WELCOME to WOLLONGONG
COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECT

Peter Kell, Virginie Schmelitschek, Ann-Maree Smith and Gillian Vogl

Funded by IMB Community Foundation

Presented by Virginie Schmelitschek
ISANA Conference. Auckland NZ. November 2008

Where is Wollongong?
80 km south of Sydney in the Illawarra region.

It is Australia’s 10th largest city.

INTRODUCTION

• Community Action Project

• The Welcome to Wollongong (W2W) Community Working Group

• Purpose of Paper

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

University of Wollongong (UOW) has a total of 22,120 students with approx.

4000 international students

from 70 different countries and regions

BACKGROUND

• The international experience: Rhetoric and Reality
  – Discrimination
  – Racism
  – Physical Danger
  – Psychological Risk

STUDENT’S QUOTE

“I didn’t think that I was going to face lots of prejudice …..
they never accept you, ……non Australian, …..
if you want to be a part of the community ……… more tough.
hard to get acceptance …… not for any other reason except that
……I am not Australian.”
STUDENT’S QUOTE

“I expected Wollongong to be safe but actually I was robbed two times by teenagers ………
they used a knife and asked me for money ……..
I report to the security office but I don’t think it worked.”

THE W2W PROJECT

• International Students and Host Communities
• Aim of W2W project
• Committee and cohesive community working group
• Strategies:
  – Civic reception
  – Mini festival
  – Community website
• Rationale for strategies

DESCRIPTION OF EVENTS

• Civic reception

• Mini Festival
METHODS FOR EVALUATION

• Focus groups and interviews
  – with 30 international students prior to and after the W2W festival
  – with domestic students and community representatives

• Surveys on the day
  – One was for community residents and the other for international students

CONTINUED

• A video of the festival
• An evaluation meeting
• A Planning day
• An evaluation report

EVALUATION

• Strengths
  – Development of community working group
  – Survey: 60 out of 69 international students

“The festival is for welcoming international students, make me feel respected”

“I have come here for one year, last year we don’t have this activity, I think it is good to make the newcomer get to know the area here, make them feel comfortable, yeah it is good, also to know that the council here is very concerned about our international students”.

“Excellent, the first but we wish not to be the last”.

LIMITATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS FOR NEXT YEAR

• More information about the significance of the civic reception and of the significance of the official party
• Connections need strengthening
• More involvement local business/shops with the festival.
• An education project about issues associated with global student mobility and international students
• more rigorous networking with Business Chamber, to obtain sponsorship
CONCLUSIONS

• International students core business of university

• Wellness paradigm

• Contribution of international students

• Agency of students