Introducing Junction Community Centre Sewing Program

The Junction Community Centre is situated in an area with a large Aboriginal population. The area also has a high number of migrant communities. Staff at the Junction have noted a gap in knowledge of new migrants to the area about the First Nation's people and Australia's history. The Junction Community Centre have developed an Adult Community Education program using a Numeracy unit from the Foundation Skills Training Package to support students to fill this knowledge gap.

The sewing course is supported by a partnership with Lutheran Community Care (LCC) who provide free fabric donated to their charity shops. LCC support individuals and families in need - whether locally or in remote communities like Hermannsburg near the APY Lands. At times, LCC experiences a shortfall in clothing, which is where the Adult Community Education program is able to assist. Students are taught the skills to make the required clothing from scratch, whilst building their personal satisfaction of giving back to the community. The students who are predominantly migrant and refugee women, are encouraged to develop and use the skills to make an item of clothing to donate and another to keep for their own family. Their literacy and numeracy skills are developed as is their confidence using the English language. The skills learnt are transferable to increase participants employability.

The multifaceted program provides students with knowledge of the First Nations people, including their history and culture whilst they learn to sew. The students have been able to draw parallels from their own lives, including loss of country, culture, etc with the Aboriginal community and are not so ‘fearful’ of a community that they generally only (erroneously) associated with negative stereotypes. We have seen friendships develop with members of the Aboriginal community as students interact and get to know each other by participating in other activities in the centre.

The program has strengthened participants numeracy, literacy and English language skills and opened up their chances of gaining employment. Since the project’s inception, two students have commenced employment, two students have enrolled in TAFE studies, two students have become volunteer group facilitators at the centre, and several members of the local Aboriginal community have joined the centre’s board.