



MCoT News

Welcome to the October 2009 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.

[FairerFutures](#)

MCOT NEWS AND UPDATES

- [From the Chair](#)
- [Next Council Meeting](#)
- [New Executive/Management Committee](#)
- [Multicultural Evening](#)
- [October Days](#)

NEWS FROM OUR COMMUNITIES

- [Karaoke Lunch](#)
- [Simply the Best](#)
- [Climate Change Forum](#)

GENERAL NOTICES

- [Thank You](#)
- [Social Security Agreement Australia and the Czech Republic](#)
- [Antidiscrimination/Violence Survey](#)
- [Myer Christmas Pageant](#)
- [FECCA Conference](#)
- [Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre](#)
- [Multicultural Voices](#)
- [21st Century Transport](#)
- [Our Island Our Voices](#)
- [Free Public Debate](#)
- [Refugee Reforms Continue](#)
- [Strategic Settlement Framework](#)

MCOT NEWS AND UPDATES

From the Chair

As Chairperson of the New MCoT Committee, I would like to extend warm and hearty greetings to all the members of MCOT and all Ethnic Communities and Service Providers out there. Let me start by thanking the outgoing committee and Davor, the immediate past Chairperson, for a job well done in having steered MCoT on a steady course during the past few years. I would also like to congratulate the new committee members and look forward to working with them during the next year.

The immediate task of the new committee is to take stock of our financial situation and ensure that we will receive adequate and continued funding to enable us to fulfill our role as the peak Ethnic and Multicultural advocacy body. To this end, discussions have already been initiated with Multicultural Tasmania and the Department of Community Development.

In a climate where there has been an economic downturn, funding agencies are more closely looking at

funding agreements and ensuring that the terms of the grant agreements have been met. In this context the new committee will have to revisit our grant agreement.

We may have to reprioritize the way we work.

Your new committee will also revisit our advocacy role and see how better we can elicit the issues that affect the different communities. Our funding agency also requires us to provide advice and input to policy. This will require us to regularly meet with our constituent members, existing partners, service providers and other peak bodies. To advocate, we must be properly informed. Therefore I appeal to all our members to bring to the notice of MCoT any issues affecting their communities or focus groups, that need to be taken up with the Local, State or Federal Government. We will also have a continuous dialogue with FECCA on issues that need to be lobbied at Federal level and our input into key policy areas.

This year I intend to make a concerted effort to attract younger members to MCoT. We will explore the possibility of running structured programs for training youth to take on the advocacy role through MCoT. In addition, MCoT having been the peak advocacy body for over 25 years, has members who can mentor youth in this role. Forming Partnerships with other Youth Peak Bodies will also be investigated.

We live in challenging times. I can assure you that it will be a challenging year for MCoT. My Committee and I look forward to working with you and for you.

Rohan Wirasinha
Chairperson , MCoT

[Top](#)

Next Council Meeting

The next Council Meeting will be held on Wednesday 21st October at 7.00 p.m. in the Acacia Room at the Migrant Resource Centre, 49 Molle St.

[Top](#)

New Executive/Management Committee

Chairperson: Rohan Wirasinha (*Friends of Sri Lanka*)
Immediate Past Chair: Davor Perovic (*Australian Croatian Club*)
Senior Vice Chair: Mahendra Pathik (*Indian Cultural Society*)
Vice Chair: David Kuel (*Image of Africa*)
Treasurer: Erik Madsen (*Scandinavian Association*)
Secretary: Helen Kosmeyer (*Dutch Australian Society "Abel Tasman"*)

Committee: Barbra Blomberg (*Scandinavian Association*)
Alex Dziendziel (*Polish Association Hobart*)
Mary Excell (*National Council of Women of Tas*)
Benetos Gavallas (*Greek Orthodox Church & Benevolent Society*)
Varun Khetarpal (*Indian Cultural Society*)
Merv Kozikas (*Lithuanian Community in Hobart*)
Ivan Matas (*Croatian Senior Citizens of Tasmania*)
Emilie Schneider (*Philippines-Australia Community of Tas*)
Ramesh Varayanan (*Hobart Tamil Association*)

Multicultural Evening

MCoT's Multicultural Evening will be held on October 10th 7.00 for 7.30pm at the Hellenic Hall in Federal Street, North Hobart. It promises to be an entertaining evening with a 3 course taverna style meal. Drinks will be available from the bar. Book a table of 10 and enjoy the evening with family and friends. Tickets can be purchase from the MCoT office. Remember No ticket, No entry.

[Top](#)

October Days

1-7 **Seniors Week**
1 National Day (*China - Cyprus - Nigeria - Palau*)
Independence Day (*Tuvalu*)

- 2 Independence Day (*Guinea*)
- Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday (*India*)
- 3 Anniversary of Unification (*Germany*)
- 4 National Day (*Lesotho*)
- 4-10 Mental Health Awareness Week**
- 9 Independence Day (*Uganda*)
- 10 National Days (*Fiji*)
- 12 National Day (*Spain - Equatorial Guinea*)
- 19 National Day (*Niue*)
- 21 National Days (*Somalia*)
- 24 Independence Day (*Zambia*)
- 24 United Nations Day**
- 25 Independence Day (*Kazakhstan*)
- 26 National Day (*Austria*)
- 27 National Day (*Turkmenistan - St Vincent & The Grenadines*)
- 28 National Day (*Czech Republic*)
- 29 Republic Day - (*Turkey*)
- 31 Halloween (*USA*)

[Top](#)

NEWS FROM OUR COMMUNITIES

Karaoke Lunch To raise funds for the purchase of medical equipment for the Philippines, a Karaoke Lunch will be held on Sunday 18th October at the RSL Club, 18 Bilton St Claremont at 12.30p.m. Cost \$15 Enquiries: Florence – 0438 658 337, Marie - 0421 491 743 (A project of the Philippine Overseas Aid, Tasmania).

[Top](#)

Simply the Best - A concert of mixed cultures organized by and featuring The Australian Rosny Children's Choir, The Tassie Pinoy Ensemble, The Pact Dance Group, The Hobart German Choir and The German Folk Dance Group at the Theatre Royal, 29 Campbell St. on November 21st at 7.30p.m. Ticket prices \$30, \$25 (Senior Tickets) , \$20 (Student Tickets). Booking at the Theatre Royal on 62332299. Ticket sales also available at the door.

[Top](#)

Climate Change, the Cost of Living and Skills forum - TasCOSS, Anglicare Tasmania, Unions Tasmania, Environment Tasmania and Sustainable Living Tasmania are holding an Our Island Our Voices forum to explore the implications of climate change for low-income households. The aim of this forum is to share ideas, unpack what a carbon pollution reduction and emission trading scheme might mean for Tasmania, and consider practical steps to reduce the cost of living effects on low-income households as a result of an emission trading scheme, particularly in relation to energy consumption. The event will include presentations from visiting national policy experts from the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), as well as local environment and community sector representatives. For more information and to register to attend visit

www.ourisland.tascoss.org.au

Tuesday, 13 October 2009: 9am - 12.30pm. The Jarrah Room, the Baha'i Centre, 1 Tasman Highway, Hobart

[Top](#)

GENERAL NOTICES

Thank you Imogen - Those of you who have been to MCoT meetings and/or had dealings with DIAC will be saddened that to learn that DIAC's representative to our Council, Imogen Birley, has left DIAC to work with Christine Milne. We would like to thank Imogen for her support during her time with us and wish her all the best in her new venture.

[Top](#)

Social Security Agreement between Australia and the Czech Republic

The agreement between Australia and the Czech Republic on Social Security was signed on 16 September 2009. It is anticipated that the Agreement will commence in January 2011 after the relevant legislative and treaty processes are completed in both countries.

Under the Agreement, Australia and the Czech Republic will each broadly share the retirement support of people who have spent part of their working life living or working in both countries.

Australia already has similar agreements operating with Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Japan, Korea, Ireland, Italy, Malta, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland and the USA. Agreements do not take away existing rights

[Top](#)

Anti-Discrimination/Violence Survey Extended until the end of October

An Anti-Discrimination /Violence Survey is being undertaken by Centacare to try to find out about discrimination and violence in Tasmania – who is affected, where it happens, how it happens and how often it occurs. Anyone who feels that they have experienced discrimination or violence in Tasmania should look at this survey. The survey includes discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, religion, sexuality, disability and age. Privacy is assured. Forms are available from the MCoT office. Please seriously consider filling them out. Nothing can be done if the authorities are able to say that they don't have the information. Here is a chance to give them some.

[Top](#)

Myer Christmas Pageant

The organiser of this year's Christmas Pageant would like some multicultural choirs or groups to sing along the route of the Pageant. No walking required. The Pageant will be held on November 21st between 9.30 a.m. and 11.30a.m. If you are interested, please contact the Hobart City Council.

AND/OR

The Migrant Resource Centre has invited MCoT's members to parade with them as part of the Pageant! For more information or for pre-parade involvement, contact Georgi at MRC 62210999 or gmarshall@mrcchobart.org.au. It should be heaps of fun.

[Top](#)



FECCA CONFERENCE OCTOBER 29 & 30 2009 SHEPPARTON VICTORIA

Celebrate diversity and support FECCA at the 2009 FECCA Conference “*Strengthening Multiculturalism and Building Social Inclusion*”.

To be held in Shepparton, enjoy the fresh produce as well as the stimulating and informative panel session and plenary topics including: Human Rights for Ethnic and Religious Minorities, Multicultural Youth: Identity and Access, Regional Settlement, Interfaith, Social Inclusion for New and Emerging Communities, and Economic Participation and Skills.

Confirmed speakers include:

- Laurie Ferguson, Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services
- Sen Ursula Stephens, Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector
- Dr Sharman Stone, MP, Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship
- Dr Tanveer Ahmed, Psychiatrist and Writer
- Clare Martin, CEO, ACOSS

- Shaun Brown, Managing Director, SBS

Date: October 29-30

Venue: Eastbank Centre, Shepparton, Victoria

Book now to take advantage of early bird rates.

Early bird conference registration costs range from \$200 to \$400 depending on the package.

For further information and to register on line visit www.fecca.org.au or call 02 6282 5755.

[Top](#)

Commonwealth Respite & Carelink Centre

Australian Government

FREECALL 1800 052 222

Does someone in your family need help every day?

Do you need to rest or take a holiday?

You are invited to a morning tea, to find out how we can help carers.

Tuesday 27/10, or Thursday 29/10 Community Based Support South

24 Sunderland St, Moonah

Please phone Meegan to book your place, or phone anytime to talk to someone about how we can help you.

[Top](#)

Multicultural Voices State Election Forum

**Thursday, November 26 2009
Migrant Resource Centre, Hobart
6pm – 7.30pm.**

Refreshments will be provided.

The Migrant Resource Centre, Multicultural Council of Tasmania (MCoT) and TasCOSS invite you to a special forum to discuss issues for Tasmanian multicultural communities in next year's State Election.

Local candidates in the State Election from all major political parties will be in attendance.

Health services? Education? Employment?

Public Transport? Translation Services? Social Inclusion?

This is your chance to have your say on the important issues for you and your community.

To register your attendance visit

www.ourisland.tascoss.org.au

or call 6221 0999

[Top](#)

Imagining a 21st Century Public Transport System for Greater Hobart

Buses? Trains? Trams? Ferries? Car Pools? Bikes and Scooters? What is the future of public transport in Greater Hobart? Our Island Our Voices invites you to a discussion on the future of public transport in Hobart, with a specific focus on the transport needs and options for the northern and southern suburbs of Hobart Both forums will include presentations from local transport economists as well as leading proponents of the various public and community transport options for Hobart's future. This will be followed by an open discussion on what a 21st century public transport system in Greater Hobart might look like.

For more information and to register to attend visit www.ourisland.tascoss.org.au

Glenorchy Forum Tuesday 3 November 2009 : 6.30-8.00pm Glenorchy Civic Centre, Eady Street

Kingston Forum Thursday, 5 November 2009 : 6.30-8.00pm "The Centre" @ St Clement's Anglican

Church 100 Beach Road, Kingston

[Top](#)

Get involved in Our Island Our Voices: a new campaign for a fairer Tasmania

www.ourisland.tascoss.org.au

The **Our Island Our Voices** campaign for a fairer Tasmania has begun and we need your help in getting Tasmanians to sign on!

Our Island Our Voices is about ensuring that all major political parties make clear commitments to health, education, and services in the lead up to the March 2010 State election. It is about advocating for a clear commitment from political parties to community service organisations.

You can help make the campaign a success by:

- logging on to the campaign website, joining-up and emailing the call to parties to Tasmania's major political parties and their candidates for the March 2010 State election.
- circulating this email to your colleagues, friends and family and encouraging them to support the push for a fairer Tasmania.
- organising your own pre-election events to promote the issues in the call to parties.
- putting a link to the campaign website on your own web homepage
- adding 'I support the Our Island Our Voices campaign for a fairer Tasmania (www.ourisland.tascoss.org.au)' to your email signature.

The campaign will only be successful if people sign on and get involved. It only takes 5 minutes to get started, so please join up and email all major political candidates asking them to tell you what they will do for a fairer Tasmania.

Please also circulate this email among your networks and urge as many people as possible to join the campaign for a fairer Tasmania.

If you have any questions about the **Our Island Our Voices** campaign please contact Luke Martin at TasCOSS on 62310755.

[Top](#)

Tasmania's political leaders agree to a free public debate

Premier David Bartlett, Liberal Leader Will Hodgeman and Tasmanian Greens Leader Nick McKim will meet in a free, open and public debate in **Hobart on Tuesday, the 1st of December at the Federation Concert Hall. Bookings essential** - members of the public will need to register, and are invited to ring TasCOSS on 6231 0755 to book their free tickets or register their details online at www.ourisland.tascoss.org.au to be posted their free tickets.

The debate will be independently moderated and cover a broad range of issues for Tasmania's economy, community, democracy and environment.

For more information, please contact:

Daniel Hanna 0408 144 884

Tom Muller 0448 310 043

Stop Press This event is now booked out. You may like to register to be on the waiting list.

The debate will be recorded and available to download from www.ourisland.tascoss.org.au.

[Top](#)

NEW CITIZENSHIP TEST UNVEILED ON 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP

The Federal Government has released a revised citizenship test resource book - *Australian Citizenship: Our Common Bond*, which provides the information one will be required to know when sitting the Australian Citizenship Test after October 19. This coincides with September's celebrations for the 60th anniversary of Australian citizenship. FECCA has joined in these celebrations and pointed out that citizenship is the glue that holds our culturally diverse nation together. It is the common bond that unites all Australians around our shared democratic values and beliefs and loyalty to our shared homeland.

Migrants and refugees from non-English speaking background traditionally have high rates of citizenship take up.

Under new citizenship test laws—including those passed in Parliament this September—prospective citizens will now be assessed on their understanding of Australian civics and the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship, rather than undergoing a general knowledge quiz about Australia. The test is also designed to assess whether applicants have a basic knowledge of the English language.

FECCA is happy to note that an audio-DVD on key parts of the citizenship test is currently being developed to assist people with low literacy levels, that the resource book is being translated into 37 community languages, and that educational experts are currently working on a citizenship course for a small group of disadvantaged people, who for a range of reasons, such as limited literacy or schooling, are likely to struggle when studying for and sitting a formal computer-based test. FECCA hopes that the selection process for applicants sitting the course rather than the test is not unduly restrictive. All disadvantaged migrants and refugees from non English speaking backgrounds who may struggle with a formal test should be able to sit the course as a pathway to citizenship.

However, FECCA notes with some concern that the Government has also chosen to raise the test pass mark from 60 per cent to 75 per cent despite this not being a recommendation of the Citizenship Test Review Committee. This, FECCA believes, is an unduly onerous pass mark, that may exclude eligible applicants from attaining citizenship.

Under the previous and short lived citizenship test, applicants were required to have a high level of English proficiency and comprehension skills, and a comprehensive understanding of Australia's history, culture and sport, alongside an understanding about their rights and responsibilities in Australia. This test made the pathway to citizenship unduly difficult, particularly for migrant and refugee applicants who may have low literacy levels and limited schooling and many of who failed the test. FECCA believes that citizenship is an inherent right for all those who are eligible. We welcome this new, fairer, test, and commend the Government's moves to make it more accessible to people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

[Top](#)

REFUGEE REFORMS CONTINUE

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) has congratulated the Rudd Government on the significant restoration of the human rights of refugees. New laws were passed which abolish immigration detention debts thereby ending the cruel, inhumane and ineffective system of billing immigration detainees for their stay in detention. The Senate also voted down attempts to overturn Government reforms that restore equitable work rights for asylum seekers in Australia so as to lessen their chances of becoming destitute. In further good news the Government also introduced new laws to better protect refugees at further risk of death torture and inhumane treatment if deported. It is terrific news that Australia is in the process of restoring decency and a human rights focus to our immigration and refugee policies. Minister Chris Evans and the Senators who have supported these measures deserve to be congratulated for their stand this week," said Voula Messimeri, AM, FECCA Chair. Australia can again begin to hold its head high as a country that treats people who are often fleeing persecution, misery and worse with more dignity and respect. We look forward to seeing further reforms under the Government and also participating in reinstating and redeveloping Australia's multicultural policies in the coming months", concluded Ms Messimeri.

[Top](#)

Parliamentary Secretary, Mr Laurie Ferguson, announces the Strategic Settlement Framework

Refugee settlement services to change 25 September 2009

A new flexible client centred approach will be the focus of Australian settlement services, the Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, Laurie Ferguson, announced today in Brisbane. The new directions follow a national consultation process conducted in mid-2009 on the government's Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS).

About 500 people attended 17 consultation sessions conducted across Australia, representing more than 210 community organisations and at least 80 government agencies.

In addition, 195 refugees from 18 different ethnic backgrounds participated in focus groups.

'The consultations revealed gaps and issues around isolation, lack of youth engagement, access to education and employment, and some weaknesses in cultural orientation,' Mr Ferguson said.

'In certain instances clients spoke of 'tick and flick' services - feeling as though they were not provided with enough tangible assistance or support beyond the first few weeks.

'We are taking this feedback on board and it will be central to the redevelopment of new settlement programs.'

Key features of the reshaped model will include an onshore cultural orientation program, tailored case management, a greater youth focus, better coordination of services and more effective links with other settlement programs.

'We are also considering improvements to accommodation services and facilitating pathways to education and employment,' Mr Ferguson said.

'We need to give refugees greater hands-on support and guidance to navigate a new life in Australia. A flexible, client-focused approach will help start refugees on the right path, tapping into their strengths, and helping them to fully participate in the Australian community.'

A request for tender for the new initial settlement program will be issued in the coming months.

For the full text of the speech go to www.immi.gov.au/parlsec/media/speeches/2009/

[Top](#)

General MCoT Information

Postal address: PO Box 798 Hobart 7001

Street Address: 49 Molle Street Hobart

Phone: 03 6231 5067

Fax: 03 6231 5069

Email: mcot@tassie.net.au

Web: www.mcot.org.au