



MULTICULTURALISM MATTERS

MCNT'S Newsletter

Message from the President, Jenny Medwell

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Citizenship Test Rejected by the NT Ethnic Communities

In September 2006, MCNT facilitated a community consultative meeting to respond to the Commonwealth's Discussion Paper entitled "*Australian Citizenship; much more than a ceremony*". The meeting was attended by 43 representatives from different ethnic organizations in Darwin.

The meeting responded to the four questions outlined in the Discussion Paper and they were as follows:

1 **Should Australia introduce a formal citizenship test?**

There was a unanimous decision that the test is not needed and that it was a step backwards which will reduce the number of migrants taking up citizenship. The participants questioned the link between passing a test and being Australian.

There was a view that the formal test would disadvantage migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds and those with low level of literacy. Furthermore, the participants believed that the test may create a group of second class citizens in Australia ie those who are unable to pass the test. They argued that the qualification for Australian citizenship should not be higher for new comers than it is for the general population.

2. **What level of English is required to participate as an Australian citizen?**

The participants expressed the view that migrants particularly those from non-English backgrounds are motivated for their own advantage to attain functional level of English as this is a requirement to obtain and retain work and access services.

The participants noted that Year 3 Level MAP testing (multi level assessment) reflects the national benchmark indicating the capacity of individuals to function socially and economically. However, observations were made that not every educated Australian born individual has reached the Year 3 level of English proficiency. Therefore, the meeting believed that the qualification for Australian citizenship for newly arrived and established migrants should not be higher than it is for the general population.

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It was expressed at the meeting that some refugees have specific problems that have not been address by current services to date particularly those who have experienced torture and trauma that may have impact on their ability to learn English. Some Refugees with a low level of English may not pass the citizenship test, thus making it impossible for them to be reunited with their family.

3. How important is knowledge of Australia for Australian Citizenship?

The participants expressed the view that an understanding of life in Australia is an important part of a successful integration to the Australian community. However, they believed that knowledge of Australia should not be included in a formal test to gain citizenship as it is a natural pathway in the learning process as migrants integrate into the community.

4. How important is a demonstrated commitment to Australia's way of life and values for those intending to settle permanently, or for a significant period of time in Australia?

The participants considered that the above question was ambiguous. What is to be demonstrated is the intention testable, and if so how should it be tested.

Participants noted that there is discordance of view about Australian values and that there isn't any set of values that one could get most Australians to sign up to or actually practice. Values are inspirational, just as is our democracy.

Another outcome of this meeting is the establishment of the Australian Citizenship Test Working Group who will continue to lobby for non-testing of migrants in order to acquire citizenship. The group has developed a petition form for members of the community to sign and this is enclosed in this Newsletter. The Group is urging the community to rally against the introduction of the citizenship test. The form can also be obtained electronically/email at admin@mcnt.org.au and/or by ringing MCNT on 89459122. MCNT thanked those people in the community who have already signed the petition.

Abolishment of Multiculturalism Policy

The Howard Government to date has not made an announcement if it is going to update the current multicultural policy and currently, discussion is yet to happen about what would happen to this policy.

John Howard keeps talking about "integration" and "cohesive society" and his abhorrence towards "zealous multiculturalism". A similar view is echoed in Janet Albrechtsen of the Australian Newspaper in her article dated 29 November 2006 when she said "*move over multiculturalism, your time is past*". She stated in her article that "*Andrew Robb, Parliamentary Secretary for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs is trying to dislodge the multicultural mentality that was imposed on the nation more than 30 years ago. But it won't happen until the Howard Government formally ditches multiculturalism, a deliberately slippery word*".

The Australian multiculturalism recognizes, accepts, respects and celebrates cultural diversity. The four principles that underpin the multicultural policy are: responsibilities of all, respect for each person, fairness for each person and benefits for all.

MCNT re-affirms its support towards the principles of the existing multicultural policy which have provided Australia a framework for maximizing the social, cultural and economic benefits that a cultural diversity brings to Australia.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Executive Committee and Staff to wish everyone warm greetings for the festive season.



Message from Robert Williams, Policy & Project Director

Youth Issues

In response to the youth tensions in the northern suburbs, MCNT convened a meeting of government agencies and service providers.

Out of that meeting, a working party comprised of NT Police, Mission Australia, The SHAK, Melaleuca and MCNT was formed. This group is holding five one day camps for different groups of youth to voice their opinions on a range of issues affecting them. The comments will be summarized and presented to stakeholders in January 2007.

One of the outcomes to date is that MCNT has lobbied the Attorney General to amend the legislation whereby minors may be named in the media. The NT is the only State/Territory in Australia that allows this, leading youth to fulfill the sensationalized media image projected of them.

FECCA Transformations Conference November 2006

During November, I attended the Transformations Conference in Canberra. Andrew Robb, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration, promoted the need for citizenship testing, and stated that Australia should be one community, not composed of groups of communities. He also moved that the term "multiculturalism" was over-used and had lost its meaning, and that other more appropriate words should be used to describe cultural diversity. His address was politely received.

In his address Andrew Metcalfe, Secretary to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, stated that DIMA had previously been "process rich yet outcomes poor", however they were now working proactively to ensure fair access and equity to all its clients. They are now changing their culture to be client focused, acknowledging that even administrators must be client orientated because they support the workers who are face to face with clients.

The Multicultural Council's 2007

Interfaith Harmony Calendar:

a message of peace

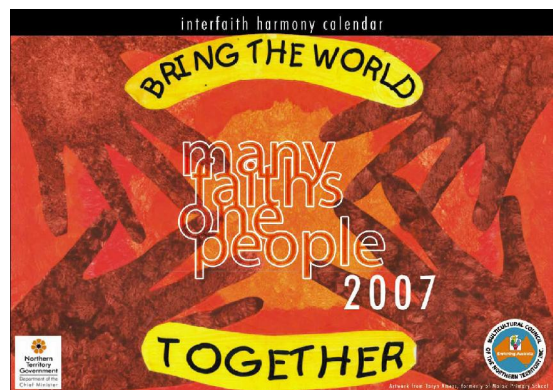
MCNT is once again producing the 2007 Interfaith Calendar funded by the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

For this new calendar, it was decided to select posters that conveyed the theme of 'peace'.

The 2007 Interfaith Harmony Calendar again highlights the significant religious festivals, holy days and feasts for the major faiths represented in the Northern

Territory. Bahá'í, Islamic and Jewish Holy Days begin at sunset on the previous day to the dates indicated. All Islamic, and certain Hindu and Buddhist Holy Days are calculated on a lunar calendar, vary from year to year, and are the closest approximations with possible local variations.

Each month features a prayer for peace from a major faith or religious tradition in the Territory, and features an inspirational artwork from the 2005 'Many Faiths, One People' poster competition. The information for this calendar has been derived from authoritative sources, and every attempt has been made to verify its accuracy and relevance to the Territory. This calendar has been published with the aim of broadening awareness and understanding of religious diversity and to promote interfaith and community har-



Project Update by: Betchay Mondragon

Multicultural Solutions Parenting Project

In the previous issue, I was wet behind the ears as Project Officer. Nowadays, I feel I have found my bearing and made enough connections in the community to feel confident to move around and make things happen. I must say, this update will seem like it was a full packed, full on three months – because I think it was!

October School Holiday

The October School Holidays had a dozen children singing, dancing, feeling good and wreaking havoc in the MCNT office premises and community room. During that period, we also had guest, DJ Fat Albert, courtesy of the NT Aids and Hepatitis Council who came on a Wednesday afternoon to scratch some vinyl records, provide cool music and get the young people dancing. Thanks to the support of Ausdance NT, we had a dance tarket floor and the Darwin Symphony Orchestra who lent us their platforms which provided a stage for our DJ. We had about 60 people coming and going, great break dancers from Style Impressions Krew and a good number of passers by from the local community telling us we were doing a good job.



Sing, Dance And Feel Good



Break Dance Competition

Mural on Youth Living Together in Harmony

Winners for this competition were Mia Kolpondinos & Eric Lawrence who were awarded \$100 each while Dylan Brown and Mitchell Whelan shared the prize money getting \$50 each.



Robert Williams, MCNT Policy and Project Director awards Mia Kolpondinos, one of the winners for the Mural Design Competition.

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HOOPS FOR HEALTH

Hoops for Health is a lifestyle program targeting young people, using basketball as a tool to incorporate healthy, well-being and life success skills with sports and physical activities. Timmy Duggan, former player of the National Basketball League of Australia and creator of this program was contracted to work with children and parents for three Saturdays.



The participants were given slide shows, talk-ups, ball handling tricks, tips on eating healthy and three days of basketball. A portable hoop was set up at the car park behind the MCNT office



SOMALI CHILDREN'S FUN DAY

As part of the celebration of National Children's Week (Oct 21-29, 2006), small grants were made available to the community. Following from the submission writing skills development workshops facilitated by former Capacity Building Officer Jenny Milne, I encouraged Fatuma Ahmed Ali (Somali woman and child care worker) and Issa Ntigahera (from Burundi and coach of the Super Eagles all African youth soccer team) to prepare a grant application.

Fatuma was successful in her application which allowed her to run five days of children's activities including the teaching of traditional songs and dances, a history of Somalia, lots of fun activities and healthy meals prepared by the mothers with assistance from the Multicultural Solutions *What's for Lunch?* activity.



Fatuma with the participants to the SOMALI Children's Fun Day

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SHARING CULTURAL PARENTING KNOWLEDGE

All the video shooting is completed and what a wonderfully exhilarating and cathartic experience, to inspire families to reflect on their strengths, to discover the depth of parenting knowledge that has been attained and to realise our cultural affluence.

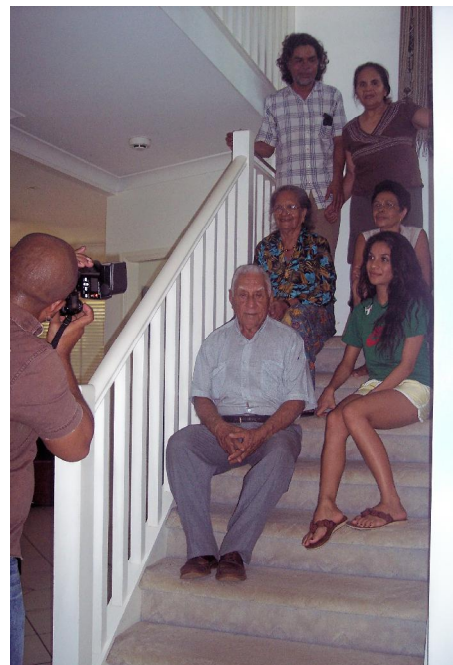
The DVD featured families from East Timor, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Somalia and a colourful mix of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Maori. The long, tedious and highly technical work that is post production is now well underway and will hopefully be ready for a private viewing by the families before final editing takes place.

Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Ms. Hon Delia Lawrie, shared our excitement over the project and has offered to host the launch in February 2007 at Parliament House! We'll keep you posted!



AT TRACKS DANCE REHEARSAL SPACE
TO VIDEO THE GRAY FAMILY

AT THE
CASIMIRO
HOME IN
DURACK



International Students Orientation

Charles Darwin University is conducting a compulsory orientation for all international students commencing each semester.

Charles Darwin University has a very diverse group of students ranging from Indian to Chinese and African. Each year, we aim to introduce community members to the new students, to enable them to meet someone from Darwin, with similar cultural backgrounds. This will help them facilitate the transition period and often leaves them feeling less '*out of place*' and helps create a support network among the students.

This year, we have allocated approximately 30 minutes of introduction plus one hour lunch where the students will get the opportunity to talk to the community members. Everyone is invited to attend.

The date has been set for **Monday 19 February 2007 at 12.15pm on Casuarina Campus. Building 31, Level 3, Room 3.**

For more information and booking details, please contact **Vibeke Foss**, Student Facilitator (International Support) on 8946 6288 or Email: vibeke.foss@cdu.edu.au

English students try their hand at sewing!

For Abdi Gedi, the Certificate I in Clothing Production at Charles Darwin University has given him the opportunity to improve his English while perfecting tailor making skills already learnt in his country.

Before he became a refugee, Abdi was a self-taught tailor for 17 years in Mogadishu. He operated his own small business with four machines and two employees where he sewed clothing for men and women as well as upholstery.

Abdi and his seven children, came to Darwin from Somalia one year ago. He is currently studying English at the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). Certificate I in Clothing Production was a joint venture between Fashion Studies and the AMEP and was the result of a successful DEET tender.

The students in the class originated from many different countries which included Somalia, Indonesia, Cambodia, East Timor, Liberia and Vietnam.

“The sewing course has been very fantastic because I had a sewing teacher and an English teacher to help me. When I made a mistake, the teachers showed me and I know many things now.”

One day, Abdi would like to have his own business here; when he knows more about business in Australia. He is also considering undertaking Certificate 2 in Clothing Production but at the moment his mind is on the arrival of his wife and three more of his children in Darwin next week.



Abdi hard at work at the sewing machine



Ladies at work

Youth Profile



Padiet Ajout is a student in the Adult Migrant English Program at Charles Darwin University. He is also studying in The Special Preparatory Program for Youth.

Where do you come from? *Sudan.*

How long have you been in Darwin? *A year and a bit.*

What are you studying? *English at the Adult Migrant English Program, Charles Darwin Uni. I'm also doing some other subjects in the afternoon like driving and computers.*

How long did you study in Sudan? *Until year 8 in Sudan and then I finished High School in Egypt.*

What languages do you speak? *Dinka, Arabic and English.*

What are your plans for the future? *I'm thinking about 2 things. I'd like to do Law or maybe Architecture.*

What do you like about Darwin? *The people are good here. It's a good place to study and it's quiet.*

Social Security Agreement between Australia and Switzerland

The Dept of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has issued a statement that a Social Security Agreement between Australia and Switzerland has been signed. The Agreement is expected to begin operating in 2008, after the relevant legislation is passed and other necessary changes have been made in both countries.

Under the Agreement, Australia and Switzerland will each broadly share the support of those people who have spent part of their working life in both countries. People will be able to move between Australia and Switzerland knowing that their pension rights are recognised in both countries.

The text of the Agreement is available on the website: www.facsia.gov.au

Global Sound

The Centre for Folklife & Cultural Heritage of the Smithsonian Institute in the US has a huge library of recordings from around the world that can be purchased. If any individual or group has a recording then that can be added to the collection, and when copies are purchased, royalties are paid to the originator. Check their web site www.smithsonianglobalsound.org.

NOTICES

Christmas Closures The MCNT office and Community Room in Malak will be close during the Festive Season starting from 23rd December to 1st January 2007 inclusive. The Council will resume its normal business activity on the 2nd January 2007. Bookings to the Community Room will be suspended during the closures dates.

Australia China Friendship Social Christmas Function is on Saturday 16 December at MCNT Community Room. Please come at 6.30 pm for 7.00 start. For further information please ring Dr. Chaplin Hsiung on 0417 814 626

Centrelink Public Holiday payment arrangements Centrelink makes special arrangements over holiday periods so the payments you or your family may receive are not delayed by the holidays. Remember to read your forms carefully over the holiday period to find out when they should be returned. Some people will receive specially coloured forms to show they have an early return date.

For more information in languages other than English, call 131 202 Visit the internet at www.centrelink.gov.au

Do You Know Someone Who Should Receive an Australia Day Award?

Nominations are now open for the NT Achiever Award. This award is announced by the Chief Minister on the eve of Australia Day, 25 January.

The award recognises outstanding achievement by a Territorian in the areas of either the Arts, Sports, Work Place and/or Community Service.

Nomination forms can be downloaded from www.australiadaynt.com.au or by phoning the Australia Day Council NT on 8924 4204.

Nominations close MONDAY 8 January 2007



Do You Know What You Will Be Doing on 26 January 2007?

Australia Day is our National Day and there are lots to do across the Territory. Flag Raisings and Citizenship Ceremonies, Breakfasts, BBQs, Fun Runs, Family Days, Ute Run, footy games, art exhibitions are just some of the events planned.

Closer to the day, check out the Australia Day website www.australiadaynt.com.au for more information.

Or, plan to have your own celebration. Invite your neighbours and friends. And above all, on Australia Day make it a point to Celebrate what's great!



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.

[Sponsored by NT Government Office of Multicultural Affairs]

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**



The AMEP is funded by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs

Happy Migrant Social Club Learn English – conversation / one – on - one / advanced level
Update your General Knowledge / History / Geography
Information talks by Government & Non-Government organisations
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)

[Sponsored by NT Government Office of Multicultural Affairs]



2006/07 Executive Office Bearers and Committee Members in their respective Portfolio(s)

Office Bearers

Jenny Medwell (<i>President</i>)	Human Rights, Reconciliation & Equal Opportunity, Immigration & Family Services
Vijay Daniels (<i>Snr Vice Pres</i>)	Media and (Arts & Culture)
Lea Mussak (<i>Vice President</i>)	Ethnic Schools & Languages and Human Resource
Asma Akram (<i>Secretary</i>)	Women's Affairs and Migration Services
Luchi Santer (<i>Treasurer</i>)	Marketing and Promotion and (Human Resource)

Committee Members

Dominique Adjudra	Disability and (Refugee Settlement)
Cheryl Ahmat	Arts and Culture and (Women's Affairs)
Vibeke Foss	Education & Employment and (Women's Affairs)
George Jerue	Health and Youth Affairs and (Education and Employment)
Maria Koukouvas	Refugee Settlement
Juan Romero	Families and Children Services and Seniors

MCNT's Staff Update

The **Minister for Multicultural Affairs**, the **Hon Delia Lawrie** visited the Multicultural Council at Malak on Tuesday 5th December. She exchanged greetings and interacted with the Executive Committee and Staff

Jenny Milne with the completion of Capacity Building and Settlement of Skilled Dependants projects where she is the Project Officer so does her contract which concluded on 31st October 2006. This project lasted for 1 year under the Community Settlement Services Scheme grant from the Dept of Immigration & Multicultural Affairs (DIMA). The Committee and staff thanked her for all her hard work and effort for making this project viable.

Ron Mitchell is back again with the Council. This time around he will be doing the production of 2007 calendar. This Project is funded by the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA).

A **new position** for another **Project Officer** has emerged due to the grant approved from Dept of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) under **the Settlement Grant Programme**. The objective of this project is to deliver services which assist clients and communities in the Settlement Target Group and the dependents of skilled migrants with low English proficiency in rural and regional areas to become self-reliant and participate equitably in Australian society as soon as possible after arrival.

MCNT has granted another grant from **OMA** under the *Quick Responses Grants*. The project called **'Youth activities in Darwin Northern Suburbs over the December 06 School Holiday'** is to conduct a range of recreational and social activities that are aimed at reducing the current level of anti-social behaviour, whilst promoting respect of other cultures and giving youth an opportunity to express their views at forums.



Postal Address:

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Fax: (08) 8945 9155

Email: admin@mcnt.org.au

Website: www.mcnt.org.au

MCNT is sponsored by
The Northern Territory Government
through the Office of Multicultural
Affairs



Northern Territory Government
Department of the Chief Minister

The Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory (MCNT) is the Peak body dedicated to advocacy and representing the interests, concerns and aspirations of people of Non English Speaking Immigrant and Refugee Background.

Our aims and objectives are:

- To ensure the right of ethnic communities to a fair go, a fair share of community resources and their full participation in decision making in issues which concern and/or affect them;
- To assist in the settlement of migrants and refugees and inform them on aspects of life in Australia;
- To lobby for best practice service delivery models which meet our stakeholders' needs for access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services;
- To manage the Council's activities in a responsible and transparent manner to the benefit of our constituency;
- To be a strong voice for the Northern Territory at the national level;
- To encourage and support multicultural and ethnic organizations to maintain and share the social and cultural life of their communities;
- To promote joint action and cooperation between multicultural and ethnic communities and partnerships with service providers on issues of common concern;
- To achieve a truly multicultural society where diversity is celebrated and where there is no discrimination and disadvantage based on race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, culture and language;
- To focus on outcomes and meet performance agreements.

The President of MCNT, Jenny
Medwell and the Executive
Committee Members and staff
Wishes each and everyone a joy-
ous and wonderful
Holiday Festive Season!!!



MCNT does not take responsibility for the accuracy of news items, nor are the opinions expressed herein the official position of the Council. Opinions and contributions from MCNT members and supporters are always welcome.



HAPPY NEW YEAR