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Senior Manager, Knowledge and Advocacy



Soo-Lin has over 25 years experience in both the Victorian Government and non-government sectors. She has managed significant policy and program areas in state government and her previous experience in the non-government sector range from managing community based organisations to policy advocacy and community development in a range of sectors. She is currently the Knowledge & Advocacy Manager for the Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY), Victoria.

In this role, she has carriage for creating partnerships with universities to strengthen the evidence base for multicultural youth work practice. The most recently completed Australian Research Council Linkage project investigated the extent to which young people use formal and informal networks to develop a sense of social connectedness and belonging in a multicultural society.

Young People Negotiating Active Citizenship and Belonging

Young people are frequently viewed as either ‘citizens in the making’, as disengaged or disinterested. Young people’s perception is that there are few opportunities to engage in more formal political processes particularly if they are below the voting age. Even if opportunities present themselves, it can be difficult for them to see the impact of participation in more formal political structures, in contrast to localised or community based responses where results are more immediate and their work is encouraged. In the context of young people as ‘citizens’, CMY has adopted a broader view of active citizenship – to encompass both the formal and informal ways that young people engage and contribute to the community. Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds often face further barriers that can result in them missing out on opportunities to participate, preventing them from being able to make positive contributions as valued citizens in society. Creating and supporting meaningful opportunities for youth participation contributes to building a stronger, more socially cohesive society – one that is built upon inclusion, equity and a robust, dynamic multiculturalism; a society where young people from refugee and migrant background play an integral role in shaping and benefitting Australia as a whole. Drawing on a recent ARC Linkage project conducted with Deakin University and a Victorian based survey with young people, this paper will explore ways in which young people develop and negotiate active citizenship and feelings of belonging; the social barriers to network engagement and ways in which they are influenced by the type of networks they believe they can join, as well as those they actually participate in. It will also include a case study of a youth-led social cohesion project delivered across two growth corridors of Melbourne (Casey and Wyndham).

