

OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL INTERESTS

KATANNING CONSULTATION

REPORT SUMMARY

Background

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

The consultation aimed to:

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

Methodology

The consultation in Katanning differed from previous consultations, which were initiated and coordinated by the Office of Multicultural Interests. 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 encouraged strong community representation at the forum. Information gathered at the meetings was used to supplement the data gathered at the community forum.

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

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.

Information gathered at the community forum was supplemented by individual meetings with representatives of Braeside Primary School, Great Southern Institute of Technology, Islamic Association of Katanning Incorporated, Katanning Community Resource Centre, Katanning Migrant Resource Centre, Katanning Senior High School, Shire of Katanning Library and Western Australian Meat Marketing Co-operative (WAMMCO). Two meetings were held with community volunteers.

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 community.

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

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 shire'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 number and a wider range of employment opportunities.

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

Next steps

The Office of Multicultural Interests is forwarding a copy of the full consultation report to relevant 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 at www.omi.wa.gov.au.