



Multicultural Western Australia

Newsletter of the Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI)

October 2008



A day in the life of a Muslim Student

Al-Hidayah Islamic School was recently declared the WA Primary School Winner in the Panasonic's Kid Witness News New Vision Awards for 2008.

Teacher Norani Ahmad and students Fatima Noor and Siti Nurul Aimiza Hj Zaini were flown to the Gold Coast in Queensland for the Awards night at Sea World on Thursday 3 September 2008. They were presented with a Trophy, Certificate and \$2000 worth of Panasonic products.

Year 6 student Fatima (11) said the video aimed to correct the misconceptions about Muslim students.

"Our video is titled *A Day in the Life of a Muslim Student*," she said. "We want to spread the message that we are just like any other students in Australia."

"People think of us as different because of the clothes we wear and they think we have a secretive life. I've been teased because of the clothes I wear, but apart from the clothes, we are like any normal kids."

"We enjoy sports, play games and love jumping around during break time. The video shows us participating in sports, our classroom activities and what our school life is like." Fatima added.

Teacher Norani Ahmad said the video portrayed the multi-national mix of students of the primary school.

Kid Witness News (KWN) is a hands-on video education program created to encourage students to develop valuable cognitive, communication and organisational skills through the use of video.

This unique program provides schools with an array of video equipment and offers participants the opportunity to develop their interests, abilities and creativity through the production of videos.

Full details and the video clip can be accessed from KWN website at www.panasonic.com.au/kwn/winners_2008.cfm .

MESSAGE FROM THE HON JOHN CASTRILLI MLA MINISTER FOR CITIZENSHIP AND MULTICULTURAL INTERESTS

I feel proud and privileged to become the Minister for Multicultural Interests and Citizenship.

My father came to Australia from Italy in 1952 and my mother, sister and I arrived two years later. I was three years old and did not speak English until I started school. Starting a new life in Australia wasn't easy for my family but it wasn't long before we were immersed within the Australian way of life. At the same time, our family maintained and celebrated our rich culture at every opportunity.

My commitment to multiculturalism led to my appointment as a Commissioner of the former Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission between 1988 and 1991.

My professional career has included two years with the South West Development Commission as the Developmental Planner and Projects Financial Consultant, seven years with the Department of Commerce and Trade as the Senior Regional Trade Officer and eight years as a partner in Bunbury Finance Pty Ltd.

I was elected to the West Australian Parliament in February 2005 as the Member for Bunbury. I entered parliament with extensive community and local government experience having served as a Councillor for six years before being elected Mayor of Bunbury in 1997 and 2001. I have also recently accepted Honorary Citizenship of Jiaxing, China and Honorary Citizenship of Setagaya, Japan, and I thank my friends in both countries.

I think it's very important to highlight the positive impact that ethnic communities have made to the social, economic and cultural development of Western Australia. I am also keen to actively address the real issues facing culturally and linguistically diverse communities including racism, barriers to employment and marginalisation in the housing market.

I often reflect on the sacrifices my parents made to migrate to this magnificent State and believe it is my responsibility to do the very best that I can for the wellbeing of current and future communities. I assure you that I am genuine and serious about listening to the multicultural sector and I look forward to working closely and collaboratively with you.





GOSNELLS WOMEN'S HEALTH SERVICE Facilitating the Social Inclusion of Migrant/Refugee Women & Children

In July 2007 Gosnells Women's Health Service commenced an OMI Community Relations Integration Officer (CRIO) Project with the focus on multicultural parenting and maternal wellbeing. This 12 month project was successful in engaging 87 women from over 15 cultural backgrounds.

The project had a dual focus on establishing social support groups for migrant/refugee women and developing play programs for their children. A close partnership with the Gowrie WA Multicultural Supported Playgroups ensured that the project met the needs of the women and their children. Strategies such as employing bilingual community workers, providing home visits, and transporting families ensured that the activities provided by both Gosnells Women's Health Service and the Gowrie WA were accessible for the women.

Social isolation emerged as one of the greatest challenges facing migrant/refugee women with young children. Social isolation of the women impacted negatively on maternal well being, parenting capacity and the availability of avenues for generating social networks. The children's attachment relationships, developmental outcomes, and preparedness for kindergarten/school were all negatively affected by the family's isolation.

Funding through OMI's Community Grants Program has meant that the organisation can continue to support these women for several months beyond the life of the original CRIO funding. A weekly Multicultural Mothers Support Group will be held in Thornlie so that migrant/refugee women and women from the wider community can come together with their children to socialise and develop social networks and community connections. Activities and information sessions will also be provided on a range of topics identified by the women that will help to equip them with the skills, resources and confidence to increase their capacity to engage in all aspects of life in Australia. Culturally and developmentally appropriate play and social opportunities for their children will be provided to assist in developing positive parent/child relationships and to prepare the children for the transition from home to school.

For more information please contact Anna Lambeck at Gosnells Women's Health Service on 9490 2258.



Regina Jin with Project Officer Amorette Dyer updating her resume to reflect her new skills

Extra Edge to Apprenticeship and Traineeships

Extra Edge Community Services (EECS) has been funded by the Office of Multicultural Interests to open doors to apprenticeships and traineeships for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. EECS operates in the South East Metropolitan region where there has been a recent hike in migration numbers, in particular those from African countries.

Commencing in March 2008 the EECS has partnered with Joblink Midwest in Geraldton and Rainbow Coast Neighbourhood Centre in Albany to extend the project outside the metropolitan area. Already, the project has received a lot of interest from the community. A key outcome of the project will be a best practice model to increase access to apprenticeships and traineeships by those from CALD backgrounds that can be adopted more widely by training and employment agencies.

The project celebrated an early milestone in July with one of its participants, Regina Jin, obtaining employment in a Cert III Aged Care Traineeship with Howard Solomon Nursing Home. Like all participants, Regina went through a process of career exploration and employability skills training. Regina needed to learn basic industry specific skills and gain some local work experience in aged care. This was accessed through RTO Assist, a registered training organisation that specialises in aged care. Although Regina was not eligible for government funding for the course, this barrier was overcome by using funds available through the EECS project.

EECS provides career information and advice through its Employment Directions Network services and these are available to everyone. For more information about the project or their other services please contact Amorette Dyer on telephone 9333 2000 or email amorette@ees.org.au.

Fremantle Multicultural Driving Practice Project

Fremantle Multicultural Centre is helping newly arrived migrants and refugees overcome hurdles they face in getting their Driver's Licence.

Funded by the Office of Multicultural Interests through its Community Grants Program, the six month project will help clients get their Learner's Permit, and provide driving lessons and mentoring to complete the required 25 hours of driving practice.

An expected 30 people will benefit from the course which will be offered in Fremantle and Mandurah. The course is already fully subscribed however if you would like more information, please contact Peter Scott on (08) 9336 8282.

Are you happy with the health and disability services you have received?

The WA State Government agency that deals with complaints against health and disability service providers is keen to hear more from people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The Office of Health Review (OHR), an independent state government agency, is responsible for assisting in the resolution of disputes between consumers and service providers. OHR staff members deal with complaints ranging across the entire range of health and disability services.

Director Anne Donaldson said that the Office encourages people to contact them if they have a complaint.

“Our Office in Perth deals with people and organisations right throughout the State,” she said.

“Our main role is to help ease or resolve complainants’ concerns confidentially and impartially.”

“We deal with complaints from people of all ethnic backgrounds, however we do hope to see more from people from diverse backgrounds as they appear to be under-represented on our complaints database.”

Ms Donaldson said that her staff are experienced at working with people from varying backgrounds, and are conscious of how a complainant’s beliefs or cultural background may impact on a complaint.

“We recently dealt with a case where a pregnant woman presented to her hospital with symptoms that she felt indicated problems with her unborn baby. The woman was told that the symptoms were normal and asked to come back for her normal scheduled appointments. Unfortunately the woman later miscarried and she felt that this could have been prevented had the hospital carried out a more thorough examination.”

“The complainant and her husband came to us because their concerns had not been resolved at hospital level. They were concerned at the prospect of suffering from some kind of retribution, which apparently could have been the case in their home nation.”

“After our staff convinced the couple that they had nothing to fear from raising the complaint with the hospital, a conciliation meeting was held where the hospital apologised to the couple and provided an explanation for what had happened, and offered support services. The couple found the outcome to be very satisfactory.”

“So even in the most tragic circumstances, and with the challenges involved in cross-cultural communication, we can often still deliver benefits to both parties involved in a dispute.”

Ms Donaldson said that people are encouraged to contact the Office even if they just want to make a telephone enquiry.

The Office of Health Review can be contacted for confidential advice between 8.30am and 4.30pm Monday to Friday on 9323 0600 or free-call 1800 813 583. The Office will pay for the use of interpreters and translators if they are required. Complaints and queries can also be lodged online at www.healthreview.wa.gov.au



OHR Director, Anne Donaldson

Meet Pierre Luboya



Pierre Luboya is the current President of the Congolese Community of WA Inc. (COCOWA). Pierre joined COCOWA immediately after coming to Australia in 2004 and was elected president of COCOWA in January 2008.

Pierre has worked with Centrelink as a contract

Interpreter and as the Coordinator of Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy Program (IHSS) with Catholic Migrant Centre (Centrecare Migrant Services). He has also been involved in voluntary work including providing members of his community with information about Australian laws, life skills and settlement issues. Pierre is currently studying at Murdoch University.

As the President of COCOWA, Pierre is committed to the activities of the association and, with the support of the Executive Committee, he is determined to build COCOWA as a strong and effective African community organisation in Western Australia.

“Australia is a country of opportunities” says Pierre. He encourages all adult members of COCOWA to work hard and maintain the standards of this country that has so generously accommodated them. Pierre has also been encouraging young people to further their education, which is a key to their future here in Australia, in Congo or elsewhere.

Pierre exhorts all Congolese living in Australia to individually and collectively take considerable steps towards building bridges and creating networks for the benefit of Congo DR, Africa and Australia.

The Congolese Community Association was formed in 2000 and was incorporated in July 2002.



The Constitutional Centre of WA, WA Electoral Education Centre and WA Parliamentary Education Office offer a Joint Civics Education program for community groups and schools. The Joint Civics Education program can be conducted at the Constitutional Centre of WA in West Perth or a presenter may be able to attend your venue. The program runs for approximately two hours.

Participants examine our constitutional framework, state and federal powers and the state preferential voting system, including participation in a mock election. Other exercises explain our state parliamentary system and processes. Material is delivered in English and an interpreter can be arranged if required.

If your group is interested in learning more about our democracy contact Luke Garswood, Principal Policy Officer – Citizenship at OMI on 9222 8841.

2008 International Year of Languages

On 16 May 2007, The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2008 the International Year of Languages in an effort to encourage multilingualism as a means of promoting, protecting and preserving diversity of languages and cultures globally.

In his message for the International Year of Languages, the UNESCO Director-General, Mr Koïchiro Matsuura said “Languages are indeed essential to the identity of groups and individuals and to their peaceful coexistence. They constitute a strategic factor of progress towards sustainable development and a harmonious relationship between the global and the local context”.

In Australia, besides English as the official language, some 200 languages are spoken in the community including more than 60 different languages spoken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Celebrating the International Year of Languages provides an excellent opportunity to acknowledge and support this diversity of languages we enjoy in Australia.

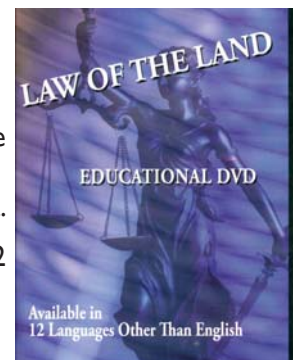
To mark the occasion, OMI has translated and placed on its website information about OMI programs and services in 12 community languages: Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Dari, Dinka, Farsi, Indonesian, Kirundi, Mandarin, Serbian, Swahili and Vietnamese.

This multilingual information is accessible from the OMI website at www.multicultural.wa.gov.au.

“Law of the Land”

The Ethnic Communities Council of WA Inc (ECCWA) has produced a multilingual educational DVD about the law and justice system of Australia to assist new migrants settling in Australia.

The DVD is produced in English and 12 community languages and covers legal implications in practical areas such as family and domestic violence, identity theft, substance abuse, traffic offences and racial vilification.



The DVD was officially launched by the Federal Attorney-General, the Hon Robert McClelland MP, at Multicultural House in North Perth on Wednesday 10 September 2008.

Launching the DVD the Attorney-General said: “When coming to Australia, it’s important that all new citizens learn about our norms, our values – and our laws. This way, they can understand what’s legal and illegal, acceptable and unacceptable”.

ECCWA President, Ramdas Sankaran stated the DVD would have a positive impact on crime prevention and social cohesion and thanked the Federal Attorney-General’s Department and the Law Society of WA Public Purposes Trust for funding the Council to produce ‘Law of the Land’.

The DVDs are in English, Amharic, Arabic, Bosnian, Burmese, Cantonese, Dari, Dinka, French, Mandarin, Kirundi, Somali and Swahili.

Copies of the DVD can be obtained, free of charge, from ECCWA office at 20 View Street, North Perth. Please telephone ECCWA on 9227 5322 to reserve your copies.

More Artists Wanted!

More than 150 people have already had their say in Deakin University’s investigation into issues facing artists from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds in Western Australia through focus groups, telephone and face-to-face interviews.

The researchers are interested in hearing from more artists and are encouraging people to take part in a telephone interview or an on-line survey.

Early results reveal that artists’ experiences are as diverse as their cultural background. They also indicate that arts organisations are becoming increasingly aware of the need for the Australian arts scene to connect more with Asia and that there is a need for the Perth CBD to provide a more dynamic environment to support the work of artists from diverse cultures.

The research has been commissioned by the Office of Multicultural Interests with support from the Department for Culture and the Arts, Kulcha and Community Arts Network (WA).

To take part in a telephone interview for the project, please contact either Natalie Jenkins: natalie.jenkins@optusnet.com.au or Professor Ruth Rentschler: rr@deakin.edu.au. The on-line survey can be found at: <http://www.deakin.edu.au/dsa/eforms/43441/43441.htm>

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