



Opening Doors participants from the Goulburn Multicultural Centre gain some insights at Cosciencese Australia on their first visit in September 2012.

Project opens doors to science

Engaging young humanitarian immigrants with Australian science is the goal of Opening Doors, with the project already generating positive outcomes since its inception in 2012.

Developed by Dr Sean Perera, an academic staff member at The Australian National University's Centre for the Public Awareness of Science, the project is designed to open up pathways into science and technology studies and careers.

The project works as both a school-based and community-based program, and includes an ongoing partnership with the Goulburn Multicultural Centre (GMC).

The partnership with the GMC sees participants come to Canberra during school holidays for science engagement. Their most recent visit in September involved a visit to the Mount Stixens Observatory and the National Museum of Australia.

"In terms of the museum, we looked at the science-based jobs that happen behind the scenes," Dr Perera said. "The idea was if they liked the museum, what other jobs could they do if they are interested in science."

According to Dr Perera, the project has had several success stories including some

participants deciding on science careers while another young man has enrolled in a university science degree.

However, Dr Perera said it has had additional benefits for the participants such as revealing to them that the fear of science they constructed was not true.

"At the last debriefing... she [one of the participants] said 'before I thought I had to be afraid of science but now I know that it's something I can go and see, it's not something to be afraid of anymore'."

Dr Perera said.

As to the future of the project, Dr Perera hopes elements of science can be incorporated into settlement advice when people come to Australia.

"When people come to Australia they get advice on how to get a driver's licence, apply for a job, find a home... but it needs to go beyond that," Dr Perera said. "I would like to see science incorporated, things like Australian flora and fauna and why biosecurity is important."

He also said it is important people are taught about water management, sustainability and especially health including eating habits, essentially 'basic day-to-day science'.



Dr Sean Perera from the ANU has developed the Opening Doors project to engage young humanitarian immigrants with science.

Opening Doors provides science engagement opportunities to participants aged between 15 and 24 years. The participants are culturally and linguistically diverse, and come from disadvantaged

backgrounds with limited access to science and technology-based studies and career pathways. For more information, visit openingdoors.anu.edu.au

- Alison Redman

