Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) Project 2020-2023

Project Evaluation Final Report – March 2023

AMPARO
Advocacy
inc

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Executive Summary

Background

AMPARO Advocacy (AMPARO) is a non-profit community organisation providing individual and systemic advocacy with, and on behalf of vulnerable people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds with disability. AMPARO is governed by a voluntary management committee, the majority of whom are people from CALD backgrounds with disability and is funded by the Queensland Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services. AMPARO is well respected across the multicultural and disability sectors as the only organisation in Queensland that specifically works to protect the human rights and wellbeing of vulnerable Queenslanders from CALD backgrounds with disability and has done so since 2004.

Most individuals that AMPARO works alongside, are from refugee backgrounds, with either they or their families having settled in Australia under the Refugee and Humanitarian Program. They are often experiencing multiple and complex layers of disadvantage with limited English proficiency and not accessing mainstream services or specialist disability services, including the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), to the levels they should be.

The NDIS is a complex specialist disability service system that can be extremely difficult to access and navigate, as the system does not respond effectively to the additional language and cultural needs of people from CALD backgrounds. Evidence for this was seen in the lower-than-expected CALD participation rates at the time of applying for this grant – rates which continue to remain low at the time of writing:

- In Queensland, a total of **5%** of participants were from a CALD background, however ABS data suggests this figure should be closer to **15%.**
- Nationally only **9%** of participants were from CALD background, however the NDIA suggests this should be closer to **18.9%** (Quarterly Report, March 2022).

In February 2020, AMPARO was successful in securing a 3-year Information, Linkages and Capacity Building grant to deliver both Individual and Organisational Capacity Building activities to people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their family members. An evaluation of AMPARO's ILC Project was undertaken in collaboration with The Hopkins Centre at Griffith University. The evaluation took a **mixed methods case study approach**, in which surveys, interviews, focus groups and a review of program data were utilised to engage with multiple perspectives on the capacity building work and its outcomes.

Individual Capacity Building (ICB)

The evaluation of AMPARO's Individual Capacity Building (ICB) work sought to explore how the project supports ICB in people from CALD backgrounds with disability. It found that AMPARO's ICB process is underpinned by values of social justice, human rights, the social model of disability and culturally responsive practice. **ICB has been implemented by Multicultural Engagement Workers (MEWs) who conducted extensive community outreach to identify and engage with people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families, explore their needs and goals, and deliver individual capacity building activities.** This work was underpinned by collaboration with stakeholders including community leaders, health and education services and disability service providers. It was supported by reflective practice and continuous improvement in response to emerging needs.

An analysis of participant demographics and feedback showed that **AMPARO's ICB Project was extremely effective in engaging with people from CALD backgrounds with disability, their families and support networks.** In particular, the project engaged effectively with people from refugee and humanitarian backgrounds and emerging language groups. The project had at the time of writing this report, worked with 220 people with disability (and at least 411 family members and friends) who were born in more than 35 different countries and spoke more than 24 different languages. 99% of participants were either born overseas in a country where the primary language spoken at home is not English or in Australia to parents whose preferred language is other than English. **The majority of participants in the ILC Program had arrived in Australia in the past 5 years, with 84% having arrived on a humanitarian visa, highlighting the significant levels of vulnerability of this cohort.**

The project was highly successful in building the capacity of people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families to understand and uphold their rights, particularly in relation to increased knowledge and confidence to exercise choice and control over disability supports. Qualitative feedback from people with disability and their families provided powerful testimony to the impact of the project in their lives, with participants commenting that AMPARO's support had enabled them to articulate their needs and goals, access the NDIS, implement their NDIS plans, speak up and ask questions, change services if they need to, and plan for the future. Participants commented that they are now participating in the community, including attending TAFE, finding employment, accessing public transport, connecting with neighbours and improving their English skills. **One participant commented: "I am no longer hiding in my room."**

The work encountered a range of challenges: including challenges to establishing and implementing the project in the context of COVID 19 and frequent lockdowns during the first 2 years of the project; regular changes to the availability of disability services and programs; systemic barriers to accessing and navigating the NDIS and other services; challenges in engaging Language Services (such as interpreters), particularly for smaller language groups; and challenges in working with participants with heightened vulnerability in highly complex situations. However, **positive outcomes were facilitated by prioritising building trust and rapport with people with disability and their families and developing a deep understanding of their needs and goals. This was underpinned by culturally responsive practices** such as engaging certified interpreters and meeting people in locations suitable to them, mostly in their homes. It was recognised that achieving positive outcomes required a significant investment of time, perseverance and collaboration with other stakeholders. The capacity of the MEWs to undertake this work was facilitated by a supportive and collaborative organisational culture.

Several learnings for AMPARO were identified, including placing a greater emphasis on community engagement, undertaking more creative goal setting with participants, and clarifying some tensions inherent in the role when working with such a vulnerable cohort. The evaluation also sets forward recommendations to the Department of Social Services to improve access and outcomes for people from CALD backgrounds with disability.

Organisational Capacity Building (OCB) Project

The Organisational Capacity Building (OCB) component of the project aimed to strengthen the Capacity of AMPARO as an organisation led by and for people with disability from CALD backgrounds. It did this by building the leadership, knowledge and skills of current and new members from CALD backgrounds with disability, to lead and govern AMPARO into the future. The OCB Project Evaluation engaged with project participants (known as Emerging Leaders) and staff in oversight roles via focus groups, surveys and event reports. The evaluation found that as a result of the project, **Emerging Leaders had greatly increased their understanding of AMPARO's vision, values, and work; were more actively participating in AMPARO's leadership activities; and had gained skills and confidence to speak up and share their story,** including representing AMPARO to external stakeholders. For example, through participating in the project, Emerging Leaders had joined AMPARO's Management Committee, contributed to strategic planning activities, participated in community consultations, and shared their story with AMPARO's local Member of Parliament. It was more difficult to assess the extent to which Emerging Leaders were engaging in peer support, though some Emerging Leaders raised this as a highlight for them. The evaluation identified that the final aim of the project - for Emerging Leaders to build ownership of their own ongoing leadership and development - had been less effective.

Challenges encountered by the project included the impacts of COVID-19 on holding face-to-face events; the availability of Emerging Leaders to attend all events; time required to facilitate participation in events; and building connection with AMPARO as an organisation, rather than with individual staff members. The OCB Staff Team also noted that an ongoing challenge is integrating the practices and outcomes of the OCB project into AMPARO's ongoing work. The success of the project was facilitated by its highly personal and responsive approach; actively addressing barriers to participation; and utilising participatory group processes. In particular, Emerging Leaders increased their understanding and gained confidence through the mutual sharing of personal stories.

The evaluation highlighted several learnings for AMPARO, including ways to increase participation by Emerging Leaders in events and to support Emerging Leaders to take ownership of their own leadership development. There were also learnings around incorporating OCB practices into AMPARO's ongoing work.

Section I: Background to the ILC Individual and Organisational Capacity Building Project 2020 - 2023

AMPARO has found through our extensive advocacy work with individuals over nearly 20 years, that Queenslanders from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families experience additional barriers to accessing important information, identifying and accessing mainstream and specialist disability supports understanding their rights, exercising choice and control and resolving concerns. Expectations among many for what a good or ordinary life can look like for people from CALD backgrounds with disability can be low. Issues of stigma and shame are often associated with mental health and disability and has meant that people are often isolated from their communities. Sometimes families can be reluctant to seek outside assistance because of this. Unfortunately, many of the systemic barriers experienced under the previous State disability service system have continued under the NDIS. AMPARO's experience is that the NDIS is a complex services system that is extremely difficult to navigate.

As a result, people from CALD backgrounds with disability fall through the gaps and miss out on effectively accessing essential services, including access to early intervention for their children and the NDIS. Furthermore, successive Federal and State Governments have failed to provide culturally appropriate information, education and engagement with individuals, families and communities to address these issues in any meaningful way.

In addition, AMPARO had found that people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families experience major barriers to participating in skill development and training that would build their capacity and confidence to take on leadership roles in community organisations. This was identified as relevant for AMPARO as an organisation that has a commitment in its Constitution to having the majority of the management committee, being people from CALD backgrounds with disability.

Prior to the current project, in late 2019, AMPARO was successful in securing a one-year Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Grant from 2019-2020 with the focus on Individual and Organisational Capacity Building.

The **Individual Capacity Building** component of that first project delivered culturally appropriate activities to individuals and their families to increase their understanding of disability, the rights of people with disability, expectations for a good life and capacity to engage with services. In recognition of issues such as stigma and language barriers, this project delivered activities through face-to-face information sessions people's homes and in small group sessions engaging bicultural workers and interpreters. Over 12 months, this project engaged 92 people with disability and a further 40 family members and friends of people with disability through these individual and small group sessions. Translated resources were also developed on the Rights of NDIS participants, and draft information on Common therapies and other terms and available Support Services.

The **Organisational Capacity Building** component of this same ILC project was an important opportunity for AMPARO to establish ongoing sustainable processes to ensure the organisation had skilled people from CALD backgrounds with disability who could participate in planning, decision making and governance of AMPARO Advocacy into the future. Following outreach and engagement with CALD communities to identify potential participants, AMPARO collaborated with the Community Resource Unit (CRU) and Speaking Up For You (SUFY), to develop and deliver workshops on contemporary disability practice, social independent advocacy, sharing stories, and governance and leadership. As a result of this work, 17 new people from CALD backgrounds with disability joined AMPARO as members, 2 of whom were elected to the Management Committee, and 9 new members committed to continuing their leadership development with AMPARO in the new ILC Project.

Part A: Individual Capacity Building (ICB) Project
February 2020 – February 2023

Project Overview

There were many positive outcomes from the ILC Project 2019 -2020, the basis of which formed a successful application to undertake a 3-year ILC Project from 2020 – 2023. This new ILC Project aimed to build on the success of the previous project, and enabled AMPARO to extend this work to other areas across Queensland.

The project was facilitated by AMPARO's Multicultural Engagement Coordinator based in Brisbane, who provided leadership and supervision to a team of part-time Multicultural Engagement Workers (MEWs) based in Brisbane, Toowoomba, Townsville, Cairns and Logan. The regions were selected because of the high numbers of humanitarian entrants settling in these areas. Between July 2018 and June 2020 there were the following number of new humanitarian arrivals in each region: Brisbane 1323; Logan/Gold Coast 1383; Toowoomba 1580; Townsville 576; and Cairns 456.

The Individual Capacity Building (ICB) Project aimed to deliver capacity building activities to people from CALD backgrounds with disability ("participants") and their family members to increase their:
- Knowledge of disability in the Australian context
- Understanding the rights of persons with disability and how to exercise their rights
- Expectations for what a good life can look like for people with disability
- Awareness of mainstream and specialist disability services and what steps are needed to access these services, including the NDIS
- Capacity to exercise choice and control when engaging with services, including the NDIS
- Confidence to exercise their rights and voice their concerns
- Connections with their peers.[1]

As identified in AMPARO's previous targeted outreach and ILC activities, many individuals and families from some CALD communities are reluctant to discuss issues related to disability and mental health in public settings and prefer information to be delivered face-to-face in their own homes. The complexity of information being relayed also meant onsite interpreters would be needed to ensure effective communication. It was envisaged that ILC activities would be delivered primarily through face-to-face information sessions in people's homes and in small group sessions engaging bicultural workers and interpreters.

The number of, and hours worked by, MEWs has varied over the course of the project and as at March 2023 included five personnel working a total of 130 hours per week and majority work from home. The role of the MEWs is described in detail in the 'Findings' section below, and included undertaking culturally appropriate community outreach and engagement; meeting with people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families in their homes; delivering tailored and culturally appropriate information, resources and capacity building activities; and undertaking networking, training, administrative and evaluative activities. The ICB team was supported by the AMPARO Manager, Multicultural Engagement Coordinator, a part-time Administrative Assistant, and an Evaluation Consultant.

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1   AMPARO Advocacy Inc, Part 1 Multicultural Engagement Workers Handbook, May 2021, p. 5.

Evaluation Design and Methodology

The Evaluation Design adopted a mixed methods case study approach to provide rich insight into the complexity of individual capacity building with people from CALD backgrounds with disability. This approach enabled the evaluation team to engage with multiple perspectives on the capacity building work and its outcomes, in its real-life context.[2]

The Evaluation was guided by the following Key Evaluation Questions:

1. **Explore how the project supports individual capacity building** in people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families.
2. **How effective was the ICB project in engaging people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families?**
3. **What effect did the ICB project have on the lives of people from CALD backgrounds with disability?**
4. **Identify and describe challenges and facilitators** that affect individual capacity building in people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families.

The data collection methods employed are outlined in the following table:

Stakeholder group	Data collection method
People with disability and their families	Surveys (n=112) Interviews (n=9)
Multicultural Engagement Workers	Interviews (n=5) Intake forms (n=220) Debrief forms (n=150)
ICB management team	Focus groups (n=3)
External stakeholders	Online survey in Jan 2023 (n=24)

Table 1: **Data collection methods**

The evaluation design sought to mitigate the limitations of each data collection method. For example, responses to the surveys for people with disability and their families were likely to have been influenced by the presence of the MEW (who, in most cases, administered the survey) and by cultural factors such as a lack of familiarity with the types of questions being asked. These limitations were countered by the interviews with people with disability and their families, which were conducted independently of the MEWs and allowed for clarification of questions and deep exploration of responses. Another limitation of the data collection was that Surveys, Intake Forms and Debrief Forms were each reviewed and updated at various points during the project to incorporate improvements, therefore data is not available for every question for every participant.

The evaluation was undertaken in collaboration with The Hopkins Centre at Griffith University. This report references findings made by The Hopkins Centre (noted in the footnotes) in addition to AMPARO's findings.

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2   AMPARO Advocacy, Inc. Evaluation Design, 2020, p. 2.

Findings

The evaluation findings are outlined in relation to each of the Key Evaluation Questions below.

1. Explore how the project supports Individual Capacity Building in people from CALD backgrounds with disability.

AMPARO's Individual Capacity Building (ICB) process can be understood as occurring across four stages: project design and establishment, beginning ICB, throughout ICB and ending ICB. These stages are underpinned by continuous reflection, evaluation, and improvement.

1.1 Project design and establishment

The initial phase of the ICB project was project design and establishment by the leadership team. This included:
- Identifying and clarifying the theories, values and approaches underpinning the project
- Consultation with stakeholders
- Setting project milestones
- Determining the scope of the Multicultural Engagement Worker (MEW) role
- Preparing onboarding and learning tools for MEWs
- Recruitment and induction of the MEWs

Values of social justice, human rights, the social model of disability, and culturally responsive practice were identified as central to AMPARO's ICB approach and were prioritised in recruitment and induction of staff.

1.2 Beginning Individual Capacity Building

The process for engaging people from CALD backgrounds with disability varied by region. In Brisbane and Logan, where AMPARO had extensive networks in place, many individuals accessed the ICB project through their existing connections with AMPARO, and via the National Community Connectors program (which AMPARO was one of the agencies funded to deliver) while it was operational in 2021. However, in Toowoomba, Townsville and Cairns, extensive community outreach was undertaken via settlement agencies, disability service providers, the Refugee Health service, schools, GPs and hospitals.

> *"Disability is a little more hidden, so that's part of our - the initial part of our role is to find the people who are not getting the services. That also means that I need to have contacts in the different communities and that's why I went to lots of meetings to start with, to let people know that I was here and that's what I was looking for and wanted to help with." (MEW Interview #1)*

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3   This conceptualisation is an adaptation of that presented in S Siyambalapitiya, S Ziegenfusz., and S McKenna, AMPARO Individual Capacity Building: A Qualitative Case Study Evaluation Final Report, The Hopkins Centre, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia, 2023, p. 14.

Top 11 sources of referral

Source	Value
Hospital	3
Community member/ leader/ bicultural worker	3
GP or community health/ allied health	4
Previous connection with AMPARO (e.g. past client)	5
School or other education provider	5
Targeted Outreach Project	6
Refugee Health Service	6
Disability service provider	9
Personal networks of worker	10
Settlement service	14
Community Connectors	17

Figure 1: Top 11 sources of referral *(Source: Intake Forms)*

AMPARO's ICB Project was undertaken by Multicultural Engagement Workers (MEWs), who worked collaboratively with people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families. Prior to meeting with individuals, MEWs gathered background demographic data, identified interpreter needs and preferences, and arranged a time and place to meet the person with disability and/or their family member/s. This information was gathered from referring agencies or from the person with disability and/or their family member, with an interpreter where necessary[4].

Typically, the initial appointment with an individual took place in their home (or another location if requested by the person with disability and/or their family member/s), with a face-to-face interpreter present (or with a phone or video interpreter, if a face-to-face interpreter is not available). The meeting was variously attended by the MEW, the person with disability, friends or family members, the referring agency (where relevant) and/or other close contacts. At this meeting the MEW typically completed the intake and consent forms, explained their role and conducted an informal assessment. This included identifying needs and existing supports and exploring goals and plans. Data from interviews with MEWs shows that people with disability and their family members were often unclear what supports (if any) they were currently receiving and may have been unsure what support the MEW could provide. The initial phase therefore often involved substantial investigation and engagement with stakeholders by the MEWs to develop a comprehensive understanding of the person's situation[5].

> *"Usually they're referred to me by somebody and then I go and visit them, talk to them, assess the situation and sometimes it then takes quite a bit of digging and talking to other people and finding out what services, where I can get clear information. Because quite often the participant doesn't really know themselves what's happening to them, or where they're up to. So I really need to know that before I start trying to help them to get services." (MEW Interview #1)*

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4 Siyambalapitiya, Ziegenfusz, and McKenna, p. 15.
5 Siyambalapitiya, Ziegenfusz, and McKenna, p. 16.

1.3 Throughout Individual Capacity Building

The evaluation conducted by The Hopkins Centre identified the following components to the ongoing work with people with disability and their families:

- **Regular contact with people with disability and their families**, including continuing to build trust, inviting participants to initiate contact at any time if they have problems, and meeting participants at home or in other locations as required to meet their goals
- **Collaborative goal setting and review** with people with disability and their families
- **Provision of information** tailored to the participant's goals and needs
- **Support to communicate with and navigate the NDIS and other services**, including supporting people with disability and their families to prepare for meetings, and attending meetings with them
- **Building skills** of people with disability and family members to access information and services and participate in the community
- **Networking, collaboration and teamwork**, including meeting with community leaders, service providers and other stakeholders, and collaboration with the AMPARO team.[6]

Participant's goals were often related to accessing and navigating the NDIS, obtaining employment, accessing education and achieving a comfortable life.[7]

MEWs reflected that building participants' understanding of their disability and the opportunities available to them in Australia was often a lengthy process:

"It's gradual. It's not something that today, they understand their situation, same day, they understand what they need, same day, they know where to find those services. So, it's just gradual. So, today you may take time making them understand where they are, what they face, because sometimes people don't know that they have issues. They know that they are born with a disability. That's all for them. They know they have a disability; they [think they] have no opportunities. That's their understanding because of their cultural background. So, for them to understand beyond what they have; they can have more, they can do more despite the disability..." (MEW Interview #5)

Similarly, supporting people to access mainstream and specialist disability services often involved significant time dedicated to building understanding and confidence, as well as actively supporting communication with a service provider:

"It's not only about referring a person to a specific service, if you refer a person to a specific service and you don't do any follow-up to make sure that they got what they need, sometimes it doesn't work." (MEW Interview #5)

MEWs noted that they were often involved in educating other stakeholders (including Support Coordinators, NDIS planners, and disability service providers) about how to work effectively with people from CALD backgrounds, especially regarding the right of people to access interpreting and translated information.

"Sometimes I guess that capacity building can be about you may find an amazing Support Coordinator, but they don't have a lot of experience with working with interpreters. So helping them to understand the importance of that. With some, a couple of times I've spoken to them about how to register with TIS for example, so they can use interpreters." (MEW Interview #3)

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6   Siyambalapitiya, Ziegenfusz, and McKenna, p. 16-17.
7   Siyambalapitiya, Ziegenfusz, and McKenna, p. 16.

Types of support provided to access the NDIS

Support to access and effectively participate in the NDIS was one of the most common types of work undertaken with participants. Overall, 65% of participants gained 'Access to the NDIS' and/or 'Access to services funded under the NDIS' through their participation in AMPARO's ICB project. The support provided by MEWs included increasing people's understanding of the benefits and opportunities that NDIS can provide, and how they can have real choice and control. Of those for whom this support was provided, the most common types of support we provided were 'Pre-planning', 'Collecting evidence to support Access Requests or Support to access Medical/ Allied Health assessments' and 'Plan implementation/ Connecting with service providers'.[8]

> *"We do much work in the process of a NDIS application, helping people to gather their evidence from the specialist, from the GPs and everywhere." (MEW Interview #5)*

1.4 Ending Individual Capacity Building

MEWs reflected that knowing when to 'exit' a participant from the project could be difficult, due to many participants having extensive needs and the open-ended nature of capacity building. The average length of time for which individuals were engaged with AMPARO's ICB Project as 232 days (approx. 7.5 months) (see Section 4.4.2 Facilitators: 'Length of time of engagement with project'). The situations in which participants were exited from the project fall into two broad categories[9]:

- **Goals have been achieved**: this may include the person with disability and/or their family members feeling confident to leave the program, all participant's goals having been achieved, being actively engaged with a Support Coordinator and/or appropriate services, or being actively engaged in the community, education or employment.
- **All possible actions have been exhausted**: Alternatively, ICB was ended where goals had not yet been achieved, but where no further action was possible by MEWs, or where there were significant challenges to remaining engaged. For example, a person may have set a goal of accessing the NDIS, but the request had been denied and all avenues for appeal had been exhausted. In these situations, MEWs connected participants with all available services and supports (such as the Queensland Community Support Scheme, where relevant).

1.5 Continuous reflection, evaluation and improvement

The ICB process was supported by regular updates from the evaluation team, including six-monthly 'data snapshots' which provided insights into participant demographics, and facilitators and challenges to the work. Improvements were made to the ICB process by the leadership team in response to these updates, including streamlining reporting processes, targeting professional development and supporting community engagement.

Similarly, MEWs identified that continuous learning and reflection was critical to the success of their work, including continually updating their knowledge of NDIS processes and disability services, and sharing information within the team.[10]

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8   Source: Debrief Forms.
9   Source: Debrief Forms.
10 Source: AMPARO Multicultural Engagement Workers planning day, March 2023.

2. How effective was the ICB project in engaging people from CALD backgrounds with disability?

The ICB project engaged extremely effectively with people from CALD backgrounds with disability, their families and support networks. In particular, the project engaged effectively with people from refugee and humanitarian backgrounds and emerging language groups.

2.1 Outreach and engagement

Location

Participants came from across the five regions targeted by the project, with greater numbers in Brisbane, Logan and Toowoomba as anticipated in the project design and allocation of staff resources.

Participants by region (n=220)

Region	Participants
Townsville	19
Toowoomba	42
Logan	43
Ipswich	1
Cairns	27
Brisbane	88
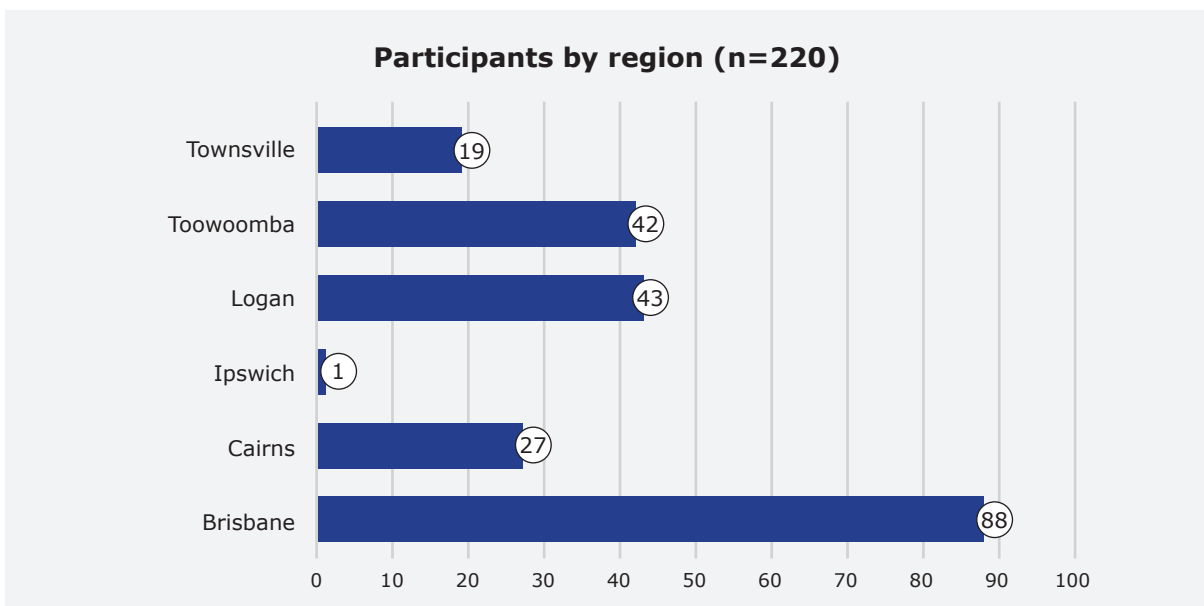
Figure 2: Participants by region *(Source: Intake Forms)*

Referral sources

Participants found out about the project and/or were referred from a wide range of sources across the disability and multicultural sectors, as well as via personal networks. (For further information, refer to '4.1.2 Beginning Individual Capacity Building'.)

2.2 Participant demographics

The project worked with:
- 220 people with disability, referred to as "participants"
- At least 411 family members and friends of participants (likely to be under-reported)

Cultural diversity

- 99% of participants were either born overseas in a country where English is not the main spoken language, or were born in Australia to parents whose preferred language is other than English.
- Participants were born in more than 35 different countries.

The top countries of birth (excluding Australia) in each region were:

Brisbane	Cairns	Logan	Toowoomba	Townsville
Vietnam Somalia Iran	DRC[11] Nepal Bhutan	Egypt Iraq Aghanistan	Iraq South Sudan Syria	DRC CAR[12]

Table 2: Top 3 countries of birth by region *(Source: Intake Forms)*

- **95% of participants either had a preferred language other than English** or were children under 10 years of age with parents whose preferred language was other than English.
- **Participants spoke more than 24 languages other than English**, including 11 languages each spoken by less than 1% of participants (Afar, Dari, Tamil, Burmese, Karen, Mandarin, Hindi, Oromo, Sudanese, French and Hazaragi), indicating a wide diversity of participants.

English proficiency

- 70% (of participants and their family members where applicable) indicated that they require an interpreter.

Migration history

Most participants were new arrivals from refugee backgrounds.
- 54% of participants had arrived in Australia in the past 5 years.

Years since arrival in Australia
(overseas-born participants for whom we have data only, n=172)

Category	%
More than 25 years	6
21 to 25 years	3
16 to 20 years	6
11 to 15 years	8
6 to 10 years	22
5 years or less	54
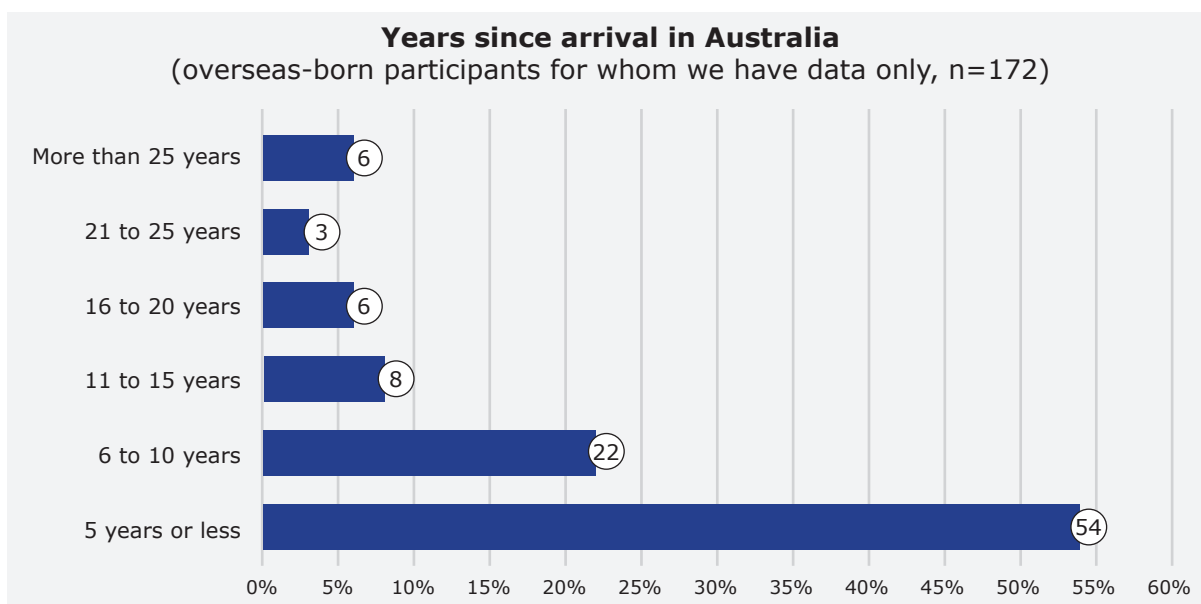
Figure 4: Years since arrival in Australia *(Source: Intake Forms)*

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11   Democratic Republic of Congo.
12   Central African Republic.

- 84% of participants had arrived in Australia on a humanitarian visa.

- The top countries of birth for people who had arrived in the past 5 years were Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo and Syria.

Visa type
(overseas-born participants for whom we have data only, n=177)

Visa type	Count
Other	3
Migrant/ Skilled	5
Family/ Partner	20
Humanitarian	149
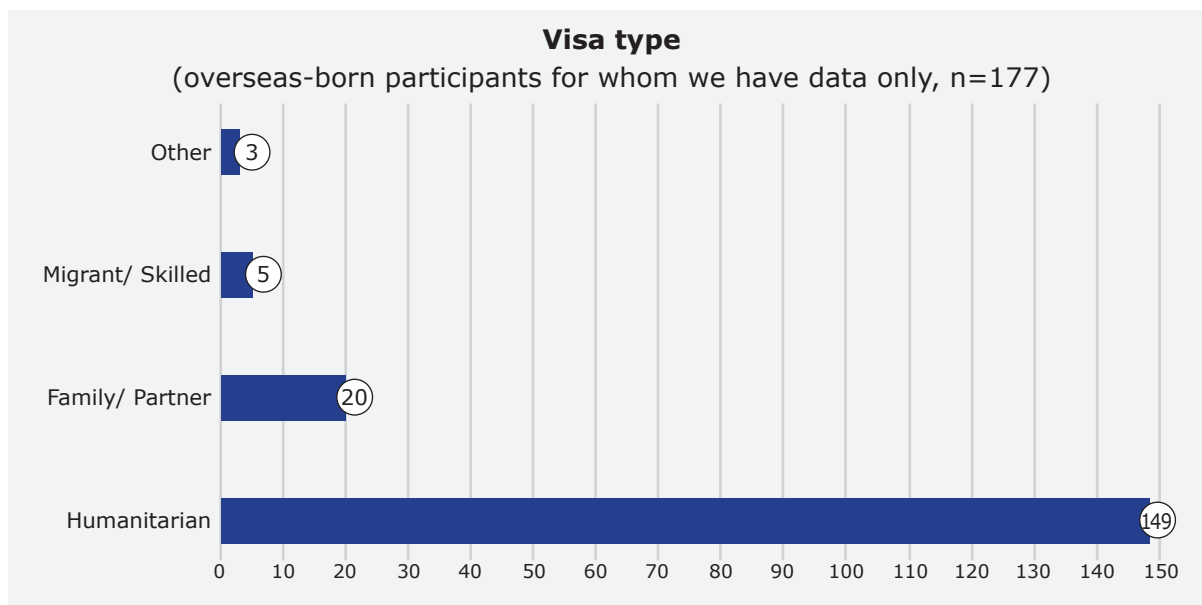
Figure 5: Visa type *(Source: Intake Forms)*

Age

There was a diversity of participants across age groups, with 31% of participants being aged under 18 years. Occasionally MEWs have found when working with parents of children/ adolescents with disability, that the parents would not consent to having their child's disability diagnosed due to the stigma associated with having a child/adolescent with a disability.

Age groups of participants
(age in years at intake)

Age group	Count
Unknown	14
>65 years	2
45 to 64 years	79
18 to 44 years	56
7 to 17 years	51
0 to 6 years	18
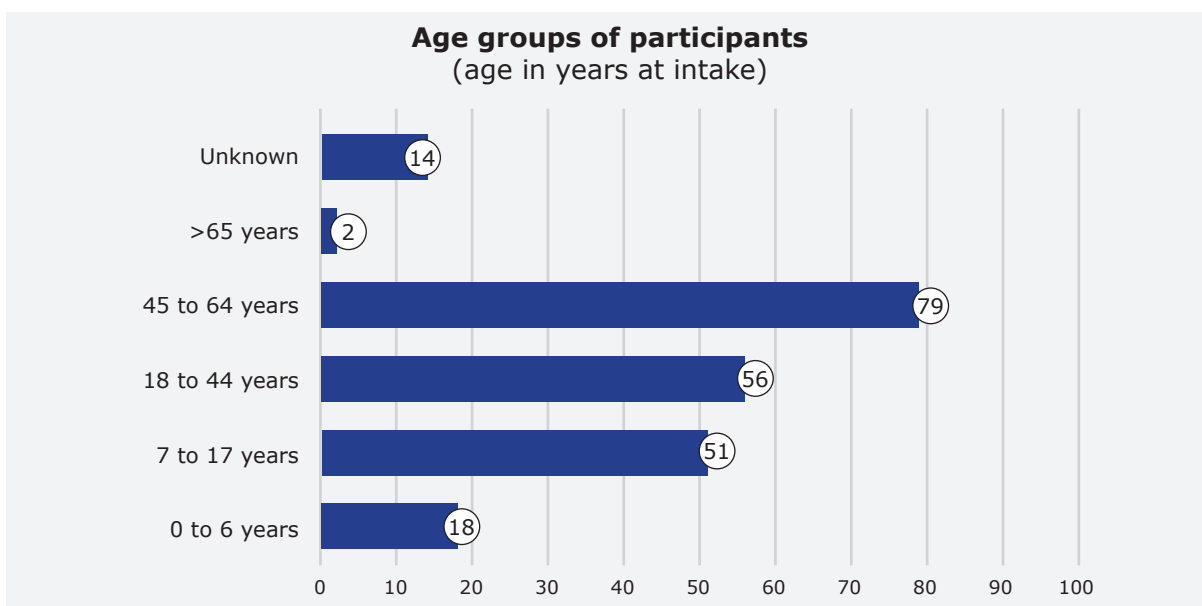
Figure 6: Age groups of participants *(Source: Intake Forms)*

Type of disability

Participants reported a wide range of impairments, with physical disability and psychosocial disability being the most commonly reported. This reflects findings from the 2018 Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers which found that the main conditions affecting people with disability were physical and mental and behavioural conditions.[13]

Types of impairment experienced by participants (n=220)

Type of impairment	Percentage
Language Disorder	1
Speech	2
Acquired Brain Injury	3
Unknown	3
Developmental Delay (applies to 0-5 year olds...	4
Neurological (including epilepsy and Alzheimer's...	5
Sensory - Vision	5
Sensory - Hearing	5
Autism (including Aspberger's Syndrome and...	13
Intellectual (including Down Syndrome)	15
Psychosocial	24
Physical	32

Figure 7: **Types of impairments experienced by participants** *(Source: Intake Forms)*

What does this demographic data tell us?

The above data shows that AMPARO's Individual Capacity Building project was highly effective in outreaching and engaging people from the target cohort. It also builds on the previous findings of AMPARO and others to illustrate the complexity associated with working with this cohort, the vast majority of whom are recent arrivals in Australia from refugee backgrounds. Most of the people with whom this project engaged had experienced significant trauma, had low English proficiency, and had little to no access to disability supports and services in the past. They were likely to be experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage and significant barriers to community and economic participation.

2.3 Feedback regarding effectiveness of engagement

People with disability and their families provided consistent feedback that MEWs had engaged effectively with them. 100% of participants 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' that '*The AMPARO worker listened and understood my needs*', while 98% of participants 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' that '*I am happy with the support I have received from AMPARO*'.[14]

"[The AMPARO worker] truly listened to me." (Participant survey)

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13 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Disability, Ageing and Carers, Australia: Summary of Findings. Released 24/10/2019, viewed 29/03/2023, https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/disability/disability-ageing-and-carers-australia-summary-findings/latest-release.

14 Source: Participant surveys. Note: only 1 survey respondent indicated that they 'Disagreed' that 'I am happy with the support provided by AMPARO'. This individual 'Agreed' that the AMPARO worker had listened and understood their needs, helped them to connect with supports and services, and that they now knew more about the rights of people with disability. However, they had been referred to an agency with a long waiting period and were dissatisfied that there was a long wait for services to commence.

"The service is really good and it's really helpful for families like us." (Participant survey)

"Amparo is so much helpful. They are committed to assisting people in need, even with complex situations." (Participant survey)

"[The AMPARO worker] kept in touch." (Participant survey)

"Helpful and friendly. Thank you very much for your continuous support. You are really very nice, helpful and friendly. You always responded YES whenever I called you." (Participant survey)

AMPARO's stakeholder survey found that 42% of respondents had found out about AMPARO's ILC project via direct contact with a MEW, with 25% finding out about the project via interagency / network meetings and another 25% via word of mouth. This reflects the effectiveness of grassroots community outreach undertaken by the MEWs in each region. Stakeholders also commented on the effectiveness of the MEWs working relationship with them:

"It has been great to work closely with the engagement worker as a team around a person/family." (Stakeholder survey)

"[MEW's] input has been so beneficial to understand the client's cultural needs." (Stakeholder survey)

3. What effect did the ICB project have on the lives of people from CALD backgrounds with disability?

Overview of outcomes achieved

The evaluation sought to analyse outcomes achieved across four categories, as shown below. This data is based on MEWs reflections of outcomes achieved with participants (as reported in Debrief Forms), which is then compared with participant feedback (via surveys and interviews). **The most common category of outcomes achieved was an increase in participants' 'Understanding of disability in the Australian context' (84%)**. Such understanding is foundational to accessing appropriate supports and exercising one's rights.

Outcomes achieved with participants
(by category, n=150)

Category	%
Meaningful participation in their families and communities	58
Knowledge, skills and confidence to exercise their rights	77
Access to services and supports	77
Understanding of disability in the Australian context	84
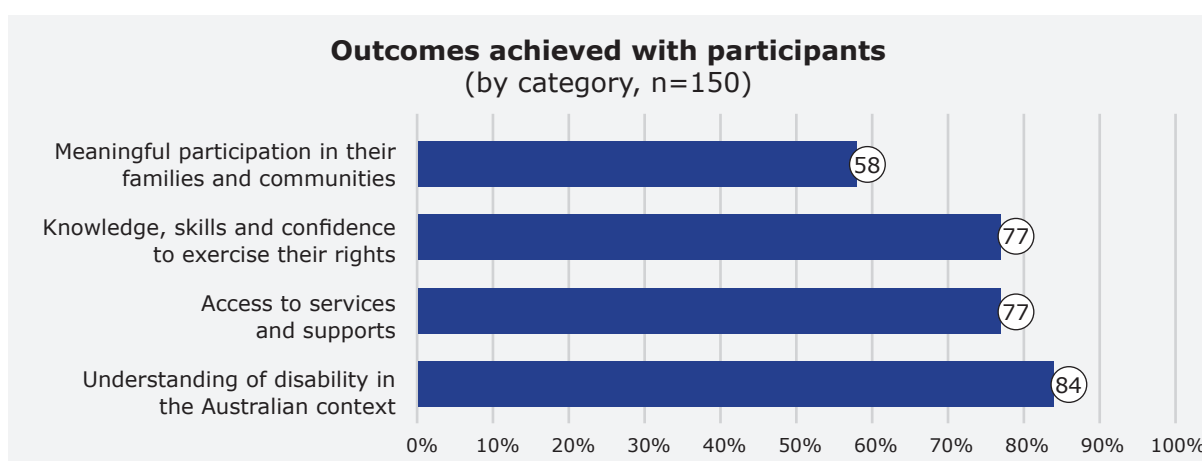
Figure 8: Outcomes achieved with participants *(Source: Debrief Forms)*

Each outcome category was further analysed in terms of specific outcomes. The top six specific outcomes achieved are shown below. As can be seen, **the top five of these outcomes relate to increased understanding, skills and confidence**, while the sixth outcome relates to service access.

Top 6 specific outcomes achieved
(by category, n=150)

Outcome	Value
Access to non-NDIS services which are relevant to achieving their goals	53
Increased understanding of disability services available in their local area	54
Increased understanding of their disability	56
Increased knowledge, skills and/or confidence to access disability services	60
Increased understanding of the Australian disability service system	70
Increased understanding of the rights of people with disability and how to exercise those rights	71

Figure 9: **Top six specific outcomes achieved** *(Source: Debrief Forms)*

Outcome Category 1: Understanding of disability in the Australian context

A significant focus of work with many participants was building understanding of the Australian disability service system, as well as understanding of the person's disability and the services available in their local area.

People with disability and their families commented on how the project had increased their understanding of their disability and the Australian disability service system:

"I learnt more about her disability and the future changes." (Participant survey)

"I feel more supported with understanding my son's NDIS plan." (Participant survey)

MEWs also reported that participants' understanding of their disability and disability services increased:

"Initially participant didn't want NDIS as she didn't believe that she had a disability, as she was comparing herself to her brother's level of intellectual disability. Once receiving services, she understands the benefits and what extra supports can provide." (Debrief Form)

Outcome Category 2: Access to services and supports

MEWs reported that access to the NDIS was achieved with 35% of participants, while 44% of participants achieved access to services funded under the NDIS, and 53% achieved access to non-NDIS services.[15]

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15 Source: Debrief Forms

97% of people who responded to our participant survey 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' that 'The AMPARO worker helped me to connect to services and supports that I needed'.

“The AMPARO worker helped me to connect to services and supports that I needed”

Neutral / No Change	2
Strongly Agree	48
Agree	15
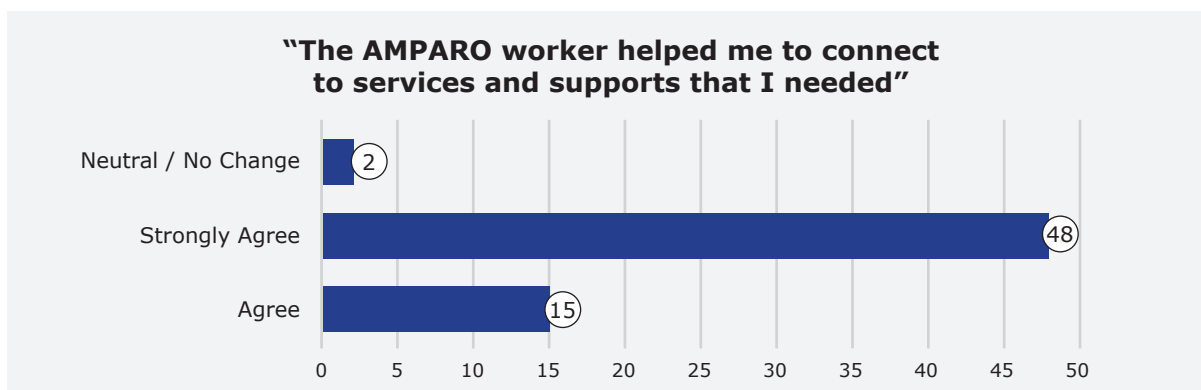
People with disability and their families indicated that access to services and supports was one of the most helpful aspects of the support provided by AMPARO:

> *"To get support in place [was the most helpful thing] because I was sitting on the NDIS plan without the knowledge of what to do, where to go." (Participant survey)*

> *"Help to access services [was the most helpful thing]. Before [the AMPARO worker] helped we did not know how to find services for my son." (Participant survey)*

In particular, people with disability and their families highlighted the importance of AMPARO's support in accessing the NDIS and Support Coordination:

> *"[A family member of a person with disability] told me that **the work that I did for them earlier in the year to help them with the NDIS has made a huge difference to their lives**. [The family member] was experiencing a high level of carer burnout and she said that she is feeling a lot better and has more time to herself. [The person with disability] is now better supported and getting out of the house more and learning to be independent." (Debrief Form)*

Similarly, people who responded to our stakeholder survey emphasised the significance of AMPARO's intervention in facilitating access to services and supports for this cohort:

> *"[AMPARO's ICB project has made a] significant difference… **the people who have been supported through this program would not have access to the support they require through the NDIS** or would have plans that are under-utilized due to not having the supports to start linking and engaging services." (Stakeholder survey)*

> *"**Some CALD people with limited English and other cultural barriers will never get NDIS support without an organisation like AMPARO**." (Stakeholder survey)*

Outcome Category 3: Knowledge, skills and confidence to exercise their rights

95% of participants 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' that after participating in AMPARO's ICB project, "I know more about my rights/ the rights of people with disability".
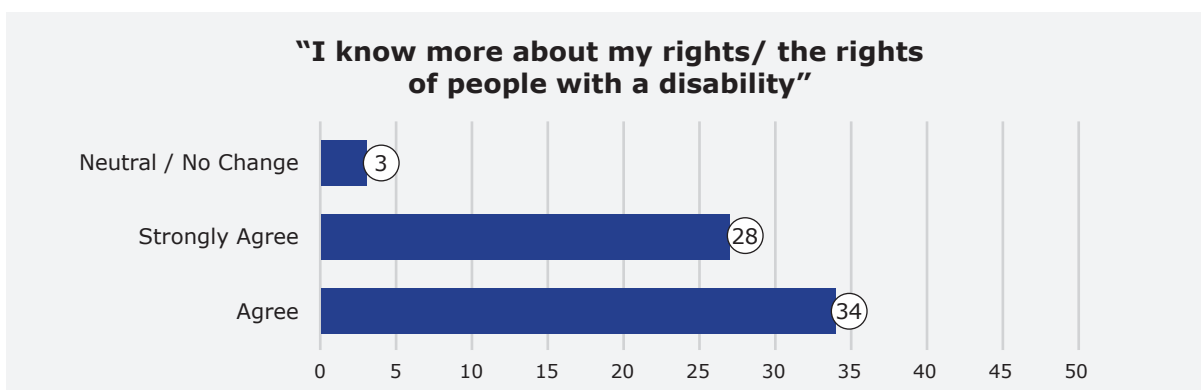
Figure 11: "I know more about my rights/ the rights of people with a disability" *(Source: Participant Surveys)*

People with disability and their families commented on their increased confidence and awareness of their rights in the participant surveys:

"I know my rights a lot better." (Participant survey)

"I learnt to speak up and ask questions at school." (Participant survey)

"It is my right to change services if I want to." (Participant survey)

"I have been able to gain my self-confidence back and feel proud about myself." (Participant survey)

This was also a consistent theme in interviews with participants and their families:

Participant interview #3

Facilitator: "Would you say that you feel more confident because of the work [the AMPARO worker] was doing with you?

Interviewee: "Lots. Lots. Not just a little, lots, yes." (via Interpreter)

Participant interview #1

"Yes, actually [the AMPARO worker] made me feel more confident, like more self-confident. Now I feel myself conquer**; I used to be very, very scared person, like I used to have lot of trouble, lots of problems, that's why I became a very, very frightened person of having anything. [The AMPARO worker] was the one who supported me, who taught me how to go into the society and the community and talk to others and be more confident … she put me on the right path by talking to me, by convincing me that the law is [strong here]; like it's the law who rules those people, not everyone has their own law. There is only one law who rules the whole people, like all people. **So she, by talking to me, by making me understand that the law can give – the law can help everyone, and being next to the rights of everyone..."

MEWs reported that many participants gained confidence to manage their supports independently, moving forward:

> *"Participant mother is confidence (sic) in follow up next plan review with her son." (Debrief Form)*

> *"[The parent of a person with disability] felt more empowered to articulate what her son needs from the NDIS. She now understands that she must gather evidence for the review meetings and clearly outline what her son needs to the NDIS." (Debrief Form)*

Stakeholders also commented on the impact of AMPARO's ICB project in building the knowledge and confidence of people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families:

> *"Families are in better position to make informed decision about the needs of child who has disability." (Stakeholder survey)*

> *"Incredible impact on empowering people with disability." (Stakeholder survey)*

Alongside an increased understanding of their rights, participants also reported an increased sense of their own value and worth, and raised expectations for what their life could look like:

> *"I feel less stressed and more hopeful." (Participant survey)*

> *"I feel safer." (Participant survey)*

> *"My life is better." (Participant survey)*

> *"Planning for the future; starting to think about good options for [the person with disability]." (Participant survey)*

Outcome Category 4: Meaningful participation in their families and communities

MEWs reported that this outcome category was less commonly achieved with participants than Outcomes Categories 1-3. This may be due to the level of vulnerability experienced by this cohort, and the need in many cases to begin with building a foundation of understanding of the rights of people with disability and access to services, which then facilitate participation in the community.[16] However, MEWs did report that a significant proportion of participants left the project with an 'Increased sense of connection and belonging to local community' (39%) and 'Increased confidence to share information they have learnt' (35%). Even more strongly, 62% of participants 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' that "AMPARO has helped me join in more in my community / I have more connections in my community".

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16 These issues are explored further in Section 4.2.2 'Participant demographics' and Section 4.4.1 Challenges: 'Challenges to engaging people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families in the ICB process'.

"AMPARO has helped me join in more in my community / I have more connections in my community"

Strongly Disagree	1
Disagree	2
Neutral / No Change	19
Strongly Agree	17
Agree	19
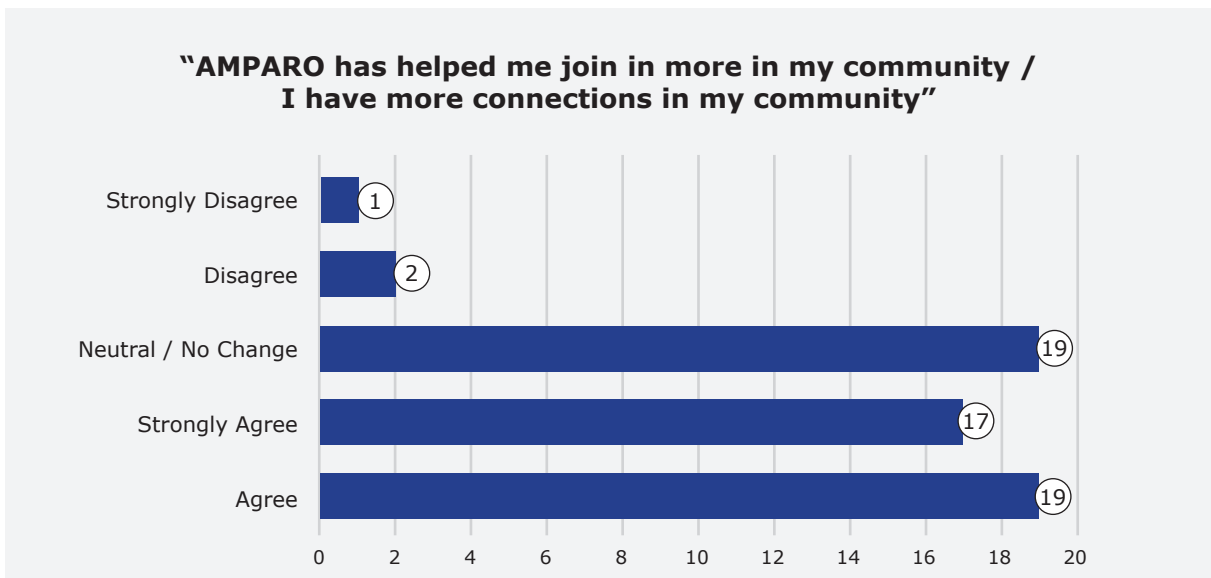
Figure 12: **"AMPARO has helped me join in more in my community / I have more connections in my community"** *(Source: Participant Surveys)*

Some examples of increased participation included access education and employment:

> *"I got a job." (Participant survey)*

> *"I have started studying a Certificate course at Mt Gravatt Community Centre after [the AMPARO worker] referred me to them." (Participant survey)*

Other participants reported increased participation in English classes and other community activities:

> *"Attending English classes and playgroup." (Participant survey)*

> *"I feel good to know that I'll improve my English skills with the tutor at home program from TAFE." (Participant survey)*

While this outcome was not achieved as commonly as other outcomes, where it was achieved, it made a significant difference in the lives of people with disability and their families.

> *"Even if I couldn't access NDIS (due to my GP refusal to assist), I strongly agree that the support I got from Amparo has considerably changed my life positively. I* ***am very happy and proud of who I am now. I can access the community with more confidence and interact with others****. I have also been able to feel motivated to get back to work for at least a few hours." (Participant survey)*

> *"She got help from NDIS with learning how to go to school by bus and train and she is now doing that by herself." (Participant survey)*

> *"I feel like I am not alone which is a very good feeling after years." (Participant survey)*

> *"****I am no longer hiding in my room****." (Participant survey)*

4. Identify and describe challenges and facilitators that affect Individual Capacity Building with people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families.

AMPARO's Individual Capacity Building (ICB) process can be understood as occurring across four stages: project design and establishment, beginning ICB, throughout ICB and ending ICB. These stages are underpinned by continuous reflection, evaluation, and improvement.

4.1 Challenges

Throughout the project, MEWs reported a range of complex and intersecting challenges which affected their work with people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families. While these challenges are analysed here across seven categories, they should be understood as affecting one another and multiplying the barriers experienced by many participants.
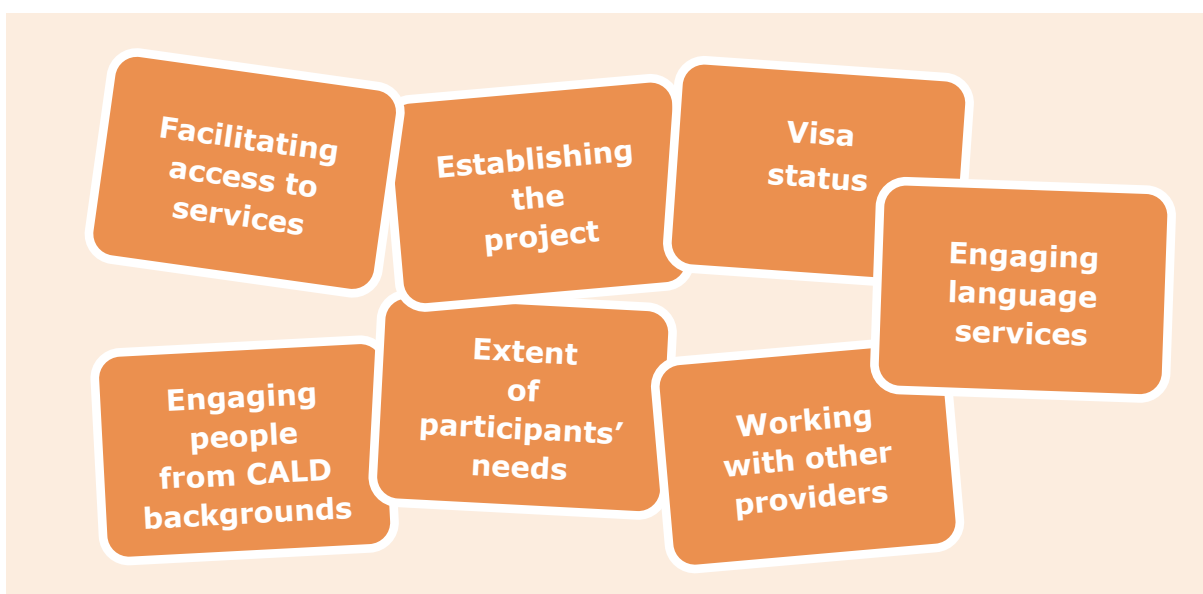
Figure 13: Challenges affecting the ICB project

Challenges to establishing the ICB Project

The ICB Staff Team highlighted some challenges to establishing the ICB Project. It was challenging to recruit staff, particularly in remote areas, who had sufficient knowledge and skills across disability and cultural responsiveness.[17] Recruitment was intentionally delayed by several months in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and imposed restrictions, as it was understood that the work could not proceed effectively without the capacity to undertake face-to-face community engagement. This time was utilised by the ICB staff team to further develop AMPARO's ICB model and develop resources for staff induction and training. However, after some delays, six part-time Multicultural Engagement workers were recruited and commenced induction and training in late August 2020.

It was also challenging to build team connection and support with a small team located across five regions.[18]

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17 Siyambalapitiya, Ziegenfusz, and McKenna, p. 24.

18 Source: ICB Staff Focus Group #1

Another broad challenge to establishing the ICB project was the shifting landscape of disability and NDIS services and the turnover of staff in other agencies, which meant having to rebuild relationships with new stakeholders in government and community agencies, throughout the project. For example, MEWs noted that the short duration of the National Community Connectors program required adapting referral pathways and the focus of the ICB project.

Another challenge identified in establishing the project was a lack of role clarity. Anecdotally, MEWs commented that it was often difficult to identify the boundaries of their role, particularly when working with people in highly complex or vulnerable situations.[19] This lack of role clarity can be summarised as three fundamental tensions which emerged within the MEW role as the project progressed (these will be explored further in the discussion below):
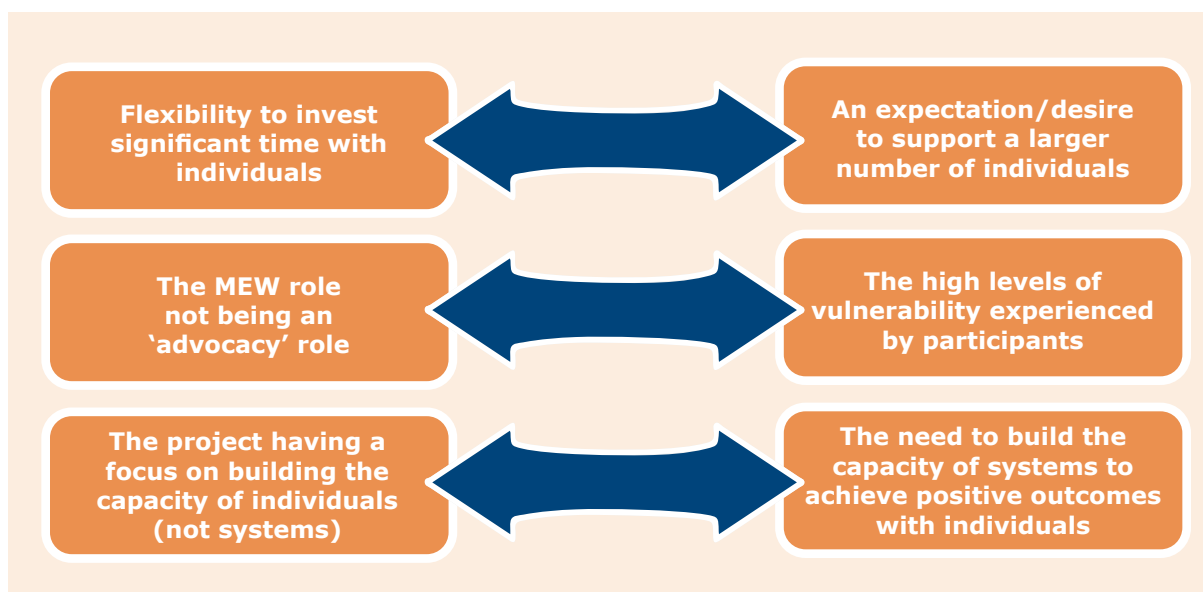
Table 3: **Tensions in the MEW role** *(Source: MEW Interviews, Debrief Forms, MEW Planning Day)*

Challenges to engaging people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families in the ICB process

MEWs reflected that it was sometimes challenging to engage people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families in the ICB process. This was due to a range of complex, intersecting reasons including a lack of understanding of the disability service system and the role of the MEWs; a lack of trust in institutions due to experiences in their home country; a lack of positive outcomes from previous attempts to engage with disability supports; and stigma related to disability.

> *"We get referrals and we meet with families. It's still really hard… they generally don't have any idea how we can help them…* ***I've had a couple of families who have just been very, really hard to engage with. They've just got no idea how we can help them and trying to build up that trust****. So then they, yeah - and I think as well, a lot of their own perceptions of disability, the stigma and shame around disability, it makes it really hard to work with people so that they're open." (MEW Interview #3)*

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19 Source: AMPARO Multicultural Engagement Workers Planning Day, March 2023

Many of these challenges required a significant investment of time on behalf of the MEW to build trust and understanding. This is further explored in the section 'Length of time of engagement with project' below.

Challenges to facilitating access to the NDIS and disability services

A consistent theme across interviews and surveys with MEWs and participants, was how challenging it is to access and navigate the NDIS and disability services. Supporting people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families to address these barriers took a significant focus of time and resources, which could have been redirected to other areas of capacity building if the NDIS was more easily accessible. Additionally, the challenges encountered were often de-motivating to participants who may then give up on accessing the NDIS. The challenges encountered included barriers to obtaining evidence of disability; complexity around the relationship between health conditions and disability; and inconsistent information provided by the NDIS.

> *"Difficulties with communication with NDIS in relation to getting conflicting information each time the MEW contacted them, in relation to having [the person with disability's] physical disability acknowledged by NDIA in her plan." (Debrief Form)*

> *"**Everything with the NDIS is so hard**." (Participant survey)*

> *"T**he NDIS is so hard to understand**. But you have helped us a lot. Thank you." (Participant survey)*

Furthermore, in some cases, participants' lack of understanding of the purpose of the NDIS and other disability supports presented a challenge to engaging with disability services:

> *"Like, for instance, a child has a disability, and the parents have no idea about speech pathologists, you know, physiotherapists, and you find that **they don't have the motivation to help, like to go for those services, because they don't have full understanding, and for them, they say, oh no, the money should go for something else...** So, sometimes it takes a while for us to orient people in terms of choices of services, in terms of like getting motivation in some things, but we do our best and, you know, education is something that has to be always there." (MEW Interview #5)*

For some people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families, cultural beliefs and norms also presented a barrier to accessing the NDIS and disability services:

> *"[Some CALD communities] seem to be well known in declining services and diagnosis of a suspected mental health and psychosocial impairment in their families. I visited the family three times including once at school with teachers trying to explain what they could expect from the NDIS and that NDIS comes with no risk but to improve their life however they had again declined the access." (Debrief Form)*

> *"Cultural barriers and misunderstanding of NDIS and disability in general. The carer just refused because he did not want any outsider to intervene in his home to support [the person with disability]." (Debrief Form)*

Challenges encountered in work with other providers

MEWs reported that at times, the actions of other stakeholders present in the lives of people with disability and their families presented a barrier to effective work. In some cases, role confusion and disagreement between stakeholders negatively impacted the ICB process. In other cases, poor service quality and a lack of cultural responsiveness had resulted in people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families 'falling through the gaps' or being pressured to obtain services from particular providers:

> *"Barriers being [another agency]* **who harassed him to stay with them for NDIS Support Coordination***." (Debrief Form)*

> *"They desperately need help, but they don't see a way forward, or people coming forward to help them. They've become like, they're blaming themselves, and they're blaming the system because the system doesn't see their disabilities.* **The ... team [from another agency] don't come to visit them, and to sit with them***. They just do the paperwork just to do it, really, based on the report and then they make the outcome before they [meet the participants]." (MEW Interview #4)*

> *"I was looking at, well, this plan is so basic,* **whoever did it had no idea of this person situation, they'd never been to his home** *- it was just not right.... He hadn't heard anything from his support coordinator… from about August to November - August, September, October, November -* **he had never heard from his support coordinator***, or a support worker contacted him at all." (MEW Interview #2)*

A common issue in working with other services was a lack of engagement with language services, including interpreters and translators. Despite NDIS policy clearly stating that NDIS Planners and Providers will book certified interpreters and provide translated participant plans[20], MEWs found that this rarely occurred in practice:

> *"Say… one of the workers is assisting someone to access a service in Logan, that in the process of doing that… they're asking the service to… organise an interpreter.* **"Oh, we've never done that before***," [is the response from the service]." (ICB Staff Focus Group #1)*

> *"Go NDIA,* **everything gets sent to you in English***. I now say to people, cause I've done up a little thing and it's about.. [on the] 'I need an interpreter' card, they can also - I write down on the bottom, 'You've written to me in English. Please send it to me in [my preferred language].* **I can't read it***." (MEW Interview #2)*

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20 National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), 'Language interpreting services'. Updated 10 August 2022, viewed 29 March 2023,https://www.ndis.gov.au/understanding/language-interpreting-services.

Challenges in engaging language services

AMPARO Advocacy is committed to engaging qualified interpreters whenever required in our work with people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families and this was included in the ILC Budget that was approved when applying to undertake this work. While, in most cases, it is a straightforward process to engage an interpreter, issues can occur, particularly when working with people from language backgrounds which have relatively small populations in Australia. Issues encountered at times during this project included a lack of available interpreters; poor interpreter quality; and a lack of trust in interpreters on behalf of people with disability and their families.

"[There is] only one Afar interpreter in Australia." (Debrief Form)

"Support Coordinator referred participant and her mother to Amparo advising that… due to poor interpreting at the planning meeting, [the participant] ended up with a plan that was not suitable to the participant's needs." (Debrief Form)

"Some people are very culturally sensitive to be open about their stuff when we use interpreters from the same background. Yes, interpreters are helpful, but… not everyone trusts the confidentiality, not everyone is ready to trust. So, sometimes they just provide us partial information because of the stigma and other cultural reasons behind communication." (MEW Interview #5)

Challenges due to visa status

MEWs highlighted the systemic barriers experienced by people with disability on Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs) and Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs), who were therefore ineligible for access to the NDIS and some other services.

"There were a lot of systemic barriers that we faced while working with this family. Due to the fact that the family are on a Temporary protection visa, [the person with disability] was not eligible for the NDIS and could only access 5 hours a week of support from QCSS funding. They were also living in a state of frequent crisis due to the stresses in their lives. These issues made it difficult to work with the family on things like goal setting and what a good life looks like. Additionally, they had a lot of financial stress and [the person with disability's] mum was anxious about gaining employment in order to fulfil her visa requirement. This was made harder by the fact that [the person with disability] who is 18 years old cannot be left a home alone for long periods of time." (Debrief Form)

These issues were particularly heightened for children, who often missed out on critical early intervention:

"Significant barriers for this participant [aged 7 years old] as he is living on a SHEV visa. He may be eligible for citizenship and therefore eligible to access NDIS in the future, but current wait times for citizenship processing is 18 months. Advocated with the Minister for this to be priority processed, however result is unknown…" (Debrief Form)

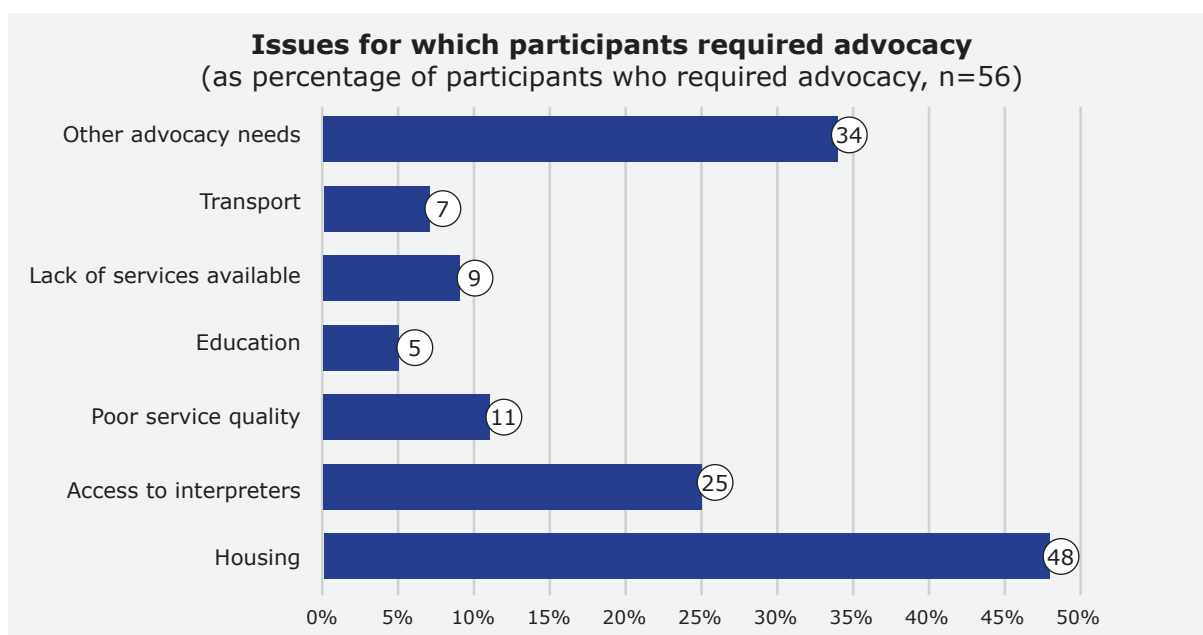### *Challenges due to the extent of participants' needs*

In many cases, the people engaged by AMPARO's ICB Project had significant, fundamental needs which made them highly vulnerable and presented a barrier to them engaging with ICB. Common issues were a lack of access to appropriate housing, and domestic and family violence:

> *"The situation for this family is terribly difficult and complex. They have two boys with disability and no father. The oldest brother has become the head of the household and life is very hard for him." (Debrief Form)*

> *"Participant was 16 years old and living with ASD Level 2 without supports due to DFV within her family. Participant's mother was not able to apply for NDIS without support." (Debrief Form)*

> *"Participant lives with his relatives who are now homeless." (Debrief Form)*

MEWs reported that 37% of participants with whom they had worked required advocacy for at least one issue, with almost half of these participants (48%) requiring support to secure appropriate housing. **This means that almost 1 in 5 (18%) of people engaged by AMPARO's ICB Project were experiencing significant housing stress or homelessness**. Other issues for which people required advocacy included access to interpreters, poor service quality, education and transport. Many of these issues would not become apparent until the person had been engaged with the ICB project for some time. MEWs provided a range of supports in response to these issues, depending on factors such as the availability of other services and the extent of the person's support network. For example, in situations of a person with disability not having access to appropriate housing, MEWs often had to support the person through the process to apply for public housing, liaised with the person's Support Coordinator to ensure housing would be followed up, or referred the person to a local disability advocacy organisation, such as AMPARO and followed up to ensure the referral was actioned. The frequency of these needs occurring illustrates the extremely challenging contexts in which MEWs were working in implementing ICB with this cohort.

Issues for which participants required advocacy
(as percentage of participants who required advocacy, n=56)

Category	Value
Other advocacy needs	34
Transport	7
Lack of services available	9
Education	5
Poor service quality	11
Access to interpreters	25
Housing	48

Figure 14: Issues for which participants required advocacy beyond the scope of the role
(Source: Debrief Forms)

4.2 Facilitators

Against the backdrop of these challenges, feedback from MEWs and participants reveals several facilitators which supported the project to achieve positive outcomes.

Figure 15: Facilitators affecting the ICB project

Facilitators at the organisational level

The ICB staff team emphasised that recruiting workers with appropriate skills, knowledge and values was foundational to the project's effectiveness. MEWs reported that internal support from AMPARO helped them to work effectively. This included the sharing of knowledge and resources between team members, regular team meetings, the accessibility of supervisory staff and a general atmosphere of support.[21] Additionally, the ICB staff team noted that effective communication with the funding agency was also critical to the project's success:

> *"The importance of the relationship with the grants manager or the funding agency. Because this work is so complex… I think it's really important to have someone that you can contact and talk through these things with. I don't really know how we urge the government to make sure that keeps happening. It just makes such a difference… Where you have the close relationship with someone who has perhaps taken the time to visit your office or understands in more detail the work that you do and the challenges you face. It's just really critical to being able to keep doing that work."* *(ICB Staff Focus Group #3)*

Trust and rapport

AMPARO's model of ICB prioritises building trust and rapport with people with disability and their families, in culturally appropriate ways. Trust is the foundation of effective work with this highly vulnerable cohort and was frequently highlighted by people who responded to participant surveys (see below). Aspects of building trust included: visiting people at home; respectful listening; empathy; a willingness to help; and following through on what was promised.

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21 Siyambalapitiya, Ziegenfusz, and McKenna, p. 30-31.

What was most helpful about the support AMPARO provided? *(Participant surveys)*

"I feel comfortable with [the AMPARO worker]."

"[The AMPARO worker] always did what she told us she would do which was very helpful."

"The effort that you put in. You looked at things in different ways. You were willing to help."

"[The AMPARO worker] truly listened to me."

"[The AMPARO worker] was very kind and understanding to me, and [to my husband]."

"Most important was the visits to my home and talking and listening to me."

"I felt comfortable and calm from when I first met you."

"You listened and tried to work out how to help."

*"What I have noticed is, with working with [the AMPARO worker], **I find that when they come up with the plan, they do the job.** They make sure it's sent off to another agency. Whenever there's a response, they follow up as well and **keep working until we achieved something**. We have come across many other services prior to this that they are good at saying things, but they never follow up, or they just throw things at us and let us find our own way. That's probably why we were stuck for so long without anything being done…"* (Participant interview #3, via Interpreter)

*"I think a lot of people do have services that come in and out of their lives. We're all so busy in this sector and I guess a lot of services would give up a bit sooner than maybe what I will. **I think showing you care; it helps to build that trust in the relationship and shows that you're going to do the best by them**. You've got their best interests at heart."* (MEW interview #3)

Developing deep understanding

Participants reflected that the MEWs developed a deep understanding of their needs and aspirations, and facilitated communication of this to other stakeholders:

*"Sometimes it's not easy even with interpreter. But someone that understands you, even with that interpreter - **so the person sees your needs and they talk for you, they stand up for you, they do something for you**… The person that feels your pain and your needs, and they say or they do something for you [sighs] that's the best thing. That's such a heart-warming."* (Participant Interview #2)

The ICB leadership team noted that workers developing this deep understanding of people's needs was part of the project design:

"Really understanding people in their context. What is their life, what are the factors that are impacting on them… Trying to get that where's this person situated? What's influencing them? What's their previous life experiences that have led them to this point?" (ICB Staff Focus Group #1)

Language services engagement

The project had an extremely high engagement of language services. ICB was provided directly in participants' home languages by bilingual and multilingual Multicultural Engagement Workers for 27% of participants. Interpreters were engaged for another 70% of participants whose preferred language was other than English.

MEWs reflected that engaging interpreters, or providing services in the participant's home, was critical to their role:

> *"The things I might start with would be to know… the language that I'm going to use to be able to talk to the person, and provide an interpreter, whatever the fees.* **Without that, I wouldn't do my job [effectively]***." (MEW Interview #4)*

> *"****I need to have a good interpreter, preferably face to face****, and explain what's happening." (MEW Interview #3)*

> *"Language is important because the kind of work we're doing, we have to be able to communicate very clearly with those people…* **We can't do the work without making sure that they have the chance to really hear it in their own language***." (MEW Interview #1)*

Data from participant surveys highlights the significant difference it makes to people with low English proficiency to have access to qualified interpreters or bilingual staff:

> *"****Having someone who I can speak with in my own language****" [was most helpful about the support AMPARO provided]. (Participant survey)*

> *"****To be able to have my say with the use of interpreters**** and not only rely on family members to relay my voice" [is what has changed in my life]. (Participant survey)*

AMPARO staff go beyond just booking interpreters, to developing relationships with effective interpreters, going to the effort to arrange face-to-face interpreters, and problem-solving to find language support for people where interpreters are not available:

> *"Face-to-face is best. Interpreters always tell us it's so easy to miss the facial expression or the – their subtleties. Also I think families seem more likely to trust an interpreter that's come to see them on numerous occasions. They sort of build that, it's just typical relationship stuff, I guess." (ICB Staff Focus Group #1)*

> *"I think that we're very lucky at AMPARO that w****e tend to try to build professional working relationships with good interpreters****… [We try to] request specific interpreters. Then I think that enables us to build relationships with our families that we work with and participants much easier because if things are being interpreted correctly and* **the family feels comfortable with that interpreter being in their home, that helps with the relationship building and the process of building capacity***." (MEW Interview #3)*

> *"Then what do you do if there is no interpreter… for a language. Then we go to bicultural workers if they're recommended…. Then it needs to be… a process, so we… sit down with that bicultural worker and explain the project with them… Because it's not just about them interpreting word for word, they're going to have a different role." (ICB Staff Focus Group #1)*

Other aspects of culturally responsive practice

Other aspects of culturally responsive practice identified through the evaluation included providing translated information where possible, displaying cultural sensitivity, and engaging in a respectful way with participants and their families.[22]

> *"When I'm with [the AMPARO worker] I feel like she talks my language. She's speaking English but very clear, 100 per cent… [Other service providers] talked so quick, which was a little bit difficult for me to understand and she was talking to me not quick and more clearly... some people - I don't know - some people know how to talk to other people, like migrant. I feel - I believe [the AMPARO worker] can work many different cultures and she can work with everyone, I think… Because she has good personality.* **Some people when they work with you, they look like sometimes angry, sometimes - they talk to you like - sometimes you don't understand. But all the time she was happy and friendly and more understanding***. If I sometimes don't understand she reply to me so many times different words. She uses different words. If I don't understand this word she changes." (Participant Interview #4)*

Home visits

The capacity of AMPARO's ICB project to visit people at home, at times suitable to them, was frequently highlighted by participants and workers as being critical to effective engagement. Few other services offer this, which presents a significant barrier to service access for many in this cohort.

> **What was most helpful about the support AMPARO provided?** *(participant survey)*

> *"Visiting at home."*

> *"Coming here to our home."*

> *"Listened to me and visited with me face to face."*

> *"Most important was the visits to my home and talking and listening to me."*

Culturally appropriate information provision

People with disability and their families highlighted the importance of MEWs providing them with information they could understand, about the disability service system and their options and rights:

> *"With the original plan, NDIS plan, we were just being asked what do we want to do? If we don't know what to do, how are we going to do it? So, with [the AMPARO worker], she actually guided us into - let us know what are there, what's available, and then guide us and explain everything. In that way, she provided us with the information to help us to make that decisions." (Participant Interview #3)*

Collaborative support

Positive outcomes were also facilitated by MEWs walking alongside people with disability and their families, providing practical assistance while building skills. This included assisting people to understand correspondence, fill in forms, learn how to request an interpreter, and attending appointments with participants. Due to the extensive barriers

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22 Siyambalapitiya, Ziegenfusz, and McKenna, p. 30.

discussed above, this level of collaborative support was critical to building capacity of many people in this cohort:

> *"[The AMPARO worker helped me with] all the different steps… Before [the AMPARO worker helped me] I was just confused… Every appointment I have, she comes to me before appointment and she was explaining to me… [When I have a phone appointment] she come sit with me. When they talk to me and when I don't understand something she was explaining to me more…" (Participant Interview #4)*

> *"Well, in my work with people who have a disability, I'm helping them to get access to the services that should be available to them, but at the same time I'm teaching them how we do it and encouraging as much as they're able, for them to participate… I'm trying to get them to understand that they are in control and that they - yeah just teaching as I go along, I guess." (MEW Interview #1)*
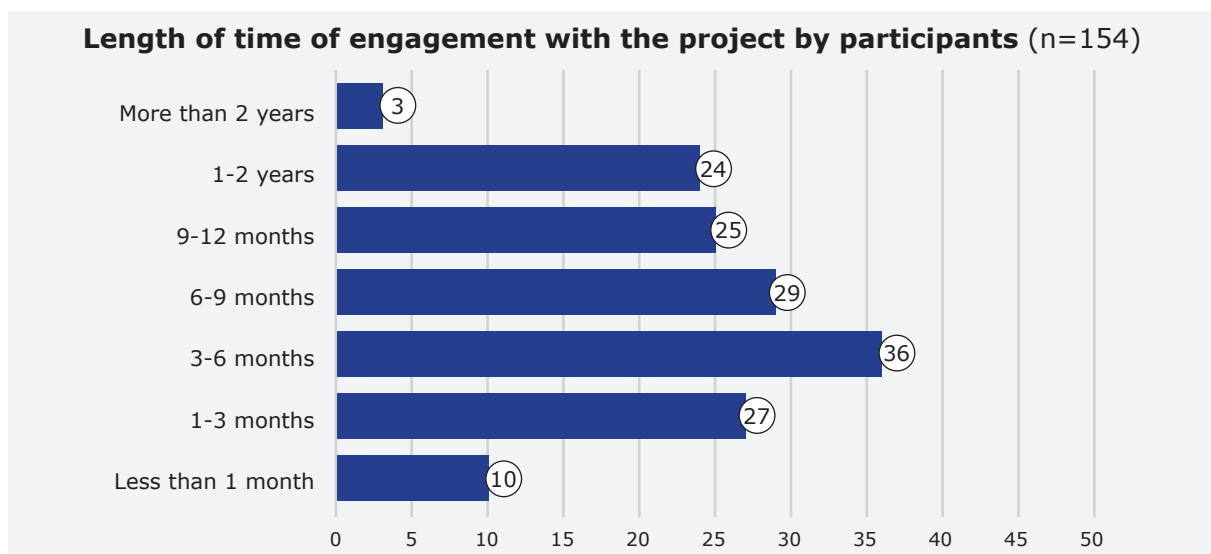
People responding to our Stakeholder Survey emphasised that they do not know of any other organisations who are able to provide this level of support and guidance:

> *"There is **not any other organisation able to provide intensive one on one support** for people from Culturally diverse background to access the NDIS once someone has been in Australia for more than 5 years." (Stakeholder Survey)*

> *"The family… get **supported step by steps** with the guidance and the support from organisation." (Stakeholder Survey)*

Length of time of engagement with project

The flexibility of the design of AMPARO's ICB Project allowed MEWs to remain engaged with participants for as long as was required to achieve their goals. The intensity of work and degree of challenges and barriers experienced by participants is reflected in the length of time for which participants remained engaged with the project. Of the 154 participants who had exited the project, more than half (53%) had been active in the project for more than 6 months, with the average length of engagement being 232 days (approx. 7.5 months).

Length of time of engagement with the project by participants (n=154)

Category	Value
More than 2 years	3
1-2 years	24
9-12 months	25
6-9 months	29
3-6 months	36
1-3 months	27
Less than 1 month	10

Figure 14: Length of time of engagement with the project by participants (Source: Intake Forms and Debrief Forms)

Both the ICB leadership team and MEWs were aware of the importance of investing time to get results:

> "… the organisation knows that it takes time to build relationships and to respond to people in a sensitive, culturally appropriate way… that means that there's good outcomes for people because we're not saying well you've got to do this in three months… the project is very flexible and does really whatever it takes to help individuals and families. But that limits the numbers of people that we can assist." (ICB Staff Focus Group #1)

> "It takes a lot of perseverance to get results I think." (MEW Interview #1)

Collaboration with external stakeholders

MEWs highlighted the importance of working collaboratively with other stakeholders engaged in the lives of people with disability and their families. Positive outcomes were also facilitated by MEWs working to build the cultural responsiveness of other stakeholders:

> "[Working in collaboration with AMPARO's ICB project] reminded me to be more considerate when dealing with people from culturally diverse backgrounds and to ensure staff have information and training to support them in their role." (Stakeholder Survey)

> "[MEW's] input has been so beneficial to understand the clients' cultural needs." (Stakeholder Survey)

> "So, I think that's always a feature of AMPARO's work, and it is with this project too, that to some extent it's… **talking with those systems to try and make them more accessible to the individual**. Yeah, I think that's a real strength and it's really critical to AMPARO's work… We're giving that sort of level of basic information [about how to engage interpreters] to increase – for them to do a better job and to increase their knowledge around how to work with people." (ICB Staff Focus Group #1)

Key Conclusions

AMPARO's ICB project engaged effectively with people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families, as well as with other stakeholders. The project achieved a wide range of positive outcomes depending upon the unique circumstances and goals of each individual. However, some of the more significant outcomes included an increased understanding of the rights of people with disability and the Australian disability service system; increased knowledge, skills and confidence to access disability services; greater understanding of options, choices and decisions available to them and increased wellbeing and connection with community.

The project encountered a range of challenges. Some of these challenges were related to working with people in highly vulnerable and complex situations, or who had very little understanding of their rights and what to expect from disability supports. Other major challenges were related to engaging the disability service system, including structural barriers to accessing the NDIS, engaging interpreters, and working in a context of frequent change.

The success of the project was facilitated by recruiting highly culturally responsive workers, who focused on building relationships of trust and deep understanding with people with disability and their families, and with other stakeholders. The flexibility of the project in terms of being able to provide home visits and work with participants over a considerable length of time also contributed

to the project's success. Workers provided culturally appropriate information and step-by-step support to build participants' understanding and skills. Such extensive support is rarely offered by agencies working with this cohort but was critical to achieving sustainable positive outcomes.

Participant demographics and feedback, alongside reflections from the MEWs, highlights the extreme levels of vulnerability experienced by many of the people engaged by this project. AMPARO's experience in delivering individual advocacy and other targeted engagement with people from CALD backgrounds with disability has shown that the NDIS and other disability services have not been designed to respond effectively to the language and cultural differences of this cohort. The ILC project similarly has highlighted systemic barriers across many service systems, which prevent equitable access to a range of supports, including the NDIS and that intensive support is needed to ensure that people from CALD backgrounds with disability have the opportunity to access appropriate supports and participate in their communities.

Learnings for AMPARO

This evaluation has identified several learnings for AMPARO. These are drawn from The Hopkins Centre report as well as further reflection by AMPARO.

1.   There were significant disruptions to community outreach and stakeholder engagement in the initial phase of this project due to COVID 19, and staff changes within the project team and external stakeholders. However, for future projects a **greater emphasis could be placed upon understanding community demographics, and undertaking further community outreach and stakeholder engagement, in each region**. This may assist in clarifying the MEW's role with stakeholders early on, expanding the reach of the project, and predicting challenges which may arise.

2.   **The AMPARO leadership team could work with MEWs to provide greater role clarity**. For example, clear expectations could be set around the number of individuals each MEW should be working with over each six-month period. However, it is also acknowledged that a strength of the project lies in its flexible response to the needs of each person with disability and their family, rather than a 'one size fits all' mentality. It is imperative that MEWs and the AMPARO leadership team continue to work closely together, so that the challenges and facilitators of this work are understood by all involved.

3.   **The work of the MEWs could be further supported by developing more resources, such as translated information, to provide to people with disability and their families**. However, it is acknowledged that this work can be time and resource intensive, that information changes rapidly, and that information needs to be relevant to each individual.

Part B: Organisational Capacity Building Project

Project Overview

AMPARO's Organisational Capacity Building project (2020-2023) built on the previous work in this area under the 2019-2020 ILC Project and worked with 13 Emerging Leaders from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds (including 9 people with disability and 4 family members of people with a disability) in a range of activities to build their capacity to actively participate in AMPARO's leadership and organisational processes.

The Emerging Leaders were born in 10 different countries representing at least 9 different ethnic backgrounds. The project design intentionally recruited people who are in a stable situation (i.e., not in need of advocacy) and who are able to speak English well (see further discussion in Section 4.2.2 Facilitators 'Targeted, personal invitation recruitment of Emerging Leaders'). As a result, all Emerging Leaders have lived in Australia for more than 5 years, with most able to speak English 'Well' (n=8) or 'Very Well' (n=4). Further demographic information is shown below.

Select demographic information about Emerging Leaders:

- **Gender**: Seven women and six men.
- **Age**: Two Emerging Leaders were aged under 25 and one over 65.
- **Highest level of education completed**: Most Emerging Leaders had completed either a high school (n=5) or Certificate/ Diploma (n=4) level education.
- **Employment Status**: Around half (54%) were not currently engaged in paid work. Others were business owners, working casually or working full time.
- **Types of disability**: Five Emerging Leaders have a physical disability, two have a vision impairment, one has a psychosocial disability, and one has a neurological disability.
- **Languages spoken**: include Farsi, Kirundi, Swahili, Spanish, Hazaragi, Somali, Vietnamese, Kirundi, and Sudanese.
- **Ethnicity**: includes Afghan, Chinese, Columbian, Congolese, Iranian, Somali, Burundi, Sudanese and Vietnamese.

Emerging Leaders participated in 14 events between October 2020 and December 2022. These included being supported to attend 7 regular organisational events (such as Management Committee meetings, the Annual General Meetings, and bi-annual Reflections Meetings), 3 external events, and 4 training sessions tailored to the needs of Emerging Leaders.

In addition to attending regular organisational events, emerging leaders attended the following events:

- **Development of new Strategic Plan 2020 -2023.** Held over 2 days in October 2020. Many emerging leaders attended and participated in the Strategic Planning Days.
- **Rally for Individual Advocacy funding: March 2021.** Emerging leaders and other AMPARAO members had an opportunity to join the Stand With Us campaign and support the call for ongoing state funding for independent advocacy, by attending a Rally outside parliament House.
- **Annual Members Morning Tea 9 June 2021.** Over 30 new and old members, allies and a local State Member of Parliament, Jonty Bush also attended. Members of the emerging leadership group were able to tell their stories of the difference AMPARO's work makes in their lives or listen to others do this. This event saw increased attendance due to the Organisational Capacity Building project.

- **The Importance of Independent Advocacy: 14 June 2021.** Emerging leaders attended a Zoom session to learn more about independent social advocacy and the principles and elements of this work. This session was to build on a previous workshop held in February 2020.
- **Creating Good Lives for People with Disability: 31 July 2021.** People with disability are often told by their community what they can't do. This workshop for explored what people with disability CAN do to raise expectations for themselves, family members and others, and to look at practical ways people with disability can achieve valued roles and live valued lives in family and community life.
- **Development of two videos titled:** *Why AMPARO's Advocacy Matters*. **7 May 2022.** Members of the leadership group, management committee and people with disability who had received individual advocacy and their family members, came together to talk about the work of AMPARO, and the difference advocacy can make and why. We shared lunch and filmed the discussion. At the time of writing this report the videos had not yet been finalised or uploaded to the AMPAR) website
- **New Ways Forum 7 October 2022.** 4 people with disability and 2 family members attended this forum organised by the Community Resource Unit (CRU) where they heard people with disability speaking about how they were living good lives in their communities with the support of informal and formal supports. Emerging leaders and members of AMPARO heard what is possible and how people with disability can be creative with their NDIS supports.
- **Human Rights Week – Community Conversation 9 December 2022.** This event was organised in collaboration with QLD Human Rights Commission. AMPARO helped to organise and promote this day and supported members of the management committee, staff and leadership group to attend.

Attendance varied at each event, with an average of 6 Emerging Leaders attending. A range of strategies were used to support Emerging Leaders at each event, as shown below. The most common strategies were to provide tailored information to Emerging Leaders; to facilitate opportunities for Emerging Leaders to meet members of AMPARO's Management Committee and/ or staff; and facilitating group discussion.
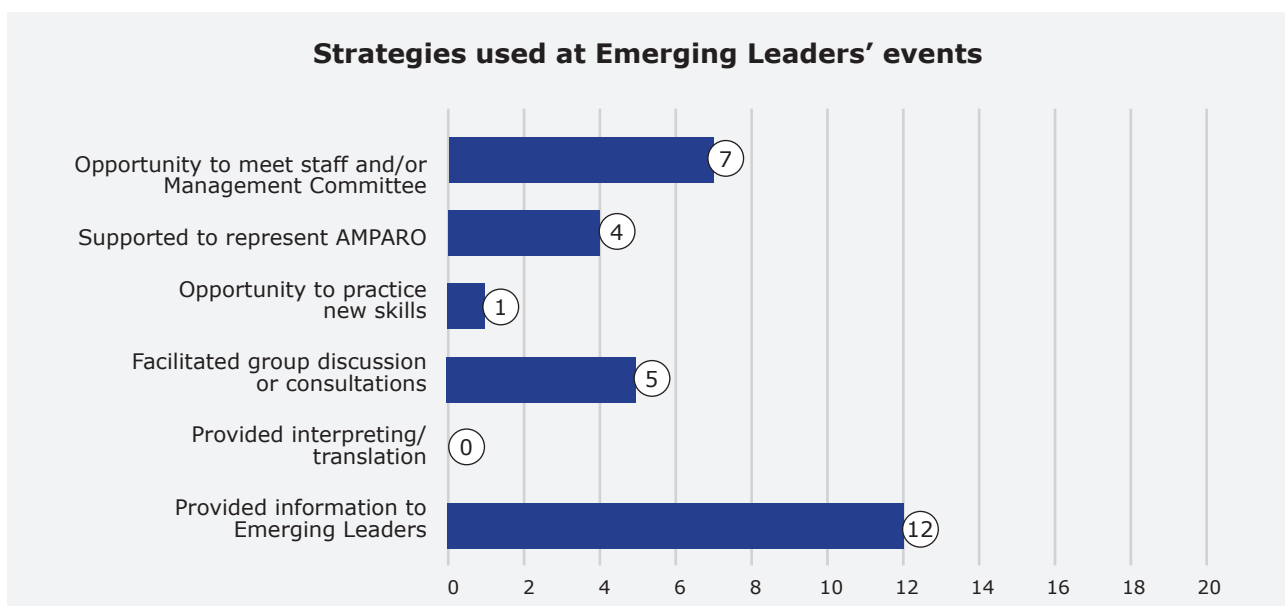
Figure 16: Strategies used at Emerging Leaders' events *(Source: Event Reports)*

Evaluation Design and Methodology

The OCB Project Evaluation engaged with project participants (known as Emerging Leaders) and staff in oversight roles, to capture different perspectives on the work and its effects.

The evaluation was guided by the following Key Evaluation Questions:

1. **What effect did the OCB project have on the capacity of people from CALD backgrounds with disability to actively participate in AMPARO's leadership and organisational processes,** particularly in relation to their:
   a. Understanding of AMPARO's vision, values and work
   b. Active involvement in leadership activities
   c. Skills and confidence to represent AMPARO to external stakeholders
   d. Skills, motivation and opportunity to engage in peer support
   e. Ownership of their own ongoing leadership and development
   f. Other outcomes.
2. **Identify and describe challenges and facilitators that affect organisational capacity building of AMPARO Advocacy Inc.**

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. The data collection methods are outlined below:

Stakeholder group	Data collection method
Emerging Leaders (people from CALD backgrounds with disability, participating in the OCB project)	Focus group (n=1) Feedback forms (n=10) Phone surveys (n=4)
OCB Project Officer	Event reports (n=14)
OCB Staff Team	Focus groups (n=2)

Table 4: **Data collection methods**

The evaluation was undertaken in collaboration with researchers from The Hopkins Centre at Griffith University, who facilitated the Focus Group with Emerging Leaders and contributed to the analysis of the Focus Group data. All other data collection and analysis was undertaken by AMPARO Advocacy Inc.
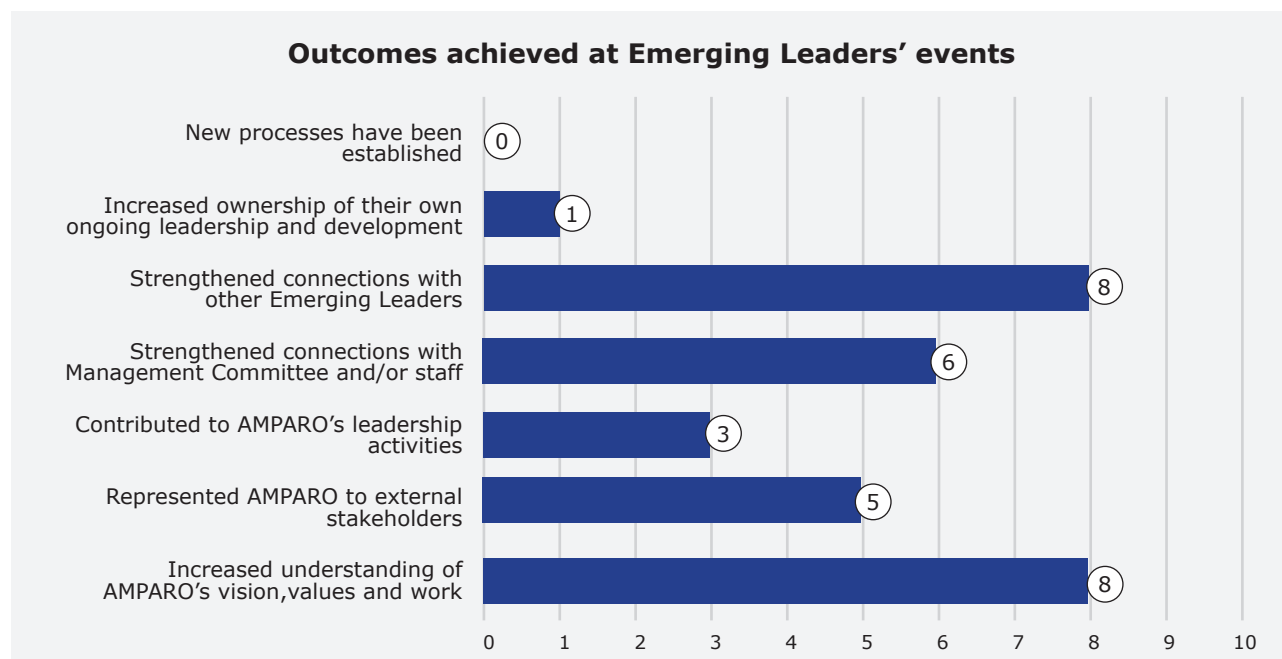
Findings

The evaluation findings are outlined in relation to each of the Key Evaluation Questions below.

1. What effect did the OCB project have on the capacity of people from CALD backgrounds with disability to actively participate in AMPARO's leadership and organisational processes?

Outcomes were analysed across five domains, each of which is explored below. In addition to these, the OCB Project Officer and AMPARO Manager reflected that the most common outcomes achieved were 'Increased understanding of AMPARO's vision, values and work', 'Strengthened connections with other Emerging Leaders', and 'Strengthened connections with Management Committee and/or staff' (see chart below).

Outcomes achieved at Emerging Leaders' events

Outcome	Value
New processes have been established	0
Increased ownership of their own ongoing leadership and development	1
Strengthened connections with other Emerging Leaders	8
Strengthened connections with Management Committee and/or staff	6
Contributed to AMPARO's leadership activities	3
Represented AMPARO to external stakeholders	5
Increased understanding of AMPARO's vision, values and work	8

Figure 17: Outcomes achieved at Emerging Leaders' events *(Source: Event Reports)*

1.1 Increased understanding of AMPARO's vision, values and work

100% of Emerging Leaders who provided feedback via the Feedback Forms or Phone Survey, 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' that they feel more connected with AMPARO and understand more about the work AMPARO does. They described their increased understanding of AMPARO's purpose, values and work in social advocacy:

"Something about AMPARO's purpose [that I learned at the Strategic Planning days] is to give - is to empower people with disability to have a voice, to be able to speak up for themselves and to assist others in the community." (Emerging Leaders Focus Group)

"AMPARO values people who works for them. They work with board members who are people with disability themselves so they value people with disability… Care for people in disability from poor background. So those are the core value of AMPARO that I've come across. Being there in their shoes." (Emerging Leaders Focus Group)

"I now feel more confident about advocacy and what it is, how it works; before I joined I knew nothing about this." (Phone survey)

"In our communities there is a cultural barrier, people from Africa, we have a fear of shame. We fear speaking up. We fear for our families. A language barrier exists. We come from war torn countries, we don't usually understand the concept of advocacy". (Participant)

The OCB staff team reflected that through building understanding of AMPARO's work, as well as learning from one another's stories, Emerging Leaders were moving from an awareness of individual issues to an understanding of systemic issues:

"A lot of comments [from Emerging Leaders] have been about people learning about other people… expanding their knowledge, but in an easy way. It's not intellectual, it's not theoretical, it's not didactic. It's uh, I can relate to that person… it's a place where people can freely say… this has happened to me. I don't think they have a lot of opportunities to do that, and it's a way of valuing that those stories because they… can see well, that's what's happened to other people and that so it's not just me. It's not that there's something wrong with me... it's a common experience of some of the systemic things that happened." (OCB Staff Focus Group #1)

1.2 Increased participation in AMPARO's leadership activities

75% of Emerging Leaders 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' that they feel that they have had opportunities to contribute to AMPARO's work.

"Since I've started I think at the beginning I was kind of reserved to myself but now I'm totally free. I became one of the board members. That was a year ago and I was kind of still reserved to myself but now I'm totally free. The office will call me or call them. I attend their Zoom meetings if there's any. I don't miss their meetings. Fully participating." (Emerging Leaders Focus Group)

The OCB Staff team reflected that the OCB project facilitated many Emerging Leaders to attend AMPARO's Strategic Planning session in 2020, which was the first time this had occurred. Additionally, four Emerging Leaders joined the AMPARO Management Committee as a result of their participation in the OCB project.

1.3 Skills and confidence to represent AMPARO to external stakeholders

100% of Emerging Leaders who provided feedback via the Feedback Forms or Phone Survey, 'Agreed' or 'Strongly Agreed' that they feel more confident to speak up and share their story.

*"The first time I spoke I was a little nervous but at end I happy and can talk and learn from others… if you meet me 2 years ago I couldn't talk. **Now I have confidence talking to people**." (Participant reflection reported in Event Report)*

In the Focus Group, one Emerging Leader expressed a desire to represent AMPARO to government decision-makers:

"[What I would like moving forward is] not only getting involved with the AMPARO decision-making as well. Possibly meeting up with the government decisionmakers. That would help in - if there's any need to do that. Step forward and do more because once you become a leader that don't mean that you become a leader always stuck in your home..." (Emerging Leaders Focus Group)

The OCB Staff team reflected that Emerging Leaders attended events they would otherwise not have attended, including an 'Advocacy for Advocacy' rally, a disability action week event, CRU training and events with AMPARO that build connections in the community. The staff team had observed Emerging Leaders speaking up at events and sharing their story, including at community consultations, sharing their experiences with the local MP at AMPARO's Members' Morning Tea, and expressing a desire to share their stories at future events.

1.4 Skills, motivation and opportunity to engage in peer support

For some Emerging Leaders, the project increased their capacity to support other people with disability and their family members in the community:

"[It is] very special [to be part of the Emerging Leaders group]. For once - or one is I am able to giving back to the community through AMPARO and the great things that AMPARO does for the community. So that's just another way of me joining AMPARO hand-in-hand and giving that back to the community." (Emerging Leaders Focus Group)

The OCB Staff Team reflected that it is difficult to assess the extent to which Emerging Leaders were active in sharing their learning with others in their communities.

1.5 Ownership of their own ongoing leadership and development

The OCB staff team reflected that this outcome was more difficult to achieve (see '4.2.1 Challenges', below):

"In my mind, there was a sense of wanting the group to take on more lead. You know to be more autonomous…that hasn't really happened… it would have required more regular ongoing meetings of people. That had been an idea… so that that they'd learn to be self-managed. A self-managed leadership group…" (OCB Staff Focus Group #1)

2. Identify and describe challenges and facilitators that affect organisational capacity building of AMPARO Advocacy Inc.

2.1 Challenges

Figure 18: **Challenges affecting the OCB project**

Impacts of COVID-19

The OCB Staff team reflected that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected the forming of group cohesion, as events had to be postponed or held online. This was particularly noted to have affected the sense of shared ownership by Emerging Leaders of their own learning and ongoing leadership development. At times, COVID-19 had directly impacted planned activities, such as an event that had to be ended earlier in the day due to a sudden lockdown being called for the Brisbane area.

Availability of Emerging Leaders to attend events

Attendance of the Emerging Leaders at the training sessions, events and meetings varied significantly across the project. The Evaluation identified a number of factors contributing to this. Emerging Leaders noted that the location of the meetings at AMPARO's office made it difficult to attend for some, even with the support of cab vouchers, as the travel time made it a long day or a late night. For others, pre-existing commitments or the impacts of their disability affected their capacity to attend. The OCB Staff team noted that it was challenging to find a time for meetings that suited everyone, due to the diversity of the group. Other Emerging Leaders noted that the voluntary nature of the group (i.e., that AMPARO did not offer remuneration for participating), may impact the extent to which people could participate.

Time required to facilitate participation in events

The OCB Staff Team noted that it takes significant time and focused effort to support the Emerging Leaders to attend and participate in events. This could be due to cultural differences, a lack of familiarity with these kinds of events and technology such as online registration or email, or the impacts of disability:

> *"It does take quite a lot to contact the Emerging Leaders to get them interested, to connect them into [the event]… It requires a phone call at the very least, and then another one before the event. Follow up. And then there's physically getting to the event… You might need to really help people. It takes time." (OCB Staff Focus Group #1)*

Building connection with AMPARO as an organisation

While relationship building was identified as a facilitator of the project (see below), the OCB Staff Team noted that it was challenging to build Emerging Leaders' sense of connection with AMPARO as an organisation, rather than their sense of connection with individual staff members (and particularly, with the OCB Project Officer and AMPARO Manager):

> *"You know, so [the OCB Project Officer] was developing these relationships with the emerging leaders. But [she] is not central to AMPARO in the sense of [the AMPARO Manager] or the advocates… So when we asked at the workshops, "How did how did you know about our project?", it was all "Jen Jen Jen" [the OCB Project Officer]… you need to talk about AMPARO because otherwise when you go on holidays they don't know AMPARO is still here..." (OCB Staff Focus Group #1)*

> *"You know, even people who've been involved with AMPARO for a long time… They'll answer my call because they know me… but they may not answer if they don't know who [a different AMPARO worker] person is." (OCB Staff Focus Group #2)*

Related to this, it was noted in the OCB Staff Focus Groups that the project was limited at times by its reliance on the OCB Project Officer. When personal circumstances impacted the availability of the Project Officer, it was difficult for the work to progress. The small amount of funding for the organisational capacity building work also made it challenging to engage staff due to the very limited number of hours of work available.

Integration of practices into AMPARO's core business

One of the key themes identified in the Focus Groups with OCB Staff was the challenge of integrating the practices and outcomes of the OCB project into AMPARO's ongoing work, particularly without funding dedicated to his.

2.2 Facilitators

Figure 19: **Facilitators affecting the OCB project**

Targeted, personal invitation recruitment of Emerging Leaders

The success of the project was facilitated by a targeted, personalised recruitment process. Firstly, potential Emerging Leaders were identified through building on AMPARO's previous projects and consulting with stakeholders in CALD communities. Secondly, recruitment was limited to people with moderate levels of English proficiency and who did not currently require advocacy, to ensure that the project had capacity to support their engagement as Emerging Leaders. Thirdly, potential Emerging Leaders were invited to join the project through a personal introduction via phone call, and often followed up by a home visit. Emerging Leaders reflected that this approach made them feel at ease and facilitated their increased involvement with AMPARO over time:

> *"Before [AMPARO] approach[ed] me by giving me a phone call and after a while then I made an appointment and somebody walked into my house and introduced me to AMPARO. That is great approach without fear, without hesitation. They don't force people into what you think is good and bad. So then I was involved in many, many trainings that was run by AMPARO to empower leaders… I attended several*

trainings or meetings where some government officials and people… [came] from the university talking to us and just giving power - empowerment to people… I've been into this for the last three years now." (Emerging Leaders Focus Group)

Responsive project design

The training events were specifically tailored to the needs and learning styles of the Emerging Leaders, based on consultation with the Emerging Leaders and training providers:

"People [from CALD backgrounds with disability] have traditionally lacked opportunities to access that training and information… People need the opportunity to access training that really is also designed for them. So the [standard SRV training that takes place over two days] I wouldn't recommend to a lot of people that were on the Emerging Leaders… I think tailoring that workshop to meet the needs of the participants worked really well." (OCB Staff Focus Group #1)

Tailoring events to the needs of Emerging Leaders included sharing personal stories, interactive activities, and opportunities for everyone to contribute. The OCB Staff Team also engaged in regular reflective practice and continuous improvement, adapting the approach where required.

Facilitating access

The participation of the Emerging Leaders was facilitated by regular, individual contact and consultation, to identify needs and address barriers:

"You have to be conscious of, OK, well, what are his needs? Can he get the train?... Do you need a taxi? So checking out what support people need, letting them know that you're going to be there so that they know that they're going to see a familiar face when they turn up and saying, look, I'll be there before you arrive because people are going to something new." (OCB Staff Focus Group #2)

Trust and rapport with AMPARO staff

Emerging Leaders and the OCB Project Officer commented on the importance of relationships of trust and rapport with AMPARO staff:

"[The staff at AMPARO are] very good. Very nice. Very kind. Very - they have empathy. This is the most important… For example, about two months ago I think I had a session… and when it's finished and the both of them, they could go and they could go to their place. But they stay with me and they open the gate and - where I - the taxi came and they - when they said okay, you're just sit on the taxi and help me and everything and then they go." (Emerging Leaders Focus Group)

Opportunities to build relationship and group cohesion

Emerging Leaders highlighted the benefits of having opportunities to build relationships with others in the group. Sharing meals and cultural experiences-built understanding of the experiences of other people with disability:

*"Better in person, good time to be with other people, meeting other people with a disability, [finding out] what their life is like. Hearing different stories, different issues, different countries, helped me understand more about it. **I feel more connected to other people with disability**; everyone is different."* (Phone survey)

Participative group processes

Relationship building and group cohesion were facilitated by participative group processes. These in turn built a sense of connection with the organisation and motivation to contribute:

*"It occurs to me that for that to work, people have to be willing to engage with it, and **there needs to be a certain level of trust and safety** in the room you know… What I do is… building safe containers for people to share stories… So you know it's sitting in the circle, that's things like… everybody checking in, it's listening, well, you know really creating a place, a ritual around listening to each other. I think that all those things in the processes are encouraged, and people know they'll have a place to share their story… you might have asked a question of the group so that people then gave really positive feedback to the person who just shared their story about what they've learned and clapped for people… And so I think **people were definitely made to feel the environment was safe… Participative process really enabled that**." (OCB Staff Focus Group #1)*

Mix of face-to-face and online meetings

Face-to-face meetings were preferred, but it was also acknowledged that occasional online meetings could enable busy people to attend.

Preparation and debrief for events

Emerging Leaders were often sent material to help them to prepare for an upcoming session, while debrief meetings were often held after events to consolidate learning and increase attendance.

Allowing time to build connection and understanding

The success of the project was also facilitated by allowing sufficient time for Emerging Leaders to build a sense of connection with AMPARO and a deeper understanding of AMPARO's work. Emerging Leaders were engaged in a range of activities which built on one another over a three-year period, rather than isolated events.

"I think it is something of people feeling connected to AMPARO and having a sense of understanding the values of AMPARO more, the purpose of AMPARO, what advocacy is. To really start to get that takes quite a long time for people… And I think that's been the benefit of the project too, and it is an ongoing process." (OCB Staff Focus Group #1)

Key Conclusions

The Organisational Capacity Building project has been highly successful in building the capacity of a core group of people from CALD backgrounds with disability and family members. As a result of this project, four Emerging Leaders are now engaged on AMPARO's Committee of Management, while others are now confident to represent AMPARO at external events and to contribute to strategic planning. **These outcomes strengthen AMPARO's connection with and representation by people from CALD backgrounds with disability and will contribute to the sustainability of the organisation.**

More specifically, the project had strong outcomes in terms of building Emerging Leaders' understanding of AMPARO's purpose, values and work; building skills and confidence; and increasing participation in AMPARO's leadership activities. It was more challenging for the project to achieve outcomes in terms of opportunities for peer support and Emerging Leaders having ownership of their own ongoing learning and leadership development.

The project's success was facilitated in large part by its personal, responsive approach and strong connections with community stakeholders. While it was time-intensive, providing individualised support to enable Emerging Leaders to attend and participate in events was critical to achieving the project's outcomes. Similarly, the investment in opportunities for relationship-building amongst Emerging Leaders, and between Emerging Leaders and AMPARO staff, led to a strong sense of belonging and motivation which contributed to the project's success. It also facilitated the sharing of personal stories, which was a key mechanism by which Emerging Leaders learned about the experiences of people from CALD backgrounds with disability and gained a deeper understanding of AMPARO's work.

Learnings for AMPARO

This evaluation has identified several learnings for AMPARO:

1. The OCB Staff Team could consult further with Emerging Leaders to identify ways to increase participation in meetings, such as reviewing the location of meetings. It is also important that Emerging Leaders are informed prior to joining the project that it is not paid work, to ensure that expectations are clear.

2. Emerging Leaders could be supported to build skills in independently arranging their own attendance at events. This was not necessarily a focus of this phase of the OCB but would reduce reliance on AMPARO staff workers in the future.

3. The OCB Staff Team could consult with Emerging Leaders and other stakeholders to develop ways to increase Emerging Leaders' ownership of their own learning and leadership development, moving forward.

4. The OCB staff team and AMPARO advocates could work together to identify ways to incorporate some of the practices and outcomes of the project into AMPARO's core business.

5. It is recommended that AMPARO build networks with qualified and experienced people who could continue the organisational capacity building work, and who could provide other options if one worker becomes unavailable.

Section III: Recommendations to the Department of Social Services – Information, Linkages and Capacity Building Team

This evaluation has identified several recommendations for the Department of Social Services – ILC Team. Many of these recommendations build on those put forward by AMPARO Advocacy Inc. in other reports and submissions.

1. **The ILC Programme needs to consider the extent of vulnerability of people from CALD backgrounds with disability and their families**, particularly those from refugee backgrounds and emerging language groups. The complex situations people are in and the level of need, impacts on the numbers of people that can be assisted at any one time. The NDIS ILC Program initial design failed to recognise the systemic barriers that prevent people being able to: access the NDIS and mainstream services, voice concerns, and exercise choice and control over many areas of their lives. While AMPARO's ILC Project has achieved significant outcomes in working with individuals and families from CALD communities, it has demonstrated the level of unmet need and extensive systemic barriers that lead to social and economic disadvantage and discrimination. The Department of Social Services should take a leadership role in bringing these issues to the attention of appropriate State or Federal Government agencies to facilitate positive changes in legislation, policy and practice. Ongoing funding is needed to expand the reach of projects like AMPARO's and build on the success to date.

2. **The NDIA must develop and implement a new CALD Strategy and Action Plan** that will address the substantial systemic issues that continue to prevent people from CALD backgrounds with disability having equitable access and participation in the NDIS.

3. **The right of people from CALD backgrounds to engage interpreters when accessing mainstream and specialist disability services needs to be promoted vigorously to all government agencies and service providers.** AMPARO's project reinforces the critical need to engage certified interpreters to ensure effective communication with this group.

4. **The Department of Social Services must address the significant unmet need of Queenslanders from CALD backgrounds with disability to access independent advocacy,** by providing additional funding through the National Disability Advocacy Program. Funding must be targeted to advocate for people from CALD backgrounds with disability.

5. **Acknowledge and fund the ongoing support to build the capacity of Disabled Persons Organisations is necessary**, to ensure people from CALD backgrounds with disability from are central in the design and delivery of all services and activities. Funding security for small independent advocacy organisations is necessary to enable an ongoing focus on capacity building of people with disability so that organisations can continue to be led by and for people with disability.

6. **Acknowledge and fund future ILC work to address issues of stigma across culturally and diverse communitie**s. Issues of stigma and shame towards people with disability were a barrier for full inclusion for many people from CALD backgrounds with disability. Addressing issues of stigma in relation to disability that broadly occurs across many communities, and contributes to the exclusion of people with disability, was not in scope for this ILC Project. Future work is necessary to address this systemic and real barrier to full participation and inclusion of people from CALD backgrounds with disability in communities.

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