

SPOKE - Regional Multicultural Awareness Forum

The Regional Multicultural Awareness Forum was held at the Port Wakefield Sports Centre, 19 March, 2008. The Forum was hosted by Wakefield SPOKE, and supported by the Yorke Regional Development Board, the Barossa and Light Development Board, Wakefield Regional Council and South Australia Works, SA Government.

The Forum was attended by 24 people representing a range of agencies and organisations working in the area of multiculturalism, the health sector, regional development, employment agencies and local government as well as community groups. Apologies were received from Simon Millcock, former SPOKE member and Manager Regions Yorke and Mid North Office Regional Affairs, Department Trade and Economic Development, as well as Mick Brock, Chairman SPOKE. The Forum was fortunate to have the Lieutenant Governor, Mr. Hieu Van Le as the key note speaker.

A full list of people who attended the Forum is attached along with email addresses to facilitate networking. The Forum write up will be posted on the SPOKE website together with the Forum speakers presentations.

www.wakefieldspokenetwork.com.au

Executive Summary

In the absence of Simon Millcock, and Mick Brock, Deb Crawford, SPOKE committee member opened the Forum and welcomed attendees. In her welcoming address Deb acknowledged the importance of raising awareness of multiculturalism in the Wakefield Region, especially in view of the increasing number of migrants working and living in our community. She thanked people for their attendance and for participating in the Forum. Although unable to stay for the entire day, Deb thanked the people responsible for organising the Forum, acknowledging in particular Di Gameau, Yorke Regional Development Board, Barbara Lightburn, Barossa and Light Regional Development Board, Mick Brock, CHAP and Helen Smith. Deb emphasised that the Forum had been designed to provide a variety of presentations from people working in the multicultural industry as well as several case studies of people sharing their experiences of being a migrant settling in the region.

Deb introduced Helen Smith to facilitate the Forum. She outlined the objective of the workshop, the format and agenda for the day and thanked people for attending. Helen introduced Mr. Le, thanked him for this time and invited him to address the Forum.

Mr Le, himself a migrant from Vietnam came to South Australia some thirty years ago and now regards Adelaide very much as 'home'. Mr Le addressed the Forum in his role as Lieutenant Governor, a role he has undertaken since January 2007. Mr. Le holds the position of Chairman of the South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission (SAMEAC), and is the first person of Asian ethnic background to fulfil this role. He is a recipient of the 1996 Australia Day Medal for outstanding service to the ASIC and has been awarded the Centenary of Federation Medal for service to the advancement of multiculturalism.

Mr Le's address focussed on the important role migrants' play in living and working in a regional community in South Australia. He was able to share his experiences of coming from a migrant background and the many challenges he faced as he settled into a new life in Adelaide. He emphasised, that as migrants it is important to celebrate our differences whilst at the same time using our background to add to the rich cultural diversity of the community in which we live and work. Mr Le has a passion to make South Australia a 'migrant-friendly state', and that whilst we may "be in a battle with other states to attract and retain new migrants and offering a safe, secure and, above all migrant-friendly state, gives us the edge."

Mr. Le congratulated SPOKE on hosting the Forum indicating his on-going support in assisting migrants to settle in South Australia.

Forum format

The objective of the Forum was to focus on the many issues relating to multiculturalism in the region. The speakers were selected from agencies and organisations that provide services for migrants such as Multicultural Aged Care, the Migrant Resource Centre, Refugee Services, Health agencies as well as the Department of Trade and Economic Development. Recognising the value of hearing migrants talk about 'real life experiences', SPOKE also invited newly arrived migrants to tell their stories at the Forum.

The morning session consisted of a presentation from Karen Lablack, Population and Migration Division, Department Trade and Economic Development. Karen discussed the South Australian Population Policy and the rationale behind increasing South Australia's population.

The next presentation was by Maria Vlachoulis, Manager Community Services and Development, Multicultural Aged Care. Maria discussed her experience working with aged migrants recently settled in South Australia and those in need of aged care accommodation with a range of health and well being issues.

Following the morning tea break, Regina Betts, Senior Program Manager, SAMCSS Humanitarian New Arrival Settlement Service, Migrant Resource Centre was invited to address the Forum.

SPOKE had originally intended to provide a selection of multicultural food and entertainment during the lunch break, however this was not possible. The Forum was well catered for by the Port Wakefield Hotel. If a follow-up Forum of this nature were to be held in the near future, multi-cultural food and entertainment reflecting the different migrant communities living and working in the region would be real bonus.

The afternoon session comprised a brief workshop session and three presentations by migrants and workers sharing their personal stories. Following lunch attendees were invited to workshop issues relating to multiculturalism in their communities and organisations and to identify barriers, gaps and opportunities. In summary the workshop session identified more barriers than gaps or opportunities. Regional areas were seen to be conservative in not accepting cultural differences which often contributed to making the migrant feeling isolated. Although it was felt this was not insurmountable and could be overcome with education, time and resources. The majority of barriers related to lack of resources such as trained workers, transport, education and training opportunities as well as family support. Gaps included availability to culturally appropriate food, transport to sporting and social events, few community houses and the lack of a central coordinating

body to assist migrants in accessing appropriate services and follow-up programs. Family support was also limited and often not considered as part of the overall package in attracting workers to regional areas. Fewer opportunities were identified; although the group felt that with appropriate policy changes, agency support and resources the 'picture' would improve for migrants and that a culturally changing landscape would be like a revival to some 'declining' regional areas of South Australia.

After the workshop, Simran Bath, Regional Migration Officer, Murraylands Regional Development Board, Inc. was the first presenter, followed by Nayano Taylor-Newman, Refugee Services Murraylands Multicultural Project, Murray Bridge. The final presentation was by Abraham Perumbrayil Francis, Mental Health Social Worker, Lower North Health.

(A summary of the presentations is contained in the body of this report and a copy of the presentations can be accessed on the SPOKE website).

Before closing the proceedings for the day, Helen invited the attendees to make final comments. (These comments are contained in the body of the report).

In summary the attendees appreciated the information presented at the Forum, the networking and the opportunity to meet a variety of people representing organisations working in the multicultural sector. The number of resources provided by the Migrant Resources Centre and Multi-cultural SA was also appreciated. Many people commented that the presentation by the Lieutenant Governor was excellent and appreciated the opportunity to meet him on a personal level. Several of the closing comments from the participants indicated strong support to hold a follow-up Forum to build on the information and issues raised at today's Forum and in particular to look at strategies to overcome barriers to improve circumstances for migrants settling in regional South Australia.

In closing the Forum, Helen thanked everyone for attending and reminded them that information relating to the Forum would be available on the SPOKE website

www.wakefieldspokenetwork.com.au

Email addresses of the attendees will also be posted on the website to facilitate networking.

Helen also thanked SPOKE for hosting the Forum and the Port Wakefield Sports Centre Committee for their assistance in making available the venue.

Recommendations: The *Regional Multicultural Awareness Forum* was another successful Forum hosted by Wakefield SPOKE. It represents another gathering of people and agencies working in a range of human and community services relating to multiculturalism. The Wakefield region represents an increasingly changing demographic and economic landscape. One of SPOKE'S key objectives over the past few years has been to raise awareness on key issues facing the region such as health, community and human services, economic development, employment, disability, youth and multiculturalism. This Forum attracted a representation of organisations and communities working and living with a relatively 'new' migrant population. The Forum targeted all sectors of the industry with the majority of attendees representing the health sector, church related organisations, government and private sector agencies including economic and regional development boards. It was pleasing too to have representatives attending from the Riverland, the Murraylands, Whyalla and Port Augusta. The purpose of holding the Forum at Port Wakefield was to locate it at a central location within the Wakefield region. Port Wakefield is considered a strategic location for the Yorke Peninsula, the lower mid north and is within commuting distance from Adelaide. The location initially proved challenging, especially in attracting speakers to travel the distance given the time factor, however the central location and the facility proved to be ideal.

A considerable amount of effort was spent by the organising committee on publicising the Forum to attract a reasonable number of attendees however as is the trend the registrations did come until the last moment. In future more attention needs to be given to promoting the Forum well in advance via networks and the media and to following up with potential attendees at an early stage. Having the Lieutenant Governor as the key note speaker was certainly a draw card, however this could have been promoted more extensively which may have resulted in more people attending the Forum.

Feedback from the attendees and the speakers supported the overall design and format of the Forum which provided an overview of a number of topics and issues facing workers and the community in the area of multiculturalism. There was some criticism about the delayed start of the Forum, given the need to wait for the arrival of the key note speaker. This was unavoidable and perhaps could be related to the location of the Forum and the distance from Adelaide.

When designing a Forum there is always a danger of having 'too' many presentations and not allowing enough time for discussion and networking. Although this Forum was intended to be a mix of presentations (content) and workshop (discussion) there were possibly too many presentations which reduced the time for general discussion.

Feedback from the attendees and the presenters also supported the idea of holding a follow-up Forum to build on issues discussed and strategies to address them. It is suggested SPOKE consider holding a follow-up Forum in the not too distant future in order to capitalise on the networking and the relationships established at the *Regional Multicultural Awareness Forum*. Consideration could also be given to inviting the Lieutenant Governor to return as key note speaker to focus on ideas and strategies to create a more attractive migrant- friendly state.

*Forum proceedings*Introduction:

Helen Smith facilitated the session and after describing the objective and format for the Forum she invited attendees to introduce themselves and make a comment relating to a major issue or concern they have in relation to multiculturalism in their community or workplace.

The comments were as follows:

- We need to show migrants respect
- retention of people in our regional communities is important especially retaining the migrants
- Integration of migrant into our community
- Don't forget the role of humour in what we do and celebrate people's diversity too!
- There is a big divide between skill and employment
- We should be thinking seriously about strategies to attract and keep migrants in our regional area and the outback
- Assess the type of skills sponsored through migration programs compared to the shortage of skills and the needs of the workforce and employers
- Don't forget the family support
- Inclusion is important while accepting diversity
- Lack of services within regional towns
- Intolerance and understanding
- Building tolerance, understanding and awareness in regional towns
- Sustaining and welcoming in communities
- Support for carers
- Access to appropriate services
- Reflect, respond and plan for aged care
- Be more welcoming to migrant families
- Support and inclusion of new migrants into regional towns
- Provide stability which will help communities stay together
- Awareness of migrants needs outside of the metropolitan area
- Access to culturally appropriate services
- Engagement of the local community in all activities relating to migration

Morning Session

Presentations

The morning session consisted of three presentations discussing the role of agencies in providing services for the aged as well as policy development, training, advocacy, counselling, referrals and social well being.

Following the opening address by the Lieutenant Governor, **Karen Lablack**, Population and Migration Division, Department Trade and Economic Development discussed the South Australian Population Policy, the implications of developing the Policy and the difficulties in 'reaching' the desired population quota. She also discussed examples of communities where migrant populations had recently settled to undertake work opportunities in areas such as Murray Bridge, the Riverland and most recently the Wakefield region.

A copy of Karen's presentation is available on the SPOKE website.

Karen's contact details karenlablack@state.sa.gov.au

Maria Vlachoulis, Manager Community Services and Development, Multicultural Aged Care, discussed the cultural training provided for people working with aged migrants and described many situations when a lack of cultural awareness can be upsetting to both the client and the worker. She also discussed the role and services provided by Multicultural Aged Care and invited people working with aged migrants who were not aware of this agency to make contact with her.

Maria's contact details mariav@macorg.au

Regina Betts, Senior Program Manager, SAMCSS Humanitarian New Arrival Settlement Service, Migrant Resource Centre addressed the Forum in lieu of Eugenia Tsoulis, also from the Migrant Resource Centre who was unable to attend at short notice. Regina provided a very comprehensive overview of her role as Settlement Manager and the range of services provided by the Migrant Resource Centre. Regina also made available a number of resources and publications which were distributed to the attendees.

Regina can be contacted via the Migrant Resource Centre admin@mrcsa.com.au

Afternoon Session

Workshop session: What does multiculturalism mean for our region, community, town and organisation?

Summary

The majority of comments related to **barriers** rather than gaps and opportunities. Perhaps this was because the frustrations and difficulties experienced by workers and migrants impacted on their every day life. The most common barriers included limited resources especially such as trained workers, transport and access to services. It was also emphasised that the focus on multiculturalism, in almost every aspect was certainly in Adelaide and not regional South Australia. It was also acknowledged that regional South Australia was not well marketed on the international scene and that migrants would not be attracted to this state especially if there were not aware of the opportunities, albeit some what limited. Although there was support and a genuine belief that improvements could be made to attract more migrants to regional areas, it was also acknowledged that this would not happen without government support, policy changes, resources, money and investment in training support workers to assist people in the migration process and to integrate them into the community. It was also recognised that a worker often migrates with his or her family and that family support and education is often not included as part of the process and 'package'. Meeting the needs of CALD people was also a very important issue and that removing the 'red tape' in respect to government policy would assist the overall migration process.

As far as comments relating to **gaps**, these included access to transport options which restricted migrants from attending education and training courses as well as socialising. The provision of cultural foods was very limited in regional areas and in many areas not available at all. Most of the migrants had to travel to Adelaide to purchase specific cultural foods. The lack of a central body to deliver cultural services in the regional areas was also identified and this made coordination difficult. Often agencies and people had no means of 'tracking' where migrants were settling and data needed to be distributed amongst agencies to keep them informed so appropriate services could be provided. Some areas were identified as not being CALD friendly and providing few incentives to attract workers and their families. Finally there was an apparent lack of community understanding of the needs migrant workers and their families which contributed to the lack of appropriate services and support available in some regional areas. Despite there being a number of gaps in respect to multicultural issues, there was an overall optimism that these issues were not insurmountable with appropriate support through partnerships, greater networking and marketing.

Opportunities were recognised as bringing cultural diversity to a community and this should be recognised and celebrated through cultural festivals and gathers where cultures could be experienced such as dance, food, religion and family activities. One of the major opportunities with increased migration is an expanding population which could bring 'life' to some areas experiencing population decline. "Migrants bring new perspectives to areas. It is not just about providing a workforce".

∩ = indicates more than one response

Barriers	Gaps	Opportunities
Qualifications not recognised Inability to source high numbers of skilled workers	Migrants find it difficult to get cultural food in regional areas	A multicultural community provides opportunities to increase the workforce
Jobs are not always the same as they would have done at home	There are not a lot of job opportunities	Migrants could participate in sport or other activities as a means of linking with local community i.e. Tai Chi, soccer, table tennis
Consider the emotional and mental stress	Access to transport inhibits social interaction and work opportunities	Increase in population brings new interesting perspectives into the community
Language difficulties, formality and bureaucracy	It can be expensive to undertake training and upgrade qualifications	Migration brings a whole new life to them and becoming part of a community
Appropriate training for all staff in multicultural leaning and understanding Costs associated with retraining and learning a new language	Lack of recognition	Migrants could become employed in local government and bring new innovative ideas on ways to address the current and future needs of CALD people
Need more social workers, youth workers and men's health workers in the Lower North Health service	Lack of interpreters and support services in regional areas	Finding the 'lawn bowls' that allows the individual and others to focus on something other than the new person
There is no capacity including money in the current health service for meeting the needs of CALD	No community houses	
Community awareness and acceptance in conservative communities ∩ ∩ ∩	Some regions are not CALD friendly in terms of customs and beliefs	
Red tape and moving the goal posts in regard to government policy	Lack of human services and personnel	
Remote communities have fewer services	Little to attract skilled workers	
Smaller communities don't have 'perceived' demand for migrants	No central body to deliver cultural services	

Barriers	Gaps	Opportunities
Attracting migrants- the focus is on Adelaide	Lack of community understanding	
Regional areas do not have a big profile on the international stage		
The focus is on numbers rather than skills needs /		
Transport in regional areas is a big problem (Migrants may not feel confident enough to find other means of transport) /		
Disparate communities who can not cope with differences Misunderstanding of differences		
Recognition of prior learning and qualifications		
Working with spouses too		
Stereotypical perceptions of migrants - will they be a burden on the govt? Muslim appearance = negative response		
Knowing where the migrants are settling and when they are coming		
Affordable housing		
Isolation of urban environment		
Connecting to local events which do not reflect cultural diversity		

Afternoon Session - Presentations:

The first presentation was by Smiran Bath a recent arrival to the Riverland. She spoke of her 'initiation' to Australia and described her feeling of isolation, confusion and doubting her decision to migrate to Australia. Her initial impressions were not being welcomed to her new home and it took her and her family some time to 'fit in to the community'. Many of the people at the Forum related to her story and supported her comments and ideas about improvements needed to support a family settling into a regional area. Simran concluded saying she and her family have settled into the Riverland and are "feeling more at home". Simran stressed that if it had not been for the support she received through her work environment the integration may not have been such a smooth process.

Nayano Taylor-Newman, Project Manager Refugee Services, Murraylands Multicultural Project, discussed the services provided at Murray Bridge. Her enthusiasm for the project was most evident. Nayano described the variety of programs supported by the project and the many outcomes achieved since the program commenced. Many of the attendees identified with the issues and problems she and her colleagues faced in starting the program, ensuring its continuity and the benefits to the migrants and the larger community overall.

The final presenter for the day was Abraham Perumbrayil Francis. Abraham, a recent arrival to the Clare Valley was very entertaining in telling his story of bringing his family to South Australia and the many cultural challenges they faced. Describing his rather 'shaky' start and a feeling of being over welcomed, particularly by the 'lack of people,' Abraham was pleased to be able to tell us that he and his family were now settled happily in their new life in the Clare Valley. Abraham emphasised that through his workplace he received tremendous support which was a crucial factor in helping him make friends, adjust to a new culture and it also provided social opportunities for him and his family.

Final Comments

In closing the Forum Helen invited attendees to make any final comments in relation to the Forum, the format and/or the content as well as ideas for future Forums, opportunities and issues.

∩ = indicates more than one response

Comments were as follows:

- I got a lot out of the Forum. It was interesting to hear what else is happening
- We should hold another Forum to build on what has been discussed today and look at solutions
- It was valuable especially hearing the personal experiences
- At Port Augusta we do feel isolated and it was good to be here today and network
- The personal stories were inspiring ∩∩
- Multicultural Aged Care presentation was excellent
- It was good to hear the stories and presentations. Perhaps some of these ideas need to be spread to Gawler too!
- Abraham was excellent. I particularly enjoyed his story about the need to be patient and learn as we experience new things
- Listening to the presentations was very informative and interesting. I learnt a lot
- Holding a Forum like this gives us the opportunity to come together
- It was a great day listening to different perspectives about multiculturalism
- We need to keep in mind that people need to be trained when working with migrants and do not forget the elderly
- I loved the stories and am looking forward to a changing multicultural Barossa community
- Glad I came. The personal stories were very powerful ∩∩
- I learnt a lot about the difficulties experienced by migrants across the sectors
- The case studies were great
- The group was just small enough to allow for good interaction
- The Forum stirred up a lot of memories for me
- Some of the information was a cultural shock to me and reinforced the huge gaps that exist within our multicultural communities
- It was a good day with a good mix of presenters and attendees
- I had a good giggle listening to the stories

Comment Form The following comments were written by the attendees on forms provided.

/ = indicates more than one response

Presentations:

- Excellent content. Very informative and awareness raising
- Useful to have the diversity of perspectives and to see what is important and the key issues in a range of areas
- Hieu Van Le - excellent and very inspiring
- Nayano - Murray Bridge is a very good example of a 'can do' regional community
- Abraham - very positive presentation
- Even though I knew about the agencies who presented today, I've enjoyed their personalities. I particularly enjoyed the personal presentations from Simran and Abraham. I feel that migrants telling their stories and experiences help us to see the 'reality'. I admit I am surprised to hear this region had little knowledge about services available and guess more of these Forums need to be held. I guess from here we need to look for ways to achieve goals (Murray Bridge is a good example). I will be interested in further Forums in any of the regions as well as learning where migrants are settling within these regions. Part of my job is to reach out to these people. cdescalzi@adelaide.catholic.org.au
- The size of the Forum was great and allowed for interaction and networking. I come from a Latin American Spanish speaking background
- Very informative. I loved the case studies
- All very informative and interesting speakers. The only issue I have was starting late. The facilitator should have kept an eye on the time
- The whole day has been excellent, however the delayed start to the Forum was disappointing and I was unable to stay to hear all of the presentations
- All good information. Great to have resources and material and to make contacts too
- Informative and relevant

Workshop session:

- Good. Could do some brain storming. Represent to the Lieutenant Governor that both the host and migrant communities need more education
- Interactive session. It was great that people felt comfortable enough to participate
- The session focused too much on barriers and gaps (repetitive). There should have been more focus on solutions and actions that can be followed through or at least investigated and delegated. A back up Forum to review outcomes will be good
- This was a good way to tease out issues for rural regions and where to go to develop strategies to overcome barriers

Other:

- The facilitation was very good
- Excellent day. A nice size group which worked well together for networking
- The Forum should have started on time. Participants times is a valuable as a speakers

Attendees and contact details

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Deb Crawford	Wakefield SPOKE crawford.deb@saugov.sa.gov.au
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Kate Jenkins	Lower North Health PO Box 239 Clare SA 5453
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