

Screening Saves Life

DBSV Health Check Project

July 2024 to September 2024



Supported by:
Australian Multicultural Health Collaborative

Report by:
Dr Jamuna Parajuli

Health Check Project: Screening Saves Life -

Final Report

Executive Summary

The Health Check Project, a campaign themed “Screening Saves Life” run by Didi Bahini Samaj Victoria (DBSV) from July 2024 to September 2024, aimed to improve awareness and access to preventive healthcare within the Nepalese community in Melbourne. The Nepalese community is one of the fastest-growing migrant groups in Victoria, with a diverse cultural background. While younger generations are adapting to the Australian lifestyle, many older community members maintain strong ties to traditional values, language, and customs, which can create barriers to healthcare access.

Through this campaign, we successfully engaged 242 men and women aged 20 to 73 across multiple locations, including Glenroy, Craigieburn, Wyndham (online), Lalor, Thomastown, Vermont, Knox, and Aintree. Our approach was inclusive, reaching different cohorts such as young women’s groups, women’s groups, and older mixed groups, including illiterate men and women.

The project involved community consultations to identify healthcare challenges, followed by interactive awareness sessions to address fears and misconceptions about cancer screening. Key activities included group discussions, creative poster designs, role-playing exercises, and the co-design of promotional messages for broader community engagement. A significant achievement of the campaign was supporting 108 women in accessing breast screening mammograms through our partnership with BreastScreen Victoria. The campaign’s success highlights the importance of community-driven initiatives in breaking barriers and encouraging proactive healthcare participation.

1. Description of the communities

We worked with the Nepalese community living in various locations in Melbourne Victoria. The Nepalese community in Melbourne is one of the fastest-growing migrant communities, with significant cultural diversity. While the younger generation is increasingly adapting to the Australian lifestyle, many in the older generation maintain strong ties to traditional values, language, and customs. Like other migrant communities, they face challenges related to integration and healthcare access.

Through this Health Check campaign, we successfully completed community consultations and awareness sessions for seven diverse community groups, engaging 242 men and women, aged between 20 and 73. The program was conducted across multiple locations in Melbourne, targeting various cohorts to address their unique needs and concerns. Locations included Glenroy, Craigieburn, Wyndham (via online sessions), Lalor, Thomastown, Vermont, Knox, and Aintree.

We reached different groups, such as young women's groups in Glenroy, women's groups in Craigieburn and Lalor, and older mixed groups in Glenroy, Vermont, and Knox. The program also included participation from illiterate men and women, ensuring inclusivity. Most importantly, many women accessed breast screening mammogram services, supported by DBSV volunteers and BreastScreen Victoria, ensuring critical follow-up care after the awareness session.

2. *Summary of campaign activities.*

First, we conducted community consultations to identify the fears and challenges the Nepalese community faces in accessing available cancer screening programs (these identified needs were outlined in the previous mid-review report). Following this, we organized community awareness sessions targeting different groups to address their specific fears, obstacles, and concerns regarding cancer screening.

During these sessions, we employed highly interactive and participatory methods to co-design messaging that would motivate participants to address their issues and engage in cancer screening. Activities included small group discussions, creative poster designs, and practical role-play exercises for awareness, and the community helped to design promotional messages for shopping bags, which we planned to print and distribute to participants to promote cancer screening in the broad community.

Most notably, in partnership with BreastScreen Victoria, we supported 108 women in accessing breast screening services at various locations in Melbourne. The feedback from participants and the broader community has been overwhelmingly positive. Additionally, two more group bookings are scheduled in the coming days.

3. *Summary of outcomes achieved*

This screening campaign successfully achieved its goals by conducting community consultations, running awareness sessions, and supporting women in accessing breast screening through our partnership with BreastScreen Victoria. A key focus was identifying and addressing common fears, misconceptions, and stigma surrounding cancer screenings, while also raising awareness of the importance of cancer screening and co-designing culturally appropriate promotional messages to encourage greater screening uptake within the Nepalese community. We are proud to announce that 108 women, many of whom had never been screened before, have now participated in the screenings, with additional group bookings scheduled in the coming days.

- Number of breast screens: out of 159 registered, 108 screened and two more group bookings are scheduled.
- Number of bowel screens: NA
- Number of cervical screens: NA

Note: though we have encouraged each and everyone to do cervical and bowel screening, but its hard to monitor those data.

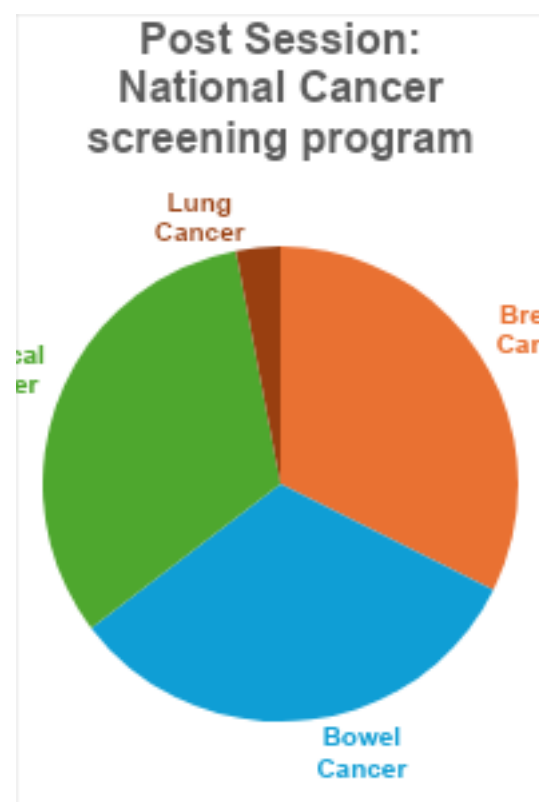
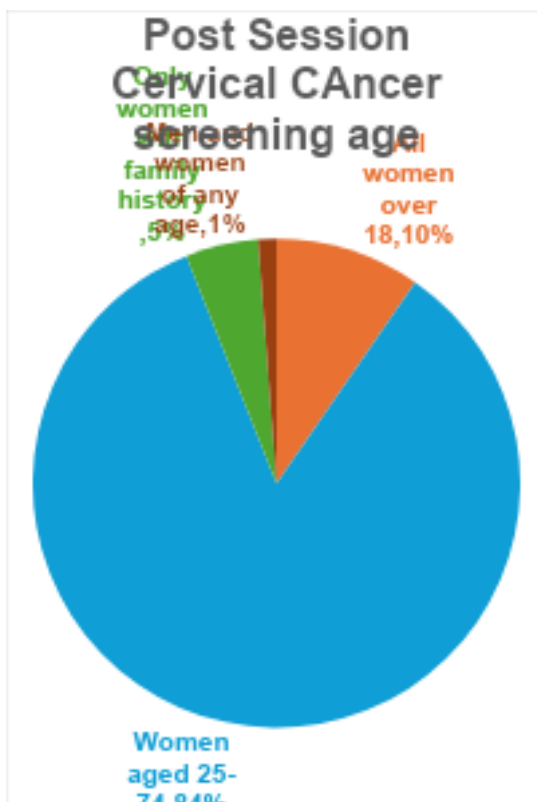
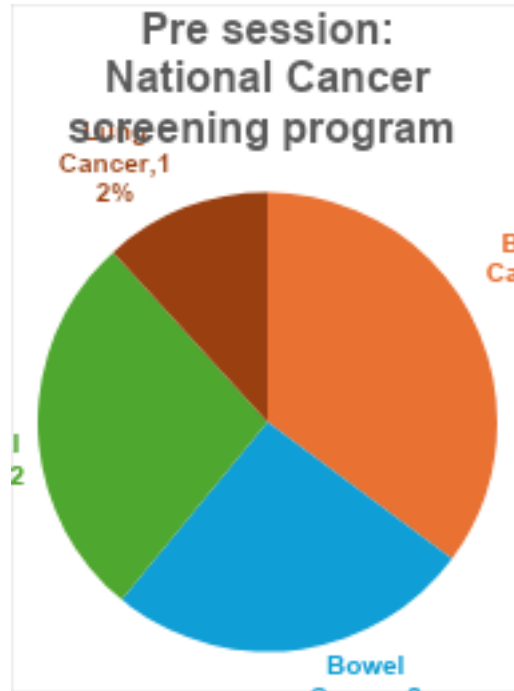
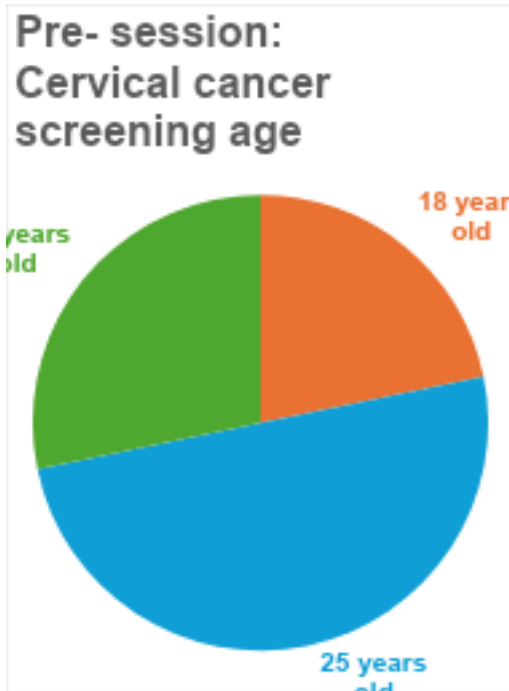
4. ***Key learnings on people's beliefs, knowledge or behaviour towards breast, bowel and cervical screening.***

We conducted seven community consultations across various locations in Melbourne, followed by cancer screening awareness sessions and workshops. Participants represented diverse groups, including young women, women with school-going children, and middle-aged men and women. Through these consultations, we learned that the community largely lacks awareness about the importance of cancer screening, highlighting a critical gap in knowledge and understanding.

The consultations revealed several major barriers to cancer screening uptake, including a lack of proper education and awareness, insufficient focus on self-care, concerns about potential costs, and the pressures of a busy lifestyle. Additional challenges identified were visa conditions, insurance coverage issues, shyness, social taboos, denial, limited guidance from GPs, fear of body exposure (sacred body concept), stigma, cultural beliefs, and language barriers. These factors collectively hinder participation in cancer screening programs within the community.

Surprisingly, even educated professionals missed screenings due to ignorance and a lack of reinforcement. The awareness sessions and workshops successfully addressed these fears and barriers, helping to break down obstacles to cancer screening uptake.

As an organization, we have also developed a strong partnership with BreastScreen Victoria, which has been instrumental in our efforts.



5. **Outline of any new information, concerns or issues that have arisen.**

Overall, this project has been instrumental in raising awareness and successfully co-designing culturally appropriate cancer screening promotional messages through active community engagement, consultations, and

workshops. The activities and engagement have fostered a sense of ownership among participants, empowering them to become advocates for cancer screening within their communities. Additionally, we produced a short video showcasing the community's active involvement. [Link]

However, there were some **concerns from the community members** such as

- Visa status, insurance coverage whether that covers screening costs for those who do not have Medicare
- Fear of high cost for their children (from older people)
- Lack of information about eligibility, and cost
- Do not know where to go, who to ask , language barriers.
- Health illiteracy (illiterate in their language, do not know how to read the information even in their native language, hence word of mouth, peer support and one-to-one engagement are very significant in this group)
- Health professionals such as GPs never asked while going for another check
- “Cancer is not my disease (denial)”
- “No symptom to check up” seeking health check only if sick

Concerns as an Implementing Partner

- While the workshops and consultations have proven effective in raising awareness, ensuring sustained engagement post-workshop/program is a challenge as there is a huge demand from the community to continue engagement, particularly around accessing screening services.
- More funding, resources and support are required to meet the needs of the wider community and expand outreach. There is still a growing demand for workshops, consultations, and screenings. DBSV is especially running voluntarily, so it's hard to sustain the volunteer support for a long time.
- One ongoing challenge is the integration of cancer screening awareness into the broader health system especially GP to play a more active role in educating and promoting screenings remains difficult. “Screening was never discussed in GP practice” as per the community consultation.

6. Description of local partnerships (such as health professionals, Cancer Council, Cancer Institute, etc) and learnings through involvement with these local partner organisations.

During the implementation of this project, we partnered with various groups and organisation and engaged in various levels of partnership to make this campaign exceptionally successful. One of the major partners was BreastScreen Victoria.

BreastScreen Victoria has been a pivotal partner in facilitating group bookings for breast cancer screenings. The collaboration led to the successful participation of 108 women in Breast screenings, demonstrating the effectiveness of coordinated efforts between community initiatives and professional screening services.

Learnings:

- Group booking models are highly effective in encouraging participation, especially among communities that are hesitant about individual appointments.
- The involvement of trusted community organizations such as ours in the booking process helps reduce fears and anxieties, ensuring better turnout.
- Logistical support provided by BreastScreen Victoria, such as appointment scheduling and follow-ups, allocating specific cultural worker and DBSV allocating specific volunteers to support women to take to the appointment and to interpret during the appointment played a crucial role in the success of this initiative.

7. *Samples of resources produced, for example, leaflets, videos, podcasts, radio segments, and social media posts. Provide links if these are available online.*

- The successful co-design of screening promotion messages through community engagement has fostered a strong sense of ownership and empowered participants to become active promoters of cancer screening within their communities. The messages were creatively developed and presented in various formats, including role plays and presentations, with plans to share them on platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and local radio, ensuring broader outreach and impact.
- Through small group discussions, we co-developed and designed the shopping bag messages to address fear around screening and promote screening uptake.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/19zIPECYBpSggtkBhwmaYfxExhnPDVHtW/edit?usp=drive_link&oid=101934106476911027431&rtpof=true&sd=true

- We produced a short video of success stories and experiences of women who participated in the screening.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XB6snnbhjW6tbQ3yleDJrhx-Zfm0qrOH/view?usp=drivesdk>

- We spoke in SBS radio about the Campaign and encouraged the community for screening uptake.

<https://www.facebook.com/share/ofDmZCg7LHYTtaMD/?mibextid=WC7FNe>

8. Photos of information sessions and events. Please ensure that permission has been received by participants for these to be shared.

Some of the DBSV activities at a glance

1. Some visual highlights of the program Photos
<https://photos.app.goo.gl/eN7hcd2JdhvGxVih8>
2. Community engagement and Awareness session and experience of women
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XB6snnbhjW6tbQ3yleDJrhx-Zfm0qrOH/view?usp=drivesdk>
3. SBS radio talk in Nepali
<https://www.facebook.com/share/ofDmZCg7LHYTtaMD/?mibextid=WC7FNe>
4. The Facebook post
<https://www.facebook.com/share/T7aoKBr7MrzQi3pZ/?mibextid=xfxF2i>

9. How can the partnership with the Australian Multicultural Health Collaborative and your organisation/community be strengthened? Please give specific ideas/recommendations that could be adopted.

To strengthen the partnership between the Australian Multicultural Health Collaborative and DBSV, we think some of the strategies could be

- Continue joint community health awareness campaigns such as this and we need more awareness around mental health and chronic disease prevention, nutrition and lifestyles.
- We can also do joint research projects to gather data on health needs, concerns gaps and barriers to health access. So that organisation advocate for policy change that better addresses the needs of the multicultural population.
- Both organizations could advocate for increased government funding for culturally appropriate healthcare, and better inclusion of multicultural needs in public health programs, that ensure equitable and accessible care.
- Support DBSV to employ a bilingual health worker (Nepali) to assist non-English-speaking community members in accessing healthcare services, including cancer screening programs.

Acknowledgement

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the **Australian Multicultural Health Collaborative** for their invaluable guidance and support throughout the Health Check Project. Their expertise and commitment to improving healthcare access for multicultural communities have been instrumental in shaping our approach and ensuring the success of this initiative. Also for their generous grant, which enabled us to carry out this important work. Their funding allowed us to conduct community consultations, organize awareness sessions, and develop culturally appropriate health promotion materials, ensuring that the message of early detection and screening reached those who needed it most.

We also sincerely thank BreastScreen Victoria for their partnership and unwavering support in facilitating group bookings and ensuring that women from the Nepalese community could access life-saving breast screening services. Their collaboration has been critical in overcoming barriers and encouraging preventive healthcare participation.

We deeply appreciate the contributions of our DBSV volunteers, who played a vital role in coordinating sessions, supporting participants, and guiding women through the screening process. Their dedication and hard work were fundamental in making this project a success.

Lastly, we are immensely grateful to the community members who participated in the consultations and awareness sessions. Their openness, willingness to share experiences and commitment to taking charge of their health have made a significant impact. This project was a collective effort, and its success is a testament to the power of community collaboration in improving health outcomes.

Appendix A - Activities

List all activities you have you completed during implementation, including number of participants

Activity	Total number of participants	Gender	Screening Information	Language(s)	Community Group (if applicable)	State
Community consultation and co-design workshop event	18	Female	Cervical, Breast	Nepali, English	Glenroy young women's group	Vic
Information session -Online Meeting	13	Female	Cervical, Breast	Nepali, English	West DBSV members	Vic
Community consultation, co-design workshops and awareness sessions	31	Female	Bowel , Cervical, Breast	Nepali, English	Craigieburn Women group/ Nepali Samaj	Vic
Community awareness session and co-design messages- Aintree	27	20 Female 7 Male	Bowel , Cervical, Breast	Nepali, English	Aintree Nepali samaj	Vic

Community awareness session for > 50 population- Glenroy	89	27 Male 62 Female	<i>Bowel , Cervical, Breast</i>	Nepali, English	Glenroy/ Brodmeadows	<i>Vic</i>
Community awareness session and co-design messages- Lalor	36	Female	<i>Bowel , Cervical, Breast</i>	Nepali, English	Nepalese Neighbourhood in Northern region	<i>Vic</i>
Community awareness session and co-design messages- Vermont	28	5 Male 23 Female	<i>Bowel , Cervical, Breast</i>	Nepali, English	Eastern Nepali community	<i>Vic</i>
Total	242	203 Female 39 Male				
Support provided to access breast screening in 14 groups. With the support of 10 volunteers. Other 2 groups are	108	108	Had breast screening done through group booking in different locations	Nepali	Epping, Broadmeadows, Craigieburn, Werribee and Melton Breast Screen centres.	<i>Vic</i>



scheduled for screening						
----------------------------	--	--	--	--	--	--

