

OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL INTERESTS

CONSULTATION

REPORT SUMMARY

Background

The Office of Multicultural Interests Strategic Plan 2009–2013 commits the agency to engaging individuals, community organisations, the private sector and local government in policy development and long-term planning to support and promote cultural diversity.

In 2009, the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, Hon John Castrilli MLA, asked OMI to undertake a community engagement strategy that has resulted in a number of regional and issue-based consultations. The aim of the strategy is to facilitate the engagement of people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds in government decision-making processes, policies and programs and provide information, skills and opportunities to support settlement, integration and citizenship.

The consultation in Albany and Mount Barker aimed to:

- i) identify issues and their associated impacts faced by people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds in Albany and Mount Barker
- ii) explore possible solutions, and find ways to achieve them.

Methodology

Two OMI officers conducted the consultations which also benefited from the presence of staff from Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and Department of Human Services (DHS) at all meetings. The consultations involved two community forums and a series of meetings with key individuals and agencies.

Thirty-eight people attended a forum at the Albany Migrant Resource Centre on Monday 17 October 2011 and 26 people attended a forum at the Great Southern Institute of Technology on Tuesday 18 October 2011. Of these, 55 (86 per cent) were community members, six (nine per cent) were from government agencies and three (five per cent) were representatives of non-government organisations.

Nine meetings were held with key individuals and agencies in Albany and Mount Barker.

Key issues and solutions

The consultations in Albany and Mount Barker revealed that the community was becoming increasingly culturally diverse and that this presents both opportunities and challenges. Migrants and refugees who had recently arrived highlighted many positive features of the area, including its physical attributes and the willingness of community members, employers and agency staff to support their settlement.

Some gaps in service delivery were evident, particularly in the areas of transport, information provision, employment, housing and language support. Many comments were made regarding the need for service delivery agencies to increase their use of interpreters and translators.

Priority issues

- **Language**—the need for increased access to English language learning opportunities and for agencies to increase their use of interpreting and translating services.
- **Employment**—the need for increased access to career guidance services, overseas qualifications recognition, opportunities for adult learners to access a wider range of education programs to enhance their job opportunities, and increased employment opportunities for people from CaLD backgrounds.
- **Transport**—the need for a more frequent public transport system and assistance for people to obtain a driver's licence.
- **Information provision**—the need for improved access to information to facilitate the settlement process and the provision of settlement information and advice for all migrants and refugees.
- **Community integration**—the need for the community to embrace a wider range of multicultural community events, increased competency of service delivery staff, and capacity building among ethnic community organisations and community members.

Other issues raised included the need for:

- assistance accessing public and community housing
- increased access to specialist health services
- the high, and sometimes prohibitive, cost of dental health services
- information and assistance to reunite with family, including those still residing in refugee camps
- increased access to childcare.

Despite these issues, the overriding sense was of a welcoming community that was poised to enjoy a period of economic growth and an increasingly culturally diverse workforce and population.

Next steps

The Office of Multicultural Interests is forwarding a copy of the full consultation report to relevant Local, State and Federal Government agencies for their information and comment and will monitor responses and subsequent initiatives arising from the consultation.

A full copy of the consultation report is available on the OMI website at www.omi.wa.gov.au/omi_consultations.cfm.