

Creative Dialogue & Design (CDD)

Community Dialogue Workshop

Report

Introduction

From April 2011 to the end of October 2011 thirteen community members from the greater Brisbane area met to continue the intercultural community dialogues which were started through the Diverse Brisbane Community Cafés. Participants came from various Aboriginal, mainstream Australian, Middle-Eastern, African and Asian backgrounds. The group used a small group dialogue process called *Creative Dialogue & Design (CDD)* to structure the conversation and to record the results of the discussion. This report outlines the results of this dialogue.

The process was facilitated by Serge Loode from the University of Queensland and used as part of an action research process for his doctoral thesis. The CDD dialogue had three phases: problem-mapping, vision-mapping and action planning. The group asked two questions and then answered these through in-depth discussion, dialogue and sharing of experience. Then they planned a number of projects which arose from the joint discussion. CDD uses a computer software to record the ideas and stories that are shared during the dialogue.

Representation and use of personal stories and views

Members of the CDD dialogue group participated as individuals, and while they talked about problems their communities were facing, they did so not as official representatives but as individuals with inside knowledge. This report aims to share the outcomes of the dialogue with the wider community and to provide anyone interested in doing so with the opportunity to join our conversation and to respond to the problems identified and the vision created.

The group acknowledges that some stories and experiences may sound offensive to others. They do not necessarily represent general trends and they do not mean to stereotype individuals or communities. They represent the participants' individual experiences and the stories they shared as a group. Sometimes these stories are reported in first person singular if they originated in the experience of a particular group member. In other cases they are reported using the pronoun "we" to indicate that this is a view which was shared by a number of group members.

The issues raised were typed into the CDD software as they were discussed by the group. The information in this report stems directly from this data. As

different people were speaking and writing at different times, the style of language varies.

Problem-mapping question

What significant barriers hinder our communities from building better relationships with each other?

The group originally identified 67 different barriers, which stand in the way of communities connecting better and building better relationships. Some of these problems were more pressing than others, some were overlapping, some were connected with each other. Throughout the meetings the group refined their answers, and created a map of the problems and how they influence each other. Through this process they reduced the 67 original barriers to 18 at the end of the problem-mapping phase.

The map in the appendix to this document lists the 18 barriers and how they influence each other. Barriers in stages 1 and 2 are the root causes, which communities grapple with. Barriers in stage 3 are the problems encountered most often and the problems in stages 4 and 5 of the map are the results, the effects of the root causes. Barriers that are in the same box influence each other and cannot be dealt with separately. The arrows represent the pathways in which groups of barriers influence each other. The number in brackets behind each problem refers to its place in the original list of 67 problems. Below are explanations by the group of the elements identified in the map. Below are the explanations for the 18 elements:

Individualism favoured over collectivism (18)

In the West people have existed in the primacy of the individual. In other places people have existed in the primacy of the collective. It is a trend in development and modernisation to move from the collective to the individual. When some communities come to Australia (mainstream Australia is individualist) they are collectivist peoples, but here they turn towards individualism. Modernisation is seen as a move from the collective to the individual. Communities are now forced to live by 'one man one vote' and Western ideas of human rights and individualism. An example is a group of South Sudanese youths at a park or at a train station: everyone (in mainstream society) assumes that they are up to no good because they are not individualist. The youths are just living out their collectivist identities. This is similar for Aboriginal young people. An example from a school in Logan: there were always groups of Samoan young people playing cricket or footy and hanging out. In our experience if Aboriginal young people would do this they could be targeted by the police. It's a problem for the young people growing up here and changing their views. Their parents are still collectivists, but the young people grow up in the individualist culture. An African child is a son or daughter of the whole community. Because of that an uncle can discipline a child. Here in Australia the uncle has no right to do so because he is not part of the inner family.

Lack of respect (32)

In Aboriginal culture a young person is taught to respect their elders and parents. Your elders have lived a lifetime and have gained many experiences that you need to recognise. Leadership from parents must come shining through the children. Elders will not tell, they will advise a child. This respect for elders is lacking in a lot of societies. Elders are trying to bring this respect back. Acknowledge what you stand for and what we stand for. A recent example: at Roma St train station there was an elderly lady with a big suitcase that she could not carry easily by herself. I felt that she needed help carrying the luggage. I asked her if I could help. This was a sign of respect and it is important in my culture. I have to give more respect to the older people. Race does not matter. If someone needs help you show respect by helping them. The greatest respect you can give to someone is to say thank you. Respect is more important than earning money. It is also important for future generations. Respect cuts both ways. To get to know someone is better than to be ignorant. You cannot buy respect. Respect is the greatest achievement. You have to give respect to receive respect.

Lack of cultural awareness and differences (6)

When I first went to the first large group Community Café Dialogue at Moorooka State School it was the first time I ever spoke to someone from South Africa, Sudan, Burma or Cook Islands. There was an element of surprise for me that I would be accepted by the different communities. I did not know what their concerns and cultural etiquette was and they did not know about me. This created silent tension and anxiety in me. I think this not knowing is what keeps people separated and hinders a more inclusive community.

This also comes back to education and information in schools. We did not know that we could get along. People go in with expectations. It was a big positive surprise to me to attend the dialogue. It helped that we went around the circle and introduced each other. I developed a better cultural awareness.

"Red-neckism" Racism (29)

We have experienced different forms of racism. There is racism from mainstream Australians against Aboriginal people and against migrants. There is also racism between Aboriginal people and migrants and between migrants and migrants. And finally there is racism from the mainstream institutions against people from non-mainstream backgrounds.

Communities, which are migrant communities themselves, practice racism against other emerging communities. I have experienced people from Asian cultures turn their back towards me and do not want to talk to me (I am of African background). Maybe an explanation was that they were students. When you come to study here the interest is to study here and then to go back to your country and you may not want to learn much more about others.

Racism also exists in different treatment from government. Immigration at the airport is an example. If you have dark skin you are more often interrogated or delayed than if you have white skin. The way that they put the questions is rude, denigrating, it makes you nervous. Officers opened my passport and tried to look whether I had faked my picture. They even damaged the paper of the document.

If you are from a different background, you have to work twice as hard, study twice as much and constantly prove yourself. People keep on asking me where I learned my English and they would not believe me or would think that people do not speak English in my home country. Most Africans here are overqualified for the jobs that they are doing but cannot get a better job here. I heard from other students that they feel that their lecturers do not expect them to do well because they come from a different country. There are patients in medical practices who say they do not want to be touched by an African doctor. It hurts when you hear that. I had to sit an English test before coming to Australia although I taught English at university level in my home country.

Lack of standing together in strength in diversity (lack of dialogue) (20)

We are trying to recover what we have lost. I did not know what a community dialogue looked like until I went to Moorooka State School and participated. It's that lack of curiosity to learn from others and to get to know others which stands in the way of communities connecting. I was ignorant about other cultures. You are caught up with your own lot and you are not worrying about anybody else. When I did finally go to the dialogue, it opened up my eyes, my heart and everything else. Usually at community meetings nothing gets done. At a lot of Aboriginal meetings there is a lot of fighting. I have seen someone have a heart attack at a community meeting because there was no dialogue at the meeting. It was frightening to see. This process is totally different. It is about accepting each other. It is also about the ability for one person to be accepted as a facilitator to keep the dialogue moving. It is about dialogue in community. It is a community effort. The tribal instinct is there and it creates barriers and separation. Maybe this is something that is also connected to the individualism and collectivism. Some African communities here in Australia tends to be more individualistic than their counterparts in Africa, while others maintain their collectivist roots better.

Lack of shared language problems (2)

Sometimes lack of knowledge of a common language like English is the problem. But shared language problems go deeper and contain more.

Not knowing of how the other one talks. It's about breaking down barriers. It's about knowing that someone is different and that they speak differently. Some people get up and talk to the clock on the wall and not the people in the room. Body language is very important. If I cannot speak English with someone then I try to express myself non-verbally. Sometimes it is very hard to understand someone who has not grown up with the same language. It takes time to understand. We have experienced this in this dialogue. We understand each

other better after having been together for a number of sessions. Sometimes not looking at someone is something that we have learned as children. If something is interesting we follow each other in conversation with our eyes. Sometimes not looking at someone eye to eye is a sign of respect because that is how they were brought up and it is a habit. We need to learn more about each other to know when it is a sign of respect and when not.

Australian legislation is not accommodating to emerging communities (21)

It is the government's role to create and change legislation. Sometimes these changes do not filter down to the ordinary people. Emerging communities do not understand the legislation. It would be good if there was an agency where people from all countries or walks of life could go to find information. Tax law is an example. My friend tried to do his own tax and ended up owing the Australian Taxation Office more than \$400. I went to a company to find work and they said that only if you are an Australian resident you can lodge your CV. Why do I have to be a resident? What does it mean to be a resident? Can people on student visas apply?

A lot of African parents are losing their children to child safety services because their way of bringing up their children is against the law here in Australia. It is difficult to understand and learn this law. And you can't refer every question of law to the legal profession because it is not affordable.

Aboriginal people are feeling similar pain. We are also going through the second generation of stolen children in Aboriginal communities because child safety is taking away our children because we do not bring them up according to white law. Some white people think that if we allow our Aboriginal children to run around in nappies or only short shorts this means neglect. It is not neglect, they can walk around in the sun with their dark skin. The white system does not allow that. On the other hand not everyone is doing the right thing with their children, and the law needs to protect the children. There are two sides to every coin.

In Mozambique they do community consultations before they draft laws and they try to integrate the views of the communities. A law should be good for everybody. Another example is that it is perfectly natural in some countries for a woman to show her breasts but to cover her legs. Here in Australia a lot of women show their legs but find it offensive to show their breasts. Because of our different world views it is normal that we don't understand and need to learn from each other. Often the learning comes too late because we are not informed of what people or the state expect of us.

I spend a lot of money coming to Australia and now I am uncertain if I am allowed to stay and I cannot get a job because they only want people with permanent residency. There is no leeway in the law and it disadvantages people like me. One of the migration agents said that people from Africa cannot stay while people from Asia can stay. And I was told that I have problems because I am from Africa.

Stolen identities and language (59)

The legacy of the Stolen Generations still impacts strongly on Aboriginal peoples. This has an impact on all of us. Aboriginal people who are Stolen Generation find it really hard to identify who they are themselves and to get acceptance within their own communities. It is even harder for them to connect with other communities. This problem could also affect other people, for example from Africa, who were taken from their land or removed from their families through war.

Preconceived ideas (5)

We have encountered a preconceived idea in the existing Australian mainstream population that people from African countries have all lived in the desert herding cows. A lot of people who come have degrees and higher education. The preconceived idea is that if you are black you are uneducated. There is also the preconceived idea that Aboriginal people are drunks in the park.

Realising that we all also have preconceived ideas is embarrassing. People assume. This is often also an issue connected to communication and education. People who are good communicators have less preconceived ideas. If you do not know about communication then you have less access to information and you easily have more preconceived ideas.

Lack of harmony prevents working in unity (51)

There is harmony among us in this community dialogue. For example: there are five different people here who can work in harmony. There is often a lack of that in other community groups. There is no hostility here in the room. No angry person. Harmony is about sharing. We can take what we have learned here outside. That is our mission statement. We want to spread the word about us working in harmony so that others can join us and create an inclusive society. There are so many factors that divide you that you don't look for the things that unite you. There also seems to be harmony in Australia compared to other countries which are torn apart by war. But it is fragile. Our communities are not standing together. And too often we do not engage in dialogue.

"Black and white" policy (30)

This refers to the 'White Australia' policy. For a time, only English migrants were allowed into Australia. No people from Asia or other backgrounds. In 1973 we finally abolished the White Australia policy. The Indigenous peoples of Australia also did not have the right to vote. As an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander you were accepted as a soldier when you went to war, but you were not allowed to sit with your soldier mates at home in the same pub. Because of this policy Australia is still seen as a 'White Man's Country'. You rarely see Aboriginal peoples in the media. You see Asian young people now, and sometimes African young people, but rarely Aboriginal young people.

In commercial or government areas it is still evident that it is a white man's country. Only after coming here from Africa I learnt that there were black people who were the first Australians. Aboriginal people are seen in the same context as migrant people. They are a minority. Now Aboriginal people are out more through sports than in any other area. We feel that in regional areas we have experienced separation along colour of skin: 'You are black and I am white. You are the worker and I am the boss.' When people are still children they don't see this, but when they grow up they learn it from their role models.

Neglect of responsibility (10)

Responsibility is a big duty, for example to deliver services to your community. There are two kinds of responsibility: one is feeling responsibility, the other is showing responsibility. Sometimes community leaders only show responsibility, but they do not feel it. Breaking commitments is neglect of responsibility. When people give you trust, you have to fulfil your responsibility. Neglect of responsibility is also a problem at the personal level. If everyone says: let's leave it to someone else to solve this problem, then the problem grows. Everyone has to take responsibility for their own good actions. Responsibility is a joint community effort.

Perceived cultural differences (1)

Perceived cultural differences induce an element of surprise, psychological withdrawal, tension and fear. When we come together with people from different nationalities or cultural backgrounds we often take a step back and ask ourselves how are we going to handle it.

An example is shaking hands: will I shake his hand if he does not want to shake mine? We have a hugging system in the Aboriginal community. That is what we do. There is also the embracing and kissing among aunties and uncles. What if other communities find this offensive or uncomfortable?

We have to understand about different cultures. Then we learn to follow someone else's different cultures and protocols. And it is important to accept and explore these.

Moral panic through media (12)

The media has a strong influence on public opinion. Sometimes it creates something of a moral panic among some communities. Examples are panic about Muslims, Afghans, Aboriginals. Some media outlets exploit it. Another good example is raising children in remote areas. They don't see the good things, like good young leaders growing up in remote communities. They only tell half the truth and pander to what they think is the biggest audience. A bad story sells more papers than a good story that is true. Shock jocks on talk-back radio where people ring in fire up this panic. The media is a kind of business. We often think that profit is more important than balanced reporting.

Lack of fresh thinking to build a better relationship (57)

We have too much of celebrating food, festivals, fashions and dances. We should learn about other people's lives. We should go beyond food. We need to dialogue and listen to each other. We need to build friendship. The talk that is missing should be inclusive. It should be across cultures. It can only be done through dialogue. We should engage in more joint action. Like children's playgroups. We have to tell stories of old and new. New ideas require safety and space for the ideas to come up. An example of the positive effects is the refugee community of people who have escaped Burma/Myanmar. Here in Australia people from Burma can think about fresh ideas. In Burma we can't think. If three or more people meet there together they are suspicious and they can get persecuted. We need to make more personal connections through meetings.

Lack of courage and self-confidence (35)

If people start from different backgrounds, courage and self-confidence, and they give their opinion the general public sometimes labels them radicals. The general public tends to class them as trouble makers if they express opinions opposed to the norm. A lot of people won't put themselves out there. If someone comes from another country and gets up and makes public statements, then they are labelled trouble makers. It is the same for Aboriginal people and for newly arrived people. Aboriginal people will sometimes also put other Aboriginal people down. They say you talk like a white man, you dress like a white man. You have to be very strong to stand up to this. You have to defend and defend and defend. It pushes you to your limits sometimes. There are two kinds of people: some will earn respect quietly, others (often young ones) will speak out. Some older people say that the louder young ones are bossy. We're in 21st century and we have to adapt to the changes and let the younger people talk. Sometimes when talking to other elders when you bring a new idea to the table the other elders say "but you have got the education that I never got".

When you have a dominant culture then every other culture has to be careful in how they interact. Brisbane is a white culture. How often do you see black African people walk around? If you are African you sometimes try to restrain yourself and you can't interact freely. An example is our experience with child rearing in African cultures: in some African cultures people do not use prams, they are carrying their babies on their backs. But African women here are not confident enough to do that in the city. They think they have to use prams because everyone else does. In Moorooka they carry their babies on their backs. That's because there are more of their own people there. People try to fit into the dominant culture. The dominant culture is free to make mistakes and to be adventurous, but the minority cultures are not free to do that.

Lack of patience and understanding (38)

Some people don't want to listen and understand. All of us often don't take time to listen. We make quick judgements. There is an old Aboriginal saying "they hear but they do not listen". It's like in a disco or club dancing to the

sound but not listening to the music. And when you cannot listen you cannot understand or empathise.

Poor bugger-me (37)

“Poor bugger me” is an old Aboriginal saying. People called Aboriginal people poor buggers and then the Aboriginal people responded by saying "poor bugger me". It's a syndrome among people. You are carrying a grudge. You cower down to others and accept that they treat you badly. Instead of being “poor bugger mes” we should be standing proud and putting our head high. It has changed in the last ten years with Aboriginal people and white people, there is much less cowering than there was before. But it is still happening and it is not just happening in Aboriginal communities.

Vision-mapping question

What goals do we need to achieve as a group to build a better Brisbane community?

After the group had discussed the problems they created a vision of what goals they wanted to achieve to build a more cohesive, inclusive and friendly community. They identified 32 goals, which could help achieve this aim and then reduced this number to 13 goals through dialogue and a voting step. The final 13 goals were structured again into a map to visualise the plan.

The map in the appendix needs to be read in a similar way to the problem map. Elements on the left (stages 1 and 2) are core goals. If they can be achieved then it will be much easier to achieve the goals on the right side (stages 4 and 5). Goals in stage 3 are central, they depend on some success with the core goals but they also can be addressed together for a strong positive effect. Goals which are listed in the same box influence each other and need to be addressed together. The arrows point out pathways of influence. The numbers in brackets behind each goal statement refer to its number in the original list of 32 goals. Below are the explanations for the 13 goals identified by the group.

Providing people with due respect and a lived experience of this respect (30)

First we give an example of the problem: when I studied at TAFE to learn English I was also working full time at the same time. I first had a very good teacher who was like a mother. Then we got another teacher who told us she would "push us like a donkey". I was not going to fight with her, I left the TAFE but I felt disrespected and disappointed. It is similar in some schools. Teachers need to manage their own behaviour in class. If teachers treat two students in different ways, one as a human being and one as an animal, then the students will fight.

Students need to learn friendship roles. Children and adults need to be nurtured. The word “nurture” should always be there. I have seen it in schools

that teachers put children down. Instead of nurturing they embarrass the children in front of the class. You don't put any person down in front of anyone else. Teachers should talk with the class like we are talking in this dialogue.

In the Hazara Sunday School where I teach we have a different way of dealing with inappropriate behaviour. When students do something wrong, I advise them in front of everyone else that they are hurting others without shouting at them or throwing them out of class. If they did something really wrong I would talk to their parents. I ask the students if they would like it if the same was done to them and they often say "no". I talk with the students and parents on how to help the children grow up.

Another way is to give people the opportunity to tell their ideas and to listen to them. This is another example of lived respect. Listening is very important. Listen with an open heart and mind. Sitting together as friends.

Help people accept and own the changes in society (29)

To help achieve an inclusive society we must acknowledge that we have moved forward. By people accepting the changes that have happened in our lives we help in building a more inclusive society. Most people here in Brisbane are not here temporarily, they are part of the society and community. We need to help them to accept that our society has changed and is now multicultural. Australia is no longer what it was in 1850. We need to teach the younger generation about that. It is important to put it into the society. Especially at school. This is also teaching people to accept common humanity. When you teach young people that Captain Cook discovered Australia you are distorting history. The Aboriginal people of Australia discovered Captain Cook when he came to their shores.

Educate our young people in cultural diversity starting in schools (9)

We have an idea on how to do this: it can be done through an advisory committee. It can be good for young people to see us sitting in unity. This can help with activities and prevent fighting. They see us as united elders and this can help them.

It's all about getting young people not to use their fists. It also shows the children that we are there to help them and not sit there and pass judgment. It is important to build stronger connections between young people in school with their elders in the community.

In many high schools there are no parent committees, and if there are committees there are often only white mainstream Australian people on the committees. There are special classrooms for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Why are there no Afghani or Rohingya rooms to acknowledge these students in the schools? If there was a multicultural advisory council then probably the principals at schools could relax more. When children see their parents in the school they will think that the parents are looking after their future. Normally parents only come to school if there is a

problem. It is not about forcing children to learn something but to discuss with them why it is important.

Creating equal opportunities (7)

If we put all communities together we will have a bright, clear and very helpful society for the future and the next generation. Let us provide an example from the business world: opportunities need to be open to everyone. Virgin Australia, for example, employs people from all different ethnic backgrounds. It is important to see that a cross-cultural section of society is employed. Another example is the police: there should be people from all different sections of Qld society working in the police service. Equal opportunity is important for everyone to live peacefully. It prevents conflict and problems. This also means that we as a group need to raise our voice, point out the problem to people in seats of influence and assist each other. We feel that there is not enough employment across cultural groups in many of our services and businesses.

Building group capacity to advocate for themselves instead of advocating for them (31)

It is important that we acknowledge people's self-determination and their needs when trying to help. An example from work with mental health clients who experienced unhealthy life choices and overweight conditions may illustrate this. Initially it was decided in my organisation which started a program to help these people that it was a problem which could be fixed through a diet. Resources, facilitators and time were provided to change people's diets. There was no effect over two years. Then we realised the reason for the unhealthy lifestyle choices were restricted access, stigma in community and lack of self-confidence. We then used a different approach where we provided opportunities for community engagement, better access and a framework that helped build self-esteem and confidence. We did not focus on diet at all. The result was that people were more engaged in community activities and felt more confident and one client who had lost no weight at all in the first intervention lost 10kgs.

It is very important to make a group part of the solution and not just part of the problem. This is a true bottom-up approach to peacebuilding. Too often we judge people's problems and think that we know best for people instead of working with them to identify their own priorities. This is a very colonial mentality. It ignores the tacit knowledge in communities. It is all about participation. When someone puts effort and energy into something they identify with it. So when we want to assist others, we need to identify their needs with them and build their own capacity to advocate for their needs.

Fostering youth interaction to prevent fighting (2)

There are many complex reasons why young people get into fights. Under this goal we try to identify some that we find most pressing.

In our experience in some schools they are fostering the idea that young people have to fight their way into or through schools. The young people now think that they have to fight someone from a different community to get along. It always ends up in a fight either in the school or outside the school. Something needs to be done to end these fights. We had an incident in Woodridge. There was also the incident when Jonathan Thurston's uncle was killed by young people. These incidents leave deep wounds and hurt the communities.

Maybe we can make it work through sports. Maybe some strength can be found in sports. On the other hand sports teams have the same problems. Aboriginal players, for example, are put down by their teammates or opponents because of their cultural background. Some young people are also told that the only thing that they are good at is sports. That is the wrong way. The young people need to be supported to make their own choices.

Young people should talk to elders or other young people before they fight someone. They need to put themselves in a space where they can let the anger go. Then they can keep their composure when they are talking to the people they are in conflict with. When people speak in anger, the anger comes back. When they speak calmly they can diffuse the situation. It's the anger we need to change. We should foster respectful communication between young people (and everyone else).

It is also important to work with parents and community leaders so that they take more responsibility when some of their young people are fighting. Family leaders must be good role models. There are also organisations that work with young people who harass others. They take them on camps to help them see other perspectives. Parents need to be aware what their children are doing. Parents need support, they need a safety net around them.

Another way to address the issue is for government to prosecute adults who supply young people with cigarettes, alcohol or drugs. We all have experiences of adults giving cigarettes or alcohol to underage children outside supermarkets or at home. They are not helping the young people. Sometimes fighting also comes from telling lies. If people tell less lies they probably fight less.

Encouraging interconnection between communities (13)

Encourage more people to attend community dialogues. The Community Cafés are such a way to establish interconnections. There are people who have never experienced the importance and the comfort of being part of a community and being nurtured by others. They don't know what it means to be in a community. A lot of people do not think it is necessary to meet the new arrivals and to welcome them. The existing population is territorial.

Another incentive for people could be if participation was acknowledged so that others could see who attends community dialogues. This would show others what they have achieved and that it is an important process. Feeding

the right information to communities. To connect communities we need to be clear about our goal and clearly communicate this so that they understand properly.

Identify leaders/representatives of various diverse communities and build relationships (6)

When the Community Café Dialogues started the council compiled a contact list. Then the project team started talking to community members. The initial list was only about 25% of the final list of invitees. It is about someone making personal connections and collecting phone numbers, email addresses etc. Then the project team called the people on the list and explained the process. With some people it was hard to do it on the phone because of different accents, languages etc. A lot of talking about relationships in general is required. The way to connect is to build personal relationships and show interest in each other and our stories. It is about removing stereotypical identities which we associate with people and to see them as who they are and not where they come from. You need to go beyond just ticking the box. Visiting people in their homes or community organisations is important. If personal relationships are built then people will even contact you about very difficult or uncomfortable things. Knowing more about each other makes us put our assumptions aside.

Spread the positive message through the media (3)

The media is sending out wrong messages. Some problems can be worked out by communities before they come to the media. We should bring police into the meetings, or the elders. If plans to solve problems are made and then the media is contacted a positive message would go out. It is about giving positive interviews about intercultural relationships and connections to the media. NAIDOC week was such an example: telling positive messages about the intercultural celebration of NAIDOC Day. It is also about clarifying messages before they are misunderstood and misreported by the media and about giving direct interviews so the media cannot distort your voice. It is also about making clear that you identify someone else's view or story when you give an interview and you are not talking about your own experience. Interviews need to be carefully planned.

Creating strong Brisbane community (1)

Attending MDA World Refugee Day as an Aboriginal Elder was an example for a strong Brisbane community. Being invited and having an Elders Tent there broke down a strong barrier. This showed the strength that the elders can implement to connect with other communities.

We can still improve the process. The elders from the other communities were not given enough chance to do the same talking and sharing. It's about providing a space in our community celebrations for the people from the other communities to attend and to feel welcome. I would also have liked the Aboriginal people to invite MDA to put up a tent at NAIDOC Day to show that

there is reconciliation between our communities. We also need to foster and nurture the other (younger) communities. If they are younger, like a baby, they need more care from the parents. A strong Brisbane community cares for the younger members.

Create opportunities for people to feel free to represent themselves without gatekeepers (19)

Even in the Community Café Dialogues Brisbane City Council acted as a gatekeeper and invited people. It also funded the process. When the funding ran out the Community Cafés stopped. Even in this group Serge acted as a gatekeeper. What can we do to give people the opportunity to come together by themselves? Sometimes we can support projects/opportunities for meetings by saying "thank you". Sometimes we need to plan further activities by ourselves and invite the gatekeepers as participants. This has happened in this small community dialogue group. Brisbane City Council is not the gatekeeper, it is a participant.

Create an inclusive society (4)

To create an inclusive society we need to identify the values that bring us together. An example are festivals: festivals are contemporary. You can hardly find 50 Africans who watch the footy. There are too many festivals and events that are still strongly associated with a certain cultural origin, for example the State of Origin football match or St Patrick's Day. New and emerging communities do not attend many of these. Some of the festivals aim to create a more inclusive society, but they actually segregate people more. They keep people away. A celebration that recognises each group and takes values from each group would be good. Domestic media should pick up on the important events for the Brisbane community and celebrate them all instead of only showcasing some and not others. Mainstream discussion and media should take notice of these days. Government needs to realise that this is a multicultural society.

Australians recognise holidays and celebration days as important days for them. We all shared food at Australia Day and got together and had a fun day. We have to invite other people and we have to listen.

An inclusive society is a dream that we have to try to build. What we should try is to create a more balanced society in which St Patrick's Day is just as important as African Day or Invasion Day and where all people feel welcome to celebrate. There is still a strong bias towards white mainstream organisations and celebrations.

We also need to acknowledge that if there are celebrations for certain areas or groups then it is ok that the majority of people and cultures from that area dominates these events. It is important that multicultural festivals are not just one-day a year events but that they become part of everyday lived experience. It's not experiencing something exotic but making a multicultural life the normality and making it more accessible. Otherwise it creates a "theirs" and

“ours” mentality. It may not be possible to make every holiday a public holiday. But it is possible to raise awareness and acknowledge each other's celebration days as important events through advertising, messages etc.

Change multiculturalism as a concept to a concept which encapsulates inclusive society (10)

This concept is hard to understand. It's about getting to the nuts and bolts of what makes community work. It is very difficult to express what is a multicultural policy? What is a multicultural society? Are we really living in a multicultural society? Multicultural policy is a word that helps politicians to buy votes. We have to create advocacy groups to have input into multicultural policy but at the same time we confirm the structure of special policy for disadvantaged groups. Cultures are not static, when two cultures come together then they shape each other at the same time. Some multicultural policy implies that we are trying to establish Ethiopia in Australia or Afghanistan in Australia. This is not possible. But I can live as an Ethiopian in Australia. When we use terms like multicultural policy we place expectations on how people should interact.

The new concept which encapsulates inclusive society celebrates our commonalities whilst understanding and accepting our differences. It includes equality, respect, acceptance and understanding within society. We acknowledge that identifying the injustices in the past is important for many people and that they impact on the present but at the same time we can make a new history together for common purpose.

One way to do this is to have representatives from the top-level participate in the dialogue meetings and to build relationships. Allowing politicians and decision-makers to participate in the dialogue. If you always look at them as the policy-makers then you exacerbate the power hierarchy. If you put them into a position of power, then they are going to use it. Sometimes the decision-makers show up but they do not fully want to engage or participate in the dialogue process. One way to address this is to make some changes to the process and to introduce activities where they are forced to role play or paraphrase what someone else has said. A talking stick might also work. It is important to take them out of their role of policy-makers.

Working in schools and changing education with inclusive advisory committees from many cultures could also help change this concept over time. Representatives from the committee could go together to different schools and help deal with incidents. Adults are sometimes too old to move. We should start with the younger generation.

Conclusion

We hope that our dialogue about barriers between communities and goals to change our relationships for the better is informative and valuable. As part of the dialogue group we have grown together and become friends and we would like to invite others to join us or to establish their own dialogue groups.

We feel strongly that in a community dialogue, when we share experiences, stories, hardships and moments of pride, we build a stronger community through conversations that matter. We will continue meeting once a month to progress our dialogue. We would like to invite whomever is interested to join our conversation and to give us feedback on these ideas.

Contact

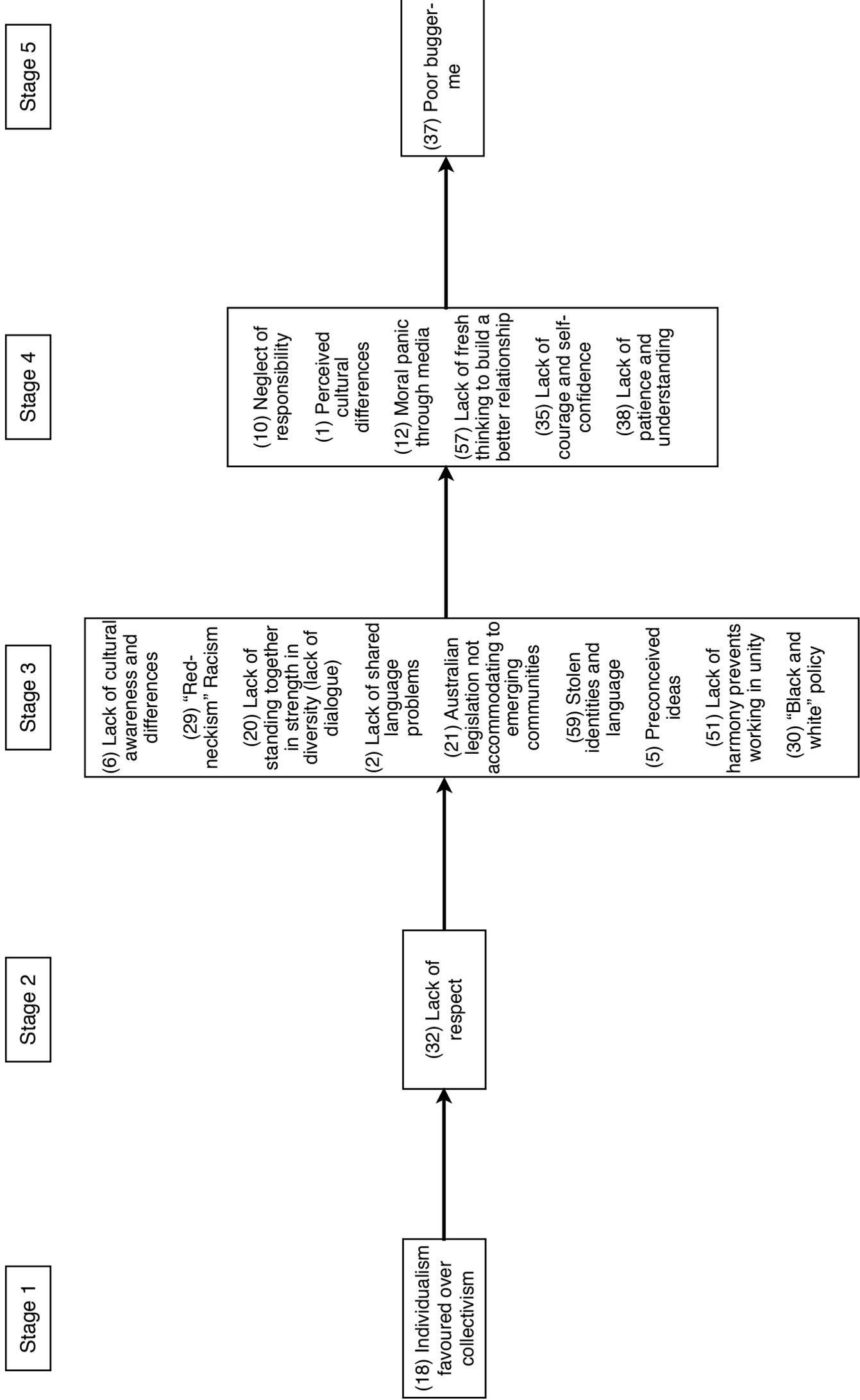
If you would like to provide feedback or contact us, please email or call:

Serge Loode

M 0404 807 031

E s.loode@mac.com

What significant barriers hinder our communities from building better relationships with each other?



What goals do we need to achieve as a group to build a better Brisbane community?

