

# SALDHIG

**TOWARDS A SAFE, STRONG  
AND RESILIENT SOMALI  
COMMUNITY IN BANYULE**

A partnership project that delivered  
an innovative community safety  
and crime prevention initiative



*The SALDHIG Diverse  
Communities project was  
funded by the Victorian  
Government's Community  
Crime Prevention Program*





Banyule City Council is proud to acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as Traditional Custodians of the land and we pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past, present and emerging, who have resided in the area and have been an integral part of the region's history.

Banyule City Council endorses the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full and accepts the invitation to walk with First Nations peoples, to a better future for us all.

Our community is made up of diverse cultures, beliefs, abilities, bodies, sexualities, ages and genders. We are committed to access, equity, participation and rights for everyone; principles which empower, foster harmony and increase the wellbeing of an inclusive community.

## INTRODUCTION

The Banyule City Council SALDHIG project 'Towards a Safe, Strong and Resilient Somali Community in Banyule' was funded in 2021-2023 through a \$229,600 grant as part of the Crime Prevention Innovation Fund through the Victorian Department of Justice and Community Safety. The partnership project was delivered and evaluated as an innovative community safety and crime prevention initiative. Banyule City Council contributed in-kind funding to support the delivery of the program throughout the funding period.



### PROJECT SUMMARY

To address concerns around youth disengagement and limited supports for the Somali-Australian community in Banyule, it was identified by community leaders that Banyule City Council could take a lead in bringing together key services to address the need areas.

The SALDHIG project was a community co-designed, innovative and inclusive project that provided significant support to Banyule's large Somali-Australian community. The project was embedded in the Youth Services Team of Banyule City Council, where a team of Somali-Australian community workers were engaged to undertake initiatives aimed at **capacity building, increasing access and improving health and wellbeing outcomes** for the local Somali-Australian community.

### INTENTION

SALDHIG was conceived as a multi-generational project with a focus on young people and families, that aimed to address barriers that impact inclusion and wellbeing outcomes. Somali-Australian community members were supported to increase service access, participation and social inclusion to enable a greater sense of connection to organisations and the broader community.

The project worked to address concerns around key issues, including mental health, intergenerational relationships, racism, drug and alcohol use, disengagement, anti-social behaviour, education and employment, while increasing cultural knowledge in the broader community. SALDHIG also supported the community to become better informed on traditionally taboo topics.

The aim of the SALDHIG project was to plan and deliver high-quality, evidenced-informed, strengths-based and community-led capacity building activities, support programs, workshops and events for parents, carers and families, with a specific focus on culturally-diverse and Somali-Australian community members. By providing short-term focused support to families and young people SALDHIG aimed to increase the capacity of parents and families, to bridge the cultural divide between home and community life.



## KEY THEMES



1 Somali-Australian youth require meaningful, interest-based recreation and social opportunities to disrupt cycles of family, school and community disengagement



2 Somali-Australian youth seek to contribute to social cohesion within families, the Somali community and the broader Banyule community



3 Somali-Australian families require knowledge and skills to support their young people to navigate the social challenges and positively contribute to the community; and seek to reduce the barriers to accessing specialist services to address prevailing youth health and wellbeing issues



4 Somali-Australian young people seek support to develop employment skills and secure meaningful work



5 Developing cultural competence within workplaces and services will address unconscious bias and discrimination against Somali-Australians

## DEVELOPMENT

The project was informed by deliberative engagement with Somali-Australian young people and families who live or spend time within the Banyule region, alongside consultation with cultural leaders, professionals and organisations who provide community services within the region. The project was also informed and underpinned by the 2041 Banyule Community Vision process.

The project was undertaken using a co-design methodology and a strong partnerships model, that included guidance from an Advisory Group of key stakeholders who met regularly to inform and support the project.

The community identified that rather than creating new services for Somali-Australian residents, it was imperative for Council to instead contribute to sustainable outcomes that build the capacity and knowledge of local professionals, so that pre-existing services could be made more accessible and culturally inclusive.

*Not only does it require a village to raise a child, it takes the same village to address the root causes of community safety and orientate Somali-Australian youth towards positive life trajectories*





The project took on a multi-faceted approach that was based on the following key categories:



### Capacity Building for Families

- ▶ Supporting parents/carers to support the young people in their lives
- ▶ Developing knowledge in parents/carers to intervene early if concerned about young people
- ▶ Exploring the challenges of raising children when living in a new country
- ▶ Building connections with services to increase ongoing supports for families



### Community Celebrations and Recreation Activities

- ▶ Providing opportunities for people to utilise public spaces
- ▶ Building inter-community trust and addressing conflict
- ▶ Providing opportunities for celebrating and sharing culture
- ▶ Affordable events and programs for families



### Life and Employment Skill Development

- ▶ Supporting young people to overcome barriers to education and employment
- ▶ Advocating for the needs of local young people regarding education and employment
- ▶ Supporting young people to develop skills to support their friends and family



### Community Advocacy

- ▶ Eid Celebrations hosted within Council
- ▶ Increasing community connection
- ▶ Educating the broader community about cultural diversity and religion
- ▶ Advocating at a local and State government level



### Cultural Competency Training

- ▶ Increasing accessibility and inclusion in local services
- ▶ Developing the professional knowledge and skills of local workers
- ▶ Sharing the importance of representation to encourage greater diversity amongst Staff in local organisations

## THE PROJECT TEAM

An experienced team of Somali-Australian community and youth workers led the project over the two-year period.



### Sadia Ali (Family Support Officer)

Sadia worked predominantly with Somali-Australian young women, carers, parents and families. Sadia provided a range of services and programs that identified emerging community needs, including culturally appropriate sessions on drug and alcohol support, mental health knowledge and positive parenting strategies targeting Somali-Australian families. Sadia led training initiatives focused on Somali culture, so that local organisations could work to increase access and better understand the needs of diverse communities in the Banyule region.



### Saeed Ahmed (Youth Programs Officer)

Saeed worked predominantly with Somali-Australian young men. Saeed provided a range of events, opportunities and programs for young men and was able to engage with young people and provide individual support and referrals assistance. Saeed also focused on inter-community cohesion and early intervention approaches. Saeed led training initiatives focused on the religion of Islam, so that local organisations could work to increase access and better understand the needs of diverse communities in the Banyule region.



### Mahamed Hassan Awl (Youth Programs Assistant)

Mahamed supported young people through a range of inclusive community events that focused on increasing access and celebrating culture. Mahamed led the social media and marketing of the project, which included creating educational resources that were shared with professionals and the wider community to increase their knowledge and understanding.



# PARTNERSHIPS

## THE DIVERSE COMMUNITIES ADVISORY GROUP (DCAG):

The DCAG involved a combination of 12 partner organisations, including several of the services who supported the initial funding application. The group was integral in assisting with ideas, partnerships, and community connections.

The DCAG representatives were able to identify areas of need for the community, advise on key project priorities and inform the SALDHIG team of emerging concerns. Key partners also partnered on the delivery of several events, programs and workshops that were key outcomes in the project.

<b>Banyule Community Health</b>	<b>Department of Education</b>	<b>Somali Australian Council of Victoria</b>	<b>Himilo Community Connect</b>
<b>Self Help Addiction Resource Centre (SHARC)</b>	<b>Victoria Police</b>	<b>Youth Support and Advocacy Service (YSAS)</b>	<b>Yarra Plenty Regional Libraries</b>
<b>Job Advocates Victoria</b>	<b>Banyule City Council – Community Safety</b>	<b>Spectrum</b>	<b>headspace Greensborough</b>

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The SALDHIG project created safe spaces for community involvement and supported positive impact through the delivery of a range of activities including culturally appropriate and gender-specific events. Objectives of these safe spaces included capacity building, intergenerational relationships, education, intercommunity connection, crime prevention and engagement with local services and facilities.

## CAPACITY BUILDING FOR FAMILIES

The project delivered numerous education programs targeted at young people and families. Many of these were codesigned and provided the opportunity to share thoughts on what service and programs needed to be provided for their community. A snapshot of these programs included:

-  **25** Attendees Mothers Alcohol & Other Drugs - 3-week Education Program
-  **19** Attendees Parents Supporting Parents Consultation Event
-  **43** Assisted Individual Case Support - people given support and referrals
-  **13** Attendees Teen Mental Health First Aid Training
-  **15** Attendees Tuning into Teens training – 6-week parenting program





## LIFE AND EMPLOYMENT SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Delivered in partnership with local services and Somali mentors. Young men met and engaged with mentors from their community to hear about how they overcame barriers to achieve successful careers.



30+ attendees at a Young Men's Employment Forum



43% young men received further individual support after the event



*It has been so great to get the community together and to help the youth find employment - these are our pathways to success.*

## COMMUNITY CELEBRATION AND RECREATION ACTIVITIES

A variety of Women's Only fitness and wellbeing events were hosted during the project, which focused on building intergenerational relationships, providing access to services and building the capacity of mothers & carers to support the young people in their lives and build protective factors for their families.



25

Attendees

Zumba & Yoga Event



960

Total Attendees

4 x Women's Only Swim Nights @ Watermarc



23

Attendees

Young Women's Eid Celebration



36

Attendees

Somali Women's Action Group (SWAG)

*The women's only slide is the most popular I would say. It's helped women connect better.*

*I personally know some who drive 45 minutes to enjoy themselves surrounded by culturally diverse people. Keep it up.*





## EVENTS FOR YOUNG MEN

Young men were supported with a range of events and workshops throughout the project, to better connect them with supports and increase their understanding of services that are available to them. A focus on intercommunity connection allowed the young men to decrease emerging intercommunity conflict and increase their positive engagement.



31

participants

Young Men's Eid Bowling



45

participants

Civic Engagement Workshop with Heidelberg Stars Soccer Club



7

participants

Youth Martial Arts Program



24

attendees

Intercommunity Cohesion Event



The events were so important to engage young people and connect them to a sense of culture.

## COMMUNITY ADVOCACY

A variety of events were delivered focusing on connecting families and young people with each other, local service providers and culture.



100

Attendees

Community BBQ for families at Malahang Park



150

Attendees

SALDHIG Eid Dinner (Project Celebration)



35

Attendees

Iftar & Islamic Museum Tour for young people



20

Attendees

Shaah & Sheeko community culture sharing event



35

Attendees

Intercommunity Networking Event for Somali-Australian professionals



130

Attendees

Young people's Movie Night



40

Attendees

Bowling Night for Young People



15

Attendees

Heritage Mural Event



114

Attendees

Eid Movie Night

The team at SALDHIG have worked exceptionally hard to get involved within the community and I thoroughly enjoyed every event in which I have been involved in.





# CULTURAL COMPETENCY TRAINING

The project team developed a comprehensive 2.5-hour Cultural Competency Training that was delivered for free to local services, to develop their ability to better support & work with the Somali-Australian community. The training was designed to be suitable for any service in the Banyule region who wished to build their understanding and connection to the Somali-Australian community. The demand for the Cultural Competency training surpassed expectations and has led to long lasting systemic change across the region with a large increase in service access and participation amongst Somali-Australians since the training was provided.

## PARTICIPATION



35

Local services and organisations



498

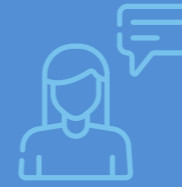
Local professionals completed the training

*It was a wonderful opportunity to gain insight into how to better connect with the Somali-Australian community and to provide culturally appropriate services.*

*Through completing the training I felt I had increased confidence to engage with the Somali community and a greater appreciation for Somali culture*

OUTCOMES	
Prayer rooms added to local venues, including libraries and leisure centres	Stronger connections to youth mental health services and an increase in outreach appointments in the Heidelberg West region
Increased trust and stronger relationships between the community and services	Stronger relationships between organisations and key Somali-Australian community leaders
Wudu wash facilities added to community spaces that have prayer rooms	An increase in Somali-Australian professionals being hired in local organisations

## COMMUNITY STORIES



### Fatha's Story

Somali-Australian Mother of five children  
Attended SALDHIG Drug & Alcohol Education Program for Mothers

*Gave me the knowledge and tools to step up my game in looking out for my family's well-being..... it let me give back to my community by making it safer and more informed.*

**Can you share a bit about yourself and what led you to seek out the SALDHIG's Drug and Alcohol Education Program?**

**Fatha:** I've called Australia home since the '90s and have always been active in my community. But as my kids were growing up, I realised I didn't know enough about the whole drugs and alcohol scene, especially what was going on with young Somali-Australians. So, I decided it was time to make sure my family and community were safe.

**How did you come across the program, and what made you decide to give it a try?**

**Fatha:** I heard about this program through the grapevine. They said it was a 6-week program led by SALDHIG & the Muslim Youth, Adult & Families team from My Centre, and the special thing was it respected our culture and religion. I was curious and figured maybe it could give me some real-world tools to deal with this stuff, so I thought, "Why not?"

**Can you share some of the big things you took away from the program?**

**Fatha:** I got a real eye-opener about the risks that come with drugs and alcohol. They showed me how it can mess up your body, your head, and your relationships. Plus, they shared some services that really respect our culture and religion.

**What about practical skills or tools?**

**Fatha:** It helped me fine-tune my talking skills, especially when it comes to chatting with my kids about the whole drugs and alcohol thing. Made it way less "I'm telling you what to do" and more about giving them the facts. They taught me how to spot signs. Plus, they had some awesome stress-busting tricks that I could use.

**It sounds like you didn't just learn new things, but you also connected with others. Can you tell us about that?**

**Fatha:** The program brought together parents and folks from the community who were all in the same boat. We formed this network. And now, I lead a women's support group within our community. It's a place where we support each other and make sure everyone feels like they belong.

**After finishing the program, how did you put what you'd learnt into action?**

**Fatha:** Oh, I got right to it. I started having these honest chats with my kids about the risks of using that stuff. I also took the lead in our women's group, sharing what I'd learned and making sure we spread the word in our community.







### Fatima's Story

Young Somali-Australian Woman  
Attended SALDHIG Buraanbur events for Woman

*This has helped Somali-Australian women like me to connect better with our parents. These events have helped us to celebrate our heritage and embrace our identities. It's helped us to strengthen families and nurture relationships across generations.*

#### Can you start by sharing a bit about your background and what led you on this unique journey?

**Fatima:** I'm an 18-year-old Somali-Australian woman, and my story is a bit of a blend – you see, I've got Somali roots, I've grown up in the vibrant Australian culture, and I hold dear to my Muslim faith. This fusion of identities sometimes creates quite a puzzle for me as I try to figure out who I am and how I fit in the world!

#### Can you tell us about the intergenerational conflict you've encountered?

**Fatima:** That's been quite a journey. You see, my parents hold on tightly to our Somali traditions, which I respect, but I've also been immersed in the diversity of Australia. This sometimes creates a gap between us, leading to misunderstandings and tensions. I'm eager to explore my own path, but my parents worry about me losing touch with our culture.

#### What role have intergenerational Buraanbur events played in your journey?

**Fatima:** These events have been nothing short of transformative. They're these beautiful celebrations of Somali culture where generations come together to celebrate, share stories, and connect on a deep level. These gatherings have fostered empathy and greater understanding

between me and my parents. They provide a safe space where young people can connect with their roots alongside our elders. For me, they've been a catalyst for change, helping me appreciate my heritage while navigating the unique challenges I face.

#### How did you use the insights from these events to mend the gap with your parents?

**Fatima:** I started having more heartfelt conversations with them, sharing my thoughts and aspirations. It was a way to meet in the middle, and through that we began to truly understand each other better.

#### Can you tell us more about how you're sharing your experiences with others?

**Fatima:** I recognised it was essential to share my journey and educate my peers about my unique identity. So, I got involved in cultural awareness events at school to break stereotypes & create a space where diverse backgrounds are celebrated.

#### Why do you believe intergenerational events are so important?

**Fatima:** These events are like bridges that bring generations closer together. They provide spaces to address intergenerational complexities in a positive way. They really support unity, understanding, and mutual growth.



### Highlight of Young Men's FIFA Intercommunity Cohesion event

*The participation of all young people involved was outstanding, and then the speeches at the end were truly heart-warming. I'm hoping that these interactions can continue in various ways down the track.*

- Chris, Team Leader Yarra Youth Services

The SALDHIG team undertook a unique approach to addressing concerns around intercommunity conflict, by providing opportunities for young men from neighbouring regions to meet and participate in programming and events together.

Banyule City Council teamed up with Yarra City Council to host an exciting opportunity for young men to participate in a FIFA Tournament.

The event allowed young people to meet, find common ground and learn more about each other in a safe environment. By supporting young people to focus on what they have in common, rather than their differences, the team were able to build connections that have positively impacted intercommunity relationships between young people & families from the two municipalities.





# PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

## KATE FROM YARRA PLENTY REGIONAL LIBRARY (SENIOR MANAGER ENGAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS)

**What was beneficial for your team after completing the SALDHIG Cultural Competency training?**

We had a deeper understanding of Somali culture straight away. We picked up that having a prayer space in the library would be important and useful, and found a space that could be converted straight away, so we were able to set that up the next day and it now sees regular use.

**What barriers have you previously faced as a service in connecting with the Somali-Australian local community?**

A lack of understanding and a lack of contacts in the community. And a lack of time and focus!

**What connections have been built for your service with the Somali-Australian community since completing the Cultural Competency training with SALDHIG?**

We received a Libraries for Health and Wellbeing Grant to engage with the Somali-Australian community and were able to employ two Somali-Australian staff. This made a massive difference. Mahamed and Aisha were made more welcome due to our staff's increased understanding after the training, and they were key in driving programming and engagement in the community. Our grant culminated in an art exhibition and Somali Cultural Festival.

## MELISSA FROM HEADSPACE GREENSBOROUGH (COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND AWARENESS TEAM LEADER)

**What connections have been built for your service with the Somali-Australian community since completing the Cultural Competency training with SALDHIG?**

We have built a good connection with a diverse local school, particularly with the wellbeing team. They have referred young people to us, and headspace has gone out to the school to present a presentation. headspace also collaborated with SALDHIG to run an art session for CALD young people to explore their cultural identity through an art mural. The main theme of this mural event was to share an individual experience of one's Heritage. Hosted by Art Psychotherapist Matilda Brown, young people were invited to express their artistic side through painting. headspace also attended the Cultural Festival in March 2023.

**Are there any upcoming or planned opportunities for your service to connect and work with the Somali-Australian community?**

headspace have organised to run a Tuning into Teens program in partnership with Banyule City Council for the Somali community. headspace

and Banyule City Council are also in the early stages of discussing with Art Psychotherapist Matilda Brown to run another art session – Art and Tea with young girls from the community and possible other opportunities might pop up for headspace to attend programs such as the local Somali Women's Action Group (SWAG).

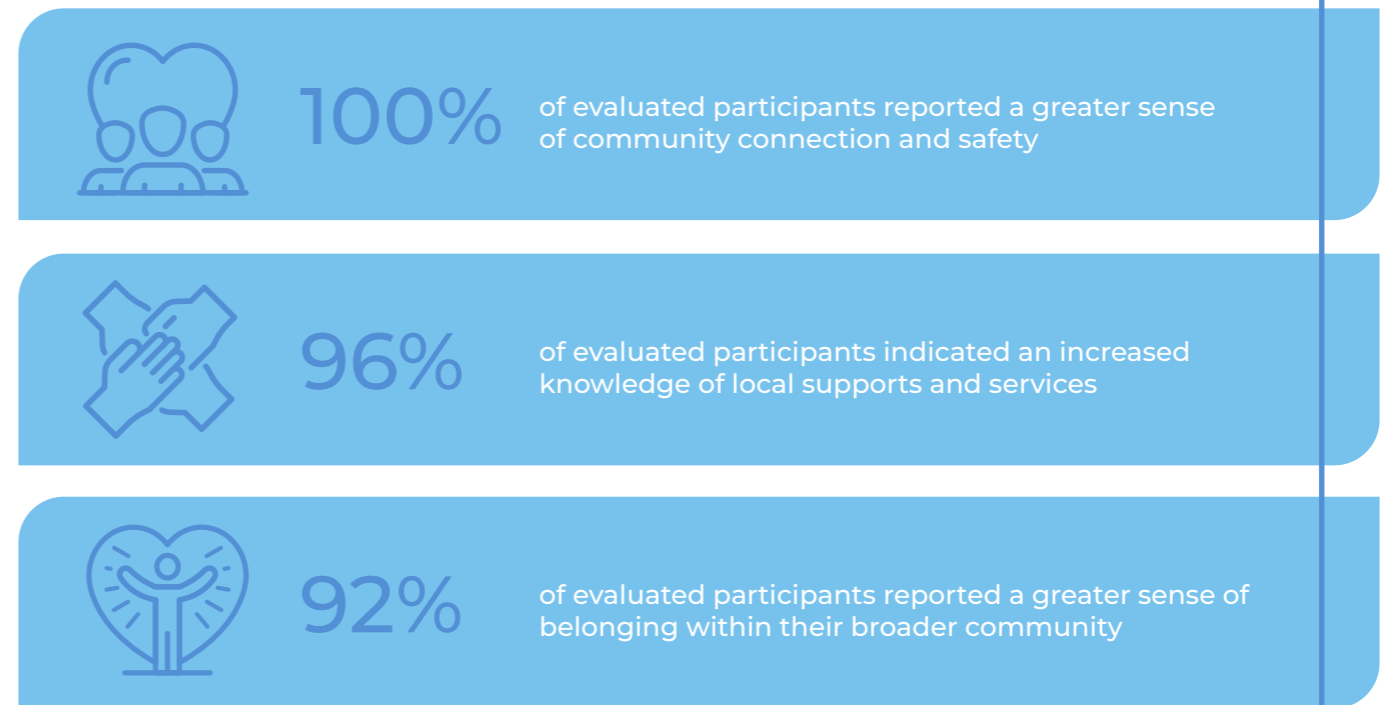
**Any other further comments or feedback you want to share**

I think it has been an absolute pleasure connecting and collaborating with the SALDHIG team. The team have made it so easy to collaborate and come up with some meaningful and purposeful events together to get better outcomes for the Somali community. It has also given headspace some insight and understanding about how to support the Somali community, what the community needs are and how we can best provide support. We understand flexibility, time and building on the relationship with community is important and having the connection with the team has really helped us connect better with the community.

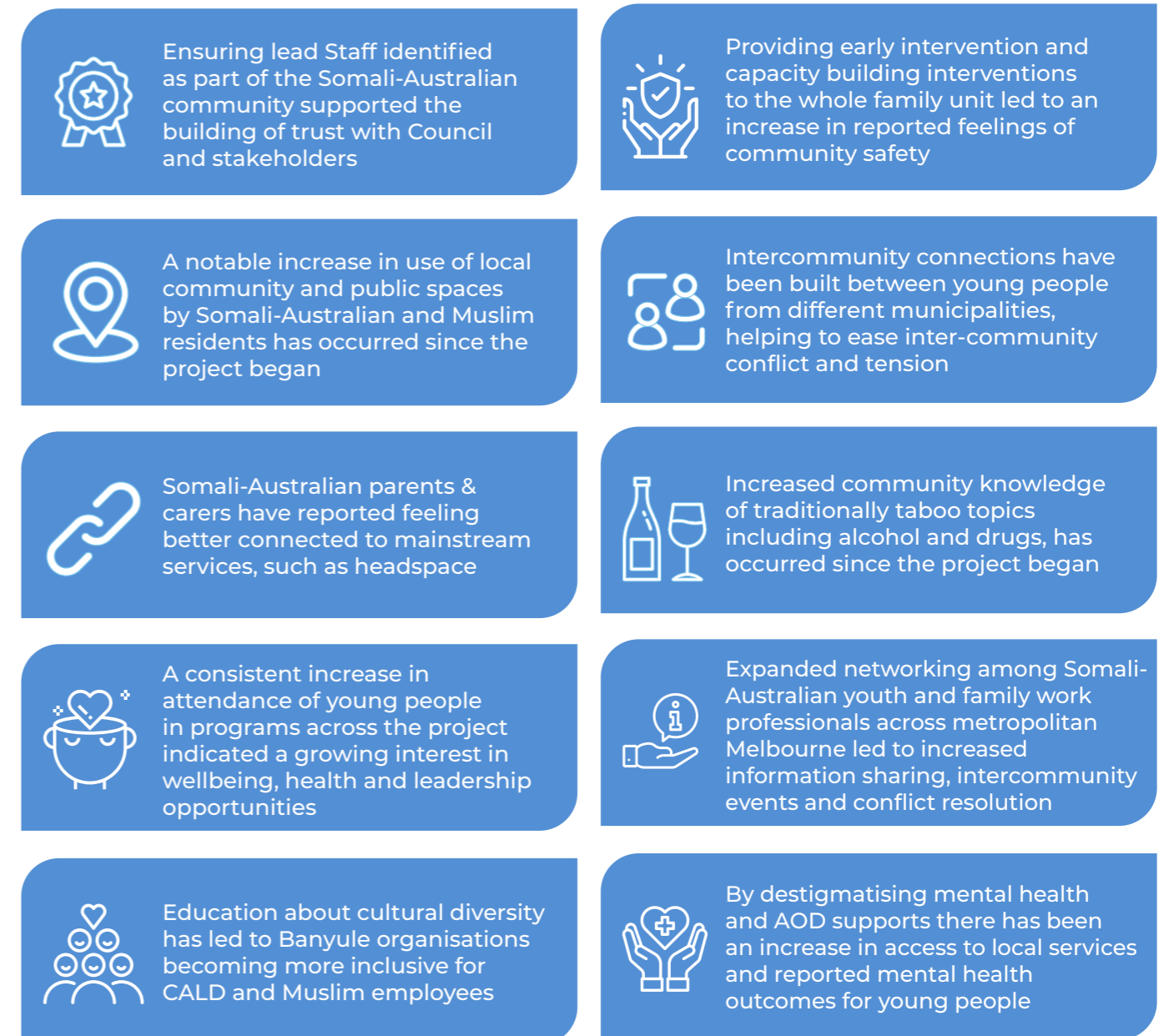




# COMMUNITY OUTCOMES & BENEFITS



## OTHER PROJECT BENEFITS





# CONCLUSION

The SALDHIG project, led by Somali-Australian professionals, has made a substantial and profound difference within the Banyule community. The project has used first-hand experience, expertise, and abilities to connect local government, services, and the community. The project has supported people of all ages and has seen significant growth in intergenerational relationships within the community.

Greater feelings of engagement and connection to the Somali-Australian community have been shared through feedback. The outcomes of the project have exceeded original expectations. Using a capacity building approach with an early intervention focus has ensured that many project elements are likely to continue to create sustainable impact. Engagement rates of Somali-Australian participants demonstrate the valuable connections established through this project.

## LEARNINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS

The SALDHIG project model is transferable to other regions and with other cultural groups. The project has succeeded due to it having the ability to pivot to meet the needs of the community throughout. SALDHIG has been an effective example of genuine community development work.

Some recommendations and learnings for other organisations hoping to undertake similar work include:

- ▶ Recruiting team members from within the CALD target community is essential.
- ▶ Providing structured support, coaching and mentorship to diverse team members to assist in overcoming systemic bureaucracy assisted in project success.
- ▶ Evaluation requires a well thought out cultural lens – standard evaluation approaches were not successful. Opportunities for facilitated meaningful discussion was highly valued within the community.
- ▶ Flexibility to respond to community demand enabled the team to address emerging needs and created community trust – testing event and programming ideas through focus groups contributed to an increased sense of community ownership.
- ▶ Using already established, evidence-based programs and adjusting delivery and content using a culturally relevant lens has led to significant engagement with community.
- ▶ Developing respectful and open partnerships at project establishment with both community led and religious organisations assisted in the success of this project. Their endorsement and insights assisted greatly in the development of community trust.
- ▶ It takes substantial time to build trust within community; future development work with diverse cultural groups should anticipate this time in planning to ensure genuine engagement and sustainable outcomes.
- ▶ Cultural competency training could be replicated by other organisations to assist in local services becoming more accessible by removing simple barriers.
- ▶ Early intervention work with young people needs to be funded ongoing. Once young people become exposed to the justice system it can be extremely difficult to connect with them. Therefore, ongoing funding to support prevention work with a younger cohort is crucial.
- ▶ Ongoing funding for capacity building work with families to increase parent/carer knowledge of mental health and crime issues is required to create a sustainable impact. Families increase their parenting skills and then share this throughout their community, if given ongoing opportunities for culturally-appropriate education.
- ▶ Allowing mental health and drug and alcohol services to have a presence within social and recreation events mitigated barriers and provided opportunities for community members to access information and support in a non-threatening way.

It is recommended that ongoing further funding be provided to SALDHIG in order to build on the many successes of the project and to address significant ongoing community need for early intervention

*The SALDHIG Diverse Communities project has been successful in many ways having been led by young persons from a diverse background. It is as a partnership approach to deal with crime, intercommunity conflict, drug taking, youth and family relationships and general safety. This is very important.*

*Such projects need to continue as part of a proactive and ongoing approach, this is key and helps to build trusting relationships and empowerment with community.*

Albert Fatileh  
Leading Senior Constable, Victoria Police

*These programs and events have been critical in supporting the community in addressing issues related to community safety, justice and parenting.*

*...the project has empowered Somali Australian youth to become leaders in their community, working towards building safer and more inclusive communities.*

*....it has demonstrated its effectiveness in improving community safety and justice.*

Sheikh Abdinur Weli  
Islamic Council of Victoria







## HOW TO CONTACT BANYULE COUNCIL

For all enquiries or information about any Council services:

**P** 9490 4222

**E** [enquiries@banyule.vic.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@banyule.vic.gov.au)

**W** [banyule.vic.gov.au](http://banyule.vic.gov.au)

**F** 9499 9475

### Postal Address:

PO Box 94, Greensborough 3088

### Council Service Centres:

Greensborough: Level 3, 1 Flintoff Street

Ivanhoe: 275 Upper Heidelberg Road

### Office Hours of Opening:

Greensborough: Monday – Friday 8.30am – 5pm

Ivanhoe: Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm

### Interpreter service:

If you need an interpreter, please contact TIS National on 131 450 and ask to be connected to Banyule Council on 9490 4222.

If you're hearing or speech is impaired, you can call us through the National Relay Service on 133 677 (TTY) or 1300 555 727 (ordinary handset) and ask for 9490 4222.

