

Office of Multicultural Interests Katanning Consultation Report

April 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September 2010, Mr Richard Kowald, President, Shire of Katanning, wrote to the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, the Hon John Castrilli MLA, requesting that the Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) conduct a consultation in Katanning as part of its statewide community engagement strategy.

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 aimed to:

- i) identify issues faced by people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in Katanning and the associated impacts of these
- ii) explore possible solutions and how to achieve them.

Forty-four people attended the community forum at the Katanning Leisure Centre on Thursday 24 February 2011. Of these, 28 (64 per cent) were community members, 14 (32 per cent) were from government agencies and two (4 per cent) were representatives of non-government organisations. Feedback from participants following the consultation indicated satisfaction with the quality of the presentations and facilitated group discussions.

Information gathered at the community forum was supplemented by individual meetings with key individuals and agencies in Katanning. Meetings were conducted on Thursday 24 February and Friday 25 February 2011.

It should be noted that, while the consultation model is effective in raising issues and identifying CaLD community perceptions of government services, it does not necessarily yield recommendations or solutions that can readily be implemented.

Key issues and solutions

The consultation in Katanning revealed a socially cohesive community that not only supports but actively celebrates and embraces multiculturalism. The consultation also revealed the shire's strong support for its CaLD communities.

However, gaps in service delivery were evident, particularly in the areas of school resources, health and Centrelink services, and language support. Many comments were made regarding the need for service delivery agencies to increase their use of interpreters and translators.

Priority issues identified at the consultations were:

- **Centrelink**—the need for a comprehensive Centrelink service in Katanning.
- **Medical treatment**—difficulties accessing health services, particularly specialist (including torture and trauma) services and the need for greater use of interpreters by health services and professionals.
- **Citizenship test**—assistance to sit and pass the citizenship test.

- **Language**—the need for more English classes during the day, at night and on Saturdays, and English language assistance, particularly greater access to interpreting and translating services.
- **Migrant services**—the need for comprehensive and coordinated settlement services and additional resources for the town’s migrant resource centre.

Other issues raised included the need for:

- opportunities for staff in service delivery agencies and businesses to undertake cultural awareness training
- partnerships and coordination between service providers, business and the wider community to address the issues raised
- increased resources for schools to assist CaLD students, particularly those from refugee backgrounds
- increased access to public housing
- the development of small business and a greater range of employment opportunities.

Despite these issues, the overriding sense was one of pride in the ability of the town to acknowledge and address the needs of CaLD communities with the resources available to it. There was a belief that the Shire of Katanning has provided inspiration and leadership in this area and the community would welcome opportunities to build on its achievements.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In September 2010, Mr Richard Kowald, President, Shire of Katanning, wrote to the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, Hon John Castrilli MLA, requesting that the Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) conduct a consultation in Katanning as part of its statewide community engagement strategy.

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.

1.2 Methodology

The consultation in Katanning differed from previous consultations that were initiated and coordinated by OMI. The Katanning consultation was both initiated and coordinated by the shire council. This not only highlighted the shire's strong interest, concern and support for its culturally diverse community but also facilitated a range of meetings with key agencies and individuals and resulted in strong community representation at the forum. Information gathered at the meetings was used to supplement the data gathered at the community forum for inclusion in this report.

The consultation also benefited from the presence of a Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) representative at all meetings. A representative of the Karen Welfare Association, based in Perth, also assisted with community contacts and attended several meetings.

Community forum

Forty-four people attended the community forum at the Katanning Leisure Centre on Thursday 24 February 2011. Of these, 28 (64 per cent) were community members, 14 (32 per cent) were from government agencies and two (4 per cent) were representatives of non-government organisations. The participants were from a range of cultural backgrounds. A list of communities and organisations represented at the forum is provided in the Appendix.

The forum was opened by Mr Richard Kowald, President, Shire of Katanning and introductory words were also provided by Mr Alep Mydie, President of the Islamic Association of Katanning.

The consultations comprised a facilitated discussion in small groups in which OMI sought input on issues affecting families from CaLD backgrounds. Each group had a facilitator and scribe who recorded the issues raised by participants at each table. Two interpreters were used: one to assist speakers of Karen and the other for speakers of Burmese.

Participants were also offered individual feedback sheets on which they could make additional comments if there was insufficient opportunity to contribute all the comments they might wish to make.

For each of the issues raised, participants were invited to:

- i) identify issues faced by people from CaLD backgrounds in Katanning and the associated impacts of these
- ii) explore possible solutions, and how to achieve them.

The issues were summarised and then each participant voted to prioritise two key issues and their solutions.

It should be noted that, while the consultation structure is effective in raising issues and in identifying CaLD community perceptions of government services, it does not necessarily yield recommendations or solutions that can readily be implemented.

Supplementary meetings

Information gathered at the community forum was supplemented by individual meetings with key individuals and agencies in Katanning. Meetings were conducted on Thursday 24 February and Friday 25 February 2011. A list of the meetings is provided in the Appendix.

1.3 Evaluation

Following the forum, participants were asked to provide feedback on the presentations, quality of discussion and overall organisation. Results are provided below.

Twenty-seven of the 44 participants (61 per cent) completed the questionnaire.

All respondents (100 per cent) found the discussion relevant. Nine (33 per cent) respondents gave a rating of 'excellent' and 18 (67 per cent) respondents gave a rating of 'good'. All respondents believed their views were heard to varying degrees. Fourteen (52 per cent) respondents gave a rating of 'excellent' and 13 (48 per cent) respondents gave a rating of 'good'.

The question asking participants to rate the value of OMI's consultation program was completed by 26 of the 27 respondents. All respondents (100 per cent) valued the consultation program as 'good' or 'excellent'. Of these, 17 (65 per cent) gave a rating of 'excellent' and 9 (35 per cent) gave a rating of 'good'.

Qualitative feedback indicated that key areas for improvement related to the use of the information gathered at the consultation.

Perhaps a bit more information on how the information will be compiled and process/ resources for implementation—who will be doing actions or will it be up to various organisations to pick up themselves.

Future consultation topics

The two suggestions for future consultation topics were government rental housing and humanitarian support services.

1.4 Lessons

The consultation highlighted the value of:

- consultations initiated and coordinated by a local government authority. As noted above, this facilitated a range of meetings with key agencies and individuals in the town and contributed to a strong community representation at the consultation forum
- individual meetings with key agencies and individuals to supplement information gathered at the community forum. These meetings allowed greater exploration of the concerns of various agencies and members of the community and provided a more comprehensive understanding of issues in the community
- attendance at all meetings of a DIAC staff member who was able to respond to questions regarding immigration and citizenship matters.

2. ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS

2.1 Migrant services

Participants at the community forum identified a strong need for a more comprehensive migrant resource centre and associated services. Currently, the Katanning Migrant Resource Centre receives funding through the Australian Government's Settlement Grants Program (SGP) for a part-time service. The SGP target group comprises permanent residents who have arrived in Australia during the last five years as:

- humanitarian entrants
- family stream migrants with low levels of English proficiency
- dependants of skilled migrants with low English proficiency who have settled in rural or regional areas.

Select temporary residents (Prospective Marriage, Provisional Partner, Provisional Spouse and Provisional Interdependency visa holders) in rural and regional areas who have arrived in Australia during the last five years and who have low English proficiency also fall within the target group.¹

The migrant resource centre currently provides a service 20 hours per week over two days and it was widely felt that this was not sufficient to meet demand. This was also raised by a representative of the Western Australian Meat Marketing Co-operative Limited (WAMMCO):

When the migrant resource centre is needed they are not available.

WAMMCO employs a significant number of migrants and people from refugee backgrounds. At the time of OMI's consultation, of WAMMCO's workforce of 308, nearly 80 per cent were from CaLD backgrounds, including 65 Chinese, 57 Malay and 46 Burmese workers. The WAMMCO representative identified a need for assistance with issues such as school, banking, children, life skills, acculturation and basic English. WAMMCO currently runs a 'work readying' course.

Participants at the forum identified a need for assistance for entrants beyond the five-year SGP eligibility period as well as assistance for those who have arrived through other migration programs. It was noted that there was a need for services to address issues such as intercultural differences, trauma, domestic violence and isolation. The need for assistance to obtain a driver's licence, to prepare for the citizenship test and to arrange family reunion was also highlighted.

At a meeting at the Katanning Migrant Resource Centre, staff expressed frustration that limited funding restricted the provision of services, commenting that the inability to provide a service to all members of Katanning's CaLD communities created a "bad impression". While acknowledging the primacy of

¹ See: <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/delivering-assistance/settlement-grants/what-sgp-providers.htm>

the needs of newly arrived clients, they also highlighted that some SGP clients who reach the five-year limit for assistance have not yet achieved successful settlement and require ongoing support. Staff also identified a need for a more general migrant service to service the broader CaLD community.

Staff at the migrant resource centre also remarked on the fluidity of the Katanning CaLD population and the impact on the demand for services of interstate migration and transmigration between Albany and Katanning. While it was acknowledged that SGP funding was limited to assisting clients within a five-year settlement period, it was suggested that statistics on which DIAC bases its assessment of SGP applicants and funding levels may not accurately reflect the true demographics of the town. DIAC statistics are sourced from DIAC's Settlement Database and secondary movement statistics rely on clients advising Medicare of their change of residence. A failure to do so affects the accuracy of this data.²

Staff also noted that the centre became "swamped" at certain times. For example, it was noted that WAMMCO shuts down once a year for plant maintenance but many workers do not plan for this and come to the migrant resource centre seeking financial assistance and other support.

Participants at the community forum also noted that there is limited information regarding the support services available and that there is a need to promote existing services.

Suggestions

Suggestions to address the issues raised at the community forum were:

- additional resources to be provided to the migrant resource centre including employment of specialists in key areas such as torture and trauma counselling, acculturation, preparation for the citizenship test and family reunion processes, as well as the provision of more general immigration information and advice
- better communication, cooperation and coordination between relevant agencies, including partnerships "to achieve outcomes and provide services that cannot be achieved individually"
- a central point for dissemination of information for migrants
- development of a "Katanning multicultural directory"
- utilising community leaders to convey key information.

² DIAC has advised that funding for the area is based on statistics drawn from a number of sources including the department's Settlement Database which collects settlement location data from a range of departmental systems, the Adult Migrant English Program and Medicare Australia. In 2010–11, the data showed that there were 150 Family Stream, 96 Humanitarian and 12 Skilled targeted group arrivals in the Lower Great Southern Statistical District which includes Albany and Katanning. DIAC has also advised that additional resources are required to provide services at two sites and that efforts are made to supplement funding where possible to address these additional costs.

2.2 Language assistance

The consultation highlighted the impact of language barriers on the settlement and integration of migrants and refugees. Participants commented on the frustration, social isolation and limited employment opportunities that can result from language barriers. Participants also highlighted the needs of older people who tend to revert to their first language as they age:

The older generation [are] having communication issues—[the] impact will be on the younger generation to help out and having [to] spend most of their time taking the elders to doctors, filling out forms, translating, reading letters and bills that they don't understand. It will be OK if the younger generation was a "stay at home mum" or don't have a full time job. But if the older generation are relying on someone who has a full time job, they would have to take time off work all the time ...

The key language issues identified by participants were as follows:

Availability of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes

A written submission to OMI commented on the challenges in relation to the provision of English language training:

Present TAFE funding and facilities are grossly inadequate especially bearing in mind that most new arrivals work 12 hour shifts at WAMMCO and a 4 ½ day week usually. They are very tired and can only spare a few hours at weekends to study English. This is a long process and we cannot expect them to become proficient at both oral and written language in a short period of time.

While WAMMCO has considered the possibility of workplace English language training, this is currently not a viable option. The WAMMCO representative noted that the company was constantly in need of additional workers to maintain productivity. Given the demands on the existing workforce and the measures currently in place to accommodate the cultural and religious needs of its employees, it was not in a position to release workers for classes during work time.

Participants at the community forum expressed a need for ESL classes to be provided not only during the day but also at night and on Saturdays. This issue was discussed at a meeting with TAFE staff who commented on the difficulty of attracting and retaining skilled staff to Katanning. Staff stated that new English classes had been planned for 2011; however, the lecturer had withdrawn at short notice. The position has since been re-advertised and attracted a significant number of applicants and TAFE staff were optimistic that the new classes would go ahead as planned.

Other difficulties with accessing English language training that were raised by TAFE staff included:

- a lack of public transport
- difficulties accessing childcare for women with children
- resistance from husbands of some women in relation to attending classes

- lack of resources at the TAFE to provide Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) classes for new arrivals.

Participants acknowledged the important role played by Katanning Literacy Link, a volunteer tutor program operating as part of the Read Write Now program, in providing English language learning assistance.

Access to language services

Participants expressed a need for improved access to interpreters, translators, translated information and assistance to complete forms.

We do not understand all communication from any department.

Generic services in Katanning ... should know about how to arrange interpreters.

A major issue of concern were difficulties faced accessing interpreting services at doctors' surgeries. There was a perception that GPs were either unaware of the availability of free interpreting services or reluctant to use them due to the additional time and work involved.

One participant shared an experience in which they had acquired an injury in the workplace but, because of both language difficulties and a fear of losing their job, they chose not to notify their supervisor. The same participant related their lack of success obtaining the services of an interpreter at the doctor's surgery. The doctor failed to provide a satisfactory treatment for the injury, which the participant suggested might be due to communication difficulties, and they are now seeking a doctor in Perth.

Concerns also were raised regarding the availability of interpreters in certain languages and dialects:

I've noticed that there is no Cocos Malay speaking language in the translator services. I tried talking to Centrelink on behalf of my grandmother, and Centrelink wouldn't accept it, so we had to go through an interpreter. First it was Malaysian, but my grandmother didn't understand due to the different dialect, then they tried Indonesian, and also she didn't understand, and the problem wasn't resolved. Malaysian Malay, Indonesian, and Cocos Malay is not the same. The dialect is very different.

Suggestions

Solutions to address issues raised at the community forum included:

- provision of English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at a range of times including during the day, at night and on Saturdays
- use of Katanning Literacy Link which offers the services of volunteer tutors
- increased use of interpreters (both telephone and on-site) by employers and service delivery agencies, particularly health services
- employment of bi-lingual workers by key services

- widespread promotion of the availability of interpreters and translators
- increased availability of information in key languages.

2.3 School education

The need for support to assist the integration of migrants and people with refugee backgrounds into school was a common concern among participants. Issues included:

- English language difficulties that not only limit academic progress but also affect students' social integration with their peers and schools' ability to communicate with parents
- the need for additional support for some students, for example, through homework classes such as those currently provided by the senior high school
- concerns that students from CaLD communities are not "mixing" enough with other students
- the need for students and parents from some cultures to understand the school system
- the need for increased cultural awareness in schools to assist the integration of students from other cultures.

The schools do a great job with the very limited funding but so many refugee students are missing out because we simply can't provide the level of support and help that they need. We are trying to avoid having a future pool of unemployable, disaffected young people with limited English and no job prospects.

Meetings with representatives of Katanning Senior High School and Braeside Primary School provided insight into the issues raised at the community forum and several others. It was evident that cultural diversity was embraced by the schools and that considerable effort was made to accommodate students' needs:

We wear our multiculturalism as a badge of honour. We love it.

School representatives attributed teachers' great commitment to assisting students to a more general sense of commitment to the community. One school representative noted that:

School staff want to be in Katanning—they feel a sense of ownership of the community.

Staff readily related their positive experiences working with students from diverse backgrounds. Some staff members commented on the joy of seeing students, who have never sung before, learn to sing and expressed their delight at the result:

The music from the Karen kids is amazing.

Staff highlighted the difference in support needs for students who have entered through the skilled and humanitarian migration programs and from

different backgrounds. Staff expressed concern regarding their capacity to address the complex needs of CaLD students, particularly those from refugee backgrounds. Most of these students were deemed unready for mainstream classes and requiring almost one-on-one support.

Resourcing

At Katanning Senior High School, English as a Second Language (ESL) students account for 11 per cent of its 382 students and the percentage was similar at Braeside Primary School. Each of the schools has been allocated 0.6 of an FTE to assist with English language learning. This is directed at 42 students in the case of Katanning Senior High School, and at 25 students at Braeside Primary School,. The senior high school also has a Malay liaison officer who works three-and-a-half days a week with the ESL students.

The senior high school has allocated an additional 0.9 FTE of its general staffing allocation to assist these students and, while keen to provide the support, is concerned that this means reduced resources for other students. Additional support has also been provided in the form of homework classes conducted by teachers each Tuesday and Thursday for an hour after school. This is provided by teachers voluntarily and in their own time.

The Department of Education has recently provided the school with a transportable building for ESL classes and the school is currently seeking funds to buy computers. Many students do not have access to computers at home and it was noted that school-based learning relies on the internet.

Of particular concern to both schools was their ability to meet the needs of students suffering post-traumatic stress disorder. More recently these have included young African and Burmese students. The senior high school has the services of a psychologist three days a week, and Braeside Primary school once a fortnight, however, this was regarded as insufficient due to the number and range of students requiring assistance.

The experiences of these students had made strong impressions on teachers. One teacher spoke about a young student from Burundi who had run away from home in fear of his life aged nine years of age. He had lived on his own for three years as he escaped across the border before the Red Cross and his mother had traced him and brought him to Australia. The teacher commented on his obvious resilience and self-sufficiency but also remarked that “he has been through a lot” and expressed concern for the long-term impact of his experiences.

Concerns were also raised regarding the schools’ ability to meet the needs of students from CaLD backgrounds who had physical or learning difficulties. Examples included:

- difficulties attracting support through Schools Plus³ for students whose learning abilities are not genetic but rather had been affected by prolonged lack of nutrition

³ Schools Plus provides supplementary resources to Western Australian public schools that have eligible students. These students may require significant and often ongoing teaching and learning

- a student who is deaf but spoke neither English nor Auslan
- a student who staff believe is autistic but whose parents are not in a financial position to secure a diagnosis, thereby preventing the school from accessing appropriate support.

The matter of advanced information regarding new arrivals was a concern for both schools:

We normally only find out by rumour that people are arriving. The school is the last to know.

It was noted that lack of prior warning limited the extent to which they could plan and budget for the needs of these new students.

Apart from the need for computers at the new learning centre and the services of a torture and trauma counsellor, the senior high school listed “knowing who and where to go to get the skills and knowledge we need” as one of their three priority needs.

The senior high school also acknowledged feeling the loss of support from the Fremantle District Education Office which had closed as part of an amalgamation of school districts. The Northam Regional Education Office is now the key point of contact and staff indicated that this office was not in a position to provide support:

There is one person there to help who is too busy.

Parent involvement

Staff at the senior high school observed that parents “tend to value education” but noted that it was often difficult to communicate with them due to language barriers. It was noted that the school had no money for translating newsletters and that, even if this was an option, it would not reach some parents, particularly Afghan Hazaras and many Karen, who are not literate in their first language. The schools sought out local resources to assist, including accessing a member of the Burmese community to interpret and seeking out a Chinese interpreter from the local TAFE college. However, there was no specific allocation for interpreters in the school’s budget and even the use of an interpreter did not solve all problems.

The school is considering hosting a morning tea for migrant and refugee parents to help develop links with the school. This approach had been successful in the past in reaching out to parents of Malay students.

Staff from the senior high school noted that WAMMCO, which employed many of the men, is supportive:

If the school needs to reach the parent of a Chinese student, for example, the school rings the meatworks and they grab someone who speaks Chinese and they tell the parents. It's nothing official.

However, this support was not experienced by staff at Braeside Primary School whose representative noted that there was no one at WAMMCO that they could contact in an emergency.

Both schools highlighted the role of Mrs Jean Phillips, a volunteer in the community, who is a link between the Burmese community and services in the town, and identified Mrs Phillips as a key contact person. Braeside Primary School noted that this year, Mrs Phillips had warned the school that two Burmese families would be arriving.

Cultural integration

The schools reported no major concerns regarding racist incidents or interracial conflict among students.

It was noted that some groups of students, particularly Burmese, tend to sit together and isolate themselves from other students and that this gave other students the impression of “gangs”. However, staff suggested that the Burmese students appeared scared of other students and that they sat together to experience a feeling of security and to defend themselves if necessary.

Participants at the community consultation suggested that this issue was not restricted to Burmese students, with one person commenting that:

CaLD students need to fit in with other students; for example, outside in the playground CaLD students tend to hang out with each other during recess and lunch time. They don't mix with other students. This isolates them further more.

The school identified “some problems with truancy” but explained that this was usually due to students’ choosing to work rather than attend school or to babysit younger siblings while parents were at work. It was noted that part of the reason for this was a lack of childcare in the town.

It was noted that sport, particularly soccer, causes the students to interact together. Staff at the senior high school highlighted the success of a multicultural football program for girls, organised in partnership with the WA Football Commission. The importance of students participating in excursions was also noted and school staff expressed concerns that parents often were not in a position to pay for these. Country Week, for example, costs \$300.

The schools also recognised the importance of understanding the culture of students’ countries of origin and relating to students in a culturally appropriate manner. However, staff stated that they lacked the resources to develop cultural competency skills.

Suggestions

Suggestions made at the community forum to address the issues raised were:

- establishment of a ‘buddy system’ at schools to link local students with those who are newly arrived
- crèches where pre-school children can be cared for and learn English
- cultural education in schools
- celebration of Harmony Week by schools
- employment of a Karen teacher at the senior high school
- increased funding to assist teachers with resources to assist CaLD students
- encouraging parents to attend homework classes as a way of introducing them to the school environment.

Programs such as the ‘Rainbow Program for Children in Refugee Families’ and ‘School’s In for Refugees’ are also available to support children from refugee backgrounds. The Rainbow Program is aimed at children aged 9–12 years who attend English language schools and centres or mainstream schools with a significant enrolment of new arrival families. The program also supports families.⁴

‘School’s In for Refugees: A Whole School Guide to Refugee Readiness’ provides a range of tools and strategies to strengthen the capacity of school communities to support students from refugee backgrounds and enhance their schooling experience in Australia. It aims to give teachers, support staff and administrators strategies to provide a supportive school environment that promotes the mental health and wellbeing of students from refugee backgrounds and improves their educational outcomes.⁵

2.4 Employment

Participants at the community forum noted that, although many migrants and refugees travel to Katanning because of a perception that work is readily available, this is not always found to be the case. At the same time, it was acknowledged that many people in the wider community also experienced difficulties securing work and that the town needed the development of small business and a wider range of employment opportunities.

Participants highlighted a need for career advice for adults and support to locate appropriate work. Participants also identified a need for career advice and support for students transitioning from school to the workforce. It was suggested that young people from African backgrounds find it particularly hard to find work. It was also observed that while WAMMCO offered job opportunities for men, suitable work was needed for women and for people with a disability.

It was also suggested that more training opportunities would be helpful for new arrivals as well as for young people.

⁴ See www.kidsmatter.edu.au/programs-guide/rainbow-refugee. Accessed 6 April 2011.

⁵ See http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/settle/empowering_refugees/pdf/5-schools-in-for-refugees.pdf. Accessed 6 April 2011.

Some concern was expressed regarding the service received at employment agencies⁶:

... the language barrier [is] sometimes an issue and the feeling from people was that the agency does not prioritise them over others seeking work that may be of Australian nationality.

Participants at the community forum also highlighted some confusion in the community regarding the right of Job Services Australia clients to choose and change their provider should they not be happy with the service that they are receiving.

Difficulties obtaining recognition of qualifications gained overseas and the difficult and time-consuming process of completing bridging courses were noted.

Volunteer work with organisations such as the State Emergency Service (SES) and Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) was identified as a useful strategy both to integrate into the community and to make contacts for future work opportunities. However, it was suggested that information about the requirements of volunteers was not widely publicised and that language barriers could prevent some people from obtaining information about how to contact these organisations and/or to enlist as volunteers.

Participants also highlighted the need for cultural awareness training for businesses to ensure they are welcoming and understanding of the needs of a diverse workforce. This was also raised by a WAMMCO representative:

It is difficult having a diverse workforce—there is a lot of juggling ... There is a need for programs that help businesses deal with issues faced in having a diverse workforce.

Suggestions

Participants at the community forum made the following suggestions to address some of the issues raised:

- provision of career advice and job search support for people from CaLD backgrounds in general and for CaLD students transitioning from school to work in particular
- partnerships between agencies and businesses to create traineeships for CaLD young people
- initiating community projects such as community gardens to develop young people's skills
- provision of information and training for businesses in relation to managing a diverse workforce

⁶ Two agencies are funded by the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations through the Jobs Services Australia program to deliver employment services in Katanning. Community First International provides a part-time service (8.30am to 12.30pm Monday to Friday) and Skill Hire WA Pty Ltd provides a monthly visiting service from its Albany office.

- businesses appointing work liaison officers to facilitate communication between employers and CaLD staff with low English language proficiency.

2.5 Health

Participants at the community forum acknowledged the important role played by the Department of Health's Community Health Services. The consultation highlighted difficulties accessing health services not only by CaLD communities but by the wider community as well. Apart from the waiting times involved in securing doctors' appointments and the limited availability of specialist services, access to culturally appropriate health services was a major concern. A recurring complaint was the lack of use of interpreters by health services including the hospital and GPs:

We use [a] friend [but they] are not available all the time.

[There is] racism [at the] doctor's surgery, not in the community.

Participants identified problems accessing female doctors for Muslim women, doctors who were prepared to take the time to understand the needs of CaLD clients and diagnose and treat appropriately, as well as specialists. This issue was also raised by a WAMMCO representative:

There is a need for health and trauma services. Health services are in short supply. If a son is sick, the dad must take him to Perth for treatment. If he is very sick, the family may move to Perth permanently. There is an Indigenous health unit at the hospital but no services specifically for CaLD people ... We wanted to bring some Burmese to Katanning but they wouldn't come because they were receiving counselling in Perth that they couldn't get in Katanning ... The mental health service could be expanded. There are currently only two psychologists.

The need for access to torture and trauma counselling was raised on a number of occasions. DIAC has advised that clients who have settled in Katanning would already have exited the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) and, if counselling needs had been identified, they would have already have been referred to the Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (PASTT) which is run by Department of Health and Ageing (DOHA).⁷ Under the new Humanitarian Settlement Strategy contracts, which will replace the IHSS and are due to be operational by April 2011, DOHA will have responsibility for all counselling services to Humanitarian and Refugee entrants.

Other issues raised were the:

- need to investigate the issue of substance abuse among some members of CaLD communities

⁷ See: <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/mental-torture>.

- demands placed on school dental clinics due to the serious nature of dental problems among children from refugee backgrounds.

Suggestions

Suggestions to address these issues were:

- greater use of interpreters by health services and professionals
- promotion of the priority line that provides free interpreting services for doctors, dentists and pharmacists
- increasing the cultural competency and diversity of the health workforce
- access to torture and trauma counselling for children and adults from refugee backgrounds.

2.6 Community integration

Both the community forum and meetings with individuals and agency representatives revealed a strong commitment to multiculturalism across the Katanning community. This was evident not only in the support provided to the town's diverse CaLD communities but also in the range of cultural events celebrated in the town. These included new year celebrations for the Burmese, Chinese and Karen communities, the Muslim Eid celebration, NAIDOC week and the town's annual Harmony Week events which include a Harmony Festival and a Harmony Exhibition.

Members of the community often remarked on the support provided to newly arrived groups, commenting on the support of the Baptist Church and the local shire as well as more generally:

It's a very accepting community.

However, it was felt that service delivery organisations could do more to assist the community in providing this support:

It could be so much better if services came on board to help the community.

Discussion about this issue largely focused on the need for increased cultural competency skills among agency staff to address the needs of the town's CaLD communities. This ranged from an awareness of the need to provide halal food for the Muslim population at events, to ways of communicating effectively with different groups.

Participants also commented on the perceived isolation of some groups, such as Afghan and African women, and the need for activities to encourage members of CaLD communities to participate. This was also raised in a written submission:

A number of the refugee families, mostly, but not exclusively Afghani's [stet], are struggling to integrate. The men are working and are out and about in the community, but the women stay at home and are sometimes actively discouraged by their men from leaving the home ... The difficulty is that the men are trying to adjust to Western society and

the culture shock can be massive. On top of dealing with past traumas and coping with traumatised wives and children they are faced with a culture that does not prevent women from doing anything that they want to. While some families resist such freedom others want to embrace it, but it takes small steps and won't happen overnight. The children are a fantastic resource. They pick up the English language much faster and help their parents to adjust.

It was suggested that both government and non-government agencies could have a role in this by initiating activities to involve various groups.

The Katanning Community Resource Centre highlighted some of the work that is already being done to address the isolation of some CaLD community members:

We are hoping to fund another course for refugee women to learn the basics of computer use including internet searching, VOIP and email to help to reduce the isolation felt by a lot of the women ... We have run such courses before and they are very popular.

Once again, sport was identified as an effective way to encourage interaction between groups and a meeting with the cultural inclusion officer at the recreation centre revealed a range of opportunities provided by the centre to encourage participation in sport and recreation events by both young people and their parents.

Concerns were also raised regarding the level of support required by members of CaLD communities as they age. It was noted that there was a need for assistance to take people to medical appointments, help fill out forms and secure interpreting services when necessary.

Suggestions

Suggestions made to address these issues were:

- cultural awareness sessions for organisations, businesses and the wider community
- brochures about the cultural practices of different groups to be distributed to businesses and the wider community
- a brochure in different languages, and cultural awareness sessions, providing information for new arrivals about the Australian culture
- sport and recreation activities that involve members of CaLD communities as well as the wider community
- establishment of a service to assist ageing members of CaLD communities.

2.7 Centrelink

Participants expressed a need for a more comprehensive Centrelink service in Katanning as some clients have been travelling to Albany to access services. Concerns were expressed regarding the reliance on self-service

facilities which require clients to use a telephone or computer to conduct their Centrelink business. For people from CaLD backgrounds with limited proficiency in English this can be a significant barrier to accessing services.

Participants highlighted the cost and inconvenience of travel to Albany (or Perth) to conduct Centrelink business. Not all clients have access to private vehicles and, if they do, they must allocate some of their limited financial resources to petrol and, possibly, accommodation.⁸

Following the consultation, Centrelink advised that it has responded to the growing needs of the Katanning community by providing funding to a contracted agency to deliver services in Katanning since the mid-1990s. The agent's presence in Katanning is to ensure that, in most cases, customers should not be required to travel to Albany. From 1 July 2011 the Katanning Community Resource Centre, the Centrelink Agent, has advised that it will fund three full-time staff to provide Centrelink services from 9.00am to 5.00pm with customer service support to reduce the need for self-service operations.

Centrelink agents provide a face-to-face information brokerage service to the community in addition to providing self-help facilities. The services provided include:

- educating and encouraging customers to access Centrelink's suite of self-service facilities such as telephone phone, fax, and internet
- responding to customer enquiries or issues about Centrelink payments and services and, where required, either referring the customer to the Centrelink Call Centre or, in the case of CaLD customers, Centrelink Multilingual Call. If requested by the customer, the agent will contact the Centrelink Call Centre on their behalf
- providing access to Centrelink, and where appropriate, Department of Human Services forms, information products and publications including multilingual publications such as 'We Speak your Language Cards'
- outlining and, where appropriate, assisting customers to become aware of their rights, obligations and complaint mechanisms
- assisting customers who have difficulty in understanding English to access suitable interpreter services through Centrelink Multilingual Call Centre or other sources as appropriate
- promotion of Centrelink Services in the local community, for instance, the availability of Centrelink specialist staff including social workers and multicultural services officers, where appropriate
- assisting with information seminars delivered by Centrelink as requested.

⁸ TransWA provides coach services between Katanning and Albany five days a week (not Tuesday or Friday). However, these buses leave Katanning in the afternoon and arrive in Albany by the closing time of most services, which means that an overnight stay may be required.

Centrelink Agents are not Centrelink staff. However, Centrelink encourages agents to reflect community diversity in their employment practices. Katanning Centrelink Agent employs Indigenous and Malay speaking staff.

Centrelink advised that Albany Customer Service Centre staff, as well as Centrelink Multicultural Services Officers, have visited and continue to visit Katanning, as required, to conduct information sessions. One of the more recent outcomes from the community engagement has been the recruitment of a community member on the Centrelink Interpreter Panel and renewed efforts to identify others in the community who might be able to meet interpreting requirements.

Suggestions

Suggestions made at the forum to address Centrelink issues were:

- establishment of a comprehensive Centrelink service in Katanning
- opportunities be provided to staff to undertake cultural awareness training
- access to be provided to telephone interpreter services.

2.8 Housing

Participants at the community forum also expressed concerns regarding the availability of housing. It was noted that, although purchase and rent were both more affordable than metropolitan Perth and other regional areas (for example Karratha), the lack of housing stock was problematic. This affected not only residents but also the extent to which service providers were able to attract staff:

There are limited rental options available in the area. This means that getting ESL lecturing staff is problematic as they can't get accommodation.

It was also suggested that there may be some discrimination against Indigenous people and people from CaLD backgrounds in the private rental market.

Suggestions

Suggestions to address this issue included:

- identifying vacant properties and approaching owners to explore the option of renting them
- addressing discrimination in the private rental market
- increasing Department of Housing public housing stocks in the area
- a greater presence in Katanning by the Department of Housing to investigate and address housing shortage issues.

3. PRIORITY ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS

At the end of the forum, participants identified the major issues that had been raised in their group discussions. All participants were provided with two coloured dots and asked to identify the two issues and solutions that they considered the most important. A total of 43 (98 per cent) participants took the opportunity to place their vote.

3.1 Centrelink

Twenty two (51 per cent) participants identified the need for a more comprehensive Centrelink service in Katanning as one of their top two priority issues.

Suggestions

The key solution was establishment of a comprehensive Centrelink service in Katanning.

3.2 Medical treatment

Fifteen (35 per cent) participants rated access to medical treatment and a reduction in waiting times in general, and culturally appropriate health services in particular, as one of their top two priorities.

Suggestions

Suggested solutions were:

- increased access to health services
- greater use of interpreters by health services and medical professionals
- promotion of the priority line that provides free interpreting services for doctors, dentists and pharmacists.

3.3 Citizenship test

Twelve (28 per cent) participants identified the need for assistance to sit and pass the citizenship test as one of their top two priorities.

Suggestions

Suggested solutions were:

- assistance to learn what is required and provision of a facility at which to sit the test.

3.4 Language

Ten (23 per cent) participants identified the need for more English classes and six (14 per cent) participants rated English language assistance as one of their top two priority issues.

Suggestions

Suggested solutions were:

- provision of English classes during the day, at night and on Saturdays
- a social worker to assist communication between those with low levels of English language proficiency and relevant services
- greater use of interpreting services.

3.5 Comprehensive settlement services

Seven (16 per cent) participants identified the need for more comprehensive and coordinated settlement services for migrants as one of their top two priority issues.

Suggestions

Suggested solutions were:

- additional resources to be provided to the migrant resource centre including employment of specialists in key areas such as torture and trauma counselling, acculturation, preparation for the citizenship test and family reunion processes as well as the provision of more general immigration information and advice
- better communication, cooperation and coordination between relevant agencies, including partnerships “to achieve outcomes and provide services that cannot be achieved individually”
- a central information point for dissemination of information for migrants
- development of a “Katanning multicultural directory”
- utilising community leaders to convey key information.

4. CONCLUSION

The consultation in Katanning revealed a socially cohesive community that not only supports but actively celebrates and embraces multiculturalism. This was evident not only in comments made at the community forum but also in meetings with individual community members and representatives of government and non-government agencies in both formal and informal meetings.

The consultation also revealed the strong support of the Shire for CaLD communities which many felt was not obvious, such as the Shire's active employment of people from CaLD backgrounds, support for community groups and the provision of information and advice to CaLD community members, especially those new to the town.

However, gaps in service delivery were evident, particularly in the areas of school resources, health and Centrelink services, and language support. Many comments were made regarding the need for service delivery agencies to increase their use of interpreters and translators.

Despite these gaps, the overriding sense was one of pride in the ability of the town to acknowledge and address the needs of CaLD communities with the resources available to it. There was a belief that the town provided inspiration and leadership in this area and the community would welcome opportunities to build on its achievements:

It's a great place to trial things to help people settle.

5. KEY ACTIONS

OMI will undertake the following actions to encourage responses to the issues raised.

Language assistance

- Forward a copy of the report to the Department of Training and Workforce Development and Great Southern College of TAFE highlighting the need for ESL classes to be provided at a range of times including during the day, at night and on Saturdays.

School education

- Forward a copy of the report to the Department of Education highlighting the importance of cultural awareness education in schools and the need for additional resources to support the provision of assistance to CaLD students in schools.

Settlement services

- Forward a copy of the report to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship highlighting the need for targeted settlement services in Katanning, particularly assistance in relation to:
 - preparation for the citizenship test
 - assistance with family reunion processes.
- Forward a copy of the report to the Department of Health and Ageing highlighting the need for torture and trauma counselling services in Katanning.
- Forward a copy of the report to the Shire of Katanning and highlight the need for information regarding the range of services available to the town's CaLD communities and suggesting the development of a multicultural services directory for the town.

Employment

- Forward a copy of the report to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations highlighting concerns regarding the provision of services to CaLD clients by Job Services Australia providers in Katanning.
- Forward a copy of the report to the Department of Regional Development and Lands highlighting comments regarding the need for support in relation to economic and community development in Katanning and the surrounding region.
- In correspondence to the Department of Training and Workforce Development and Great Southern College Institute of Technology, seek comment on the potential for partnerships between agencies and businesses to create traineeships for CaLD young people.

Health

- Forward a copy to the Department of Health highlighting concerns regarding access to medical, particularly specialist services and the need for:
 - greater use of interpreters by health services and professionals
 - promotion of the priority line that provides free interpreting services for doctors, dentists and pharmacists
 - increasing the cultural competency and diversity of the health workforce in Katanning
 - access to torture and trauma counselling for children and adults from refugee backgrounds in Katanning.

Community integration

- Forward a copy of the report to the Department of Sport and Recreation highlighting the value of the work of the cultural inclusion officer and the importance of sport and recreation activities as a means of encouraging interaction between cultural groups.
- Forward a copy of the report to the Department for Communities highlighting the need for support for the town's ageing CaLD community members.

Centrelink

- Forward a copy of the report to Centrelink highlighting the need for:
 - a greater range of Centrelink services in Katanning
 - cultural competency training for staff, including those employed in Centrelink agencies
 - use of telephone interpreter services by Centrelink staff.

Housing

- Forward a copy of the report to the Department of Housing highlighting comments made in relation to the shortage of public housing in Katanning.

6. APPENDIX

Attendees at Community Forum

Government

Shire of Katanning

Department of Health—Community Health

Disability Services Commission

Katanning Senior High School

Great Southern Development Commission

Great Southern Institute of Technology

Non-government

Community First

Katanning Community Resource Centre

Community

Islamic Association of Katanning

Karen Community of Katanning

Karen Welfare Association

Supplementary meetings

Braeside Primary School

Great Southern Institute of Technology

Islamic Association of Katanning Incorporated

Jean Phillips—community volunteer

Joan Garstone—Read Write Now volunteer tutor

Katanning Community Resource Centre

Katanning Migrant Resource Centre

Katanning Senior High School

Shire of Katanning Library

Western Australian Meat Marketing Co-operative (WAMMCO)