

2. Methodology

Sample - Summary

Interviews

- 20 Interviews with local government community workers in each of the LGAs in the top twenty council areas, with the exception of Stirling in WA.
- 20 community initiative organisers
- 35 Individuals involved in selected initiatives via focus group discussion.
- 10 Interviews with Muslim-Australian Non-Participants
 - Syrian, Palestinian, Lebanese, Fiji-Indian, Afghani, African, Pakistani.
- Interviews with 18 individuals (in 3 Focus groups) of Anglo-Celtic extraction, resident in the Sutherland Shire

Questionnaires

- 20 Questionnaires were sent to the top twenty LGAs. Response rate of 13
- 65 Questionnaires sent to case study locations. Response rate of 33.

The research methodology for the study comprised a mix of web-based reviews, a survey, stakeholder interviews, and case studies of selected initiatives. Specifically:

An audit process of local initiatives

An audit was undertaken of local initiatives in Australia aimed at building positive relationships between Muslim and non-Muslim-Australians. The audit involved:

- **Analysis of existing research data** obtained from the 'Building Neighbourhood Harmony' *Living in Harmony* partnership to identify councils who have undertaken relevant initiatives directed towards Muslim-Australian communities in their jurisdiction;
- **Web-based review** of grass-roots and local government initiatives in Australia;
- Visited each of the **top 20 councils** (as identified in the 2006 Census) to **interview key staff** to assess the number, quality and type of initiatives undertaken there;
- **Online survey of top 20 councils** which asked them to list all harmony initiatives targeted at Muslim-Australians their council has convened in the last five years. The survey also sought their views on what the most effective programs are, and the barriers to implementing them, and;
- **Meetings, email and telephone contacts** with a range of representatives and community leaders in Muslim-Australian communities to gather information on and seek views about initiatives of which they have knowledge or have been a part of.

International web-based review of best practice.

A web-based review of local initiatives was conducted in Australia and overseas, particularly in the UK, Western Europe and Canada to identify best practice. Selected initiatives were followed up through email contact and telephone interviews with organisers.

Case Studies

Nine (9) Australian initiatives were selected as case studies. Case studies were identified to achieve a representative spread of initiatives and target groups. The aim of the case studies was to provide in-depth, qualitative insight into participant experiences; to assess the impact in terms of the stated aims of the initiative, especially in terms of achieving attitudinal change; to explore the characteristics of the participants, and explicitly identify the range of contributing factors to the success (or otherwise) of each initiative under examination so as to facilitate possible future replication or further development.

Questionnaire: Participants in selected case studies were asked to complete a questionnaire providing basic demographic data and their evaluation of the initiative.

Focus group discussions: The research team conducted nine (9) focus group discussions with Muslim-Australian and non-Muslim-Australian participants of selected initiatives.

- Nine (9) focus groups were conducted with participants across nine (9) case study initiatives. These included both Muslim-Australian and non-Muslim-Australian participants who were asked about their experiences, perceptions and views of the initiative they were involved with.
- Council and Community Groups: Seventeen (17) interviews were conducted with council staff and representatives of community organisations involved with selected initiatives. Their views were sought on the effectiveness of the initiatives, sustainability, special successes and barriers to community participation.

Interviews with Non-Participants (the 'disengaged')

- A total of twenty (20) Non-participants, who we have termed 'the disengaged', were interviewed in a mixture of individual and focus group based interview formats.
- The 'disengaged' group in the study were selected according to two criteria: one, that they self-identified as not having previously been involved in any organised 'community harmony' type activity; and two, they reported little or no involvement or contact with community based organisations.
- Ten Muslim and Ten non-Muslims were interviewed about why they would or would not participate in local initiatives, their experiences and views of such initiatives and barriers to participation.
- They were also interviewed about informal or unofficial forms of inter-cultural/interfaith engagement they have been a part of or know of, and about their views on 'mixing' with those of other faiths.

Top Twenty LGAs

The top twenty Local Government Areas in terms of the number of Islamic persons resident within them according to 2006 Census data are, in order of magnitude:

Rank	LGA	No. Muslims
1.	Bankstown	25996
2.	Hume	19688
3.	Canterbury	17792
4.	Auburn	16111
5.	Liverpool	13740
6.	Blacktown	12463
7.	Parramatta	12120
8.	Brisbane	10868
9.	Moreland	10618
10.	Greater Dandenong	9875
11.	Rockdale	8897
12.	Brimbank	8407
13.	Fairfield	7896
14.	Holroyd	7478
15.	Casey	7475
16.	Whittlesea	6763
17.	Campbelltown	6371
18.	Darebin	4848
19.	Stirling	3921
20.	Wyndham	3656

*Table: Top Twenty councils in terms of number of Muslim residents
ABS 2006 Census*