

## Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds with Disabilities

August 20, 2020

The Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN) and the National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) hosted an online National Meeting on 'Young People from Refugee and Migrant Backgrounds with Disabilities: Exploring Experiences and Gaps' on 12 August 2020.

The purpose of the meeting was to hear from and raise awareness about the personal/lived experiences of disability for young people from refugee, migrant and CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) backgrounds. The goal was to provide a deeper understanding of which organisations are working with this group of young people and to identify what and where the gaps might be.

The event was co-hosted by Nadine Liddy from MYAN and Dominic Hồng Đức Golding, from NEDA. We heard from guest speakers Cindy Liu, VIC, Youth Disability Advocacy Service and Grace Edward, QLD, producer, director and playwright. The meeting also included presentations from other young people living with disability, carers and advocates for people living with a disability and representatives from the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. The interactive online event provided ample opportunity for Q&A among the attendees, which allowed for a range of voices, information and concerns to be heard.



### ***What are the main issues and concerns raised by young CALD people living with a disability?***

- Youths aged between 12-25 years are in a transformative period of life. The intersection of being young, living with a disability and coming from a CALD background makes it easier for people to fall through gaps and the seeking of support a lot more difficult.
- It is very hard for parents of CALD backgrounds, especially newly-arrived refugees and asylum seekers, to navigate disability support networks.
- Some cultures view disability as a stigma and something that should remain hidden. Experiences in other countries have resulted in a fear of disclosure in case of government repercussions when attempting to re-settle in Australia. Denial of disability in CALD families can seriously delay support and access to services. Support from schools and self-advocacy as young teens is sometimes the only way forward for our multicultural youth who live with a disability.
- Feelings of isolation and difference are exacerbated in CALD communities when supports and accommodations are provided without the inclusion or consideration of cultural practices.
- Many CALD families, in particular those who have recently arrived in Australia, have a rocky connection with medical and government support agencies; and they are wary of intrusion or others caring for their children.

## **What do our CALD youth living with a disability identify as being needed?**

- Connection with disability support and service networks is needed, in order to develop independence and self-advocacy skills. The inclusion of families in the support that is provided will allow for an understanding of disability to be fostered and for children to feel safe to engage.
- Linking disability services with settlement providers and established CALD community groups is needed. This will assist in the development of relationships, trust and security, which in turn will foster self-management and better access to the services and supports available.
- Ensuring that CALD representation is in the disability advocacy space is required. Asking families and communities what they need, rather than making judgements and assuming what they need, will foster connections and engagement in services.
- Our CALD families living with children with a disability need the freedom of fear to access support and services that provide disability information in first languages. Engaging with local community networks will help to reduce fear and allowing the CALD voice to be heard when determining what services are to be provided will make a positive difference to young people and their families.

What was made clear to those of us participating in the national meeting was that support for disability should be about liberating the family of the responsibility of care and enabling individuals to develop self-management wherever and whenever possible.

Support should improve lifestyle and provide equitable access to education and work opportunities. Guidance for self-agency, service provision to enable all to live well, achieving independence and having a voice in the supports to be utilised engenders feelings of empowerment – and feeling empowered develops the life-long capacity to seek appropriate support when required throughout adulthood.

Federation recognises that our school teachers and public education services lead the way in the provision of support for students with a disability. This is largely without funded support and via school-based initiatives and access to government agencies.

The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the inadequacy of current funding for students with disability. Complex student health issues, lack of access to allied health services when not at school, inequities in access to technology and remote learning, challenging home environments and disruptions to learning when removed from school support structures saw many students disproportionately affected and now having to try and “catch up” in achieving their learning outcomes.

The long overdue equity loading for students with a disability, along with additional permanent teachers, is paramount to creating safe, supportive classrooms for effective teaching and learning outcomes. This is the best way to ensure both students with disability and their teachers are supported in schools. Recognition that our CALD students living with a disability need their voice heard when trying to access supports and services within their home is also required.

Federation will continue to pursue the full funding and resourcing of our public schools in order to further support CALD students and students living with a disability.

Members wanting to access the contact details for services specifically dedicated to the support of CALD students living with a disability can contact Federation at [mail@nswtf.org.au](mailto:mail@nswtf.org.au) or by phoning (02) 9217 2100 and requesting this information.

Members wanting to make a submission to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability can access further information via the details below:-

- [Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability](#)
- [Supports available](#)
- [Video](#)
- [Translated information](#)