



Community Relations Commission
For a multicultural NSW



2005 Community Relations Symposium Report

Promoting Cultural Harmony

Community Relations Commission *For a multicultural NSW*

The Community Relations Commission is legislated to consult systematically and widely with our culturally, religiously, linguistically and racially diverse community in the pursuit of its objectives. As part of this responsibility, the Commission held a Symposium on 21 June 2005 in Parramatta. Over two hundred and fifty delegates from community, religious, academic and private sector organisations participated in the event.

The Symposium provided a key opportunity for community workers to network and for organisations to showcase community initiatives in the area of multicultural affairs. The community views expressed and reported on at the Symposium provided the Commission with further insight into priority issues for community organisations working in the area of multicultural affairs and/or with specific linguistic, cultural and religious communities. The program, media releases relating to the Symposium, and speeches are available on the Commission website www.crc.nsw.gov.au.

Workshop Summary

Workshop: Ageing Populations – Aged Care Services and Community Issues

- **Facilitator:** Marta Aquino, Commissioner CRC
- **Presentation:** The establishment of the Vietnamese Elderly Accommodation Project (Van Lang Housing Cooperative Ltd)

This presentation covered the development of the Van Lang Housing Co-operative, the initial needs analyses that led to its establishment, the role of key players, performance indicators, project outcomes and evaluations, and outlined the services that are provided to Co-op members.

- **Presentation:** Polish Community Home Care and Carer's Program

This presentation addressed how the organisation selected and trained bilingual care workers to assist individuals and their families in ways that are mindful of personal and shared migrant histories, war trauma, refugee experiences and other issues. It explored the strong demand for bilingual workers, particularly since many elderly people frequently revert to their first language and lose most, if not all of their English language comprehension and skills.

- **Presentation:** Regional Perspective on Ageing Populations

This presentation explored facilities, opportunities and social support services for the elderly within regional Australia, including Home and Community Care (HACC) services, the availability of culturally appropriate food, social activities, and residential services. It also explored issues of geographic isolation, language barriers and the availability of bilingual staff in rural and regional areas.

- **Presentation:** Government Overview - Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care

Key Results of Workshop

Following the problem-solving exercise, the following are some of the key aspects that were identified:

- Onus is placed too much on organisations – older people can contribute to improving their own situation.
- Current criteria's make increasing bureaucratic demands on organisations seeking funding.
- Sensitivity to cultures needs to be included as a key aspect of training in organisations.
- Need to provide opportunities for people to communicate with each other about sensitive, rather than just peripheral issues.
- There is no such thing as an umbrella provision of “culturally appropriate services”. What is needed is service that is appropriate to each culture.
- Need for a computer data base/clearing house for accessing advice, information and assistance in addressing culturally diverse needs.

Workshop: Small and Emerging Communities

- **Facilitator:** Ezel Jupiter, Commissioner CRC
- **Presentation:** Mentoring and Capacity Building for Small and Emerging Communities

This workshop examined strategies for mentoring or assisting small and emerging communities to establish and build adequate, self-managed support mechanisms within an Australian context. Drawing on practical examples and experiences, the workshop addressed how, by focusing on the existing strengths and abilities of individuals and groups, successful community organisations may be established in a variety of contexts.

- **Presentation:** Settlement Needs of Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants in Regional Areas

This presentation provided a brief overview of the Hunter Region as a settlement destination, the challenges experienced to date, and described how the local community and agencies are coordinating responses to the issues presented by refugee arrivals. The presentation also explored difficulties faced in implementing a planned and coordinated approach to refugee settlement in non-metropolitan areas, without appropriate and timely information or infrastructural enhancement.

- **Presentation:** Re-engagement with Learning: Re-entry Education for Refugees

This session focused on how Bankstown Senior College is meeting the needs of African students re-engaging in education. The Intensive English Centre outlined specific programs and strategies that they are currently implementing to maximise

students' learning. The presentation discussed *The Young Africans in Schools* program, and the school's African Communities project. Three current students recounted their journeys so far and the challenges they have faced re-engaging in education.

- **Presentation:** Government Overview - CRC

Key Issues

Obstacles for service providers:

- Communities' reliance on self help. Most communities have to do everything themselves and rely on volunteers.
- Privatisation of services and competition for resources.
- Loss of knowledge and of expertise within industries, especially in the community work industry.
- Australian reality, high number of immigrants coming in, high use of service providers.
- Mainstream service providers should have adequate training in cultural sensitivity and awareness.

Workshop: Cultural Harmony

- **Facilitator:** Michael Christodoulou, Commissioner CRC
- **Presentation:** Affinity Intercultural Foundation

This presentation introduced the *Affinity* program, "Home Encounters", which has taken interfaith dialogue away from a conference setting and brought it to ground level. Organised in conjunction with St. Charles Catholic Church, *Home Encounters* takes small groups of Muslims and Christians into private homes to informally discuss aspects of faith. The program has resulted not only in a greater understanding of other faiths and cultures, but encouraged self-reflection as well.

- **Presentation:** Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE)

This presentation provided an overview of ICE projects that have had significant outcomes for socially-excluded young people, the impact on their relationships with communities, altering community relations and perceptions of young people. Some of ICE's projects include the Storybox Internet publishing project for newly arrived African and Afghan young people, the Arabic youth video and leadership program 'Agents of Change', and urban community-based music programs such as Suburban Sista Soundz and Hip Hop 101.

- **Presentation:** Goodness and Kindness Society – the story, concept and process of a successful community harmony project

This presentation looked at the strategies used to foster change, the process used to manage the program and bring it to 15,000 children across Australia, and the obstacles the program faced and overcame. The presenters shared a little of their own journey and how the project changed them.

- **Presentation:** Government Overview: Ethnicity, Cultural Harmony and Sport - Department of Sport and Recreation.

Problem Solving:

Creating a Public Campaign to Promote Cultural Harmony

Key Issues

- Media – would like to see this issue addressed at the next symposium.
- Teachers – have a strong influence on the kinds of attitudes formed by younger generations.
- Gap between public policy and public attitudes – needs to be addressed.
- Need to go beyond dialogue between faiths and ethnic communities to getting the broader community involved.

Addressing these Key Issues

- More focus on educating young people, particularly in the years K – 6. Include programs like the Goodness and Kindness campaign as part of the school curriculum.
- Story-telling projects so that people can share their experiences and understand the experiences of others.
- Change definitions of leadership to make the concept more accessible to young people from a variety of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds
- More mentorship and training particularly for young people.
- Empowering new groups – refugee and emerging communities.
- Promoting more intercultural activity across the full range of the public spectrum through sport, arts, culture, religion etc.

Workshop: Youth Leadership and Mentoring

- **Facilitator:** Margaret Kama, Commissioner CRC
- **Presentation:** PACIFIC STAP (Special Tutorial Assistance Program for Pacific Islander Students)

This presentation examined how PACIFIC STAP has proven to be a highly effective early intervention program for the PI community. Its robust nature allows it to be tailored to suit any community, regardless of ethnicity.

Presentation: MY MATES, Motivated Young Multicultural Australians for Togetherness Education and Support, Cross Subcultures Youth Peer Mentor Project

MY MATES aims to provide peer education and support to young people from the Canterbury-Bankstown local government area through peer mentoring projects. Project activities include regular group discussions on issues such as consent in sexual relations, drug use, negative perceptions of young people, Aboriginal Reconciliation, intergenerational projects to bring seniors and local young people together and bridge

general gaps, excursions and activities for at risk and street frequenting young people, community barbeques and camps.

Presentation: Sierra Leone Youth Group

The group's Youth Vision program focuses on four issues important in the lives of young people; culture, education, sports/recreation, and law & order. Activities address Australian culture, maintaining the African culture, the educational system, opportunities for young people, the legal system, participation in sports and outdoor activities, and health issues. This presentation introduced a number of successful activities implemented by the Sierra Leone Youth Group, including the annual Day of the African Child concert, health camps and cultural exchange programs to regional areas.

Presentation: Government Overview: School Leadership Initiatives - Department of Education and Training

Problem Solving Exercise:

Building a NSW Youth Leadership Network

Key Aspects of Workshops

- Creation of a network under the CRC umbrella for the promotion of youth initiatives.
- Ethnic youth fell under attack as result of negative media coverage.
- To empower, train and mentor youth to be incorporated into the management process of their community organisations.
- The network would provide a space where young people could come together to share ideas.
- The network could also provide a space for mentoring and developing of leadership skills by senior members of community organizations and government agencies.

Workshop: Partnerships and Networks

Facilitator: Gary Moore, Director NCOSS

Presentation: Pacific Island Youth Network (PYNC)

The Pacific Island Youth Network (PYNC) aims to provide support in meeting the challenges of settling into a new country. In 2004 PYNC organised a Youth Day which aimed to promote further education and employment for Pacific young people with workshops, live performances and activities including arts and music. Over 4,000 Pacific people from across NSW came together to celebrate.

Presentation: Community Builders Website

The *communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au* website is a program of the Communities Division in the New South Wales Department of Community Services. This website aims to network and resource everyone involved in community level social, economic and environmental development and sustainability. This website provides practical

toolkits and guides for diverse community groups on a broad range of community strengthening activities.

Presentation: Local Government Multicultural Forum

The 2005 Local Government Multicultural Forum was hosted by Ashfield Council on 3 June 2005 and showcased many of the services available to communities, and the partnerships available with local government bodies. Utilising the Forum as a case study, this presentation considered how communities can build effective partnerships with their local governments and how these relationships can facilitate better connections throughout a community.

Presentation: Overview of Government Direction on Partnerships - NCOSS

Problem Solving Exercise:

Formation of a Multicultural Women's Network - Australian Bosnian Women's Cultural Association

Key Aspects of Workshops

- Identify models where opportunities and resources exist.
- Provide a service to communities to enhance this model and take it into the future.
- To focus on key issues in the community, cultural aspects of each group, and women's groups in particular.
- Developing newsletters and websites to share information and communicate
- Seek resources in the form of:
 - i. Services to community, making sure that services are provided, available and delivered to the broad community.
 - ii. Current networks and partnerships to provide basic skills and opportunities to the young and to the general community.
 - iii. Sustaining funding from government departments and seeking funding from the private sector and non-profit organizations.
 - iv. To promote skills and develop training opportunities to establish networks and contacts.

Outcomes of the Symposium 2005

In summary the Commission achieved the following outcomes through the Community Relations Symposium 2005:

- Good participation from a wide range of community, religious, academic and government institutions.
- One hundred and one delegates provided written feedback on the workshops and fifty-two delegates provided written feedback on the symposium in general.
- 64% of the respondents rated the symposium as excellent.
- Community workers and leaders were brought together to talk about issues that were considered by the Commission and delegates to be priority issues.
- Workshop groups canvassed a range of strategies for community organisations and the government to consider when dealing with issues of concern.
- Managed a professional event well within budget.