

### **Session #3 – Communities as Protagonists:**

Communities are a vital element of our society, whether defined by cultural, ethnic, religious, geographic or other affiliations. They emerge from the different interactions and associations we have with one another and can often serve as support systems for both the existing and the newly arrived, helping people navigate the complexities of culture and society. People find a place of inclusion, belonging, and a sense of purpose in community and can foster healthy patterns of thought and behaviour. In communities, individuals of different ages, backgrounds and groups come together regularly and draw on their intergenerational, intercultural and interfaith wisdom.

A reassuring theme of the Australian story has been the capacity for people to come together as communities to address challenges. This spirit is particularly apparent in times of crisis but can also be seen in the collaboration and sharing of cultural heritage and knowledge. Communities, including those of new arrivals, have much to contribute and have a great desire to do so.

- What are the current conceptions of 'community' that we have in Australia? And how has our understanding of these changed over time?
- What role do communities play in fostering social cohesion in Australia? What capacities and resources already exist, or are needed, within communities, which can help to strengthen social cohesion? How are we becoming more aware of these and how are communities being supported to contribute these to our collective endeavors?
- How can institutions/organisations work together more creatively with communities to contribute to the strengthening of social cohesion? How can they support communities to engage with one another more effectively?