

# A Journey from Tibet to Australia

Northern Beaches Tibetan Community Research Project Report  
2019

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- Dee Why Beach photo: unknown (Google)

## Foreword

The Northern Beaches Tibetan Community Research Project has been in the pipeline for almost eight years. It was a dream that Jacqueline Smith OAM and I had for a long time. Jacqui retired, and the idea was put on hold.

It was during an informal conversation, while having lunch with a long-time friend, Fernando Hincapie, an anthropologist working at Macquarie University, that an opportunity opened up to convert the dream into reality. With Fernando's connections we were able to engage two Sociology students, through the university's PACE program, and we successfully applied to the Northern Beaches Council for funding, under their Community Arts and Cultural Grants program, to finance the project.

Five people, including four Tibetans, answered the call for volunteer facilitators and a photographer to join a working party led by Dhondup, our Tibetan Settlement Officer, to work with the team managing the community consultations groups, led by Fernando Hincapie.

The Tibetan Community not only responded to our request for attendance at the consultation meetings, but also responded in large numbers to our request to answer the survey that was part of the research.

Five community members volunteered to tell their life stories to be included in the report.

The basis for this research stems from my passion for the Tibetan Community and its history. I met my first Tibetan friend, Cheme, in Manly in 1994 and I have been involved with the community on and off ever since. In the last ten years we have seen a substantial change in the community, not only in numbers but also in human capacity.

The idea for this research project came from wanting to learn more about the Tibetans who are settling on the Northern Beaches, which is the largest Tibetan Community in Australia. This report will work as an information and education tool to service providers, the Council, the Northern Beaches community, and the Tibetan Community. It will be used to gain a better understanding of the Tibetans and of how we can provide better services, as they are settling into their new lives, here on the Northern Beaches.

Maria Elena Chidzey  
Manager  
Community Northern Beaches Inc.  
Multicultural/Settlement Services.

## About Community Northern Beaches (CNB)

Community Northern Beaches (CNB) is an independent and not-for-profit organization, devoted to serving the Northern Beaches community. We have an open-door policy, offering face-to-face assistance for anyone who seeks it. We also assist via phone calls, make appointments, fill in forms, explain bills and prepare tax returns, provide information about other service providers, and guide people with various problems such as dealing with Centrelink etc. We collaborate with a range of organizations to help people navigate their way through hardship, and we empower individuals through community services.

The CNB Multicultural/Settlement Service empowers people, by assisting them to form their own support networks, and provides opportunities for community building by offering training, English conversation classes, learning to drive and swimming programs etc.

The CNB Multicultural Settlement Service is the only funded service to assist Refugees, Humanitarian Entrants and disadvantage migrants in the Northern Beaches under the SETS program.



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## Introduction

This report for the Tibetan Community Research Project presents a study of the current situation of the Tibetan community in terms of the needs and support required to facilitate their settlement in the Northern Beaches. It considers matters affecting the community in the areas of health, education and training, employment, skills and occupation, business opportunities, cultural preservation and identity.

This information will help Community Northern Beaches, service providers and other stakeholders to tailor their services and address important issues in the Tibetan community.

The report also presents a number of stories about members of the community and their journeys leaving Tibet, the land on top of the world, to come and live in the land down under. These stories tell of the circumstances under which they left families and friends, and their encounters with a new way of life, in Australia.

The goals and expectations of this project are aimed at improving the services delivered to the Tibetan community by providing an up-to-date understanding of community needs and interests, and informing the community of new services and changes to services that affect them.

Another goal is to build the capacity of the Tibetan community, along with service providers and stakeholders, by providing opportunities for the growth of its human and social capital, and creating strategic options for education, employment and business ventures for members of the community.

Through the expansion of the community's social network, a greater awareness of Tibet and of Tibetans in Australian society can be created, facilitating their inclusion into the wider Northern Beaches community and increasing opportunities for recognition and participation.

It is expected that a more comprehensive way to deliver services and support would allow the Tibetan community to drive its own future, and to contribute in a greater way to the wellbeing of the entire Northern Beaches community.

Community consultations were carried out to collect information for this study. The methodology used was rapid appraisals, a methodology that collects information in a timely and effective manner. In addition to this, a series of focus groups, group interviews and a survey were utilised to collect data. Organisational documents and previous reports were also reviewed.

## Findings of Consultation

The Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) and the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program provide services to humanitarian and disadvantaged migrants, assisting them to become independent and active members of the Australian community.

HSP and SETS work with providers of settlement and conventional services to deliver English language tuition and build the skills needed for further education and employment.

These types of services are aimed at building the human and social capital of communities, to allow them to prosper and contribute to society. The role of organisations is to facilitate the acquisition and utilization of skills, knowledge and occupations that are required or already exist in communities to increase their wellbeing and livelihoods.

It is also important for organisations to create networks and alliances, which allow for growth and participation in the affairs of the nation.

In this sense, human capital represents the skills, knowledge, ability to work and good health that together enable people

to pursue different livelihood strategies and achieve their livelihood objectives. At a household level, human capital is a factor of the amount and quality of labour available. This varies according to household size, skill levels, leadership potential, health status, etc.

Social capital in the context of this study is taken to mean the social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives. These are developed through networks and connectedness - either vertical, patron/client or horizontal, between individuals with shared interests - that increase people's trust and ability to work together and expand their access to wider institutions, such as political or civic bodies.

Membership of more formalized groups, which often entails adherence to mutually agreed or commonly accepted rules, norms and sanctions, and relationships of trust, reciprocity and exchanges that facilitate cooperation, reduce transaction costs and may provide the basis for informal safety nets amongst the community.

The relationship between service providers and communities is one which needs to be built on trust and service-focus. It must be informed by an understanding of the needs and issues affecting its clients, and its processes must address the difficulties faced by individuals trying to access their services.

## Tibetans in the Northern Beaches

The first Tibetans arrived in Australia in 1972. For many years their migration was in very small numbers, so small that there are no records. From 1991 to 2019 the numbers gradually increased and since 2008 there has been an increase in the population by an intake of around 100 new Tibetans a year migrating to Australia, most of them settling on the Northern Beaches of Sydney.

According to the Australian Government Department of Social Security Settlement Database, between 1991 and 2015, 775 Tibetans arrived under the humanitarian stream of Australia's migration program. Of these, 626 settled in NSW and 174 in Victoria. At the time of the 2011 census 995 people in Australia recorded their ancestry as Tibetan.

However, informal estimates from The Central Tibetan Administration's Department of Security in Dharamshala, India, place the population to April 2019 at 2,500 Tibetans living in Australia, most of them in Sydney and in the Northern Beaches in particular.

The Department of Health's Northern Sydney Local Health District accounted for 1,300 Tibetans assisted through their services to July 2019, most of them residing in the Northern Beaches. Similarly, the Tibetan Community of Australia, Sydney, estimated 1,300 to

1,500 Tibetans residing in the Northern Beaches, a figure that matches information obtained from Community Northern Beaches Multicultural and Settlement Services, which registers an increase from 17 Tibetans in 1994 to between 1,300 and 1,500 in 2019.

The growth of the Tibetan community on the Northern Beaches is due to the supporting network provided by the already established and structured community. Tibetans have established a very efficient community organisation, the Tibetan Community of Australia NSW Inc., (TCA), which has successfully supported them since 1992 by welcoming new arrivals, introducing them to the services available in the Northern Beaches, assisting them to find accommodation and education facilities, accessing Centrelink, etc.

Other reasons for this growth are the existence of appropriate service providers and employment opportunities. Testimonials from focus group meetings reported that housing in the Northern Beaches is very expensive and that it could be cheaper to relocate to another area. However, on the Northern Beaches, Tibetans have extensive community and service networks as well as plenty of employment that they may not be able to access in other areas.

The Tibetan community is proud of their work ethic, their commitment and the quality of their work, and they believe that as this becomes recognised by employers, it will open opportunities for more Tibetans to be employed on the Northern Beaches.

## Service Providers

In consultations, the Tibetan community ranked service providers in terms of their importance and accessibility and on how these facilitated the transition into settling in Australia.

Financial assistance, education and employment services were at the centre of the discussions on the wellbeing of the community. These services were identified as essential in their dealings with daily life. Nevertheless, it was identified that some services constrain the capacity of the community to develop by influencing community members' choices and goals for life. The effect of this is a feeling of exclusion and isolation, which is detrimental to the aspirations of individuals and families.

Service providers' efforts with respect to the training and employment of members of the Tibetan community, regardless of their occupations and skill levels, concentrate on the cleaning and aged care service sectors, which have provided the community with training and employment once they achieve an appropriate language level.

Nevertheless, there is need for diversification and identification of further training areas of greater relevance to individuals and their life aspirations. For example: improving English skills, other career

paths such as hospitality, or higher education entry schemes where service providers actively work with communities to innovate and explore new opportunities and strategies to improve individuals' skills and quality of life.

“There is not a lot of value in the work we do here. The hourly pay, the time it takes. We all do cleaning and aged care.” Most attendants at the focus groups agreed that they were working to pay the bills, with not enough time or money for luxury or leisure activities.

Prior research has found that unemployment levels for refugees are high, and that, regardless of their experience, they usually gain jobs that are below their skill level. After being at an unskilled job for too long, their prior skills, abilities and experience lose value (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007).

A similar situation occurs with respect to English lessons. Language has been identified as a major barrier to accessing more satisfying jobs. Many refugees find that after completing their allocated hours of English lessons, it is difficult to pursue more advanced lessons, as they need to find employment urgently, in order to continue to receive other forms of support.



## Skills and Occupations

The Tibetan community feel they have many skills and occupations that they can offer the larger community, but these are not being used, because of lack of recognition, opportunities, and most importantly, because of the language barrier. However, there is enormous potential here to document a set of skills and occupations that service providers and the wider community can access to match and offer employment opportunities.

Tibetans coming to Australia bring with them a variety of skills and professions which, they believe, cannot be utilised here due to the lack of a market for their craft e.g. Tibetan religious painting, wood carving, tailoring and embroidering. These skills seem not to be useful in Australia because the time that it takes to design and craft their works will make the end-products of these skills too expensive. Nevertheless, this set of skills and occupations can easily be adapted for application to the Australian market.

For example, Tibetan painting, which is very respected and sought after in Tibet and India, but not to the same degree in Australia. Likewise, tailors find that Australians prefer a different type of sewing. “Locally there is no market for our traditional skills”. Skills should be transferable so as to produce goods suited to local markets, and service providers could play a role in identifying

and recognizing such skills and occupations, and in encouraging the community to obtain more meaningful and valued jobs.

It is considered that a better understanding of the occupations, skills, and interests in training and education that exist within the Tibetan community will allow service providers and other stakeholders to match the interests and needs of Tibetans to better opportunities and the building of a stronger community overall. To this end, it is recommended that a database of skills and occupations of members of the Tibetan community is created and made available to service providers and other stakeholders.

One of the major barriers identified by the Tibetan community, something that is holding back its development, is the language barrier, especially the difficulties faced by Tibetan immigrants in accessing advanced English level lessons. It is essential that they be able to do this, both to be able to practice their skills and occupations, and also to assist their schooling and further education. As discussed above, their need to continue receiving support from certain service providers may limit their opportunities to derive full benefit from lessons to improve their level of English.

The language barrier, together with their Tibetan identity, also means that the Tibetan community finds it very difficult to access

information in their own language. It is often not easy to find interpreters, due to the low numbers of Tibetans in Australia. They must use English or Chinese, languages in which they are not fluent, to make applications, access services and obtain information. As Tibet is not recognised as a country of origin in Australia, they have to tick China, India or Other in the application forms.

As an example, the community sees a driver license as a very important and necessary document in order to access employment. Tibetans trying to get the New South Wales driver license find the process very difficult, as their language is not available in the multilingual program used by the RTA. So they have no choice but to do it in English, despite the fact that other languages such as Mandarin and Korean are available as a choice.

Also, there could be a cultural barrier to certain types of employment, considered to be excessively stressful or too physically demanding. Jobs that could place a heavy toll on health and wellbeing could be considered inappropriate for them.

Another important group of Tibetan people have arrived in the last 4-5 years. These are well educated, have good command of the English language, and many have knowledge of Chinese as well as oral Hindi. Most are young, ambitious, curious, and mobile. They are seeking different employment and education opportunities from those who had come here with little or no English language knowledge.

## Education

Education is highly regarded by the Tibetan community and although first generation and elderly migrants find it challenging, they see in the younger generation opportunities for prosperity and for growth in the capacity of their community.

Completion of school, TAFE and University studies are regarded as a positive step in this direction. Nevertheless, support is needed to encourage more Tibetans to pursue and access further education. Again, service providers can play a role in facilitating this, by advising and connecting community members with educational institutions, for example through organizing visits to open days, and linking candidates to migrant support services within these institutions.

Members of the new generation of Tibetans, many born in Australia, have graduated from secondary school and are now enrolled at various tertiary education institutions such as TAFE and University. There, they are studying to become doctors, nurses, accountants, engineers, lawyers, social workers, etc. They are the future, and will become the backbone of their community.

For many Tibetan residents in the Northern Beaches, the English classes provided by the Adult Migrant English Program, (AMEP), at TAFE NSW Northern Beaches campus has been their first introduction to

structured classroom education. Many of them, especially those in the older generation, are literarily and numerically illiterate in their own language, having first learned to read and write not in their own language, but in English.

The Australian government provides eligible migrants, especially refugee and humanitarian program entrants, with up to 510 hours of free English tuition, followed by 180 hours of special vocational-related English classes.

Most adult Tibetans in the Northern Beaches have attended these classes. Many have followed up with courses in aged care and cleaning operations, which has seen hundreds of Tibetans gain employment in the aged care and commercial cleaning sectors.

In 2011 CNB staff, inspired by the desire of Tibetans to find employment, lobbied and advocated for the creation of a cleaning course to be run by the Out-Reach Unit of TAFE. The course was approved, and was headed by Phillipa Bellmore, who not only organized the training but also successfully negotiated with the TAFE cleaning contractor of the time to employ all the students who had successfully completed the course.

This is one example of how service providers working in partnership can improve the quality of life of communities. Here's another...

Coming from the high mountains in the Himalayas, from a country that is landlocked, the beach presents a whole new set of challenges for Tibetans. Service providers have identified and addressed these challenges - for example, with swimming lessons and water safety for community members offered as a partnership between Community Northern Beaches and Water Skills for Life. In ways like this, service providers can support the development of life skills relevant for members of the Tibetan community.

Another important educational activity for the Tibetan community is the Tibetan language and culture school run on Saturdays from the Mackellar Girls school in Manly Vale. This learning centre is important for the community's maintenance of its Tibetan identity and customs. The Tibetan Community of Australia NSW Inc. is the funding organization and manager of this school program.

## Important Dates and Celebrations

### Losar - the Tibetan New Year Festival

Traditionally, Tibetans follow the lunar pattern in their calendar, wherein one year is made up of twelve months. Tibetan New Year commences on the first day of the first month of each lunar year. But the preparation for Losar starts from one month earlier, with repainting and cleaning the home and preparing pancakes and snacks - Kabsey and Kuri - which are a special kind of deep fried pastry.

Tibetan customs and rituals for commemorating the new year are deeply rooted in Buddhist ideology and beliefs. This starts with making auspicious offerings to The Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), to the deities and to the lamas, followed with reciting prayers and good wishes, after which a typical breakfast is specially prepared for Losar.

The Losar festival goes on for seven to fifteen days, even for one month in some areas of Tibet. However, in most of Tibet, Losar is usually celebrated - with parties and get-togethers - for the fifteen days up to the first full moon. But, Tibetans in exile have to cut it to just three days or even a one-day celebration. Especially here in Australia, the official Losar

celebration is for one day only.

Tibetans start the celebrations with special offerings and prayers from their home, and then they go out to greet their neighbours. From 9am, they gather in a particular Losar place where the whole community appears in beautiful traditional costumes and enjoy cultural shows and other entertainment. They also have special food and snacks. It is a wonderful gathering, with a display of beautiful Tibetan costumes, Tibetan foods, and Tibetan songs and dances, despite the fact that Tibetans in Australia can't spend days and months on Losar preparations as they would have done back in Tibet.





## The Dalai Lama's Birthday - July 6<sup>th</sup>

July 6<sup>th</sup> is one of the most important days of the Tibetan calendar. It is the day that the Dalai Lama's birthday is celebrated by Tibetans all over the world, with auspicious offerings made in front of his portrait and wishes made for his long and healthy life. On this day, many Tibetans - individuals and organizations - take part in charity programs by giving food and clothes to those people who are disadvantaged. Many rescue and save the lives of fish and animals that might otherwise be killed.

However, it is a sad irony that Tibetans in Tibet cannot celebrate His Holiness' Birthday. In Tibet it is strictly prohibited to celebrate this day, or even to keep his photo, which is regarded as a crime by the Chinese government.

Tibetans hold the Dalai Lama in extremely high regard. He is not only their spiritual leader – he is the symbol of Tibet, and the embodiment of the Tibetan spirit. In the eyes of many, he is still the highest leader of Tibet. Tibetans on the Northern Beaches celebrate his birthday every single year, even if they have to change the day that they do so. Since most of them work on weekdays, they prefer to celebrate the event on the weekend. Therefore, they sometimes need to adjust

the day of celebration, if the date of his birthday does not fall on Saturday or Sunday. The whole community gathers on that day from early morning, and celebrates his birthday throughout the day, with cultural entertainment by both adults and children.



## March 10<sup>th</sup> - Commemoration of Uprising Day

March 10<sup>th</sup> is not a day of celebration. Rather, it is a day to remember and commemorate the Tibetan Uprising of 1959. This is a day which reminds Tibetans of the illegal Chinese invasion of their homeland and the contributions that its patriotic heroes and heroines have made to their nation. So this is unlike other important dates, which are occasions for celebration.

On this day, Tibetans gather to remember what has changed and how much they have lost. “The 10th March every year is the day which brings the emotion of frustration and anger”, they say. On this particular day, Tibetans used to have a march, and it is regarded as important.

Tibetans endeavour to free up their schedule to make a stand. Many of them travel to Canberra to meet with members of the government and to protest against the Chinese government in front of the Chinese Embassy. In Sydney, Tibetans and their supporters, including Chinese and Australian people, meet in Martin Place and march to the Chinese Consulate to protest.



## Saga Dawa - The Fourth Month of the Tibetan Calendar

This month is the most sacred month of the year.

During this month, Tibetans take extra care and are mindful not to commit any unvirtuous deeds. Buddhist Tibetans consider Saga Dawa a month that should be dedicated to accumulating merits by engaging in virtuous deeds and avoiding engagement in any acts of violence. Many Tibetans stop eating meat for this month, as eating the flesh of sentient beings is seen as an act of violence that Buddhists should avoid. They are especially careful to avoid eating meat on the full moon day of this holy month.

Tibetans on the Northern Beaches often gather in the St David's Church Hall in Dee Why to read from the Kangyur, (108 volumes of the translated words of Buddha), and Tengyur, (translated treatises by Indian scholars in 225 volumes), and they make auspicious offerings and recite prayers. All this is organised by volunteers within the Tibetan Community and lamas and monks who are resident in the area.





## Lhag-Kar - White Wednesday

Lhag-Kar is astrologically recognized as an auspicious day for the Dalai Lama. Since around 2008 it has been a traditional day for Tibetans to express their devotion and pray for his long life. Tibetans on the Northern Beaches gather at St David's Church Hall in Dee Why to recite prayers. It is also a day to carry out good deeds, as well as remember their holy leader.

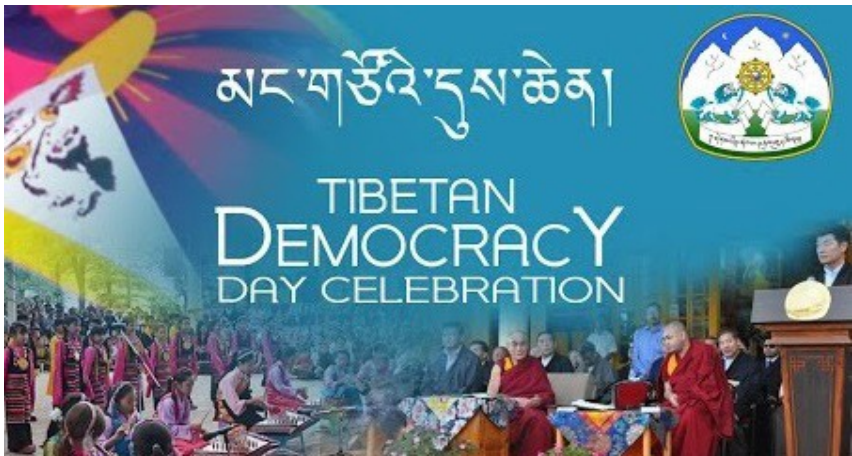
On this day, Tibetans all over the world consciously make an effort to speak pure Tibetan, eat Tibetan food, wear traditional dress and avoid consuming meat.



## September 2<sup>nd</sup>

September 2<sup>nd</sup> is the Tibetan Democracy Day. This year - 2019 - Tibetans commemorated their 59th anniversary.

This is the day on which the Dalai Lama bestowed upon his people the gift of a democratic system of governance. It is a historic day for Tibetans and every year it is commemorated with gratitude throughout the world, except in Tibet, as the country is under Chinese occupation. In Australia, Tibetans gather and commemorate the day by reading the statements of the Tibetan Parliament and the cabinet of ministers.





## December 10<sup>th</sup>

This is the day on which the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. Since then, the day is commemorated as a momentous occasion by Tibetans in exile. This year they will mark the 30th anniversary of the conferring of the Nobel Peace Prize. Tibetans will celebrate the day by gathering and reading the statements of both the Tibetan Parliament and the cabinet of ministers.



## Places to visit

Published mapping shows that Tibetans in their homeland have many holy places to visit, such as monasteries and temples, as well as other places such as parks and gardens.

Conversely, here in Australia, Tibetans do not even have a temple or stupa in which to undertake their most common and most favourite activity - the Kora, a form of pilgrimage and meditation that is shared by both the Buddhist and the Bon traditions of Tibet. Tibetan people pray, meditate and accumulate circumambulations and affirmations by walking around a sacred place, such as a temple, a stupa or a mountain.

Questioned about the places that they frequently visit in the Northern Beaches, Tibetan people mention the following as their favourite or most visited places:

**Dee Why Park** - They go to the park for morning and evening walks, for relaxation and meeting friends.

**Coffee Shop** – A place to go where they feel comfortable. Most Tibetans go there to meet with friends, to get news about Tibet and their people back there, to make new friends

within the community, to discuss and share ideas, and to stay up to date with community news.

## Brookvale Community Centre & CNB Manly

Tibetans visit these two community centres to request assistance, to seek guidance, to access information about services and events, and to meet and network with service providers. They also learn how to get involved with their community, both Tibetan and local.

They go to TAFE for education and training. Places like the library and the RSL club are also visited.

## A Sense of Place

“There is nowhere we can go to, that is our own space, unique to us. In India everyone loves to go to MacLeod Ganj, known both as Little Lhasa and as Dhasa”

For the Tibetan community, having a place of their own would benefit the entire community, as they would gain some independence and be able to maintain their cultural values. This place would be a symbol of their culture and religion, and a place to educate their children in the Tibetan language and traditions. It would also be a place to practice Buddhism, and would ideally be a place blessed by the Dalai Lama.

There are many places on the Northern Beaches where Tibetans feel welcome, places where they meet to relax and socialize, places where they can go to access the latest news from back home and places where they can practice their religion and traditions. And yet these places lack a Tibetan identity and do not enable them to act upon the message, associated with the Tibetan diaspora, of striving to maintain their culture and religion, and contemplating an eventual return to a liberated homeland (Rattray-Penrose, 2019).

## Places Most Frequented by Tibetans

**TAFE:** English study and other skills training, a place to learn about the rules and regulations of living in Australia

**Beaches:** Social engagement and entertainment

**Café shop:** Exchange ideas, meet friends, relax and get the latest news

**Library:** Study, photocopying, printing, emailing, book reading, online news, story books and DVDs

**Mackellar Girls school:** Functions, Saturday School, meetings, parties and other auspicious occasions. Many Tibetan girls are students at the school.

**Community Northern Beaches:** Settlement Services including assistance with documents and forms, tax, understanding bills, immigration advice and information sessions and assistance with Centrelink matters

**Centrelink:** Income assistance, Medicare, transportation.

**Job Network:** Jobs and training

**Health Centre:** Health checks

**RSL Club and Builder's Club:** Recreation

## Research Project Methodology

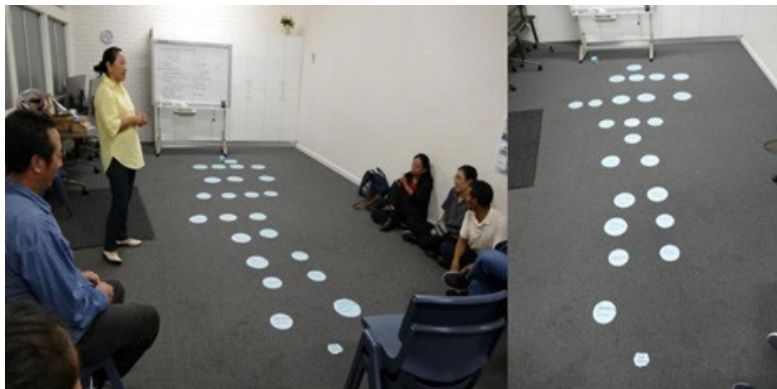
Rapid appraisal is a comparatively unstructured data collection approach designed to acquire information in a timely and cost-effective manner. The rapid data collection methods used in this consultation with the Tibetan community included key informant interviews, focus group discussions, group interviews, and an informal survey.

The tools used to collect data during the focus groups included calendars of significant celebrations for the Tibetan community, mapping of relevant places that community members visit, and a ranking of service providers in terms of importance and accessibility.

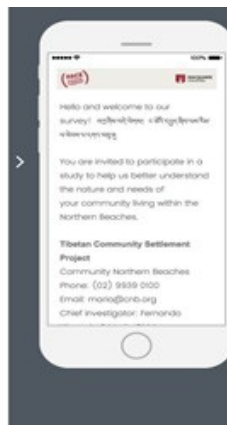
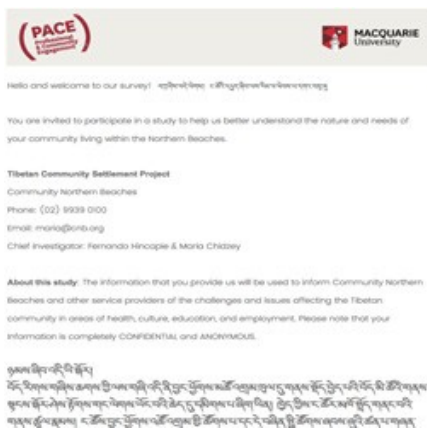
Group interviews were used to discuss issues related to health, education, employment and training. A complementary survey served as a tool to validate data collected using the more qualitative methods described above.

This methodology provides a clear picture of the current situation of any given community, and identifies areas that need support in terms of quality of life and the development of the community.

MAPS	<p>Important places where community members meet, type of activity, why they meet there, etc. For example: Gloria Jean's Coffees in Dee Why, which is visited by community members.</p> <p>Wednesday prayers</p>	<p>Questions: What are the main places the community visits? Where does the community do shopping? Doctor/Hospital?</p>
CALENDARS	<p>Important dates/times for the community to celebrate, and dates/times relevant to their daily life. For example, February 9, Losar (Tibetan New Year) celebration, December celebration of the Dalai Lama's Nobel Prize, Monthly seniors excursion.</p>	<p>Questions: Important events, celebrations, formal and informal meetings, key days.</p>
Service providers ranking	<p>Organisations and groups, formal and informal, which are of importance to community, accessibility to organisations; understanding of services offered by organisations/groups. For example interaction with stakeholders, Wednesday prayer group.</p>	<p>Questions: List the organisations and groups you use or participate in. What organisations are more important? What organisations are more accessible?</p>
Group Interview	<p>Levels of wellbeing within the community and their relationship to employment/income, housing, services, and leadership roles. Natural, economic, human and social capitals. Vulnerable groups</p>	<p>Questions: Discussion of quality of life, livelihoods, education, employment, businesses, etc.</p>



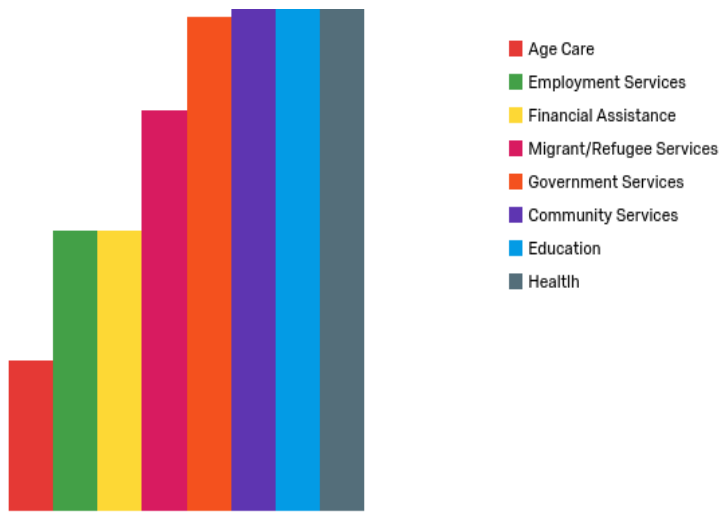
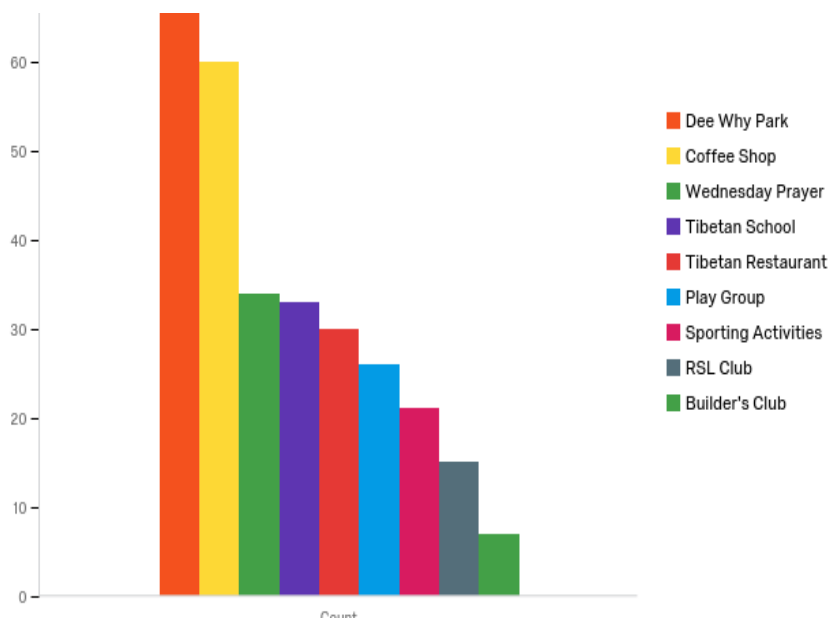
## Focus Group 2



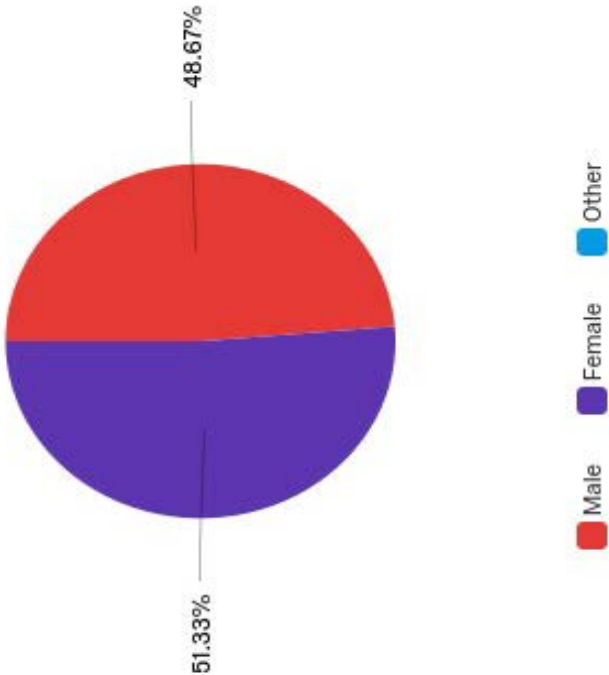
## Survey Design

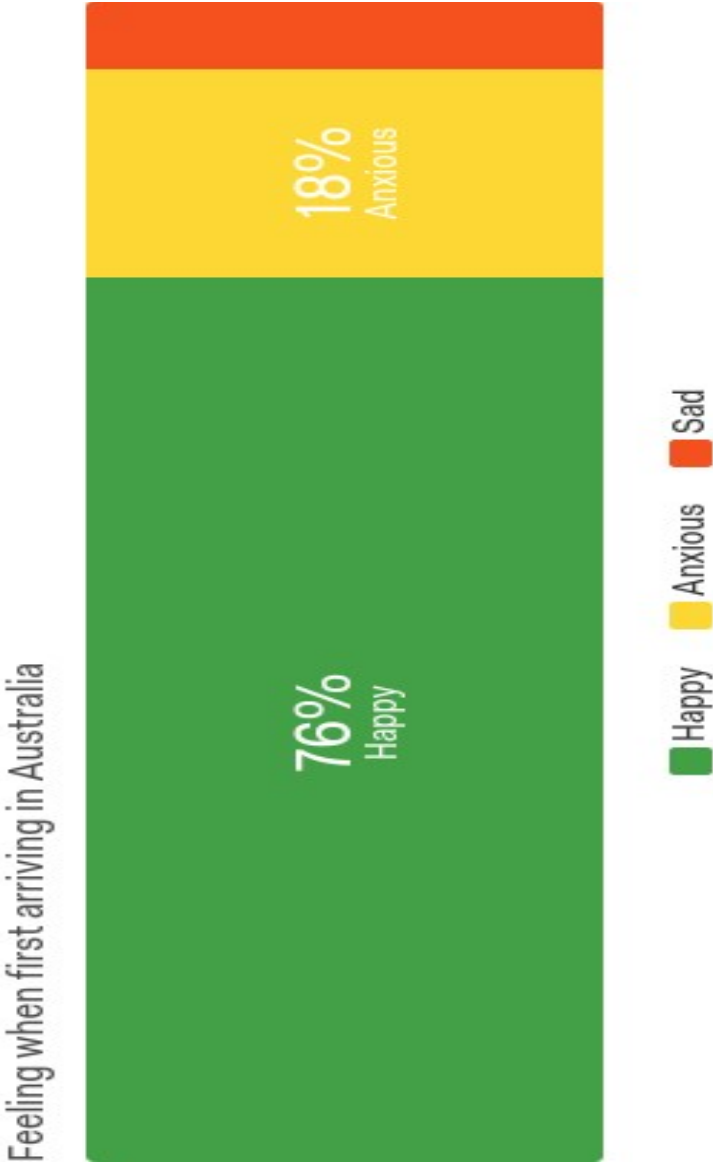




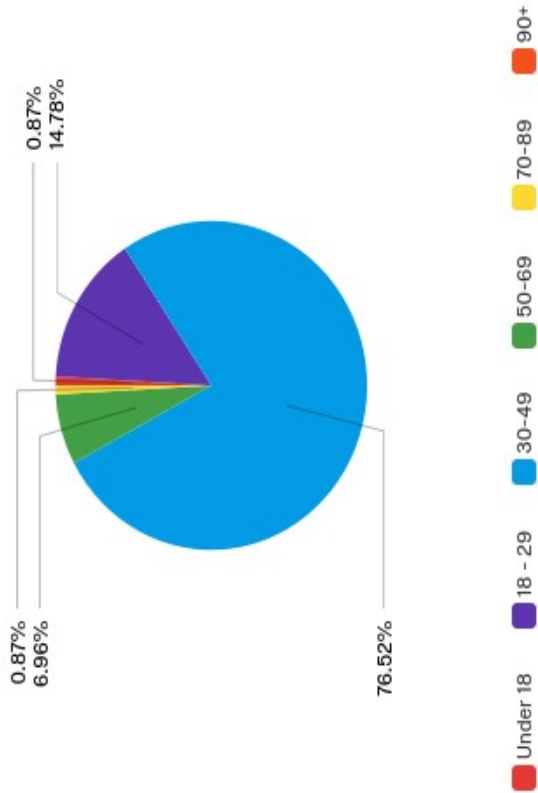


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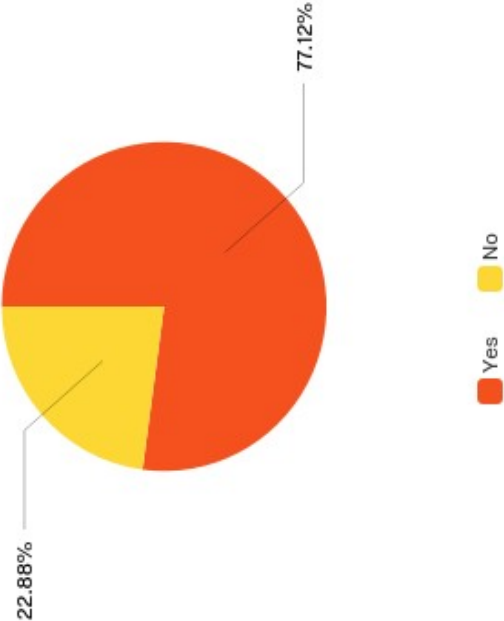




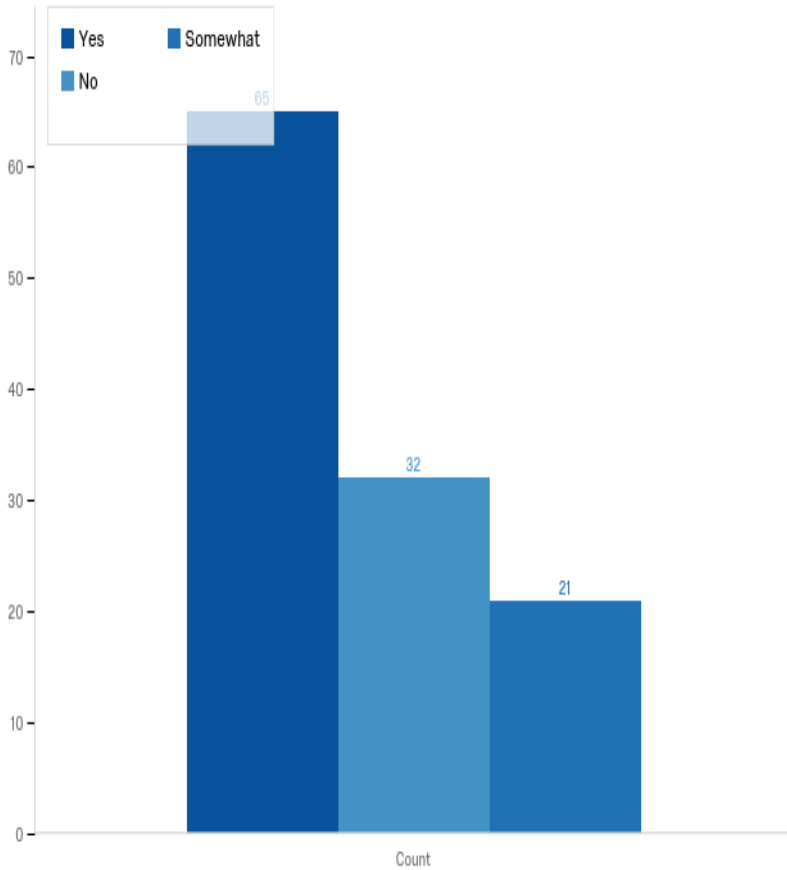
Age



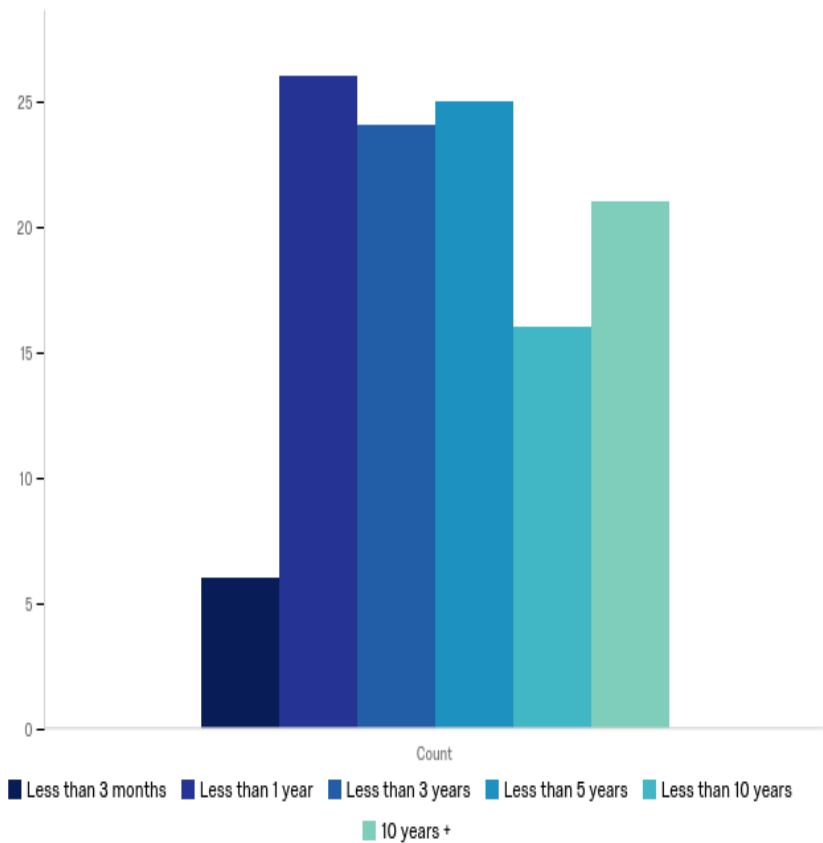
Help received once arriving



### Knowledge of services before arriving in Australia

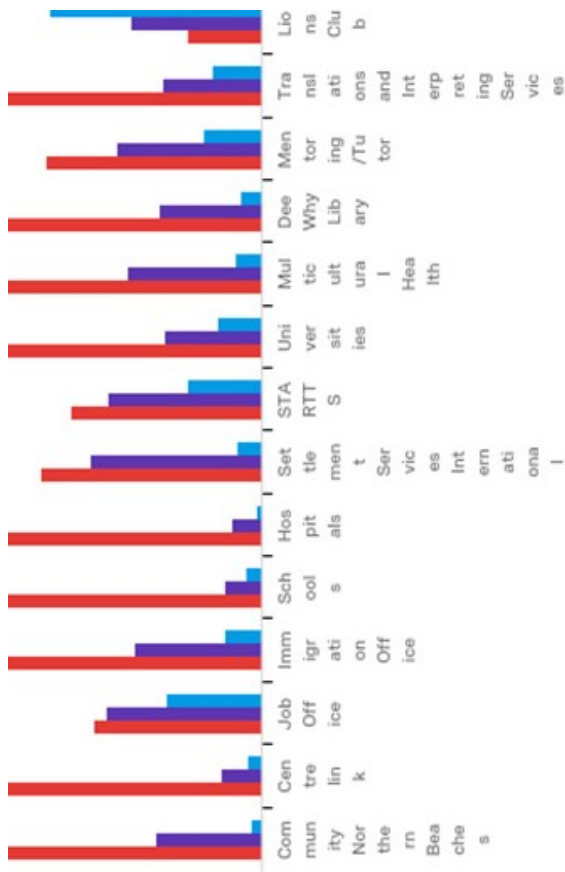


Time in Australia





q11 - What services are important to you?



q11 - What services are important to you? གཞན་གྱི་ཞབས་ལུ་ཚད་པ་ལག་ནས་བྱེད་པ་གལ་ཆེ་བ་གང་དག་རེད་འདྲི་གཞན།

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count	
1	Community Northern Beaches	1.00	3.00	1.30	0.51	0.26	79	
2		1.00	3.00	1.16	0.45	0.20	92	
3		1.00	3.00	1.83	0.77	0.60	75	
4	Northern Beaches Council	1.00	3.00	1.63	0.68	0.46	71	
5		1.00	3.00	1.96	0.79	0.63	51	
6		1.00	3.00	1.48	0.65	0.42	69	
7	Immigration Office	1.00	3.00	1.16	0.46	0.21	80	
8	Schools	1.00	3.00	1.10	0.33	0.11	83	
9	Hospitals	1.00	3.00	1.53	0.61	0.37	66	
10	Settlement Services International	1.00	3.00	1.72	0.74	0.55	57	
11		STARTTS	1.00	3.00	1.45	0.68	0.46	56
12		Universities	1.00	3.00	1.45	0.61	0.37	65
13	Multicultural Health	1.00	3.00	1.35	0.57	0.32	81	
14		Dee Why Library	1.00	3.00	1.62	0.72	0.51	58
15		Mentoring/Tutor	1.00	3.00	1.47	0.70	0.48	68
16	Translations and Interpreting Services	1.00	3.00	2.33	0.76	0.58	51	
17	Lions Club	1.00	3.00	1.16	0.42	0.18	89	
	Tibetan Community Of Australia (NSW)							

#	Question	Very Important	Important	Not Important	Total
1	Community Northern Beaches	72.15%	25.32%	2.53%	79
2	Centrelink	86.96%	9.78%	3.26%	92
3	Job Office	40.00%	37.33%	22.67%	75
4	Northern Beaches Council	47.89%	40.85%	11.27%	71
5	St David's Uniting Church	33.33%	37.25%	29.41%	51
6	Immigration Office	60.87%	30.43%	8.70%	69
7	Schools	87.50%	8.75%	3.75%	80
8	Hospitals	91.57%	7.23%	1.20%	83
9	Settlement Services International	53.03%	40.91%	6.06%	66
10	STARTTS	45.61%	36.84%	17.54%	57
11	Universities	66.07%	23.21%	10.71%	56
12	Multicultural Health	61.54%	32.31%	6.15%	65
13	Dee Why Library	70.37%	24.69%	4.94%	81
14	Mentoring/Tutor	51.72%	34.48%	13.79%	58
15	Translations and Interpreting Services	64.71%	23.53%	11.76%	68
16	Lions Club	17.65%	31.37%	50.98%	51
17	Tibetan Community Of Australia (NSW)	86.52%	11.24%	2.25%	89

## A Collection of Personal Stories



Mr Lobsang Norbu

## Mr Norbu's Story

I was born in 1934 in Nyangra, Trinkunchu, in central Tibet. When I was 7 years old, I became a resident monk at Sera Monastery in Tibet's capital, Lhasa. At 15, I was appointed Store-In-Charge and I served in this position for ten years.

In 1959, when I was 25 years old, the Lhasa Uprising started and I joined the uprising against the occupying Chinese forces. Even though I was a monk, I had no choice but to take up arms to defend my country from Chinese invasion.

On March 10<sup>th</sup> 1959, a huge crowd of Tibetans, including many of my relatives, surrounded Norbulingkha, the summer palace of the Dalai Lama, to protect our leader – His Holiness the Dalai Lama. We held an urgent meeting at our monastery that night.

The abbot of our monastery asked for ten volunteers from each of the 16 hostels to join an armed resistance against the Chinese troops. He told us it was time to put aside our self-interest and fight for our nation. I immediately volunteered. We, the Tibetans, were ill-equipped and untrained to resist the Chinese troops, who came with their advanced artillery.

We had rifles, they had machine guns. But we did not give up, and we put up a good fight. The monks and I soon fled to Phenpo, from where we continued to fight. By then, there were just nine of us left. Some surrendered and returned to the monastery.

I went to Lhokha and joined Chushi Gangdruk, an organisation of Tibetan guerrilla fighters, who had helped facilitate the Dalai Lama's escape to India a few days earlier. On 26 March, we went to defend Chak Sam Chuwo Ri, the temple of Thangtong Gyalpo. We fought the Chinese troops head on for two days. On the third day, our base was bombarded in the middle of the night, killing many of my mates. I was severely wounded in my abdomen and could not flee the scene on my own. I was captured and imprisoned.

After my arrest on that day, I was locked up in solitary confinement at my monastery for three years. I was tortured and told to confess guilt over my actions and to disclose the names of my accomplices. When I refused, I was sent to a prison to be "reformed". Many of the inmates at the prison died of starvation. The food given to us was simply not enough.

In 1959, the prisons were filled with Tibetans. Many innocent prisoners were later released, while the prominent leaders of the uprising received prison sentences ranging from ten to twenty years. Prisoners like me, who were arrested on the battlefield, were released in small groups on condition that we denounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama and put our fingerprint on a document that stated “Tibet is a part of China”. I refused to accept their proposal. For that, I was given a seven-year prison term and stripped of political rights for a lifetime.

I was later moved to Drapchi, Tibet’s largest and most notorious prison. At this prison prisoners were dying daily from torture and undernourishment. At the end of my seven-year confinement, I was due to be released, and the Chinese officials brought my mother to see me. They told me that I would be released if she expressed her regret over my actions and her gratitude to the Chinese Communist Party for the prosperity it has brought to Tibet.

She was told to address a gathering of Tibetan commoners. My mother refused to give in. She told the officials she could not do it because after the Chinese came to Tibet she had seen only the suffering of the Tibetan people. She told me to continue to fight until we received justice.

My mother even warned that she would disown me if I was released as the result of confessing my guilt and denouncing His Holiness the Dalai Lama. She said she would be proud of me even if I died in that cold prison fighting for my country. Therefore, the Chinese officials extended my sentence and I ended up spending 24 years in prison. During my imprisonment in Drapchi Prison, they broke my legs and arms. All this happened because I refused to name my accomplices and denounce my guru, His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

After the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping declared that prisoners arrested in 1959-1960 would be released. But again, on condition that we accept China's sovereignty over Tibet.

I refused to accept this proposal, even after facing many years of torture and imprisonment. Hence, I continued to remain in prison for a few more years. In 1982, I appealed to the Chinese authorities to release me on the grounds of my "good behaviour" in prison. I told them I was one of the longest serving Tibetan prisoners. On 1st December 1982, I was released from prison. It seemed like a miracle.

In 1987, I organized a peaceful protest against the Chinese



government. When I was planning this my brother, who had come from India, told me that our protest should be done in a peaceful way. He made good suggestions. It was in 1988 that I left my homeland and on October 1<sup>st</sup> 1988 I arrived in India. There I received a private audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

He granted me the job of steward of Tsuglagkhang, (the main temple near his residence). But, I am not the kind of person who is very hygienic and can keep the things neat and clean. Therefore, I could not accept his kind offer. So I asked him if I could work at the temple as a sweeper, and I would have been grateful for that. But, the gentleman who was in charge of Tsuglagkhang said that they didn't need a sweeper and he would call me when they needed me.

And then later on, representatives of the People's Chinese government tried to contact me, offering me a job in Dharamshala. Obviously, I rejected their silly offer right away. Nothing could shake my respect and faith in my guru, Dalai Lama, nor my loyalty to my beloved nation - Tibet. I am a proud patriotic Tibetan. My faith and loyalty for my guru and nation is eternal.

In 2015 I came to Australia on a humanitarian visa. Since arriving in this country, I receive all the support I need from the government and I feel grateful for this.

But, I wish to have a home for myself and my niece and her two children. I applied for that years back, but so far nothing has happened. My niece Choekyi looks after me but she has two children to look after too. So, it is a bit hard for us. The worst hardship of all is getting a proper place to live in. I wish I could get one home for all of us to live in. I don't expect it to be huge, nice, or well furnished.

## Tenzin's Story

My name is Tenzin and I come from Tibet. When I was 14 years old, I became a nun, and when I was 17 years old, I escaped to India. I walked 22 days through the mountains before we arrived in Nepal.

From Nepal, we took a bus to India. We arrived at the Tibetan Reception Centre in India and I stayed almost one month there. From the reception centre, I went to a nunnery. I stayed in the nunnery for five years. When I left the nunnery, I joined a teacher's training course at the school in Sara, which lasted two years. After I finished my course, while I was looking for a job, I had the opportunity to study a one-year computer course at Gu-chu-sum, a Tibetan non-governmental organization.

When I finished my computer course I was offered a teaching position at the Such school. I taught Tibetan grammar and history for a year, and shortly after that I was offered a position as a journalist. I really loved that job. I worked as a journalist until I came to Australia.

When we arrived in Australia, members of the Tibetan community picked us up at the airport and gave us food. Then a

friend of mine collected me and I stayed at her unit for one month. At that time the Tibetan Community Association was very small, it had around 20 members and they were all volunteers. The committee helped us to open a bank account and register with Medicare, Centrelink and TAFE English school. Deciding not to take the Centrelink payments, I started to look for a job.

After two months, I commenced a new job as a balloon printer. I didn't take the Centrelink money because I could make my own money. My second job was in Woolworths, at the check-out, and cleaner. This country is clean, and peaceful and has respect for human rights. It also has good medical treatment and good laws.

I was very happy sharing accommodation with my friend, until she started a relationship. That made me feel lonely, so I then looked for another room, and decided that I would like to get married.

Firstly, I had to go and give back my nun's vows to the Lama, as I was still a nun at the time. Secondly, I started to look for my soulmate. Eventually, I found a great man and we got married in 2009. Now, I have two beautiful children, a girl and a boy, and we are a very happy family.

I work a morning shift and my husband works in the afternoon. On Saturdays I volunteer with the Australia Tibetan Language School. Nowadays, the Tibetan community has almost 800 members and the new members have good facilities. When they arrive in Sydney, there are organisations that assist with food and furniture.

There is also immigration assistance with applications to bring your partner or family over. They assist with the paperwork and help to make appointments for health checks. Even now, if you are interested in studying at TAFE, they give you a variety of courses for free, for example cleaner and age care. Also, the institution has developed a lot and now has good teachers and educational training.

In particular, Community Northern Beaches' Multicultural/Settlement Service has been helping and assisting Tibetan people in different ways and we really appreciate all they've done for the Tibetan community and its welfare.



Mr Tsundu

## Mr Tsundu's Story

I was born in 1983 in Minac, a province of Kham, north of Tibet and close to China. When I was 3 years old, my family sent me to a monastery to become a monk.

After China's occupation of Tibet, (when I was 14 years old), some Magma officers came to our Monastery and had a meeting with four senior monks. In the meeting, they told the monks that we weren't allowed to put His Holiness the Dalai Lama's image or paraphernalia (trappings) anywhere in our personal rooms, nor were the rooms to be used for prayers or anything like that.

They told us that they were going to check up on us and if they saw that someone had a photo or anything related to His Holiness, we would be arrested. "Today we come here to let you know the rules," they said. "And if by the time we come back, you haven't got rid of everything that has to do with His Holiness, we will arrest you".

After a month they came to check every single room in our monastery. "There is nothing here for you", the leading monk told them that. The officers then asked us to sign a contract to swear that we wouldn't pray to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I wasn't happy with what was happening at that time. After that meeting three friends and I decided to run away.

The Chinese officers told our Monastery leaders that they had to find me and my friends. We ran away from Minac monastery on foot. It wasn't safe, but I wasn't happy there anymore. I left in 1997, when I was 14 years old.

We told the senior monks and our families that we were going to Lahsa, the capital of Tibet, but that it was a secret and that no one could know. Although my father told me that I couldn't go because I was too young, we left anyway and arrived in Lhasa where we stayed for one month. Then we walked from Lhasa to Nepal. This was in September 1997, which was the most dangerous time to do this, because of the inclement weather.

We got a special guide to help us and 42 other people to walk over the mountains. We had 3 days and 3 nights in a truck that had a cover, from under which we could hardly see anything or anyone. Suddenly, at 2am one morning, the truck stopped and we were let out from under the cover and told to start walking. After three days of walking, they brought us to a river early in the morning, and we were told to get in the water and cross the river.

Not one of us could swim, and the water was high and very dangerous. After crossing, we began the walk over the mountains. It was important that we walk only in the middle of the night, when it was pitch black and you were unable to see anything. We would walk from 10 pm when it was dark until 5 or 6 am, and then we stopped. That's how it was, day after day. We looked for caves where we could hide from the Chinese guards during the day time, so they wouldn't see us.



They had dogs that could smell where people were hiding. If the dogs found anyone, the guards would come on horse and kill them. We were lucky they didn't find us.

We walked for 7 weeks before we reached Nepal. This was partly because it is so hard to walk on soft snow in the mountains that it takes a very long time. All the food ran out quickly and we had nothing to eat or drink for two weeks. All we ate was snow. We didn't have any energy and our whole bodies changed. We looked like we were drunk, because we didn't have the energy to control our bodies or our movements.

After arriving in Nepal, the Nepalese border police took us in and gave us food and stuff, but we could not eat straight away because our bodies couldn't handle it. I thought I was going to die. I really did think, "Now my time is up". But luckily I survived.

In Nepal we had to hide as well, but the Nepalese border police put us up in small houses. They helped us to bypass other police and to get to Kathmandu.

In Kathmandu we went to the Tibetan refugee centre. There we received food, clothes and some money. Then we went from Nepal to Delhi, and from there to Dharamshala. We couldn't stay in Kathmandu, because many Tibetans come to Nepal and the refugee centre there was full.

When we arrived in Dharamshala's Tibetan refugee centre,

they asked us if we wanted to go to school, to a monastery, back to Tibet or somewhere else. I went to a monastery in South India for 3 years. I didn't contact my family for 4 years.

In South India it is extremely hot and I was sick a lot. Since I grew up in a very cold place and then came to a very hot place, the change of environment made me very sick. I lost weight and was very skinny. It's hard on your body when you go through so much change.

After 3 years I went back from South India to Dharamshala, which was like Tibet weather-wise. Then I went to Nepal to a monastery where I stayed for 4 years. Then I lost my grandparents. I wanted to see my parents and family. I tried but I couldn't. I applied for a Nepalese passport to try to go to Tibet, but I couldn't go.

## From India to Australia

I first met my ex-girlfriend while I was in South India. I came to Australia with her. She grew up in Sydney. She helped me to come here on a de facto spouse visa. She was a Buddhist, and she was studying Tibetan language, and also design. It was her that I came with to Australia in 2005. I didn't know any Tibetans here. I was all by myself. I stayed in the city for 2 to 3 years, and went with her to New Zealand a few times. Over there I met a few Tibetans, and became good friends with a Tibetan guy there.

After two years here, my girlfriend and I separated. In 2007 I moved to Dee Why, where I met other Tibetans. Then in 2008 His Holiness the Dalai Lama came here, and we went to see him and hear his teachings in the city. He said that there weren't many Tibetans in Australia, but wherever you go in the world, you should never give up on your country or your culture, language and religion. It doesn't matter how many people you have around you, you always have to stand up for Tibet.

“You are living here on behalf of 6 million Tibetans that are still in Tibet,” His Holiness the Dalai Lama explained. “You live in a free country where you get to practice your religion. You have each other, and each of you carries the other Tibetans on your shoulders. Never give up. Just show everyone

our love, passion, family, compassion etc. If you do bad things, you will be the one person who ruins it for other Tibetans.”

“I always hear that whatever country you go to, Tibetans are good, honest, and compassionate”, he continued. “Even if you cannot help others, you shouldn’t harm anyone else. Never give up Tibet, never until your country is back. We have to work for those Tibetans who can’t live in freedom.” After listening to His Holiness’ teachings, I felt that he had touched my heart very strongly.

I’ve been involved in many Free Tibet protests. I have been to Canberra to Parliament House, where I spoke with MPs and Senators about the Tibetan issue. In 2008, when I was protesting with some friends - a family of husband, wife and brother - we took a big banner and we climbed the Coca Cola sign in Kings Cross and put up a massive ‘Free Tibet’ sign. We sat there on top of the sign, and it was all over the news and TV. Everyone messaged me and called me and told me that they saw me and the big banner.

People have come from Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney to participate in the March 10<sup>th</sup> protests and marches. This year, 2019, was the 60<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan Uprising. Hundreds of people gathered in Martin Place in Sydney: Tibetans, Chinese, Australians, and members of the Friends of Tibet and the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress in Sydney.

I have been elected president of the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress in Sydney, twice. Each time for a term of two years, first in 2014 and now in 2019. I always have, and always will, help Tibetans anywhere. I help if they are looking for jobs or moving homes, or I help them with the kids or to go to the hospital.

How did you adapt to living in Australia?

I was really surprised because the weather was so good. People were very friendly and the country was so good. So many lovely parks and beaches, and the city is very clean compared to where I've been before. I didn't know any Tibetans, I was in the city by myself for 3 years and I walked around the city a lot. Also, where I've been before overseas, people steal things, but I have never seen anything like that here. People here help out and donate stuff for people who need it.

I was a bit shocked, but I thought it was such a beautiful country. And for me it was good that it was an English-speaking place. It's only a little time difference to contact my family in Tibet, which is good. Also, there are plenty of jobs here in Australia. The academic English and grammar of most Tibetans is not that good, but here we can learn more.

My own English isn't that good because I never took the time to learn properly, but I always dare to speak up. I am a

person who speaks up for Tibet. I am proud that I can speak Tibetan, some Indian, and some Nepalese, and I am proud that I am doing something for my country. My English is not perfect but I always speak up.

There are two things that I think are particularly good in this country. Firstly, here in Australia people speak up if someone is doing something wrong, even if it's your friend or family, and that is good. Secondly, if you compare Australia to Europe and America, there are so many terror attacks happening there compared to here. I watch the news all the time and I think it's horrible. There is no problem with religion here.

What do you think about the services?

I came here by myself, so I have never accessed money from Centrelink or used most of the services that are available. But I have always helped other Tibetans, and I know that Centrelink is good and has helped Tibetans a lot. Centrelink gives financial assistance to families and single Tibetans before they can work and look after themselves, which is good.

I have accessed the migration services of the Community Northern Beaches Multicultural/Settlement Service. They do such a great job, and that is exactly what we Tibetans need.

What can we do better?

I don't really know, because I haven't needed a lot of help. I have only learned about services so that I am able to help other Tibetans.

I don't know if the Community Centre is still doing this, but Tibetans always have problems with filling in forms for anything. Sometimes they also get letters that they don't know how to read. I always help with filling in forms, all the time. It happens every day, because people don't know how to do it themselves. In the future, if you can get someone to help with letters and fill in forms, that would be very good. Forms are usually very important for Tibetans, especially when applying for jobs, etc.

The swimming and car driving programs that you have are very good.

There are so many things that you do well.



Mr Gendun



## Thubten Gendun's Story

Thubten was born in Lhasa in 1944. At the age of eight years old his family sent him to a monastery to be trained as a Buddhist Monk. He didn't want to go, but his family sent him anyway. Thubten lived in the Sera Monastery, 6 miles away from Lhasa, overlooking the city and the Potala, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's religious and Government palace and residency.

In 1959, when Thubten was 15 years old, the Chinese were closing in on His Holiness' palace in Lhasa, having already conquered the rest of Tibet. The monks in Sera Monastery could hear the artillery but didn't know what was happening.

Then at 2am one morning they heard the sound of guns and shelling, and could see actual smoke and dust coming from the Potala and from His Holiness' Summer Palace. Thubten, one of twelve young monks, was on the third floor of their house, from where they could hear gun fire and shelling coming from the mountain behind the monastery. They sensed that it was slowly getting closer.

Soon the Chinese were shooting directly at the monastery. Shells started to fall on the monastery. The monks, including Thubten, ran downstairs to the ground floor and hid.

As the Chinese got closer and closer to the monastery, the sounds of guns firing became louder and faster. The senior monks told the younger monks to run away because the Monastery could collapse, causing debris to fall on them and kill them.

Thubten and the other monks ran into the mountains and hid, but the Chinese kept closing in on them. So they all ran further and further into the mountains. There were several monks fleeing with Thubten, some of whom were very senior, and twelve others who were in their teens. They ran until they reached the border with India.

They all crossed the Everest mountains walking on soft snow without appropriate equipment, clothing or footwear. They had no trekking knowledge or experience, and no idea of what route to take.

Only by praying and with the assistance of one senior monk who possessed a ‘designator’ (a religious object that could be used in a similar way as throwing a dice or heads and tails, to choose which path to follow), did they miraculously find their way out.

The Indian soldiers who found them were very friendly and helpful. They gave Thubten and the monks food and a place to rest. They also told them that His Holiness had passed by the very same post four days before. Thubten stayed there for a

week recuperating and relaxing. As he recalls it, “It was so nice!!!”

Afterwards, they moved south to Missamari near Bangalore. There it was very hot and they were still wearing their Tibetan winter clothes, made of sheep skin, and wooden clogs. The Indian soldiers had given them all warm pyjamas and sandals. For Thubten it was very funny to see the lamas, Guesiash, and very senior monks in Indian pyjamas. Thubten remembers how everyone was in shock to be wearing pyjamas, as they had been wearing their monks' robes since they were little boys.

The monks were all given the opportunity to go to a monastery, and the younger ones also had the option of going to a school. Thubten chose to go to a monastery with his friends. He lived in East India for four years, but there he became very ill. He was diagnosed with tuberculosis and was admitted into hospital. It took him three years to be rid of the disease. After Thubten got better, he was told to go to the mountains where it was cool and the air was clean.

During this time, the Tibetan University in Varanasi was opened. There Thubten studied for a degree in Hindi, Tibetan language and philosophy, eventually becoming an ‘Acharya’, (highly learned and respected individual). After nine years he graduated and went to Dharamshala, and worked at the Tibetan Library there for four years. Throughout this period of working in the library, Thubten was also teaching

Tibetan language to western students and travellers. One of Thubten's teachers was then invited to go to America to teach Tibetan philosophy, and that person invited Thubten to go along with him. Together they travelled and taught across America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

In 1987 Thubten decided to leave his monastic life and come to Australia. He soon met a few girls, one of whom became his wife. At the beginning, they lived with his wife's family. His father-in-law was very kind to him and found him a job packing goods in a factory. Sadly, Thubten's qualifications were not in demand in Australia.

Thubten's father-in-law made sure Thubten went to work every day, and even drove him to the factory. "He didn't speak very much, but he always asked me about my work," Thubten recalls. Work in the factory was very hard. The first two nights, Thubten was very sore. His whole body was left aching. In his monastic life he had never had to do any physical work, so his body was not used to it and it was hard to adjust. But after a few months, he had become a model employee. When he came to Australia Thubten was quite chubby, but after working in the factory for a while, he lost a lot of weight.

Thubten and his wife had three children - two daughters and a son, the oldest daughter born in Sydney. They then went to live in Lismore for a while, where their second daughter was

born. When they returned to Sydney, Thubten met a Tibetan friend, who was the CEO of Canon. This friend gave him a job in the packaging department.

Later on, Thubten's teacher from the Library in Dharamshala moved to New Zealand and Thubten moved there with his family. But in New Zealand he quickly discovered that finding work was much more difficult than in Australia. In the end Thubten studied hospitality and opened a restaurant with a Dutch partner. He worked there for two years until the partnership broke down and the business was sold. His son was also born in New Zealand.

After Thubten sold the restaurant, he decided to study aged care, and worked as an aged care worker. He then decided to come back to Australia, where he found work in the Minkara Retirement Village and Aged Care facility in Bayview.

When he was working there, Thubten's brother-in-law suggested that he work in the disability sector, as it was easier than aged care work. Thubten took his advice and went to work for DADAC, as it was called then. He worked there for ten years. By the time he was able to take long service leave, he was 60 years old, and so he decided to retire. After his retirement, Thubten moved to Melbourne and then to Adelaide, before returning to Sydney.

During most of his time in Australia, Thubten and his wife have been involved in work with the Tibetan community on the Northern Beaches and have watched it grow over the decades. Currently Thubten works as an interpreter, which suits him perfectly, as the work is sporadic and not too demanding.

Thubten found his migration to Australia a positive experience, even though finding work, getting married, and establishing a family life within Australian cultural norms was hard at the beginning. “It was especially hard with the added dramatic change from a monk’s life to that of a layperson,” recalls Thubten. Most notably, when Thubten arrived in Australia around Christmas time, he had just left his monastic life and he had never been around alcohol.

However, he soon found himself being invited to barbecues and parties where he was regularly offered beer and wine. At first, he never accepted. But now, after trying a little here and there, he drinks socially.

“When I first moved here, there weren’t as many services for migrants,” says Thubten. “But now in Australia, life is good for migrants and the standard of living is high”.

Thubten feels lucky that he migrated to Australia.

## Nigan's Story

I was born in 1969 into a family of nomads in Amdon Province in the Eastern part of Tibet. We used to look after the animals. Mainly we had three types of animals: horses, yaks and sheep. In the warmer months we moved from place to place. During winter we would stay in one spot. Winter in Amdon is very cold and can last up to 6 months. The temperature can go down to as low as -25 to -30 degrees.

When I was growing up during the Cultural Revolution, we didn't have many education opportunities. However, when I was a young boy, I had the opportunity to attend a Chinese school for a few years. My father was imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution.

I had to go home to help the family. Later my mother sent me to Ngawa Prefecture School where there were Muslims and people from other backgrounds as well as Tibetans. In the school, some of the teachers suspected that students were getting involved in politics, and some of us were kicked out of the school.

In January 1992 I left my home to try to go through Nepal to India. We paid someone to help us to cross the mountains.

We walked through the Himalayas for 7 days before we got caught by the Nepalese police and were sent back. After a few weeks, we decided to try again. We walked in a group of 14 people, for 14 days, in the middle of the night.

After 9 or 10 days we arrived at a bridge at midnight. There was a Nepalese army camp at the bottom of the bridge, so we scattered to cross the bridge and we regrouped at the other side. One member of the group could not be accounted for. We didn't know where he went or what happened to him. Later on, we lost our guide, who was a Nepalese from the Sherpa community. We kept walking for two or three more days, until we arrived at a monastery, where we were given food and clothes.

We stayed there for 3 to 4 days to rest and recover our strength. From the monastery we went to the Tibetan registration office in Nepal, and from there we went by bus to India, to Dharamshala. There, they asked us where we wanted to go, to a monastery or to school. The monks in the group chose to go to a monastery and I chose to go to school.

I was sent to the transit school in Dharamshala, where I studied English. In Tibet we hadn't had the opportunity to study English, but in India, English is the common language. I was in the school for a year.



In 1996 I joined a Christian missionary school. It was a great opportunity to learn English, as everything was taught in English. I was also very interested in learning about other religions, cultures and democracy. When I left the school, I went to Bangalore in the south of India and stayed there for 4 years. I had the opportunity to study and assist other students as well as visiting various places around southern India, including Mysore.

In 1998 I went back to Dharamshala. After my time in the Christian school, my mind was open to learn more about Buddhism, so I attended Buddhist classes in the Tibetan library. I was offered a job at the meditation centre of the FPMT, (Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition), funded by Lama Yeshi and Lama Zopa Rinpoche. I worked there for 8 years, until 2007.

In the late 1990s the Australian Government started a Humanitarian Support Program that allowed Tibetans to be resettled in Australia. I had the opportunity to migrate to Australia in 2007. We knew in India that in Sydney's Northern Beaches, in Dee Why, there was a Tibetan Community, and that it would support us.

They picked us up from the airport and helped us to access other services. In those days, it was the housing department

that assisted with the bond and 2 weeks rent. After a few days I joined TAFE to learn English. I knew some English because in India I had worked as an interpreter at the meditation centre. I studied at TAFE for 6 months and then left and got a job at the Dee Why Glass company.

It was very hard work, but then I left and worked at the Neutral Bay supermarket. From there, I moved to the Mona Vale House nursing home, (Thomson Health Care), in Mona Vale, where I have now been for 11 years. I am the Maintenance Supervisor and Fire Officer.

I felt that it was important to do volunteer work for the community. In 2011, I went to a community meeting and I got elected to the committee, and then I was elected President of the Tibetan Community of Australia in NSW, (TCA NSW), for a period of two years.

Soon after, I was also elected President of the National Association of Tibetan Communities in Australia. During my two-year tenure, we had a large number of Tibetans migrate to Dee Why, and we were very busy supporting them.

In 2013, I finished my term with the NSW organisation but continued with the national association until 2015. I continued to assist the community, but took a break from the

committee. During that time, I volunteered to work with the Middle-Way Approach movement.

In 2018, I was elected President of the TCA NSW again, mid-term, and was re-elected for a full two year term in 2018. I am the current President.

At the time of His Holiness' visit to Australia in 2013, I was the President when TCA NSW organised a huge event in Darling Harbour, attended by thousands of people.

I have been in Australia for 12 years now, working very closely with the service providers including Centrelink, Settlement Services International (SSI), Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS), Multicultural Health, Community Northern Beaches' (CNB) Multicultural/Settlement Services, and with real estate agents in the area.

Housing is one of the main issues for our community. It is very expensive in the Northern Beaches to rent or to buy a property, so some families are moving away from the area and forming small settlements in Nowra, Newcastle, the Blue Mountains, the Central Coast and Campbelltown. We keep connected to all those other communities in NSW.

The advantages of living on the Northern Beaches are many. It's easy to get work, even though many Tibetans speak poor English. When they do get a job, their employers are generally very happy, especially in the nursing homes and disability service sectors, because of the nurturing, caring and hardworking nature of Tibetans.

Tibetans also have a close connection with the wider community and its support services. The reputation of the Tibetan Community on the Northern Beaches is very good.

In my role as President, the committee and I work very hard on the preservation of our language and culture, and take great care in educating the new generation.

The Tibetan Language School opened in 2001. It is part of the NSW Community Languages Schools Program. 90 children attend the Saturday school, learning to read and write Tibetan Grammar from 9 am to 12noon and Tibetan Culture - e.g. music and dance - from 12:30 to 2 pm. The school is run by TCA NSW with qualified volunteer teachers and parents. The school also has a volunteer driver.

## Literature Review

Tibet has experienced a tumultuous past over her 2000 years of recorded history. At times, Tibet has existed as an independent nation, while at other times it has been ruled by powerful Chinese and Mongolian Dynasties. In 1950, The People's Liberation Army of China commenced its invasion of Tibet and by 1959 Tibet had become an autonomous region within China (STARTTS 2016 ).

According to the Dalai Lama's office in Dharamshala, the official population of Tibet is six million. However, others estimate it to be between 2-4 million (Wise & Sait. 2008. p. 10).

Since 1959 numerous Tibetans have fled Tibet to settle in other countries, mostly in those closest to its borders such as Nepal, India and Burma. In 2002, however, Tibetan communities were also recorded in Canada, USA, Australia, Sweden, Norway, Scotland, Switzerland and New Zealand (Wiley, 2002).

The Tibetans have their own language as well as their own form of Buddhism and the teachings of the Dalai Lama, and their own economic and political systems. Many flee

Tibet and take the tough decision to make the dangerous journey through the Himalayan Mountains to reach Nepal, because they cannot freely practice their religion or study their own language in their home country (STARTTS. 2016)

## The Diaspora

The term ‘diaspora’ has been used to describe the Tibetan experience. Diaspora has been defined as the dispersion of any people from their original homeland. Its origin derives from the 586 BCE Babylonian exile of the Jewish population (Anand. 2003 p. 213). The original use of the word emphasizes retaining links to “sentimental links” (Esman. 1986. p.339), as well as links to unique cultural values through a collective effort and a shared commitment to the goal of an eventual return to the exiles’ homeland.

The Tibetan experience can therefore be described as a modern diaspora, as Tibetan people in exile are focused on retaining their traditional values, culture and religion, and hope for an eventual return to their homeland. The Jewish and Tibetan experiences have similarities even though they are not identical. These similarities between the two experiences have been observed by scholars and by the Dalai Lama himself. In 1989, the 14th Dalai Lama met with Jewish leaders. At that meeting he asked what was the “secret” of

surviving exile, as the Jewish diaspora had lasted for 1900 years, during all of which time the Jewish people had preserved their distinct religion (Katz. 1991. p.34).

## Tibetan Identity

The Dalai Lama and his followers believe that “having a unified identity is vital in maintaining cultural traditions during exile ” (Katz. 1991 . p.4). The Dalai Lama and his exiled leadership act as the gatekeepers of an ancient culture, permeating the ethos of the Tibetan diaspora with a theme of cultural preservation (Klieger. 2002 p. 24).

This type of unified collective consciousness can be described by the social theory of ‘habitus’. Habitus is a set of durable dispositions inscribed on the person that bears the trace of their history and origin (Yeh. 2007. p. 651). Bourdieu describes habitus as a “product of history that produces collective and individual practice that ensures ‘correctness’ of cultural practice based on perceptions of explicit norms and informal rules” (Bourdieu.1990. pp. 53).

This theory is helpful for understanding the Tibetan experience and the value Tibetans place on the importance of cultural preservation. Yeh explains that “Tibetan migrants believe they should share recognizable characteristics with all other Tibetan people”, but due to the now transnational

nature of their people, a divergence of identity has taken place (Yeh. 2007. p. 651 ).

The Dalai Lama has expressed his concern on this matter, stating that “there are signs of the degeneration of Tibetan traditions and moral principles that shows a degradation of the spirit and of self-discipline” (Iyer. 2001).

The differences between Tibetan migrant groups over time highlight the importance of collective cultural symbolism (Hess. 2006. p. 97). Exiles from 1959 carry a romantic and timeless vision of Tibetan culture in their minds (Harris 197). Often when old exiled Tibetans find themselves face to face with new Tibetan migrants with seemingly ‘Chinese’ characteristics, questions of authenticity arise, and concerns for the Tibetan collective consciousness surface.

## Tibetans in Switzerland

In 1965, one thousand refugees were granted settlement in Switzerland, and by 1974 there were roughly 1,500 Tibetans settled in the country (Ott-Marti. 1976). Initially, the Swiss Red Army assisted the refugee community until they had established themselves. They provided language training and lessons on Swiss cultural orientation (Ott-Marti.



1976). The Tibetans are thought to have adapted considerably well in Switzerland, due in part to the services provided to the community (Corlin. 1991. p. 110 ).

In the village of Rikon, the Tibetans had been provided a centre for religious and cultural practice, which has led to Rikon becoming a centre of Tibetan culture in Switzerland (Corlin. 1991. p. 110). The centre offers Tibetan language classes for the young and regularly presents uniquely Tibetan events. The facility is staffed by seven lamas, spiritual guides of Tibetan Buddhism. These lamas have been selected by the Dalai Lama and act not only as spiritual guides, but also as cultural interpreters to Swiss officials. They teach history, art and language as well as aiding - through traditional Buddhist practice - members of the community may be experiencing mental illness (Corlin.1978. p. 111).

The success of Tibetan settlement in Switzerland is largely due to the appointment of lamas and the access granted to facilities which are dedicated to supporting the Tibetan community as their primary purpose. These facilities have been blessed by the Dalai Lama, an important symbol of authenticity for the Tibetan community.

## Tibetans in Canada

In Raska's (2016) 'The Canadian Historical Review', the author provides useful insights into the Tibetan resettlement program in Canada. In 1966, Canada was selected as a settlement location for Tibetan refugees. The Canadians modelled their Tibetan resettlement program on the plan used in Switzerland, which involved permanently resettling 240 Tibetan refugees (40 - 50 families).

On June 18<sup>th</sup> 1970, the Canadian cabinet approved the plan as an experiment and allocated an estimated \$3308.33 per refugee. The selection criteria used by Canadian immigration officials targeted young married couples, with some level of education and English language skills. A total of 228 Tibetans arrived in Canada, settling in eleven different locations across 3 provinces: the Prairies, Quebec and Ontario. The first 98 Tibetans arrived in Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto in March 1971, where they all received housing, clothing, employment and food.

In Quebec, the Tibetans were able to quickly gain a strong sense of community with other Tibetan refugees. However, some frustration arose amongst some of the Tibetans because they were not allowed to work during the language learning period and they felt too dependent on the

Canadian authorities. This frustration caused by a reliance on others was also evident in other provinces.

In Cobourg, Ontario, the Tibetans were given one support counsellor each and they underwent a two day course of orientation to their new community. They felt that Canadian officials tried to treat them like guests, providing support they never expected to receive. For example, a washing machine, refrigerator etc., which were much appreciated, as these items assisted with the practical aspects of resettlement. These elements of the Canadian resettlement program came as a surprise to them, as they had expected only to be provided housing and medical care as they understood to have been the case in Switzerland and India.

In Lindsay, Ontario, only two Tibetans had English language experience, so the others needed more help than those being resettled in other regions. They were given separate English language classes with teachers provided from the provincial Department of Citizenship. Counsellors helped refugees find jobs for the adults, and after nearly a year most of refugees were working.

The last Tibetans to be resettled were in Belleville, Ontario. An interpreter worked closely with them until their English improved. They expressed anxiety over

employment, and this led to men gaining shift work and women attending classes in the local church. Belleville's Tibetans had more health issues than those in the other locations. They had vitamin deficiencies, were malnourished, and some had internal parasites. Consequently, it took over a year for them to gain employment.

In southern Alberta, (in the Prairies region), there were already pre-arranged jobs for the Tibetans in agriculture, and the employers had agreed to provide furnished houses for them. In Taber the Tibetans were employed on potato, cattle and sugar beet farms. They received two days of counselling before starting employment or school, as well as training on food nutrition. The Tibetans in southern Alberta knew that those settled in Ontario and Quebec were receiving more language training, and this created some resentment within the community as they claimed it would make it easier for the Ontario and Quebec Tibetans to adjust to their new community.

DMI officials reported that many Tibetans in southern Alberta and Taber felt lonely and isolated, possibly due to them working on remote farms in rural communities which left them separated from their own community. After working on the farms, many left and moved to Lethbridge or Calgary.

Out of all the different locations of Tibetan resettlement programs, Winnipeg's 5-month program was the most effective according to the DMI officials. This was attributed to the Tibetans' pre-existing language and life skills, as well as their general health and wellbeing. In 1972, one last group came to Manitoba, and having learnt from the other locations, DMI officials there adjusted their re-settlement program to better suit the refugees' specific needs.

After all the resettlements were completed, DMI officials stated that future programs should be coordinated with an emphasis on meeting the specific needs of families and individuals. This change in approach would lessen confusion for refugees, and reduce anxiety.

The DMI Officials said that it would be better to treat each refugee as an individual from the start, rather than as part of a 'homogenous' group. Intensive rather than extensive instruction and support were also identified as a necessity, along with assistance with job searching, budgeting, and finding their way around the area. These strategies, acknowledged as improving independence, would no doubt be preferred by most Tibetans. Overall, all 228 of Canada's Tibetan refugees were progressing and seemed happy in their new homes.

Despite the success of Canada's resettlement program,

in 1975 the Canadian government rejected a new request from the Dalai Lama for more refugees to be resettled. Instead, they turned their focus to refugees from Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos, in light of the large numbers displaced after the end of the Vietnam War (Raska. 2016. pp. 547-575).

## Tibetans in Australia

From 1991 until March 2015, it is recorded that a total of 775 Tibetans arrived in Australia under the humanitarian stream of its migration program, with 2014's figure of 194 being the highest number in a single year. Most refugees have settled in Dee Why or surrounding suburbs, with a growing number of Tibetans since 2011 relocating to Newcastle, where there is access to cheaper rent and job opportunities.

Victoria also has a small Tibetan community, with a total of 174 Tibetans recorded as settled in 2014 (Australian Government Department of Social Security Settlement Database. 2015). Applications for the 'Special Humanitarian Program' are in general 12-15 times higher than places available, and priority is given to those who had been political prisoners and their families. They are selected by the Administration of the Tibetan Government in Exile and interviews are held in New Delhi by the Australian High Commission, who assess them as 'humanitarian entrants' instead of 'refugees' (STARTTS. 2016).

## Needs

Research on refugees resettling in other countries has found that it is often a very stressful, long process and they often have to go through traumatic experiences to get to safety. When arriving in Australia, the Tibetans do not know how anything works here, so therefore it is important for them to learn how the system works. To minimize the level of stress and anxiety they may undergo, prior research of the Tibetans' experiences arriving in Australia have found some key needs that should be met, to make the resettlement as 'easy' and as efficient as possible (Spencer. 2004. p. 74).

## Housing/accommodation

A stable, long term home is a security that is essential for a successful resettling of refugees (Connelly et al. 2006. p. 32). But according to Wise and Sait (2008. p. 16), on the Northern Beaches Tibetans often only have access to short term accommodation, and very expensive and overcrowded apartments.

Tibetan refugees often stay together with friends, which can be unsettling, and a source of anxiety due to the uncertain longevity of such accommodation arrangements. Even if housing is cheaper further away from Sydney, they choose to stay in the Northern Beaches, as the Tibetan Community there is very strong, well-structured and cohesive, and takes good care of new arrivals. It is in fact the largest emerging

community in that local government area. Being close to other Tibetans heavily outweighs the cost of having cheaper rent and cost of living elsewhere.

## Employment

Prior research has found that unemployment levels for refugees are high, and when they obtain employment, it is usually in jobs that are below their skill level, regardless of experience. After being at an unskilled job for too long, their prior skills, abilities and experience loses value (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007 p.2). Tibetans experience discrimination by employers, based on ageism or due to real, or perceived, lack of English language skills.

Racism is also common, with refugees reporting that following job interviews their applications are denied because of the way they look or their accent.

It is shown that early access to work experience provides benefits in terms of building knowledge about job networking and how to get employed, which in turn reduces anxiety about their economic situation and the future. A job helps to secure social and economic security and assists with English proficiency, as well as helping self-esteem as Tibetans get to develop connections with other people (Wise & Sait. 2008. p. 16). As soon as a Tibetan gets to work, it enhances their chances of finding stable, affordable accommodation, so that



they can stay close to the community they love and value so much.

## Education

Resettling into another country comes with a high degree of uncertainty for refugees and migrants, particularly for children and adults with language and education difficulties. A safe and stable environment is very important for refugees trying to both learn a language and get an education (Johnson et al. 2004).

There are barriers for Tibetan refugee children starting school, such as frequent moves due to short term housing, health problems, limited access to the internet, lack of English proficiency, and racism at school, as well as teachers with a lack of knowledge about the Tibetan experience. Also, some refugees don't have prior school experience and have to learn how the school system works, while simultaneously trying to understand their new environment .

Research suggests that schools should provide a space for learning that caters towards young migrant settlers, establishing systems that encourage socialisation and learning, while recognising the cultural diversity of migrant and refugee settlers (Wise & Sait. 2008).

## Language

Spencer (2006. p. 25) highlights how the lack of English proficiency prevents refugees from accessing services, as it creates a barrier to information, integration and a sense of belonging. The quicker refugees learn English and gain language proficiency, the more independent and confident they become when using, for example, public services, community spaces or transport etc. Integration becomes easier, as they can then fill in forms, read social security letters and so on, which without English language knowledge, can lead to anxiety and a feeling of powerlessness (Connelly et al. 2006. p. 41).

## Facility

Religion and its celebrations are very important to Tibetans, partly in light of the fact that they left Tibet because they could not freely practice their religion.

Previous research has shown that thanks to their religious beliefs and practices, Tibetan refugees are at lower risk of developing PTSD and anxiety/depression disorders than refugees of other religions (Sachs & Rosenfeld. 2008). Thus, it is important for them to have a place where they can meet with other Tibetans, hold their celebrations and other cultural events, and just feel safe (CALDS. 2004).

# A Journey from Tibet to Australia

Organisation	Importance	Accessibility
Northern Beaches Council	Australian Government	1. Australian Government
Centrelink	Centrelink	2. Community Northern
Job Office	TAFE	Beaches, Centrelink, TAFE,
TAFE	Schools	Schools
Community Northern Beaches	University	3. Dee Why Library, University,
St David's Uniting Church	Community Northern Beaches	Hospital /Medical Centre,
Immigration Office	Mentor/Tutor	Mentor/tutor
Banks Schools	Hospital/Medical Centre	4. Northern Beaches Council,
Hospitals	Dee Why Library	Settlement Services
Facilities First	Settlement Services International	International, Banks
Settlement Services Inter-	Northern Beaches Council	5. St David's Uniting Church
national	Multicultural Health	6. Lions Club, Police
Police	St David's Uniting Church	7. Facilities First, Smith Family
STARTTS	Lions Club	8. Nursing Homes, TIS
RTA	Police	9. STARTTS, RTA
Nursing Homes	Banks	10. Immigration Office
University	Smith Family	11. Job Office
Multicultural Health	Facilities First	
Dee Why Library	Nursing Homes	
Mentoring/Tutor	Job Office	
TIS	Immigration Office	
Smith Family	STARTTS	
Lions Club	TIS	

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