



# MULTICULTURALISM MATTERS

## MCNT's Newsletter

ISSUE: 05 & 06

Jan - Jun 2007

### Youth Forum – National Youth Week 14-22 April 2007

**Special points of interest:**

- Briefly highlight your point of interest here.
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We will be holding a Youth Forum on Sunday 22 April in the MCNT Community Room, commencing at 10.00 am and finishing at approximately 4.00 pm. The Youth Forum will have a wide focus and broad representation from the young people of Darwin's ethnic communities.

The Youth Forum's program and agenda will be designed and owned by our young people and is a means for young people to make a positive contribution to their community, to develop friendships and networks, to interact with role models and mentors, to develop a positive identity and to be heard.

It is anticipated that a major focus of the forum will be on addressing issues relating to the successful settlement and integration of young refugees and migrants into Australian society.

As we see it the program will include fun activities

with elements of team building and cultural awareness and celebration. We will also have great prizes for the best ideas during the brainstorming and consultation sessions.

The forum is planned for all day – from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm. A multicultural (halal) lunch will be provided. There is no cost for participation.

One of the aims of this forum is to identify leaders and to establish an ongoing Youth Advisory Committee which will meet regularly to discuss issues of concern and formulate future directions which will include identifying funding opportunities for future projects. The Youth Advisory Committee will report directly to the MCNT executive and indirectly to the NT Office of Youth Affairs.

This Youth Forum and Youth Advisory Group are seen as effective vehicles to empower young people to

voce their concerns so that they can provide meaningful input into MCNT's policies and procedures. These processes will also ensure that service providers, decision makers and the wider community are kept aware of the issues affecting youth from CALD backgrounds.

We are inviting youth participants for the Youth Forum from MCNT's membership base as well as from our partners and stakeholders. Perhaps you or someone you know would like to be involved. If so, please contact either Ron Mitchell or Roslyn Henry on 8945 9122 or email [sgp@mcnt.org.au](mailto:sgp@mcnt.org.au) or [families@mcnt.org.au](mailto:families@mcnt.org.au). If you need assistance with transport, please let us know.

## YOUTH COMMITTEE

The framework for establishing the MCNT Youth Committee is now taking shape with the first stage commencing in March 2007 followed by a Youth Executive Planning Day scheduled for April.

The Youth component of MCNT will be one of this year's most exciting additions to the Council's project repertoire. The Youth Committee will bring young people from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds together to make positive contributions to the larger community.

The MCNT is keen to attract young people from across the multicultural spectrum into the program which is designed to ensure that the voice of youth gains support across all areas of policy development in multicultural affairs.

This program will be stimulating, creative, uniting and energizing, and of mutual benefit to both culturally diverse communities as well as all members of the wider community.

## LIVING IN HARMONY 2007

### *INFORMATION SESSION 17TH APRIL*

The MCNT hosted two successful grants application information sessions recently: on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> March (Darwin City Council) and Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> March (Northern Territory Government). These sessions were well attended and productive, and we are sure that they will result in a number of productive outcomes for our members and clients.

The *Living in Harmony* program, an Australian Government initiative, has for a number of years assisted incorporated, not-for-profit organisations with funding for projects that aim to promote shared Australian values and mutual respect.

The 2007 round of the *Living in Harmony* Funded Community Projects is now open and the call for Expressions of Interest closes on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> April. The MCNT in association with the Darwin office of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) is hosting a community information session for this current round on Tuesday evening 17<sup>th</sup> April from 5.00 pm.

The Australian Government is particularly interested in hearing about innovative projects from the Northern Territory that engage the community to promote Australian values and good community relations and focus on one or more of these areas:

- \* new and emerging communities;
- \* young people;
- \* community based activities such as sport; and
- \* Indigenous Australians

This year \$1.5 million has been allocated to fund projects costing between \$5,000 and \$50,000 per project. Projects should be of up to 12 months duration and be completed by December 2008. To access the *Living in Harmony* 2007 Guidelines and to find out how to submit your EOIs on-line, visit:

[www.harmony.gov.au](http://www.harmony.gov.au)

So incubate your innovative project ideas and come along to MCNT's *Living in Harmony* information session on Tuesday evening 17<sup>th</sup> April from 5.00 pm. DIAC officers will be there to provide expert advice on the application process and on how to pitch your EOIs to enhance your organisation's chances of a favourable assessment and ultimate success for your proposal.

To reserve your place, phone Bebelyn at the MCNT on 8945 9122 or email [admin@mcnt.org.au](mailto:admin@mcnt.org.au)

## PROJECT UPDATE

### Multicultural Solution Project

As the new project officer for the Multicultural Solutions Project I am responsible for a large number of essential support services for families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, migrants, children and refugees. The project is funded by the Department of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and will continue through until June 2008. The aim of the project is to ensure that the needs of people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are met as effectively and efficiently as possible.

A critical part of the current project is the establishment of a support group at the Tata Family Centre, located on the grounds of the Karama Primary School. As yet there is a lack of group or support networks to assist migrant and refugee families, particularly those with young children in the area of Karama and Malak.

Support groups require suitable venues to enable families to engage with others and become involved, and familiar, with the range of family activities and services available to people throughout the area.

**By: Roslyn Henry**

For this reason, the Tata Centre, Playgroup Association, Melaleuca Refugee Support Network, and the Adult Migrant English Program are working together with the Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory to assist the development of social and cultural infrastructure necessary to enable the support group to function effectively. If you are interested in having a role in such a support group, please contact me so that we can begin to measure the level of interest by people wanting to become involved in support group activities.

### Settlement Grant Program –

**By: Ron Mitchell and  
Melanie Moore**

The MCNT's Settlement Grants Program (SGP) Project is a continuation of activities and programs based on the solid work already established through the combined efforts of Community Capacity Building Officer Jenny Milne and the Community Settlement Services Scheme (CSSS) Project.

Over the past few months SGP Project Officers Ron Mitchell and Melanie Moore have been getting to know the needs of their clients, stakeholders and other service providers. Information gaps are being identified as Ron and Melanie develop the program and as a consequence, a comprehensive range of effective programs and activities are beginning to take shape. Programs are designed to meet settlement needs, promote self-reliance and improve the employment prospects of

our recently arrived migrants and refugees.

Public awareness of core issues already generated from the project to date including a positive front page Australian Day refugee story "Aussie at last: Refugee counts blessings" in the *Darwin/Palmerston Sun* of Wednesday 24 January featuring Fatuma Ahmed Ali and an article "NT backs refugees" quoting MCNT President Jenny Medwell and Sudanese community leader Alex Lokotyang in the *Northern Territory News* of Monday 12 February.

On Monday, 19th March, Ron and Melanie organised a grants application information session with presenter Madhu Dasgupta from Darwin City Council. That information session was very well attended and created a lot of interest among the participants. A sec-

ond grants application information session is due to be scheduled for the near future and that will involve presenters Joy Kirk and Deborah Moore from the NT Government's Community Engagement Division.

Ron and Melanie are committed to making a difference with the SGP Project and are already planning a series of regular workshops. The topics for those workshops include: capacity building; theme-based training sessions; and, community consultations for their client group.

If you need information and advice or if you have any ideas or suggestions of how MCNT might further develop effectively advocacy, please phone Ron or Melanie at the MCNT or drop into MCNT and see them personally.

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

This year the MCNT celebrated International Women's Day with a Dinner at the Sky City Casino Ballroom on 8<sup>th</sup> March. The Dinner was a sell-out, with over 150 people attending, including the Hon. Clare Martin, Chief Minister; the Hon. Delia Lawrie, Minister for Multicultural Affairs; Sue Bradley, Co-Chair of the NT Statehood Committee; Carolyn Richards, Ombudsman for the NT, and women from across all sectors of the NT Community.

MCNT President, Jenny Medwell represented the Multicultural Council, Alderman Dorothy Fox presented the 'Welcome to Country' and Professor Helen Garnett, Vice-Chancellor Charles Darwin University gave the Key-Note speech. ABC journalist Naomi

Edwards performed the role of Master of Ceremonies introducing a splendid array of entertainers ranging from the One-Mob Indigenous dancer, through to the Liberian Dancers, Aboriginal performer Mandy Garling and ending with 'The Spanners' (the 457 Band).



Jenny Medwell, Prof. Helen Garnett and Hon. Claire Martin at the dinner

## HARMONY DAY

Every year the MCNT marks Harmony Day with an event in celebration of community diversity, unity and tolerance. This year, Harmony Day was showcased by school children, government, and more than 500 organisations and communities from across the Northern Territory.

Ron Mitchell, the MCNT's Settlement Grant Program officer, convened Harmony Day and put his networking skills into overdrive to draw communities and people into the Harmony Day celebrations. MCNT opened its doors on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> March to the public to enjoy the Northern Territory's cultural and linguistic showcase of multicultural diversity.

The evening was launched by the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the Hon. Delia Lawrie with a feast of entertainment from the Liberian

Cultural Dancers, Bernadine Krute, and Phil O'Brien. The highlight of the evening was the launch of the Nhulunbuy Rotary Club's Harmony Day day micro-film promoting community harmony for public consumption on television. Nhulunbuy Rotary Club received a grant from the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Citizenship to produce a series of three short videos.



Minister Delia Lawrie giving speech at the Harmony celebration

## STRATEGY AND CORPORATE PLAN 2007 - 2010

The MCNT executive held two one-day planning work shops during February to re-assess its strategic direction, evaluate its programs, and identify the future needs of its members and the multicultural community for the next three years.

The draft Plan is in a new format and reflects greater emphasis on engagement and community communications within the MCNT itself, with government and non-government organisations, the business community, and members. The final Plan is now in the process of being finalized and will be presented to the Office of Multicultural Affairs including the 2007-2010 MCNT budget.

## PRESIDENT'S SPEECH ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY (IWD)

The United Nations' theme for this year International Women's Day is 'Ending impunity for violence against women and girls'.

Eliminating violence against women and girls remains one of the main serious challenges of our time. Violence against women and girls continuous unabated in every continent, country and culture. Most societies prohibit such violence yet the reality is that too often; it is covered up or tacitly condoned. That is why the International Women's Day is so important. It spells out our responsibility to work for enduring changes in values and attitudes.

For 30 years the MCNT has been in the forefront of support for the many culture and ethnic groups that are represented here tonight. Like the people and groups from diverse cultural backgrounds that MCNT are privileged to represent and who now form the social and cultural foundations of the Northern Territory society, I would like to take this opportunity to say something about the Council.

MCNT is a non-profit organisation with an elected, hard working Committee, a small and equally hard working staff, and a broad cultural membership base of people and organizations that are committed to making multiculturalism a success in the Northern Territory.

For us, "Multiculturalism" is more than a policy. It is representative of the hundreds and thousands of women, men, families, communities and organizations from diverse cultural backgrounds that have arrived here to make the Northern Territory, and Australia their home and that MCNT has enthusiastically supported through every imaginable way since MCNT's inception in 1977.

The Council's work in advocating the interest, concerns and aspirations of migrants and refugees would not be possible without the financial support from the Northern Territory Government's Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Commonwealth Government's Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the Department of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

On behalf of the Council, I would like to thank the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth Governments for their strong support to MCNT.

I also wish to extend my thanks to MCNT members, and to many volunteers and individual people on the Executive who work tirelessly in a voluntary capacity towards the social, cultural and economic well being of the communities that the Council is committed to represent.

## MIGRANTS HANDBOOK

The NT Government's Office of Ethnic Affairs (now OMA), produced '*A Handbook for Migrants Looking for Work in the NT*' in 2001. This resource now requires updating to include new initiatives such as the Work Choices legislation. Its practical value to job seekers may also be improved through examples of resumes, website job search, and support that is available to establish entrepreneurial ventures. The review would include desktop research, and visits to agencies to confirm current delivery of services.

A project officer will be engaged by MCNT once the terms of reference have been finalized to research the employment issues and Expressions of Interest will be called for shortly.

## MCNT's On-Going Services

**Migration Clinic Advice:** A free migration service advice to help people in the community who cannot afford to pay for the services of a private migration agent. Low income earners or people who are economically disadvantaged, who hold a bridging or protection visa or who are applying for visas which are part of the Humanitarian or Family Immigration programs. Registered migration agents will help/advise clients on how to prepare and lodge your visa application. Our three registered migration agents volunteers are: Mr. John Newman, Mr. Yogan Sathianathan & Ms Joan Washington. Schedule is every third Monday all year from 6.00—8.00pm. Please ring the office on 8945 9122 to get an appointment.

**Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP):** This is a special community class for women only. Mothers can bring their children to class. Classes are from 9.00 am—12.00 noon Wednesdays and Thursdays at MCNT's community room in Malak. Course places are free for newly-arrived migrants or refugees who are eligible under Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs guidelines. Australian permanent residents are also invited to enrol in our program.

For more information contact **Jill Kaye (Manager) on 8946 6543 Email: [jill.kaye@cdu.edu.au](mailto:jill.kaye@cdu.edu.au)**

**Happy Migrant Social Club** Learn English – conversation / one – on - one / advanced level  
Update your General Knowledge / History / Geography. Information talks by Government & Government organizations. Play games for brain power. Social / Cultural gatherings / Excursions

**WHERE?** Casuarina Public Library

**WHEN?** Mondays & Wednesdays from 9 – 12 noon

**HOW MUCH?** \$3.00 entry fee (includes morning tea)

**PHONE:** Cecilia Raddatz (8927 3108) Sr Mary Chan (8981 8488) Selmah Beers (8983 1180)

## BECOME A FRIEND OF STATEHOOD

The Northern Territory Statehood Steering Committee is looking for Territorians interested in a voluntary role to promote Statehood during 2007.

### What does a Friend of Statehood do?

There are four types of people we are looking for:

**Frontroom** A volunteer who helps out at stalls on the show circuit, at shopping centres and markets, proudly wears their Statehood T Shirt and is willing to learn about and talk to their fellow Territorians about Statehood.

**Backroom** Someone not so comfortable with a public role but is happy to stuff a few envelopes or take on an organising capacity for stall set up and pull down.

**Talkinghead** A person who is a capable public speaker, able to understand difficult issues and put themselves in the firing line when the hard questions are asked.

**Networker** A person who wants to form their own Statehood support group or someone who wants the right information so they can talk about the issues at parties, barbeques or at the bus stop. Learn about constitutions, federalism and Statehood issues and tell your friends and acquaintances.

These are unpaid voluntary roles. T-shirts and caps are provided to Friends of Statehood.

Friends of Statehood receive appropriate support and training and will be covered by a general insurance policy for accidental injury.

Bring your own skills and talents to this important issue, and help make history!

### How can I find out more?

Contact Michael Tatham or Sharon McAlear at the Office of the Statehood Steering Committee on **(08) 8946 1437** or **email [statehood@nt.gov.au](mailto:statehood@nt.gov.au)**

- People outside Darwin are particularly encouraged to become Friends of Statehood.

- The Statehood Steering Committee expressly does not support any party political

agenda. Friends of Statehood must support and respect that principle.

- Resources may limit the numbers appointed

## ARAFURA GAMES CALLS FOR VOLUNTEERS

It's hard to believe that in a few weeks time we will be lighting the torch at the Opening Ceremony of the ninth Arafura Games. From the 12 – 19 May 2007, sporting neighbours from the Asia Pacific region and beyond will come together to compete in a spirit of friendship at the Arafura Games 2007.

Like a successful sporting team, the success of the Games is dependent on a strong united group of people working together to make the event a reality.

The Games volunteer workforce form a large and essential part of this team.

Recruitment of up to 1,000 volunteers is required to assist in staging the event which attracts approximately 5,000 participants from Australia, the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

"The volunteer workforce are always remembered fondly by Games participants - they are at the forefront of the event and are the friendly face of the Games," Arafura Games Director Adrian Curry said.

Games volunteers can choose from a number of roles including working in the accreditation or media centre, acting as team attaches to international teams, running information booths setting up at public locations or meeting and greeting teams as they arrive at Darwin Airport.

If you are interested in volunteering at Arafura Games 2007, please visit the Arafura Games website for further information on how to register

[www.arafuragames.nt.gov.au](http://www.arafuragames.nt.gov.au) or email [volunteersarafura@nt.gov.au](mailto:volunteersarafura@nt.gov.au).

## CELEBRATION OF PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE

109th Anniversary Celebration of Philippine Independence will be held on 9th June 2007 7.30pm at the Filipino Community Centre.

This is a formal gathering dinner with entertainment. For reservations/bookings and for more information please contact:

**John Rivas - FAANT President**

**Tel: 8927 3926**

**Mob: 0417 081 546**

## CONFERENCE REPORT

By: R. Narayanan

### Bi-National Conference on 'Cultural Diversity', Governance and Policy - India and Australia

Today, the notion of 'cultural diversity' has become quite salient both within and between nation-states. Until recently 'cultural diversity' as a policy issue has been more commonly understood to refer to ethnically marked difference, and its negotiation and management, particularly in the public sphere, in and by societies that are becoming increasingly heterogeneous in their cultural composition. However, the apparent trend towards homogenisation, attributed to a number of externalities, is raising concerns about the ability of nation-states to nurture differences in all aspects of cultural expression including language, creative expressions, values, ideas and histories.

Succinctly put, issues arising at a meeting point between social philosophy and public policy are:

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*Continued from...*



- Sources and significance of cultural difference in contemporary societies;
- Ways institutions and policy-makers deal with cultural diversities; and
- Policy measures as devised are problem-solving or themselves problem-prone.

Admittedly, the importance of cultural diversity is gaining momentum in policy-making agendas in present day societies. However, recognition and understanding of cultural diversities is at varied levels between nations. For some countries, the vulnerability of national cultural models in a rules-based environment is the driving force. For others, interest arises from social cohesion and human security objectives. For the most part, current discourses are yet to result in concerted action.

The prime objective of the Conference on **“Cultural Diversity, Governance and Policy: India-Australia”** organised by Indira Gandhi National Open University (**IGNOU**) and Australia-India Council (**AIC**) on 5-6 February 2007 in New Delhi, was two-fold. First is to underline the growing importance of cultural diversity in the international/bi-national and national policy agendas. Second is to highlight the varying levels of the discourse—all in an effort to stimulate discussion on building consensus on the vital importance of cultural diversity and devise appropriate policy measures to deal with whatever problems arising out of cultural diversity.

Major themes discussed in depth in the seven working sessions were:

- Towards Defining and Understanding Cultural Diversity
- Mapping Cultural Diversity in India and Australia
- Dealing with Cultural Diversity by Institutions and Policy Makers
- Exploring Diasporic Community Identities in Australia
- Cultural Diversity and Social Inequality in India and Australia

As many as thirty presentations were made by participants from Australia and India representing leading research institutions and government agencies as well as creative writers including distinguished Thomas Keneally from Australia.

The open-ended dialogue spread over two days pointed to the need for crafting policies that would lead to a democratic and pluralistic global order where the dignity and identity of the citizens are preserved and enriched. The emerging consensus underlined the need for new advocacy tools and instrumentality to ensure that the cultural rights are adequately mainstreamed in the current policy discourse. The deliberations offered useful insights to policy-makers to evolve a corpus of principles that might form the basis for making and administering laws in the arena of culture.

**R. Narayanan**  
Adjunct Professor  
**School of Social Sciences**  
**Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi -- 110065**

## CRISIS IN OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

There are disturbing reports in the ABC's Country Hour that the people of East Timor are preparing to face a serious rice shortage. Reports are coming in that people are hungry and children malnourished. Late rains and poor production has severely affected the supply of rice. The East Timorese became rice dependent during the Indonesian occupations and now, approximately fifty percent of rice is produced in East Timor. The balance is imported.

In previous years, the government was a major player in the distribution of rice and, in some respects, still is. There is a limited school distribution program for children as well as supplementary health programs for pregnant women but the existing political and economic circumstances have become so disrupted by the ongoing civil unrest, this year's poor harvest will be compounded by a lack of international aid. The East Timorese fear that the shortage will take a heavy toll on their lives.

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

Recent events have seen major changes to the shape of the national political landscape. The Federal Opposition now looks in a serious position as an alternative government in the foreseeable future. For this reason, multicultural communities across the country, including in the Northern Territory, are aware of possible changes to the current government's strategic policy objectives in Multicultural Affairs at the next federal election.

The MCNT is, of course, objective when it comes to political change. The MCNT must always ensure that, whoever is in Government, MCNT's obligations are to its members and stakeholders. We are all familiar with the policy position of the current Federal Government on all aspects of immigration, refugees, settlement, visa applications across all areas of multicultural affairs.

Three areas to watch - possibly the ones that have generated the most controversy - are policy changes to the citizenship requirements, refugees, and the expanding skilled migration program, or the 457 visa. Many 457 visa holders have found that the conditions and wages they applied for have not materialized.

There are currently two investigations underway: the Ministerial Council on Immigration and Multi-

cultural Affairs (MCIMA) established in July 2006 by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to 'identify and implement cooperative measures to ensure the effectiveness, fairness and integrity of the temporary skilled migration arrangements, including appropriate and consistent minimum standards'. The MCIMA report is likely also to focus on conditions and wages of 457 visa holders, including labour market tests, the new Australian citizenship requirements (English language), and the ability of various State and Territory Governments to monitor, comply and cooperate over 457 visa related issues in their constituency.

The other investigation was announced in December 2006 by Don Randall (Federal Member for Canning, WA) and Chair of the Federal Parliamentary Migration Committee. According to a report by Geoffrey Maslen in the House of Representatives Magazine and Bob Kinnaird, labour market analyst, the Migration Committee will also likely assess the impact of 457 visas and migrant eligibility for citizenship.

The number of workers on 457 visas has jumped by 80 percent in 3 years with an intake of 50,000 in 2006 and an estimated 100,000 vacancies listed by the Department of Employment and Work-

place Relations in offshore skills assessment centres established in several countries in Asia, Britain and South Africa. To quote Kinnaird, 'for the first time in Australia, this year, there will probably be more temporary visas granted than skilled permanent residence visas'

Among the many questions to consider are these: what does a change of government at the Federal level mean for recent developments in multiculturalism, or even for the currency of the word itself? It's worth remembering that Australia is a federation and, while the Migration Act is Federal, legislation governing workers rights and exploitation is a combination of both State/Territory, and Federal. Currently, all State and Territory Governments are Labor. Will a change of Government affect the 457 visa program or the new citizenship test?

We already know that some agencies and industries engage in misleading recruitment practices and exploitation of 457 visa holders and there is no doubt that these issues will be high up on the political agenda. This, together with policies affecting refugees, detention centres, and changes to the citizenship test are big issues to watch for the impending federal election.

*Reader's comments and letters referring to the editorial are welcome, (Ed)*

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**COMMUNITY ART EXHIBITION**

As part of International No Diet Day (May 6<sup>th</sup> 2007, Nightcliff Markets)

the YWCA's Sisters project is organizing an  
ART EXHIBITION.

We are looking for art focusing on body image, self esteem, and the beauty of the human body in all its unique varieties of shapes and sizes.

To contribute, find out more, to organize or attend an art making workshop  
please contact:

**Lisa on 89 45 13 72 or email [sistersproject@ywcaofdarwin.org.au](mailto:sistersproject@ywcaofdarwin.org.au)**

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