

Study of social enterprise  
in CALD migrant and  
refugee communities in  
Sydney

Se Gun Song

## CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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## **Glossary**

|       |                                                   |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------|
| BME   | Black Minority and Ethnic                         |
| CALD  | Culturally and Linguistically Diverse             |
| MRC   | Migrant Recourse Centre                           |
| NIES  | New Incentive Enterprise Scheme                   |
| SEDIF | Social Enterprise Development and Investment Fund |
| SEM   | Social Enterprise Mark                            |
| VCSO  | Voluntary Community Sector Organisation           |
| WISE  | Work Integration Social Enterprise                |

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## **Abstract**

Despite the popular discourse that social enterprise can positively engage the socially disadvantaged and address social issues affecting them, less is known about how and to what extent such processes occur. Similar to many other countries, Australia has also seen the rapid growth of social enterprise in recent years, particularly following the global financial crisis. However, the efficacy of social enterprise for engaging the socially disadvantaged and bringing about benefits such as creating employment opportunities and reducing social exclusion is largely assumed based on available discourses.

The research primarily employs the qualitative method of semi-structured interviews. A total of 40 informants were interviewed with two different cohorts: 20 of them were social entrepreneurs at managerial level involved in the establishment and management of social enterprises in CALD migrant and refugee communities, and 20 of them were stakeholders from various sectors who had expert knowledge about social enterprises in CALD migrant and refugee communities. The informants from the stakeholder cohort were recruited from a variety of organisations such as social enterprise intermediaries, local governments, impact investment organisations, and private social enterprise consultancies.

The increase of social enterprises as a practice aimed at engaging marginalised communities in recent years in Australia-such as CALD migrant and refugee communities- has primarily been driven by policies adopted in response to emerging social enterprise discourses. Many non-profit organisations hold the belief that social enterprise can provide community development opportunities for marginalised communities and empower their members, while establishments of social enterprises enable them to be financially independent from funding bodies. In the absence of empirical evidence in Australia and overseas, such decisions have been largely influenced by the dominant discourse created and catalysed by a number of institutional factors that emerged in a response to such discourses.

One of the consequences of such a policy driven approach is the fact that most social enterprises in CALD migrant and refugee communities were predominantly established and managed by non-migrants and non-refugees. The role of members from marginalised communities or beneficiaries of social enterprises is limited to passive participation. Though the idea of the enterprising self and self-help is an integral part of legitimising social enterprise discourse, the research found that the application of social enterprise as a policy instrument has largely been rendered a charity mindset rather than encompassing innovative and entrepreneurial spirits of members of disadvantaged communities. This has given rise to the issue of agency.