

harmony

harmony



Punitha Chandramohan and Elvira Kurejsepi pictured with other new recruits, enjoying the benefits of UWA's diversity strategy.

Jobs a focus for refugee week

The University of Western Australia (UWA) and a small design business are two of the employers who will be singled out for special recognition during Austcare's Refugee Week to be held this month.

Employment has been chosen as the major focus of Refugee Week this year to promote job opportunities for refugees and to highlight the benefits people of diverse cultural backgrounds can bring to Australian employers.

Dr Judyth Watson, chair of Austcare in WA, says everybody gets a sense of worth from how other people define them, and in Australia a lot of that definition comes from work. She also points out work is fundamental to helping refugees become a part of the community, helping them to feel they are contributing as productive members to their new country.

Apart from their level of English language skills, limited local contacts, racial discrimination and lack of recognition of overseas qualifications can

act as barriers for refugees in gaining employment. However Austcare has been keen to identify employers who have not allowed these factors to become insurmountable barriers to the employment of refugees and migrants.

Employers like UWA who have continued to successfully hire people of refugee background will be showcased at an 'Employers Breakfast' to be held during the week.

Dr Watson says the purpose of this event is to firstly thank employers who've been prepared to take on employees from a refugee or migrant background but also to encourage other employers who've been contemplating doing so.

Other events to be held during the week will cater for jobseekers including a 'Job Search English Workshop' to assist people of refugee background gain English skills for writing applications and job interviews. An outline of workplace training schemes and employment opportunities will also be discussed.

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A Message from the Premier and Minister for Multicultural Interests



The tragic events in the US last month provoked a rare outpouring of grief and sympathy around the globe. Western Australians were quick to express their outrage and offer their support to those affected in the weeks following this massive tragedy. Messages recorded in condolence books around the State helped to underline the international solidarity and resolve on the issue.

However, I was concerned to hear about reports of alleged retribution against members or people believed to be members of our local Muslim community. The Government will not tolerate any such acts of violence or intimidation. I condemn any acts of retribution and urge people not to vent their anger about the events in America against innocent Western Australians or their places of worship.

Over 12,000 Western Australians follow the Islamic faith, a majority of whom are from the Middle East, and whose contribution in our community is valued and supported. They form an important part of the cultural diversity which characterises our State, made up of people from more than 190 nationalities. Like the rest of us, they were outraged at the acts of terrorism witnessed in the USA.

We must not allow events like this to disrupt the racial harmony we so greatly value in WA. This is a time for unity not division.

On a different issue, I would like to mention the great opportunity Online WA Multicultural Communities (OMCWA) is providing to ethnic communities to get online at a low cost as well as providing an invaluable means of linking communities throughout the State. OMCWA involves a partnership between the Ethnic Communities Council of WA and the Office of Multicultural Interests.

Following a successful start, OMCWA has moved into an exciting new stage where membership has been extended to not for profit community based groups and organisations.

It is also proving to be a valuable tool for showcasing the richness of our cultural diversity. I urge all ethnic communities and community organisations to support this initiative and investigate the opportunities that new technologies present to help them keep up on the information superhighway.

Dr Geoff Gallop MLA
Premier
Minister for Multicultural Interests

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Mixed workforce helps design business to bloom



Mirna Popadich (left) and Tim Chandler pictured with another colleague in the workshop at Anna Chandler Design.

Anna Chandler Design is a business with a very mixed workforce but factory manager Tim Chandler says some of his best employees have come through the Catholic Migrant Resource Centre.

The business which manufactures hand painted, ceramic wall plaques, started out operating from a small backyard shed and is now based at a factory in O'Connor with a staff of up to 20. It now enjoys a flourishing sales network in local, interstate and overseas markets but every piece is still individually hand moulded and hand painted.

Mirna Popadich, a Bosnian woman who arrived in Australia in 1995 as a refugee from Croatia, is one of those who Tim proudly nominates in his 'best employees' category. Mirna has worked for the company for close to four years after completing English language studies. After initially studying childcare, she decided to try a job as a painter with Anna Chandler Design, where she quickly discovered a passion for the work. Mirna has since been promoted to the position of painting supervisor where she oversees the work of around 12 people. More recently Mirna's work has taken her on interstate trips, where she has been promoting the company's product range at trade fairs. Tim says Mirna's love of her work shines through and she has become a highly valued and trusted employee.

Both Tim and Mirna agree that the racial background of their work colleagues, or their past experiences as refugees or migrants is not a major issue at work, because it's the skills they have and their attitude that really counts.

Tim points out that the company promotes equal opportunity in relation to recruitment and they do use other job agencies apart from the Catholic Migrant Centre. While half of his staff are Australian born, Tim's message to other employers is to definitely explore the option of employing staff from a refugee or migrant background because from his experience they can make excellent employees.

UWA strategy off to a flying start

UWA's groundbreaking workforce diversity strategy has achieved outstanding results because it was adopted as part of a holistic approach and was built on a strong record of equal opportunity.

That's the view of Diversity Officer, Malcolm Fialho in the Equity Office at UWA who hopes the program can become a model for public sector employment.



Elvira Kurejsepi (front right) and Office Manager Tracy Taylor (centre) pictured in the Graduate School of Management office at UWA.

Most significantly the program is based on real opportunities and actual positions within the organisation, rather than work experience with no guarantee of an ongoing or fixed-term position.

'It's looking at how we can get these people in the door and how we can retain them', says Malcolm.

In the six months since the strategy was launched between 30 to 40 people have been employed from the priority areas (including those with a refugee or migrant background) with a 90% retention rate.

In order to give the new recruits the best possible chance of succeeding in their roles, the program is complemented by a workplace culture change program involving anti-racism and diversity training. This helps to ensure a supportive workplace culture exists for any new staff commencing work under the program. The new recruits are also provided with culture-specific support and meet on a monthly basis to discuss issues of common interest e.g. navigating UWA systems. Malcolm explains the strategy has

been part of a total shift in thinking at the University where instead of focussing on the deficits of people from these 'target groups' they are looking at the value they can add.

Strong leadership and support from the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Director of Human Resources and other members of senior management have also been critical to the success of the program.

'The feedback we have had to date shows that people from a refugee or migrant background are adding value to our workplace, through their language skills, fresh perspectives and providing inclusive services to students', says Malcolm.

Elvira Kurejsepi is one of those who has recently commenced work with the University through this program. She has been working as a secretary with the Graduate School of Management since August after arriving as a refugee from Bosnia two and a half years ago. The South Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre in Fremantle helped find her the position with UWA after she completed English language studies as well as some courses in computing, business and technology. While enjoying her new position, Elvira has faced some challenges in resuming work after an extended break from the workforce, because of the war in her homeland and her arrival in Australia as a refugee. However she says the support from her manager, Tracy Taylor has made it much easier for her. The value of the workplace diversity strategy from Tracy's point of view is that it's providing an opportunity for those who wouldn't otherwise have the chance to compete for jobs at the University. Tracy believes the University can only benefit from staff like Elvira, who bring a broad knowledge and experience to the workplace.

For information on the Employer's Breakfast to be held on Friday 12th October, phone 9325 9330.
For information on the Job Search English Workshop phone 9440 0625.
A full listing of Austcare Refugee Week events is available at http://www.ocmi.wa.gov.au/refugee_week.htm or phone 9325 9330.

New seminar series on 'Culture and Religion'

In recognition of the importance of religious diversity in Western Australia, OMI will host an upcoming series of information sessions for service providers to help clarify the many sensitivities surrounding religious beliefs and cultural practices.

The sessions will help to facilitate effective planning and ensure appropriate services are provided, taking religious beliefs and cultural practices into account.

Each talk, focusing on a religion, will be informative, challenging and stimulating, providing practical information on how to improve service delivery.

The information sessions will be valuable for government, private and not for profit organisations who want to understand religious and cultural sensitivities of their clients and employees. The sessions will also further inter-cultural and inter-faith understanding.

Details of the first three sessions are;

- Islamic Faith and Culture, 29 October
- The Sikh Faith and Culture 5 November,
- The Jewish Faith and Culture, 12 November

All sessions will be run from 3.30m to 5.00pm at the Department of Premier and Cabinet, 7th Floor Conference Room, 197 St George's Terrace, Perth

Dates for other sessions on Buddhist and Hindu Faith and Culture will be available shortly.

For further information or to register for these sessions please contact: Dr Maria Degabriele, at OMI on telephone 9426 8690

Tears and smiles as refugees remember with a tree

Western Australians who have lost loved ones due to disappearance or death participated in a tree planting ceremony in York on 26 June, the United Nations Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

GROVE OF REMEMBRANCE

The Association for Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS) and the York Shire organised the ceremony which involved creating a Grove of Remembrance on the banks of the Avon River. This project was made possible by a grant from the Office of Multicultural Interests.

Participants included people originally from Bosnia, Burma, Ethiopia, Somalia, Serbia, Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq and Australia.

ASeTTS worker Jan Mantell said that the Grove provided a symbolic way for the refugees to remember loved ones and to participate in the

recovery of the earth that has, like many of them, been very damaged.

The day's formal proceedings opened with a dedication of the trees by Fr Adrian Pitorello, Refugee Chaplain from the Catholic Migrant Centre. ASeTTS counsellor David Neustein then shared his thoughts on the significance of a tree planting ceremony.



Tony McCrae MLA planting a tree at the York Grove of Remembrance ceremony with some help from Vin, a young Kurdish refugee.
Photo courtesy York Chronicle.

TREES: RICH METAPHORS FOR HUMAN LIFE

'Trees are rich metaphors for human life', he said, 'they put down roots in one place and grow, they are buffeted by winds, rain and sometimes hit by lightning, they can be transplanted more easily at some stages of their lives than others, and although they can survive great injury, it always leaves a scar. ... Trees are stronger when grouped together, and when they are well anchored, protect their own offspring, as well as provide shelter, food and building material for other living things'.

Tony McCrae MLA, Member for Riverton who represented the Premier at the ceremony, built up a sweat as he planted the first tree in the clay soil and mingled with participants.

With many of the participants coming from countries where political leaders are to be feared, it was their first chance to meet a politician and Mr McCrae's involvement and friendliness was very much appreciated.

GROUP EFFORT APPRECIATED

Ms Mantell said that the Shire of York had played a major role in ensuring the day's success. 'They gave us access to the land, prepared the ground for planting, found a rock for our plaque and provided contacts in the town and facilities for lunch.'

'Men of Trees also assisted with advice on caring for the 120 trees and bushes.'

The Day was a great success. It involved a mix of tears as participants remembered their loved ones and smiles as they enjoyed their day out of the city and a shared multicultural lunch.

Participants are delighted that ASeTTS has received funding to enable them to visit the Grove of Remembrance again during Mental Health Week in October.

Applications for the Citizenship and Community Grants Program are available from the Grants Officer on 9426 8690 or can be downloaded from our website at <http://www.ocmi.wa.gov.au/publications/applicform.pdf>

ECCRU to throw a multicultural light on Children's Week

Children's Week 2001 will feature a colourful array of multicultural activity, when it officially opens with a free breakfast in Kings Park on Sunday 21 October.

The Ethnic ChildCare Resource Unit (ECCRU), a non-profit, community based organisation will provide the multicultural flavour to this year's opening celebrations.

Those activities will include children wearing national costumes, story-telling in a variety of languages (including Chinese, French, Noongar, Somali, Arabic, and Bosnian) with the use of musical instruments. Face painting, kite flying and origami making will also be on offer.

Dijana Skorsur, Community Relations Officer at ECCRU said events like this help to encourage and promote bilingualism, but also display the beauty of Western Australia's diverse cultural background.

ECCRU supports the provision of culturally and linguistically diverse programs in children's services across WA. The organisation's members have access to multicultural resources from 140 countries representing 65 different languages.

The Unit is equipped with an on-site and mobile library that specialises in books, toys, ethnic music and musical instruments, posters and puzzles. The 'Diversity Shop' at the organisation's Mount Hawthorn premises also sells a great range of multicultural resources and gifts.

ECCRU also has an established database of bilingual workers who help children up to 12 years of age from various ethnic backgrounds settle into children's services. They assist service staff, families and children with communication, language and cultural issues. It is a free service to all children and families using Children's Services that are eligible for Commonwealth Child Care Benefits throughout WA.



Daniela Bretto (pictured right) and her daughter Jillian Bretto preparing for some multicultural fun as part of the Ethnic Child Care Resource Unit's involvement in Children's Week.

The breakfast for the opening of Children's Week will be held at Hale Oval near the Lotteries Playground in Kings Park between 7:30am-9am and activities will continue till 12:30pm.

For further information on other Children's Week activities contact Meerlinga on 9424 5210.

Language Services Initiatives

Building diversity improves services

The Department of Training has recently developed a Language Services Plan, which aims to ensure that the Department's information, programs and services can be understood and accessed by people for whom language may be a barrier.

Implementation of the Plan has resulted in a series of practical initiatives to overcome these barriers - not only for people for whom English is a second language but also for Indigenous people and people who are deaf or have a hearing disability.

Helen Maddocks, Principal Policy Analyst - Equity, at the Department explained that one of the first initiatives involved staff in cross-cultural training, which includes how to use translators and interpreters.

'Participants' confidence in accessing telephone interpreters increased dramatically once they found out how easy it is to use them', she said.

The strategy has also resulted in a new publication 'Where do I start? Training and Employment Services for Migrants'. The brochure, which has been sent to migrant resource centres, ethnic community centres, government departments and employment agencies, is available in English, Arabic, Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian, Chinese, Persian, Indonesian and Vietnamese.

The brochure gathers together training information from a range of government and non-government agencies including on:

- English language programs;
- how to find out more about formal recognition of existing skills;
- the assessment of overseas qualifications; and
- how to access help in finding employment.

The brochure also has case studies from six migrants who have used these services or undertaken vocational studies to get employment.

A poster with photos of 11 of the Department's staff who represent a range of cultures and language groups alongside 'Welcome' in the different languages aims to help non-English speakers feel more comfortable with accessing the Department's services.

Another successful pilot program, which saw migrants' skills and overseas qualifications matched to work experience in public sector agencies, has also been very successful in increasing their prospects of gaining employment both in the public and private sectors.

WA Police say it like it is

Communication is vital to getting any job done. The WA Police Service is discovering in the cultural-jigsaw that is WA society, that officers who speak languages other than English are a huge asset to the service.

Police personnel who can speak more than one language will now sport new, multilingual name badges to make them easily identifiable to non-English speaking people living in Western Australia.

Espanol' (I speak Spanish) or an equivalent phrase in the officer's other language.

Mr Gerard Daniells, Officer in Charge of the Police Ethnic Affairs Unit, said the aim of the new name badges was to foster a more harmonious relationship between Police Officers and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and to improve the quality of service provided to these people.

'We want to make sure that all Western Australian people are receiving the quality of service they deserve from the WA Police Service, whatever their first language happens to be', said Mr Daniells.

Mr Daniells said being able to communicate in their native language makes these people feel more comfortable when dealing with Police Officers. He hopes these badges will help to break down some of the barriers that discourage culturally diverse ethnic groups from seeking Police services and also make Police Officers more accessible to all members of the community.

The launch of the multilingual name badges follows the introduction of a religious handbook last year to assist Police Officers deal with all cultures and religions in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

The Western Australian Government's Language Services Policy can be accessed at www.omi.wa.gov.au/language_services.htm. Interpreter Cards and multilingual brochures are available from OMI.

Nilda Eisen, Multicultural Liaison Officer for the Police Department's Mirrabooka Region pictured with Bekhita Mahmoud, formerly of Eritrea and her son.

With almost 30% of our State's population born overseas, it is fitting that the WA Police Service was the first jurisdiction to introduce the concept of a multilingual name badge. The new badges are identical to the existing Police badges, however, below the multilingual officer's name will be a message such as 'Io Parlo Italiano' (I speak Italian), 'Ich Spreche Deutsch' (I speak German), 'Hablo

Karen Ferns (pictured far right) with a friend during her recent trip to South Africa.



Harmony Day winner's South African experience

A trip to South Africa for Karen Ferns has further strengthened her interest in multiculturalism. Karen won the major prize at the 94.5 Harmony Day breakfast at the Perth Zoo in March which took her and a friend on a recent ten day tour to South Africa.

Karen, an insurance clerk and mother of two, was born in India but has lived most of her life in Australia after her family migrated here when she was three. She had been excited enough just to have won tickets to the breakfast and to have been a part of the day, let alone to come away as major prize winner.

The opportunity to celebrate our cultural diversity was what originally attracted Karen to be part of the competition. Having grown up in Australia with an ethnic background has made her a passionate supporter of multiculturalism. She has developed a strong belief in the need to take people for what they are rather than making judgements about them based on nationality, skin colour or age.

'It's so important to be able to get along with each other, particularly when you consider the number of

people from different nationalities living in Western Australia,' she said. 'The whole idea of Harmony Day struck a chord with me, and that's why I was so pleased just to be a part of the celebrations.

'Everyone needs to open their eyes to new people and new cultures otherwise they're shortchanging themselves.... after all we're all the same on the inside.'

The prize donated by South African Airways took Karen and a friend on a visit to the Kruger national park, a Zulu village in Swaziland and a safari through a private game reserve.

Karen says she discovered a lot about the country and local customs in the short time she spent in Africa and greatly appreciated the opportunity to experience such different cultures on the trip.

'Most importantly though, to see a totally different side to life makes you all the more appreciative of what you have at home.'

Applications for Harmony Day small grants are now open and must be received by November 30. Further details available from 9426 8690 or at www.omi.wa.gov.au

Community Noticeboard



To list an item on the Community Noticeboard email harmony@omi.wa.gov.au or phone 9426 8690.

■ Museum space available for free to community groups

The Community Access Gallery at the Fremantle History Museum is available for use at no cost to community groups.

Your community group can;

- Produce your own exhibition
- Display your photographs
- Tell your stories

The Museum and its grounds provide ideal spaces for openings, project launches and other functions. For information or bookings phone Phyl Brown at the WA Museum on 9427 2728

■ South East Metropolitan College of TAFE have places available in English Language courses.

Hairdressing theory for migrants, an ESL course, will also be run from 16 Oct - 18 December. For further details phone Robert McDonald 9267 7304.

■ Changes are on the way to the Australian citizenship legislation.

The Federal Government has confirmed that in future, adult Australians will no longer lose their citizenship if they acquire another citizenship. The legislation is expected to be introduced into Parliament before the end of the year. Further information is available from www.immi.gov.au and www.citizenship.gov.au.

■ Check out **across**, an exhibition of Indigenous art and culture on show at UWA's Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery until 14 October. It aims to celebrate and encompass the broad scope of Indigenous art and cultural activity. Phone 9380 3707 for Gallery information.

■ East Timorese Independence Leader **Xanana Gusmao**, will be a guest speaker at an **Austcare Refugee Week Dinner** on Saturday 6 October at the St Columba-Kingswood Dining Room, University of WA. Tickets are priced at \$85 with funds raised going to the 'Association for the Veterans of the Resistance'. Reservations are essential and must be made by 3 October with Austcare on 9325 9330. Mr Gusmao and Ms Adaljiza Magno from East Timor will address a public forum on 'The situation for East Timorese refugees' on Sunday 7 October from 2pm at Winthrop Hall, University of WA.

■ The Annual **Two Rocks carnival and Maritime Showcase** will be held on the 3-4 November organised by the Blessing of the Fleet and Community Day organisations in Two Rocks. Phone 9561 1469 for further information.

■ The Latin American Cultural Association will be staging a multicultural play '**El Quijote**' at the Fly by Nightclub in Fremantle on 5 and 6 October. The performance, presented in English with some Spanish phrases, has been developed by a visiting South American director and features masks, music, dance and puppets.

■ Cultural performances, art and craft exhibitions and food sampling provided by ethnic groups will be part of a multicultural focus at this year's **Darlington Arts Festival** from 3-4 November.

■ The issues surrounding children held in detention centres will be explored at a seminar hosted by Amnesty International and Curtin University on Saturday 13 October from 9.30am - 1.30pm. For further information on the seminar titled; "A Place For Me" **Children Seeking Asylum in Australia** contact Amnesty on 9272 4005.

■ OMI has obtained a ten minute short film entitled '**Of Middle Eastern Appearance**'. It was first screened at the Sydney Arab Film Festival and deals with prejudices and stereotyping. Organisations wishing to loan the film can contact Mr Paul Rafferty, Policy Officer on telephone 9426 8690.

■ ISANA 2001, 4-7 December. Registrations are invited for this important conference for anyone involved in **international education**. Opportunities exist for display booths or display tables. Contact promaco@promaco.com.au or website <http://www.promaco.com.au/conference/2001/isana/index.htm>

■ **Bantus Capoeira** will be back to play at KULCHA in Fremantle on 20 October. Capoeira is a dynamic Afro-Brazilian slave ritual developed in Brazil since the 1500's involving singing, clapping and dancing. Playing percussive instruments is an integral part of the experience. Phone 9336 4544 for further information.

New publications

■ Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA), *The Guide: Implementing the Standards for Statistics for Cultural Diversity* can be downloaded from www.immi.gov.au

■ *Skilled Labour: Gains and Losses, Centre for Population and Urban Research, Monash University, July 2001*

This report examines the movement of skilled workers to and from Australia over the five year period 1995-96 to 1999-2000. Available from the research section of DIMA on 02 6264 1111.