



# CANBERRA MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY FORUM (CMCF) Inc

ABN 55 662 738 509

It is my pleasure, as the Chair, to present the 2007-2008 annual report to the members of the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum Incorporated at the Second Annual General Meeting held on Thursday 30 October 2008.

Before we begin, I wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people and their elders. I respect their continuing culture and the unique contribution they make to the life of this area

## The Multicultural Voice of ACT

The Canberra Multicultural Community Forum (CMCF) Inc, with the continuing support and growth of its membership and recognition as an effective peak representative of the multicultural community, has undertaken its commitment to uphold its objects for which the Association is established to promote the common interests and articulate the purpose and direction of the multicultural community in the ACT through:

- Community collaboration and consultation
- Engagement and participation in public debate
- Formulation of relevant policies
- Representation to Government
- Community education, conferences, seminars

2007-2008 was a year of major achievements for CMCF in our efforts to foster a spirit of cooperation and harmony amongst ethnic communities in the ACT and establish effective consultative arrangements and collaborative partnerships with the government and other non-government agencies such as the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship, ACT Council of Social Services, ACT Government, University of Canberra, ACT Ethnic Schools Association and ACT Policing.

Since its inception, CMCF has been busy ensuring that there is a united voice, providing strong leadership, cohesion, and accountability for Canberra's ethnic communities.

## RESOURCES FOR CMCF

CMCF has been successful in our applications for the following grants which are critical to provide the much-needed resources to deliver our commitments to promote a socially cohesive society and enhance and enrich the well-being of the multicultural community in the ACT.

2006-07 Multicultural Sector Enhancement Grant project to hold a series of Governance and leadership workshops for community organisations.	\$7000
2007-08 ACT Government Multicultural Grant programs: CMCF building The Multicultural Voice of ACT Organising Multicultural Festival Gala Dinner	\$1000 \$800
2007-08 Australian Government Living in Harmony Major funding project	\$40,000
2007-08 Multicultural Sector Enhancement Grant project Part 1 – to conduct 3 governance & leadership workshops Part 2 – to coordinate and manage National Multicultural Festival Volunteers program Part 3 – to provide community advocacy services to the multicultural Community	\$29,700

## MOVING FORWARD

I now wish to report to you the achievements and actions taken by CMCF over the past year:  
(September 2007 – October 2008):

### September 2007

CMCF welcomed the **newly elected executive committee and advisors** for a two year term. I wish to congratulate and thank each and every member who has, in the past, participated as a committee member / been co-opted as a sub-committee member / acted as an advisor to the committee and members and supporters of CMCF.

### **October 2007**

CMCF and University of Canberra jointly **organised a Languages Forum** in support of ACT language teachers, other educationalists and community leaders and called for a School of Languages to be set up in the ACT as one of several recommendations made on the day. The forum agreed to formalise itself as a continuing group to establish links with Government, existing ethnic schools in the ACT and any other interested parties.

### **November 2007**

CMCF applauded the decision of the ACT Government to provide \$300,000 for the training of teachers in order to ensure all public schools will be able to offer a program in a language other than English by 2010. CMCF met with the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, John Hargreaves MLA and the Minister for Education, Andrew Barr, on separate occasions and will continue to work closely with the government to ensure significant involvement of the multicultural community in the debate to expand the teaching of languages in public schools.

### **December 2007**

Over 70 participants representing multicultural community groups throughout the ACT region took part in a series of **governance and leadership workshops** conducted between August and December by CMCF. The program was funded through the 2006-07 ACT Government Enhancement of Multicultural Sector grant program and was presented by Mr Christopher Peters.

### **January 2008**

After months of preparation, CMCF launched the **“Paint Canberra Orange on a multicultural journey” – Living in Harmony Community project**, highlighting the importance of cultural respect and understanding and showcasing Australia’s success in integrating migrants into Australian society. This project is proudly supported by the Australian Government Living in Harmony grant program.

CMCF welcomed the decision by the Australian Government to **review Australia’s new citizenship test**. CMCF held the view that substantial changes should be made instead to put the emphasis on education, especially more resources in the teaching in English language as an important first step towards the ability to absorb and understand the Australian lifestyle.

### **February 2008**

CMCF congratulated the ACT Government for supporting the **2008 National Multicultural Festival**, the biggest and best yet held in Canberra. CMCF was responsible for **organising the force of 120 volunteers** without which the festival could not have taken place. The Hellenic Club provided the venue for CMCF to **host the National Multicultural Festival Gala dinner** with over 350 guests, who were entertained by the Al Nour wal Al Amal Orchestra of partially-sighted women from Egypt supported by the Egyptian Embassy and danced away to music provided by the Second Movement.

CMCF welcomed the apology delivered to indigenous Australians by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in Parliament and believes it has set the stage for an era of harmony between the nation’s first inhabitants and those who have made it their home in the past 220 years. The Sorry day came in the middle of the National Multicultural Festival, which celebrates the achievements of all cultures and in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders play a significant role.

### **March 2008**

On the 29<sup>th</sup>, CMCF urged Canberrans to help it ‘paint Canberra orange’ – orange being the colour chosen to signify the promotion of harmony. Over 250 people hopped on the harmony buses to tour key cultural and religious venues around the ACT and region, celebrating both the diversity and the harmony of our local community. Depending on the route chosen, passengers were taken to see places of significance to different ethnic communities including the Canberra Islamic Centre, Hindu Temple, Vietnamese Buddhist Temple, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, the National Jewish Memorial Centre and other cultural venues such as the Returned and Services League and the Hellenic Club. It was a great opportunity for the community to learn about the culture of others, while sharing details of their own journey. Cultural food stalls and performances presented by local community groups were highlights of **the harmony day celebration**, and each participant received an orange cap and ribbon and a show bag proudly supported by the Hellenic Club.

## **April 2008**

In response to Australian Citizenship Test Review Committee's invitation, CMCF provided a **comprehensive submission to comment on the Australian Citizenship Test** in which, CMCF raised its concerns regarding the role and aim, the effectiveness, the content and the discriminatory character of the Citizenship test, the ethical, practical and moral implications of the test, and questioned the efficient use of public resources. CMCF urged the Federal Government to scrap the controversial citizenship test and expressed serious reservations over its value in assessing whether migrants are ready to accept Australian values and integrate into Australian Society.

## **May 2008**

A **second Canberra Region Languages Forum** was held at the University of Canberra jointly supported by CMCF to continue its efforts to push for greater emphasis on languages in the public schools and for the community to work together to further promote language learning in the ACT. The 2020 summit has highlighted the importance of language skills for global engagement in trade, security and interpersonal communication and it was encouraging that the ACT government has shown interest in raising the profile of language teaching.

## **June 2008**

CMCF **celebrated a Reconciliation event** on 28<sup>th</sup> June as part of the Living in Harmony project by conducting a forum with a series of speakers on the theme of reconciliation. The forum has promoted a greater understanding between the multicultural community and Australia's oldest cultures and it was the first time that a forum like this was held in Canberra. The forum was co-sponsored by the University of Canberra's Ngunnawal Indigenous Higher Education Centre. The project is proudly supported by the Australian Government's Living in Harmony program.

## **July 2008**

CMCF echoed the praise of the Federation of Ethnic Community Councils of Australia (FECCA) in **supporting the reforms in the Australia's immigration detention system** announced by the Minister, Chris Evans. CMCF **received a response** from Minister Chris Evans on the government's commitment and the steps to be taken to restore public confidence in the immigration system.

## **August 2008**

CMCF **made a submission to the federal government's review of the Adult Migrant English Program** and was critical of the review's apparent position that speaking another language is a barrier and disadvantage rather than an opportunity for the development of second language skills and beyond.

After many months of working together with the ACT Policing, the links between Canberra's culturally and linguistically diverse community and **ACT Policing** have been strengthened by the **signing of a Statement of Principle** which pledges greater cooperation in pursuit of a broader and deeper relationship. Under the agreement, an officer will attend CMCF quarterly general meetings and CMCF will maintain an ACT Policing page on its website and will assist ACT Policing to bridge the gap between police and the multicultural community.

CMCF participated at the **ACT Government's second multicultural summit** held on 30<sup>th</sup> and our committee members played a significant role on reporting back to the final plenary session from their workshops on Aged Care and Community Languages. The constructive recommendations will be considered by the government to shape a course for multicultural Canberra through to 2012.

## **September 2008**

CMCF joined with the University of Canberra, which hosted the event, and the ACT Ethnic Schools Association to organise a **Language Expo celebrating 2008 as the International Year of Languages on the 28<sup>th</sup>**. The theme of the Expo was "Travel Round the World in a Day" with performances, language workshops; a panel discussion for parents raising a child in more than one language; and a panel in which major political parties outlined their policies on language education for the pending election.

October 2008

As part of the ACT election, CMCF **organised a very successful 'Multiculturalism Question and Answer Panel'** represented by a cross section of the Canberra community including politics, the professions, business and the multicultural community. Ross Solly from ABC Radio hosted the event. The session provided opportunity for questions to be asked from the floor and answered and debated by the panel members. CMCF also provided opportunity for candidates to include their individual profiles on the CMCF website.

CMCF is finalising the organisation of the Last phase of the Living in Harmony event – **Celebration of living in harmony and citizenship** to be held at the Theo Notaras multicultural centre on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2008 with spectacular cultural performances and foods to welcome the new citizens and those who are interested in becoming Australian citizens in the near future.

### **CMCF website & CMCF News**

The CMCF website [www.cmcf.org.au](http://www.cmcf.org.au) provides up to date information to the community. Our sincere appreciation to Mr Chris Peters AM, and the Multicultural Business Chambers of Australia as our proud sponsor of the CMCF website. Throughout the year, CMCF published regular news and upcoming community events for the interests of community.

### **Community Advocacy services**

CMCF has been busy behind the scenes doing a great deal of liaison, lobbying and networking on behalf of Canberra's ethnic communities:

- participating as a member of the ACT Peak organisations forum meeting chaired by ACTCOSS, representing the community sectors as a united group to identify, discuss and address social policy and community issues;
- participating as members of the COMPASS (Committee on Migrant Planning and Settlement Services) and the ACT and Regions Client Reference Group (DIAC);
- continued to liaise with FECCA and participated in various community consultation forums such as White Ribbon workshop on Domestic Violence against women;
- Working with AON Risk Insurance to develop strategies to set up an affordable public liability insurance under a group community scheme administered through CMCF;
- Held quarterly general meetings with invited guest speakers from the ACT Office of Multicultural Affairs, ACT Policing, Federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship;
- Established link with National Ethnic Disability Services (NADA) and agreed to become a member of NADA as ACT representative;
- Attended various community events to represent and in support our multicultural community and to showcase its cultures
- CMCF Executive committee meets on first Tuesday of the month.

### **Membership**

CMCF continues to strive for new membership to join the Forum and work with community groups to truly become the representative voice of the multicultural community in the ACT.

### **Farewell and welcome**

In January 2008, Our Patron, Elnor Grassby and CMCF welcomed the Ambassador of Sweden, Her Excellency Mrs Karin Ehnborn-Palmquist, who, in her capacity as the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, has kindly agreed to become our Forum Co-Patron supporting our cause to further enhance our multiculturalism, after the departure of HE Dr Hans Demel, Ambassador of Austria.

### **In conclusion**

I wish to acknowledge and sincerely thank each and everyone of the committee and advisors who have made the commitments and contributions in their own ways to move the Forum forward to become an effective and vibrant peak organisation, representing the aspirations and common interests of the multicultural community in the ACT.



Sam Wong AM

(Chair)

30 October 2008