, as MOW did not exist in their home countries.
- NESB communities are not a homogenous group. While some clients found the meals highly acceptable, others found it not acceptable at all. There are great differences between and within these ethnic groups. Individual experiences are greatly affected by immigration experiences, gender, English language skills, cultural and religious differences.
- Most of the pilot project participants thought that the service was suitable for the sick and for people with disabilities who could not cook for themselves. It was not seen as an alternative for having a break from cooking, or as providing respite to the client or carer.
- Nearly all the clients considered the quality of the meals good. However, this did not mean the meals met the clients' needs due to the type of food served. A number of the clients stated that they would not continue to use the service, as it was not appropriate food for them.
- The major reason why clients would not use the service in future was dislike for the food. The clients who said that they would use the service in future stated that they would only use it when they had lost their independence and didn't have anyone to look after them.
- Most of the clients preferred the hot meals (which was the mainstream supplier). The clients did not find a taste difference between the frozen and hot meals. People who preferred the frozen meals claimed that it was more convenient to have them all delivered on the same day rather than waiting for a meal at a set time every day.
- The side dishes provided with the meals were similar so the ethnic frozen food was not seen as different to the mainstream supplier. The ethnic meals had three vegetables usually corn, peas and carrots, which the clients considered very boring and repetitive. The pilot project highlighted the need for providing a complete ethnic meal which includes authentic side dishes, desserts and vegetables.

- All the clients regarded the food as very healthy as it did not have much salt or oil. A number of clients stated that the meals would be excellent for sick and old people who have digestive problems.

Communication and language difficulties were identified in the Pilot as not only issues in recruitment but also as an ongoing service issue. Some of the clients had difficulty in communicating with the Nepean Food Services about issues such as changing the time of a delivery. Lack of English language proficiency caused simple issues to become major dilemmas. The use of interpreters with clients needs to be an ongoing process not just for the recruitment of clients. The Pilot also identified the need for a high profile promotional strategy targeting NESB clients of HACC services to increase the knowledge of food services and how they operate. These issues require organisations to adjust budgets to meet the needs of NESB clients. Funds need to be allocated to meet the cost of translations, interpreters and promotion.

The Pilot confirmed that culturally appropriate food is an important factor for NESB clients. A steady supplier of ethnic meals is required, not only to recruit clients but also to keep them using the service. The expertise of community groups could be utilised for creating the recipes. More importantly, the NESB community groups should be consulted concerning the rituals surrounding eating and to identify the cultural needs of the clients.

Pilot Project 2:

The project will assist a food service provider to target twenty existing Anglo clients with free ethno-specific trial packages for three weeks. The project will strictly monitor and document the clients' feedback on the quality of food, cultural appropriateness of the food, and the presentation of the food. If clients enjoy the authentic meals provided the current menus of the service will incorporate these new dishes.

This Pilot was conducted in the Hawkesbury Local Government Area with the assistance of the Hawkesbury and Colo Meals on Wheels Services. The major aim of the Pilot was to test whether Anglo-Australian clients would find ethnic meals acceptable and culturally appropriate. The project evaluated feedback of Anglo-Australian elderly MOWs clients on:

- The quality of food;
- The cultural appropriateness of the food; and
- The presentation of the food.

Overall the pilot explored client's opinions about the ethnic meals. Rather than just providing ethnic meals to clients from non-English speaking backgrounds, the pilot wanted to test if creating a choice for all clients would work. If it did then this model could be used for providing culturally-appropriate meals for NESB clients in areas such as Hawkesbury where there is a lower number of NESB clients in a large geographical area with no one particularly large ethnic group.

An action plan was developed by the Project Worker with the Hawkesbury Meals on Wheels Co-ordinator. The pilot project commenced on Monday 10th November, 2001 and the clients received their last delivery on 7th December, 2001. There were initially twenty-five clients recruited, one of who left the trial before the agreed time as she did not enjoy the food.

The Project Worker negotiated with the suppliers to use existing recipes, which had been authenticated by the community. A weekly menu was developed and it was repeated for three weeks to give each client a chance to fully appreciate the taste of the new meals. There were

two suppliers of food for the Pilot, the Hawkesbury District Health Service Kitchen (which supplied the cooked-chilled meals for the weekdays) and Tom Foster Centre - Marrickville Ethnic Food Services (which supplied the frozen meals).

The Pilot was evaluated via two surveys, the first on expectations and the second on food quality, taste and acceptability of the ethnic meals. The major findings were:

- All of the ethnic meals offered during the trial were rated as either acceptable or highly acceptable by the majority of the client, with one exception.
- The major reason why clients would not order the ethnic meals in the future was dislike for the food. Similarly the major reason why clients would use the ethnic meals in future was that they had enjoyed and liked the food.
- Most of the clients who said they would use ethnic meals in future were happy to have diversity in the menus. A number of them stated that they would not like to have ethnic meals every day but were happy to have it occasionally.
- Like the NESB community, the Anglo-Australian community is not a homogenous group. There were great differences between the pilot clients. The individual needs and background of clients had direct affect on their choices. While some clients found the ethnic meals to be highly acceptable, others found it not acceptable at all.
- Most of the pilot participants thought that the meals were suitable for everyone. Only a few clients saw ethnic meals appropriate for just ethnic people.
- Nearly all clients considered the quality of the meals to be good or satisfactory. However, this did not mean the meals met the client's needs due to the type of food served. A number of the clients stated that they would not continue to use ethnic meals as it was not appropriate food for them.

The Pilot evaluation concluded that diversity in the menus of Food Services will have a positive effect on both Anglo and NESB clients. This pilot proved that choice of various ethnic meals in the menu cycle makes the service more accessible to both target groups. Organisations need to re-organise budgets to diversify their menus. Financial resources will be needed for developing new menus, promotion, and for translations and interpreters.

Pilot Project 3:

Employ a bilingual worker three days a week for six months to work closely with the appropriate community to increase the access of NESB clients to a local food service. The Nepean NESB Food Services Development Project will assist a food service provider to employ a bilingual worker. The population statistics will be taken into account to decide which community group will be targeted. Two factors will be taken into account: size of the community and the number of aged in the community. The project worker will promote the food service to the community, and also identify the needs of the specific community and obstacles that they face in receiving services.

Pilot 3 saw the development of an Arabic-speaking Food Service Project targeting the Blacktown Local Government Area. The Forum employed a project worker, Nazmi Gabriel, 21 hours per week from July to December 2003. The Pilot aimed to trial a range of innovative strategies to enhance access to and knowledge of Meals on Wheels services by the Arabic-speaking community in Blacktown. Accordingly, it was envisaged that the Project Worker would work with the Arabic-speaking community, Blacktown Meals on Wheels (MOWs) and other

relevant organisations. Blacktown MOWs agreed to participate as a primary partner organisation in the project. The Pilot project employed a range of strategies, including:

- Advocate for increased access to and usage of Blacktown Meals on Wheels for Arabic-speaking people;
- Develop strategies for the delivery of appropriate meals and access to appropriate food sources;
- Promote Blacktown Meals on Wheels to the Arabic-speaking community in Blacktown; and
- Evaluate project outcomes and establish strategies to achieve structural change in food provision across the Nepean region.

Some of the achievements of the Project identified by Blacktown MOWs included:

- The potential for Arabic centre-based meals via social group established by the Project Worker;
- The provision of more appropriate Arabic foods by suppliers;
- Better understanding of the needs of the Arabic-speaking community among Blacktown MOWs staff and volunteers, including cultural traditions such as fasting;
- Greater acceptance of MOWs by the Arabic-speaking community; and
- Closer working relationships with existing bi-lingual services (for example, Migrant Resource Centre).

Whilst the Pilot evaluation indicated that, in general, the outcomes were positive there were a number of significant barriers, most notably time, varying expectations and questionable targeting. In particular, achieving 'structural change in food provision across the Nepean region' was an unrealistic expectation in the resource context (six months, three days per week). A focus on 'outcomes' in some ways runs counter to the very notion of a pilot, which involves trial and error. It is also clear from this Pilot that NESB access or bi-lingual worker initiatives require a thorough understanding of the specific nature of the 'target' community. This understanding then enables a tailoring of specific strategies and approaches. This important needs-assessment and tailoring would have most usefully been done prior to the commencement of the six-month pilot.

Pilot Project 4:

Create a particular NESB food supply. The Nepean NESB Food Services Development Project will assist a supplier to focus on one or two ethno-specific cuisine. Food services will place these items into the general menu and promote it to all its clients regardless of their background. The targeted cuisine and the bilingual workers from the pilot project 1 will be from the same cultural background to supplement each other. The project will evaluate and document:

- (a) How many other clients or cultures choose to use the food.
- (b) Targeted groups' usage of ethno specific food service (from pilot project 3).
- (c) Alternatives the client has to replace food service.

This pilot proved to be one of the most difficult and revealing of the many innovative approaches trialed by the Project. The Pilot sought to create a sustainable supply of ethnic meals for both clients and food services. In seeking to establish this Pilot, the Project Worker visited and contacted numerous potential cultural meal suppliers in order to reach agreement about providing cultural meals to food services in the Nepean region. However the effort proved to be fruitless. Cultural meal service is not merely a supply issue as people previously thought. All the visited meal suppliers possessed the capacity to produce the cultural meals subject to regular orders. Though meal delivery remains an issue, the management of demand is the critical factor. For suppliers, the profit margin is the basic principle they consider in developing new business. Some meal suppliers showed strong interest in taking part in the pilot.

Emu Plains Corrective Services (Prison) kitchen was approached to find the possibility of trial production of the cultural meals. However, at the time the prison kitchen operation was under review. The prison kitchen outside the prison compound only produced meals for two local Meals on Wheels services, not for the inmates. The kitchen was operated under two paid prison staff and the rest were inmates who were paid token wages. The kitchen could survive the cost of the production only because of the low cost wages. Since the prison authority did not intend to expand its production to cultural meals, the Project Worker sought an alternative supplier – Hawkesbury Regional Hospital.

Hawkesbury Regional Hospital has been providing the meals for Hawkesbury Meals on Wheels for the past thirty-five years. Its kitchen has potential production capacity of an extra two hundred meals, apart from the current arrangement. The Hawkesbury Hospital was very interested in the cultural meals production for community clients who were Meals on Wheels clients. Again, there were two critical conditions before the production could start - regular demand and delivery arrangements. The hospital kitchen did not have staff on call to make ad hoc cultural orders. The kitchen needed relatively stable demand before the staff could be recruited. Delivery arrangements and cost remained an issue to be resolved.

Though this pilot did not proceed as planned, it revealed a willingness among suppliers to provide cultural meals. The Project Worker worked closely with Baptist Community Services Catering Service, Master Catering, Mei Mei Food and other suppliers to solve the demand and delivery obstacles. In the long run, a centrally located cultural meals production, storage and delivery system is likely to be a more efficient solution.

Working in partnership with Mei Mei Foods and Nepean Food Services, the Multicultural Meal Delivery Trial eventually took place (started on 18th March 2004 and delivery concluded on 19th April 2004). The pilot was evaluated via questionnaire at the end of April 2004. Once underway, the trial went to plan and received positive feedback. The participating clients were happy to receive greater choice in food and the food service provider expressed willingness to continue working with Mei Mei after the trial.

The important elements in the success of this Pilot were:

- Available choice for clients;
- An acceptable meal price;
- Free delivery by supplier (not only for the trial but for future provision) ; and
- Willingness of the service provider.

Pilot Project 5

A centre-based meal project which will involve transporting clients to a centre for a meal (The meal will be culturally appropriate to the group's needs).

At the time of development of Pilot projects few food services were providing centre-based meals. The primary service model was for the delivery of meals to people's own homes. There was an increasing awareness, however, of the need for social contact among the HACC target group. This Pilot was developed as a means of increasing awareness and comfort levels of NESB clients with food services as well as meeting the social needs of isolated older NESB people. Over the time of the Project, however, there was a widespread adoption of centre-based meals among the food services network. As a result, the Pilot required some initial involvement from the Project Worker but soon became part of 'normal' service delivery for food services across the region. All food services in the region now provide centre-based meals with a focus on NESB communities.

The Project Worker assisted in the establishing links between the Filipino community and Blacktown Meals on Wheels. The key to the success of this centre-based meals initiative was the enthusiasm and involvement of a Filipino community worker who had good links into the community in the area. With the liaison of the Project Worker, a monthly centre-based meal was provided for the Filipino community. This community worker advertised, recruited and supported clients to participate. Meals were cooked on site with the involvement of members of the Filipino community and food services volunteers. Transport was provided to assist access and the meal was attended by some forty people regularly.

The initiative has run successfully for the past three years, providing an opportunity for older Filipino people to meet socially, have a nutritious and authentic meal as well as increase the opportunities for networking with other services. Interestingly, over time the involvement and support required by the Food Service has declined markedly. The Filipino community now feels comfortable in using the Centre, increasing the likelihood of individuals using the meal delivery service in the future. From a food perspective, there has been a change over time with the Filipino clients now asking for 'Australian' meals with some slight variations (rice replacing potatoes with fish or chicken as the meat). This shows that slight variation can increase the acceptability and suitability of meals provided by Food Services. 'Authentic' meals may be an important facilitator of access; however, over time it is evident that people's food tastes have much in common. This has been an important lesson for the Food Services as it makes meeting the needs of NESB clients less daunting and more achievable.

Pilot Project 6

NESB volunteers cooking or doing the preparation for the cooking at clients homes. Nepean NESB Food Services Development Project will assist a food service in recruiting volunteers from various cultural backgrounds and training them to cook in client's homes. The relevant health and occupational health and safety regulations will be strictly followed.

The Home Cooking Project was devised to provide an alternative option to mainstream meals for NESB clients and overcome the issues of irregular supply of cultural meals. Traditionally, it has been beyond the capability of a kitchen to cater for the needs of one or two individuals. The aim of the Home Cooking pilot was to meet the needs of those people who do not generate sufficient demand for mass meal production. For example, if two or three Italian or German clients intend to acquire food services and the service provider does not have the appropriate meals for these clients, Home Cooking might be worth considering as a possible option.

It took nearly four months to complete the Home Cooking Pilot Project. There were seven participants as service recipients and eight participants as volunteers. Fourteen participants were from culturally and linguistically diverse background. Cultural backgrounds included: German, Iranian, Dutch, Filipino, Spanish and Chinese. Of all the participants, one client had used a Food Service for a short period of time in the past. However, all the participants were aware of the existence of Food Services with differing perceptions. Clients either lived alone or with a partner. Some had family members or relatives living in Sydney. One of the clients was ready to go to hospital for surgery. One client dropped out of the Pilot Project half way, because family members were not comfortable about visiting volunteers. Clients were willing to provide information needed by service providers. The volunteers performed the shopping and home cooking duties for the clients twice a week for a period of six weeks. Volunteers were encouraged to sit down with clients, share conversation and/or meals if invited.

Clients were recruited via flyers, local newspapers, church services and community events. Volunteers were expected to have basic cooking knowledge and possess empathy with older people. A second language was preferred and ideally the volunteer would speak the same language as the client. A driver's licence and access to a car were essential.

Matching of the appropriate volunteer to the particular client was the most challenging task. The pilot required volunteers to have contact and involvement with clients. Discussion of menus, shopping for ingredients and cooking at client's home for up to one and a half hours for each visit requires a much higher level of volunteer involvement than a simple meal delivery. For most clients, the duration of the home cooking activity appeared to be a valuable time. The clients were not only fed, but human contact with the outside world was also maintained.

It was preferable that both the community group leader and a member of the client's family were present during the initial home visit. Apart from the regular volunteer screening process, language, cultural, religion, personal attributes and interests, the duration of commitment was also factored into the matching process.

Clients were interviewed at the commencement and throughout the pilot. Most clients praised the 'service' highly and would like to use this service if it was available. Three clients didn't like the suggestion that one person does both the cleaning and cooking together, because they would be too busy to talk to clients. The personal interaction was stated as a reason for wishing the program to continue beyond the trial.

Some clients were extremely cautious about who was coming to their home to cook. Privacy was a major concern. When asked whether an alternative volunteer could come to perform the same duty in their homes, two clients firmly refused. Other clients wanted to talk to the volunteers first before agreeing to the service or the volunteer.

When asked if the cost of meals was acceptable for the future, four clients considered the cost was within their budget. As the clients saw the meals cooked in their own kitchens, there was no sense of profit-making by somebody else. Two clients thought that \$6.00 for one meal was a little bit expensive. If they needed two meals per day for five days, it would be \$60.00 a week which would be a significant part of their pension.

Volunteers enjoyed cooking for clients and they gained satisfaction from their involvement. Two volunteers reported that they were invited to go to clients' homes for a dinner after completing the project. One volunteer who used to do Meals on Wheels delivery commented:

Home cooking is a more challenging task than meal delivery. The longer duration of staying at a client's place requires the volunteer to show more caring and concern. The client treats me like a family member.

The Home Cooking Pilot tested the feasibility of food service provision to the needs of NESB individual clients. Similar to any other means of service delivery, it has its own pros and cons. However, home cooking could be an appropriate means of providing food service to people with special needs where these needs may not be met by traditional food service delivery. The Pilot made the following recommendations:

- Budgeting should take account of both volunteer's reimbursements cost and client affordability.
- The home cooking service is recommended for small number of clients due to the capability and capacity of local food services.
- Recruitment of clients and volunteers should start from existing non-English speaking background groups in which both the 'clients' and the 'volunteers' may already know each other.
- Matching clients and volunteers requires consideration of language, personality, and length of commitment required from the volunteer and the client.
- The application of the findings from this project in another area should take the local demographic and geographic factors into consideration. There is no single approach that could be treated as universal.
- Cultural meal provision to NESB communities has remained as both policy and service issue for many years. Many studies and trials have been conducted in the past and recommendations made. An holistic approach is needed to co-ordinate the regional efforts in order to tackle this issue. It is a challenging task which can be fulfilled.

Key challenges to providing food services to culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the Nepean

During Project development, consultation phases and implementation a number of key barriers to the provision of food services to NESB communities were identified. Whilst there may be differences in expression and weighting, there appears to have been considerable agreement about the multi-layered nature of the problem. Broadly, these challenges can be described as:

- Supply issues;
- Demand issues; and
- Organisational culture of Food Services.

The strategies of the Project all attempted in some way to address one or more of these key challenges. These key challenges, difficult to change in isolation, are significantly more complex as they interact. Supply of culturally diverse foods is viewed as not viable due to the low demand, however, demand is restricted by the lack of foods that might attract more NESB participation. One or all of these key challenges were raised throughout the Project and the evaluation by stakeholders for explaining the seeming lack of progress on improving NESB client usage of Food Services.

Supply issues

In early planning consultations and throughout the Project there was consistent concern about the lack of 'authentic' meal suppliers. The main suppliers for Nepean-based food services (Baptist Community Services Catering, Masters Catering, Emu Plains Corrective Services and Hawkesbury Hospital) predominantly supplied 'traditional Australian' menus. During the Local Area Planning forums it was identified that 'there is no supplier for authentic cultural food. Where there are suppliers, the minimum amount of food that has to be ordered is too much for Meals on Wheels services'. Concern was expressed about the cost and lack of delivery provided by those suppliers that did provide less traditional foods.

The Project developed a number of strategies aimed at addressing supply issues, including establishing a close working relationship with suppliers to support their provision of 'authentic meals'. Both the Project Worker and the Arabic Bi-lingual worker took a very hands-on approach preparing meals with both Food Service volunteers and catering suppliers. Feedback from suppliers indicates that they valued this assistance, particularly in relation to ingredients. One supplier, for example, was using beef as the meat in middle-eastern food when it is more traditional and authentic to use lamb. The use of authentic spices and herbs was also assisted by the Project.

From a supplier perspective, the supply of meals must be financially viable. There are limited ethnic meals suppliers and they tend to explore their markets in other areas rather than the community service field. There are few incentives for them to meet the needs of lower income clients. Those ethnic meals suppliers that exist are located at a distance from the Nepean region and most will not deliver. This creates a major barrier for food services in relation to the transportation of food stuffs, in terms of both health regulations and costs.

Despite these obstacles, however, the Project successfully showed that supply issues alone **do not** prevent food services from providing for NESB clients. Whilst time consuming, the Project successfully worked in partnership with a range of suppliers. This is to be expected given the lack of pre-existing relations between NESB food suppliers and food services. This investment of time is similar to that of any new partnership. What is required is an appreciation of the motivations, expectations and abilities of each partner. Key is the willingness to find consensus and creatively problem-solve.

Demand issues

The Project also sought to address demand issues identified through Local Area Planning, consumer consultations and implementation. Some Food Service providers indicated they did not provide services to NESB clients as they did not want or need these services. This lack of demand arose from a complex array of factors, including: language; lack of awareness; settlement patterns; and, cultural traditions. Additionally, the Project identified a number of beliefs held by NESB communities that hindered access to Food Services. Some of the factors impacting on demand included:

- Language difficulties in accessing Food Services. Clients with poor English skills were uncomfortable or unable to negotiate a service. One participant in a pilot project, for example, wished to change delivery times for a meal however was unable to communicate with the Food Service over the phone.
- Many NESB clients come from countries that have limited or no social services so are unfamiliar with the services offered by Food Services. There was a startling lack of knowledge of Food Services among participants in the pilot projects.
- Numerous stereotypes were evident among participants in consultations and pilots effectively acting as a barrier to NESB clients. Some included: NESB people don't like frozen meals; NESB people look after each other so they don't need our services; we don't have any NESB residents; our service is open to everyone, they don't ask so they don't need it.
- Some individuals perceived utilising a service (or outside help) as losing your independence or an admission of family not caring for its members. The Project confirmed previous research that the non-English speaking background community tends to hold back from accessing community services. Feedback from participants in pilots indicated that the acceptance of community assistance was seen as losing face in front of neighbours, friends and relatives. Many participants felt that the government had a duty to maintain the standard of living and family had the obligations to look after their daily needs.
- In the Nepean region scattered settlement patterns in some areas increase the social isolation faced by NESB groups. This limited their involvement in community activities and awareness of 'mainstream' services. Scattered settlement patterns also raised the difficulty for food services of finding a meal acceptable to the whole community.

There are over two hundred ethnic groups that live in NSW with even further differences in each ethnic group making it impossible to cater for this diversity.

- Some groups and clients have a preconceived idea that Food Services' food does not taste good, is not fresh, hygienic or authentic. In some cases this was based on previous bad experience. Some held concerns that the social rituals of food preparation are not addressed by Food Services. Many NESB people indicated Food Services are for emergencies only and did not consider it for respite.

The Project revealed that generating demand will require further work with NESB communities, Food Services (management committee, staff and volunteers) and suppliers (in relation to the provision of cultural foods). It is not simply a matter of translating information about Food Services, although this would be a useful strategy. What appears to be needed is a comprehensive plan that addresses all factors that limit demand. As mentioned above, suppliers require regular demand. Given the demographics of the region there would appear to be cross-regional cooperation opportunities in a number of widely available cultural food types (such as Italian, Greek, Spanish, Filipino, Arabic). Although individual Food Services may not have sufficient demand for, say, Italian across the region there would appear to be significant potential demand.

Another interesting way of generating demand is the provision of centre-based ethnic meals. Blacktown Meals on Wheels service, for example, has operated a highly successful centre-based meals service for the Filipino community for some time. Centre-based meals provide a bridge between the service and the community, creating greater understanding and trust, and increasing the likelihood of members of the community approaching the service for assistance

in the future. This has contributed to a very simply menu change (replacing potatoes with rice) that makes meal provision more culturally appropriate and accessible.

Organisational issues for Food Service providers

The Project identified a range of organisational issues facing Food Service providers in Nepean. These issues related to the way the organisation operated, how it managed its funds as well as attitudes of staff and volunteers. The resource limitations of Food Service providers need to be acknowledged. Very small amounts of funds are available to Food Services and they use these funds efficiently. Whilst translations and interpreting are an obvious cost, attendance at migrant interagencies and the formation of relationships with ethnic communities also are a cost to be borne by organisations. Cross-cultural training of management committee members, staff and volunteers is also costly and needs to be ongoing.

The resource environment, however, does not provide an excuse for poor practice. The Project revealed that some Food Service providers lacked basic knowledge of the demographics of their catchment area. Providing services to those most in need (such as those isolated by language) was not viewed as a priority among some providers, in direct contradiction of the HACCC standards. Generally, there was a sense that providing services to NESB clients was 'too difficult', took too long, and cost too much. Some hid behind the cloak of 'diversity' – there are too many differences to cater for everyone – to cater only for the mainstream. Like many other mainstream services faced with the challenge of cultural diversity, some Food Service providers argued that they were already over-stretched and under-resourced so were powerless to do anything about NESB access.

Among Food Service providers in the Nepean the Project found low levels of NESB people in the management, paid staff and volunteers. Additionally, there were low levels of networking and consultation among ethnic communities and service providers. There was a lack of understanding that building trust and change does not occur overnight.

As mentioned previously, NESB access to Food Services has been a policy priority for some twenty years. As such this Project was one of numerous strategies aimed at improving Food Service provision to NESB clients. The hostility among Food Service providers towards the Project Worker and the Project more generally suggests that it will remain a policy priority for some time.

Conclusion and recommendations

From an evaluation perspective, it would be hoped that over the four year life of this Project there would have been evidence of a decrease in barriers that inhibit access. The success of some of the Pilot innovative approaches indicates that to some extent the Project has achieved this. There is greater capacity in the service system (providers and suppliers) to respond to the needs of NESB clients, and greater awareness and willingness among NESB communities to use Food Services. The Project has sought to create greater linkages between key stakeholders (clients, NESB communities and organisations, Food Services and suppliers). Follow-up work is urgently needed to ensure the initial steps taken by the Project are furthered. If a healthy, inclusive, community is to become embedded in our social contexts and institutions significant further work is required at the individual, group, organisation, service network and community level.

The following recommendations are made in relation to the Forum:

- That the Forum continue its active role in facilitating networks and partnership projects between development and direct service organisations.
- That the Forum continue to lobby for improved access to Food Services for NESB communities and additional funding for Food Services.
- That a written partnership agreement be negotiated by Forum with future partners, detailing resource commitment, expectations, reporting, line-management, complaints procedure and potential outcomes.
- The following recommendations are made in relation to NESB access to Food Services:
 - That the Department audit all Food Services in relation to NESB clients and the HACCC Standards.
 - That the Department provide earmarked funding for NESB access initiatives for Food Services, with a particular focus on addressing identified cultural competency gaps.
 - That the NSW Meals on Wheels Association develop an action plan to enhance the cultural competency of Food Service providers.
 - That centre-based meals be used as a strategy to enhance access to Food Services, break down isolation and build community networks.
 - That Home Cooking Projects be implemented in conjunction with migrant community organisations as an innovative way of extending Food Services and addressing social isolation.
 - That Food Services pro-actively build networks with NESB organisations and groups.
 - That bi-lingual staff in other services proactively establish closer working relationships with Food Services.

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