

# ESTABLISHING STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS TO ENGAGE WITH MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES IN REGIONAL VICTORIA

## Summary

Improving food equity and increasing access to culturally appropriate food in the local government area (LGA) of Campaspe is an important objective of the Healthy Food Systems Implementation plan for the Loddon Mallee Public Health Unit (LMPHU). Multicultural communities across the Loddon Mallee are a priority for the LMPHU. Evidence from the literature suggests multicultural communities experience dietary shifts from traditional diets to western diets upon migration to higher socioeconomic countries like Australia, resulting in unhealthy dietary patterns and higher risk of non-communicable disease. Therefore, improving availability to culturally appropriate food for multicultural communities living across the Loddon Mallee region is important to supporting healthy eating in these communities.

Mapping of the food system in the Campaspe LGA demonstrates poor availability of culturally appropriate food. However, due to limited engagement opportunities little is known about the experiences of multicultural communities eating and purchasing behaviours in Campaspe. Other regional and local organisations also expressed the need to engage with multicultural communities to inform upcoming projects, however few engagement opportunities existed. Identification of alignment of strategic priorities across different regional and local stakeholders in Campaspe that expressed the need for greater engagement with multicultural communities resulted in the establishment of the Campaspe Multicultural Connections Network. This network allowed for development of two engagement events for multicultural communities and an ongoing partnership commitment to provide future events and resources.



**“Overall Zinda was a welcoming and inclusive environment and filled the need to connect with community”**

## Interventions

The need to increase engagement opportunities with multicultural communities in the Campaspe LGA was identified through initial insights and conversations with stakeholders such as Campaspe Shire Council and Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services (LCMS). LCMS highlighted the need to increase their footprint into Campaspe and build stakeholder partnerships to inform upcoming projects including the Zinda multicultural event for Echuca and dinner for the Tongala Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme workers in partnership with the LMPHU. These events would also be an important engagement opportunity for organisations and an opportunity for the LMPHU to support cultural food sharing and understand how to better improve food equity in the region.

To address this need, a new stakeholder partnership group titled the “Campaspe Multicultural Connections Network” was implemented by the prevention and population health team in the Murray sub-region of the LMPHU. The network aimed to connect local stakeholders together to support the design and delivery of engagement opportunities in the Campaspe LGA such as the Zinda multicultural event for Echuca. The network held regular meetings which included Campaspe Shire Council Community Wellbeing and Flood Recovery teams, LCMS, Healthy Loddon Campaspe, Womens Health Loddon Mallee, multicultural community members, a Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme recruitment agency, and community health-promotion representatives from Echuca Regional Health; Rochester and Elmore District Health Service; and Kyabram District Health Service.

LCMS was supported by the Campaspe Multicultural Connections Network to deliver the first Zinda Multicultural Festival in Echuca. The network provided advice on location, dates and times, contacts for multicultural community leaders, event requirements, communication and promotion of the event. Approximately 200 people attended the event, which included many cultural performances, activities and healthy catering from local Filipino women.

Additionally, local stakeholders including Campaspe Shire Council Flood Recovery Teams, LMPHU, Womens Health Loddon Mallee and Echuca Regional Health attended Zinda on the day to engage with community and provide service information, health promotion resources and giveaways including sunscreen; mosquito spray; masks; hand sanitiser; healthy eating, sexual and reproductive health and mental wellbeing resources.

**“We hope to have more times like this [Pacific Islander Dinner] in the future, and we hope that what has been started today is going to bring something big in the future as Pacific Island Brothers”**

The Campaspe Multicultural Connections network also supported LCMS to deliver an engagement opportunity with the Tongala Community Activity Centre, Kyabram District Health and LMPHU for the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme workers living in Tongala. The engagement was a Pacific island dinner and food forum which aimed to scope the healthy eating and physical activity needs of the workers. 25 male workers attended and shared a healthy Pacific islander dinner cooked by a community member and had a round table discussion with LMPHU, Campaspe Shire Council, LCMS, and Kyabram Health promotion on cultural food availability, access, utilisation and sports and recreation needs.



**“Zinda was a great opportunity to have conversations and develop a list of community contacts to support future work. We have already received a few calls from attendees enquiring about recreation services”**

**“Zinda was an excellent seeding event for Echuca which we can build on in the future”**

## Outcomes

The Campaspe Multicultural Connections network has achieved outcomes of improved partnership and systems connectedness by linking and engaging over 24 stakeholders and community from 8 organisations. The ongoing nature of the network ensures that there is a network of stakeholders to support future projects including the development of translated and culturally appropriate resources and other events.

The events supported by the network including the Zinda event and the Pacific Island Dinner and Food Forum resulted in 6 local and regional stakeholder organisations engaging with approximately 225 community members living in Campaspe to promote services and provide health promotion and prevention information.

The Zinda event provided Womens Health Loddon Mallee the opportunity to engage with multicultural women about their upcoming mental wellbeing session in Echuca and supported Campaspe Shire Council to make connections with key multicultural community leaders to inform future work including culturally and linguistically appropriate messaging for extreme weather events such as floods. The event also supported LCMS to build connections with multicultural leaders for future projects.

The Pacific Island Dinner and Food Forum engagement provided evidence for the LMPHU on how to improve food equity for multicultural communities in Campaspe and informed funded healthy eating and physical activity projects for the recreation team at Campaspe Shire Council and Healthy Loddon Campaspe for 2024/2025.

The LMPHU also provided the funding for the healthy cultural food prepared by multicultural communities and distributed 62 sunscreens, 49 insect repellents, 32 hand sanitisers, 88 facemasks, 50 lettuce and parsley seeds to grow at home and 14 pacific island cookbooks at both events.



## Project Learnings

A key lesson learnt from the Campaspe Multicultural Connections Network is the importance of identifying strategic alignment with other organisations to ensure a collective approach.

The Pacific Island dinner and food forum highlighted the importance of cultural food sharing as a means of creating discussion around food. The event also shed light on the lack of access to healthy and culturally appropriate food in Tongala resulting in community traveling over an hour to access affordable and culturally appropriate food. Continuing to provide regular cultural dinners for PALM scheme workers was identified by council and the Tongala Activity Center as an important initiative to support wellbeing.

The Zinda multicultural event demonstrated the importance of available translated resources for COVID-19, Influenza and other health protection and prevention messaging. Many of the current resources are not tailored to the specific cultures in Campaspe including Filipino, Samoan, Fijian and Karen communities. Furthermore, to increase uptake and reach of resources, QR codes may be useful for the community to access information after the event.