



Community Relations Commission  
*For a multicultural NSW*

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS  
ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM**

*RESPECT AND RECIPROCITY*

**16 AUGUST 2007**

*REPORT*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Community Relations Annual Symposium**

The Annual Community Relations Symposium was held successfully on Wednesday 15 and Thursday 16 of August 2007 for the seventh consecutive year. This event has come to be a highlight in the Commission's event calendar as well as for various community organisations that regularly attend and support it. The aim of this event is to provide an opportunity for the most current and innovative community projects to be showcased. In so doing, the Commission provides a discussion and networking forum for community organisations to workshop ideas and share successful project models.

The Community Relations Commission For a multicultural NSW has a statutory responsibility to undertake wide-ranging consultation with our diverse community with respect to its objectives. The Annual Community Relations Symposium is a proven mechanism for the Commission to meet this objective by creating a forum where active engagement can take place with a broad cross-section of organisations ranging from peak community bodies and community leaders to local Council representatives and NSW State Government agencies.

The most significant addition to the Annual Community Relations Symposium has in recent years, been the inclusion of Youth Leaders Day as the first day of the Symposium. Youth Leaders Day grew out of a need identified at the 2005 Annual Community Relations Symposium to dedicate an entire day of the Symposium to the voices of young people in order to provide the necessary space and focus on the issues of concern to multicultural Youth in NSW. Youth Leaders Day was held successfully held for the second consecutive year in 2007. The outcomes of this well-attended event are detailed in the *Community Relations Youth Leaders Day Report 2007*. This report will focus on the general Symposium day held on 16 August 2007.

'Respect and Reciprocity' was the guiding theme of the 2007 Community Relations Symposium which provided an effective focus for the discussions held over the two days of the Symposium held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Parramatta. The Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship, the Hon. Barbara Perry MP delivered the opening speech on the first day of the Symposium which was Youth Leaders Day 2007.

At the forefront of the discussions were the topics of diversity, harmony and equality for the people of NSW. The Symposium provided an excellent forum for the delegates and representatives of community organisations to express their ideas and perspectives about these issues and for the commission to be able to listen to and analyse the concerns raised.

## ATTENDANCE

The general Symposium day was well attended with approximately 160 delegates and workshop presenters. This group represented over 130 different community organisations, migrant resource centres and other non-government organisations, members of ethnic and religious groups, representatives from Local Councils, journalists from ethnic media, and representatives from NSW State Government agencies and departments. In addition to this, there were also representatives from the various divisions of the Community Relations Commission in attendance along with Commissioners and representatives from eight Regional Advisory Councils (RACs).

## OUTLINE OF THE DAY

### Opening speeches

Delegates were welcomed by the Chairperson of the Commission, Mr Stepan Kerkyasharian AM to the Symposium at the Governor's Ballroom of the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Parramatta. The Chairperson began by thanking, on behalf of the Commission, the many representatives of community organisations who were in attendance and reminded the delegates that this event was dedicated to the exchange of ideas and knowledge with the ultimate aim of learning from the experiences of one another. Mr Kerykasharian stated,

*Today is about showcasing various community projects from which we can learn about inclusion and participation. Each one of you does tremendous work within your own communities. You all do things differently and yet you are all successful in your own way. It is important that others know about what you are doing so that they can learn from you, and so that you can learn from them as well.*

The Chairperson also raised for discussion the importance of not allowing complacency to set in with regard to multiculturalism as public policy. He spoke of the current political climate where it would seem that opinion leaders in our society are turning away from openly supporting multiculturalism,

*These are times when we have to stand up and support multiculturalism. Not as a welfare policy, not a policy that is about a disadvantaged section of our society, but as a public policy which promotes community harmony. As a public policy which makes us live together in harmony, which makes us better Australians.*

Mr Kerkyasharian also spoke of the prevailing attitude held by some members of the community who express their acceptance of Australia as a multicultural society but argue that we should somehow 'move beyond' multiculturalism. That is, an acceptance of multiculturalism as a fact of the demographic make-up of Australian, but a rejection of ongoing support for a policy of multiculturalism. The Chairperson argued that a public policy of multiculturalism which continually promotes social harmony and allows us to foresee and forestall that which will impact on the cohesiveness of our society is not something that we can abandon. To conclude, Mr Keryasharian summed up the message of the Symposium by saying,

*We are united and we are committed as Australians, but we are different within ourselves and we respect and accept that difference. We are committed to celebrating diversity without ever losing the vision of the shared value for the future of this wonderful land. We are here today to take part in shaping the decisions that affect the communities in which we all live.*

## **Workshop Sessions**

Each of the five workshop session featured three presentations covering different aspects of the workshop topics. These topics were formulated through a process of consultation with relevant stakeholders and through wide-ranging research. In this manner, the Commission was able to find the most successful and innovative projects currently being undertaken in the community which dealt with the key issues in the area of multiculturalism in NSW. The workshop topics for the Annual Community Relations Symposium 2007 were as follows:

### Workshop Strand A

*New & Emerging Communities: preparing for the next wave*

### Workshop Strand B

*Creative Expressions: community cultural development*

### Workshop Strand C

*Environmental Citizenship: sustainable living for all communities*

### Workshop Strand D

*Health & Well-being: mental health and men's health*

### Workshop Strand E

*Family Matters: resources for parents and carers*

## **Keynote Address**

Mr Neville Roach AO, Chairman of Financial Network Services, a subsidiary of Tata Consultancy Services, Chairman of Australia India Business Council and Director of One-Steel Ltd, delivered an inspired keynote speech that brought a depth of perspective to the discussions which was very positively commented on by many of the delegates.

Mr Roach is well known as a significant contributor to the development of national policies and programs in relation to social and cultural issues. He was the Chairman of the National Multicultural Advisory Council from 1996 to 1999, and its successor the Council for Multicultural Australia (NCMA), which reported to the Prime Minister, and to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs.

As a convener of the Australia India Information Industries Business Network and Chairman of the Australia India Business Council, Mr Roach has been an active advocate of closer links between Australia and Asia, especially his country of origin, India.

As Chairman of the Business (Migration) Advisory Panel, Mr Roach advised the Minister on all aspects of business migration from 1997 to 2002, and served as a member on the Board and as New South Wales President of the Committee for the Economic Development of Australia.

In 2000, Mr Neville Roach was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) on Australia Day for service to business, particularly in the Information Technology Industry and for his contribution to the development of Australian multiculturalism. In October 2001, he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Science by the University of NSW for his eminent service to the community.

Mr Roach began his speech by discussing the need for us all to get back to basics and understand the true meaning of multiculturalism in the Australian context,

*We need to recognise the enormous value that diversity has already delivered to us and its potential to deliver to all of us much, much more and to also recognise that a proactive approach to the management of diversity is the best way to minimise any risks that diversity poses to community harmony and to maximise its benefits.*

He went on to discuss the importance of Australian democratic values and fundamental human rights to Australian multiculturalism. Mr Roach argued that “when human rights are getting trampled, it is the minority communities and the new communities that suffer the most”. He went on to speak of the critical part that reconciliation with Aboriginal Australians plays in the inclusiveness advocated by multiculturalism. Further to this point about the need to foster greater understanding and harmony across communities, Mr Roach advocated greater respect for Islam in Australia.

Australian multiculturalism is intended to be an action-oriented word, Mr Roach argued. That is, multiculturalism is not just a definition,

*It implies that there will be strategies, that there will be programs and policies that actually take a proactive approach to the management of national diversity [...] More and more we are seeing a focus on the obligations of the new migrants and the importance for them to assimilate, rather than the obligation that we have to them [...] It is important that we make sure that the new migrants who come here are given the best opportunity to settle in and settle in quickly, to participate and enjoy living here.*

Mr Roach went on to add that Australia needs to be proactive in order to maximise the benefits that migration can bring to the wider community. He advocated the need to respect and support new migrants in order to ensure that they are able to quickly become productive members of the wider community within as short as possible a timeframe.

## **Performance**

The entertainment was provided by the South West Youth Peer Education (SWYPE) which is run by Mission Australia. SWYPE is a youth service operating in Sydney's South Western region with a focus on education and improving outcomes for young people aged between 12-24 years who may be at a point in their lives where they are facing decisions, challenges and setbacks. SWYPE uses learning tools such as performing arts, music, sport, cultural arts as effective forms of engagement.

The group performed a street theatre-style routine called 'Clock Werx' to a captivated audience in the Governor's Ballroom. The performance centred on a story about the hectic happenings inside a kooky grandfather clock. Each part of the clock represented a different issue regarding the relationship between teacher, student and the community.

When all the parts of the clock finally came together to work in synchronicity, they were able to learn a valuable lesson,

*If we utilise our time effectively and work to the same rhythm, we will have stronger links between the learner and the teachers, and in turn work more effective in our communities.*

## **Concluding Plenary Session**

The concluding plenary session brought together all the delegates for a final and concluding session with the aim of discussing as a group the main themes and issues arising out of the five concurrent workshops and throughout the day's discussions and speeches. Commissioner Michael Christodoulou led the discussion along with a panel of delegates appointed to deliver a brief summary of the major discussion points from each of the five workshop sessions. These points are covered in the 'Emerging themes of the day' section of this report.

The Chairperson delivered the closing speech and thanked all the delegates for their attendance and generous contributions. The importance of the Annual Community Relations Symposium in providing a valuable learning opportunity for both the Commission and delegates alike was highlighted in this speech. The Chairperson went on to add that the information gleaned from the day would be used to guide the Commission's work,

*We will be informed by your views, as you express here today, in the advice that we formulate to government, in the recommendations that we'll put forward to government and in the various submissions that we make to government and to other bodies and authorities.*

The Chairperson also took the opportunity to acknowledge the financial support that the Commission receives from the New South Wales Government and the Parliament of New South Wales which enables the Commission to host this important annual event. Mr Keryasharian acknowledged the support of the Premier on NSW, the Hon. Morris Iemma, and also that of the Minister Assisting the Premier on Citizenship, the Hon. Barbara Perry MP.

## **EMERGING THEMES OF THE DAY**

The information detailed below is a summary of the emerging themes and discussions from each of the five concurrent workshop sessions held on the day:

### **Workshop Strand A**

#### ***New & Emerging Communities: preparing for the next wave***

Facilitator: Ezel Jupiter, CRC Commissioner

Assistant: Sheetal Challam, CRC Staff member

Presentation 1: Aurelia Rahman and Elizabeth Phillipsz from the Baulkham Hills Holroyd Parramatta Migrant Resource Centre (BHHP MRC) presented a profile on the Burmese community in Sydney including a brief history of settlement and the issues impacting on settlement. The BHHP MRC is a community based, non-profit organisation established to promote the well-being of migrants, refugees and humanitarian entrants from non-English speaking backgrounds living in the local government areas of Baulkham Hills, Holroyd and Parramatta.

Aurelia Rahman discussed how for some time, migrants to Australia from Burma had expressed the need for a Community Directory. In response, the Burmese Advisory Committee of BHHP MRC agreed to take it up as a project under the Community Settlement Services Scheme of the then Department of Immigration & Multicultural Affairs (DIMA). It was decided that the directory would serve as a ready reference of the 'Who's Who' within the Burmese community for use nationally. The directory would also include an information sheet on Burma and a list of the basic mainstream service providers aimed at assisting new arrivals.

Among the delegates attending the workshop, there was considerable interest in a profile of the emerging Burmese refugee community. Lengthy discussions took place among the delegates regarding Australia's obligations to accept Burmese-Thai refugees.

Presentation 2: Sharmila Falzon from the Parramatta Young Christian Workers (YCW) showcased the DriveSafe project which is a joint partnership between the YCW, Auburn Council and the NSW Police. This project enlisted the help of volunteers to assist refugees to gain competency in safe driving skills within the Australian context and to attain provisional licences. The workshop generated discussions regarding the inadequate funding opportunities currently available for important programs that assist with settlement such as DriveSafe.

Presentation 3: Miriam Pellicano from the Mercy Refugee Service showcased the Community Links Project which was established to offer settlement assistance to vulnerable refugees and humanitarian entrants. Volunteers play a key role in this program that provides refugee families with home visits from volunteers in order to provide support and assistance with a range of settlement issues and related matters.

Emerging themes of 'New & Emerging Communities' workshop:

- complexity of the Australian system for newly arrived refugee youth and their families which can cause confusion
- barriers in attaining provisional licences including financial constraints in accessing driving lessons
- limited parental support and access to a suitable roadworthy vehicle as a significant barrier for young people in obtaining a provisional licence
- diversity and complexity of the needs of recently arrived humanitarian entrants which present service delivery challenges
- training needs of volunteers which need to be considered especially in relation to cultural awareness.
- issue of public liability and public risk insurance for volunteers
- importance of partnerships between agencies which aim to ensure appropriate service delivery

## **Workshop Strand B**

### ***Creative Expressions: community cultural development***

Facilitator: Myriam Bahari, CRC Staff member

Assistants: Priya Singh, CRC Staff member; Maria Rosa Rodner, CRC Intern

Presentation 1: Shauna McIntyre, Community Development Officer at Lismore City Council presented on Lismore's Living Library project which is a community-based initiative that brings people together in one-to-one conversation to encourage understanding, challenge negative stereotypes and reduce prejudices in the community. Lismore City Council partnered with the community to launch Australia's first Living Library Program in November 2006.

The aim of the project is to reduce prejudices among different cultural groups through increased understanding. The inspiration for the project came from a similar project featured as part of Denmark's Roskilde Festival in 2000.

The "books" that make up Lismore's Living Library are members of the community selected from all different walks of life, for example, a Sudanese refugee, a Japanese immigrant, a homosexual man, a handicapped man, and a teenager who lives in an alternative lifestyle community. Lismore Library is an institution that everyone in the community respects, so it provides a safe and accessible place where people from different backgrounds can meet.

Presentation 2: Paola Morabito, a graduate filmmaker from the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS) presented on her short film called "Bread" which is set in a Bankstown bakery. Ms Morabito and her production team won the 2007 Community Relations Commission AFTRS Award, presented each year for the best graduate film which makes a contribution to multiculturalism. The film was written and directed by Ms Morabito and the casting was developed in partnership with the Bankstown Youth Development Services.

Ms Morabito opened the discussion by introducing herself as the daughter of Argentinean immigrants who owned a fruit shop where she occasionally worked as a child. Her film about a Vietnamese bakery is informed by her own experiences of growing up in a family that ran a local business without actually being autobiographical. The themes raised by the film generated lively discussions among the delegates whose interpretations of the film differed considerably.

Presentation 3: Nalika Padmasena, Rugmini Venkatraman, Eleonora Raffo from the Cumberland Women's Health Centre presented on the project 'Song of Anklets'. This project aims to deliver education on human rights through traditional dance and music performances from the South-Asian region. Migrant communities from this region are the target audience of the theatre-style performances which deal with issues such as domestic violence.

The performances are interactive and are accompanied by a facilitator who guides the audience through the various possible narrative 'endings' or 'outcomes'. Facilitators invite feedback and discussion from the audience by asking questions like: "What did you feel about the story?", and "How would you like the story to end for the female character?". The performers then act out the scene. The advantage of this method is that it enables the audience to engage with messages that are potentially difficult to broach by creating an informal and non-confrontational atmosphere for discussion.

This project has been a big success in schools and non-English speaking communities. Some funding for the project has come from the Office of Women, NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet. Community support both financial and through volunteer assistance has also been sought.

Emerging themes of the 'Creative Expressions' workshop:

- importance of open communication when addressing complex issues
- use of artistic forms of communication to convey messages in a less threatening manner
- significant contribution to our community that small investments can make when used to fund effective programs
- the importance of being inclusive of the mainstream community and not limiting the reach of your work to marginalised groups
- new and creative ways of forging communication links between different groups in the community
- strong influence of family in the building of identity for first and second generation migrants
- need to be mindful of the generational differences when working on projects involving young people who were born in Australia but are from ethnic backgrounds
- lack of full understanding of the issue relating to violence against women among some ethnic communities

## **Workshop Strand C**

### ***Environmental Citizenship: sustainable living for all communities***

Facilitator: Malcolm Haddon, CRC Staff member

Assistant Facilitator: Kuranda Seyit and Thida Yang, CRC Staff members

Presentation 1: Julie Gaul from the NSW Early Childhood Environmental Education Network (NSW ECEEN) presented on the “Seeds for the Future” project. The NSW ECEEN supports early childhood services to embrace environmental sustainability practices. The network is a partnership between key early childhood organisations, environmental extension education services and independent professionals.

The “Seeds for the Future” project brings together interested persons and organisations to work with children of pre-school age with regard to environmental education. The process involves teaching young children to respect each other, the physical world and the environment in which they live. Children learn through interaction and active participation with each other, so the activities have a focus on developing problem-solving skills.

Presentation 2: Joyce Fu and Elsa Cheung-Wong from the NSW Ethnic Communities Council (ECC) presented two projects run by the ECC: The Saving Water in Asian Restaurants Project and the Asian Dry Cleaner Electricity Saving Project. These two environmental sustainability projects were set up to help non-English speaking business owners and managers to reduce their water and energy consumption and save money. Both of these projects involve the provision of information in community languages and the use of bilingual environmental educators.

The Dry Cleaning project aims to address the issue of heavy energy use in the industry which results in a significant amount of the gross income of small businesses going to pay for utilities. The ECC approximates that 80% of the 450 dry cleaning businesses in NSW are operated by people of ethnic backgrounds, predominantly from Vietnamese and Chinese. This can result in cultural differences and language difficulties for organisations aiming to provide services to the sector. To date, this project has managed to visit 50 dry cleaners and undertake 17 energy audits.

The Asian Restaurant project aims to address the significant amounts of water used to cool, cook and clean wok stoves in Asian restaurants. There are over 2700 wok stoves in restaurants across Sydney with 50% of these being operated in Chinese businesses. This project provides practical methods to minimise water use in Asian restaurants.

Presentation 3: Rosanna Luca from Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Authority (SMCMA) presented on the “Educating communities for a healthy catchment” project. The SMCMA works with local councils and communities to help to promote the LandCare ethic and foster support and community engagement to assist in the protection and regeneration of Sydney’s natural environment. SMCMA Community Support Officers assist local Councils to develop special projects for ethnic communities, in partnership with ECC project officers and bilingual educators.

The “Educating communities for a healthy catchment” project started with a study conducted in 2004 entitled “The Environment and Ethnic Communities” which showed that people from ethnic communities are concerned about the environment but lack knowledge about how they can contribute to sustainability practices. A key message from this project is that if ‘you look after your environment, then it will look after you’. This motto provided a great link to the Symposium’s guiding theme of “respect and reciprocity”.

Emerging themes of the ‘Environmental Citizenship’ workshop:

- need to involve everyone from all communities in achieving sustainability goals
- key role of leadership and collaboration across cultural and interest groups
- importance of thinking globally and acting locally
- need for education in community languages in order to effectively spread the sustainability message
- importance of recognising the diversity that exists in environmental practices
- need to start environmental education with pre-school aged children
- positive recognition for environmental work to play an important role
- trends in environmental practices are influenced by corporate interests
- role of the media as a powerful tool in communicating the sustainability message

## **Workshop Strand D**

### ***Health & Well-being: mental health and men’s health***

Facilitator: Michael Christodoulou, CRC Commissioner  
Assistant: Selim Adali and Ranju Sharma, CRC Staff members

Presentation 1: Helen Sowe from the Drug and Alcohol Multicultural Education Centre (DAMEC), Esther Tiange Johnson from the Australian-Liberian community and Fawzia Fegeni from the Australian Sudanese Muslim community presented on the ‘African Companions’ project. This initiative is a community education and capacity-building project intended to reduce alcohol and other drug-related harm within African refugee communities in NSW. The project is conducted by DAMEC in partnership with the NSW Refugee Health Service and STARTTS. The project is funded for two years until August 2007 by the Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation (AERF).

The African Companions are active members of the various African refugee communities who have undertaken training on a volunteer basis in alcohol and other drug-related issues. Following the training, the volunteer African Companions are supported in an information sharing process with their communities in both formal and informal forums. To date, African Companions have been trained from the Somali, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Sudanese, Burundian, Liberian, and Sierra Leonean communities.

Presentation 2:

Liz Messih and Evan Kallipolitis from the Canterbury City Community Centre (CCCC) presented on the Canterbury Men's Shed program. This program engages men aged 55 and over to meet regularly and work together on woodworking projects. This activity enables older men to have social interaction with their peers who share a common interest. There are statistically high rates of suicide among older men who face complex issues relating to health and feeling alienated from their community.

The activities in the Men's Shed provide the men with meaningful work and their own working space, plus the opportunity to develop lasting friendships. Their finished products such as toys are used for various community purposes such as donations to local hospitals and childcare centres which give the older men further satisfaction. On occasions, local businesses have placed orders for woodwork projects, which raises the potential opportunity to generate revenue for the project.

Presentation 3: Roy Laube from the Transcultural Mental Health Centre/ Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health presented on the NSW Health Transcultural Rural and Remote Outreach Project. The Transcultural Mental Health Centre carried out systematic research to investigate the needs of diverse communities with regards to mental health services in rural areas.

This study found that public hospitals need to be more aware of the specific needs of migrant communities. Accessing mental health services by members of migrant communities is at times problematic due to the associated stigma, shame and fear. The lack of anonymity in rural areas, and the incidence of communities being closely aware of its individual members, make it difficult for individuals to discuss their mental health problems. Individuals experience isolation especially in some established communities. The awareness of mental health problems needs to be increased so that community members know the full range of healthcare services available to them. More bilingual mental health workers are also required.

Emerging themes of the 'Health & Well-being' workshop:

- importance of grass roots organisations including volunteers and young people who are trusted in their respective communities
- need to recognise that no community is free of drugs and alcohol
- systematic collection of data is needed to fully appreciate the ways in which ethnic communities can gain improved access to mental health services
- unique needs of older men can be addressed through community services which impact positively on the overall family and community
- need for all members of a community to contribute and participate
- important role that volunteering plays in successful community building
- multi-faceted approach to required to meet complex mental health needs

## **Workshop Strand E**

### ***Family Matters: resources for parents and carers***

Facilitator: Kian Safaei, CRC Hornsby & Central Coast RAC member

Assistant: Tim Vose, CRC Staff member

Presentation 1: Tonny Birungi from the Canterbury Bankstown Migrant Resource Centre presented on the Honouring Fathers Project. This project works with primary schools within the Canterbury LGA and migrant groups with the aim of engaging fathers and their children through interaction, support and participation. A successful initiative recently organised as part of the project has been an exhibition made up of photos taken by children of their fathers doing their favourite things such as hobbies.

Talks by guest speakers have also been organised to assist fathers in addressing issues related to parenthood with an emphasis on practical ways that fathers can participate in the day-to-day activities of their children. Other activities have included events such as a day dedicated to fathers and their families to encourage the greater appreciation of the importance of the father-child relationship and the need for support and education for fathers in the community.

Presentation 2: Cheryl Webster from ANGLICARE presented on the rock and water program which was initially developed to support and improve the social development of boys. This program is based on a combination of cognitive behavioural, social learning and martial arts philosophy principles. The program is built on the premise that boys are ‘action-learning beings’ and that they learn best in stimulating environments that capture their interest. The program effectively utilises martial arts as a vehicle in which to engage the participants.

This program offers teachers, counsellors and youth workers new ways to interact with boys and girls using various teaching methods. Physical exercises employed in the program are constantly linked with mental and physical skill development. In this way the program leads from simple self-defence, boundary and communication exercises to a strong notion of self-confidence. The program offers a framework of exercises and thoughts to assist young people to become aware of their purpose and motivation in life.

Presentation 3: Grace Chan, Multicultural Carer Program Coordinator with Carers NSW presented on the ‘Care for Carers’ project which includes a series of training programs for service providers aimed at enhancing their capacity and skills for working with and supporting carers from ethnic backgrounds. Carers make up over 11% of the NSW population, with the number of carers from non-English speaking backgrounds estimated to be much higher than the official figures. This program links carers to support services and identifies their unique practical, emotional and social needs. The Care for Carers program emphasises a practical approach to support including the building of partnerships, knowledge, application of theory to everyday

situations and communication strategies. This project highlights the need to take cultural differences seriously when undertaking the planning, development and delivery of education and training programs for carers from ethnic backgrounds.

Emerging themes of the 'Family Matters' workshop:

- development of partnerships and support structures to assist with the impact and success of community projects
- benefits gained from thinking outside traditional concepts and adopting more creative approaches to problem-solving
- source of new and innovative ideas that young people can bring to community projects
- importance of finding out about other interesting projects that are taking place locally and internationally so that you can learn from them and share ideas
- rewards to be gained by all the community when migrant families are assisted to effectively settle in Australia
- importance to be proactive wherever possible instead of reactive
- importance of using all of your experiences both personal, cultural and professional, to assist you with your work in the community

## **COMMUNITY RELATIONS SYMPOSIUM 2007 OUTCOMES**

In summary, the following outcomes were achieved through the Annual Community Relations Symposium 2007:

- Approximately 160 people from over 130 different community organisations, non-government organisations, local and State Government participated on the day as delegates and presenters.
- Of the 66 delegates who completed the feedback evaluation forms:
  - 98% would recommend the event to their peers
  - 81% felt the venue was good or excellent
  - 70% had not previously attended a Community Relations Symposium
  - 74% rated the event overall at the highest rating of '(4) Good'
  - 72% said they speak a language other than English at home
  - The languages detailed included: Bengali, Farsi, German, Hungarian, Indonesian, Korean, Mandarin, Mingaka, Polish, Serbian, Swahili,
- Many of the delegates reported having found the workshops to be informative and relevant to their area of interest.
- The keynote speech delivered by Mr Neville Roach was well received by delegates and was commended for its intelligence, fairness and courageous approach to the complex issues currently facing multiculturalism in Australia.

- Delegates commented positively on the good networking opportunities presented by the forum and the opportunity to explore issues relating to multiculturalism with other relevant community organisations in NSW.
- Delegates were invited to suggest ways to make future Annual Symposiums even better. The following key suggestions were made:
  - Workshop sessions to be longer and include more presentations
  - Active involvement of young people at the general Symposium day
  - Provision of space for organisations to set up stalls, exhibitions and posters
  - Encourage online communication, networking forums and email lists
  - Present awards to community workers, organisations and individuals involved in successful initiatives
  - Questions and feedback to be invited from the floor at the conclusion of the general Symposium day

The delegates were asked to identify the topics that were of interest to them and which they would like to see explored at future events. The various topics suggested have been arranged into the following four categories:

#### **Community development**

- community self-reliance
- funding sources for community projects
- community management and strategic planning
- solutions-based approaches to the challenges facing communities
- environmental sustainability at the community level
- issues confronting youth and family relationships

#### **Across communities**

- collaborative projects between ethnic and aboriginal communities
- issues relating to advocacy and harmony between ethnic communities
- better ways to network and communicate across community organisations
- international initiatives and best practice models for community organisations

#### **Access and equity**

- access to services and overcoming barriers for recent migrants
- job opportunities for recent migrants
- aged care for migrants and issues relating to ageing communities

#### **Government policy**

- government policy on multiculturalism and community issues
- language education policy issues
- multiculturalism and language diversity in schools
- ethnic diversity and language skills in the workplace

These outcomes and suggestions will be used to inform the planning and implementation of future community events and forums organised by the Community Relations Commission including the Annual Community Relations Symposium 2008.

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