

Vision Twenty22

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To be implemented nationally through community organisations at
the state level

In consultation and support by government agencies, service
providers, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders.

Youth and Community Engagement

Paper Prepared by: Indra Adhikari

With additional inputs by Suren Ghaley and public discussion at the Second Australian Bhutanese Conference

Young population forms a big chunk of the Bhutanese community. As we settle in a new country, the future of our community rests on the conduct and initiatives of this young generation. They are the guidance to the older generation in language, navigation, culture and finances. This young population has partly experienced the traumatic refugee life and they have seen the free and joyful Australian life. Learning from the past and using the present as opportunity to grow and prosper in the future is the most challenging task they must shoulder.

Young people from our community not only have the opportunities to grow and expand here in Australia but also shoulder the responsibility to give continuity to our culture, identity and communal harmony. They carry our legacy, spirit and values to generations to come. The future of who we are completely depend on the course of action, schooling, community engagement and intergenerational relations these young people adopt.

What they adopt, then depend on what we impart to them. We are in a critical stage to decide whether we want our newer generation to carry on with our legacy, culture and social values or let them choose these fundamental social characteristics from others as they grow up. The onus lies with the community leaders, elders and intellectuals.

Special focus must be given to ensure this young generation gets attention, build resilience, empower themselves with strong will power to serve the community and the country while ensuring they inherit culture, social values and acceptable and valuable traditions that we lived through.

There is also a large groups of community members in the 40s or 50s with enormous skills but not recognised. The association shall work to find means that would help recognise the skills they have.

As we faces these challenges, there is definite need for us to start working on developing database that will give us the exact idea of the situation in hand and develop ideas and programs appropriate to the needs.

Our actions must ensure the younger generation is socially valuable, economically strong and culturally resilient.

1. Employment opportunities

Unemployment is one of the major challenges for our younger generation. Though this is not concentrated only in our community, growing number of young people without work in our community is a concerning agenda. The market offers ample opportunities but younger population is finding it difficult to connect their interest with the industry.

General observations show, younger generation are hesitant to continuing their higher education. Failure by a friend to find good job despite having university education discourages one to pursue higher education. As a result, more young people have opted to earning than higher education. The population of young people opting to start working at the tender age to get some pocket money is encouraging school dropout.

The association shall ensure and encourage the young people attend school education and continue with university education. Alternatively, if university education is not the first choice for some young people, association shall design programs to make sure these young people pursue vocational education. Vocational education is the best option for young people not interested in university full time to improve their skills and update on latest legal requirements for works.

While association shall encourage everyone to pursue higher education, it shall also encourage the young people to enter the employment market early to gain essential qualities and skills requisite to gain better employment opportunities. This shall address the difficulties young people facing to find suitable employment opportunities despite having educational qualification. The young people must understand that Australian work culture not only demands educational qualification for a good job but also the work experiences.

Skilled individuals also have hard to link with the industry they dream of. The association shall work to link the skilled and qualified individuals with employment opportunities.

Beside young unemployment, our community members in 40s and 50s have faced high unemployment. The primary reason for this being traditional work skills they acquired not recognised in Australia. These people need fresher courses on workmanship and vocational trainings to rejuvenate the tremendous work skills they possess and convert into Australian work standards.

The association shall invest in connecting these existing work skills, vocations and industry making it compliance with the Australian regulations and opening doors for opportunities to our community members.

As part of the seeking employment opportunities for our community members, the association shall seek support from individuals and organisations to provide mentorship that enhances the changes of gainful employment.

2. Socio-cultural connections

The young generation engage and intermingle with the wider Australian community. This is very important to the intellectual, social and mental growth of these young people. That gives them fantastic opportunity to learn about others, make bigger fraternity and learn to live in harmony in the highly diverse social environment. But, concurrently, it poses concern of them loosing connection with their own language, culture and community. We have already started seeing many young people failing to read, write and speak our language, have distanced from our cultural festivals and remain ignorant to our social values.

The association shall design program for young people to learn and retain our cultural and linguistic identity. They include Nepali language classes, social gathering, interaction between older and younger generation, cultural festivals and such others. Such programs shall focus on strengthening the ever-widening generation gap too. Closer relationship between elderlies and young generation not only glues the widening generational gap but also provides avenues for the young people to learn about our cultures, social values and family traditions.

The association shall, while encouraging the young people to engage and learn other cultures, provide opportunities to have closer connection and deeper relations with our own cultures and social values.

3. Community engagement

We value volunteerism and it is immensely ingrained into our values and practice. While the term 'volunteerism' might have become more vocal, it was integral part of our social life. We regard this as our family or social responsibility. We have been the living proof that we volunteer for all our community activities and social causes, for generations.

Volunteerism gives space for young people and adults to engage in community activities, build relationship, promote unity and enhance cooperation. This is the primary platform that provides avenues for young people to brighten their working skills.

Young people must have opportunity to engage more in the community activities and projects. This not only empowers them, it gives them a window to look opportunities that best suits them. Volunteering is very important and crucial part of the Australian life. Providing space for young people to volunteer in community will pave way for their job opportunities, social connection, community harmony and personal development.

Engaging young in community activities is sharpening their skills and talents and open doors for employment opportunities.

We have also encountered with young people who have pushed themselves inside doors and have become completely isolated from the community. Community engagement will give them exposure and help them socialise.

4. Educational and extra curriculum support

We are facing a completely new way of learning. While transitioning from our oriental teaching traditions to the western teaching techniques, we are traveling in a confusing state of mind. While we have not been able to forget the way we learnt, it's quite challenging to grasp the new teaching techniques.

Our young people too have abrupt shift in the way they learn. From the traditional book rot culture to technology-dominated method of teaching, this shift is a big jump for young people to adopt. The transition is not smooth. Until they get used to with the new techniques, they need support, mentor and additional help to ensure they adjust to the new way of learning and above all they get practically what they are intended to.

The young people also need support in their extra curricular activities such as sports, language, cultural learning. While schools and teachers traditionally provide support for all curricular and extra curricular activities within school hours, additional support that community, family and individuals provide in their curricular and extra curricular activities outside school hours greatly enhances the learning capability of the young people. Such support are part of encouragement and motivation for young people to pursue learning.

The association shall invest to find alternatives within the community to support these young and adult to achieve their dreams and aspirations. Such alternative programs could be nationally connected or segregated to address the local needs.

5. Peer education

Peer education is the most effective means. Young people learn from their friends of same age much quicker than their seniors. Influences in learning from same age group is more effective, quicker and economic. To engage young people in fruitful activities, we must include young people in the mentoring role, leadership role. Community must run peer education program to ensure all young people from our community get equal treatment, get level playing field to learn and implement their knowledge.

The young people have marched into leadership role in many state level organisations and community activities. This is a positive progress towards holistic development for young people. This must continue.

The association shall encourage young people to pair up with community seniors in the leadership role and taking important community responsibilities. The plans are to ultimately transfer the leadership and community responsibilities to these young, dynamic and competent leaders.

6. *Building entrepreneurship*

Building entrepreneurship is crucial. We anticipate social, economic and political leadership from our younger generation. The anticipation must be practical – given them space and opportunity to build that entrepreneurship. While we give importance to access gainful employment, it is more important to build in us the qualities and skills required in a strident entrepreneur.

The association shall find means to promote entrepreneur capabilities and self-employment among the young generation and other qualified community members.

Community members in 40s and 50s who have enormous skills, not recognised in Australia, would have high potential to run their own business and generate employment for others. Association shall invest to build entrepreneurship in them and provide guidance in developing entrepreneur skills in them.

Addressing social and mental health

Paper Prepared by: Indra Adhikari

With inputs by Dr Naresh Parajuli, Naresh Parajuli and other participants at the Australian Bhutanese Conference

Working closely and harmoniously does not require magic but simpler commitments to trust and respect each other and accept alternate views. They are not hard to earn but sincerity.

Are we unified today? Do we work together towards our common good? Have all of us sat together and said in heart, 'It's time that we stopped dividing amongst ourselves and started to truly work together, for the good of all of us'.

Competitive environment is important to build a community, but competitive self-interest is destructive. When we compete, let's be fair and not bring in self-interest motives while working for common good.

We failed in our mission for democracy in Bhutan and repatriation because we remained divided. Let's learn lessons from our history. We have the opportunity to write a positive history and teach our younger generation that unity truly is the best policy.

We lost many of our family members to the hands of Bhutanese regime and poverty of refugee life. Over two decades of refugee life was like fuel to fire in our already traumatised minds. Even after settlement and availability of all amenities, we have not completely recovered our mental health. Suicides stories we have read post settlement are manifestation of the deep-rooted disturbances in our mental health.

Mental health issue is ever rising and is becoming an alarming issue.

1. Social isolation

Social, psychological and medical research have now demonstrated conclusively that there is a direct correlation between the degree to which a person feels connected to others and their physical and mental health. Post settlement, it necessitated working-age members of the family to find employment, leaving behind the aged-parents and people with disabilities at home alone. They remain unengaged, disconnected and isolated. Social activities and frequent interactions among community members have decreased to a great degree. Such is kind of a traumatic situation for senior

community members – putting stress on their mental health and depression. It has been medically proven that social isolation would increase the likelihood of chronic illness such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes and more frequent bouts of sickness, such as colds or flu, and longer recovery times.

Sudden changes in lifestyle and social life, as we travelled from Nepal to Australia, have also given cultural shock to us, more specifically to our older generation.

The association shall invest time to find solution to control social isolation and cultural shock through various programs that provides opportunities for community members for frequent gathering, interactions and engage in social activities. It shall develop network with the psychologists and mental health practitioners to provide adequate and appropriate services to the members of the community on mental health.

2. Generation gap and linguistic barriers

We have observed social, political, economic or technological changes are quicker than before and for old generation it is very hard to learn and understand the new things. Whereas the younger generation is quicker to understand and adopt with the changes. This put old generation in disadvantaged position. In our context linguistic and cultural changes also added woe.

The newer generation is marching well on new fronts while our senior members of the community taking minor steps far behind. Cultural and linguistic barriers were the major hurdles causing generation gap in our community.

We attach great importance to our family lives and as a general rule of relationships among family members is highly valued, strong, and enduring. Children feel that they can never fully repay their parents for either the “gift of life” or the countless sacrifices they have made to raise them to adulthood. As with bonds between parents and children, relationships among siblings are of tremendous moral and emotional significance and are capable of withstanding a good deal of conflict. This strong bond and peace-driven values must be passed on to the newer generation and should remain alive and exemplary to wider Australian communities.

The association shall formulate programs to connect the generation – linguistically, culturally and technologically. Working to reduce the strain of generation gap will boost social harmony, family affection, social breakdown and family violence. The association shall work to ensure both young and older generation work tandem to share their knowledge and experiences to each other which would benefit to them and understand sentiments.

3. Ethnic & Linguistic diversity

We are diverse within us. The beauty of our community is the diversity in culture, language, dialects, festivals and cultural attires. The unity in diversity is our strength and can form a good example for wider Australian community.

These diversities must be preserved. There are not many senior members in the community who speaks dialects like Gurung, Tamang, Ghaley, Kirat, Majhi, Newar, Limbu, etc The association shall work towards preserving these dialects and providing opportunities for young generation to learn them. Preservation and continuity of so many dialects and Nepali language is the most important task we must carry on for maintaining our identity.

4. Trauma from torture in Bhutan and refugee lives

Many of our community members have been tortured at the hands of the Bhutanese regime – many killed, others raped. Family members of these community members have come a long way under this serious mental condition. It shall be hard for us to explain in words how these members could feel the pain as they describe horror they have experienced.

Life in refugee camp further deteriorated our mental health. We hardly have got opportunities to overcome this trauma and build our healthy souls. Post settlement, mental health has become the serious killer. The family separation, disjoint family, reversed roles in the family, lack of community interactions, social gathering and cultural shocks all added fuel to the already traumatised mental status of the Bhutanese community members.

It's time we invest time in making ourselves mentally healthy and fit, provide ourselves space for peace and prosperity and live in harmonious and unified community. The association shall reach out to the community intellectuals and active volunteers to chart out plans for more social interactions and gathering that will address the problems of social isolations and cultural shocks.

The association, in conjunction with the member-organisations, shall encourage the joint family living, care for elderly members of the community and provide support for people with disabilities. The association shall make every effort to find support and organise programs to solace the mental health of the torture victims who have been living with trauma for such a long time. The association shall coordinate with the Bhutanese and other community organisations who provide these services to run them more effectively and affectionately.

5. Mental health issue

The community members face a lot of mental health issue arising from the disjoint family structure, reversed family role, longing for the place we were born and the torturous life in the refugee camps for more than two decades. The isolation and cultural shock are other factors causing mental health problem in the community. The participants at the discussion forum also raise the issue of caste based discrimination that could have contributed partly to the mental problem in the community.

The association shall join with other expert and professional bodies dealing with mental health problems and invite them to the Bhutanese community to address the problem we have been facing. Recognising the programs run in South Australian in collaboration with STTARS, similar programs could be replicated in other states as well.

National advocacy to connect homeland

Paper Prepared by: Indra Adhikari

With inputs from Nanda Kharel, Diwakar Chhetri, Parsuram Sharma-Luitel and participants from the Second Australian Bhutanese Community.

We have defined our 'official' identity based on our nationality. We regard ourselves Bhutanese because we have connection with Bhutan. Our heart still beats for Bhutan. We still dream to see Bhutan, visit Bhutan. We not only have left behind our friend, families and relatives but our gems of emotions, memories, properties and sweats. We drained our blood for the prosperity of Bhutan. We set the economic foundation for the country because of which the country is now making such a tremendous progress.

We have pain emitting out of our suffering caused by eviction. We are disgruntled against the rulers of Bhutan for denying our basic human rights. Our dispute is with the rulers, not with the country – the land.

As long as we regard ourselves Bhutanese, our connection with Bhutan must not terminate. We should not only have emotional but physical and economical connection the country. We wish to see and visit our relatives and family members. As we make our economic strength, we would like to invest there.

For our dreams to come true, we should continue dreaming. We should dream with open eyes and we continue our persistent efforts to make this dream come true. Let's envision to travel to Bhutan freely in our generation.

1. Political lobbying

In Australia, we lack political connection. We, definitely, lack connection with Canberra. We have hardly talked to our politicians what we wanted to do and what they should do to help us achieve. To build political connection, it does not necessary need of becoming party members or its followers. It is more to do with our frequency of holding discussion with political leaders and presenting our proposals. It is more to engage the decision makers into our issues and address them appropriately.

Australia and Bhutan hold good bilateral relations for years. Australia is a major donor to Bhutan's development projects and Australia provides the highest number of scholarship for Bhutanese to pursue higher education. Australia continues to become the favourite destinations for Bhutanese,

either for higher studies or migration. More and more Bhutanese, either through Australian or Bhutanese government scholarship or through private means, are travelling to Australia for studies, work and family union.

We must take this positive vibe in our favour. We must persistently lobby the political and bureaucratic circle to put pressure on Bhutan to open door for us to visit and see our relatives. Union of families, parted by the eviction in 1990, must not only take place in Australia but in Bhutan too.

The association shall engage with the highest circle of political and bureaucratic decision makers to engage them finding means to open Bhutan's doors for resettled folks to travel to Bhutan and meet their relatives. This is universal human rights and Australia must uphold this rights and push Bhutan to abide by these humane principles.

Many of our friends and families back in refugee camps still aspire to return Bhutan. Our engagement with Australian government should also focus on holding dialogue with Bhutan to ensure these aspirants are given chance to see Bhutan.

Lobbying at the regional, state and federal level is necessary. The association shall leverage all options for the lobby.

2. Connection for social justice

We assume, Bhutan government will not accept or tolerate any form of investments – for profit or not for profit – we intend to make in Bhutan. We haven't tested it yet. We assume, Bhutan will not accept our application for travel as a tourist. We haven't tried yet, at least from here in Australia. Our assumptions are based on our experiences as Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. We tend not to like the being called 'Bhutanese Refugee' any more yet we continue to accept ourselves within that circle, at least when it comes to connection with Bhutan. Even if we accept our individual or direct investments are unacceptable in Bhutan, we have looked at the alternatives. We have remained within the four walls.

A lot of Australian not-for-profit organisation work, directly or indirectly, in Bhutan. There are individual Australian too, who have endeavoured their time and energy towards maturing Bhutanese Australia relations and enrich Bhutanese progress and prosperity. So far, we have hardly met with these individuals and organisations and expressed our interest to serve.

We must spare energy to engage with these individuals and organisations and make efforts to contribute for Bhutan's progress. Our engagement with Bhutan through these not-for-profit institutions, with no political motives, may possibly open doors for us to travel to Bhutan, see our friends and families and make investments. Additionally we would be able to contribute productively to the progress and prosperity of the Bhutanese society and retain our Bhutanese-Diaspora identity.

The association shall also work at the connecting people to people contacts that will engage the local community through academic works.

3. Sponsoring our relatives for studies and work in Australia

Higher education in Bhutan is rare and expensive. There are limited seats in the government and private colleges for higher education. Every year when Class X examinations are published, government sets cut off point for students to get college enrolment. Those under the enrolment have to either find cheap colleges in India or look for low-paid job. Those who have influence avail foreign scholarship while those who can afford go themselves.

However, large number of Bhutanese whose income is not good cannot afford to help their children pursue higher education. They come most from the rural community, economically marginalised and socially deprived. Failure to provide children with higher education means the family continue to run the circle of poverty and backwardness.

The association should make every effort to find alternative help and sponsor these students to travel to Australia to pursue their university education dreams. This will be the biggest contribution we can bring any changes to the life of economically and socially marginalised communities and to enlighten them about real human rights, democratic values and individual liberties.

We can work in collaboration with the employers here to provide seasonal employment opportunities to people from Bhutan. That will open doors for people to people contact. This will erase the negative taboos that people in Bhutan have about us. Lets be generous with them as we move a step to reconciliation.

4. Economic, social and moral support to those from Bhutan who advocate for family connection

Family connection is fundamental to the wellbeing of an individual. Voice of many in Bhutan, who seek to connect with their families in resettled countries, curtailed. There are reported instances where local government officials and elected local government representatives indiscriminately target individuals who maintain relations with their relatives and friends abroad. There are instances where individuals, who meet their 'refugee' relatives, economically blackmailed, threatened of jail sentences on charges of sedition and treason.

The association shall work towards providing economic, moral and social support to those from Bhutan who advocate for rebuilding and reconnecting with their family and relatives in Diaspora. These advocates would be vital in putting pressure on political parties in the Bhutanese parliament to make

policy changes allowing us to revisit Bhutan and see our families and relatives.

5. *Economic connection*

Our journey towards economic prosperity is marching steadily. Our desire for investments that gives us profits as well as satisfaction is growing. As we develop entrepreneurship, Bhutan could one of the ideal destinations for us to make investments. We have passion, enthusiasm and emotions attached to the economic and social prosperity of the country we were born in.

With no political intentions, it's time that we start searching avenues to divert our investments to Bhutan. We should be able to convey message to the government of Bhutan that our engagement in Bhutan will not only boosts the social wellbeing through family connection but also provides economic benefits for Bhutan. In addition, this will further enhances the bilateral relations between Bhutan and Australia.

6. *Special humanitarian program for those in camp, not resettled*

The settlement process has come to conclusion. There are over 7,000 our countrymen still lingering in Nepal with hopes to get repatriated. They have rejected the offer of bigger dreams, brighter future and wider hopes but maintained the pure love and affection with the country they were born in. We must salute their endeavour and dedication towards respectful repatriation.

The association shall endeavour its utmost capacity to work for a respectful solution for those willing to repatriate. The association shall stand firm in its support that governments of Nepal and Bhutan must agree to provide safe passage for this small population return to their country. UNHCR must work with the countries who offered settlement of the last refugee population and India through diplomatic channels to ensure Bhutan abide by its commitments to repatriate the remaining exiled Bhutanese.

This repatriation will facilitate deeper connection between Bhutan and its Diaspora.

Cross Cultural Relationship

Paper Prepared by: Indra Adhikari

With inputs by Dal (Dinesh) Khadka and other participants at the Second Australian Bhutanese Conference.

Ours is a closed society. We come from a segregated society based on ancestry or traditional professions. As we move to live in a multicultural community and open society, there are challenges and hesitations to change our habits and behaviours. Not everyone has same capability to adopt with the changing circumstances. Not everyone has grown up with same mental and emotional ability to accept the changes quickly. Some are quick to adapt, others are reluctant and require more time and social support.

Our experiences show, older generation generally, are hesitant to change their behaviour and accept the new reality compared to the newer generation. While we cannot force the older generation, as they have the right, to change the way they believe, and they live, we must find ways ensure they are ready to intermingle with the wider Australian community and let their children accept the changing need of the time.

Saying so, there is much to do for the younger generation to ensure they bring in better, productive and creative personality from their engagement with the other communities. We must work to ensure the younger generation also freely engage and learn from their peers of other communities and cultures.

1. Building relationship with other communities

Australia is possibly the country with biggest diversity in terms of ethnicity and nationalities. And this diversity has existed peacefully and respectfully for years. The reason behind is the close relations this diversity maintains and respect it provides.

We are far ahead. We have made achievements but there are lot for us to do. Building relationship with other community, for young, adults and seniors, means fostering friendship, cohesion and fraternity. This is a peace building process. This is an educational process for us to understand the values, practices, beliefs, way of life and other ethos from the spectrum of so many communities existing in Australia. Bonding relation not only educate us but also helps us propagate our culture and values, stand tall as a distinct community and take leadership in ensuring harmony, friendship and connection.

We make common mistakes of assuming about other culture and defend ours. These assumptions make us think other cultures weird or scary.

Cultural stereotypes are a source of misunderstanding and often kill a discussion even before it even started.

We must learn to respect other cultures, lifestyle, beliefs, habits and opinions. We must learn to understand where they are coming from and respect that not everyone has the same opinion and lifestyle as we do.

The association shall work towards helping community members explore other culture, understand, respect and accept the fact that we can live harmoniously in a very diverse social environment.

The association shall, in consultation and agreement with its member organisations, roll our programs and activities that will build our relation other communities. In the process to connect with other communities, the association shall build relations with other multicultural advocacy groups such as FECCA.

2. Australian history lessons

We are new to Australia. As we become citizen of this country, it's our responsibility to learn the history of Australia. Migration to Australia is new phenomenon. However, Australia has one of the longest histories of human civilisation. The mode and process of this civilisation varies which gives us to learn the innumerable human history in one country. The north and south, east and west, all have different history, distinct identity.

Post colonisation, Australia's path to modernisation is the quickest in history. From an unknown country, Australia landed in the category of a developed nation within two centuries while many countries across the world continue to face challenges and obstacles to economic, social and political modernisation.

We must create environment whereby all members of the community will have opportunity to learn the history of this country. Learning history and its culture builds respect, adherence and sense of contribution towards the country.

The Association shall come up with programs, to be implemented through it's member organisations in states, to provide opportunities for our community members learn about Australia history, it's characteristics and values.

3. Cross cultural engagements

We all know we live in a country that promotes multiculturalism and multi-nationalism. There are as many cultures as the heads of the people in Australia. There are innumerable cultural festivals. South Australia's identity is popular as the festival state.

We already have multicultural history. Within the smaller group, we have multiple cultures. However, our multiculturalism is limited by the more similarities than dissimilarities. Unlike, Australia contains array of so many cultures which isolates our mini-multiculturalism into a single identity.

It's time we become part of these wider Australian cultural festivals, share our joy, our heritage and learn from others'. Cultural engagement not only gives us opportunity to share our cultural traits and history with the wider Australian community but also provides platform for us to learn other cultural traits. Exchange of cultural values enriches us, makes us more humane and tolerant, which in turn makes our community more resilient and peaceful.

Cross cultural engagement gives us chances to learn about programs and projects being implemented by other community addressing similar problems we are facing. We would benefit from learning from these programs and project which could be replicated to address conditions in our community.

4. Cultural communication

Cultures are some sometimes barriers but in other times they are opportunities. Our culture provides us opportunities to communicate about us to others. The association shall endeavour to find ways to communicate our culture to others. It shall also work communicate other cultures to our community members.

We remain disengaged to many opportunities due to lack of cultural communication. We assume all services we receive must come from the person who is culturally closer to us. This may not be possible in all circumstances.

Cross-cultural communication is imperative and strategically important for organisations and groups to thrive in multicultural environment. This type of communication involves an understanding of how people from different cultures speak, communicate, and perceive the world around them.

Cross-cultural communication in an organization deals with understanding different business customs, beliefs and communication strategies. Language differences, high-context vs. low-context cultures, nonverbal differences, and power distance are major factors that can affect cross-cultural communication. The concept of high- and low-context culture relates to how an employee's thoughts, opinions, feelings, and upbringing affect how they act within a given culture. We are from high context culture – are collectivists and focus on interpersonal relationship whereas the North America and Eastern European communities have low context cultures. Australia is mixture of all such cultural types and inter-community communication is more complex and paramount.

5. *Intra-cultural relations*

We come from the community where diversity already exists. We have several distinct cultural values, norms, beliefs, faith and customs. As we march towards broader diversity and push for cross cultural harmony, it is utmost important to maintain a sustainable unison, harmony and equality within the community.

We are aware of the communal differences traditionally been practiced. But we are also cognizant of the community unity and harmony our ancestors have maintained despite differences. Many of the traditional beliefs we have may not befit the changing circumstances while others are vital.

The association shall engage with community members to pick the best practices that we have and work towards ending gender and ethnic differences. While it won't be appropriate to force the older generation to change their beliefs, it is important to educate them of our new social status. The association shall work to engage members of the younger generation to educate themselves about the social stereotypes and not to carry the practice into their life.

The association shall work to keep alive our vibrant cultural and traditional legacies of diversity and peaceful co-existence while respecting others' cultural, practices, belief, faith and social values. The association shall also engage in diffusing the differences to build a stronger and unified community. The intellectuals and community leaders shall engage community members to understand that diversity we have is not a line for segregation or division but strength of unity in diversity.

The association shall pursue the teaching of universal brotherhood.

Retaining Identity

Paper Prepared by: Indra Adhikari

With inputs by Tejman Rayaka, Pralhad Dahal and other participants of the Australian Bhutanese Conference

Identity does not necessarily mean ethnicity. It defines a person's heritage, culture, values and language. It can include an individual or a big mass of individuals. A person's identity is defined by the common identity of the community in which he/she was born. Here we are talking about a common identity.

Resettlement has given us opportunity to shine – cherish the past and build the future. But also has posed challenges to remain 'ourselves'. We have already observed the abrupt changes in the way we celebrate our festivals and the language we speak. Do we really care about 'ourselves'? We must accept the necessary changes coming into our social and cultural values but it must not become so dominant that it erases our identity of who we are.

In the latest census, many of us have been counted as Nepalese not Bhutanese. Of course, we will have linguistic connection with Nepal, but we must not disconnect from Bhutan.

Ensuring that we remain who we are is important.

1. Language & music schools

Nepali language is the common identity for us. It is the lingua franca that connects our own mini cultural community. On top of Nepali language, we have multiple dialects gradually eroding from us. While we joyfully promote the principles laid down by human rights instruments that an individual has the right to get education in his/her language at home, we are systematically failing to inculcate new generation even to speak our language. This is a serious issue every parent must think twice.

A few states have already initiated such schools. They have benefited the community members enormously. The Nepali language classes have opened doors, ironically, for communication between the grandchildren and grandparents.

The association shall work with the member-organisations to establish at least one Nepali language ethnic schools in every state. The association shall work towards educating our younger generation about our language, culture, and social values. Nepali language schools are important medium to impart language classes to the children. They lay an important role in ensuring that younger generation do not loose their connection with Nepali

language. Additionally, the association shall endeavour to teach other dialects of our community to our youngsters – by encouraging the grandparents and parents to introduce such dialects to children at home.

Such schools may also be introduced with our musical instruments and dances. Volunteers shall be sought to contribute their time to teach young children to play our musical instruments and dance. The association, in coordination with the member organisations, shall make efforts to provide support with the musical instruments and other facilities to run the schools.

2. Media

Media plays very crucial role in promoting us. In Australia the mainstream media poorly covers multiculturalism. Hardly anyone here knows who Bhutanese are, forget about our culture. We have not adequately made our presence strong – as we wish to have.

We don't have a strong community media fraternity. Bhutanese community in Australia has only one regular radio program. Easy access to social media and smart phones gives people for regular connection with community members and get updated what's happening. However, with the increasing trend, as presented by quality researches, the fake news and information circulating through social media can become misleading agent for community members. The radio is the only media that shares current information in a holistic way and reaches everyone in one format. Radio Pahichan has been helping disseminate community information, discuss community problems, seeks solutions and link community members with the service providers.

The association shall work to expand this Radio project nationally and promote the sense of belonging in the community towards this radio. The association shall encourage the member-organisations to contribute toward promoting and expanding the radio reach to all community members.

The radio is very effective media to engage the elderly generation and provide answers to many of their unanswered questions. The radio shall also play the other role of sharing stories of our senior community members with young people – the story of inspirations, difficulties, challenges and hopes.

3. Cultural festivals

The best feature of our community is festivals. Traditionally, we celebrate festivals every month. It could be the family initiative or community initiatives. The busy working schedules have altered the way we celebrate our festivals and enjoy our culture.

These festivals manifest our identity. We must continue celebrating. We must find alternative to seek off time from our working life to celebrate these festivals and keep them alive. Keeping them vibrant and lively not only

enriches our life but also prospers the multiculturalism in Australia. Our children, grand children and their generations to come will certainly enjoy the vastness and virtues. Our cultural festivals teach us the philosophy of commonness, unity in diversity, respect, harmony, friendship and fraternity.

The association shall work in tandem to celebrate these cultural festivals and ensure their continuity. The association shall seek appropriate means to transfer the cultural knowledge to the younger generation that are of their interest such as cultural fashion show.

4. Documentation and story collection

One thing we lacked throughout our democratic struggle is documentation. We hardly documented our eviction, our struggle in camps and our success stories in resettled countries. We have hardly told our history to our young generation – other than what was taught in camps' school curriculum.

History lessons, of our Bhutanese ancestry, is told more effectively with new technologies that are closer with the generation. Our traditional ways of oral lessons are ineffective.

Documenting history has already begun in South Australia. The association, in coordination with the member-organisation, shall help expand this noble initiative to other states in order to collect stories of struggle, contributions to national building and sad stories of eviction – told through our older generation.

The documentation shall be in any form – text, audio, audio-visual. This documentation will form the foundation for our generation to learn about our history, culture and identity.