

## MELWAYS COMMUNITY BUILDING PROJECT

### Organisations Involved & Contact Details

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### Aims & Target Group

**Aims:** Melways Community Building Project aims to bring diverse communities together. Building a stronger, more self-reliant community is one of the aims of the Melways Community Building Project, based in Melbourne's inner west.

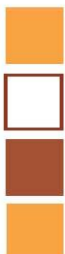
**Target Group:** The Melways Community Building Project focuses on diverse residents in an area running along Gordon Street, from Footscray's Whitten Oval, in the north, to Highpoint Shopping Centre in the south.

### Project Description & Components

Community Building is about local people working with government to strengthen their communities and improve the places in which they live. It is also about government listening to what local people have to say and supporting them to develop projects that achieve their goals.

The project focuses on neighbourhoods or towns experiencing geographic isolation or rapid social and economic change. The project plan is, over three years, to develop action plans that create positive improvements for the community by gathering the diverse knowledge, energy, ideas and resources of local people.

It is an innovative project in Melbourne's inner west which has brought together a range of community leaders to help fellow residents from culturally diverse backgrounds to learn basic map reading skills.





## Process

The idea for Melways Community Building Project was suggested by Phillip Edward, a Vietnamese community leader, who was concerned about older people in his community who had great difficulty getting around the city because they couldn't read a street map.

After discussing this issue with various community leaders in the area, the group decided to focus on putting together a short workshop on Melbourne's popular streetscape guide, Melways. Thus was the birth of Melways Community Building Project.

One of the major challenges for the Melways project was building a sense of community in a neighbourhood with little history of social cohesion. This process led to the formation of a community leadership group consisting of 15 local residents from backgrounds as diverse as Sudanese, Somali, Ethiopian, Vietnamese and East Timorese as well as Anglo Saxon Australians and a small group of overseas students.

According to Klara the biggest success of the project was the way the group worked together as a team to bring the idea to fruition. "Most of the time they enjoyed the process. They went down a number of different avenues and came up against a few dead ends but they always reassessed and moved on." She said the workshop was successful because it wasn't pitched too high in terms of literacy and it was personable. "For example, the group made a conscious decision to meet everyone at the door." Afterwards a number of people asked for further workshops and reports filtered back that participants had started to use the Melways for job interviews and getting around on public transport.

## Outcomes

Since completing the Melways project, the community leadership group has gradually evolved into a local residents group with wider priorities and goals. *"It was a great project but we realised we didn't want to do ten more workshops. We wanted to move towards becoming a voice for the local community,"* said Vicky.

Some of the issues the group is now pursuing include resolving parking problems around Western General Hospital, establishing a neighbourhood watch, reducing litter and lobbying for a community meeting room. However they were keen not to waste the learning they developed for the Melways project and set about capturing it as a community training kit. Once complete, the kit will be handed over to Maribyrnong Council and made available to other groups.

## Challenges & Obstacles

## Funding

Maribyrnong City Council.

## Images

