



North Melbourne Football Club



**ARDEN STREET
REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT**



Australian Multicultural Foundation

***Report of Community
Consultations***

2008

**Learning and Life
Centre**

Foreword

In June 2008, the North Melbourne Football Club with the support of the Scanlon Foundation and in partnership with the Australian Multicultural Foundation unveiled its plans to build a state of the art Learning and Life Centre.

The aim of the project is to create a unique and rewarding community/sports club relationship which will include access to meeting rooms, a theatrette, an indoor sports stadium and a modern, open educational facility known as the 'Learning Centre' in the proposed Arden Street redevelopment. It is expected that construction of the redevelopment will be finalised by early 2010.

To achieve this we undertook extensive community Consultation in 3 stages to ensure that the program and learning activities delivered through the centre are relevant and appropriate in meeting the needs of the community. Community consultations took place during August and November 2008.

A key objective of the study was to determine the scope, type of projects and potential partners for the Centre.

This report reflects the key outcomes of each of the stages undertaken. The information collected through the consultation provides a solid base upon which the planning for the Centre can be developed. We want this Centre to be a place where schools and community groups want to go. It is about engaging with our multicultural and indigenous communities, and that means everyone. It is our aim to use sport and education as a unifying force to benefit all Victorians and to promote social cohesion.

In the words of Glen Archer, 'The centre will also give North Melbourne players a fantastic way of contributing their time, energy and passion to the community. We want to help young people understand that it doesn't matter what colour you are, what race you are, or what religion you have., respect for each other and learning to get along is what is important'.

We wish to thank the Scanlon Foundation for its outstanding support and advice. We would also like to thank the local community and the young people of North and West Melbourne for their enthusiasm and support in the Consultation process, together with the consultants - Maria Dimopoulos (Myriad Consultants), Faten Mohamed (Centre for Multicultural Youth) and Ahmed Ahmed (consultant) for their excellent work. We also wish to acknowledge and thank the Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Support and Recreation and Reconciliation Victoria, the Victorian Multicultural Commission and the Australian Football League for their support and partnership.

Eugene Arocca
CEO
North Melbourne Football Club

Hass Dellal OAM
Executive Director
Australian Multicultural Foundation

Introduction

“Our major reasons for doing this [establishment of the Learning and Life Centre] is to make North Melbourne relevant to Melbourne and the wider Victorian community and to engage the multicultural community using education and sport as the unifying force. The best investment for us is our members and the community”

Eugene Arocca, North Melbourne chief executive

Overview

In June 2008, the North Melbourne Football Club (the Club) unveiled its plans to build a state-of-the-art 'Learning and Life Centre' as part of the Club's Arden Street redevelopment. The Club announced that the Centre would be developed in conjunction with the Australian Multicultural Foundation (AMF), and that it “would seek to bring Melbourne's communities together by creating a modern open classroom with cutting edge educational programs for people from all walks of life”¹.

The role of sport in cultivating social connectedness and inclusion and promoting physical, mental and emotional health is being increasingly recognised by both government and community organisations and institutions. As such, one of the key objectives of the proposed Centre, which is due to begin construction in February 2009, is the empowerment of individuals and communities and the improvement of people’s quality of life through education and community development. This will include the development of a range of community and youth programs, including educational classes on numeracy and literacy and lifestyle and healthy living programs, all designed to promote community connectedness and enhance social cohesion.



Outcomes of Preliminary Discussions

Preliminary discussions between the Club, the AMF and a range of local and state-wide stakeholders had already identified possible activities for children and young people during the day, including programs targeting children aged 8-16 who would be brought into the Arden St classrooms. Innovative and creative programs could feature anti-racism and anti drug messages, and promote respect and acceptance, as well as building literacy and numeracy skills amongst children and young people.

¹ See ‘Arden Street kicks off community spirit’ 2nd June 08 kangaroos.com.au

Other preliminary suggestions included the Centre being made available after hours for use by community and adult learning groups. Some examples of programs that could be offered by the Centre included:

- English language teaching;
- Health and wellbeing programs;
- Drug and alcohol education; and
- Vocational based classes that help people from the area improve their skills and employment opportunities.

It had also been envisaged that the Centre could become a hub for people from diverse backgrounds to meet in a safe and welcoming environment. Clearly, the possibilities for such a Centre are endless. The desire to reflect the needs, concerns and aspirations of the local community is therefore reflected in the decision by the AMF and the North Melbourne Football Club to undertake a more comprehensive community consultation process.

Stages of Consultations

The development of the Learning and Life Centre is based on a commitment by the Australian Multicultural Foundation and the North Melbourne Football Club (together with the other Project Partners²) that all sectors of society should have access to lifelong learning activities, including skills development and civic education. Educational and learning empowerment is a powerful community development tool that strengthens the political, social, personal and economic capacities, skills and knowledge of individuals and communities necessary for social cohesion and community connectedness.

In order to ensure that the programs and learning activities delivered through the Centre are relevant, appropriate and meaningful, a community consultation strategy was proposed. The consultation strategy involved three stages, with separate consultants contracted to undertake the work:

- **Stage One:** General Community Consultation – undertaken by Maria Dimopoulos, MyriaD Consultants
- **Stage Two :** Consultations with Young people – undertaken by the Centre for Multicultural Youth
- **Stage Three:** Consultations with youth and families living in the Housing Estates – undertaken by Ahmed Ahmed



² The Arden Street Redevelopment Project Partners also include Federal and State Governments, Melbourne City Council, AFL and the Scanlon Foundation.

Consultations were undertaken during August and November 2008. A key objective of the consultations was to determine the scope and type of daytime and after hour programs and potential partners to be considered by North Melbourne Learning and Living Centre.

This report reflects the key outcomes of each of the above stages. Information collected through the consultations provides the foundations upon which the planning of future programs and learning activities can be developed.

Demographic Profile of North Melbourne

In considering the content and methods of program delivery, it is vital that an understanding and analysis of recent demographic data is undertaken³. Until 1 July 2008, North Melbourne was shared between the Local Government Areas of the City of Moonee Valley and the City of Melbourne, but is now entirely within the City of Melbourne. The handover of North Melbourne to the City of Melbourne has changed the municipality's age profile and the multicultural profile of the community (in particular, significantly increasing the size of the Somali-born community in the City of Melbourne).



In summary, some important points in relation to the data that should be central in the strategic thinking of the Centre include:

- North Melbourne's population has grown reasonably quickly over the past six years;
- the area has a higher median age than the municipal average;
- North Melbourne (new areas) has a high proportion of children aged under 12 years;
- it has the City's second largest concentration of older persons;
- North Melbourne (new areas) has the largest average household size in the City of Melbourne;

Education and qualifications

- North Melbourne has the municipality's largest number of school students;
- in North Melbourne (new) only 7% of residents have a Bachelor degree or higher;

Cultural diversity

- 40% of North Melbourne (total) residents were born overseas;
- the most prominent overseas birthplaces of residents are United Kingdom (3%), Malaysia (3%), New Zealand and China (7%);

³ Much of the information has been extracted from the City of Melbourne Research Paper '*North Melbourne Small Area Economic and Demographic Profile*' (2008)³.

- almost 37% of North Melbourne (total) residents speak a language other than English at home, with the percentage in newer parts of North Melbourne being as high as 61%;
- the most common languages spoken other than English, are: Mandarin (7.5%); Cantonese (7%); Somali (3%), and Vietnamese (2%).

Internet

- the area has the highest proportion of dwellings with no internet connection in the City of Melbourne, suggesting that on-line is not the best option for promotion and communication to households in this area.

Incomes

- median incomes in North Melbourne are among the City's lowest;
- the area has the City of Melbourne's third largest concentration of low income earners, on incomes less than \$250 per week;

Housing

- the predominant housing tenure in North Melbourne is rental;
- housing costs in North Melbourne are the lowest in the City of Melbourne;

In summary, the Club will need to be cognisant of the rapidly changing demographics in the area, and note that the municipality's age and multicultural profile will impact in a number of ways, including use of interpreters, provision of child care to ensure accessibility for young parents, particularly from new and emerging communities and active engagement with schools and school communities given that the municipality has the highest number of schools students.

Key Findings - Stage One

MyriaD Consultants were contracted to undertake general community consultations as part of Stage One of the Project. A concerted effort was made to capture the input of a cross-section of the local population, including social and health service providers, educators, municipal, clergy, community service groups, business people, law enforcement officials, seniors, youth, and volunteers.

Overall, key outcomes of the consultations included:

Recognition of Indigenous Local History

It was considered critical that Indigenous organisations/community bodies were identified and consulted, particularly given the historical significance of the North Melbourne area, and of course the history of Aboriginal Players in the Club itself, including the Krakouer brothers, and more recently, players such as Daniel Wells and Matthew Campbell.



The following Indigenous organizations and individuals were consulted:

- The City of Melbourne Indigenous Unit
- Institute of Koori Education – Deakin University
- Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation (MAYSAR)
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service Co-operative Ltd (VAHS)

Further discussions also took place with North Melbourne chief executive Eugene Arocca and Board members of the Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation and Reconciliation Victoria.

The following core guidelines for the operation of the Centre emerged generally from the discussions with various stakeholders, including the following principles:

- to reinforce the contribution of lifelong learning to social cohesion, active citizenship,
- intercultural dialogue and human rights.
- to contribute to increased participation in lifelong learning by people of all ages, including
- those with specific or particular needs and disadvantaged groups
- to promote language learning and linguistic diversity;
- to support the development of innovative ICT-based content, services, pedagogies and practice for lifelong learning;

- to reinforce the role of lifelong learning in creating a sense of shared citizenship and shared values based on understanding and respect for human rights and democracy, and encouraging respect and acceptance for diversity

Current community issues that may impact on the Centre and its objectives;

- Polarisation between 'new' and 'old' North Melbourne
- Lack of coordination between local services
- Disengaged youth – lack of appropriate space/activities
- Socio economic disadvantage
- Mental health/health issues generally
- Overwhelmed with 'Redevelopments'
- Inadequate meeting spaces for under resourced groups

Key community learning needs and strategies to address such needs;

- Aboriginal history and cross cultural training
- Health and Well Being – Information sessions/classes
- First Aid training – partnerships with St. Johns/MAS
- Employment Pathways – Programs to Assist Unemployed
- Language Learning
- Anti Racism/Human Rights Training
- Homework Classes
- Computer/Free Internet access
- Community Gym
- Young women/women only classes
- Arts/Theatre Classes



Factors that block learning initiatives

- Child care availability
- Structural access – issues for people with disabilities
- Venue with an institutional feel
- English language proficiency
- Financial constraints
- Gender Issues – eg, women prevented from attending
- Lack of time
- Disinterest

Factors that will promote engagement with learning initiatives

Respondents identified the following strategies to promote participation in proposed activities and programs:

- NMFC building effective and long term local relationships
- Appointment of Centre Coordinator
- Co-Location with local learning organisations
- Effective communication and clear partnerships with local agencies generally (ensure referral pathways)
- Safety
- Centre should be open on weekends particularly for young people.



Key Findings - Stage Two

The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues utilized a range of strategies simultaneously in order to obtain holistic and informed answers from the young people. The process was flexible and adaptive to ensure ownership of the consultation by the participants.

For this process, focus groups and a questionnaire were adopted. Focus groups were seen as less intimidating to young people than individual interviews and produce sound and qualitative results.

In this consultation process CMY

- Maximized control by young people by allowing them to nominate a time and place to hold the focus groups and by attending youth events
- Explained the benefits of sports, recreation and learning for young people
- Provided the young people with the opportunity to chat openly about some of the challenges they face in their everyday lives
- We spoke with young people from diverse cultural and faith backgrounds, age groups, genders and localities.

Ninety young people participated in focus groups; for some of the participants the discussion about the centre was integrated into a training session they received from CMY. The gender divide in these groups was even; 50% were females and 50% males. Some groups were gender specific but the majority of groups had participants of both genders. CMY spoke with ten groups of young people; five of the groups were of young people from the same cultural background, while the other five groups were of participants from various cultural backgrounds.



Sixty-eight participants completed a questionnaire. The young people were given the questionnaire during an **International Students Forum** in October 2008 and during a **Students Expo** at a training institute in November 2008. From the young people who completed the questionnaire 45 were males and 23 were females.

The young people we consulted with are diverse in ages, cultural/faith backgrounds and localities. Our youngest participants were 12 years of age, and the oldest participants were 30 years of age⁴.

⁴ Further information on the background of the young people who participated in the consultation process is attached at the end of this report.

Key Outcomes

The young people see themselves as playing a key role at the Centre; they do not want to be passive participants. The young people would like to be involved in coordinating activities and some have expressed interest in gaining paid employment at the Centre.

Transport

- For more than ninety percent of the young people, the Centre is a place they would visit.
- For the majority of young people public transport will be their means of travelling to the centre. For many this would involve the train, particularly those living outside inner Melbourne.
- For those who would not visit the Centre, their reasons were that it was too far from home, and they are very busy with work and study.
- For five young people challenging relationships with young people living in North Melbourne will prevent them from visiting the Centre- not sure what you are trying to say here?.

Safety

- Some of the young people expressed some concern about safety and issues they might face if there was no support from workers at the Centre.
- Some young people have requested the presence of security guards after dark.
- The young people would feel safe in the Centre if there were no alcohol or drugs present and if there was a security/police presence (although they recognised this might scare some people away who are wary of them).

Awareness/Information

- Currently, many of the young people are not accessing recreation and sporting activities. The reason for this is that they have limited knowledge/information about the services offered to young people in their local community.
- Where they are aware of services, issues such as cost and lack of culturally appropriate services are barriers to their participation.
- Most of the young people spend their leisure time in parks, beaches, shopping centres, train stations, and fast food restaurants.
- It is important for young people and their families to have information about the Centre.
- The young people want their families and them to receive information about the Centre, via postal mail, email and the Centre's website.
- All information would need to be translated into the various languages currently spoken by our new and emerging communities.
- In addition to this, some young people have informed us that their parents would want to have a phone or face-to-face conversation with Centre staff members before allowing their child/children to visit the centre.
- Some of the young people have expressed that word of mouth is the best way of spreading the word about the Centre in their communities. These young people consider their communities to be small and close knit, in which word of mouth is the best method of sharing information.

Activities

The key recommendations provided by the young people about the types of rooms and activities/ services they would like to access at the Centre have been grouped under the five topics listed below:

Centre Opening Hours

- The Centre to be open mainly on the weekends and after school hours
- Most young people will visit the Centre once a week with about 5% that will visit more than once a week.

Usage of Space at the Centre

- Access to rooms for learning how to play music and to practice music
- Access to a big room with mirrors for dance rehearsals
- Meeting rooms for youth groups
- Computer room
- Function/ conference room
- Kitchenette
- Costume room
- Prayer room
- A spiritual room
- Communal area
- Quiet room
- Music studio

Services/Activities Offered to Young People at the Centre

- Support with transport to access the centre: organise pick up points for certain groups
- Homework club
- Employment support services
- Food from different cultural backgrounds to be offered on different days in the canteen. To have halal food available for Muslim young people, vegetarian options and junk food.
- To have access to short term courses and classes (cooking classes, hospitality courses, retail courses, forklift courses, IT courses)
- Support to access cheaper driving lessons
- Photography and video production courses
- Different courses at different times – young people’s interest changes over time; it’s good to check with the young people every few months
- Courses to learn how to DJ for young women
- Multimedia classes
- Information about volunteering opportunities in the community



Recreation and Sports at the Centre

- Soccer
- Cricket
- Tennis
- Basketball
- Football
- Badminton
- Aerobics
- Swimming/ Sauna
- Community GYM
- Sporting competitions and tournaments
- All sporting equipment to be provided for young people by the centre
- Table tennis
- Billiard
- Different players from different clubs to visit the centre
- Football players show us tricks
- Raffle tickets – free tickets to football games
- Have a police GYM – to build better relationships between police and young people
- Trivia nights
- Sing star competitions
- Rooms for drama groups
- Girls nights only – cultural fashion shows

Workers to Support the Young People Accessing the Centre

- Some of the football players
- Sports coordinator
- Social worker/ youth worker
- Peer mentors (young people working at the centre in volunteer capacity) Legal practitioners
- Housing support workers
- Counsellors

The young people we spoke with are excited about the idea of the Centre. They are appreciative of the process that was undertaken to ensure their voices are heard and hope their recommendations will be considered. For many the Centre will provide them with opportunities currently not available to them. It is hoped that the Centre will be bringing the young people together to appreciate their similarities and to understand their differences.

Key Findings - Stage Three

Stage Three of the Project was conducted by Ahmed Ahmed who designed and implemented an engagement strategy with young people from diverse backgrounds, with a particular focus on the North Melbourne, Flemington and Kensington Estates.

Methodology

Young people, particularly from migrant and refugee backgrounds, who are living in low socio economic environments, have historically been excluded from various social and political engagement processes. So a critical part of the process was the need to generate trust and confidence within the young people around the objectives of the project.

A considerable amount of time was spent informally assessing the nature and extent of current and potential barriers to engagement. Overall key reasons for disengagement included:

- Distrust in authority
- Previous experiences which has resulted in cynicism
- Social dislocation
- Feelings of not belonging
- Experiences of racism
- Inadequate education.
- Lack of opportunities

Another key factor was the fact that many young people have not traditionally been drawn to AFL, preferring instead to play soccer.

Design of Questionnaire

A critical element of designing the consultative strategy was to engage young people and community in the process itself. It was through this process, that they were then able to further engage in discussion around their particular needs in relation to a potential learning centre.

This participatory method of engagement is very culturally appropriate and relevant, and is an extremely effective way of getting feedback from young people and community who are disengaged. It also quickly became apparent that through this process, that the participants felt that they owned the project, and so were more likely to get others involved.

Youth Response.

- Majority of the Young people expressed that the best suitable time the life and learning centre is accessible is during the evening.
- Most of the young people would like to see it open Monday to Friday.

- Although names of some individuals were raised as potential workers at the centre many of the participants have mentioned that someone respectful and understanding would be best suited to work with young people, they also added someone who respects and understands confidentiality.
- When the question ‘will the structure of the facility be closed for the private use of girls’ was asked, there were many different answers, with the majority opting for the YES answer.
- On the other hand there was no opposition to the catering side of things with the overwhelming majority deciding on healthy HALAL food.
- The transport side of the issue was seen as a critical part of the life and learning centre.
- Many of the young people have mentioned that a prayer room should be dedicated to those young people who want to perform their daily prayers.
- And when the question was asked will you use if there was a prayer room available a significant number of girls and boys said YES.
- Many of the young people have expressed their interest of having a variety of activities running from the Life and Learning Centre.
 - The activities the young people mentioned include; Indoor Soccer, Basketball, Footy, table tennis and billiards.
 - The young people also expressed their will in participating in recreational programs such as camps, one day activities such as go-carting and paintball, this activities will be most required during the school holidays. School holiday programs were seen to be an integral part of the centre’s activities.
- With many of the young people still at school it made sense that young people were given the chance to express what sort of educational facilities they would like to see the centre provide.
 - Many of the participants said that tutors will be best used if they were available.
 - And the subjects the young people stated they require help with was; Math’s, English and Science subjects. This request was coming from Secondary students.
- With many of the young people from migrant backgrounds and diverse communities, an AFL multicultural program was very much expressed by the young people. And although their thoughts of what multicultural programs varied, they all had something in common. The need for people from diverse backgrounds to interact and participate in similar activities.
- Some of the multicultural activities mentioned by the young people include; Football matches, BBQ’s, Forums and community days.



Community response.

- Although the majority of the community welcomed the design and construction of the centre, they strongly expressed their views about how the centre should be run.

- One of the main points to come out of their concerns was to have more educational programs running alongside sports and recreational activities.
- The community reiterated the importance of having qualified tutors available throughout the year. This is important because many of the families cannot afford to pay tutors for the children.

Appendix A – List of Individuals/Organisations Consulted

- The City of Melbourne Indigenous Unit
- Institute of Koori Education – Deakin University (Lisa Thorpe)
- Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association (Dr. Mark Rose)
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service Co-operative Ltd (VAHS) (Reg Thorpe)
- Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (Sam Afra)
- Victorian Multicultural Commission (Stephen Dimopoulos)
- Action on Disabilities in Ethnic Communities
- Rotary Club of North Melbourne
- Oznam House
- North & West Melbourne Precinct Association
- Doutta Galla Community Health Services
- Women’s Health West
- Centre for African Australian Women’s Issues
- North Melbourne Language Literacy (Joanne Goodman – Manager)
- The Centre (focus group/Interview with Thea Bates, CEO)
- Arden Street Supporters
- The Kangaroos Network of Women (KNOW) (Jo Thurton)
- YMCA Victoria (Samantha Darcy Centre Director)
- North Melbourne Pool
- Essendon Football Club
- AFL (Nick Hatzoglou, Manager, Multicultural Unit)
- City of Moonee Valley (Nalika)
- City of Melbourne -
- Stratcorp Consulting

Appendix B -Demographic Details of Young People

The backgrounds of young people who participated in the consultation process included the following;

Cultural groups:

- Eritrean
- Somali
- Ethiopian
- Chinese
- Indian
- Colombian
- Nepalese
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Fijian
- Malaysian
- Indonesian
- Sierra Leonean
- Liberian
- Chilean
- Thai
- Peruvian
- Mauritian
- Egyptian
- Lebanese
- South Korean
- Sudanese
- Niue/ Cookie
- Maori
- Filipino
- Cook Islander
- Samoan
- Tongan
- Kenyan
- Filipino
- Macedonian
- Syrian
- Burmese/ Australian
- Australian
- Liberian
- Burmese
- Chin
- Afghani

Faith groups:

- Muslim
- Christian
- Buddhist
- Hindu

Localities:

- Sunbury
- Roxburgh Park
- Footscray
- Sunshine
- Altona
- Werribee
- Hoppers Crossing
- Braybrook
- Laverton
- Flemington
- North Melbourne
- Kensington
- Lalor
- Epping
- Preston
- Glenroy
- Keilor Downs
- Springvale
- Reservoir
- Brunswick
- Kew
- Bundoora
- Dayton
- Prahran
- Elsternwick
- East Brunswick
- Broadmeadows
- Cranbourne North
- Maidstone
- Yarraville
- Sunshine West
- Carlton North
- Upfield
- Malvern East
- Campbellfield
- Ormond
- Caroline Springs
- Melbourne city
- Southbank
- Coburg
- St. Albans
- Noble Park

- Clayton
- Caulfield
- Carlton
- Springvale
- Donvale
- Kingsville
- Croydon
- Ringwood
- Bentleigh

- Springvale
- Essendon
- Boxhill
- Victoria Park
- West Footscray
- Ascot vale
- Burnside
- Thomastown
- Reservoir

