



MCoT News

Welcome to the April 2010 edition of The Multicultural Council of Tasmania newsletter

Promoting Multiculturalism and Harmony in Tasmania

If you wish to subscribe or unsubscribe please send an email to mcot@tassie.net.au
Please email or phone us on 6231 5067 if you would like to contribute items for the newsletter. The deadline for each month's issue is the first Monday of the relevant month.

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MCOT NEWS AND UPDATES

Next Council Meeting

The next meeting of the Multicultural Council of Tasmania will be on 19th May at 7 p.m. in the Acacia Room at the Migrant Resource Centre, 49 Molle Street, Hobart.

April Days

- 4 Independence Day (*Senegal*)
- 5 **Daylight Saving Ends**
- 10 Good Friday
- 13 Songkran Festival (*Thai New Year*)
Sinhala and Tamil New Year (*Sri Lanka*)
- 14 Vaisakhi (*Sikh New Year*)
- 17 National Day (*Syrian Arab Republic*)
- 18 National Day (*Zimbabwe*)
- 19 Republic Day (*Sierra Leone*)
- 25 Anzac Day
- 26 Union Day (*Tanzania*)
- 27 Freedom Day (*South Africa*)
National Day (*Togo*)
National Day (*Montenegro*)
National Day (*Serbia*)

GENERAL NOTICES

**The Hon Bill Shorten launches groundbreaking report on Ethnic Disability
On Thursday March 18, 2010 at Parliament House, the Hon Bill Shorten launched the report:**

People from Non English Speaking Background with disability in Australia: What does the data say?
The report was commissioned by the National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA).

Sibylle Kaczorek, Executive Officer on behalf of the NEDA Council states that, 'Australia is an increasingly diverse country, with a robust history of migration which has a strong impact upon Australian values, culture and composition, particularly with respect to the contribution that has been made by of a growing proportion of Australians with non English speaking background (NESB) ancestry.'

'People from diverse backgrounds also include people with impairment and illness, with an increasingly large number of Australians from non English speaking backgrounds with disability.'

Despite evidence of a strong impact of cultural and linguistic diversity on the 'face' of Australia, there remains very little data on the role of non English speaking migration in shaping contemporary Australia and Australians.

Kaczorek highlights the following findings of the report:

- More than 1 million people with disability are from non English speaking backgrounds.
- Some form of recent migration heritage is a characteristic for over 40% of people with disability.
- There is a higher prevalence of impairment for people born in a non English speaking country aged over 45 years of age, especially for 'first wave' non English speaking migrants, up to 3 times that of the Australian born population.

Michele Castagna, President of NEDA states, 'the report evidences the need for key improvements in Australia's data collection if we are to understand and meet the needs of people from NESB with disability. In the absence of improved data collection and analysis which must involve consistency and improved sampling, our people will miss out when it comes to service delivery.'

'At the end of the day, unless people's needs are verifiable the necessary dollars for translations and interpreters, cultural competent service delivery and support will not be provided.'

'The report is a timely contribution to Government planning, setting of targets and outcomes and budget allocation', Castagna notes.

The National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA) is the national peak organisation representing the rights and interests of people from non-English speaking background (NESB) with disability, their families and carers throughout Australia.

The report launch preceded NEDA's governing Council meeting and a stakeholder input meeting towards the development of NEDA's operational plan.

A copy of the report can be found on the NEDA website www.neda.org.au.

CANBERRA MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY FORUM CMCF rejects immigration claims

March 26, 2010

Demographer Bob Birrell has done the immigration debate in Australia a disservice with his unfounded allegations about the effects of immigration on Australian culture, the chair of the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum, Sam Wong said today.

Dr Birrell, from Monash University, claims that Australia's traditions, based on heritage, sporting culture and common language, are threatened by mass immigration.

Mr Wong said Dr Birrell ignored the fact that Australia has long had a very successful non-discriminatory policy regarding source countries for immigration. "Everyone who migrates to Australia has to meet very tough selection criteria," he said.

"Dr Birrell does not seem to grasp that culture is a living thing, subtly evolving over years in response to many factors, including immigration, but also technology, social attitudes, and political change.

"Australian culture is very different today from what it was in the 1930s and I suspect an Australian from the mid-19th century would have found 1930s Australia a very strange place," Mr Wong said.

"Our culture is changing, and has always changed, perhaps a little faster in the 21st century than it has in the past.

"Language is much more a problem for the first generation of migrants than it is for the nation as a whole, and their children very quickly adapt. Does Dr Birrell seriously suggest that we are all going to end up speaking Vietnamese or Mandarin because we take immigrants from those countries?" Mr Wong asked.

"As for sport, has he bothered to review the list of 'overseas' names that have enriched Australian football, cricket, the rugby codes, netball and a score of other sports? Is he ashamed that migrants and the sons and daughters of migrants have contributed to Australia's development into an international soccer power?"

"Dr Birrell is consistently negative about the effects of immigration on Australia, forgetting its undeniable nation-building impact over many years."

He should stick to adding up his figures and leave their interpretation to others," Mr Wong said.

"For further information contact Sam Wong on **0433 947 888**.

ETHNIC COMMUNITIES COUNCIL OF VICTORIA

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Close monitoring needed for provocateurs of 'anti-Australian' sentiments

29 March 2010

Mr Sam Afra, Chairperson of the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) reiterated his call for authorities and community leaders to keep a close eye on individuals and groups who use public forums to espouse views which undermine Australia's generous and welcoming spirit.

"In this country, we are blessed with the freedom of expression and the opportunity to dissent, but we do not want to see those freedoms misused in ways that damage our harmonious society," Mr Afra said.

Mr Afra was responding to a planned march on Victorian Parliament in April which had been reportedly linked to minority groups circulating racially and religiously-charged material targeting Australia's diverse communities.

"Already this year we've seen social networking sites like Face book used to promote vicious and divisive sentiments,' Mr Afra recalled, "and a string of anti-social incidents create an undercurrent of anxiety among migrants and international students."

"Clearly, this is not a time for reckless and thoughtless commentary that derides and intimidates other Victorians as they go about their lives."

"It is a time for bonds to be reaffirmed, commonalities to be re-emphasised, and any concerns we may have to be expressed with reason, restraint and sensitivity."

Mr Afra pointed to organisations such as Cricket Australia and the Australian Football League (AFL) as showing great leadership in their initiatives reaching out to diverse communities.

"Recently I attended the Harmony Day Cup and saw players from a wide variety of diverse backgrounds come together harmoniously," Mr Afra said. "Then there was the wonderful community-driven initiative Vindaloo Against Violence to promote solidarity with our Indian communities."

"These are the kinds of uplifting and unifying public events we should be championing through FaceBook rather than simply looking to exploit frustration and uncertainty and foster social discord."

"Australia has not become the popular, optimistic and outward-looking nation it is by looking for the worst in others and finding reasons to exclude and discriminate," Mr Afra added.

"We are a proud pluralistic society whose people can acknowledge points of difference and agree to disagree from time to time without pandering to humankind's worst instincts."

"We must be careful to ensure that those with more sinister intents do not find ways to hijack our open democratic society and corrupt that ideal."

For further information, please contact **0421 124 112** or **0417 489 226**.

FEDERATION OF ETHNIC COMMUNITIES OF AUSTRALIA

Immigration: should the full house sign be posted?

Pino Migliorino
Chair, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia
Canberra, 26 March 2010

FECCA's role as the peak voice representing the needs wants and aspirations of diverse linguistic and cultural groups many of whom live on the margins and endure disadvantage is an important one in the discussion of population growth and a big Australia.

It is not only a role legitimised by representing those communities who have come to Australia in previous eras it is also a role required in engaging with and defining both the type and quantum of immigration needed by Australia into the future.

Given the central role that immigration has played in our growth as a country to this time, it will remain the key component in the future growth of the country. Therefore FECCA welcomes the broader discussion of population policy and planning into the future. At the same time our starting point in the discussion is that the continuation of immigration is an essential element for a sustainable and meaningful population approach.

Immigration, an essential element in Australia's future

FECCA promotes and at times defends the value of immigration across a range of issues and national needs:

- In the first instance the continuation of an immigration program will be essential to redress the needs of an ageing community. As the population ages and for the first time we approach the proportion of those aged over 65 will be greater than those 14 and younger, we will feel the results of losing skills from the workforce and having neither the number and skill necessary to meet the needs of this new demographic. Even more important are the projections for the very old with the proportion of those older than 85 increasing from 1.7 per cent to 5 per cent in the next 40 years.
- Continuing immigration is also important because it allows families to reunite and through this provide what is arguably the most effective form of settlement support. It should also be noted that the family migration program is used extensively Anglo Australians to bring spouses from overseas.
- A balanced immigration program with a significant humanitarian program serves to fulfill Australians international obligations for the resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers. It is especially important that Australia as a wealthy first world country provide this international 'fair go' for populations in need and seeking new lives.
- Ongoing immigration will serve to meet the skills gaps and needs we have both now and increasingly in the future. This skill based approach needs to be calibrated to the needs not only of our industries but also for our capacity to meet the needs of our ageing population. The ageing of the significant number of post war immigrants will require a service population with language and cultural skills that can be provided by health care workers from the major post war source countries.

Immigration & a big Australia: criticisms and responses

But when we talk about a big Australia, the critics of immigration come to the fore and intrinsically change the debate through polemic argument. As a way of describing this I have gone no further than using comments made in this week's press. And I present three of the most worrying positions:

- The first is from Bob Carr, a former Premier of NSW who stated this week that immigration is responsible for the overcrowding of our cities and should be halved
- Professor Bob Birrell from Monash University was quoted in the Herald Sun on Monday 22 March, that immigration at current projected levels will place the 'Aussie way of life' at risk and should be slashed
- The third is the online commentary from organisations such as 'wecandobetter' who posted an article last Sunday 21 March titled 'No more admissions required, Australia is full'.

I want to address each of these to question the basis of the position and its impacts and consequences. The first position, that of Bob Carr is based on an overpopulation of our cities and the lack of adequate infrastructure to sustain population increases. Apart from a critical lack of planning and commitment to infrastructure in key cities such as Sydney, there are a number of academics who argue that our cities can be made to hold more people and in fact they can do so without increasing the impact on infrastructure or the environment. Whether through urban consolidation or through more effective planning, space can and should be made available.

The alternate is also applicable, in that Australia needs to increase the appeal of settling in and staying in rural and regional areas to ensure the sustainability of these areas and regions. Immigration is an obvious and necessary component and has been the focus of regional development approaches throughout the last century. On the whole these approaches have failed with immigrants settling in these areas eventually making their way back to the cities and the cultural communities that sustain their cultural and social lives.

Indeed this is the key, the policy direction should not be solely attracting and placing people and families in regional areas, it should be geared towards retaining them there and that will only apply in a planned approach which seeks to meet the personal, social and cultural needs of these groups as a fundamental platform to feel accepted and from this wanting to participate and contribute to the local community. Developing strong regional communities will need the delivery of strong assisted settlement and comprehensive multicultural services and programs.

Cutting skilled immigration by half will not address these fundamental development and infrastructure deficits.

The second position, propagated by Bob Birrell, can be dismissed by referring to Australia's growth over the last sixty years. In 1945 the Australian population numbered seven million. A few weeks ago the ABS indicated that we had reached 22 million. A 300 per cent increase in sixty years. The question should be, 'has this level of increase damaged or enhanced the 'Aussie way of life'? Very few would argue that our way of life now is poorer or less intrinsically Australian now than it was in 1945.

The third position is of most concern, especially when it is given partial legitimacy though environmental arguments. At face value nil immigration is used as a euphemism for anti-immigrant sentiment and this is where the argument for a sustainable immigration should be focused and should include:

- Numbers themselves not being the core of the environmental argument as the world's population exists regardless of how many people are in Australia. What is more important is the environmental behaviour of all Australians, which should be modified to reduce our impact
- Immigrants are in many instances better prepared for good environmental behaviour, whether through their experiences in desert climates, or their ability to reuse and recycle as an economic necessity, positions them as both understanding their impact on their environment but also the behavioural requirements to maintain their environment. The interest of these in the environment was measured by the NSW Government in two studies in 2003 and 2006 titled 'The Environment and Ethnic Communities'
- The final point is that there is a counter intuitive argument that suggests that we need population increase so that we can create the wealth and size to drive economies of scale needed for the infrastructure development required to reduce our energy consumption and impact on the environment. This systemic response capacity should be part and parcel of the population debate especially where it intersects with environmental considerations.

The argument of nil migration is an nonsense and detracts from any valid debate on the topic of population numbers and population policy.

Conclusion

In moving to a conclusion to this presentation I want to sound the warning bell with regard to potential scapegoating of immigration in the current population debate.

I think it is incumbent on all participants in the population debate to be aware of the potential use of the debate to promote racist and anti-immigrant sentiment. Racist comment which masquerades as legitimate comment on population should be excluded from intelligent debate.

I along with my FECCA colleagues believe that we can achieve a level of informed discussion not about whether Australia needs to increase its population but rather the nature of this increase and the systems, supports and infrastructure to ensure that it is both sustainable and meets Australia's national interest.

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FECCA WELCOMES RUDD GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW POPULATION MINISTRY

Media Release - 06 April, 2010

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia welcomes the Rudd Government's announcement over the weekend of a new ministry for Population.

"FECCA welcomes the appointment of the Honourable Tony Burke MP to the new population portfolio," said FECCA Chair Mr Pino Migliorino.

"FECCA has been calling for a national population policy and is very much in favour of the government giving this higher priority. It points to a willingness to develop sound policy which reflects Australia's needs and its human rights obligations".

FECCA looks forward to being consulted in the near future as the ministry fulfils its mandate to develop a Population Strategy for Australia.

As a key national organisation representing Australians from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds FECCA is well placed to contribute to the development of a National Population Strategy.

"It is both desirable and possible for Australia to address the threefold needs of sustainable economic growth, a commitment towards responsible environmental management and a necessity to continue assisting people who have experienced violations of their human rights in areas of serious conflict around the world."

"This is an important opportunity for Australia to be proactive and form positive policy around population and immigration for a strong, sustainable and just future," said FECCA Chair Mr Pino Migliorino.

Cleared for immediate release: 6th April, 2010

Media comment: **Pino Migliorino 0411 137 700.**

Enquiries: FECCA: 02 6282 5755

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Tasmania Together **Putting our students to the Challenge**

Every Tasmanian plays an important role in shaping, improving and making a difference to Tasmania's future, including our young people.

The 2010 Tasmania *Together* Youth Challenge is a competition open to all primary school, high school, and year 11-12 students across Tasmania.

Either individually or as part of a class group, students are asked to think about their vision for Tasmania's future and express it in a creative way.

The competition is a fun and educational experience for students, helping them to achieve success across a range of areas within the Tasmanian Curriculum.

There are also some great prizes up for grabs including iPhones, iPod Touches, Wii Consoles and Wii Fits, and Netbook Computers.

Tasmania's future is in our young peoples' hands.... it is time for them to show us where they will take it. For more information or to enter talk to your school or visit www.ttyouthchallenge.com.au.

Home Share Program

Homeshare is seeking referrals from other service providers for older householders living in the Sandy Bay, Dynnyrne, South Hobart, North Hobart and Taroona/Kingston areas for our *Homeshare* program. This program is designed for older people who are eligible and interested in *Homeshare* as a way of assisting them to continue to live at home safely and independently.

Homeshare provides older people with a suitable *homesharer* who will help out around the home for up to 10 hours a week in return for free accommodation.

To be eligible, householders must have a home of a reasonable standard of accommodation, a capacity to live with someone else, a willingness to undergo the assessment process and preparedness to undertake a *homesharing* arrangement for at least 6 months.

If you are in a position to refer, please keep *Homeshare* in mind as a viable option to suggest to anyone who is having difficulty in managing their normal household and external activities and/ or needing the security/safety of another person in the home at night-time.

The presence of a *homesharer* has been demonstrated to delay the admission into residential care for more than 50% of householders in a *Homeshare* program. (Stats provided by Wesley Homeshare, Melb).

If you would like more information about *Homeshare*, please contact Vivien at Community Based Support 62086600 or email: homeshare@cbssouth.com.au

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