Delivering TravelSmart in a Diverse Community

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1   Introduction

By changing travel behaviour across a community (how, when and where people travel) transport system efficiency can be improved and specific outcomes (such as reduced traffic congestion, increased safety, improved mobility for non-drivers, energy conservation and pollution emission reductions) can be achieved. Voluntary behaviour change approaches have been successful in changing travel within local communities, Australia and overseas.

The Victorian Government's TravelSmart program is delivered in three streams; Communities, Education and Workplaces. The objective of the program is to achieve a reduction in vehicle kilometres traveled through voluntary changes towards more sustainable travel choices. These include an increase in public transport use, walking and cycling.

TravelSmart Communities employs an individualised dialogue marketing methodology to influence travel across a whole community. The methodology uses over the phone and face to face contact with households and written material provided primarily in English.

In 2005 TravelSmart Communities was delivered in partnership with the City of Maribyrnong; one of Australia's most diverse communities. More than 80 languages are spoken within the municipality and many new migrants live in the area. The diversity of the local community posed some challenges for successful delivery of TravelSmart using the existing methodology.

This paper outlines the work involved in augmenting an existing travel behaviour change methodology to engage culturally and linguistically diverse community (CaLD) groups within the Maribyrnong TravelSmart project area. It explores the differences between the current TravelSmart Communities approach and community engagement strategies; the work undertaken prior to TravelSmart to engage with CaLD groups and the approaches developed for engaging with particular community groups at different stages of the project.

2   TravelSmart in Melbourne

The Victorian Government, through *Linking Melbourne: Metropolitan Transport Plan* (Department of Infrastructure, 2004), has identified TravelSmart – a voluntary travel behavior change program - as a key measure to promote sustainable transport and manage travel demand and traffic congestion within metropolitan Melbourne. TravelSmart is delivered by the Department of Infrastructure in partnership with local government and Metlink (the provider of customer-related public transport information).

By encouraging people to use the car less and engage in active transport TravelSmart also leads to a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions and traffic-related pollution and supports other individual, community, economic and environmental benefits, including improved health outcomes.

TravelSmart Communities, one of the three Victorian TravelSmart steams, works directly with households to support changes in travel behaviour at the household and community level. Households within a common geographic area, determined by local government area boundaries, are targeted.

TravelSmart Communities has progressed over the last four years through research and development to the current large scale (45,000 household) demonstration project. The program methodology has been tested and consolidated over this time and successfully delivered at a large scale. With agreement from Socialdata Australia, the Victorian Government has adapted its current methodology from the core Indimark® methodology to deliver a consistent approach for future projects in inner and middle metropolitan Melbourne.

Initial results from TravelSmart Communities projects are in line with other Australian and international travel behaviour change programs with a significant decrease in car travel and subsequent increases in public transport, walking and cycling.

3   Individualised dialogue marketing

TravelSmart Communities promotes sustainable transport through intensive, short term 'individualised dialogue marketing' campaigns.

Such campaigns offer personalised information and support, tailored to (self-)identified information needs and one's desire to change behaviour. Participants are provided encouragement, rewards, and opportunities to trial and maintain new behaviours.

The voluntary nature of the program is essential to its success. As Ampt (2003) explains, only if the individual is able to make the choice to change behaviour to suit their own needs, without top-down mechanisms or compulsion, will it be sustained. The choice to change must be made because s/he believes it will improve their personal life in some way. Upon making the change these identified personal benefits are realised. Thus new behaviours become self-reinforcing and maintained in the longer term.

Behaviour change campaigns run in Europe, America and Australia have shown to be highly effective in promoting and maintaining a range of sustainable behaviours, including increased use of sustainable transport (McKenzie-Mohr & Smith 1999; Brög, Erl & Mense 2002; Perkins & Giannakodakis 2001). Households have proved an effective campaign target audience as many decisions about travel, for example, are made at the household level (Ampt 2003; Brög Erl & Mense 2002; Brög & John 2001; United Kingdom Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions 2002).

3.1   Methodology used in Victoria

The steps in the TravelSmart Communities methodology are outlined in Figure 1. The campaign begins with an announcement letter shortly followed by phone call or home visit inviting households within the target area to participate in the program. Through open dialogue the TravelSmart team encourages each contacted household to think about their travel behaviour and travel needs. Those most ready and able to change to (or increase their use of) sustainable travel modes take up this invite, thereby self-selecting into the program.
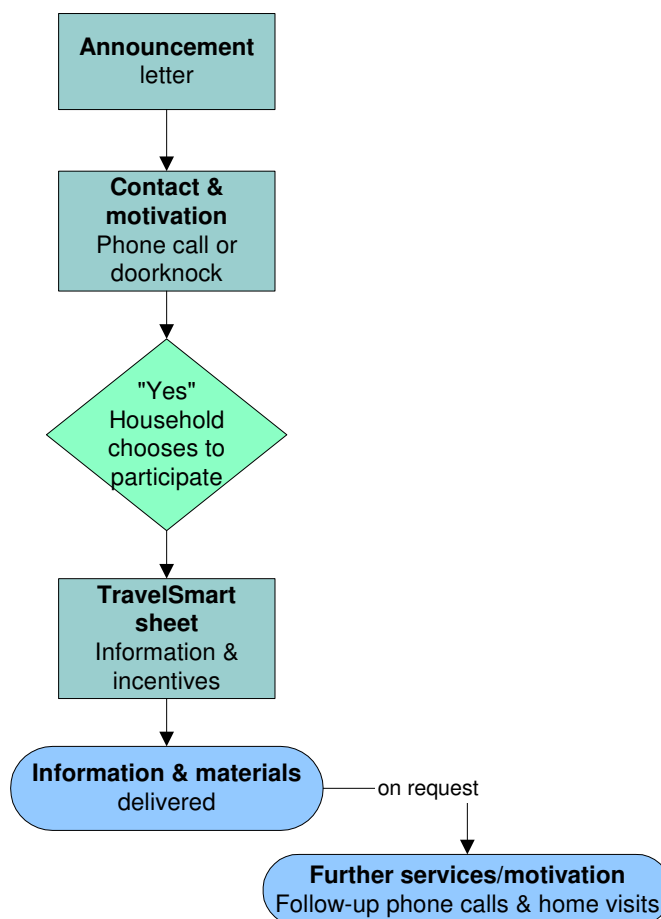
Figure 1 TravelSmart Communities methodology

Participating households are mailed a TravelSmart sheet, as shown in Figure 2, a list of available information on walking, cycling, public transport and smarter car use. Together and on their own time, household members may select the listed materials they would like to receive. Filling in the TravelSmart sheet provides another opportunity for household members to consider and discuss their own travel needs and behaviour; the perceived personal benefits and other motivators which drive this behaviour.

Upon return of the TravelSmart sheet, a travel package is compiled for the household and delivered to the home. As households only receive material they have deemed relevant to their needs and desire to change, the sustainable transport message is highly targeted.

Figure 2 TravelSmart sheet

Information delivered through behaviour change programs has greatest impact when presented by a credible source (McKenzie-Mohr & Smith 1999). TravelSmart offers materials developed by the state's peak transport organisations. Once the TravelSmart project has ended, participants can link into these organisations for further information and support to maintain adopted behaviours.

Finally, more specialised information and encouragement through one-on-one discussions with experts, either over the phone or as a home visit (known as further services) is provided to select households. Public transport specialists and cycling advisers visit a small proportion of homes to give practical advice on choosing sustainable travel modes.

Social diffusion – also utilised in the fields of marketing and advertising - is a key component of all behaviour change programs (McKenzie-Moor & Smith 1996; MacFadyen, Stead & Hastings 1999). Offering the TravelSmart program simultaneously to households in the same neighbourhood generates interest in the program and helps spread the TravelSmart message throughout the community.

Previous TravelSmart participants have commented they valued the 'community feel' of the program. They saw neighbours out walking with a TravelSmart umbrella, pedometers or bag, using a stop specific timetable to catch the local bus or cycling on local paths and were encouraged to adopt similar behaviours. Many people approached local Council wanting to participate after hearing about the program from family and friends.

4 TravelSmart Communities compared to community engagement

TravelSmart Communities, as a stand-alone short term intervention, has demonstrable benefits for delivering travel behaviour change outcomes (Socialdata Australia 2004). Benefits are shared across a whole community through influencing a *portion* of the community; those who are most ready to change. This is in contrast with a community engagement or community development strategy whereby *all* groups within the community are provided with access to opportunities through a range of tailored approaches and ongoing contact, which are established to facilitate change from within the community in the longer term.

Ampt (2003) has highlighted the differences between travel behaviour change methodologies and community development and proposes that community engagement and development is characterised as "an unstructured, evolving response by a community to their particular needs or problems".

A key difference is the period of contact with the community. TravelSmart is a short term intervention and targets those who are ready to change at the point in time when the project is delivered. It is not a community engagement strategy which would aim to build community readiness for change over the longer term. The strategy would specifically adapt messages and methods of contact to address community and/or cultural needs and values.

Table 1 summarises the differences between the TravelSmart Communities methodology and key attributes of community engagement.

Table 1 TravelSmart Communities methodology and community engagement

TravelSmart Communities	Community engagement
o Short term intervention	o Longer term contact
o Works with a portion of the community who are ready to change (although benefits spread across whole community)	o Focus is on the whole community
o Key demographic information used to identify significant barriers to participation	o Detailed analysis of demographic influences, including norms and values, to identify barriers and opportunities
o Bias towards those receptive to information supplied in this form	o Messages and delivery adapted to address cultural needs and values
o Delivered by external suppliers	o Working within the community, to establish relationships, build trust
o Limited contact with the community outside the methodology	o Using both formal and informal networks to engage with different community groups
o Use of existing material to provide links beyond the project; participants choose the information relevant to them	o Develops and adapts materials to suit cultural needs and values
o Methodology reviewed and refined for future projects in other communities	o Approach and actions are reviewed for future delivery within the same community and learnings are translated to other initiatives.

5 TravelSmart in Maribyrnong

The 2005 TravelSmart Communities campaign targeted up to 45,000 households within the City of Maribyrnong and City of Moonee Valley, neighbouring local government areas in Melbourne's inner north-west. Both City Councils were key partners in the project. TravelSmart was delivered in Maribyrnong from April to September 2005.

The City of Maribyrnong – comprising the suburbs Braybrook, Footscray, Maidstone, Yarraville Maribyrnong, Seddon, Tottenham, West Footscray - is one of Melbourne's most ethnically diverse municipalities. Forty per cent of residents were born outside Australia (versus an average 29 per cent for the whole of Melbourne). Residents come from more than 135 different countries and speak more than 80 languages. Nearly half speak a language other than English. Maribyrnong has a very high proportion of residents with very poor English proficiency (11.1% of the population).

The main languages other than English spoken within the city are: Vietnamese, Cantonese, Greek, Italian, Macedonian, Spanish, Mandarin, Serbian, Croatian and Tagalog. The City has the largest proportion of Vietnamese-born people within Victoria.

Maribyrnong City Council was selected by the Victorian Government as a project partner because Council had demonstrated a commitment to progressing sustainable travel through development of a Green Travel Plan, Integrated Transport Plan and involvement in the Cities for Climate Protection campaign, among other initiatives.

Council support for TravelSmart Communities 2005 was significant, comprising staff, materials and a financial contribution. Council engaged a Sustainable Transport Officer to facilitate TravelSmart within the City and develop and implement Council's sustainable transport program.

The municipality also met a number of key program requirements. It has a well patronised and extensive public transport network, good cycling and walking trails and facilities. There is potential for residents to choose environmentally friendly ways of travelling around and through this municipality.

5.1 Engaging with CaLD communities

TravelSmart and Maribyrnong Council recognised the need to augment the existing program to better accommodate the municipality's many residents from CaLD backgrounds in order to increase use of sustainable transport across the community. Advice was sought from Council and two external community development practitioners (Howard 2005; Peddie 2005) as to how the TravelSmart Communities methodology might be adapted to better engage with CaLD groups.

Research undertaken during an earlier TravelSmart project also provided an understanding of issues to be considered for the project's delivery. Seethaler (2003) conducted a small-scale pilot test in Melbourne to assess the impact of using the "six principles of persuasion" to promote travel behaviour change. The project determined that a person from a non-English speaking background "with reduced ability to understand and conduct a conversation in English" was significantly less likely to participate in TravelSmart. An English speaking person was 4.8 times more likely to participate in the project.

The standard TravelSmart Communities methodology relies heavily on direct over-the-phone contact with households and the provision of material in English, which does not specifically cater for the information needs of CaLD communities. TravelSmart Communities works to address language barriers to participation by ensuring contact staff are able to speak the key

languages of the project area (as identified by the Australian Census). Other cultural barriers to participation, however, may not be addressed within the existing methodology.

As part of her investigation, Seethaler found that little research has been undertaken to examine cultural differences in the way information is received and how groups respond to different persuasion strategies (see Wosinska 2001). Nisbett (2003) explores "differences in the way communication is received and processed" by different cultural groups. He notes that human cognition – the way we comprehend and understand the world – differs between cultures. Belief systems and cognitive processes align with social structures and the sense of self and thus are different between cultures. These differences between cultures are carried through to perceptions and values and are thus determinants for how individuals may respond to a TravelSmart intervention.

It was suggested by several of the advisory sources that the standard TravelSmart Communities contact method may be culturally sensitive or inappropriate for some people from CaLD groups, without prior introduction through community leaders. Unless the household already know of the program and its benefits, and the expectation of being contacted, TravelSmart's unsolicited letters and phone calls would likely be rejected by a high proportion CaLD households, especially those comprised of new migrants.

It was also advised that familiarity with and acceptance of the sustainable transport message may vary according to cultural background. Several times the example was given that it was common practice for some cultural groups to ride bicycles in their countries of origin but that they were unlikely to do so in Australia for a range of reasons, including status and safety. If behaviours, such as those proposed by TravelSmart, are seen as differing to the community norm in some cultural groups, it would be a significant barrier to participation of individuals within that community.

5.2 Augmenting the project methodology
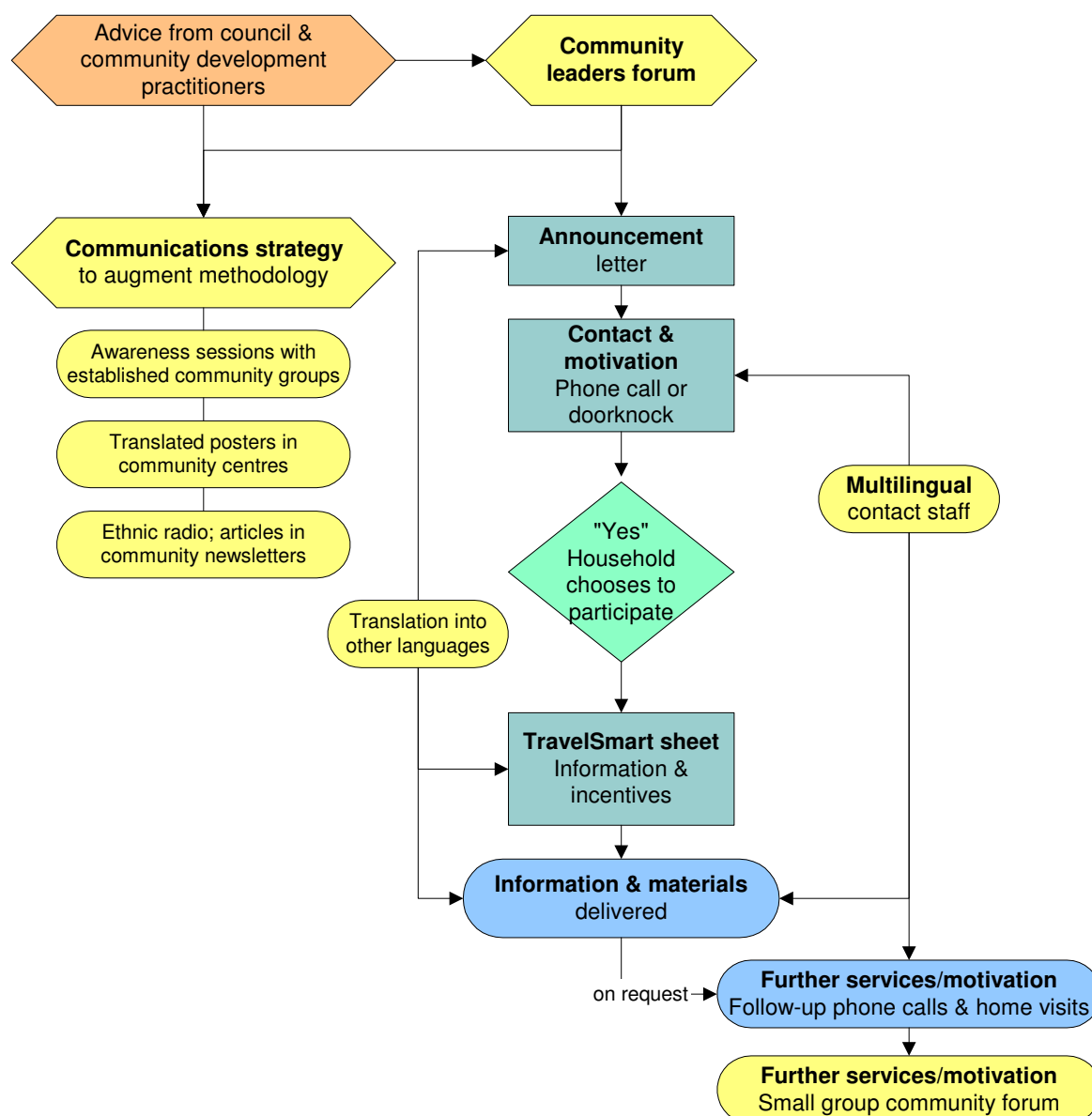
Figure 4 Augmentation of existing TravelSmart Communities methodology to engage CaLD communities

5.2.1 Community Leaders Forum

In February 2005 Maribyrnong Council held a Community Leaders Forum to introduce TravelSmart to Maribyrnong's CaLD communities. Community leaders had been identified by Council from existing networks. Round table discussions were an opportunity for attendees to tell the TravelSmart team how people in their communities prefer to receive information; make suggestions on how TravelSmart could be publicised and how the TravelSmart methodology could be augmented to better serve CaLD communities.

Forum attendees suggested a number of ways in which TravelSmart might talk to CaLD communities about the program;
- Talk to established community groups (eg senior citizens or women's associations),
- Place translated posters and flyers at key community centres (eg migrant welfare centres, libraries senior citizens meeting points)

- Distribute flyers and brochures through community networks and letter-box drop
- Put notices (articles and paid advertising) in community newsletters and local ethnic and mainstream media
- Generate articles in English language local media (e.g. local newspaper)

Though generalising from these small, informal group discussions requires caution; anecdotally it appears that leaders from more recently settled communities were more likely to suggest that people in their communities preferred to receive information in a group setting and / or in oral form. Attendees representing more established, predominantly European communities felt the mainstream as well as ethnic media was an effective communications channel for their community.

5.2.2 City of Maribyrnong's TravelSmart Communications Strategy

Council's TravelSmart communications strategy, which was developed to guide contact with CaLD groups, aimed to raise awareness about sustainable transport and the TravelSmart program. The strategy incorporated most of the recommendations from the Leaders' Forum.

Communications activities were planned to target CaLD communities prior to program roll out so that when a CaLD household was contacted by the TravelSmart team they would be more inclined to engage in dialogue about alternative transport, respond positively and agree to participate in the program.

A key message of CaLD community engagement was "TravelSmart is coming. When TravelSmart calls say YES!" Emphasis was placed on the personal benefits of participating in the program. The basis for such pre-program activities was that CaLD households may be more likely to 'say yes to TravelSmart' if they were familiar with the program and may only respond to initiatives known within their community.

Communications activities such as community awareness sessions have provided a platform from which Council can continue to work with CaLD communities around the issue of sustainable transport once TravelSmart has ended. Four successful awareness sessions were run in the early part of the project. For example, a Councillor and the Sustainable Transport Officer from Maribyrnong City Council, along with a member of the TravelSmart team met with about 30 members of the Vietnamese Women's Association Seniors Group.

Over morning tea the group discussed (with the help of an interpreter) the benefits of choosing sustainable travel and participating in TravelSmart. There was much discussion about public transport in Maribyrnong, the area's local walking paths and why people choose different modes of transport. As part of the discussion, the group decided that its next field trip could be by bus so that they could learn about how to get around by public transport.

5.2.3 Translating TravelSmart Communities

When amending the TravelSmart methodology to provide increased opportunities for CaLD households to engage with and participate in the program, emphasis was placed on delivering the program in languages other than English.

All TravelSmart materials – including correspondence, flyers and posters (figure 5) - were translated into four key languages (Arabic, Chinese, Macedonian and Vietnamese). These languages were chosen because they were either spoken by a high proportion of residents (e.g. Vietnamese) or the language community has, in general, limited ability to utilise information supplied in English only (e.g. recent migrants with limited English speaking contacts). Previous TravelSmart projects have shown that longer-settled CaLD communities have established networks which enable information supplied in English only to be disseminated.

Figure 5 TravelSmart posters translated into Arabic

TravelSmart worked with the organisations that supply materials for the program to produce key information – at least one information item for each travel mode – in the four key languages.

Multilingual phone and door knock staff for all major language groups represented in Maribyrnong were employed to speak to households in their preferred language.

Participating households who engaged in dialogue with the TravelSmart team in Arabic, Chinese, Macedonian or Vietnamese were sent, along with the English language TravelSmart sheet, a translated TravelSmart insert (Figure 6) – a pared down version of the TravelSmart sheet listing information available in their language.

Some CaLD households may not be comfortable receiving a public transport ambassador or cycling specialist in their home (Howard 2005). CaLD leaders' forum attendees also raised this issue. Thus group further services to take place at community halls were scheduled in addition to 'at home' further services.

Figure 6 Translated TravelSmart insert

6 Learning from Maribyrnong

The 2005 Communities campaign is the first to be run in partnership with local government. This tier of government is an ideal partner for the Victorian TravelSmart Communities program. Local government manages, delivers and/or oversees a portfolio of existing programs and services that target households and the community in general, including transport services. Council has stronger relationships with and links into the community and is thus able to work with TravelSmart to help strengthen community engagement in the program. Leanings from the Maribyrnong project have provided a better understanding for the development of future partnerships.

6.1 Materials

Significant travel behaviour change results have been realised in both small and large scale projects in Melbourne using the same set of project materials as used in the 2005 TravelSmart Maribyrnong project. A basic audit was completed on the materials following completion of the 2004 Darebin project to assess their value to participants. The audit was undertaken using a sample of 300 participating households from the project and found that the materials were generally well regarded.

These materials, however, have not been tested for their value or suitability for different cultural groups. Maribyrnong's very diverse community cannot be compared with Darebin; although, clearly, neither are Maribyrnong's cultural groups homogenous, with individuals within the same culture responding differently to social influence principles.

McKenzie-Mohr (1999: 88) comments that "what is seemingly a relatively straight forward program has the potential to have multiple audiences" and recommends gathering as much information as possible about the target audiences in order to best adapt the message and medium for its delivery. The question is, how significant are the differences among cultural

groups in Maribyrnong in regard to their receptivity to the materials? While the method of motivation used to influence behaviour may be effective, the impact is likely to be reduced if material received is not considered by the participant as credible.

The materials used for TravelSmart projects are from existing information sources, contributed to the project from the relevant organisations. This has been a deliberate approach by TravelSmart to enable an ongoing relationship between the household and the information provider. While the organisations have a profile and authority within their sector, such as Metlink which provides information on using Melbourne's public transport network, not all are common household names. Hence they may not have sufficient authority or credibility for some audiences.

The materials translated into other languages were also not tested for their suitability for the target audience.

6.2   Community readiness

Community readiness for responding to TravelSmart may differ across cultural groups. In reviewing the TravelSmart Communities methodology it is important to consider whether households are not participating because they are not interested or ready to change at this time, or whether it is due to language and cultural barriers that have not been addressed in how the methodology is delivered. It could be argued that the outcomes of the program are being achieved because those most ready to change elect to participate in the program, so the cultural and linguistic background of participants is not important. It is important, however, to consider the longer term cultural shift towards sustainable transport, to which this program is contributing to; this is likely to require a greater level of engagement across the community. Moreover, as stated in the whole-of-government policy *Growing Victoria Together*, increasing equity and the appreciation of culturally and socially diverse communities is a key goal of the Victorian Government (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2005). This goal must be reflected in all State Government programs.

The existing project methodology does not collect any demographic data, other than household size and number of vehicles. Thus the demographic characteristics of people who do, and do not, participate in the project, and whether they significantly differ from the characteristics of the local community, are unknown. A follow up survey of participating and non-participating households would assist in gaining a greater understanding of who participated in the project to inform future project delivery.

6.3   Council community engagement

The ability to effectively engage with a very diverse community was identified as a risk to delivery and outcomes of TravelSmart in Maribyrnong. Council community development officers raised concerns that TravelSmart Communities, as a short term intervention, may be inadequate to provide the level of engagement necessary to facilitate changes across the community, particularly CaLD community groups within Maribyrnong. In response, the methodology was augmented with strategies designed to better engage CaLD groups before and during project delivery and thus increase community receptivity to TravelSmart.

A key challenge of the Maribyrnong project was the limited time available (three months) to implement the communications strategy prior to project delivery. While a number of actions were identified, the amount of time it took to implement each one was significant. While community group awareness sessions were recognised as one of the more beneficial actions, the time taken on to organise each session (in building interest and commitment with the group) meant that only a few groups overall were contacted in this way.

It was also somewhat 'hit and miss' in identifying which community groups should be given priority. This was due both to time constraints and the community group's own receptivity to the team's contact. Again, the issue arose of working with groups most receptive to the idea rather than a perceived need. Overall, this meant that some groups, such as people within the Vietnamese community, were engaged through several approaches – forums, ethnic media, a newsletter and posters – while other groups had minimal contact beyond the TravelSmart methodology.

With more lead time allocated, prior to commencement of future projects, it would be beneficial to review how TravelSmart Communities may fit within a broader community engagement strategy on sustainable transport and further investigate how the TravelSmart methodology may be amended to better meet community needs. This would enable ongoing links to be established with community groups beyond the project period and to identify opportunities outside the Communities methodology, which may be more appropriate to engage CaLD groups and others in travel behaviour change.

Local government is best placed to lead a community engagement strategy to support the delivery of TravelSmart Communities and other travel behaviour change initiatives, given their knowledge of the community and their ongoing contact. A requirement of partnering in this project was for council to appoint a Sustainable Transport Officer. This position provides an important resource for council to implement other initiatives to influence travel behaviour and foster sustainable transport throughout the municipality; and especially, to explore a range of ways to engage with different groups within the community.

7   Conclusion

TravelSmart Communities is an effective method for achieving changes in travel behaviour to more sustainable modes. This has been demonstrated in previous projects delivered in Melbourne. The project delivered in Maribyrnong has presented some challenges and learning for the future delivery of the program in how it fits within a broader community engagement strategy, especially for CaLD groups.

Overall, the community engagement approaches provided beneficial but somewhat limited augmentation of the project. Contact with CaLD groups was restricted mostly by the time, and also the resources available. The community awareness sessions were considered the more successful additions to the methodology but they were limited in their scope, again due to the lead time and receptiveness of different groups. While it is hard to gauge the benefit of this translated material, it was considered a useful addition to other communication approaches.

A more detailed understanding of community readiness and barriers to and motivations for change amongst different CaLD communities, for example through focus groups, would provide a more informed approach to community engagement activities for future projects.

By building in more lead time to delivery of TravelSmart in future projects, the Victorian Government and partnership councils will be able to investigate more comprehensive community engagement approaches to support the TravelSmart Communities methodology. This would include identifying actions to be delivered in conjunction with project delivery and others to be delivered once the project has ended.

TravelSmart Communities is one of a number of opportunities for implementing travel behaviour change outcomes within a municipality. This type of project, delivered at a large scale, and with its high profile success, provides impetus for other sustainable transport initiatives to be pursued by council, and others, in the local area. Following up on a Communities project with different approaches, such as developing travel plans for schools and workplaces within the area, allows a wide range of individuals and households, including

those from CaLD communities, to be effectively targeted through travel behaviour change programs.

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