



THE GENERAL DELEGATION OF PALESTINE TO  
AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND THE PACIFIC

## Young Palestinians in Australia

A Framework for Community Development

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*'The occupation has created generations of Palestinians who are strangers to Palestine, generations who are familiar with every alleyway of their places of exile, but who are ignorant of their homeland...These generations are condemned to love an unseen lover, a distant, difficult lover separated from them by guards and fences and sleek terror. The occupation has transformed us from the sons of Palestine into the sons of the idea of Palestine.'*

*Mureed al-Barghouti*

## Executive Summary

This report presents findings from extensive research conducted on the social aspect of the youth Palestinian community in Australia. This study is twofold. First, it seeks to identify the fabric of the young Palestinian community in Australia, and discuss factors in shaping youth identity and connection to the community. Secondly, the overarching purpose of this report is to devise a clear framework for developing the social aspect of the youth Palestinian community in Australia through assessing its current weaknesses and strategizing methods to overcome these and build on the community's social capital to unify the community.

This report commences with an introduction to the complex position of Palestinians in Australia, who are conflicted with concepts such as forming an identity based on an 'imagined community' and the discordant notions of belonging and exile. This introduction therefore outlines some of the core ideas of the report, such as the global Palestinian diaspora network and the complicated identity of Australian-Palestinians. This section also demarcates the geographical and age scope of the research as well as some of the underlying constraints in preparing this report.

Following the introduction, the methodology section explains the multifaceted approach taken in collecting data and sources for this report. It is divided into substantial phases of the methodology, including initial consultations with the Palestinian Ambassador to formulate a research topic, literature review, analysing quantitative data, hosting focus groups with community members and the central role that the author's personal knowledge and understanding played in the formulation of this report.

The report then delves into the research context, which is critical to understanding the purpose and outcomes of this report. In particular, it outlines the recent history of Palestine to contextualise the experience of Palestinians and lay the foundations of what is referred to as the Palestinian 'collective memory'. A thorough analysis of the Palestinian diaspora is conducted to establish the discussion on the identity of young Palestinians in Australia. The research context also discusses the current fabric of the Australian-Palestinian community through referring to quantitative data on the Palestinian community in Australia. Additionally,

this section contains an overview of the civil society organisations that play a critical role in community development.

The report then moves on to the thematic sections. Each theme represents an element of the proposed framework for the development of the social aspect of the Palestinian youth community in Australia.

Section 1 focuses on unifying objectives that guide community development and social cohesion. This section notes the importance of fostering common objectives and identities within the community. A conceptual framework based on the social capital theory is put forward to analyse how the community may be developed, and the importance of social interactions in fostering a cohesive community. This section cites means by which the community can formulate clear unifying objectives in the future and build on the community's social capital.

Section 2 delves into the issue of accessibility. This section arose due to responses from focus groups that the Palestinian community in Australia is relatively inaccessible and not visible to new members of the community. This section particularly focuses on means by which the accessibility of the community may be improved, and why this is critical to improving the engagement of young Palestinians in the community. This section also describes a phenomenon cited by members from the Melbourne and Canberra communities that the Palestinian community is often accessed on a 'who-you-know' basis.

Section 3 delineates the need for the Palestinian community to shift its focus to young people in the community. This section comments on the fundamental role that young people play in community development and ensuring its longevity. Means by which a shift in focus to young people may be achieved are raised in this section, such as altering leadership dynamics of community groups and ensuring that events are inclusive for young people and single members of the community, rather than just families.

Finally, Section 4 discusses the crucial role of the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia in supporting the Palestinian community in Australia. A table in this section outlines the Delegation's mandate to represent, support and empower Palestinians in Australia.

The report concludes by presenting a summary of recommendations that align with each element of the community development framework, discussed throughout the report. It also proposes areas for further research and means by which the analysis from this report may be developed in the future. Ultimately, the paper distils a clear framework for the development of a more cohesive young Palestinian community in Australia. It concludes that whilst conflicting identities and an absence of strong social capital in the youth Palestinian community currently hinders its social development, it is clear based on this research that there is a mutual interest in developing and maintain the community's nexus with Palestine that may be harnessed for future community development.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank all those whose assistance and guidance made the production of this research report possible. Firstly, I would like to thank the staff at the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific for the opportunity to undertake an internship with them and conduct a research report under their supervision. I am exceptionally grateful for the guidance and support I received from the Ambassador, His Excellency Izzat Salah Abdulhadi, and his staff at the Delegation, Suheir Gedeon, Ruba Awwad, Noora Saleh and Jamal Nabulsi.

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# Table of Contents

<b><u>LIST OF TABLES .....</u></b>	<b><u>8</u></b>
<b><u>LIST OF FIGURES .....</u></b>	<b><u>8</u></b>
<b><u>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....</u></b>	<b><u>9</u></b>
<b><u>INTRODUCTION.....</u></b>	<b><u>10</u></b>
OVERVIEW .....	10
SCOPE .....	10
UNDERLYING CONSTRAINTS.....	11
<b><u>METHODOLOGY.....</u></b>	<b><u>12</u></b>
CONSULTATIONS WITH THE GDOP.....	12
REVIEW OF SOURCES .....	12
QUANTITATIVE DATA.....	12
FOCUS GROUPS.....	13
PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT .....	13
<b><u>RESEARCH CONTEXT.....</u></b>	<b><u>14</u></b>
THE PALESTINIAN NARRATIVE .....	14
THE PALESTINIAN IMAGINING .....	15
THE PALESTINIAN NARRATIVE IN AUSTRALIA .....	17
YOUNG PALESTINIANS IN NSW .....	18
YOUNG PALESTINIANS IN VICTORIA .....	19
YOUNG PALESTINIANS IN THE ACT .....	19
CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS .....	20
<b><u>THEMATIC SECTIONS .....</u></b>	<b><u>21</u></b>
SECTION 2: ACCESSIBILITY .....	24
SECTION 3: SHIFT IN FOCUS TO YOUNG PEOPLE .....	27
SECTION 4: THE ROLE OF THE DELEGATION .....	29
<b><u>CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</u></b>	<b><u>31</u></b>
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS .....	31
FURTHER RESEARCH.....	32
CONCLUSION.....	32
<b><u>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</u></b>	<b><u>33</u></b>
<b><u>APPENDIX A .....</u></b>	<b><u>36</u></b>
<b><u>APPENDIX B .....</u></b>	<b><u>43</u></b>

## List of Tables

- Table 1 *Age distribution of persons of Palestinian ancestry in Sydney*
- Table 2 *Categories of Palestinian community organisations*
- Table 3 *Summary of the role of the GDOP*
- Table 4 *Summary of recommendations*

## List of Figures

- Figure 1 *Map of Palestine 1947-present*
- Figure 2 *Distribution of persons born in Palestine*
- Figure 3 *Distribution map of persons of Palestinian ancestry in Sydney*
- Figure 4 *Distribution of Palestinians in Melbourne*



## List of Abbreviations

ACT	<i>The Australian Capital Territory</i>
ANU	<i>The Australian National University</i>
APAN	<i>Australia Palestine Advocacy Network</i>
CPC	<i>Canberra Palestinian Community</i>
GDOP	<i>General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific</i>
NSW	<i>New South Wales</i>
PBS	<i>Palestine Bureau of Statistics</i>

# Introduction

## Overview

A perpetual sense of statelessness and conflicting national identities continues to sculpt the identity of young Australian-Palestinians. The disparate notions of exile from the homeland and belonging in Australia place Palestinians in a unique position in forming a strong community framework in Australia. Adding to the preliminary complexity of constructing an imagined Australian-Palestinian community is the broad spectrum of political and religious views of Australian-Palestinians that obfuscate the development of a unified community identity.

Despite these initial challenges, Palestinians share a common historical narrative, culture and identity formed on the injustice of being displaced from their homeland. Consequently, this paper seeks to distil the issue of how to unify these underlying strands of the Palestinian community in Australia to form a cohesive community, irrespective of conflicting ideologies.

This study is twofold. First, it seeks to identify the fabric of the young Australian-Palestinian community, and discuss factors shaping youth identity and community engagement. Secondly, the overarching purpose of this report is to devise a clear framework for developing the social aspect of the young Palestinian community through assessing its current weaknesses and strategizing methods to unify it, though engaging, empowering and developing the community's social capital.

This paper presents unique insight into the experience of young Australian-Palestinians and their relationship with the Palestinian community. At present, there is a substantial absence in literature on the youth Palestinian community in Australia and particularly its community development capacity and engagement with the community, which makes this study both timely and unique.

## Scope

The scope of this research paper is purposively narrow. For this report, youth is defined as those falling within the age bracket of 15-25 years olds. This bracket captures later year high

school students, university students and young professionals. This age span aligns with a period of independence, during which time young people begin to form an identity and community network outside the family unit. These formative years of independence and identity awakening are critical for those who identify as being a part of the Palestinian community form a strong relationship with it.

In addition to a limited age scope, the geographical lens of this paper was also restricted. This paper focuses on the community development aspect of the youth Palestinian communities in Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney. Most of the discussion will centre on Melbourne and Canberra communities as this is where the focus groups with community members were conducted.<sup>1</sup> However, since Sydney is the only Australian city where extensive literature has been written on the dynamics of the Palestinian community, this paper will also draw on some of the experiences of Sydney Palestinians.

The choice of Melbourne and Canberra for hosting focus group discussions was due to their geographic diversity, differing population fabrics and disparate community groups. Additionally, the Canberra community has a much stronger nexus with the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia (GDOP).<sup>2</sup> It was important to discuss whether proximity to, or connection with, the GDOP impacted on each city's community dynamics.

### Underlying Constraints

There are various core underlying constraints to devising a strong and cohesive community structure. Such constraints include varied political, social and religious views which form a barrier to unified social engagement, a lack of recognition by the Australian Government of Palestinian Statehood, an absence of a strong corpus of empirical data on the Palestinian community in Australia, and conflicting identities faced by young Palestinians in Australia owing to the concept of diaspora.

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<sup>1</sup> As will be discussed throughout this report, it is recognized that a focus group held in Sydney would be beneficial to gaining a more holistic understanding of the youth community in Australia. However, for this particular report, timing did not permit for a focus group to also be conducted in Sydney.

<sup>2</sup> Although the GDOP maintains good relations with many community and advocacy organizations, many youth groups in Melbourne have less contact and communication with the GDOP.

## **Methodology**

This paper relies on a diverse range of research methods, qualitative and quantitative data, and a myriad of sources, both primary and secondary.

### Consultations with the GDOP

First and foremost, multiple consultations were held with the Palestinian Ambassador, Izzat Salah Abdulhadi, to formulate a research topic that aligned with the Delegation's objectives and the author's personal research interests. A mutually agreed upon topic, of devising a framework of community development for young Palestinians in Australia, reflects the ambitions of the Delegation to unify the Australian Palestinian community. The outcomes of this research will be critical to guiding outreach strategies and objectives of the Delegation in future years.

### Review of Sources

A review of literature, including both scholarly articles and books, proved critical to developing a comprehensive understanding of the history of Palestine, conceptual frameworks and the Palestinian experience in Australia as a diasporic community. Previous research papers written by ANU interns at the GDOP also provided varied insight into the concept of Palestinian diaspora and Palestinian civil society organisations in Australia. Another significant component of this research was consulting various online platforms, such as websites and Facebook, to gain an understanding of existing organizations, civil societies and community groups.

### Quantitative Data

Quantitative data was predominantly drawn from the analysis of New South Wales, Victorian and ACT 2011 census data. A key limitation of this report is therefore a reliance on dated

statistics. Whilst the 2016 census report was released on 11 April 2017,<sup>3</sup> the reports on community, religion, language and nationality, which would be critical to this report, will not be released until June 2017 after this report's submission. A recommendation will be made to the GDOP to consider this data when it is released.

## Focus Groups

A fundamental contribution to this report was conducting semi-structured focus groups with members of the Palestinian community in Melbourne and Canberra. Three group interviews were held to gain a holistic understanding of the Australian-Palestinian youth community. One focus group was held in Melbourne<sup>4</sup> with 7 university students and the second focus group engaged 6 members of the Canberra Palestinian community.<sup>5</sup> Data from both these focus groups was anonymised. Finally, a third focus group was hosted with four staff members at the Palestinian Delegation.<sup>6</sup> This was critical to understanding the role of the Delegation in Australia and its mandate to support and strengthen the Australian-Palestinian community.

The purpose of the focus groups was to qualify the literature review, organisational information and quantitative data. Although the two community-based focus groups held in Melbourne and Canberra are not representative of the entire Palestinian community in Australia or in their respective cities, they provided points of comparison and contrast between the experiences of Palestinian youth in each of these cities.

## Personal Engagement

Lastly, this paper benefited from the author's personal experiences in, and understanding of, Palestine. The author's placement at the Delegation also provided invaluable insight into the role of the Delegation in supporting the Palestinian community in Australia.

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<sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2016 Census* (11 April 2017) ABS <<http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/2016>>.

<sup>4</sup> Transcript in Appendix A.

<sup>5</sup> Transcript in Appendix B.

<sup>6</sup> A transcript from this focus group has not been included in the final report. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, a large portion of the discussion was unrecorded due to a malfunction with the recording device. Secondly, of what was recorded, the conversation affirmed some of the history of community development of Palestinians in Australia and reiterated the role of the Delegation, rather than presenting any individual or personal views.

## Research Context

### The Palestinian Narrative

Historically, Palestine was governed by a British Mandate after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the Sykes-Picot Agreement at the end of World War I. Following the outcome of the Second World War, and its devastating impact on the European Jewish population, Palestine's history and statehood was irrevocably altered. The year 1948 was a critical turning

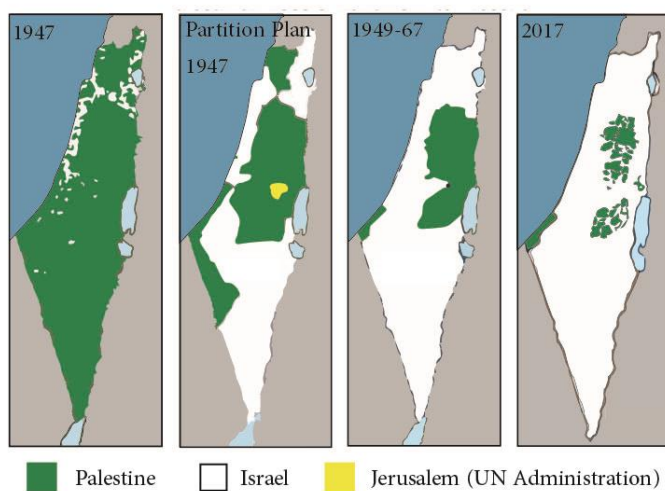


Figure 1: Map of Palestine 1947-Present

point for Palestine, with the declaration of the State of Israel and the consequent 1948 War, or the *Nakba* (Catastrophe), as it is known amongst Palestinians.<sup>7</sup> In this historic event, around 750,000 Palestinians were displaced from their homes.<sup>8</sup> This year marked the inception of *al-ghurba*, which is an Arabic expression for exile and diaspora.<sup>9</sup> Since the *Nakba*, Israeli forces have continued to occupy Palestine and deny those displaced a right to return. The *Nakba* is a core event in the Palestinian narrative, forming part of the collective memory that unifies all Palestinians.

After the *Nakba* the Israeli-Palestinian territories have been ravaged by several wars, including the 6-Day War of 1967, which resulted in the reduction of Palestinian territories to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as numerous intifadas and uprisings. At present, Palestinian territories continue to dissipate owing to Israeli encroachment through its illegal settlement program. As a consequence of a failed peace process, Palestinians across the globe continue to

<sup>7</sup> Paul Tabar, *Politics Among Arab Migrants in Australia* (2009) Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration

<sup>8</sup> [http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/10793/CARIM\\_RR\\_2009\\_09.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y](http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/10793/CARIM_RR_2009_09.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y) 4.

<sup>9</sup> Julie Peteet, 'Problematizing a Palestinian Diaspora' (2007) 39(4) *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 627, 627.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

live in a state of diaspora.<sup>10</sup> There are no globally recognised Palestinian borders, and no mutual agreement on Palestinian national sovereignty. In addition to this, the Australian Government continues to deny Palestine's statehood.

According to the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics (PBS), by mid 2016 the population of Palestine was approximately 4.81 million.<sup>11</sup> In 2009 the PBS stated that around 6.8 million Palestinians formed part of the global diaspora community.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, a shared history of exile and displacement is central to the understanding of the panoply Palestinian identities and the collective memory of Palestinians across the globe.

### The Palestinian Imagining

The identity of Palestinians living in Australia is critical to understanding the dynamics of the community. Unlike Palestinians rehomed in other Arab states who 'share with their host populations the Arabic language, the general contours of culture, a common historical experience... and often religion',<sup>13</sup> the Australian experience is vastly different. Accordingly, one element of the Palestinian community in Australia is a shared experience of living in a country completely disparate to their homeland.<sup>14</sup>

Palestinians living in Australia form part of the global Palestinian diasporic network. Peteet describes the concept of diaspora as 'dispersal from an original homeland, a collective memory of the homeland, a belief that one cannot be fully accepted into the host society, a desire for return and restoration of the homeland, and maintaining ties to the homeland.'<sup>15</sup> A diaspora network connects heterogeneous groups of people on the periphery with a shared experience,

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<sup>10</sup> Victoria Mason, 'Children of the "Idea of Palestine" 1: Negotiating Identity, Belonging and Home in the Palestinian Diaspora' (2008) 28(3) *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 271, 271.

<sup>11</sup> State of Palestine: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Palestinians in Diaspora* (10 September 2016) Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics  
<<http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=1701&mid=3171&wversion=Staging>>.

<sup>12</sup> Anat Ben-David, 'The Palestinian Diaspora on the Web: Between de-Territorialization and re-Territorialization' (2012) 52(4) *Social Science Information* 451, 460.

<sup>13</sup> Julie Peteet, 'Problematizing a Palestinian Diaspora' (2007) 39(4) *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 627, 632.

<sup>14</sup> Jeremy Cox and John Connell, 'Place, Exile and Identity, the Contemporary Experience of Palestinians in Sydney' (2010) 34(3) *Australian Geographer* 329, 331

<sup>15</sup> Julie Peteet, 'Problematizing a Palestinian Diaspora' (2007) 39(4) *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 627, 629-630.

either temporally or spatially, to the homeland.<sup>16</sup> Palestinians in Australia form part of this periphery with a diminished experience of the homeland. Consequently, ‘the dream of ‘returning’ represents a search for identity as much as for a place’,<sup>17</sup> resulting in the formation of an imagined community to maintain a nexus with the homeland.

Therefore, a central aspect of Palestinian identity in Australia is ‘collective memory’. A collective memory is a form of shared experience that does not necessarily have to be lived or personally experienced.<sup>18</sup> It comprises of a sense of nostalgia and memory associated with a place or time, and is often passed on through familial heritage.<sup>19</sup> However, for many the lived reality is that of Australia being home.<sup>20</sup>

Australia naturally forms a large part of the identity of Palestinians born in Australia. However, as Mason notes, ‘at the same time their Palestinianness remains a core part of their self-identification’.<sup>21</sup> The two conflicting identities of being a Palestinian Arab and Australian is further complicated by other forms of identification by factors such as class, gender and religion.<sup>22</sup> In a study by scholars at the University of Sydney, one respondent cited that developing a strong sense of community was obscured by the fact that many Palestinians in Australia also come from countries such as Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Israel.<sup>23</sup> Ultimately, it is the shared experience of forming an imagined community in Australia that will be explored throughout this report and how it may be harnessed to form a more empowered and cohesive community for young Australian-Palestinians.

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<sup>16</sup> Anat Ben-David, ‘The Palestinian Diaspora on the Web: Between de-Territorialization and re-Territorialization’ (2012) 52(4) *Social Science Information* 451, 460.

<sup>17</sup> Helena Lindholm Schulz with Juliane Hammer, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland* (Routledge, 2003) 111.

<sup>18</sup> Vijay Agnew (ed), *Diaspora, memory and identity: a search for home* (University of Toronto Press, 2005) 200.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Victoria Mason, ‘Children of the “Idea of Palestine” 1: Negotiating Identity, Belonging and Home in the Palestinian Diaspora’ (2008) 28(3) *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 271, 275.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid 278.

<sup>22</sup> Ibrahim G. Aoude, ‘Maintaining Culture, Reclaiming Identity: Palestinian Lives in the Diaspora’ (2001) 25(2) *Asian Studies Review* 153, 165.

<sup>23</sup> Jeremy Cox and John Connell, ‘Place, Exile and Identity, the Contemporary Experience of Palestinians in Sydney’ (2010) 34(3) *Australian Geographer* 329, 333.



## The Palestinian narrative in Australia

Palestinians arrived in Australia through various waves of migration. The first wave followed the *Nakba*, the second major wave occurred in the 1960s,<sup>24</sup> and the third and final wave occurred due to displacement from other Middle Eastern countries. The Israel-Lebanon War of 1982 sparked Palestinian migration to Australia in the 1980s, followed by the final wave of immigration in 1991 after the expulsion of 300,000 Palestinians from Kuwait during the Second Gulf War.<sup>25</sup> Since 9/11 in 2001 there has been a considerable decrease in the number of Palestinian-born persons migrating to Australia,<sup>26</sup> which correlates with the Australian Government's increasingly xenophobic migration policy.

According to the 2011 Census, 2696 people in Australia were born in the Gaza-Strip or the West Bank. The distribution of Palestinian-born Australians can be observed in the map featured (opposite).<sup>27</sup> In addition to those born in Palestine, a total of 9,107 persons recorded being of Palestinian ancestry.<sup>28</sup> However, one limitation in determining the distribution of persons of Palestinian ancestry across Australia is the lack of available data.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, the complex Palestinian history of displacement renders it challenging to isolate those of Palestinian ancestry as many also identify as being of the heritage of other host countries such as Jordan, Lebanon or Syria.

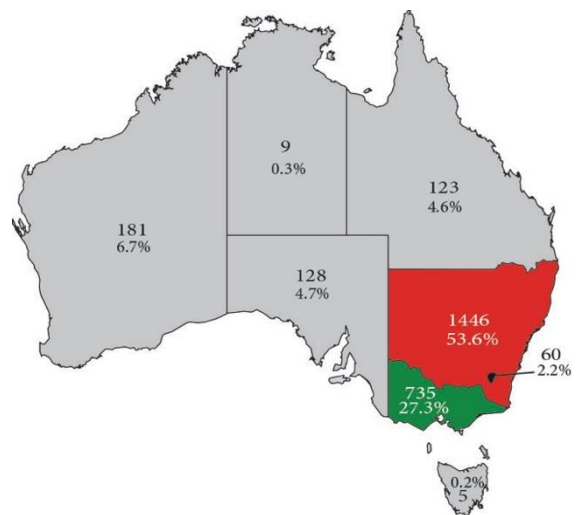


Figure 2: Distribution of persons born in Palestine

<sup>24</sup> Paul Tabar, *Politics Among Arab Migrants in Australia* (2009) Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration

<[http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/10793/CARIM\\_RR\\_2009\\_09.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y](http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/10793/CARIM_RR_2009_09.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y)> 4.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid 5.

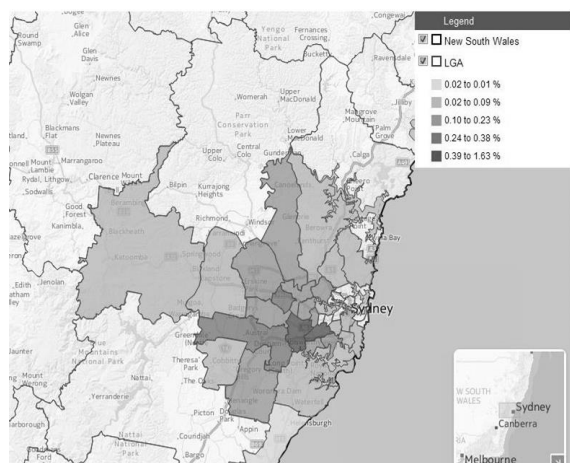
<sup>26</sup> Department of Social Services, *The Gaza Strip and West Bank-born Community* (February 2014) The Australian Government Department of Social Services < <https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/a-multicultural-australia/programs-and-publications/community-information-summaries/the-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-born-community>>.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> ACT Health, *The People of the Australian Capital Territory* (2014) The Australian Capital Government <<http://www.health.act.gov.au/sites/default/files/The%20People%20of%20the%20Australian%20Capital%20Territory%20Statistics%20from%20the%202011%20Census.pdf>>.

<sup>29</sup> NSW is the only state with comprehensive data and analysis on persons of Palestinian ancestry.

## Young Palestinians in NSW



Whilst the 2011 Census recorded 1446 persons in NSW born in the Gaza Strip or West Bank, a total of 5680 persons identified as being of Palestinian ancestry.<sup>30</sup> The birthplaces of such people included countries such as Australia, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Kuwait.

Figure 3: Distribution of persons with Palestinian ancestry in Sydney<sup>31</sup>

According to these statistics, 43.2% of persons of Palestinian ancestry in NSW were under the age of 25, and 16.8% of the population fell within the age bracket of 15-24 year olds. This is significant as it outlines that almost half the population of Palestinians living in NSW are considered young adults or children. This age group will be critical to maintaining a strong sense of community and its longevity in NSW.

Table 1 (opposite): Age distribution of persons of Palestinian ancestry in Sydney<sup>32</sup>

Age group (years)	Number (persons)	Palestinian Ancestry Percentage (%)
0 to 4	592	10.4
5 to 9	484	8.5
10 to 14	428	7.5
15 to 19	461	8.1
20 to 24	491	8.7
25 to 29	526	9.3
30 to 34	541	9.5
35 to 39	436	7.7
40 to 44	331	5.8
45 to 49	326	5.7
50 to 54	265	4.7
55 to 59	213	3.8
60 to 64	184	3.2
65 to 69	171	3.0
70 to 74	103	1.8
75 to 79	59	1.0
80 to 84	37	0.7
85 to 89	24	0.4
90 to 94	4	0.1
95 to 99	0	0.0
100 (and over)	0	0.0
Total	5676	100

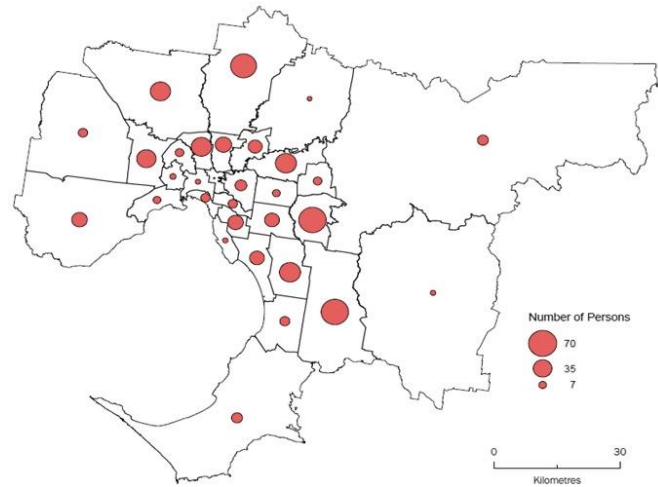
<sup>30</sup> Multicultural NSW, *Ancestry-Palestinian (Age and Gender)* (2011) Multicultural NSW <<http://multiculturalnsw.id.com.au/multiculturalnsw/ancestry-by-age-and-gender?COIID=202>>.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

## Young Palestinians in Victoria

According to the 2011 Census 27.3% (735 persons) of the Palestinian-born population resides in Melbourne, Victoria. As already suggested, only a small percentage (16.2%) arrived since 2001.<sup>33</sup>



*Figure 4 (opposite): Distribution of Palestinians in Melbourne<sup>34</sup>*

## Young Palestinians in the ACT

In 2011, 60 persons living in the ACT recorded being born in Palestine, and 134 persons identified being of Palestinian ancestry.<sup>35</sup> Whilst the Canberra-based Palestinian community is markedly small in comparison to its Melbourne and Sydney counterparts, surveying this community is pertinent as it is in a unique position owing to its proximity and connection to the GDOP.

<sup>33</sup> Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Fact Sheet Number A-98: The Gaza Strip and West Bank-born Community in Victoria: 2011 Census* (May 2013) The Victorian Multicultural Commission <<http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/images/stories/documents/2013/Censusfactsheetscommunityprofiles/98-gaza%20strip%20and%20west%20bank.pdf>>.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> ACT Health, *The People of the Australian Capital Territory* (2014) The Australian Capital Government <<http://www.health.act.gov.au/sites/default/files/The%20People%20of%20the%20Australian%20Capital%20Territory%2C%20Statistics%20from%20the%202011%20Census.pdf>>.

## Civil Society Organisations

There are over 30 Palestinian-specific civil society organisation groups in Australia.<sup>36</sup> The Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) is largest and most influential advocacy-based organisation in Australia. There are three categories of Palestinian community organisations and advocacy groups:

Type of Organisation	Examples
<i>Community Development Organisations</i>	General Union of Palestinian Workers; Palestinian Community Association in Victoria; Beit Jala Society in Melbourne; Palestinian Community Society in Perth
<i>Advocacy Organisations</i>	APAN; Australians for Palestine; Australian Friends of Palestine Association; Australian Palestinian Professional Association for Palestine
<i>Relief-based Organisations</i>	Olive Kids; Children of Gaza

*Table 2: Categories of Palestinian Community Organisations*

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<sup>36</sup> Nishadh Rego, *Palestine Civil Society Groups in Australia: A Profile* (Intern Policy Report, the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, 2014) < <http://www.palestine-australia.com/assets/Policy-reports/Palestine-Civil-Society-Groups-in-Australia-A-profile.pdf>>.

## Thematic Sections

Each themed section aligns with one element of the proposed framework for community development.

### Section 1: Unified Objectives

#### *a. Overview*

A preliminary step in achieving a more cohesive Palestinian-Australian community is recognising unifying objectives. As previously discussed in this report, the issue of identity is prevalent amongst the Palestinian community and forms a barrier to social engagement. This section will address how a strong sense of community and collective identity may be harnessed, despite conflicting identities and ideologies, to devise a community framework that is inclusive and cohesive.

#### *b. Developing Social Capital*

Being stateless often results in a lack of community participation.<sup>37</sup> The relevant issue is how to build on the Palestinian community's social capital within Australia to encourage community participation. The concept of social capital 'refers to the specific processes among people and organisations, working collaboratively in an atmosphere of trust, that lead to accomplishing a goal of mutual social benefit.'<sup>38</sup> Social capital is critical to holding communities together through the development of strong connections, relations and interests within the community.<sup>39</sup> Social capital may be developed through social networks within a community,<sup>40</sup> and captures how people 'feel like members of an identified community that they both contribute to and benefit from.'<sup>41</sup> Social cohesion is a term employed 'to characterize...

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<sup>37</sup> Refugee Council of Australia, *Statelessness in Australia* (August 2015) Refugee Council <<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/1508-Statelessness.pdf>> 3-4.

<sup>38</sup> Karen Fulbright-Anderson and Patricia Auspos (eds), *Community Change: Theories, Practice and Evidence* (2006) The Aspen Institute, 22 <<https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/rcc/COMMUNITYCHANGE-FINAL.PDF>>.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid 28

<sup>41</sup> Ibid 33.

a sense of community, an attraction-to-place, patterns of regular interaction among themselves, and a sense of trust and mutuality.’<sup>42</sup> Social capital is critical to empowering communities, however, this is a non-linear relationship.<sup>43</sup>

c. *Education and awareness of Palestine and Palestinian history*

It was identified by both focus groups that another constraint to building the community’s social capital is a lack of education amongst younger generations regarding Palestine. Consequently, it would be beneficial to have community events with an educative function, to help the individual develop a stronger nexus with the imagined Palestinian community and facilitate awareness of Palestine both culturally and historically.

d. *Towards the future*

Looking forward, there are various initiatives that may further unite the youth Palestinian community in Australia. For example, members of the Canberra focus group noted the merit in holding an annual Australia-Palestine conference,<sup>44</sup> similar to the European Palestine Conference held in February 2017 where thousands of Palestinians convened in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, to discuss a variety of issues pertaining to Palestine and the right of return.<sup>45</sup> Such a conference in Australia could bring together community leaders together to discuss the aims and objectives of each community and strengthen inter-city ties.

In conversation with the Ambassador, it was highlighted that a similar initiative occurred in 2006. In 2006 the GDOP invited more than 70 representatives from the Palestinian community to Canberra to discuss community development and advocacy work. There were some positive outcomes from this such as the development of APAN. However, it was hoped that a Federal Committee would also come to fruition. Some constraints to further community development included conflicts with existing community groups, weak leadership, narrow political views and conflicting personalities. One resulting recommendation, given that this initial meeting

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid 33.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid 37-39.

<sup>44</sup> Appendix B.

<sup>45</sup> Rawan Daman, ‘Palestinians in Europe hold annual gathering in Holland’, *Al Jazeera* (online), 16 April 2017, <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/04/palestinians-europe-hold-annual-gathering-holland-170413055443039.html>>.

occurred over ten years ago, is to renew these discussions and efforts to develop a board or committee at a national level responsible for community development.

Sport was also recognised as a means of uniting young people. The Melbourne focus group cited local futsal competitions as a way young people come together.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, the Canberra focus group remembered the Asia Cup tournament held in Australia in 2015<sup>47</sup> when Palestine played in the tournament. This event was important for unifying Palestinians across Australia, as many Palestine supporters followed the team and developed strong connections with other community groups across Australia. Even such simple interactions are means by which the community can build its social capital.

The development of the Canberra Palestinian Community (CPC) is a prime example of innovative action taken by members of the community. This community group strives to incorporate all persons on the political and religious ideological spectrum. The focus of the group is merely community meeting and engagement. Prior to the creation of CPC, the Canberra Palestinian community was primarily engaged in cause-orientated political events and sporadic community events where invitation was based on a ‘who-you-know’ basis.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Appendix A.

<sup>47</sup> Gaskin, Lee Gaskin, ‘Canberra’s Palestinian community rallies around their team at historic Asian Cup appearance’ *The Canberra Times* (online), 19 January 2015 <<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/sport/act-sport/canberras-palestinian-community-rallies-around-their-team-at-historic-asian-cup-appearance-20150117-12scwf.html>>.

<sup>48</sup> See Appendix B.

## Section 2: Accessibility

### *a. Preliminary Weaknesses*

A key weakness identified in developing a more cohesive community structure is the inaccessibility of the Palestinian community.<sup>49</sup> This is particularly the case for new immigrants to Australia who do not have a family-based community to integrate and connect with. Whilst this was identified by both focus groups, in the case of Canberra, the proximity of the Delegation had a clear impact on the capacity of new members of the community to connect with the Canberra community.

### *b. On a 'who you know' basis*

Both the Canberra and Melbourne-based focus groups noted the phenomenon that community connection and engagement was based on a 'who you know' basis.<sup>50</sup> For example, a Melbourne respondent stated that certain activities and community events were not visible or accessible unless you were in contact with the right person. Conversely, the Delegation played an instrumental role in connecting members of the Palestinian community in Canberra. Notably, one participant cited that all you need to do is arrive at the embassy and you will be pointed in the right direction<sup>51</sup> and connected to correct people in the community through social media groups such as community Whatsapp groups.<sup>52</sup> Whilst this is a positive role of the GDOP, this means of connectivity is relatively inaccessible to anyone not located in Canberra.

Comparatively, the Delegation is not as connected to the Melbourne community. Many students in the Melbourne focus group noted the struggle to meet other Palestinians, and the only way they formed a connection to the community was through meeting people at university. One Melbourne respondent argued that the Delegation should take a more active role in connecting new arrivals in Australia with people in the Palestinian community.<sup>53</sup> Whilst

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<sup>49</sup> See Appendix A and B.

<sup>50</sup> See Appendix A and B.

<sup>51</sup> Appendix B.

<sup>52</sup> This concept was also acknowledged by the staff at the embassy in the focus group held there. It was stated that when new members of the community arrive at the delegation they are added to things such as the community WhatsApp group.

<sup>53</sup> This respondent claimed that one way to do this was for the GDOP to have further community details on their website and methods to get in touch with prominent members of the community in each city or to contact the GDOP directly which its contact details are available (see Appendix A).



Facebook groups and organisational website provide a preliminary point of call for those interested in activities within the Palestinian community, there is no personal or tangible way to connect the community in Melbourne like there is in Canberra.

*c. The merits of a virtual community*

Social media and cyberspace play a critical role in connecting diaspora communities with each other and the homeland. This is particularly the case in ‘this era of globalisation, [where] the relationship of the individual to the homeland becomes relative.’<sup>54</sup> According to Hanafi, ‘[t]he continuing difficulty of finding a solution to the physical return of the Palestinian diaspora to the homeland is increasingly being addressed in the digital realm by the rise of virtual communities.’<sup>55</sup> The web is a way in which Palestinians on the periphery can form virtual relations with the nucleus – Palestine proper.<sup>56</sup>

Social media is a powerful tool to engager younger generations. During the focus groups, most respondents cited using social media as a method by which they connect with other members of the Palestinian community or become aware of community-based events.<sup>57</sup> However, an underlying constraint of the use of social media and the overarching merits of a virtual community is that it is not centralised. At present, there are a plethora of community groups online. Some are run by the Delegation, whilst others are run by members of the community. As confirmed by a participant in the Canberra focus group, most of the more active groups are politically charged,<sup>58</sup> which is consequently polarising to the broader community.

Accordingly, the Palestinian virtual community needs to be strengthened. At present, there are many social media pages and groups that all support one aspect of the Palestinian community in Australia. However, as members from the Melbourne focus group noted, events often clash and it is difficult to engage with certain events unless you were introduced to them by someone else.<sup>59</sup> Some form of online page or website that acts as a community notice board would

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<sup>54</sup> Sari Hanafi, ‘Reshaping Geography: Palestinian Community Networks in Europe and the New Media’ 2005 31(3) *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 581, 591.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid 581.

<sup>56</sup> Anat Ben-David, ‘The Palestinian Diaspora on the Web: Between de-Territorialization and re-Territorialization’ (2012) 52(4) *Social Science Information* 451, 463.

<sup>57</sup> See Appendix A and B.

<sup>58</sup> Appendix B.

<sup>59</sup> Appendix A.

therefore be beneficial.<sup>60</sup> At present such a website is indeed in progress.<sup>61</sup> However, in its nascent stage, it requires significant assistance from the Delegation to connect it with existing community groups. A critical issue therefore arises in terms of the administration of this national website. Delegating a prominent role of community coordination to a group or individual carries multiple risks, such as a future lack of interest, time or funding to continue the website's maintenance. It will be recommended to centralise this and have it linked to the Delegation in its official capacity as representative of the Palestinian community in Australia.

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<sup>60</sup> This concept was received positively by both the Melbourne and Canberra group. See Appendix A and B.

<sup>61</sup> [www.ozypalestine.org.au](http://www.ozypalestine.org.au) is a website developed by members of the Palestinian community in Sydney. It is independently funded and managed, with assistance from the Delegation. The Delegation is considering whether the website should be institutionalized. The Delegation is best placed to link community groups together and manage any form of community data base for privacy and security reasons.

## Section 3: Shift in Focus to Young People

### a. *Overview*

The youth are increasingly relied on for unifying the community and ensuring its longevity. As Youniss et al note, youth across the globe ‘must be attuned to the evolving future whilst also sustaining and adapting the past’.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, in order to devise a more cohesive community for young Palestinians in Australia, a conscious shift from older generations to younger generations must occur.

### b. *Shifting away from family orientation*

As Melbourne respondents noted, the focus of community events is predominantly families.<sup>63</sup> One respondent noted that the Palestinian community is very strong in terms of families, but lacks in its engagement with, and accommodation for, young people.<sup>64</sup> The recent initiative of the CPC in Canberra is a model that may overcome such a barrier to community engagement. The CPC is a community-based group run by the youth that hosts activities such as community picnics that are intended to be easily accessible for young people and single members of the community. Additionally, both the Melbourne and Canberra groups noted that the formation of community Dabka (folk-dancing) groups was an important development for engaging young people in community events. Finally, as previously mentioned in Section 2, using tools such as social media to connect the community aligns with the objective of this report to engage the youth community.

### c. *Altering leadership dynamics*

In conversation with the Ambassador during the focus group held the Delegation staff, it was noted that the retention of leadership among older generations was a core constraint in engaging the youth generation in community groups. This is particularly the case in Sydney, where established community groups do not want to pass on leadership opportunities to the youth.

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<sup>62</sup> J. Youniss et al, ‘Youth civic engagement in the twenty-first century’ (2002) 12(1) *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 121, 123.

<sup>63</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

Even though such groups are interested in engaging the youth, particularly for their skills, the older generations prefer to retain their leadership positions. Such community group dynamics could have detrimental impact on community development in the future.

Conversely, CPC's leadership is comprised entirely of youth. Whilst this is a notable development for the youth Australian-Palestinian community, it was mentioned in conversation with the Delegation, that if community groups are created and run solely by young people it may isolate older members of the community. Ultimately, the youth need to be given '[m]eaningful opportunities for involvement and membership'<sup>65</sup> to form positive relations with their community. This is particularly critical for preparing the youth for adult roles in their community<sup>66</sup> in ensuring the longevity of their community group.

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<sup>65</sup> Karen Fulbright-Anderson and Patricia Auspos (eds), *Community Change: Theories, Practice and Evidence* (2006) The Aspen Institute 280  
<<https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/rcc/COMMUNITYCHANGE-FINAL.PDF>>.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

## Section 4: The Role of the Delegation

The GDOP has a unique role in community development within Australia. The core role of the Delegation can be summarised in the table below:

<b>Role</b>	<b>Means of achieving mandate</b>
<i>Community empowerment</i>	Provides the community with the means and information to develop the community and engage in advocacy programs without impeding on their capacity to form an independent community in Australia.
<i>Advocacy</i>	Sends regular information to the Palestinian community organizations and individuals. Provides information on how individuals and community groups can engage in advocacy activities in compliance with Australian laws.
<i>Organisational and civil society support</i>	Organizes meetings in the various states to establish a unified body for the Palestinian community. Links Palestinian community organizations and individuals to each other and establishes a consultative process between them. The Delegation seeks to maintain a 'bottom up approach', and not impose on the autonomy of organisations and civil societies.
<i>Community outreach</i>	Attends and participates in various activities organized by the community. Remains visible in the community. Links Australian community back to the community in West Bank and Gaza.
<i>Consular support</i>	Provides various consular services to the Palestinian community. Links up new members of the community to existing community groups.

*Table 3: Summary of role of the GDOP<sup>67</sup>*

Particularly, the role of the Delegation in facilitating community events was discussed by both focus groups.<sup>68</sup> Both discussions noted that a stronger presence or assistance from the delegation in their community events would be beneficial. In particular, the Canberra focus group noted that if the Delegation committed to assisting with certain events per year this would help achieve consistency, and engage more members of the community.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> The summary of the role of the GDOP was based on the 2016 Annual Report. Whilst this report was not published by the time this report was submitted, the author worked extensively on the report as part of her internship placement. The 2016 Annual Report is expected to be published in mid 2017.

<sup>68</sup> See Appendix A and B.

<sup>69</sup> See Appendix B.

As discussed in Section 1, the Delegation was instrumental in 2006 in driving a community engagement initiative through hosting 70 community representatives in Canberra to discuss community development and advocacy. It will be recommended that a similar initiative is revived in the future with a specific focus on the role of young Palestinians in Australia and their impact on community development.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

## Summary of Recommendations

The recommendations that have either been explicitly, or implicitly, drawn on throughout this report are summarised below:

Section	Recommendation	Responsible Party
<i>Unifying Objectives</i>	Annual Palestine-Australia Conference or semi-regular national meetings to devise community development objectives	GDOP responsible for organising, with cooperation from members of the community and community groups
	Establish a Federal Committee or a Palestinian Community Advisory Board	GDOP to commence process like in 2006, however members of the community responsible – should be a body independent from the GDOP
	Consider implementing the CPC Community Organisation model in other major cities in Australia	Community group leaders in other cities
	Advocacy training groups	GDOP to empower community with practical and crucial advocacy skills
<i>Accessibility</i>	Strengthen the virtual Palestinian community and social media pages	GDOP to be more active on social media, existing community pages to reduce polarising content
	Create a central online platform to update and connect the community	GDOP consider institutionalising the national ‘Ozy Palestine’ website
<i>Youth Focus</i>	Encourage local communities and organisations to host events with an educative function	Community groups to host regular activities for young members for educational purposes
	Delegate leadership roles within the community to young people	Community groups
	Facilitate teaching of Arabic in local communities	Local communities
	Continue to hold youth trips to Palestine	GDOP and community groups
	Support sport competitions, folk dancing and other youth-orientated social activities	GDOP and community groups
	Encourage community groups to hold events that are inclusive for young members and single members of the community	Community groups and organisations
<i>Role of the GDOP</i>	Be more visible in Melbourne and Sydney communities, such as attending community events	GDOP
	Add additional section on website with information on how new members of the community may approach Palestinian communities or connect with Palestinians in Australia	GDOP to consider adding further information on their website

*Table 4: Summary of Recommendations*

### Further Research

One recommendation for further research is expanding the scope of investigation. It would be worthwhile to conduct focus groups in other Australian cities such as Sydney and Adelaide to gain a stronger understanding of how the Palestinian community, at a national and state level, interacts and operates. Additionally, when further 2016 Census data is released, this should be compared with the existing data on the Palestinian community in Australia.

### Conclusion

This paper distilled a clear framework for the development of a more unified young Palestinian community in Australia. Whilst conflicting identities and an absence of strong social capital in the youth Palestinian community currently hinders its social development, it is clear based on this research that there is a mutual interest in developing and maintaining the community's nexus with Palestine. It will be critical for future community development to ensure that this collective memory, as a unifying factor, continues to guide, strengthen and empower the youth Australian-Palestinian community to ensure its longevity and cohesiveness in years to come.



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## Appendix A

### Transcript from Melbourne Focus Group<sup>70</sup>

**Date:** 17 April 2017

**Location:** The Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health, Melbourne

**Number of Participants:** 7

----- *Introductory comments and personal introductions* -----

**Interviewer (Sarah Barrie):** So I might just start off with a very basic question. Could you please briefly describe the Palestinian community in Australia? What has been your experience of it and how have you found the community particularly for young people?

*I will go through topics – so at the moment we will look at the Palestinian Community. I will raise 3 to 5 questions and feel free to answer one, none or as many as you want and only if you feel you have something to contribute. You don't have to answer anything if you don't want to. Let's start off with just looking at the Palestinian community, how do you find it, how is it dealing with young people and what have been your experiences of it?*

**Respondent 1:** So I think the Palestinian community is a very strong community in terms of families, but I think one of the main problems or one of the main things that the community needs to target is young people and the youth and their contribution to the community itself. Most of the events run by the community are mostly for families or older people and you could rarely see younger people or youth. At the moment I think it is becoming a bit better with more involvement from the youth, but from experiences it is mostly families getting together.

**Respondent 2:** In saying so, we recently had the Jaffa Dabka group (folk-dancing). So we have a group of youth doing stuff like that together, however not everyone is involved which is probably a bit of a downside, but we do have about 20 or 30. Not all Palestinians, but mostly are. We also have Olive Kids, which is an organisation for orphans and we have a group of young people who work on that. So there are some projects here and there.

**Respondent 1:** There is also the Futsal competition.

**Respondent 2:** Yes, which is mostly all young men and boys who get together and play soccer every week. So that is pretty active. We don't have everyone under one roof yet as not everyone knows about these activities. They are not marketed for everyone to know about this. And I think there is an issue with location, I think sometimes things are located in the North or in the

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<sup>70</sup> This transcript contains relevant discussion from the focus group held in Melbourne. It is not the complete discussion. There were various reasons for not incorporating the entirety of the discussion held in Melbourne in this transcript. Firstly, some of what was said was personal remarks, personal anecdotes or otherwise conversation that was not relevant or appropriate for the purpose of this research. Secondly, some discussion focused too much on the political role of the community which is no longer a relevant consideration for this research paper.

East where people who have to commute from the South East it is a big hard to get to these things. And therefore just withdraw from some of the events.

**Respondent 3:** And one thing I will say since I came here in 2014, as you know there have been many intense incidents which took place in Palestine and the Israeli war in the Gaza Strip and what is happening to Palestinian families from there and the Zionist soldiers. Now I'd say what is very important for Palestinians to keep their eyes on is how to understand their right to legitimate resistance and how to promote it among the Palestinian community itself. I know sometimes the Australian police they think that most of our activities are related to promoting the understanding of the right of self-resistance and self-defence against the Zionists. So I believe if the Palestinian community also can concentrate and focus more attention on this issue – how to discuss the Palestinian-Zionist struggle – in a way that is accepted according to Australian laws that would be much more beneficial.

**Respondent 1:** That is more on the political side rather than the social side. I think there are some groups that are doing very well at the moment such as APAN and Australians for Palestine.

**Respondent 2:** I think we should bring them all together here. We should get everyone under one roof, explain your objectives, explain what you want to do and for all of them to know that all of these groups exist. Because sometimes there are events that are clashing on the same days, and that shouldn't happen – we should all be together in it. I think that is very important.

**Interviewer:** Yes, well this is the whole purpose of the research. There is a lot going on, a lot of different organisations, community groups and I guess it's about finding a way to make them all a bit more unified. So that even if each organisation is operating on its own and creating its own events, everyone is somehow aware of them and that they are all working towards similar goals and objectives. And as well as that having people of different political and religious views all together for the same community development is one of the important things.

**Respondent 2:** Just one more thing that is a bit weird, I feel like it is mostly the Muslims who are involved in all of this. Whereas the Christians have their own little group. There is no connection between us at all. And I'd like them to come in with us. I'd them to just blend in with us and everything that we are doing, or we blend in with them and whatever is going on with them which would be really good.

**Respondent 1:** I think it only happened just once at the raising of the Palestinian flag, everyone came together. All the religions and organisations. That was the first time in ages that this thing happened.

**Interviewer:** Yes, that is a great thing about this discussion is to highlight the underlying constraints as to why there is not a more cohesive community at the moment. Why there aren't events that tailor for everyone and why everyone is not as involved as they possibly could be. Working out what these are, what are the events that are working – that's really great. Does anyone else have anything to contribute?

**Respondent 3:** Well maybe those who are born here find it easier, but I think that the Palestinian Delegation is not doing their best in terms of connecting Palestinians who come to Australia to the Palestinian communities around them. For example, when we were at the

raising of the flag event, three Palestinian families came and said that they did not know anything about the Palestinian communities in Melbourne. The only time they saw a Palestinian was at that event. Since the Delegation – although I don't know if this is true or not – has access to people who are coming to Australia or those of Palestinian background coming to Australia, then they can connect them and at least have on their webpage if you are coming to Melbourne, then these are the Palestinian communities, and these are their contact details. This is a very simple thing that the Delegation is not doing.

**Respondent 1:** You know, three guys all came from Palestine and if they weren't studying here at the university they would have never known about the Palestinian community.

**Respondent 2:** I think its more like if you meet a Palestinian, “oh so are you're Palestinian, no way, we've got Dabka, we've got futsal, we've got this, we've got that” and they're like “oh really, how do you know about this”, and I'm like honestly I was born here, raised here, and I did not know about all of the stuff that goes on in the community until like two or three years ago because I had one friend who got me involved in all of this.

**Respondent 4:** Yes that was my point. How to reach the Palestinian community and how to know about the activities of the community there should be like some online platform. And one more thing, how to engage new students? How to reach them and incorporate them into the Palestinian community and I think that is why we need a branch in the Palestinian community regarding students and student activities. Like personally when I go to any of the activities of the Palestinian community, or at least my first time going to one of the activities for the community, it was a lot of families which was very nice but for me it was no use. But now I know these guys so go to all the activities with them or just random events. One more thing, I feel quite confused as to the point the relationship between the Palestinian community and other Palestinian associations like APAN. There should be a clear structural relationship and there should be cooperation between all of them. The question here is who is responsible to manage or organise the relationship between all of them and I feel like this is the role of the embassy to keep all of them in touch.

**Respondent 2:** Yes and just to know what everyone is doing, what's happening.

**Interviewer:** So I guess we have already discussed a bit about community events but I will delve into that more now. Again, I will raise a bunch of questions so feel free to answer any or none. So have you been involved in or attended any community events in the past? If so, what was your experience and what kind of event was it? Were there different attitudes towards the event between the youth and older members of the community? And how have you felt about larger community events with not just a Palestinian reach such as film festivals or multicultural festivals – have they been beneficial?

**Respondent 1:** So I think we have all been to Palestinian events in the past. I think the experience we get is more of a welcoming experience form families and not so much of a youth event. As (respondent 4) said, now because we all know each other we all go there to catch up. So, it's always welcoming. In terms of the multicultural events, I've been to some of them. It's very useful, not only do you meet people from the community but you meet members from other communities and see what other communities are up to in terms of relations.

**Respondent 3:** It's about educating the Palestinian kids about Palestine and telling them what are the cities, what are the villages. And during that event we talked a bit about Gaza and whilst



talking about Gaza we mentioned how the Palestinians got stronger in terms of their resistance to the Israelis and the Israeli occupation. One of the things that was said is that this is a political issue as my brother (X) said, and that we should not discuss in the Palestinian community as this is a social community. But I think this is doubtful, for example the Israeli student union at Melbourne University their webpage clearly states that they adopt the principles of Zionism and that Jerusalem is the city of all Jews around the world. So they are blatantly clear about their ideology, why should we consider that as a political matter that should not be discussed in the Palestinian community it's something essential I would say to the Palestinian identity and the Muslim identity, that repression should be resisted. Your land should be freed from those who came from Europe and America and occupied it and settled in. The Palestinian Delegation should clearly explain to the Palestinian communities about how to discuss this issue of the Israeli occupation of our land, and all our land since 1948 and how we can discuss it, and how they can build the Palestinian identity for Palestinians who are born here. Some of them don't know essential terminology about this conflict. For example, what does Zionism mean – or what is the Israeli occupation, and why the UN and international law is not supportive in this regard. I understand that some of you may think that this is sensitive or it is political yet it is essential to every Palestinian. We have been suffering from that since 1948, and we can see how much the Zionist community is strong. A student union, for academic purposes, say we adopt the principles of Zionism believing that Jerusalem is the house of all Jews.

**Respondent 1:** Yes that is something important for all the community to know basic laws and their rights and how they could contribute to Palestine. But I think regarding (respondent 3)'s point, I'm not sure if it has to do with the double standard Australian government, where anything point of view that comes from the Palestinian side is seen as something that could cause adverse reactions. I know recently one of the Palestinian peace activists was granted a visa and was planning a visit, and they cancelled his visa on the ground that his presence in Australia would cause adverse reactions. But on the other hand, if you look at Israeli activists, or even the Prime Minister of Israel himself, when they come to Australia there are adverse reactions in all public cities but no one cares and they are granted entry. So, that's why I call it a double standard and that's why some people in the community are scared to discuss these events or to discuss the right to resistance, as they think that the government might think this is linked to terrorism.

**Respondent 4:** So I'd like to first answer the question and then comment on what has just been said. So, in regarding activities, I would say there are two main dimensions to these activities. There are social gatherings for us, for me, there was another hidden dimension which is to introduce ourselves to other students. I'm doing Masters of Law in Melbourne and all of my friends in the Law school I always invite them to things like raising the Palestinian flag or film festivals. This is how we introduce ourselves to others. Sure the political activities are important, but it is important to introduce ourselves to others. For example, every time I introduce myself in Melbourne, I'm from Palestine people think I mean Pakistan. There are a lot of people from some countries who have no idea about us, our struggle our conflict. That objective should also be clear to the Palestinian community, so we are not just targeting us but we are also targeting other people by social activities, by going to multicultural events, like going to film festivals to introduce yourself. Therefore, introducing ourselves not just by demonstrations but by other things, we have to adopt different approaches.

In regards to the discussion about the political issues arising at the moment. Maybe they know more than me, but I feel like there should be different bodies with no one objective, we cannot

benefit from that lack of structure. We need to know what is the main objective of the Palestinian community? What is the main objective of APAN, and then we can draw one view for all of us. For example, the Palestinian community should focus more on social events. However, when we have one event on Gaza for example we can all assemble together because we all have one view. So different bodies but one view.

**Respondent 3:** So from this we could have what I think is called a liaison office, some way of coordinating activities and associations. It would be very useful for the Delegation to have one branch with two people in it, call themselves the Cooperation Department, and they can connect all the people and tell them about what is happening.

**Interviewer:** That is along the lines of one of the recommendations being proposed, and if all the research supports this, then this is something that the Delegation might move forward with. Perhaps to have a student advisory council, or just an advisory council, and perhaps a body that can receive funding, to distribute that money out and plan events.

The next topic is social media and the value of that. In this day and age social media is a pretty powerful tool to connect people, and looking at the value and merit of a virtual community. Some of the questions I have do you use social media regularly? If so, do you use it to connect with other members of the Palestinian community? Have you found it effective in organising community events or finding out about community events? Are you members of any Facebook groups that connects you with members of the community? What would your thoughts be on a website as a form of community ‘pin board’ where all the events go up? DO you think there is much benefit in a virtual community?

**Respondent 1:** I think we are all members of all the communities and buddies of Palestine online on social media. But I think the important thing these Facebook pages are very beneficial; you know they publish events it’s easy to reach out to you. Again at the same time, there are many organisations at the same time. Some of them social, some of them are political, some are mixed and you get lost. Sometimes events clash at the same time. So I think it’s important to have a platform or billboard that has all these organisations under one, and publish all their events on the one platform so that all these members of the community could attend, the demonstrations, political events, social events, young events, fundraisers. Sometimes you come to one night and find out that there are two or three events at the one time. I’m one person, I can’t go to all three even though it is important for me to be present at all of them. There is nothing you can do.

**Respondent 2:** Facebook is beneficial. One organisation will need to take charge and collect information from each one, and post their events online.

**Interviewer:** But do you all use Facebook? I am wary that some people in the community don’t use Facebook.

**Respondent 2:** not everyone uses Facebook.

**Interviewer:** So maybe a website would be good.

**Respondent 2:** Yes, website or email.

**Respondent 4:** That is my issue, Facebook is so useful but ...



**Respondent 1:** There are some people who don't use it in the community, particularly the older ones. They only work via phone calls or emails.

**Respondent 4:** But there should be some other accounts, like on twitter or something. I know that some people don't use Facebook.

**Respondent 2:** But I think that gets too complicated. I think just Facebook and a website.

**Respondent 4:** There is another useful one. Like if you go to any workshop or something and just sign up and give your email and get updates. This is more professional. Especially in Australia, everyone has an email.

**Respondent 5:** And another one is to assign someone in each suburb to contact Palestinians in that suburb.

**Respondent 2:** I think suburbs is too hard but regions maybe. For example, I have no idea what the Western suburbs community is about. I am mostly connected with the Eastern community, or the Doncaster community and the northern communities. They are the ones that are most active. But I know there is a Palestinian school in the West, but we don't know what happens there.

**Respondent 4:** Again, just a lack of structure in the Palestinian community itself.

**Respondent 2:** You just need that person to reach out and connect with them.

**Interviewer:** So the next question I will go onto relates to some of the underlying constraints. So how different political and religious views maybe affect people coming together as a community. Have you been discouraged from engaging in a community event because of different political or religious beliefs? Do you think that sometimes a broad range of views is sometimes a hindrance to unifying the community in Australia? If so, how can we devise a framework to overcome this?

**Respondent 1:** Yes I think the thing with Palestinians is that not only different divisions, different political views, different social views. You have one person with a different religion, with a different political view and a different social group, that's three things so if you mix them up a hundred different views. You can't bring everyone together because of that. We do need something that is uniting people, disregarding all these views, to get people together. You can't just make an event, and make it only talk about one thing.

**Respondent 2:** But you know Olive Kids? It is very big – it targets orphan children in Gaza. There is no political thing in it – no Hamas, no Fatah, no Christian, Muslim – however I've heard in the past that Christian communities don't like to get involved because they have heard that it is only Muslim. Well it is not only Muslim, it's run by Muslim people, but that's about it.

**Respondent 5:** I guess a problem within the Palestinian community, not only in Australia, but across the globe, is that they forget the idea that we are under occupation. And a lot of the problems we have - like if we were to have a country at the moment - we should set aside and focus on the goal. We are under the occupation. We need to overcome this before we fight

about the minor issues about your political agenda or your religious beliefs. You know I want to be a little bit more political in a sense – but a lot of the problems with the political parties are that they put these walls preventing them from coalition between each other just because they have minor disagreements on stuff that should be addressed later on when we form this so-called country. Please, let's form the country.

**Respondent 2:** Do you think that is present among the youth?

**Respondent 5:** I do not want to go a lot about the youth as the youth – there's a more fundamental issue which is the question of identity. Here, Palestinian youth, don't have identity. The younger generation, they have no idea about the Palestinian problem.

----- *End of relevant group discussion* -----

## Appendix B

### Transcript from Canberra Focus Group<sup>71</sup>

**Date:** 3 May 2017

**Location:** The Palestinian Delegation, O'Malley, Canberra

**Number of Participants:** 6

----- *Introductory comments and personal introductions* -----

**Interviewer (Sarah Barrie):** The first topic we will start with is very basic and is about the Palestinian community. Could you please briefly describe the Palestinian community in Australia, what has been your experience of it, and how have you found the community culture as a young person or your views of it regarding young people?

**Respondent 1:** It's actually interesting that we are doing this now as recently we've started a Canberra Palestinian Community Group. We've got Facebook groups, WhatsApp groups and are planning events for the year. That has begun this year. Prior to that, depending on whether you knew anyone at the embassy or not, you would take part in things such as the multicultural festival, speeches and stuff like that. It was kind of sporadic before this year.

**Respondent 2:** I would have to agree with (respondent 1), prior to this year the only events I knew of were charity dinners, and they were just one off or happen once in every while. It was a bit fragmented.

**Respondent 3:** Yes, before that it was very family-orientated, like who your mums and dads knew. You'd go to their houses and things like that. There was nothing in Canberra organised officially, to have regular people over such as our recent picnic event.

**Respondent 4:** Before this day we did not even know that community events existed. We just arrived here, we did not hear anything about events for the Palestinian community, and we came to the embassy and that's how we found out about it.

**Respondent 3:** And before that, none of this even existed. That's part of the reason we've opened it and created it. To help people who come here. Before that, nothing was really organised. Only like a protest, it was very event driven. Like whatever happened in Palestine, everyone would scramble together for a protest or a fundraiser following a Gaza attack or something like that.

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<sup>71</sup> This transcript contains relevant discussion from the focus group held in Canberra. It is not the complete discussion. There were various reasons for not incorporating the entirety of the discussion held in Canberra in this transcript. Firstly, some of what was said was personal remarks, personal anecdotes or otherwise conversation that was not relevant or appropriate for the purpose of this research. Secondly, some discussion personally referenced members of the community and therefore for anonymity purposes, was removed from the transcript. Finally, a section of the discussion focused on the political advocacy capacity of the community which is no longer a relevant consideration for this research paper.

**Interviewer:** So, it's a relatively new initiative to connect the community. Moving on to the next topic – community events. So, have you been involved in or attended any community events? If so, what has been your experience of the event and what were the different attitudes towards the event between the youth and older members of the community? And what about events with a larger reach such as the multicultural festival or the Palestinian film festival?

**Respondent 5:** I'm new here so the only event I attended was the picnic. We are trying to approach some Palestinian people, which is why we are here tonight.

**Respondent 3:** I guess my approach is before that (CPC) there wasn't much happening. Now we are currently organising a picnic, trying to do that every two months. Over the Ramadan period we are trying to have an Iftar, as well as Eid celebrations. That picnic that went just before was for Easter, so we have some Christian Palestinians in the community so we tried to do that for them and for their kids to make sure everyone is involved.

**Interviewer:** So I guess the CPC is hosting events for all different religions?

**Respondent 3:** Yes, so part of the calendar is that we are going to have closer to Christmas, we will have a Christmas type of event. At the end of the day Palestinians are a mixture of people and religions. Not just all Muslims.

**Interviewer:** Yes, well that was just one of the interesting findings from the Melbourne group. They found that many events were driven by different religious groups. So just to compare with Melbourne, there have been no clashes in events?

**Respondent 3:** No

**Respondent 1:** Also, at the Delegation everyone is mixed here. It is a mix of religions, everyone here is just Palestinian.

**Interviewer:** So I guess just having a community irrespective of different political views.

**Respondent 1:** Yes, and I think we have done well at that so far.

**Interviewer:** So I guess it's about finding a framework that works for everyone. One of the other things I wanted to ask you in terms of community events is that a lot of people in Melbourne that I spoke to had come from the Middle East or had only just moved here to study, so they were very knowledgeable about the Palestinian conflict. But they said sometimes it was harder with the community events for people to come and be motivated or interested because a lot of young people who had been born in Australia didn't really know much. One of the suggestion was made to have community events with some form of educational function for particularly the younger ones who feel a bit disconnected. Is that something you feel is necessary in Canberra? Or is a different situation for the Palestinian community in Canberra?

**Respondent 3:** So, we are in the process of holding a Nakba day coming up, and we plan to host it here. One of the things we are planning to do is have younger kids (under 10 years old) here, and we have a Dabka group (folk dancing) for them. At the Nakba day, we plan to have some kids read about where their families are from, and present something about their history. We are really trying to help these young people know where they are from. So as they grow they have it with them.

**Interviewer:** Another topic that I will move on to is about social media usage. One of the recommendations that is beginning to formulate is having a more virtual community, and whether that is having one unified Facebook group or having a website. Whether it is worthwhile having a website that runs as sort of an Australia-wide notice board? People in Melbourne found that they often had all these events held on the same day and they were clashing – this would be a way of having a communal calendar.

So do you use social media regularly? If so, do you use it to interact with other members of the Palestinian community? Have you found it effective in organising community events? Are you members of any community-based Facebook pages or groups? If so, are there any particularly effective or successful ones? And, what are your thoughts on having a website developed as a sort of ‘notice board’ for all community events? Do you think a virtual community could be beneficial?

**Respondent 1:** So we have one Facebook group, and a couple WhatsApp groups: a community committee group, a men’s group and women’s group all on WhatsApp. So on the ladies group, things running for kids like Dabka. Our Facebook has worked really well, in putting up advertisements for events that are also emailed out. So the same advertisement on different platforms.

**Respondent 2:** I know there is a Palestinians in Australia page as well as our CPC page. They are the only two that I am part of. I think it is a really effective way – a social media page – because I don’t necessarily check my emails that often, if it is advertised on Facebook that is where I will see it. I think it is quite a good way of advertising it.

**Interviewer:** Would you regularly check a community website?

**Respondent 2:** I would maybe if it was Australia-wide, because I think Canberra is a bit too small to have more than one Palestinian group let alone our one. I’d say Australia wide, if you wanted to go interstate.

**Interviewer:** I know that you now have the Canberra Palestinian Community, but how did you go finding people here and meeting Palestinians?

**Respondent 5:** Yes actually it was very beneficial for us. When we moved to Canberra I checked the delegation’s page and website and so this is why we are here.

**Respondent 6:** I think the politically motivated pages are more common on Facebook. More promoted, such as APAN, AJP. In terms of social community things it is only recently we have seen these.

**Respondent 3:** How have you found the picnic? I know there hasn’t been too much – have you found that you were connected?

**Respondent 5:** When we moved here we felt lonely – it is very difficult to move to a country where you don’t know anybody. It was for us a disaster.

**Respondent 4:** When we came here to the embassy they added us to the WhatsApp groups and that’s how we are connected now.

**Interviewer:** Yes, I think in Canberra you are in a privileged position as you are near the embassy and there's a smaller close knit community, there would be a lot of contrast between Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney I think.

**Respondent 3:** The Canberra community compared to Melbourne it's very small and tight and geographically it's not very big. Melbourne it's very hard, there are a lot of different areas and it can take an hour to drive between them. So people tend to stick to their groups. But in regards to social media, I'm part of our one and a couple of others interstate. So what I do is if someone else has an event in Sydney or Melbourne I'll post it on the Canberra one in case someone decides to go to Sydney for the weekend.

**Respondent 1:** I'm thinking of when Palestine came for the Asia Cup. That was a lot of road trip travelling. A lot of us from the Palestinian community, we literally followed them from different places. They came to Canberra to play, but then groups also drove to Melbourne to watch their game and Newcastle. It was quite good.

**Respondent 3:** They played in Newcastle first, then Melbourne, then Canberra. My family and I went to every game. That was one of the best experiences I've ever had. We loved it. The symbolic thing about it, Palestine isn't recognised in Australia but yet you have a Palestinian flag going up in the stadium and the anthem. So that experience was amazing. I met a lot of people from Sydney and Melbourne. You knew more people afterwards. So when they came to Canberra we organised one of the restaurants to stay open and about 200 people and players came to the restaurant. That got planned five days before the soccer, it wasn't something that was organised.

**Respondent 1:** In Melbourne, it was the first Palestinian goal and we met so many people in Melbourne. We were the Canberra group that had rocked up. It was a really great experience.

**Respondent 3:** And that wasn't even something organised. Imagine now if we had something organised, I feel like we have such a better platform.

**Interviewer:** Moving on to another topic and this one is on disparate political and religious views. People have a lot of different views politically and religiously on the spectrum and does that make it then difficult to engage in certain community events? So some questions might be have you been discouraged from engaging in any community events because of different political or religious views? Do you think the broad range of views are a hindrance to unifying Palestinians in Australia? And if so, what kind of framework can we devise to overcome this? I appreciate that this is more of a personal question and everyone has their own views on this, so if you don't want to answer this question you are not obliged to.

**Respondent 1:** I haven't really found Canberra to be particularly controversial. Even if people do have political views they aren't really at the forefront of Palestinian discussion in Canberra. I don't know what everyone says.

**Respondent 3:** Look, everyone has their views but part of our community group we make sure that isn't an issue, or the focus. The focus is not about that at the moment. Just keeping the group together, updated and interacting with each other and harnessing that community spirit. I think that is the way we will steer it towards. It is hard because the older generation, it was



very much on political grounds. And that hasn't really changed anything so let's just park it and enjoy our lives here as opposed to trying to change everything.

**Respondent 6:** I'm involved with APAN and SFJP and we definitely notice a shortage of involvement of Palestinians. It is a little bit frustrating because there were a few events that I have been involved in and I barely saw any Palestinians around them. It's only Australians. It was really appreciated those people, but it would have been nicer to see someone who was born here and be able to present their case politically, not just socially. We can only keep trying.

**Respondent 1:** We were googling our names at work the other day and the only thing of me on the internet is a picture of me outside the Israeli embassy in 2009 protesting, and it's there. I guess we have participated in protests, it has never been specially politically charged.

**Respondent 3:** A lot of people like to go back to Palestine quite frequently and you always have this thing in the back of your mind that if I get too politically involved here and I'm on the register.

**Respondent 6:** This is the essence of the whole story – that fear in every single Palestinian living abroad is still there and is preventing them. Even me, whenever I meet someone Jewish, maybe very supportive of the Palestinian cause, but when I hear he is Jewish there is always that fear and its subconscious.

**Respondent 3:** I remember the soccer game, I was in my Palestinian jersey and flag and I was interviewed. And next minute I'm forever on google with this image. You shouldn't have that fear, but it's real. A lot of people have been knocked back from going to Palestine for these reasons.

**Respondent 5:** For us it is more difficult. I am only here as a student and I got my visa through the Australian embassy in Tel Aviv. You can't risk it.

----- End of relevant group discussion -----

At the end of the structured interview questions the interviewer asked the focus group whether they had any recommendations or suggestions for how to develop a more cohesive Palestinian community. This section relates to the responses received.

**Interviewer:** Do any of you have any other recommendations at the moment that you think are critical for the Palestinian community in Australia, again, focusing on young people? What would you want the delegation to implement to support you for example?

**Respondent 1:** I think that consistency is probably good. In the sense that if we have a successful year in terms of events, that we have the delegation assist the community in certain events annually. So then knowing that we have a dinner for Eid for example. A) I feel like if it is consistent more people will come and know about it and B) it will then bounce off for other things. I think a goal could be to support the community in X amount of ways and do them 2-3 times, or whatever it is, it will help out in terms of everyone knowing the timetable but also in terms of Palestine recognising those events specifically. The multicultural festival is a big one, otherwise events such as Eid, Christmas – if we have it known what will be supported every year – it will help not be so sporadic.

**Respondent 3:** Yes, we have tried this year to be forward thinking and start marking some dates for different events. It is going well. I think one thing I thought about before coming here, was something I saw on Facebook, the had a conference in Europe for Palestinians where all these Palestinians came to the Netherlands. It was huge - they had thousands of Palestinians there, speakers, workshops – that would be really cool to have something like that here. And every year it could be held in a different city and we take a group of 30-40 people representing Canberra Palestinians, Melbourne, Sydney etc – but who knows what could come out of it. Politically wise you might meet some other people interested in advocacy or who think the same way, other people might participate in different things, other people might just like it and enjoy it because they get to meet new people and strengthen ties. I feel that is just as important as pushing the envelope. I think we just need to remember that we do have a case, the Palestinian advocacy, and we do have our battle there. But we also need to remember that that is not all we do, we also get together and enjoy ourselves, and that cultivates interactions, so when someone does say “Hey let’s go to a protest” you’re more likely to come along. But if you don’t have that, it is very hard to energise people to go do other things.

**Respondent 5:** Actually,, I don’t have a lot of information about the Palestinian community here but during the past picnic I have noticed that many children who have been born here don’t speak Arabic. Maybe I can give you some recommendations to have like some talks because...

**Respondent 4:** It is not just their roots. It is maybe a presentation about their history, their geography.

**Interviewer:** This was something also discussed in Melbourne, that particularly the young ones didn’t know some of the terms or phrases or have a basic understanding of the conflict.

**Respondent 3:** I guess I agree with you on that one. That is one point that we are trying to focus on – that’s where the Dabka came from. We are working on that. If we do have an Arabic lesson that is something that we organise through the TAFE or Islamic place in Weston or Monash.

**Respondent 5:** But I think also you can at home just give them lessons so that they can speak in Arabic.

**Respondent 4:** All the people in the community who know Arabic can volunteer, give them some lessons.

**Respondent 3:** I agree with you, and you talk to any parent and they will agree with you as well. I was lucky I learnt Arabic when I was younger and we always spoke it at home. There is hope.

**Respondent 1:** That is the thing, we speak Arabic at home, but Sarah and I studied Arabic at the ANU and the difficulty is that it is Fusha (Modern Standard Arabic).

**Interviewer:** Yes that was also a recommendation that also came out of Melbourne that somehow teaching kids Arabic or history, just so that they are a bit more aware about their culture or heritage and felt more connected to the community as they grow up.



**Respondent 1:** Because we do get questions as Palestinians in Canberra. We get questions all the time, so I feel like it would be good if our youth had an understanding.

**Respondent 3:** Yes well for a long time when I was a teenager we were known as the people who throw rocks or the rock-throwers. That was our resistance. It was funny, we started identifying with that.

**Respondent 1:** But I feel like you need to ease them into it, particularly the ones born in Canberra. When I was younger I used to go to Sunday school and I hated it, so I feel like you need to do it in a certain way that is engaging and inspiring them in a way that isn't turning them off. We could have a movie night.

**Respondent 3:** Every Palestinian has this light, this little flame in them. It's up to the people around them to turn it up. It is always there. You will never find a Palestinians that doesn't have that empathy with what is going on. The desire to know more. You just have to turn that up a bit. One thing I would recommend, and I know it is expensive, is organising trips for diaspora, for Palestinians in Australia, to see the situation, meet people and make connections. Go to the village where you grandparents are from. All of us who went on that trip now have a big knowledge about Palestinian, and a big passion for it.

**Respondent 4:** *To connect, that helps very much.*

**Respondent 3:** I don't think there is anything stronger than seeing and feeling. Especially, when Palestinians have such a broad cultural spectrum and religious spectrum. I never knew that as Palestinians we are very talented in music for example. We have great talent there.

----- *Closing Remarks* -----