



Community Relations Commission
For a multicultural NSW

**Community Relations
Symposium - 2003**

**Summary of Key Themes
and Proposals**

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The Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW

The Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW has a statutory responsibility to promote the benefits of a cohesive and harmonious multicultural society with mutual respect for and understanding of cultural diversity; provide advice to government on the state of community relations in New South Wales; and, to facilitate co-operative arrangements between government, business, community groups and educational and other bodies to support the Commission's objectives.

The Commission consults widely with ethnic communities to identify issues and potential challenges to a harmonious and respectful society and to share information on good practice in multiculturalism, promotion of community harmony and community development.

Community Relations Symposium 2003 Overview

The 2003 Community Relations Symposium brought together around 200 delegates from a wide range of community organisations to share information and to define the priority themes and common issues that should be progressed by ethnic communities and community organisations, the Commission and other key partners over the next twelve months.

The specific goals of the 2003 Symposium were to enable the participants to:-

- Discuss the challenges and issues of concern arising for communities in the current socio-political environment and to exchange views on possible solutions.
- Identify how communities and community organisations are responding to these challenges and issues.
- Identify best practice strategies and proven approaches that were emerging that should be developed or promulgated.

This Report summarises the key themes and proposals that emerged from the Symposium Workshops and highlights areas where the Community Relations Commission could take a lead or coordinating role. Additional information on the themes addressed by the keynote speakers, the Community Showcase and the Workshop Reports are contained in the Appendices.

Symposium Processes

The Symposium used a range of formats to encourage discussion and participation.

- Keynote speakers, Rev Bill Crews AM and Prof James Jupp, set the scene by addressing the impact of a multi faith society on community harmony and the need for renewal and diversification to ensure the sustainability of community organisations.

- Representatives from the Lebanese, Indian, Chinese and Italian communities and the Chair of the Ethnic Communities Council participated in a panel discussion on the challenges confronting their community and their vision for the future for multicultural NSW.
- Examples of community initiatives and government/community partnership projects were showcased to demonstrate how some communities were tackling key issues.

Key Issues Workshops

Delegates were asked to nominate the challenges and issues of concern that they wished to explore in the Workshop Groups. Over thirty suggested issues were grouped into common themes to establish the following topics for discussion:-

- Leadership
- Building Networks and Partnerships
- Community Organisation Futures
- Rural and Regional Issues
- Culturally Appropriate Services
- Youth
- Racism and Vilification
- Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Each Workshop was asked to define the issue and comment on the major areas of concern, describe initiatives that are currently being implemented at community level to address the problems and to suggest strategies, actions and community responses for the future. A summary of the Workshop presentations is listed in Appendix 3.

The major themes and priority areas identified by the Workshop Groups where the Community Relations Commission can play a facilitating or support role are highlighted in the summary below.

Sustainable Community Organisations - Leadership and Building Networks and Partnerships

The established communities have identified the need to renew and refocus their community organisations to meet the needs of an ageing population and to engage with the second and subsequent generations more effectively as a key challenge for the future.

Many established communities and organisations must meet the challenge of nurturing a new generation of leaders who are respectful of their heritage and in tune with the needs of young people to remain relevant and viable in the future. For emerging communities or smaller established communities the key challenge is the lack of critical mass and resources to maintain viable stand alone organisations and the need to partner and network effectively.

Leadership

Developing the next generation of leaders and broadening the community leadership base to include more women and young people is the key strategy for the future.

Some communities already have programs established to foster leadership potential and support organisational renewal and each community needs to foster its own leaders through strategies such as mentoring, creating leadership positions for young people and women, providing diverse role models and widening activities and support services to reflect the needs and interests of each generation.

At the same time there are significant opportunities for ethnic communities, community organisations, the Community Relations Commission, Government agencies and business to work together to foster leadership development and renewal.

Supplementary notes (in box) by CRC

Current Commission initiatives in this area include:

- *the formation of a Leadership Network*
- *the Canterbury Bankstown Community Harmony Round Table leadership and mentoring programs*

Other comments

- *Commission to consider showcasing community initiatives in this area at Symposium 2004.*

Networks and Partnerships

Strengthening the formal and informal networks between community organisations and between the established and emerging communities is another key challenge.

Many small and emerging communities do not have the critical mass of population or resources to sustain the range of community support and welfare services needed, especially during the settlement period. While retaining an independent community profile and advocacy capacity is clearly important there are many advantages in strategic alliances and partnerships between communities.

Strategies that could promote practical partnerships and resource sharing suggested by the Workshop Groups focussed on initiatives to share infrastructure and support services and the need to understand the processes that foster cooperation.

Supplementary notes (in box) by CRC

Comments

- *Commission to consider showcasing community initiatives in this area at Symposium 2004.*
- *Commission to write to relevant government agencies on these issues.*

Needs of Young People

Dealing with the impact of negative media stereotypes and issues associated with identity and intergenerational values conflict were the key challenges raised by the Youth Workshop Group. Some of the panel also described concerns in their communities that family and religious values can be threatened by mainstream culture and this creates pressures on young people and their parents.

Supplementary notes (in box) by CRC

Current Commission initiatives in this area include:

- *Arabic Youth Partnership*
- *Pacific Islander Partnership*
- *the Canterbury Bankstown Community Harmony Round Table – cross cultural and cross-generational programs*

Other comments

- *Commission to consider showcasing community initiatives in this area at Symposium 2004.*
- *Commission to write to relevant government agencies on these issues.*

Rural and Remote Communities

Many rural towns face declining populations and shortages of skilled and semi skilled workers. Most new arrivals and the vast majority of refugees currently settle in Sydney where the existing ethnic communities and networks provide support and language and other settlement services are available.

A partnership approach is needed between local communities, the three levels of government and the ethnic communities to design and implement initiatives to support refugees and other immigrants to settle effectively in rural and regional communities.

Supplementary notes (in box) by CRC

Current Commission initiatives in this area include:

- *Regional Advisory Councils*

Other comments

- *Commission to discuss with Regional Advisory Councils and Settlement Services Coalition.*
- *Commission to write to relevant government agencies on these issues.*

Culturally Appropriate Services

This group focussed on the challenges involved in providing sustainable culturally appropriate mainstream services including the variable understanding of the cross cultural service delivery at agency and service provider level, knowledge of EAPS requirements, adequate investment in specialist services such as case workers and the need to monitor social and demographic trends and social research data to support effective service planning for emerging communities and to avoid duplication of effort. A number of examples of good practice and effective models were identified.

Supplementary notes (in box) by CRC

Current Commission initiatives in this area include:

- *Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement (EAPS) program*
- *EAPS publications*
- *Regional Advisory Councils*
- *Co-hosting 2003 Albury Wodonga Forum*

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

There is still widespread community ignorance and confusion about refugees and asylum seekers fuelled by the media and others and settlement issues are not being adequately addressed. This Group identified the need for a community education campaign to debunk the myths and suggested that a summit be held to identify issues and policy changes required to resolve settlement issues.

Supplementary notes (in box) by CRC

Current Commission initiatives in this area include:

- *Reflect community views to Ministerial Council on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs*
- *Brochure to be developed in partnership with the Refugee Council of Australia*

Other comments

- *Commission to discuss with Settlement Services Coalition*

Racism and Vilification

Since September 11 there has been an increase in vilification and racist or inappropriate language in the media and wider community. This is leading to a culture of fear in many communities.

Supplementary notes (in box) by CRC

Current Commission initiatives in this area include:

- *Development of Metropolitan Advisory Council and Anti-Racism Council*
- *Community Harmony Round Table*
- *Anti-Racism Fairgo Australia partnership project*
- *CRC media releases*
- *Multicultural Marketing Awards*
- *Imam Feisal visit to Australia*
- *CRC Commission Prize in Dorothea MacKeller Poetry Awards*
- *Sydney Film Festival CRC Award*

Other comments

- *Commission to consider showcasing community initiatives in this area at Symposium 2004.*
- *Commission to write to relevant government departments on this issue.*
- *Media Awards to be developed by Fairgo Australia partnership project.*

Appendix 1: Summary of Keynote Speeches

The *Rev Bill Crews, AM* addressed the challenges we face as a multi-faith society. Drawing on his experience at the Exodus Foundation and his wider ministry Rev Crews made the following observations:-

- We are at a point in history when we are moving out of a period of religious certainty and exclusivity. This is threatening for many people and contributes to tensions within and between religious groups.
- It is possible to break down barriers when people of different faiths work together for the good of others or a common cause. They get to know each other and form bonds of friendship that cross religious boundaries and communities.
- Religious leaders from different faiths share many common challenges in ministering effectively to their communities. It is beneficial and enriching for religious leaders from different faiths to work together on issues of common concern.
- All faiths speak to our common humanity and the essential questions in human experience, whatever differences exist in beliefs, customs and observances. We can encourage religious harmony and tolerance by looking deeply into our own religious faith and acting respectfully towards other faiths.

Prof James Jupp, Director of the Centre for Immigration and Multicultural Studies at the Australian National University, addressed several questions including 'who will replace the pioneers of ethnic community organisations'. He highlighted a range of sustainability issues confronting ethnic community organisations including:-

- The need to refocus and broaden the range of activities offered by many ethnic community organisations to ensure they remain relevant to second and subsequent generations, especially in those communities that are ageing rapidly because of the drop in ongoing migration.
- Engaging young people by providing a wider range of activities that reflect their needs and interests and providing access to leadership positions.
- The need for peak community groups to diversify their funding sources to maintain their ability to represent the interests of their community.

He also supported retention of the language question in the Census as an important tool to monitor changing community needs as migration patterns change and advocated a balanced and bipartisan immigration policy that blended opportunities for permanent residence, long term temporary business migration and humanitarian migration, including enhanced capacity to respond to international crises.

Appendix 2: Community Showcase Topics

No.	Topic	Presenter
1	Community initiative: Drug and Alcohol issues in the Samoan Community	Mrs Moira Moeaia Tuisila, Secretary, Samoan Advisory Council Line Sydney
2	University, hospital and community partnership: The importance of understanding culture in the hospital care of children	Dr Sharon Chalmers, Research Fellow, Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney
3	Community initiative: Islam and the media: empowering our community previously called "Human rights and racism in the media"	Mr Kuranda Seyit, Director – Events Organiser - Youth liaison, Forum on Australia's Islamic Relations (FAIR)
4	Community initiative: Organisational Management	Chinese Australian Service Society (CASS)
5	Community partnership: The role of the Canterbury Bankstown Advisory Group	Ms Hind Kourouche, Coordinator, Lebanese Community Council
6	Community and Government partnership: The Ethnic Communities Environmental Education Project	Ms Linda Tohver, Project Officer Education, & Ms Sue Cunningham Senior Education Officer, Department of Environment and Conservation Jenny Tang Luis, Community Educator, Ethnic Communities' Council
7	Community partnership: Successful models of multicultural and religious cooperation and learning	Rabbi Allisson H Conyer, Associate Rabbi, North Shore Temple Emanuel
8	Community partnership: Workshop on community initiatives supporting refugees on Temporary Protection Visas	Melissa Phillips, Acting Director, The Refugee Council of Australia Co-presenter TBA, House of Welcome.
9	Community and Government partnership: Fair Go Australia project	Mr Alan Gold, CEO, Fair Go Australia

Appendix 3: Workshop Summaries

Leadership

The Issues

Many communities and community organisations have identified the need to develop the next generation of leaders and to broaden their leadership base to include more women and young people. How can each community foster leadership potential and how can communities and community groups collaborate around the development of leadership skills and competencies.

Comments and Concerns

- How do we develop leadership in community organisations and target and support women and young people more effectively to undertake leadership roles.
- How can we build leadership for transition into the future.
- What are the core competencies and what are qualities people require to be leaders in community organisations.

Current Strategies

- Creating opportunities to bring young and old together and to do things together – eg film nights that bring young and old together.
- St George running structured program to motivate young people to take responsibilities in community organisations.
- Pacific Islander Community Youth Committee.

Future Strategies

- CRC lead the way in developing generic leadership programs for community organisations.
- Network across community organisations to share experiences and existing resources – email contact list of groups with leadership development and support activities.
- Promoting role models from within the community – leadership developing organisations.
- Showcase leadership models and programs from within Australia and overseas including leadership internship courses.
- Partnership between government and community organisations to promote civic and community leaders.

Sustainable Organisations

Issue, Concerns and Comments

Sustainability of community organisations as the founding generations retire is a major concern for all communities.

Current Strategies

- Involve young people in management roles in community organisations.
- Designating places for young people on committees.
- Involving young people in all service areas eg services for the elderly.
- Form youth reference group eg include university students on advisory boards.

Future Strategies

- Establish programs to involve young people in the management of community organisations and involve young people in the design of the organisation's activities.
- Attract a broad range of people with varying skills and backgrounds.
- Provide mentoring and training (eg work experience opportunities) to assist young people to assume management and leadership roles.
- Persuade commercial organisations to provide undergraduate vocational training similar to US programs.

Building Networks and Sharing Resources

Issues and Concerns

- Knowledge of existing networks.
- Do existing groups share resources or are groups closed.
- Lack of venues or public spaces for community organisations to use.
- Lack of information.
- Competition between groups for funding can mitigate against sharing.
- Privacy legislation – federal and state – can make information and data inaccessible.

Current Strategies

- Person to person contacts to build formal and informal networks.
- Multicultural interagency activities.
- Government and NGOs working with small and emerging communities.
- Community networks.
- Government Boards.

Future Strategies

- Develop Shared Resources
- Eg develop common secretariat to support a number of community organisations
- Structures to Facilitate Cooperation
- CRC to sponsor a program of organisation development initiatives to assist community organisations, especially small groups, to assess their needs and develop partnership models to pool their resources.
- Document successful models of networking and collaboration in community organisations such as Local Government auspiced community support services (HACC programs) and youth programs.

Rural and Regional Perspectives

The Issue

Many rural towns face declining populations and shortages of skilled and semi skilled workers. Most new arrivals and the vast majority of refugees settle in Sydney where the existing ethnic communities and networks provide support. What policies and programs are needed to enable refugees and other immigrants to settle effectively in rural and regional communities?

Comments and Concerns

- Lack of jobs and culturally appropriate employment support in rural areas.
- Small town communities accepting but work is often seasonal.
- Two jobs created for every family.
- No services available.
- Services based on needs not numbers.
- Isolation impacts on health.
- Country areas caught in catch 22 – no services if no people, no people due to lack of services.

Current Strategies

- Employer/government partnerships eg Young.
- CRC Regional Advisory Councils – Excellent sounding boards to identify emerging needs.
- CRC EAPS officer giving presentation and linking with Regional Advisory Councils. Follow-up strategy to ensure EAPS implementation.
- Charity and volunteer organisations and migrant Resource Centres and ECCs running outreach programs – these can be built on.
- NAATI initiative training and accrediting interpreters.

Future Strategies

- Need for support services including housing, language assistance and transport.
- Build on existing employer/government partnerships.
- Establish Taskforce to identify host communities for newly arrived immigrants.
- English classes.
- Encourage group migration rather than individual settlement to create critical mass for ethnic communities in rural areas.
- Improving access to GPs using interpreters.
- Local government to prepare community and industry profiles and begin to match community needs to emergent industry and employer needs.

Culturally Appropriate Services

Issue

How to develop and deliver culturally appropriate mainstream services that are relevant to community needs and sustainable.

Comments and Concerns

- Training of service providers
- Bilingual workers and managers
- Cross cultural issues
- Use of interpreters
- Ignorance of EAPS requirements – need to promote EAPS concepts and requirements.
- Availability of social research data.
- Information on availability of services – where to go for information.
- Overlap and duplication of services.
- Opportunities to network.
- Investment and funding – whose responsibility is it to fund services such as case workers and language services.

Current Strategies

- Tongan Community – Liaison officer working with community funded by DoCs; Work on parenting programs.
- Bilingual workers – Korean Community, Health, Domestic Violence, problem gambling.
- Cross cultural training – police initiatives in the Blacktown Area.
- Community based mediation initiatives – LGA based inter-agency training. involving DoCs, Police, Health, DIMIA, Centrelink. In the Ryde Area process is concentrating on new and emerging communities.
- Data – DIMIA settlement data; Workcover data and Sydney University ACCIRT Website.
- Information Provision – Translated publications and brochures.
- Migrant resource centres.
- Community radio.

Future Strategies

- Need for standardised definition of “culturally appropriate services” – what are the characteristics.
- Coordination of data and information.
- Expansion of ‘Whole of Government’ initiatives providing culturally appropriate services and develop more partnerships between NGOs and government agencies.
- Extend usage of community radio to distribute information.
- Change current funding model to service purchase model.
- Networking at regional level
 - CRC as conduit?
 - Establish a forum of senior managers

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Key Issues

Confusion and lack of understanding of the issues.

Settlement issues including impact of temporary protection visas on service access.

Concerns and Comments

Majority of people don't really understand the issues.

- Lack of understanding of the terms refugee and asylum seeker
- Language used by political leaders
- Role of media
- Profile of asylum seekers is misunderstood

Certain groups are denied access to settlement services.

- Community support services are already stretched and cannot accommodate many of the needs of refugees and asylum seekers
- A whole of community responsibility approach is required including volunteers and business support
- Long term impacts of assessment process and determination of status need to be recognised and the system improved.

Future Strategies

Campaign to debunk myths

- Reference group, sourced from the wider community, to be established by CRC to develop a community education strategy
- Provide user friendly resources and materials via a website
- Build relationships with the media

Resourcing including financial, educational and support services

- CRC to investigate business mentoring
- CRC to work with communities to advocate for changes in the assessment and review system
- Summit to be held to identify issues and policy changes required to resolve settlement issues
- Racism and Vilification

Issues

Racism and vilification are on the rise reflecting local and international events and threatening community harmony. How can this be addressed and combated?

Comment and Concerns

There is an increase in vilification and racist or inappropriate language in the media and the wider community. This is leading to a "culture of fear" in many communities.

Current Strategies

Current strategies that address the culture of fear and use of racist language include:-

- Fair Go Australia and Racism! No Way campaigns.

- Cultural and sporting activities.
- Analysis of mainstream media to track racist comments.
- Use of mass media to promote positive media stories.
- Use of complaints mechanisms – ABA, Anti Discrimination Commission etc.
- Strengthening relations across sectors, eg business.

Future Strategies

- A coalition of communities to form an Advisory Group to work with the mass media including journalists, editors and TV producers to improve cultural awareness, monitor offensive language and program content and promote positive images and fair reporting.
- Develop and promote positive stories through the ethnic and mainstream media.
- Cross cultural school initiatives that foster inclusion and harmony as core values, promote understanding between communities and encourage critical analysis of the media.
- Communities to engage non traditional partners such as business and professional groups in a dialogue about racism and promotion of community harmony and respect.

Youth

Issue

Impact of negative stereotyping by the media on young people from ethnic background.

Concerns and Comments

- Lack of press coverage focusing on young people's achievements.
- Youth from ethnic backgrounds face double disadvantage.
- Denial of access to public space.

Future Strategies

- Develop and submit positive stories on youth achievements to the media.
- Publicise youth achievement awards.

Issue

Identity and intergenerational values conflicts are significant issues for ethnic youth.

Current Strategies

- Sarah Redfern School model in Minto. .
- Providing traineeships.

Future Strategies

- Mentoring and community support programs that focus on student/youth needs.
- Bicultural course or workshop series designed to help youth people to 'feel OK' about being bicultural.
- Positive parenting programs and training to help families and young people work through the issues surrounding competing value systems and cultural expectations.