



Community Relations Commission  
*For a multicultural NSW*

***“WHERE DO WE GO  
FROM HERE?”***

*REPORT OF THE*

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION  
SYMPOSIUM**

**22 SEPTEMBER 2011**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Community Relations Commission of New South Wales (CRC) undertakes wide-ranging consultation with the culturally, religiously, and linguistically diverse community of New South Wales with respect to its statutory objectives to promote the principles of multiculturalism. As a key component of the Commission's consultation strategy, the Community Relations Commission Annual Symposium has become a special feature on the New South Wales multicultural event calendar.

The CRC Symposium provides an opportunity to showcase current innovations in community and government projects, and an opportunity for community leaders, future community leaders, and practitioners to build networks and share ideas on the best ways to promote a cohesive and harmonious multicultural society in which diversity is recognised as a strength and an asset.

### CRC Youth Leaders Day

The most significant development in the CRC Annual Symposium in recent years has been its expansion into a two-day event, with the first day dedicated to young people. CRC Youth Leaders Day is a separate forum giving young people a voice on issues facing our multicultural society now and into the future. The day is organised with the help of the CRC's Multicultural Youth Network (MYN) and is hosted by the CRC's Youth Commissioners.

The 2011 CRC Youth Leaders Day was the sixth consecutive year of this dynamic and well-attended event. The outcomes of the day are detailed separately in the *Community Relations Commission Youth Leaders Day Report 2011*, also available at the CRC Website.

#### \*The Principles of Multiculturalism

The *Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act (2000)* defines "multiculturalism" by the following principles (the "principles of multiculturalism"):

- (a) the people of New South Wales are of different linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds who, either individually or in community with other members of their respective groups, are free to profess, practise and maintain their own linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic heritage,
- (b) all individuals in New South Wales, irrespective of their linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds, should demonstrate a unified commitment to Australia, its interests and future and should recognise the importance of shared values governed by the rule of law within a democratic framework,
- (c) all individuals in New South Wales should have the greatest possible opportunity to contribute to, and participate in, all aspects of public life in which they may legally participate,
- (d) all individuals and institutions should respect and make provision for the culture, language and religion of others within an Australian legal and institutional framework where English is the common language,
- (e) all individuals should have the greatest possible opportunity to make use of and participate in relevant activities and programmes provided or administered by the Government of New South Wales,
- (f) all institutions of New South Wales should recognise the linguistic and cultural assets in the population of New South Wales as a valuable resource and promote this resource to maximise the development of the State

## **“WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?”**

### **The 2011 CRC SYMPOSIUM**

#### **Theme, Attendance and Opening Speeches**

“Where do we go from here?” was the guiding theme of the 2011 CRC Symposium, which took place on 22 September 2011 at the Parkroyal Hotel, Parramatta.

Approximately 220 delegates and workshop presenters representing 150 different community organisations, ethnic and religious groups, settlement service providers, ethnic media agencies, local Councils and NSW Government agencies participated in this unique opportunity to reflect on the developments in multicultural policy and explore ways of improving and moving this agenda forward within the NSW Government Five Point Action Plan.

The Commission’s Chairperson Dr Stepan Kerkyasharian AO, welcomed delegates to the Symposium in the Governor’s Ballroom. The Chairperson invited delegates to share their creative perspectives and insights and to engage in constructive dialogue in the spirit of acceptance for the benefit of all communities.

Commissioner Dr Eman Sharobeem fulfilled the role of MC for the day, and Commissioners and community members from seven of the Commission’s Regional Advisory Council attended the event.

Delegates received a warm Welcome to Country by Darug Elder, Uncle Greg Simms.

#### **Workshop Sessions**

Five concurrent workshop sessions facilitated by CRC Commissioners took place from 9:45am to 1:30pm with a morning tea break. Each workshop session featured presentations covering different aspects of the workshop topic. Workshop topics were formulated within the NSW Governments Five Point Action Plan and wide-ranging search for the most successful and innovative projects currently being undertaken in the field of multiculturalism.

The workshop topics for the 2011 Symposium were:

- Economic Benefit of Multiculturalism in NSW
- Improving Services
- Regional Coordination
- Communities taking action
- Social Cohesion and Volunteering

Emerging themes from each workshop strand are reported under *Emerging Themes of the Day*.

## Keynote Address

The keynote address was delivered by Peter Wertheim AM. Peter is currently the Executive Director of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the peak national body of the Australian Jewish community. Peter has been a statutory board member of the NSW Anti Discrimination Board since 2004. He practised as a lawyer for over 30 years, including more than 4 years as a consultant to law firm Slater and Gordon. He was honorary solicitor for the East Timor Relief Association, the Australian International Fund for Disadvantaged Children in Vietnam, and Aboriginal Medical Service Co-operative, Redfern NSW.

In August 2011 Peter was appointed by the Federal Government to the newly-established Australian Multicultural Council (AMC). The AMCs priorities are to advise government on multicultural affairs, have a formal role in a strengthened access and equity strategy; research and advisory role around multicultural policy, to assist with cultural diversity celebrations and Harmony Day activities and implement a *People of Australia Ambassadors* Program to articulate the benefits of and help celebrate, our multicultural nation.

Peter Wertheim opened his address by acknowledging Stepan Kerkyasharian's contribution to multiculturalism in NSW and Australia. His address focused on two broad areas within the rubrics of multiculturalism; education and the law in response to the day's theme *Where Do We Go From Here?*

Peter Wertheim noted that English language programs do not always result in students gaining an adequate language skill which creates obvious problems for the future of newly arrival migrants and those with whom they interact. He highlighted that since the abolishment of funding for English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, there is no longer a national performance measure to ascertain how ESL students and newly arrived school aged migrants are faring in schools. He noted that this in turn could lead to problems when students enter or fail to enter the workforce or tertiary education.

In order to ensure that ESL and migrant students are better equipped to enter the workforce and/or tertiary education, Wertheim stipulated that there is a need to develop a new national language policy. He highlighted that the development of the national curriculum provides an opportunity for the policy to be embedded more broadly into this framework.

Wertheim stated, that the Federal Government's new multicultural policy which emphasises that, newly arrival migrants must accept Australian law and ethics in governing behaviour towards others and English as the national language. He suggested that values could also be incorporated as part of English language programs and provides a sensible way of addressing any conflicts experienced by migrants adjusting to Australia.

Wertheim also noted that the new national curriculum provides an opportunity to teach all Australians, about concepts of human rights and anti-discrimination and acceptance of other cultures including Indigenous culture, as these would be embedded within the framework of the curriculum.

Wertheim's discussion in relation to the law focused on the current state of anti racist legislation and he highlighted that any model of multiculturalism is based on balancing rights and responsibilities of zero tolerance for racism and enticement of racial hatred. He welcomed the Federal government's recent announcement of the development of an anti-racism strategy in partnership with key stakeholders. The Federal Attorney General has promised to harmonise current anti-racist legislation. Wertheim noted that it is important that these should be harmonised to the highest standard rather than the lowest.

Wertheim concluded his speech by reiterating that public support for multiculturalism depends on political leadership that builds respect and support for cultural diversity with Australian society and that this is of utmost importance to Australia's development and future.

### **Concluding Plenary Session**

The session commenced with a debate featuring the University of Sydney Debating Society and Macquarie University Debating Society. The debate theme, *Variety is the spice of life: Is multiculturalism working in Australia?* was utilised by the debating teams to argue the following topic: *Local councils should be permitted to prevent the construction of religious or cultural sites likely to create social unrest.*

The concluding plenary session brought all Symposium delegates together again in the Governor's Ballroom, with the aim, of discussing as a group the main themes and issues arising out of the five concurrent workshops and the speeches.

Youth Commissioner Sam Almaliki reported to the Symposium on the previous day's events. The theme and workshop topics focus on the question of *Who Am I?* and were developed in consultation with Multicultural Youth Network members. Commissioner Almaliki noted the excellent level of participation from the youth delegates and their willingness to engage with each other as well as their enthusiasm for multiculturalism. A significant and powerful position made by the young people was that it was time that our society, in relation to multiculturalism moves away from a position of tolerance and move forward toward acceptance. A full report of Youth Leaders Day is available separately from the CRC website.

Representatives from each workshop strand reported back to delegates, summarising the key themes, issues and ideas discussed in their workshop.

### **EMERGING THEMES OF THE DAY**

The following section provides a summary of workshop presentations and emerging themes from each of the five concurrent workshop sessions held on the day. The five workshop strands were:

- A. Economic Benefits of Multiculturalism in NSW
- B. Improving Services
- C. Regional Coordination
- D. Communities Taking Action
- E. Social Cohesion and Volunteering

### **Workshop Strand A: Economic Benefits of Multiculturalism in NSW**

**Facilitator: Sam Almaliki, CRC Youth Commissioner**  
**Co-Facilitator: Peter Reynolds, CRC Staff Member**

The three presentations in the Economic Benefits of Multiculturalism in NSW workshop stimulated an engaging discussion about the significance of multicultural communities in contributing to and fostering new business opportunities.

**Presentation 1: Ben Fatto Bene: Well Done**

**Presenter: Giovanna Cardamone, Italian Social Welfare Organisation**

This project is essentially an oral history project featuring interviews with ageing members of the Italian community in the Illawarra region. The participants were interviewed about their pre and post settlement experience. It highlighted the skills that they learnt in Italy and how these were utilised within the context of their new homeland. It was felt that emerging communities could learn from the settlement experience of older, more established communities such as the Italian community. The documentary video of *Ben Fatto Bene* featured a number of Italian immigrants that settled in the Illawarra region. Each participant responded to the following questions:

- what skills did they acquire in Italy?
- did they use their skills in Australia?
- what did they do when they came to Australia?
- what are they doing now?

Common themes that emerged through the interviews were, the difficulty participants experienced in having their skills recognised or used after their arrival in Australia. Most ended up having to take manual labour in the Wollongong steelworks, or similar unskilled (and low paid) jobs, before they succeeded in establishing themselves and have an opportunity to utilise the skills they acquired in Italy.

**Presentation 2: Multicultural Enterprises Australia**

**Presenter: Suji Upasena, Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre**

Suji initiated her presentation by drawing attention to the fact that in the year 2000, five of the eight billionaires in Australia were originally 'new Australians' with a humanitarian settlement background.

The Multicultural Enterprise projects run by Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre are directed toward providing project management expertise to aspiring entrepreneurs, and to showcase the skills and harnessing the enthusiasm of Australians from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The presentation noted that there are a number of barriers that need to be addressed including:

- multiculturalism is not embraced by all sectors of society
- there is stereotyping within all groups and communities and some community groups remain strongly mono-cultural in outlook
- there is still a lack of access to full social and economic participation for all Australians

The main strategies used by Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre in its projects are:

- encouraging participants to take individual responsibility
- promoting and supporting social enterprise and small business development

Current Multicultural Enterprise projects being conducted are:

- MEFarm – an organic farming project
- MENet – a one-stop- log-in shop and
- Africa Connect – concentrating on make-up and clothing production, aiming to help create an African-Australian identity
- The African Women’s Cleaning Service

### **Presentation 3: Mentorship and Work Placement Program**

**Presenters: Niwa Mburuja, African Professionals of Australia Inc.**

The workshop focused on the work of the African Professionals of Australia Association Inc (APA) which was established in Western Australia in 2007 and has recently commenced operating in NSW. The APA assists people of African origin through the provision of mentorship and work experience placement programs.

Applicants for the mentoring program must present written goals and aspirations, and mentors expect participants to have or develop specific skill sets and fulfil specific tasks. They also undertake research and meet regularly with their mentor. Mentors provide progression reports to the APA Board of Management.

Assistance is given to participants in resume writing and in developing communication skills.

The work experience placement program seeks to acquire quality experience, to assist students, graduates and other professionals gain appropriate local experience. To avoid exploitation and other problems, participating businesses present their terms and conditions for placing work experience applicants which are analysed and monitored by APA.

Currently in NSW, APA is partnering with two business organisations. The APA has also been involved in fundraising activities, for example to assist the disaster relief in East Africa.

## **Workshop Strand B: Improving Services**

**Facilitator: Dr Eman Sharobeem, CRC Commissioner**

**Co-Facilitator: Thida Yang, CRC Staff member**

This workshop provided participants with information about the provision of services that give communities a real say and an opportunity to be heard and ways of making government services more accessible.

### **Presentation 1: Understanding Money Matters**

**Presenters: Elizabeth Morley and Ingrid Van Tongeren, Redfern Legal Centre**

Redfern Legal Centre (RLC) is an independent, non-profit community legal centre committed to promoting social justice and human rights by providing a range of services including free legal advice, referral and casework to disadvantaged people living in the City of Sydney, Botany Bay and Leichhardt local government areas.

RLC undertook a community legal education pilot project about credit and debt in the Marrickville LGA targeting culturally diverse communities of that municipality. The objectives of the project were to:

- identify unmet credit and debt legal advice and advocacy need in the culturally diverse communities of the Marrickville LGA
- establish pathways for people in those communities to get legal information, advice and advocacy on credit and debit issues

The main outcomes of the project were the development of strong links with culturally diverse communities in the Marrickville LGA, community legal education on credit and debt for members of diverse communities and community workers, and a significant increase in the demand for credit and debt legal advice.

RLCs website <http://www.rlc.org.au> has information about its services as well as a number of useful tools and resources.

### **Presentation 2: Child-safe Child-friendly Strategies**

**Presenters: Myriam Bahari, NSW Commission for Children and Young People**

The presentation provided participants with information related to Child-safe Child friendly Strategies. It highlighted why safety is important and why organisations require policies and procedures when dealing with children and young people.

It equips organisations to counter child abuse including:

- Physical abuse: non accidental injury and/or harm to a child/young person caused by another person
- Neglect: not providing a child/young person with basic physical and emotional necessities
- Emotional abuse: behaviours that may psychologically harm a child/young person
- Sexual abuse/misconduct: any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child/young person

This is achieved through the implementation of strategies at organisational, position and individual levels. Organisational environment affects individual behaviour. Proper management of risks can prevent crime and inappropriate behaviour.

Strategies should be developed by undertaking a risk management process which includes the following:

- communicate and consult
- establish the context
- identify risks
- analyse risks
- evaluate risks
- develop interventions to manage risks
- monitor and review

The presentation highlighted characteristics of a child safe organisation:

- Child – centred
- preventative rather than reactive
- acknowledge that the harm is done by all forms of abuse
- understands the risk in their organisation
- actively enhances positive influences
- has clear boundaries for behaviour
- is transparent and open
- has a commitment to protect children in the organisational culture.

Further information can be obtained from the NSW Commission for Children and Young People website [www.kids.gov.au/kids/working/safefriendly.cfm](http://www.kids.gov.au/kids/working/safefriendly.cfm)

### **Presentation 3: Support for Refugee Students**

**Presenters: Jane Wallace, Kim Coates and Sherin Nair, Department of Education and Training**

This presentation highlighted the enhanced range of support programs and initiatives for refugee students in NSW government schools. The department of Education has been able to increase English and bi-lingual support for students due to increased Commonwealth funding.

The Department provides special support services to both primary and high school students using the UNICEF model. The transition programs assist students in

intensive classes for nine months before going to high school and up to 15 months for those requiring extra support.

The presentation included a video featuring students participating in the program at Auburn Public School demonstrating the benefits that additional support provides for students from refugee backgrounds.

The program works with parents and schools in an attempt to get parents involved in their children's education. Student well being is at the core of these programs. The program's success also stems from collaboration not only between schools and parents but with Non-Government Organisations and Government agencies.

The high school program provides specialised support with a focus on literacy, numeracy and support for students with increased time dedicated to English language skills and reduced number of taught subjects.

The programs are available in areas with a high concentration of refugees such as Auburn, Fairfield and Blacktown/Mt Druitt.

The outcomes of the program for students include: learning in a fun environment; developing friendship; sharing and learning.

Other programs include:

- Slippery Project at Fairfield High School
- Refugee Transition Program at Mitchell High School
- Mentoring Program at Macquarie University

## **Workshop Strand C: Regional Coordination**

**Facilitator: David Knoll AM, CRC Commissioner**

**Co-Facilitator: Andrew Church, CRC Staff member**

This workshop highlighted ways of engaging with regional communities, and the different approaches between cities and regions, difficulties in having concerns addressed, and offered suggestions to improve matters and deliver better outcomes.

**Presentation 1: M.A.G.I.C (Multicultural Activity Group in Cooma), A Place to Belong**

**Presenter: Yvi Henderson, Monaro Family Support Service Inc.**

The presentation featured programs associated with the MAGIC project which commended in 2006 with a multicultural forum. Cooma has a reputation for being the first Multicultural town in regional Australia due to the influx of migrants that

contributed to building the infrastructure of the Snowy Mountains Water Scheme. More recent arrivals to the Cooma region include members from Asian, African and South American communities.

A multicultural festival is held every year as part of the M.A.G.I.C project. Other programs include:

- Quilt and poetry project
- Share your culture through digital storytelling of migrants in Cooma
- Monthly international lunch
- Craft activities
- Chinese New Year celebrations
- Colourful Journey- migrants sharing their culture with primary and high school students
- MAGIC multicultural play group
- Learn to swim programs for women from culturally diverse backgrounds

The project targets migrants that have settled as well as those considering settlement in the Cooma area. It also targets local communities and councils, service providers and the media as a means of providing support and access to additional programs.

Challenges faced by MAGIC include resources including a lack of time and funding for services as well as societal attitudes, discrimination and social exclusion.

**Presentation 2: Wafrika Cross-cultural Summer School Holiday Project**

**Presenter: Frank Newah-Jarfoi, Wagga African Association (Wafrika) Inc.**

There are approximately 500 – 600 African people residing in Wagga. The Wagga African Association forming in 2007 in response to community concerns about cultural relations between residents of Wagga and the local African community.

The Association has undertaken projects that assist in promoting social cohesion and harmony in the Wagga region. Wafrika works in partnership with the Department of Education and parents to organise holiday school based multicultural programs for children. The project was conceived by parents with the support of the multicultural Council of Wagga Wagga and Centacare Family Services. It aims to provide young people with access to activities and education programs during school holiday periods and acts as a strategy to decrease anti-social behaviour in the Wagga Wagga area.

*Tawopaneh* (Be for each other) is another project initiated by Wafrika. This multicultural concert aimed to empower the African community through sharing their culture with other communities in the Wagga Wagga area as well as giving back to the community. The concert raised \$2,000 which was donated to Wagga Wagga base hospital.

These programs highlight the importance that refugee communities can play in building an inclusive and cohesive Australian society. The work of the Association compliments programs provided by government and non government agencies by initiating culturally appropriate projects that meet the needs of the community.

The projects showcase the potential, resilience and capacity of emerging communities to make significant contributions to the wider community.

**Presentation 3: What can rural areas offer refugees?**

**Presenter: Angela Lyons, Armidale Sanctuary Humanitarian Settlement Inc.**

Armidale Sanctuary Humanitarian Settlement Inc (ASHSI) provides support to refugees settling in the Armidale region. The workshop outlined the settlement process, the interaction with agencies such as Centrelink, Department of Education, Health, Housing, Police and settlement services. It highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of refugees being offered settlement in rural areas.

Regional Armidale is a town that has a broad multicultural community, with over sixty different nationalities calling it home. A number of African refugees who have fled ongoing violence in their native lands, in the hope of a better life have also been welcomed to Armidale.

Australia's humanitarian programs have enabled many Africans to gain residency in Australia and a large number desire to live in rural areas which more closely resemble the lands they have left behind. They are also keen to raise their children in peaceful surroundings which in most instances assists in warding off the potential dangers of drugs, alcohol and crime which can be exacerbated by community alienation.

Many Africans living in rural Australia are more likely to perform at school and find employment. Armidale provides an ideal environment given the proximity of the University of New England.

ASHSI is supported by group of hard working dedicated volunteers that are committed to providing crucial assistance, as the refugees undergo the healing process to overcome the trauma they have endured and embark on the process of resettlement.

ASHSI at times faces difficulties collaborating with other services providers such as settlement service providers and Centrelink. The organisation's ongoing efforts to secure applications for Humanitarian Special Visas (SHV) 202, have been less successful in recent times. According to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship this category is for people who are not refugees, but who are subject to substantial discrimination and human rights abuses in their home country.

Despite these difficulties the organisation remains committed to supporting the resettlement of refugees and humanitarian entrants and wishes to expand its support to people seeking resettlement under other visa categories.

## Workshop Strand D: Communities Taking Action

**Facilitator: Michael Christodoulou AM, CRC Commissioner**  
**Co-Facilitator: Seba Shmeissem, CRC Staff member**

This workshop provided participants with an opportunity to reinforce the importance and capacity of citizens to improve policy design and implementation and outcomes as well as highlight the power of the media and new technologies and its capacity to break down barriers and build trust between people.

### **Presentation 1: Beyond Political Correctness: Honest Conversations in Community Forums**

**Presenters: Rabbi Zalman Kastel and Mohammed Dukuly, *Together for Humanity Foundation***

The presentation provided delegates with an insight into the challenges and tensions of cultural diversity and provided them with knowledge to equip them with skills to facilitate honest conversations.

Tensions are often associated around discussing subjects such as *What is Culture?* In Australia we are continuously changing and adapting to other cultures.

The session challenged delegates to rethink our perceptions in relation to cultural identity: *You can Be equal and Be Different*. The media has an important role in especially educating the older generations which are not as flexible to accepting other cultures which is often driven by the fear of the unknown.

The presenters reiterated the importance of not to self censor and be upfront about your heritage and identity. It is essential to listen from a place of *not knowing* in order to facilitate openness and honesty in conversations. To make a difference start with the self.

### **Presentation 2: *You are not alone* online-video project**

**Presenters: Rebecca Reynolds and Terence Humphreys, *Twenty 10***

Twenty 10 is a community based, non profit state-wide organisation dedicated to working with and supporting young people of diverse genders, sexes and sexualities, their families and friends. It is a free and confidential service and is a safe place and staff deal with all enquiries in an understanding, supportive and confidential manner.

In September 2010, a group of young people from diverse backgrounds came together for a series of video workshops facilitated by ReachOut.com and Twenty 10. Young people had ongoing discussion about their experience growing up and 'coming out', how these experiences shaped their identities, what would have been and was helpful for them to combat the impacts of homophobia. They learnt how to capture ideas with a camera and a microphone.

These were combined to create the *U R Not Alone* video which has become a useful resource for Twenty 10. An excerpt from *U R Not Alone* was screened at the workshop.

**Presentation 3: Com4Unity: Local services working together to address increasing crime rates and unemployment of youth in the Blacktown Local Government Area.**

**Presenters: Cate Sydes, Allison Yee-Brogan and Coleen O’Dea**

Com4Unity aims to develop a pathway for young people to become meaningful participants within the Blacktown community. The project targets young people aged 12 -24 years old. Blacktown is a diverse community with over 170 different cultural groups. The project focuses on integration and mutual respect. Com4Unity was initiated by Blacktown Local Area Command in 2009. The Marist Youth Care auspices the project and works in conjunction with other key stakeholders including Westpoint Shopping Centre, Rotary Club of Blacktown City, Hillsong, SydWest Multicultural Service, Blacktown City Council and Youth Off the Streets.

The purpose of the project is to reduce crime rates, criminal activity and anti-social behaviour as well as youth unemployment in the Blacktown LGA. The delivery model includes: Engagement; Consultation; Participation; Mentoring & Support; Skills Education and Training; Employment/Social Inclusion and Evaluation.

Com4Unity events and programs include:

- Retail Operations Course
- Employment Workshops
- SWITCH - using dance to facilitate positive change through mentoring, engagement and relationship building
- BeatTown Showcase – one off performance event with local musicians, bands, dance crews and performers
- R.O.O.T.S (Representing Our Own Traditional Styles)
- Com4Unity Cup – annual soccer tournament between local high school, Blacktown Police and Comm4Uniy Members.

Key factors for success include a focus on outcomes for young People and listening to young people as well as reducing criminal activity and anti-social behaviour in the local Blacktown area.

## **Workshop Strand E: Social Cohesion and Volunteering**

**Facilitators: Seini Afeaki, CRC Commissioner and Mark Wall, CRC staff member**  
**Co-Facilitator: Cassie Morris, CRC Staff member**

This workshop demonstrated ways to empower communities to shape, protect and preserve the neighbourhood with a focus on the strategies of volunteering initiatives that communities have put in place to build upon social cohesion and manage conflict and harmony.

### **Presentation 1: Cultural Exchange Program African Women's Group** **Presenters: Rosemary Kariuki and Achol Martin**

The African Women's Group identified there was a need for social gatherings and information sessions for African women. Following an expo hosted by Police in Auburn, Rosemary Karikui noticed that there was little representation from the local African community and she began to brainstorm and develop ideas for more effective ways of engaging the community.

Since its establishment in 2007 the African Women's Group have hosted dinner dances with over 600 people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The organisation has also established Cultural Exchange, a program that takes African (75%) and other migrant and refugee (25%) women to meet women in rural and regional NSW. The program provides a platform for the women to share their experiences and differences and exchange of cultures as a means of promoting social cohesion. The next phase of the program will focus on establishing and holding gatherings for men.

### **Presentation 2: Building Stronger Communities – A case study** **Presenters: Cen Amores & Reuben Amores**

Auburn Small Community Organisation Network (ASCON) is a community hub that is utilised by over 20 organisations within the Auburn area. The Hub was established after a number of consultations that took place with Auburn Council and is managed by a steering committee.

The hub encourages community participation and holds a number of training courses, English classes and HSC support and homework help programs as well as providing space for community meetings.

The Hub has been running for four years, it has allowed services in the local area to work together and assist the local community and provide a much needed infrastructure.

Following the presentation an open floor discussion was facilitated on the topic of Social Cohesion and Volunteering which focused on themes of changing perceptions and developing communities.

## OUTCOMES OF 2011 CRC SYMPOSIUM

In summary, the 2011 Symposium succeeded in achieving the following outcomes:

- Approximately 230 delegates and workshop presenters representing over 150 different community organisations, ethnic and religious groups, settlement service providers, ethnic media agencies, local Councils and NSW Government agencies participated on the day as delegates and presenters;
- Many of the delegates reported having found the workshops to be “enjoyable, informative, educational, valuable and relevant” to their area of interest;
- Delegates also commented positively on the excellent networking opportunities and for providing a forum for exploring issues relating to multiculturalism in NSW;
- Five concurrent workshops allowed for an enthusiastic level of participation in discussion and the sharing of ideas and practical advice on issues that were recognised as being of importance to community members and community organizations;
- Feedback via Survey Monkey online evaluation reported that many delegates found the symposium and its themes relevant and informative and provided an opportunity to share ideas and network.

These outcomes will be used to inform the planning and implementation of future community events and forums organised by the Community Relations Commission including the 2012 Symposium.