

Participation

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN DRUG ACTION ACTIVITIES

“Involving a broad range of community members and organisations adds value to your activities and helps make sure your CDAT is stronger and more sustainable into the future.”

John Della Bosca,
Special Minister of State.

The *Drug Action Toolkit* is designed to build CDATs’ skills to help them work with their local communities. By developing their skills today, CDATs can sustain their activities into the future. This edition of the *Drug Action Toolkit* covers community participation practices.

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Encouraging broad community participation in CDAT activities



A CDAT can achieve long term success by encouraging community involvement in its projects. Participation can take place in many ways, ranging from:

- receiving a newsletter
- helping with mailouts, etc
- attending a community meeting
- joining a working group on a project
- developing a local drug action plan
- being on the CDAT committee.

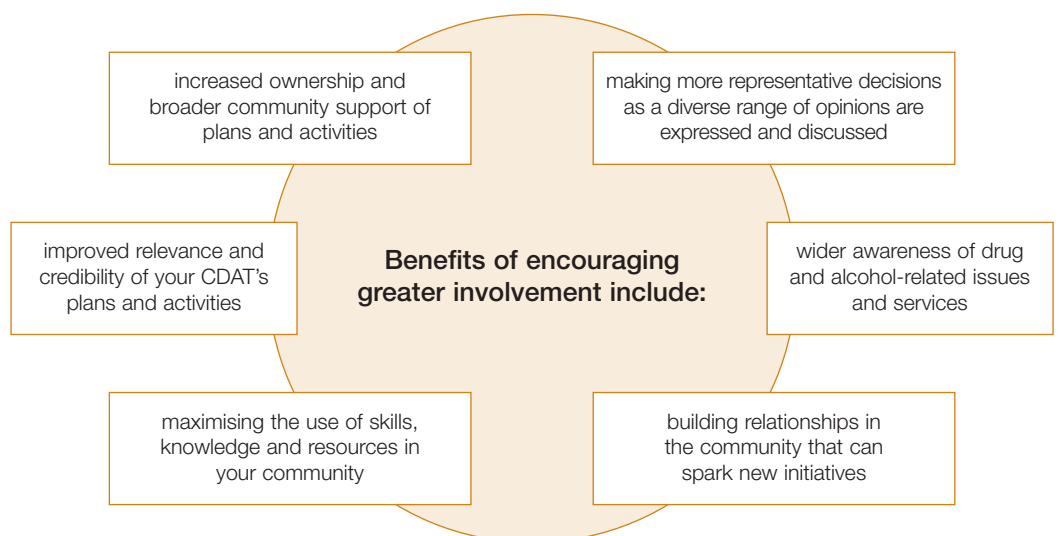
As a guide, your CDAT should aim to involve:

- a balanced membership comprising government, non-government and community stakeholders willing to work in partnership
- people who have an interest in issues affecting their community and a capacity to respond to them.

For participation to be effective, it needs to be part of your CDAT’s culture as something that is done all the time – not as a one-off activity. This will build a solid foundation for various groups to become involved, in ways that suit them, in your activities.

Ideally government representation should comprise, at a minimum, health, police, education and local government. Community representatives, other government, non-government agencies and local businesses should also be involved depending on the issues your CDAT is addressing.

Benefits of community participation for CDATs



Community can mean the people who live in a particular location or it may mean people who share a common culture or interest. A community will include a range of attitudes, interests and values. No two communities are the same.



Stakeholder participation and involvement



Here are two ways to encourage the participation of people affected by drug and alcohol-related issues.

1. Listen to them carefully to better understand the causes of the problem, any barriers to their managing the problem, and their ideas for solving it.
2. They can participate in the activity or project¹.

Your community may have a number of stakeholders with an interest in drug and alcohol-related harm issues. There are many ways for your CDAT to involve stakeholders in its activities. The type of involvement will depend on the issue and needs of the stakeholders.

The following table helps you identify some activities and the level of involvement and participation that could suit different stakeholders.

Activity	Wider community gets involved by...	Specific group gets involved by...	General community organisations and businesses get involved by...	Specific Drug and Alcohol and other relevant services get involved by...
CDAT membership	This will depend on the concerns the community wants to address, as well as the skills, knowledge and commitment of members/representatives of organisations. You should regularly review the team's membership to reflect changing issues.			
Developing Local Drug Action Plan	Being consulted on main AOD ² issues. Being informed of the plan's goals.	Being consulted on main AOD issues. Requesting specific feedback on AOD issues from them.	Being consulted on main AOD issues.	Being consulted on main AOD issues. Requesting specific feedback on AOD issues from them.
Developing and delivering projects	Being informed via newsletters, media stories.	Being consulted on specific project details. Being included on project working group.	Being consulted on specific project details. Being informed via newsletters, media stories.	Being consulted on general project details. Having representatives on project working group.
Participating in activities e.g. information stall at shopping centre	Being invited to attend.	Being invited to attend. Being part of set-up and delivery of activity.	Being invited to attend. Asking them for contribution of material/resources.	Being invited to attend. Asking them for contribution of material/resources.
CDAT evaluation activities	Being asked for general feedback. Giving feedback on project results.	Being asked for specific feedback. Being included in evaluation process. Giving feedback on project results.	Being asked for general feedback. Giving feedback on project results.	Being asked for specific feedback. Being included in evaluation process. Giving feedback on project results.
Receiving information	Receiving general information on projects and activities via local media.	Receiving specific information on projects and activities via newsletters/reports.	Receiving general information on projects and activities via interagency/ Chamber of Commerce meetings.	Receiving specific information on projects and activities via newsletters/reports.

1. Adapted from *Community Tool Box*, University of Kansas, www.ctb.ku.edu

2. AOD = Alcohol and Other Drugs

Auburn CDAT – Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Community Drug and Alcohol Survey



Auburn CDAT funded the Drug and Alcohol Multicultural Education Centre (DAMEC) survey to address alcohol and other drug use issues among culturally and linguistically diverse communities in the area. It also wanted to find out people's knowledge of local AOD (Alcohol and Other Drug) services.

Auburn CDAT did a number of things to increase the involvement of CALD communities in the survey.

- They worked with DAMEC, an organisation with experience in multicultural issues around drugs and alcohol.
- A check was made to ensure that cultural sensitivities to drug and alcohol issues were taken into account.
- An explanatory letter was translated into the main community languages of Turkish, Arabic, Chinese and Vietnamese and sent to potential households. Interviews were also conducted in these languages as well as English and French.
- The main CALD community organisations and groups were consulted.
- The survey results were distributed in a variety of community forums.

Yura Yulang CDAT – An Aboriginal CDAT



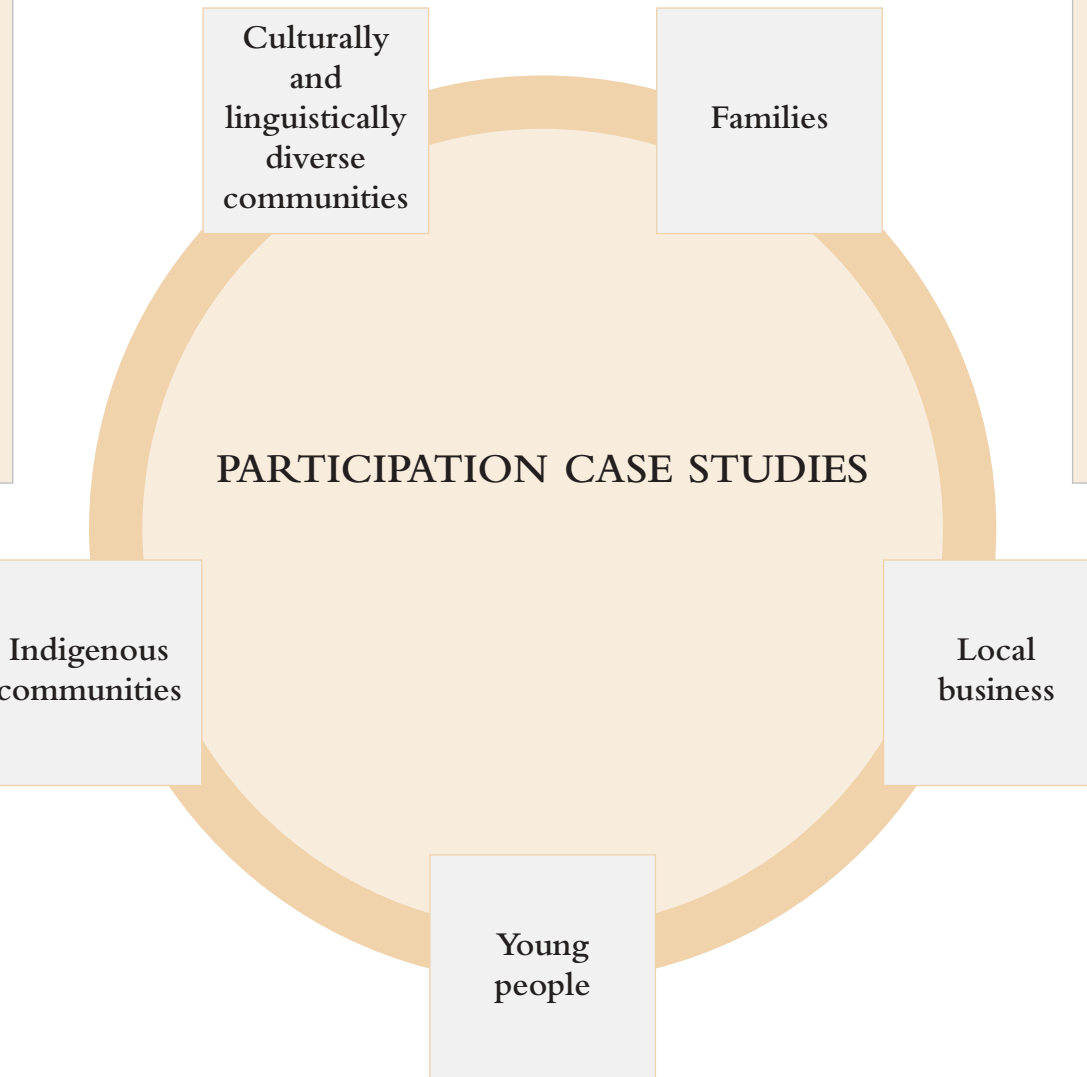
The Yura Yulang CDAT was formed in 2001 and arose from the need for an Aboriginal CDAT to address issues that affect the Campbelltown area Aboriginal community. The name Yura Yulang was chosen by the local community and means 'People's Ceremony.'

The CDAT worked closely with the local indigenous men's and women's groups to develop the *Dharawal Family Matters* booklet. There was crossover membership between the CDAT and these groups ensuring good communication.

The Aboriginal community was actively involved in the following ways.

- A local Aboriginal artist was contracted to paint six drug and alcohol-related paintings, under the guidance of community leaders.
- The booklet incorporated quotes from community members who drafted most of the text. This ensured the booklet authentically reflected the community's views.
- The paintings' stories were translated into traditional Dharawal language by community members.

The booklet has been well received and accepted by the community because of the wide involvement of a number of people, including Elders and other community leaders.



Hay CDAT – Working with young people

The Hay CDAT recognises that young people are a high priority in their community and have worked hard to engage them in their CDAT since their inception four years ago. Initially a forum was held to identify young people's needs and possible actions to address them. Hay CDAT adopted the outcomes of the forum and has actively worked with young people to achieve them.

To encourage young people to participate in the CDAT, Hay High School hosts the meetings during lunch. At the meetings,

students are encouraged to discuss issues and are delegated tasks for particular projects. Other members of the CDAT provide support and encouragement as needed. For example, the young people developed a Bus Out Of Town (BOOT) project, where they investigated recreation, entertainment, and other options and organised activities outside of their town. The CDAT and other adult volunteers helped with permission forms, supervisors and transport.



MAD CDAT – Involving Aboriginal mothers in disadvantaged communities.



Mums Against Drugs CDAT (otherwise called the MAD CDAT) was formed when a local child received a needle stick injury. Aboriginal mothers from the Department of Housing Bolton Point Estate met to take action on drugs and alcohol.

Women got involved partly because the group was fairly informal. Mums told their stories and shared their experiences about drugs and alcohol. They took the time to talk about their concerns for their children and their desire to have a better future for them. They also wanted to support their men into drug and alcohol treatment and rehabilitation.

Because the women invested time and developed an understanding of their community's issues, they were able to work in partnership with other community members, government and non-government agencies including the Police, Education and Training, Housing, Hunter Volunteer Centre and a number of Aboriginal organisations. Relationships have grown between the Aboriginal community and other residents on the estate. MAD CDAT believes their success in involving mothers is due to the passion of the women and their willingness to share their stories, admit past mistakes and move forward.

Kyogle CDAT – Involving local business



Kyogle CDAT and the local IGA Supermarket have developed a 'Lucky Shopper – Drug and Alcohol Information' project. IGA donated \$200 worth of shopping vouchers for enclosure in 'lucky envelopes'. The lucky envelopes are randomly chosen by customers, like a lucky dip. All envelopes include attractively presented information about drugs and alcohol – postcards and stickers. The incentive to win is coupled with receiving knowledge.

Some of the factors that helped the CDAT to get local businesses involved included the following.

- The CDAT has built a solid reputation for getting things done in the community. By attracting high profile individuals like Geraldine Doogue and Barbara Holborrow to their events, the CDAT gained status in the community.
- The project is an opportunity for IGA to demonstrate their role as a good corporate citizen – ie their involvement shows their commitment to the Kyogle community.

Guides to working with communities

There are no shortcuts to building and sustaining community participation in your CDAT's activities. The most important thing to remember is to communicate! The following guidelines are intended to help CDATs approach, involve and work with a range of community groups. They should be adjusted to the context of each project or activity.



General principles for encouraging participation

The following approaches can apply to all community groups.

- Invest time in building relationships.
- Be honest, upfront and clear about your ideas.
- Inform people how much of their time will be needed to participate in meetings, activities, etc.
- Brief people fully in a manner and language they understand.
- Use plain language not jargon.
- Find out what the community's issues and agendas are and work with them to find common ground.
- Talk to smaller groups to get a wider picture – listen to minority views.
- Make meetings as informal as possible.
- Keep meetings short, focused and with clear outcomes, as people have little time to spare.
- Do not overburden participants – people have school, home and job responsibilities and may not always be able to attend meetings.
- Set aside resources to support participation, e.g. morning tea or transportation.
- Get your message out to the community via other agencies' newsletters, stories in the local paper, message boards, radio, leaflets, posters, fridge magnets and word of mouth etc.
- Value any level of participation – it may grow larger in time.
- Follow through on your promises.

Working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities can have significant variations in their views on drugs and alcohol. Taking these variations into account will help your participation process to be a success.

- Use population data from your local council's Social Plan to identify the CALD communities in your area.
- Contact your nearest Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) for information on which organisations you could work with.
- Ethnic communities will have religious, cultural and other differences in them. Don't assume that a community is made up of similar people who all share one point of view on drugs and alcohol.
- Find out the best ways to communicate with different communities. Radio is one of the most effective ways to disseminate information, but use other methods as well.
- Check to make sure that your material is culturally appropriate.
- Increase your profile in the community by asking to be involved in ethnic community festivals and local community events.
- When visiting a community, check to see if you will need an interpreter.
- Liaise with government agencies which have been working with culturally diverse communities on drug and alcohol-related issues.

Working with local businesses

Businesses can make valuable contributions to their community.

- Focus on businesses with a potential interest in community activities, e.g. chemists, shopping malls, sport, recreation, and service clubs etc.
- Show the benefits your CDAT can bring to them by working on drug and alcohol-related issues affecting

businesses, e.g. safer environments for customers, recreation alternatives for young people, a positive image of the business in the community etc.

- Recognise any support you receive from local businesses by mentioning them in your newsletter, including their logos on posters and flyers, etc.
- Take time to build relationships with local businesses. This investment in time will help later if you need to ask them for assistance and resources.

Working with and involving young people

There is no simple formula that will guarantee effective involvement of young people in your CDAT. Issues and opinions will change over time and individuals will have different views and preferences.

- Get a copy of the *Working With Children Check*. Visit www.kids.nsw.gov before you start, to see what steps you need to take when working with young people.
- Meet young people on their own ground. They'll be more comfortable and it will show them that you are ready to listen.
- Explain how issues are relevant to them in language that makes sense to them.
- If young people are going to run a project, make time to train or mentor them in the skills and knowledge they will need.
- Do not allow more confident members to dominate a group.
- Make any CDAT meeting with young people as informal as possible, e.g. buy some pizzas and juice.
- Have meetings at convenient times for young people, e.g. if their school agrees – during lunch time.
- Ask other organisations, e.g. youth services, for advice and assistance on how to get effective participation.
- To improve as you go, monitor and evaluate your participation processes.

The NSW Commission for Children and Young People has a range of resources and expertise to assist you when seeking young people's participation. Visit www.kids.nsw.gov.au for further information.

Working with people with different views on drugs and alcohol

Within every community there is a wide range of views on drug and alcohol issues. It is important that everyone has a role to play and that there is room for a diverse range of strategies to address the issues.

- Listen, try to understand and respect the other person's point of view.
- Be careful not to jump to conclusions about what other people believe: ask questions to check your assumptions.
- Look past the emotion of an issue to find common ground, eg working on prevention activities might be acceptable to everyone.
- Keep communication channels open. Joint work could be an option in the future.
- Be patient as it may take time to develop understanding so you can work together.

Working with and involving Indigenous Communities

- Find out what other groups or agencies are doing in the community before you start. This avoids overburdening people and duplicating efforts and resources.
- Find out who you should talk to in the community, especially Elders and community champions. Ask for advice from your local Land Councils, Medical Services or any other Aboriginal organisations within that community.
- Ask permission from an Elder (or Elders) or other community leader to visit and discuss your ideas.
- Be respectful of all ideas.
- The way you speak to people is also important. Don't go into the community thinking you are the one who has all the knowledge and ideas.
- Don't assume that the community wants to work on your issues. There may be significant activities in the community at that time that are more important to them than outsiders presenting new projects.
- Ask for permission to use information and make sure you acknowledge that the source is that particular community.
- Ask permission if you intend to take photographs.

Visit www.daa.nsw.gov.au or talk to the local Aboriginal Land Councils for background information.

Resources

Visit www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/drugs_action for more details and information on participation practices and methods.

Feedback

Drug Action Toolkit welcomes feedback. Please call (02) 9228 3731 or email drugaction@premiers.nsw.gov.au



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