

Multicultural Western Australia



Office of Multicultural Interests
Government of Western Australia

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Hon Ljiljana Ravlich MLC, Minister for Multicultural Interests, with children at the Harmony International FolkFest.

Harmony Week wrap up

"I lived a life that was entirely segregated by race...but I'm very thankful to my mother who taught me to think beyond the present moment. I can hear her saying 'this is not the way things are supposed to be, and they will not always be this way'." Human rights activist Angela Davis, speaking to Phillip Adams on *Late Night Live*, and to thousands of listeners around the world.

Harmony Week 2008 focused on the serious issues, such as racism, discrimination and substantive equality, while celebrating and valuing our cultural diversity. Led by Professor Angela Davis - brought to Perth for the Harmony Week Vice Chancellor's Oration - and supported by hundreds of school and community events right across the state, Western Australians from all walks of life stopped to consider their place in the community.

The events held were as diverse as the people presenting them, with world music concerts in Perth's CBD, refugee storytelling in Melville, cultural markets in Rockingham, art exhibitions in Geraldton, and debates, theatre and mural painting in our schools.

Harmony Week was launched by the Hon. Ljiljana Ravlich MLC, Minister for Multicultural Interests and Citizenship, at the *International FolkFest*, run by the Australian Asian Association. The Minister told a full house; "FolkFest highlights the rich diversity of our community through the performing arts and offers us a real opportunity to learn about the incredible range of cultures and talent that exists in Western Australia."

The thought provoking nature of Harmony Week was reflected in the media, with coverage in mainstream and community newspapers, on AM and FM radio and online. Networks that traditionally shy away from multicultural issues, such as 6PR, gave

significant coverage to Harmony Week, with three extended interviews broadcast during 15-21 March. The ABC covered it 10 times across local, national and international networks.

This year, the Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) also chose to utilise non traditional forms of media, such as Loconut - a WA social networking website - and bus shelters, to promote Harmony Week and deliver key messages. OMI was excited to see the amount of topical conversation between Loconut users.

Professor Davis' high profile Oration drew unprecedented public interest with venues completely booked out. At the same event, the inaugural *Sir Ronald Wilson Leadership Award* was presented by the Minister for Multicultural Interests and Citizenship, to the Hon Fred Chaney, for his exceptional leadership in the fields of social justice, human rights and equality.

Harmony Week was a great success, with thousands of people right around the state participating in a wonderful week of thought provoking and engaging activities and events.



Indigenous performance during St Patrick's Day at Woodside

WOODSIDE celebrates diversity

Woodside and their Indigenous staff proudly celebrated this year's Harmony Week theme, *Connect*, by offering a different way to make a connection with Aboriginal and Irish cultures. On St Patrick's Day, an event was held in the Woodside Plaza courtyard which involved Aboriginal and Irish dancing, welcome to country, Indigenous bush foods and guest speakers. This event enabled Woodside to celebrate the diversity that exists in the workplace, in a week that is about celebrating cultural differences.

WA defender of indigenous human rights awarded

A West Australian who has spent more than 30 years working to advance the rights of Indigenous people has been recognised with the inaugural *Sir Ronald Wilson Leadership Award*.

The Hon Fred Chaney AO was congratulated for his exceptional leadership in the fields of social justice, human rights, equality and anti-racism.

Multicultural Interests and Citizenship Minister, Ljiljana Ravlich, said his efforts to promote indigenous reconciliation and Native Title were particularly noted.

“The value of this work cannot be underestimated,” Ms Ravlich said. “At a time when we have made a national apology to the Stolen Generation, it’s pleasing to see that a local advocate of indigenous rights has been recognised.”

Mr Chaney is best known for his role as Leader of the Opposition in the Senate from 1983 to 1990. During that time, he managed a number of ministerial portfolios, including Aboriginal Affairs.

In 1994, he was appointed as a part-time Member of the National Native Title Tribunal, a full-time Member in April 1995 and Deputy President in April 2000.

Mr Chaney’s first involvement in indigenous affairs began when he joined the Aboriginal Legal Service in a voluntary capacity in the early 1970s.

The *Sir Ronald Wilson Leadership Award* honours the lifelong work of the late Sir Ronald Wilson, who was one of Western Australia’s most distinguished public servants, a respected



Hon Ljiljana Ravlich MLC with Hon Fred Chaney AO and Mrs Robyn Christie (Leila and Ronald Wilson's daughter)

lawyer, judge, social activist and a steadfast advocate for the disadvantaged.

His commitment to advancing the cause of minority community groups, in particular indigenous people, made him arguably without peer in this area.

The Minister said striving to build a society that was inclusive, free of prejudice and discrimination, was fundamental to the ideal of multiculturalism.

“All citizens regardless of their origin, culture, religion, ethnicity and nationality, are entitled to exercise their rights and participate fully in society,” Ms Ravlich said.

African Professionals of Australia united for professional impact.

African Professionals of Australia was incorporated in 2007. The organisation is a professional body whose mission is to contribute to professional growth and capacity of African professionals living in Australia. The association aims to achieve this by:

- encouraging innovativeness among its membership
- providing technical and professional support to both new skilled personnel arriving and those already living in Australia by conducting in-house seminars and workshops
- liaising with government agencies on existing policy issues in specific areas requiring skilled personnel
- strategic awareness and initiatives
- public awareness
- making presentations to the government and its agencies regarding curricula. This will include the nature and length of training for each particular field, and existing professional bodies that regulate practicing standards and ethics.

Inspired by its quest to contribute to high professional and ethical standards of service delivery, the association is dedicated to working with all professionals of African origin. This is with a view to meeting Australian requirements through ongoing skills assessments. The association envisions itself as a medium for the rapid integration of skilled professionals from Africa into the mainstream Australian community. The association hopes to provide information to newly arrived skilled immigrants about procedural requirements necessary for them to practice.



Members of the African Professionals of Australia Management Committee with two guest speakers at the official launch.

Employers will also be provided with information about the skills offered by the migrants.

African Professionals of Australia Inc organises workshops, events and networking opportunities for professional Australians of African backgrounds and the business community in Australia.

The next event organised by the Association is the *Social Networking for Your Future Success* workshop, which will be held on Friday 16 May 2008 at 108 St George’s Tce, Perth. To register for this workshop or for further information, telephone 0421 409 711 or visit www.apaa.org.

Don't judge a book by its cover!

"I had to escape because my father-in-law was executed, and my husband was sent to jail for 15 years and everything he owned was confiscated. All because we were Baha'i."

It's a frank explanation of a terrifying event, and one that dramatically changed the course of Parivash (Nicole) Shirfar's life. It's a story she has told many times, including during Harmony Week, as one of the City of Melville's *Living Books*. The *Living Library* twists the concept of a traditional library, where you borrow a person, not a book, and speak to them about their life experiences.

Parivash arrived in Australia as an Iranian refugee in 1985 after fleeing with her two children, then aged six and 10, across the Iranian border and into Pakistan. Given the persecution of people practicing the Baha'i faith in Iran, and the focus on her family, it was an extremely dangerous journey to take. "I couldn't even say good bye to my closest friends... the authorities came looking for me at my parent's house soon after, so it was lucky we escaped," she says.

In Pakistan, Parivash was granted a visa to Australia, after her story was confirmed, in part by a newspaper article of her father-in-law's execution - one of the only things she'd carried with her from Iran.

Speaking very little English at the time, Parivash had her share of mishaps. She accidentally took her son to the vet instead of the doctor, and had to make a quick exit when she realised. She also deliberately signed up for a Chinese Cooking class so she could learn English, finding traditional courses boring, and had to argue with her confused teacher to stay there.

Harmony hub in Mirrabooka

Mirrabooka was awash with colour, culture and creativity during Harmony Week, with community members of all ages joining in the celebrations.

Students of varying cultural backgrounds worked together throughout the week (15-21 March) to create a massive sand mural which stretched more than 150 metres across Mirrabooka Senior High School's quadrangle. The beautiful mural depicted an intricate indigenous design, using warm yellows, ochre reds and black sands. Much like the mural's extensive boundaries, a greater appreciation of the value of cultural diversity spread across the whole school, with multicultural food stalls, indigenous dance performances and a special school assembly generating an inclusive and positive vibe.

Meanwhile, the spirit of Harmony Week was being imbibed by many at the Mirrabooka Square Shopping Centre. Both the Centre Court and Town Square at the shopping centre were transformed into a cultural mixing pot of food, music, information stalls and performances, as the local community came together to celebrate and embrace their diversity.

Mayor of the City of Stirling, David Boothman said that Harmony Week is about celebrating and embracing cultural diversity so that all members of the community are able to participate equally in Australian Society.



Parivash (Nicole) Shirfar

A smiling, animated woman with an inspiringly positive attitude, Parivash says she's thankful for her life experiences, because they led her to where she is today.

Parivash believes the *Living Library* experience helps to change negative perceptions and connect people. "When you read a book, you feel it but it's only paper. When you're looking in someone's eyes, telling a story, it's so much stronger."

The Cities of Stirling and Melville *Living Library* project was awarded a grant through the Office of Multicultural Interest's Community Grants Program, and is expected to continue on throughout the year as it grows in popularity. The concept has been so successful, it has caught on around WA.

Enquiries to Marcia Coelho, City of Melville: 9364 0660 and Joanna Andrew, City of Stirling: 9345 8816.



Performers at the Mirrabooka Square Shopping Centre

"The City of Stirling is one of the most culturally diverse local government authorities in Western Australia which is the most culturally diverse state in Australia. People from more than 200 different countries live in WA and speak as many as 270 different languages", he said.

A community partnership project led by the City of Stirling known as Reel Connections led the community event. The project, which aims to promote intercultural understanding through engaging young people from diverse backgrounds in community arts projects, was launched at the Harmony Week celebrations.



Dr Casta Tungaraza, Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich MLC, Eloise Maglizza, Nadia Lancor and Mary Hakim at the International Women's Day celebrations.

Minister presents Women in Leadership Awards Ethnic communities celebrate International Women's Day.

Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia (ECCWA) organised an event on Saturday 8 March 2008 to commemorate the International Women's the Day.

The event was supported by The Office of Multicultural Interests, the National Council of Women WA Inc, and The Office for Women's Policy.

The highlight of the day was the presentation of the 2008 Women in Leadership Awards to two outstanding women, Mary Hakim and Eloise Maglizza.

Mary Hakim has worked to help Sudanese women settling in Australia. Nominating Ms Hakim, Caroline Speirs, Community Capacity Builder, Department of Child Protection, noted that "Mary is one of those hidden workers who gives her time freely to help others."

Eloise Maglizza was nominated by the Latin American Cultural Association, for her role in setting up the Spanish Speaking Seniors Association. Her nomination described her as a 'tireless' worker who "is greatly respected and loved by the seniors of the Latin American community."

In presenting the Awards, Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich MLC, Minister for Multicultural Interests and Citizenship, said "this year we are honouring a leader from the new and emerging communities and a leader from the more established communities in WA. Their example is an inspiration to all of us, particularly the younger members in our society."

Multicultural Terminology What's in a word?

For some time, the Office of Multicultural Interests has been aware that terms used in the field of multicultural interests are subject to a range of different definitions, interpretations and understanding amongst groups and individuals.

To help address the inconsistency in the use of terminology, OMI has developed a list of working definitions for terms and acronyms which have been adapted and drawn from a variety of sources. Your comments on the definitions are welcome as the terms are intended to be updated and amended based on comment by ethnic communities, government agencies and service providers.

Go to www.multicultural.wa.gov.au to view the definitions.

Brockman House Community Relations Integration Officer (CRIO) Program

Brockman House in Beechboro is providing a focal point for families from Iraq who have made Perth their home. Iraqi Family Resource Worker, Fadhila Veal, is employed through the Office of Multicultural Interests' Community Relations Integration Officer (CRIO) program to identify and address the needs of the Iraqi community in Perth by providing information and links to existing programs and services.

A feature of the project is hosting a series of bazaars to gather and exchange information. The first bazaar was held in October 2007 and provided an opportunity for Iraqi women to identify the main issues to be addressed through the project. The second bazaar was held on International Women's Day, 8 March 2008, and included a guest speaker from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship who provided information about migration, as well as an opportunity for the women to barter, buy and sell items such as hand-crafts and cooked food.

Childcare is a critical component on these occasions. At the first bazaar, over 30 children accompanied the 22 adults.

Other project activities include provision of information about nutrition, health and fitness, development of a resource file of useful contacts, and production of a newsletter. Fadhila can be contacted at Brockman House on Thursday, Friday and Saturday by telephone on (08) 9279 1588 or by email: familyworker@brockmanhouse.net

CaLD Man Power

At least 20 men are now closer to gaining their driver's licence, and with that, full employment, after taking part in the Fremantle Multicultural Centre's driving practice classes.

Migrant and refugee men from CaLD backgrounds have reported difficulties in finding employment, particularly in the construction and agriculture industries, if they don't have a driver's licence.

The classes were part of the *Multicultural Men's Support Program Stage 2 Project*, and run until the end of April. The project was funded through OMI's Community Grants Program.

The project assists men from African, Southern European and Middle-Eastern backgrounds who are experiencing isolation and alienation from society. This experience can be due to difficulties with settlement, unemployment, family and mental health issues. To help achieve better outcomes for these men, and increase participation in society, three additional health and wellbeing courses were offered. After feedback from men who have taken other courses run by the Fremantle Multicultural Centre, classes were set up to involve men in cooking, fitness and motor vehicle driving practice.

For inquiries regarding the program, contact George Vassiley, Project Officer at the Fremantle Multicultural Centre on ph 9336 8282.

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