OMI Southern Corridor

Consultation Summary

November 2014

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For more information, please contact:

**Office of Multicultural Interests**

Department of Local Government and Communities

Gordon Stephenson House, 140 William Street, Perth WA 6000

GPO Box R1250, Perth WA 6844

Telephone: (08) 6551 8700 Fax: (08) 6552 1555

Freecall: 1800 620 511 (Country only)

Email: [harmony@omi.wa.gov.au](mailto:harmony@omi.wa.gov.au) Website: [www.omi.wa.gov.au](http://www.omi.wa.gov.au)

# Executive summary

The Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) held four consultations in the Southern Corridor on 4 and 6 November 2014. The consultations were undertaken jointly with the Australian Government Department of Social Services. They were organised following advice from non-government representatives about the growing population of people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds residing in the southern corridor local government areas (LGAs).

Consultations were conducted in Rockingham, Mandurah, Cockburn and Kwinana and were organised in partnership with the City of Rockingham, City of Mandurah, City of Cockburn and City of Kwinana, respectively.

A total of 71 people were involved in the consultations. In addition to local government staff, seven people attended the roundtable in Rockingham, 11 in Mandurah, 21 in Cockburn and six in Kwinana.[[1]](#footnote-1) Additional meetings were conducted with local government staff and representatives in each area: four staff in Rockingham, three in Mandurah, 15 in Cockburn and five in Kwinana.

## Key findings

The consultations revealed a growing awareness among all local governments in the region of the importance of planning and strategies to address the needs of an increasingly culturally diverse population. Such efforts were regarded as consistent with local governments’ strategic community plans and integral to achieving socially cohesive communities.

Issues for each local government area were:

### Rockingham

* Community integration—encouraging and embracing the growing cultural diversity of the area
* Social inclusion—particularly issues of social isolation for some women and concerns regarding lack of engagement of some young people
* Access to information and services—particularly in relation to housing, English language training, mental health services and support to develop financial literacy.

### Mandurah

* Support for skilled migrants—particularly those on temporary (489) visas
* Access to information and services—particularly in relation to housing, English language training, mental health services and support to develop financial literacy.

### Cockburn

* Access to information—the need to increase effort to ensure information is accessible to people from CaLD backgrounds
* Service delivery—related to planning, interagency collaboration, cultural competency and language services
* Access to services—the need for people from CaLD backgrounds to be aware that services exist and how to navigate the ‘system’
* Community integration—the need for additional effort to be given to developing an environment that embraces, celebrates and supports the city’s multicultural communities.

## Kwinana

* Community resources and infrastructure—the need for a greater level of community resources and infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse community
* Service delivery—including both systemic issues and specific focus areas of concern
* Access to services—concerns some people from CaLD backgrounds are reluctant to seek help and do so only at a crisis point and that English language proficiency and difficulty accessing public transport could pose access barriers.

While the focus of concern differed in each area, a common theme related to the adequacy of service delivery, including provision of interpreting services and translated information, and the importance of strategies to address social and physical infrastructure needs. Achieving an environment that is welcoming of cultural diversity was also a key feature of discussions.

While local governments were identified as key agents to facilitate planning, the consultations highlighted the need for plans and strategies to be developed in partnership with State and Commonwealth colleagues, non-government organisations, the community and, where relevant, business and industry groups.

With the populations of each area set to grow substantially in the coming years, these consultations were a timely start to the process.

Given the limitations of this scan of issues, a key initial step would be more focused consultation with relevant groups to explore the concerns raised.

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# 

# Introduction

The Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) held four consultations in the southern corridor on 4 and 6 November 2014. The consultations were undertaken jointly with the Australian Government Department of Social Services. They were organised following advice from non-government representatives about the growing population of people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds residing in the southern corridor local government areas (LGAs).

Consultations were conducted in Rockingham, Mandurah, Cockburn and Kwinana and were organised in partnership with the City of Rockingham, City of Mandurah, City of Cockburn and City of Kwinana, respectively.

A total of 71 people were involved in the consultations. In addition to local government staff, six people participated in Rockingham, 11 in Mandurah, 21 in Cockburn and six in Kwinana. Additional meetings were conducted with local government staff and representatives in each area: four staff in Rockingham, three in Mandurah, 15 in Cockburn and five in Kwinana.

The consultations aimed to identify:

1. the issues faced by people from CaLD backgrounds, including permanent and temporary migrants
2. whether services to people from CaLD backgrounds meet identified needs
3. how issues and service gaps might be addressed.

To promote the roundtables, OMI prepared a flyer for each local government roundtable. The flyer was distributed by:

* each local government
* OMI to its networks.

Community members, service providers and government agencies were invited to participate.

# Rockingham

## Introduction

According to the 2011 Census, the Rockingham LGA has a total population of 104,105 people. Of these:

* 31.4 per cent were born overseas (compared with 28.2 per cent in 2006 and 29.7 per cent in 2001)
* 6.1 per cent were born in a non-main English speaking (NMES) country (compared with 5.3 per cent in 2006 and 5.6 per cent in 2001)
* 5.8 per cent spoke a language other than English at home (compared with 4.1 per cent in 2006 and 4.2 per cent in 2001).

The top five countries of birth were the United Kingdom (UK), New Zealand, South Africa, Philippines and the Netherlands. The top five NMES countries of birth were Philippines, Netherlands, Germany, India and Zimbabwe.

The top five languages other than English spoken were Afrikaans, Serbian, Italian, German and Dutch.

The major religious affiliations were with the Christian faiths (57.4 per cent), no religion (28.6 per cent), Buddhism (0.9 per cent), Islam (0.5 per cent) and Hinduism (0.2 per cent).

The City of Rockingham Cultural Diversity Community Roundtable was held on Tuesday, 4 November 2014. It was attended by two OMI representatives and two officers from the Department of Social Services. In addition to local government representatives, it was attended by seven people. It was preceded by a meeting with four City of Rockingham staff members.

## Issues, gaps and suggestions

Key issues raised were:

* Community integration
* Social inclusion
* Access to information and services.

### Community integration

As census figures show, representation of people born in a non-main English speaking country has been a relatively small but is an increasing feature of the demographic landscape in the Rockingham LGA. It is estimated that the population is growing by nearly 2.5 per cent and that in some areas, such as Baldivis, the increase is even greater. It is therefore likely that the cultural diversity of the community will continue to grow in size and complexity.

The increasing cultural diversity of the area was noted by roundtable participants. For example, the Salvation Army representative at the consultations remarked that its services were receiving an increasing number and range of people from different cultural backgrounds. It was noted that the organisation is struggling to meet the demand for its services, particularly from people on bridging visas.

Participants noted that, for many years, the composition of the Rockingham community has been dominated by people from Anglo-Saxon/Anglo-Celtic backgrounds and that there was a need for strategies that encourage residents to embrace the increasing cultural diversity of their community. There was a sense that, to some extent, there was still a prevailing ‘us and them’ mentality within the community.

Concerns regarding asylum seekers were also considered to have a negative impact on the attitudes of some community members towards migrants and refugees generally. The need to ensure that Rockingham provided a safe and welcoming environment for people from all cultures and backgrounds was considered important in developing and maintaining a cohesive community.

A key to addressing this was to be inclusive in all aspects of planning regarding the community and related activities. It was suggested that cultural diversity ‘should be a part of what we do, not an add on’.

Participants also felt it was important to ensure that cultural diversity was made visible. This would not only enable members of the wider community to see the diversity within the population but also ensure that members of different cultural groups felt recognised and included.

A duality was also noted in relation to the celebration of culture—that, while it was important to acknowledge cultural difference, it was also important to recognise the similarities among different groups.

Gatherings were also regarded as an important way for people to learn about different cultures and develop an appreciation, acceptance and respect for diversity. It was noted that with the sharing of knowledge comes understanding—an important ingredient in developing community harmony and cohesion.

The importance of including the celebration of Indigenous culture was also noted.

Local government staff noted that the city currently undertakes a range of activities to celebrate and promote cultural diversity, including Harmony Week events and provision of funding to a Maori and Pacific Islander project, Kiwi Festival and Cook Island Festival.

**Suggestions to add to these efforts included:**

* using existing community celebrations and events to showcase different cultures  
  —an example of a recent children’s event was given
* establishing a [multi]cultural centre in which organisations can showcase their cultures through entertainment (particularly following the closure of Kulcha in Fremantle), seminars and a gallery—a representative of the Maori community noted that the organisation was seeking a place to display a historic Maori canoe and that this would make a memorable centrepiece for an exhibition or cultural centre
* cultural events and activities to teach and showcase different cultures and provide an opportunity for informal conversation and discussion
* connecting with religious leaders as a way of reaching in to some communities
* highlighting the benefits of cultural diversity in school activities.

### Social inclusion

Concerns were raised regarding:

* social isolation of some groups, particularly some groups of women
* young people, particularly those whose parents both work as ‘fly-in/fly-out’ (FIFO) employees and who may not be regularly attending school, as well as those who are drawn to alcohol and other drugs due to a lack of activities.

It was noted that activities were need for both groups, to assist their integration and participation in the community.

**Suggestions included:**

* connecting with women through schools (as parents) and mosques
* assisting women to establish micro-businesses
* identifying opportunities to educate women about opportunities in Australia—for example, through South Coastal Women and Family Services
* workshops and other activities for young people.

### Access to information and services

Concerns were raised that many people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds are not aware of available services or are reluctant to access them. The Department of Human Services representative also observed that ‘some people don’t know the questions to ask to get what they need’. It was also noted that some groups may consider that organisations that are identified as ‘Christian’ may not be open to clients who follow other religions.

Particular concerns were raised regarding access to housing, English language classes, support to gain financial literacy and mental health services.

Although the growth of Rockingham’s population is to some extent due to the relative affordability of housing in the area, homelessness and access to housing were noted as areas of significant concern. Issues included the lack of affordable housing and concerns that the closure of Palm Beach Caravan Park would add to the already significant competition for low-cost housing. The increased challenge of finding affordable accommodation for single people was noted.

It was suggested that there exists some discrimination in the private rental market based on skin colour and/or religion that disadvantaged some people from CaLD backgrounds. Access to English language classes was identified as a specific need. It was noted that some people do not respond well to the format of classes run through the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and that is there is a demand for conversational English classes held in a community setting. It was noted that Fremantle Multicultural Centre provided some classes of this nature.

Mental illness was also noted as a concern and the need for services to address torture and trauma issues among some people from CaLD backgrounds, particularly those who entered Australia as asylum seekers and refugees. It was noted that the Association of Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS) had recently opened a part-time service in Rockingham and that this needed to be promoted to other relevant agencies.

Financial literacy was also raised as an area of need. Participants registered concern that they had encountered clients who had recently arrived in Australia and who had signed contracts without an understanding of their meaning. It was noted that those who enter through Australia’s humanitarian program would receive assistance through the Department of Social Services-funded Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) and that the most likely group to be affected would be asylum seekers on bridging visas.

There was also a perception that some bridging visa holders whose bridging visas had expired were no longer receiving social services benefits (DSS representatives present noted that this should not be the case as clients should be receiving benefits through the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme (ASAS) funded by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP).

Suggestions to address these issues included:

* provision of conversational English classes that incorporate presentations by agencies about the services they deliver
* agencies highlighting in their marketing and promotion activities the inclusive and secular nature of their services
* creating opportunities to showcase agencies and projects operating in the area.

## Future planning

Strategically, the City of Rockingham is well positioned to spearhead initiatives to address the issues raised and its community plan provides a strong framework for related strategies.

The City of Rockingham Community Plan includes in its vision a desire for Rockingham to ‘be home to a proud, welcoming and inclusive community that understands, respects and preserves its unique sense of purpose and place’. Its statement for community includes an aspiration for ‘an involved and engaged community enjoying a lifestyle that caters for all residents, including those with specific or special needs’. Its statement for civic leadership aspires to ‘a community that is welcoming and desirable in the eyes of residents’.

Staff noted that supporting documents, such as the Youth Development Strategy, Community Cultural and Arts Development strategy, Learning City Strategy, Library and Information Services Strategic Plan, and Sport and Reconciliation Strategy already include identified actions in relation to CaLD communities.

There is an opportunity to review these and other plans, such as the Health and Wellbeing Plan, Community Infrastructure Plan and Community Capacity Building Strategy, to identify ways to increase the focus on and participation by CaLD communities within the city.

In addressing these issues and implementing strategies, participants highlighted the importance of partnerships, noting the value of collaboration between:

* relevant agencies in Rockingham—for example, establishing a network of health services
* local governments in the region (such as Kwinana and Mandurah)
* communities with significant populations based in the local governments in the region—for example, it was noted that the Cook Island community is well-represented in both Rockingham and Kwinana (although this would not be appropriate for Indigenous communities due to the importance of connections to land).
* the three tiers of government.

## Next steps

It was agreed that:

* OMI would:
* circulate the draft report of the consultations to the City of Rockingham and roundtable participants for review and comment
* provide a copy of the report to relevant Australian and State Government agencies for consideration and comment
* the City of Rockingham would consider the outcomes of the report in the context of its review of its community plans.

# Mandurah

## Introduction

According to the 2001 Census, the Mandurah LGA had a total population of 68,902 people. Of these:

* 25.2 per cent were born overseas (compared with 21.3 per cent in 2006 and 19.5 per cent in 2001)
* 5.9 per cent were born in a non-main English speaking (NMES) country (compared with 4.7 per cent in 2006 and 3.4 per cent in 2001)
* 4.9 per cent spoke a language other than English at home (compared with 3.0 per cent in 2006 and 2.5 per cent in 2001).

The top five countries of birth were the United Kingdom (UK), New Zealand, South Africa, Philippines and the Netherlands. The top five NMES countries of birth were Philippines, Netherlands, India, Germany and Italy.

The top five languages other than English spoken were Italian, German, Tagolog, Dutch and Thai.

The major religious affiliations were with the Christian faiths (62.2 per cent), no religion (13.4 per cent), and Buddhism (1.0 per cent).

The City of Mandurah is notable for its high proportion of migrants who have entered through the Skilled and Family Migration Streams: in the period 30 September 2009 to 30 September 2014, 53 per cent of migrants who located in Mandurah were through the Skilled Migration Stream and 22.5 per cent were through the Family Stream.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The City of Mandurah Cultural Diversity Community Roundtable was held on Tuesday, 4 November 2014. It was attended by two OMI representatives and two officers from the Department of Social Services. In addition to local government representatives, it was attended by 11 community members. It was preceded by a meeting with two representatives of the City of Mandurah and one councillor.

## Issues, gaps and suggestions

Key issues raised were:

* access to information and services
* support for temporary skilled migrants.

### Access to information and services

Participants identified a range of issues faced by people from CaLD backgrounds in Mandurah, including permanent and temporary migrants and those arriving through both the skilled and humanitarian programs. Local government staff noted that Fremantle Multicultural Centre currently provides an outreach service one day per week but that the centre is struggling to engage other relevant agencies to partner in addressing the needs of migrants and people from CaLD backgrounds. At the same time, it was noted that mainstream providers are expressing a need for support to address the needs of an increasing number of clients from this cohort.

Significant concerns were raised by the Principal of Mandurah Primary School regarding the challenges faced by schools in meeting the needs of students from CaLD backgrounds. It was noted that that approximately 25 per cent of Mandurah Primary School students are from a CaLD background and that the school is challenged in meeting their needs and that a critical issue is access to intensive English classes for children.

The Principal noted a high demand for an Intensive English Centre (IEC) as well as pre-primary and kindergarten English language support. It was noted that the Mandurah IEC had been closed due to lack of numbers; however, it was felt that this was not the case but rather due to schools’ lack of promotion of the centre. Students must travel some distance to the closest IEC in Beaconsfield.

It was noted that Mandurah Primary School plans to fund a position to provide support to CaLD students on a part-time (four days per week) basis in 2015 and it was hoped that:

* the Department of Education’s student-centred funding model would increase resources available to schools to address CaLD students’ language and other needs
* an IEC would be established in Mandurah in 2016.

It was also noted that, while Mandurah Primary School staff were becoming skilled in addressing the needs of this student cohort, there was a need to increase the cultural competency skills of staff in other schools.

#### Other issues included:

* the need for a central source of information about available services to support settlement and integration into the community—it was noted that it is not easy for either service providers or migrants to access relevant information from government websites
* social isolation of women—it was noted that women who do not speak English well are particularly isolated and ‘at risk’
* conflict between some men and women regarding adapting to the Australian culture and associated gender roles
* difficulty accessing affordable housing including:
* the impact of some landlords’ practice to evict tenants prior to the holiday season in order to capitalise on higher rents from holiday-makers
* overcrowding as people group together to share accommodation costs
* a rise in rental costs as the number of available properties declines.
* English language support, including:
* the need for English language training for adults beyond the available Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) classes provided by Challenger TAFE and volunteer-provided English language classes provided by Waratah Church members
* the challenge for AMEP lecturers providing tuition to classes of 28–30 students with varying levels of English language proficiency
* difficulty accessing interpreters and the need for a more comprehensive interpreter service for schools that allows for additional time to be taken to explain enrolment and other procedures
* lack of use of interpreters by some General Practitioners (GPs)—an example was given of a GP who wrote a prescription for medication for anaphylaxis for the wrong child because an interpreter was not used
* the need for torture and trauma mental health support and services
* lack of access to medical services for children.

**Suggestions to address these issues included:**

* ‘Welcome to Australia’ gatherings such as those provided by Waratah Church to welcome migrants to the community, share information and provide an introduction to community networks and services
* provision of after-school English language classes
* a ‘kindy café’ to connect migrant parents with other parents
* engaging the support of community members who hold professional occupations to provide support, guidance and mentoring advice
* mentoring or ‘buddy’ programs to provide support to migrant women and share information.

### Support for temporary skilled migrants

A significant focus of discussions at the roundtable was the situation of skilled migrants, particularly those on Skilled Provisional (Regional) subclass 489 visas. Participants at the roundtable included four people who had entered Australia through this visa pathway. Concerns relating to their situation were raised by several other community representatives, particularly those who volunteered for organisations providing support to holders of 489 visas. This visa requires a person to live, study and work in a specified region for up to four years. In WA, this is anywhere except Perth. If applying for permanent residence at a later date, the person must prove they have spent at least two years, and worked full-time for 12 months, in the specified region.

A key issue of concern was migrants’ inability to find work in the occupations on the basis of which they obtained a visa—it was noted that, at a meeting held with a Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) official in February, approximately 45 visa holders who were qualified as engineers had voiced concerns that they were unable to obtain work in their field and were employed in occupations such as taxi driving and cleaning. Roundtable participants expressed frustration at government policy that encouraged people to migrate on the basis of their skills and qualifications but did not facilitate workforce participation in relevant occupations and perpetuated the problem with ongoing intakes of people in the same occupational categories.

One participant stated:

‘According to my experience, first three month[s] is very hard due to lack of income, home sick[ness], accommodation issues, cultural shock and frustration to find [a] suitable job. [It] is very important the government keeps eye open and look[s] after new comers to Australia.

In my case, I have 17 years senior level financial management and project management experience of which six years as a Director of Finance and administration of USAID funded projects. I worked [in the] USA, Kenya, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka but here I am washing cars [on a] full time basis. Also I am a fully qualified accountant and master degree holder specialized in [f]inancial economics but I am not using my knowledge and experience to develop Australia. [I]t is departure of the government intention to develop regional areas. In general, 99% of migrant[s] will move to [the] city after they receive their PR status due to suitable job opportunities available in the city.’

Another participant stated:

‘Why send 200 engineers to Mandurah? The jobs aren’t here and if they are [the migrants] don’t get the jobs because they don’t have local experience.’

Participants noted that some migration agents contributed to the problem by misleading potential applicants and stating that it is ‘easy to find a job in Australia’.

Concerns were also raised that the work for which some migrants are qualified is not relevant to the jobs market in Western Australia. For example, those who are qualified as ‘process’ engineers are unlikely to secure work in this occupation due to the lack of industry demand for these skills. For those interested in establishing their own business, visa restrictions made this option problematic.

The City of Mandurah Strategic Community Plan 2013–33 notes that Mandurah has traditionally been a community with high unemployment. This suggests that the economic environment in Mandurah is less favourable for migrants than some other areas of the State and adds to the challenges faced by migrants seeking work in the area.

One participant noted that their frustrations were also exacerbated by difficulties accessing further education and training to enhance their job opportunities—for example, to upgrade a qualification—due to the cost of this training and the lack of available courses in Mandurah. It was noted that most relevant courses are offered by training providers in Perth but, under the 489 visa conditions, visa holders are not permitted to study in Perth.

**Suggestions to address these issues included:**

* amending legislation to allow 489 visa holders to access vocational education and training (VET) at local student rates
* the Chairperson of the Peel Regional Development Authority to liaise with the Australian Government to consider possible policy changes
* establishment of a Workforce Development Centre and employment officer in Mandurah
* a ‘job network’ for temporary visa holders that would, as part of its role, liaise with large companies such as BHP, Alcoa and Chevron to identify jobs and internships
* a policy change to allow 489 visa holders to live in Perth after they have worked one year in the specified region
* a job matching program that matches 489 visa holders with available jobs.

Other issues raised included:

* lack of information about services available in Mandurah to assist them, particularly in:
* seeking work commensurate with their qualifications, skills and experience
* setting up a small business (including for those who have been unable to find appropriate work and view an owner-operated business as an alternative employment option)
* financial pressures—arising from the demands of housing, education and training for both themselves and their children, and medical and other health services
* ineligibility for financial support provided by Centrelink or crisis help from agencies such as Anglicare
* inability to access private health insurance on arrival to help with costs associated with pregnancy if a woman migrates when pregnant—for example, it was noted that the costs associated with caesarean birth are high (approximately $10,000) and that the hospital requires this payment ‘up front’
* housing—including difficulty securing accommodation in the private rental market due to lack of a local reference
* concerns that many skilled migrants move away from the city as soon as possible because of a lack of opportunities and services available to them and that this compromises achievement of the objectives of this visa subclass
* the time taken to process a permanent visa application.

## Future planning

While participants made suggestions regarding ways to address some of the issues, they believed that, to address them all comprehensively and effectively, there needed to be a government strategy. Participants also highlighted the need for all three tiers of government to have a regional presence.

The local government representative observed that the City of Mandurah had provided an effective coordinating role in addressing issues in the past and that it is appropriately positioned to do the same in relation to these issues. Such a role is consistent with the City of Mandurah Strategic Community Plan 2013–33. It states a vision of ‘a place where our community is proud, inspired, inclusive and innovative where we respect our connections to the past and create a great future.

For example, its strategic directions include:

* embracing Mandurah’s identity as a multicultural community
* encouraging active community participation and engagement
* increasing the level of regional employment, and local education and training opportunities
* demonstrating leadership on major regional, State and national issues.

Local government staff highlighted the importance of identifying ways to integrate migrants into the community and noted the inter-relationship between social connections and safety. This indicates the broader context in which strategies to address specific issues may be developed and the strong relationship between measures that contribute to achievement of social inclusion and broader community cohesion goals.

## Next steps

It was agreed that:

* OMI would:
* circulate the draft report of the consultations to the City of Mandurah and roundtable participants for review and comment
* provide a copy of the report to relevant Australian and State Government agencies for consideration and comment
* liaise with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Department of Training and Workforce Development regarding the participants’ concerns regarding 489 visa holders in Mandurah
* inform the Department of Training and Workforce Development of participants’ advocacy for a Workforce Development Centre in Mandurah
* the City of Mandurah would consider the role it can play in coordinating agency responses to concerns regarding 489 visa holders.

# Cockburn

## Introduction

According to the 2011 Census, the Cockburn LGA had a total population of 89,683 people. Of these:

* 32.4 per cent were born overseas—28.8 per cent in 2006 and 25.0 in 2001
* 17.8 per cent were born in a non-main English speaking (NMES) country—15.5 per cent in 2006 and 15.9 per cent in 2001
* 19.1 per cent spoke a language other than English at home—16.4 per cent in 2006 and 17.6 per cent in 2001.

The top five countries of birth were England, New Zealand, South Africa, Scotland and Ireland. The top five NMES countries of birth were Italy, Philippines, Croatia, Malaysia and India.

The top five languages other than English spoken were Italian, Mandarin, Croatian, Portuguese and Spanish.

The major religious affiliations were with Christianity (62.3 per cent), no religion (24.4 per cent), Buddhism (1.7 per cent), Islam (0.9 per cent) and Hinduism (0.7 per cent).

The City of Cockburn Cultural Diversity Community Roundtable workshop was held on Thursday, 6 November 2014. It was attended by three OMI representatives—including the Executive Director—and two officers from the Department of Social Services—including the State Director. In addition to local government representatives, it was attended by 21 community members. The Mayor of the City of Cockburn, Mr Logan Howlett, opened the consultation.

It was preceded by a meeting with 15 City of Cockburn staff members.

## Issues, gaps and suggestions

Key issues raised were:

* Access to information
* Service delivery
* Access to services
* Community integration.

### Access to information

A key issue was awareness of and access to information about available services. It was suggested that more needs to be done to ensure that information is made accessible to people from CaLD backgrounds through a range of strategies such as:

* translated information
* ‘new migrant welcome packs’
* providing information through schools so that students give this to their parents
* relevant agencies forming a CaLD network to enable them to share information with each other as well as with CaLD communities
* a ‘one-stop-shop’ for information—it was suggested that the City of Cockburn could be the first point of access for communities and communicating relevant information and could provide a community services directory
* linking multicultural websites and highlighting other sources of information such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

City of Cockburn staff also noted the importance of developing relationships with CaLD community members and the agencies that provide services to this cohort to build connections that facilitate communication of information. Other potential connections were with church groups and women’s groups.

Building connections with community leaders was suggested as a way to initiate these relationships. A first step towards this would be developing a list of community contacts and it was suggested that the City of Cockburn could be the lead agency in developing and hosting this. Other suggestions included employment of a CaLD liaison officer by the City of Cockburn.

### Service delivery

Participants raised many issues regarding service delivery. These included both systemic issues and specific focus areas of concern.

#### Systemic issues

Systemic issues related to planning, interagency collaboration, cultural competency and language services. These are explained below.

##### Planning

Participants highlighted the need for agencies to have a better understanding of the profile of the CaLD community within the City of Cockburn and for a needs assessment that would inform the development and delivery of appropriate services. It was suggested that more consultation needed to be conducted with CaLD communities in the area to identify issues and potential strategies to address them. For example, a representative of the Tongan community highlighted the concentration of the community in the Cockburn region and the need for their issues to be acknowledged and relevant services to address them identified and addressed.

##### Interagency collaboration

Participants highlighted the importance of interagency collaboration including information-sharing. A number of suggestions were made in relation to operationalising this, including for the City of Cockburn to establish a CaLD reference group. It was noted that Fremantle Multicultural Centre is forming a reference group that will meet quarterly and that this group could form the basis of the network for the area. It was noted that the group could share information and refer clients as appropriate.

##### Cultural competency

Participants highlighted the need for cultural competency among agency staff and that, as a lead agency in many areas, these skills should be an important feature of professional development for City of Cockburn staff. It was suggested that Fremantle Multicultural Centre could provide cultural competency training for City of Cockburn staff.

##### Language services

Awareness of language services needs and strategies was identified as a critical issue, particularly the provision of interpreters. Participants raised concerns about situations in which children were asked to interpret for their parents, that mainstream services including some counselling services and General Practitioners (GPs) did not use interpreters when needed.

**Suggestions to address these issues included:**

* raising awareness of the Western Australian Language Services Policy 2014
* including training in working with interpreters in staff development programs
* promoting the availability of interpreting and translating service providers such as the National Interpreting Service (TIS).

Local government and agency representatives noted that the cost of interpreting services posed a barrier for services and that it is difficult to budget for this when it is not possible to predict the level of demand. It was suggested that one way to address this might be to establish a funding ‘pool’ for agencies to access on a needs basis.

#### Specific areas of concern

Specific areas of concern related to particular population cohorts—women, seniors, and children and young people—and specific service delivery areas—education and training, health, transport and financial literacy.

#### Specific groups

Participants raised issues of concern regarding women, seniors, and children and young people from CaLD backgrounds.

##### Women

A key area of concern was the social isolation faced by some women from CaLD backgrounds. It was noted that women often do not have driver’s licences (or that their husband is usually the family member who uses the car) and that women are often not confident speaking in English. Both these factors can impact significantly on their participation in social and community activities. It was noted that ‘fly-in/fly-out’ employment arrangements can exacerbate feelings of isolation.

It was noted that women’s social isolation can also impact negatively on their children’s social connections. For example, it can limit children’s level of engagement in sporting activities, a willingness to have friends visit or to visit other families.

Concerns were raised regarding the situation of women experiencing separation, divorce or family violence, particularly those who lack social and family supports. Particular concern was raised regarding legal representation and lack of eligibility for services by spouses of 457 visa holders who are experiencing family and domestic violence. The need for access to financial assistance and emergency support for women in these situations was noted.

City of Cockburn staff noted the value of programs it currently provides, such as the ‘Women of the World’ programs for CaLD women to help overcome social isolation and connect women to available services and support structures.

##### Seniors

City of Cockburn staff noted that services were seeing an increasing number of older people from CaLD backgrounds with dementia and that there is a need for services to be equipped to deal with this cohort. The need for English language support and access to interpreters was highlighted. It was suggested that funding is available through the Home and Community Care (HACC) program for bilingual workers and that this is a useful support for this cohort.

It was noted that people from some cultures ‘hide’ this illness and that this can be a significant barrier to access to available supports.

Community representatives at the roundtable revealed concerns regarding the impact of local government amalgamations on services to seniors. It was suggested that information and communication about these changes was needed.

It was also noted that it is important to the wellbeing of seniors that they are connected with other members of their ethnic community. The value of social and cultural gatherings, for example, through music and entertainment, was noted.

The need for identified parking bays for seniors to facilitate access to services, particularly health services, was highlighted. It was hoped that the Fiona Stanley Hospital would make provision for this.

Concerns were also raised regarding crime prevention and safety with concerns that vacant buildings could attract antisocial behaviour. It was suggested that a mobile policing model could be introduced.

##### Children and young people

Local government staff highlighted the need for a multicultural playgroup to meet the needs of both parents and children from CaLD backgrounds.

It was noted that the city’s youth centre runs some programs in partnership with the English language program at Northlake Senior Campus and also provides holiday programs to connect children from migrant backgrounds with the wider community.

#### Specific service delivery areas

##### Education and training

A key issue in relation to education and training was English language support. Concerns were raised in relation to both young people and adults. The impact of English language barriers on employment opportunities was noted.

Issues included:

* lack of awareness of the Intensive English Centre (IEC)
* concerns that students may only participate in an IEC for two years and that this is not long enough for students to obtain the functional English language levels required for academic study
* ineligibility for IEC services of young people on bridging visas and in community detention
* the need for constant support of IEC staff by external agencies to enable teachers to provide the necessary support to students
* lack of an Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) in Cockburn and the need for informal English classes.

Broader education and training issues were:

* the need for 16–21 year olds to be aware of career development services
* that reduced funding is impacting negatively on education and training delivery
* concerns regarding the introduction of education fees for students of 457 visa holders in 2015
* the impact of increased costs of TAFE courses—including English language courses
* differences in eligibility for study loans between people who hold Australian citizenship and those who are permanent residents.

##### Health

The need for mental health services for people from CaLD backgrounds south of the river was raised. It was noted that the Association of Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors (ASeTTS) had recently opened an office in Rockingham that would operate two days per week. The need for services to be equipped to address the mental health needs of older people from CaLD backgrounds was also raised.

As noted above, concerns were raised that medical professionals often did not engage interpreters when needed and that family members often performed this role. It was noted that, in many cases, the nature of medical appointments requires privacy and that it is important that a professional is employed who will be impartial and maintain confidentiality.

Concerns were also raised regarding:

* the implications of the establishment of Fiona Stanley Hospital on CaLD clients—it was noted that there is an opportunity for the new hospital to be the ‘gold standard’ in delivery of health services to people from CaLD backgrounds
* cultural adjustments that some people from CaLD backgrounds need to understand and accept the differences in health care practices between their country of origin and Australia, such as the shift from a family-driven focus of care to an institutional approach
* cessation of translated child health information by the Department of Health
* long waiting lists for dental appointments
* the difficulty approaching and addressing issues relating to disability as this is a taboo subject in some communities
* availability of hospital transport for appointments outside current service times.

##### Financial literacy and financial counselling

Issues relating to financial counselling and financial literacy were raised by local government staff. It was noted that this related to both established and new and emerging communities.

Issues included barriers faced by people from CaLD backgrounds accessing relevant services, lack of understanding of contracts, clients’ concerns about and reluctance to provide government officials with financial information, and a gap in sufficient financial counselling services to meet needs (which currently involve three-week waiting times for an appointment).

##### Other issues

Other issues were raised in relation to:

* the need for programs that support parents from CaLD backgrounds
* difficulties faced by some people from CaLD backgrounds in accessing housing—particularly those with large families
* difficulties faced by some migrants in having their overseas qualifications recognised—and the impact of this not only on their employment opportunities but also on their mental health.

### Access to services

It was noted that the first issue to be addressed in relation to access to services was for potential clients to be aware that services exist, as noted above (4.2.1). It was also noted that many CaLD community members ‘don’t know how to navigate the system and don’t understand the structures of the social service delivery system’.

It was also noted that transport limitations can be a barrier to accessing services and the value of integrated service centres was highlighted. Location of relevant services in proximity to venues in which people from CaLD backgrounds gather would enhance both awareness of the service(s) and access to them. It was suggested that the City of Cockburn currently owns some infrastructure, such as community halls, that could be adapted to function as service hubs. Intensive English Centres were also identified as a potential hub for services.

Participants noted that some people from CaLD backgrounds are fearful of accessing services and that this is sometimes due to, or exacerbated by, lack of confidence in communicating in English. The importance of access to interpreters and provision of translated information was highlighted. A lack of trust in government officials arising from negative experiences in migrants’ countries of origin could also impact on service access. It was noted that, to address this issue, it is critical that service providers invest time in developing relationships and trust with community members.

It was also noted that members of established communities are returning to migrant resource centres for support but that the centres are not funded to provide services to this cohort.

A representative of the Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre (EDAC) noted that the centre’s recent consultations in Cockburn had attracted few participants and that the City of Cockburn would benefit from focused strategies to engage CaLD community members.

### Community integration

Participants identified a need for additional effort to be given to developing an environment that embraces, celebrates and supports the city’s multicultural communities. It was noted that it is important that there is a dual approach to this: to provide support to individual communities and to connect specific communities with the wider community.

**Suggestions for ways to achieve this included:**

* establishing a common database of communities/groups and a register of cultural festivals
* providing access to premises for ethnic organisations for meetings and functions and a common gathering space for all community groups
* providing funding support to ethnic community organisations and other relevant not-for-profit organisations that provide social and cultural support to CaLD communities
* liaising with the Department of Education to allow organisations to use school premises on Saturdays
* increasing the number of sports facilities
* involving CaLD communities in public council meetings and encouraging CaLD community members to nominate for council positions
* expanding Harmony Week activities—such as a festival of linked activities.

## Future planning

The consultations revealed a key role for the City of Cockburn in coordinating responses to some of the issues raised, particularly in relation to provision of information, strategic service planning, consultation and connections with CaLD communities and encouraging an environment that is welcoming and inclusive of cultural diversity.

The City of Cockburn Strategic Community Plan 2012–22 provides a sound framework for these actions. It aspires to:

* ‘community environments that are socially cohesive and embrace diversity’—with an identified action to ‘develop local community plans across the city that create cohesiveness and embrace diversity’
* ‘communities that are connected, inclusive and promote intergenerational opportunities’—with an action to provide and facilitate quality community services that meet diverse recreational, cultural and community needs of all age groups
* ‘the significance and richness of our local Indigenous people and diverse multicultural community will be recognised and celebrated’—with an action to ‘recognise, engage, include and celebrate the significance and richness of local Indigenous and diverse multicultural groups’
* provide community facilities that meet the diverse needs of the community now and into the future.

It was also evident that Fremantle Multicultural Centre, as a key service delivery agency for this cohort, is a valuable resource for agencies and that there is strong community and institutional support available to progress future actions.

## Next steps

It was agreed that:

* OMI would:
* circulate the draft report of the consultations to the City of Cockburn and roundtable participants for review and comment
* provide a copy of the report to relevant Australian and State Government agencies for consideration and comment
* support Fremantle Multicultural Centre in establishing a CaLD South West Services Network
* the City of Cockburn would:
* incorporate consultation findings in the development of its Multicultural Action Plan
* consider applying for funding, for example through the Department of Social Services Settlement Grants Program, for a multicultural officer.

# Kwinana

## Introduction

According to the 2011 Census, the Kwinana LGA had a total population of 29,227 people. Of these:

* 29.5 per cent were born overseas (compared with 25.6 per cent in 2006 and 28.3 per cent in 2001)
* 11.7 per cent were born in a non-main English speaking (NMES) country (compared with 6.9 per cent in 2006 and 7.0 per cent in 2001)
* 9.7 per cent spoke a language other than English at home (compared with 5.9 per cent in 2006 and 5.6 per cent in 2001).

The top five countries of birth were England, New Zealand, Scotland, South Africa and Ireland. The top five NMES countries of birth were Philippines, India, Germany, the Netherlands and China.

The top five languages other than English spoken were Tagalog, Mandarin, Spanish, Italian and Filipino.

The major religious affiliations were with Christianity (52.2 per cent), no religion (28.8 per cent), Buddhism (1.2 per cent), Islam (0.8 per cent) and Hinduism (0.5 per cent).

The City of Kwinana Cultural Diversity Community Roundtable was held on Thursday, 6 November 2014. It was attended by two OMI representatives and two officers from the Department of Social Services, including the State Director. In addition to local government representatives, it was attended by six people. It was preceded by a meeting with five representatives of the City of Kwinana.

## Issues, gaps and suggestions

Issues raised related to:

* Community resources and infrastructure
* Service delivery
* Access to services.

### Community resources and infrastructure

There was considerable discussion regarding the need for a greater level of community resources and infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse community.

It was suggested that the centralisation of services has ‘left a hole in the community’ by removing some gathering spaces. It was noted that, although the Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre is an attractive facility, a useful hub for services and could appeal to some because of a sense of anonymity, the more sophisticated environment could deter some people. It was noted that ‘how wider community sees the use of space is different from how some communities wish to use it’.

Participants noted that service delivery is hampered by the lack of properties available in the area. High rental costs and the limited availability of land on which to build were also considered barriers, particularly because much of the available land is either State-owned or residential.

Despite some reticence regarding the appeal of the Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre for some groups, participants acknowledged the value of service hubs that co-locate services. It was suggested that this could be enhanced by locating these hubs in centres in which people currently congregate for recreational and other purposes.

Participants noted that homelessness is an issue that is not limited to any specific population cohort. However, particular concerns were raised regarding the lack of general crisis accommodation for young people.

Participants identified a need for facilities that allow homeless people to shower and lock up their belongings, such as that provided at the Perth Central Railway Station. It was noted that two facilities are currently available: ‘The Zone’ youth centre and the Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre.

It was noted that a ‘homeless action group’ that operates across Rockingham and Kwinana is looking at ways to address this issue. The importance of involving organisations such as the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia (REIWA) was highlighted.

**Suggestions to address these issues were:**

* a drop-in centre for women and girls
* for government agencies to work with industry to access unused industrial facilities—it was noted that Kwinana Industries Council is represented on a local action group and that this was one forum at which these issues could be considered.

### Service delivery

Participants raised many issues regarding service delivery. These included both systemic issues and specific focus areas of concern.

#### Systemic issues

Concerns were raised that budget constraints on many agencies mean that staff are being asked to do more but do not have the resources to meet these demands.

Participants also expressed frustration that they could not see the outcomes of the resources going in to support community members.

The need for a holistic approach to the provision of services was identified that:

* builds links between agencies and programs
* focuses on what will be to the client’s benefit and to make appropriate referrals.

A model of service delivery highlighted as an example of effective service delivery was the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (CPFS) Rockingham Family Support Network which

* takes a case management approach to clients
* partners with agencies that provide entry points to identify the fastest route to appropriate service delivery
* includes a shared database to allow easy access to client information for partnering agencies
* has one point of assessment and regular checks and monitoring.

Participants also identified a need for agencies to focus on outcomes when assessing their effectiveness, that is, on the extent to which they are making a difference so that they can adapt their services if required. It was suggested that an outcome measure should be that ‘clients no longer needs us rather than how many clients we have seen’.

**Other issues raised were:**

* the need for agency staff to increase their levels of cultural competency
* concerns regarding the availability of interpreters in some languages
* the need to look at innovative ways to break the cycle of welfare dependency, such as micro-financing.

**Suggestions to address these issues included:**

* working through the Kwinana Local Action Group
* acknowledging that long-term programs are required to address the issues that are at the core of social disadvantage
* appointing a ‘multicultural officer’ within the local government to contribute to the planning and coordination of relevant strategies.

#### Specific areas of concern

Specific areas of concern related to particular population cohorts—children and young people and women—and specific service delivery areas—employment and health.

#### Specific groups

##### Children and young people

A range of concerns were raised regarding children and young people including:

* some children are allowed to wander in public areas unsupervised because their parents are not able to afford after-school care
* the English language needs of young people are not being met
* parents and students from CaLD backgrounds may require more support and information regarding the transition of Year 7 students to secondary school
* there are few activities available for young people and particularly for children aged between eight and 12 years
* school attrition rates
* family tensions arising from intergenerational conflict
* transiency among some CaLD communities that results in children being moved from school to school as parents relocate for employment.

Suggestions to address issues included:

* funding for programs to provide activities for young people, particularly those aged between eight and 12 years
* increased funding for family support services including early intervention and parenting programs
* funding for after school activities including homework classes and English classes.

##### Women

Issues of concern related to:

* girls and young women who have been subject to physical and emotional abuse
* the vulnerability of spouses of migrants who have entered Australia on temporary visas in the case of relationship breakdown
* lack of parenting support
* lack of understanding of written communication from authorities when it is in English
* mothers failing to seek healthcare checks for children and lack of understanding of the need for them to do so.

#### Specific service delivery areas

##### Employment

Employment issues included:

* concerns regarding the difficulties some migrants face gaining recognition of qualifications gained overseas and obtaining employment in their area of expertise
* that migrants are still being encouraged to come even though jobs and support are not available
* the perception of some members of the community that new migrants are gaining employment at the expense of Aboriginal people.

##### Health

Health issues included:

* the need for services to address serious medical and emotional issues arising from violence and abuse faced by some young women
* long waiting times of up to 18 months for access to health (including child health) services
* that there is currently no on-entry assessment and screening of dental or vision health.

Concerns were also raised regarding the current practice for assessment of children’s health needs which involves screening by teachers in schools. Participants questioned the effectiveness of this approach as teachers do not have the necessary expertise. It was suggested that the Victorian model method of child health assessments—which sees the assessments conducted by child health services—be adopted.

### Access to services

Concerns were raised that some people from CaLD backgrounds are reluctant to seek help and do so only at a crisis point. It was noted that a particularly vulnerable group are girls and young women who have been subject to emotional and physical abuse.

It was also suggested that low levels of English language proficiency pose a barrier to awareness of the availability of services and that multilingual strategies are needed to reach some CaLD groups, such as the use of translated information.

Local government staff noted that difficulty accessing public transport was also a barrier for some people, particularly women.

## Future planning

Participants were unanimous in their agreement that it is important for agencies to work together to discuss these issues and to enlist the support of all levels of government, the non-government and community sector, and business and industry.

The City of Kwinana’s Strategic Community Plan 2013–23 indicates that there is a role for the local government in coordinating some of this activity.

One of its strategies to achieve the objective that ‘all sections of the community are supported by the provision of relevant community and human services’ is ‘to develop and implement the City of Kwinana’s Children, Family and Youth and other strategies in order to ensure that support programs are provided for the vulnerable, and community facilities and public spaces are enlivened by a variety of activities and programs, particularly for youth and seniors’.

The key strategy in achieving the city’s objective of inspiring and strengthening community spirit is to ‘provide a range of community events that recognise Kwinana’s cultural identity, encourage civic participation and celebrate multiculturalism’.

The plan highlights the multicultural nature of the community and the likelihood that the cultural diversity of the area will increase by 2030, as Kwinana is a popular choice for migrants due to the cheaper housing options and development of new housing lots adjacent to the Kwinana Freeway. This suggests that it is timely for planning to consider how best to meet this increase.

## **Next** steps

It was agreed that:

* OMI would:
* circulate the draft report of the consultations to the City of Kwinana and roundtable participants for review and comment
* provide a copy of the report to relevant Australian and State Government agencies for consideration and comment
* the City of Kwinana would consider the report in implementing its community plan.

# Conclusion

The consultations revealed a growing awareness among all local governments in the region of the importance of planning and strategies to address the needs of an increasingly culturally diverse population. Such efforts were regarded as consistent with local governments’ strategic community plans and integral to achieving socially cohesive communities.

While the focus of concern differed in each area, a common theme related to the adequacy of service provision and the importance of strategies to address social and physical infrastructure needs. Achieving an environment that is welcoming of cultural diversity was also a key feature of discussions.

While local governments were identified as key agents to facilitate planning, the consultations highlighted the need for plans and strategies to be developed in partnership with the Australian and State Governments, non-government organisations, the community and, where relevant, business and industry groups.

With the populations of each area set to grow substantially in the coming years, it is timely to begin this process.

Given the limitations of this scan of issues, a key initial step would be more focused consultation with relevant groups to explore the concerns raised.

# Appendix

## Organisations consulted

### Rockingham

Association of Services to Torture and Trauma Survivors

City of Rockingham

Cook Islands Community WA Inc

Department of Human Services

Kiwi Festival Promotion Inc

Rockingham Mosque

South Coastal Women and   
Family Services

The Salvation Army, Rockingham

### Mandurah

Challenger TAFE

City of Mandurah

Mandurah Migrant Support Group

Mandurah Primary School

Mandurah Obstetrics

Peel Multicultural Society

Waratah Community Church

Zonta

### Cockburn

City of Cockburn

Cockburn Senior Citizens  
 Association Inc

Cultural Learning Centre Mosaica Inc

Ethnic Disability Advocacy Centre

Free Spirit Dance Company

Fremantle Multicultural Centre

Friends of the Community

Meerilinga

Mozambique Society of WA

Murdoch University

North Lake Senior Campus

Portuguese Cultural and Welfare   
Centre Inc

Serbian Community Krajina Inc

South Lake Ottey Family  
Neighbourhood Centre Inc

St John of God Hospital

Tongan Wesleyan Methodist Church

The Joys of the Women Italian Choir

Women of the World

Yangebup Family Centre Inc

### Kwinana

ASPIRE—Bridging the Gap

City of Kwinana

Daughters of Destiny

4 Families (FMHSS) Relationships Australia

South Coastal Women and Family Services

The Smith Family

1. One person attended roundtables in both Rockingham and Kwinana. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Statistics were obtained through the Department of Social Services Settlement Database and are indicative and subject to a number of qualifications. For example, the filter for visa subclass is not presenting the entire visa subclass index (skilled visas introduced in 2012 are missing). Reports run with 'Migration Stream' will have a high number in the ‘Unknown’ category (these are skilled visas that are not being categorised correctly). Reports run with 'Visa Subclass' as a 'Report Criteria', subclass 309 – Partner (provisional) is not presenting. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)