



Annual Report

2009

Mission Statement

*Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre
is a community-based non-profit
organisation established to actively
and directly relieve the situation
of immigrants and refugees whose
social condition renders them
disadvantaged.*

Chairmans Report

Here we are again writing the LMRC'S Annual Report. In putting pen to paper it provides me with an opportunity to reflect on the achievements and challenges that we have faced in 2009. As reported in the 2008 Annual Report, we found ourselves again doing more with the same resources. External pressures, such as the global financial crises, had the greatest impact on the most vulnerable people in our society. In particular, CALD communities in Liverpool felt those additional pressures when looking for private rental accommodation that was scarce, most likely unsuitable to house large families and out of reach of many to afford to pay the weekly rent. Very often this single factor alone meant families were unable to cover their basic necessities. As financial pressures increased in their everyday lives of our clients we noticed the impact these pressures had on their psychological and physiological wellbeing.

With more refugees and emerging communities settling in the Liverpool LGA staff reported that the LMRC serviced more clients this year, with a 41% increase to the previous year. In order to manage the high demand placed on the LMRC service provision the centre had to look inwardly to come up with creative and innovative ways to deliver its funded programs and projects. The LMRC Strategic Plan formed the basis from which to plan ways of utilising the skills and experience of our staff to plan across projects effectively and to provide services that met the needs of our clients. I feel honoured to be associated with the dedicated, resourceful and skilled staff at the Centre and with passionate colleagues on the Management Committee, whose commitment has, once again, established the LMRC as a leading Community Centre and respected by other service providers.

Our ongoing partnership with Liverpool Council has allowed the Centre to meet the needs of clients at a grass root level. The Therapeutic Arts Program, undertaken with the support of DFACSA, developed innovative programs that assisted many clients to address issues of isolation and mental health. It also provided ways for parents to enhance their parenting skills. Our family support program has benefited from additional funds received by Liverpool Council and Families NSW for early literacy and numeracy strategies. Unfortunately, the LMRC's Brighter Future's Program was discontinued this year. The program had formed an integral part of the various family support services the LMRC offers to assist families; Consequently the lack of funds to continue the support to CALD communities from vulnerable or 'at risk' families with children aged eight years or under has left a gap in our service delivery.

On behalf of the Management Committee I would like to thank the various funding bodies that continue to support the valuable work the Centre undertakes to support CALD Communities. To the LMRC Manager and Staff I would like to extend a warm and sincere thank you for the continuous effort and professional approach in which you faced the challenges you encountered this year. Next year, no doubt, we may face the same or similar challenges and I expect that the same level of professionalism, innovation and team work will assist us to bring positive outcomes for the Centre and the clients we support.

Dr. Vincent Ogu

Liverpool at a glance

5205 clients serviced at the centre

180 students attended

- 2 English classes for beginners and intermediate level
- 4 Computer classes
- 2 Floristry classes
- 2 Sewing classes
- 2 Video making workshops

Tax Help Program (20 clients)

25 Volunteer Placements including 8 Student Placement

44 Ethnic Groups are using our Meeting Room Facility

Outreach Services to

- Warrick Farm “Paint and Play” Playgroup
- Lurnea and Miller Intensive English Language Centres
- Miller Hub

Information Sessions on

- Youth Services
- Centrelink
- Democracy & Australian Parliament
- Immigration and Settlement
- Women’s Health Issues
- Legal Rights and Responsibilities
- Financial Management
- Housing
- Tenancy
- Volunteering
- Understanding NSW Health System
- Employment workshops

CVS continued for its 16th Consecutive Year

Now with 25 funded Places

5 Playgroups operating in Liverpool, Hinchinbrook

- 1 language specific
- 4 Multicultural
- 92 families; 125 children enrolled

Supporting Community Events

- Nigerian Cultural Day
- Timorese Cultural Day
- Sudanese Cultural Day
- Congolese Cultural Day
- “Nowruz” Celebration for the Afghan New Year
- “Nowruz” Celebration for the Kurdish New Year
- Sierra Leone cultural day

In Partnership with other Community Organisations, undertake the following activities:

- Australian Mandaean Cultural Club
- Samoan Community
- Liverpool Australian Sudanese Community Inc
- Australia Forum
- Maltese Women’s Group
- Christ Preachers Church Int’l
- Indian Fijan community in Liverpool

Supported the following Networks:

- Liverpool Migrant & Refugee Interagency
- Community Sector Management Forum
- Settlement Council of Australia
- Warwick Farm Services Network
- Liverpool Youth Workers Network
- Liverpool Family & Children’s Service Interagency
- 2168 Committee
- Liverpools Womens Health Centre
- Community Development Support Expenditure Scheme
- WSAAS Local Ranking Committee

With thanks to our Funding Bodies

- Department of Immigration and Citizenship
- Department of Community Services
- Department of Health and Ageing
- Liverpool City Council
- Department of Housing
- DFACSIA
- Families NSW

Management committee members

Dr. Vincent Ogu	–	Chairperson
Allan Hornery	–	Deputy Chairperson
Haidar Abdalla	–	Treasurer
Blanca Arely	–	Secretary
Dr. Amad Mtashar	–	Member
David Bell	–	Member
Peter Harrison	–	Member
Yasin Barzani	–	Member
Naomi Kemmerer	–	Member
Violeta Neskovska		
/Julie Spirovska	–	Member
Allan Hornery	–	Member
Simon Fox	–	Ex-officio Liverpool City Council
Councillor Ali Karnib	–	Ex-Officio Liverpool City Council

Sessional workers

Jacqueline Dallal	–	Melkite Welfare Association
Violeta Neskovska	–	Macedonian Australian Welfare Association of Sydney
Sai Rokomaqisa	–	Pacific Island Council
Huy Nguyen	–	Vietnamese Community in Australia
Bing Lai	–	Chinese Migrant Welfare Association
Michael Kwiatkowski	–	SLASA
Louay Moustapha	–	Lebanese Community Council of NSW
Behrooz Gouniai	–	Iranian Community Organisation
Allan Hornery	–	Hon. Dana Vale's Office - Member for Hughes

Child care workers

Azeena Khan, Musharrat	Xuan Thi Bui
Lynette Pressman	Mariam Dabboussy
Sandra Romanelli	Ximena Reyes
Selma Unal	Jennifer Joy Plat
	Salma Mohamed Bashir

Staff

Kamalle Dabboussy	–	Manager
Alcina Desouza	–	Admin Team Leader/Information Officer
Pietty Greenwood	–	Multicultural Families Resource Coordinator
Anke Kotte	–	Information Officer
Dany Ya	–	Community Support worker
Jimmy Mtashar	–	Iraqi Support worker
Shabnam Bhana	–	Youth worker
Layla Hameed	–	Humanitarian Caseworker
Raeanne Ali	–	Afghan worker
Maria Karameli Manousso	–	Family Support Clerical
Maria Pereira	–	Community Visitors Scheme Coordinator
Khaled Sabsabi	–	Australian Arabic Cultural Producer Project worker
Hana Tamer	–	Families Support worker
Yahyeh Abouloukme	–	Citizenship Support Worker
Nadia Karim	–	Admin Assistant - Resigned June 2009
Nasrin Mahoutchi	–	Therapeutic Arts Coordinator – Resigned 17/12/2008
Sayed Osman	–	Caseworker Support worker
Giovanna Volpe	–	Senior Caseworker - Resigned 12/6/2009

Volunteers/Students placements

Dobrica Hristovska	Helen Kidane
Prasad Popat Mane	Enas Khalaf
Pratibha Waske	Shobha Reddy
Mona Elkhalfa	Daniela Dimitrieska
Lorna MacDonald	Randa Jebara
Nadia Al Khamisi	Bhakti Karandikar
Reem Istiphan	Anwar Buni
Fatima Mohamed	Samina Chaudhry
Farina Sahib	Sanaa Thamool
Geetha Chandraiah	
Elizabeth Ganga	
Doreen Hozeph	
Iman Moussa	
Athanasia Tzakostas	
Helen Pereira	

Administration Team / Information officer

The last year has seen a further increase in service delivery to clients at the LMRC. A total of 4218 recorded clients were serviced through the Front Desk alone, these clients were provided with information and referrals, certifying documents, photocopying and answers to general queries. Bilingual Information on various services in Liverpool and Sydney is collected, displayed and updated at the Front Desk area in Information stands including current information on Community Events, Training and Education.

The partnership with Liverpool TAFE is proving a continuing success and provided valuable education and skills to our clients. The administration team was actively involved in organising classes by liaising with students, teachers and administration support. A total of 199 students attended the following classes:

- 4 English Classes / Beginners and Intermediate Level
- 4 Introduction to Computing Classes
- 2 Intermediate Computing Classes
- 2 Introduction to Floristry Classes
- 2 Introduction to Sewing Classes

The Administration team supported the ATO Tax Help Program, Citizenship Support Program as well as the Skilled Migrant Mentoring Program providing outreach services at the LMRC by organising appointments, providing information in regards to the programs and other administrative duties.

As part of the provision of work experience to students and volunteers the Administration Team took on the supervision and training of 20 Volunteers and 5 Students.

The LMRC Meeting Room facilities have been accessed by 26 different Community Groups, who have been assisted with the organizing, recording and allocation of the rooms for use during working hours and weekends. The Administration team has also been involved in the promotion and orientation of the Centre to newly arrived migrants and refugees through Information Session, Speak Outs and Information Stalls at Community Events.



4218 clients have been recorded to have been serviced directly from the front counter

Family Support - Brighter Futures Program

The Brighter Futures Program is an early intervention program and is part of the Brighter Futures Consortium with the Benevolent Society.

The Family Worker employed by the Liverpool MRC worked with vulnerable or 'at risk' families from CALD communities with children aged eight years or under. Referrals to enter this project were received from the 'community' these were referrals from staff of the LMRC who identified some of the families as eligible for this program; from other community organizations; as well and from 'DoCS' via the Benevolent Society.

The families supported under this program displayed some of the following:

- Mental health issues including families and children traumatised due to migration and war
- Domestic Violence or dysfunctional families
- Single parents
- Lack of extended family or social support
- Child behaviour and children with additional needs
- Limited English
- Families with limited parenting skills
- Poverty and housing issues

Key achievements

As part of the support to families, the Family Support Worker provided a range of services and programs that met the early intervention program core goals of promoting healthy development in children; promoting strong functional and well-supported families; and reduction and prevention of child abuse and neglect. This was achieved by the provision of:

- Case management
- professional home visiting
- Linking families with local support networks
- Linking families to local welfare organisations for financial support
- Individual & group parenting programs
- Access to interpreters via Liverpool MRC workers or through the interpreters services if necessary
- Access to early childhood specialists
- Linking families to local child care centres and playgroups. A concept new to many of the families supported by the Family Worker.

As the families were exited from this program due to the cessation of funds for this project the Family Support Worker linked the families that required further assistance to the Benevolent Society, Brighter Futures Program.

Family Support - Cultural Connect Project

The Cultural Connect Project Team had a very successful year and achieved great results for both families and children who participated during 2009. Through the innovation of staff, and based on the perceived need for participation we explored new ways to support families through playgroups and partnerships. In 2009 there was an increase of participants, with 98 families enrolled and 125 children participating in the playgroups. As more new arrivals settled in the Liverpool LGA, more services referred families to the program and word of mouth from existing participants promoted the playgroups to family and friends. The waiting list to enrol in the playgroups continued to grow as we were unable to accommodate the increased demand.

The Cultural Connect Project held a language specific playgroup to support Vietnamese speaking families in partnership with Sadleir Public School, 'Parents as Teachers Program'. In the Liverpool CBD we continued to hold a Tuesday Multicultural Playgroup and, as a strategy to reduce the number of families on the waiting list, the Wednesday Multicultural Playgroup began operating at the beginning of 2009. In addition, during term 3, 2009 we commenced a Monday Multicultural Playgroup in Partnership with Liverpool TAFE Outreach.

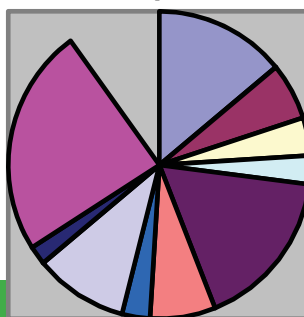
This partnership stems from the successful program and support given to students throughout our playgroups who were working towards a Statement of Attainment in Children's Services. Since opening these two playgroups we have been able to accommodate newly arrived families from refugee backgrounds some of them referred by Liverpool Hospital social workers and STARTTS. The Hinchinbrook Multicultural Playgroup continued to be very successful with 21 families enrolled.

Partnerships

Playing together Learning Together Program, funded by Liverpool

Council: This program was delivered with the support of an occupational therapist and aimed to teach families the importance of play in early childhood. Hands on workshops were held and information was distributed in Arabic, Vietnamese and English. Eight sessions were held, 13 families and 15 children attended the program.

Composition of Languages Spoken at Playgroup



Arabic
Bosnian
Dari
English
Hindi
Kurdish
Persian
Spanish
Serbian
Vietnamese
Other

Through friendships and feelings of connectedness, families gradually move to use LMRC services and mainstream services.



Tuesday Multicultural Playgroup

School Readiness Program: 18 children participated in and graduated from the school readiness program. The school readiness program's success was due to the dedication and well planned program under the direction of the Cultural Connect Project, School Readiness Teacher.

Achievements

Social Capital:

The Cultural Connect Project has decreased the level of isolation many new families face on arrival to Australia. We have linked families to other families from their own culture, language or religion. Through friendships and feelings of connectedness families gradually move to use LMRC services and mainstream services.

Families NSW project review for Metro South West region:

The Cultural Connect Project underwent a project review early in 2009. The review included proof of project records and statistics collected during the life of the project. Feedback received during and after the review stated that the Cultural Connect Project has adhered to all the requirements under the agreement we have with the Department of Community Services.

Achievements

Early Literacy Forum:

The Cultural Connect Project Team delivered a presentation and set up a display at the Early Literacy Forum to promote the LMRC 'Learn with Me Project'. Early literacy and numeracy resource kits were developed for this project. Ten requests for further information on the Learn with Me Kits were received from service providers who attended the forum.

Arabic Speaking Families Cultural Awareness Workshop and the Samoan Cultural Awareness Workshop: were facilitated in partnership with Liverpool Family and Children's Services Interagency Meeting, Families NSW and the LMRC Women at Risk Project. Participants gained skills and knowledge to assist in the support of families from Arabic and Samoan speaking backgrounds. A total of 44 service providers participated in the workshops.

Settlement Council of Australia Conference:

The Cultural Connect Project Coordinator delivered a presentation on the Haarra Project-'Know your Neighbourhood', as a best practice model, a project of the LMRC in 2008 that aimed to meet the needs of Sudanese people living in the 2168 postcode.

Breastfeeding Research Working Party:

The Family Support Coordinator is a member of the Breastfeeding Research Working Party which was formed to research factors and/or barriers that impact on a mother's ability/choice to continue breastfeeding once they leave hospital. The working party is made up of services within the Liverpool Family and Children's Services Interagency. Ten families from various Multicultural Playgroups completed the survey form.

STEPS Program:

As part of the Statewide Eyesight Preschooler Screening (STEPS) programme, a NSW Health Community Nurse visited the Liverpool and Hinchinbrook Multicultural Playgroups in August and September 2009. The nurse provided free vision screening for all 4 year old children attending school in 2010. Most children tested had good vision.

Challenges we faced in 2009:

We have noticed that more refugee families are reporting with more complex needs due to the nature of migration to Australia. Some of the women report that their husbands are missing and they do not know their whereabouts. They are dealing with PTSD, settling issues, interrupted education, poor health and lack of parenting skills. The nature of their needs have placed more demand on the Cultural Connect Project. The Family Support Coordinator required more time to support the women and the Child Care Staff developed strategies to support their children in the program and guide their behaviour in a positive manner.

Testimonials from playgroup participants:

- "Playgroup gives me lots of ideas of things to do with my child, and I get a lot of support from the playgroup staff" Parent from the Hinchinbrook Multicultural Playgroup
- "Playgroup has helped me to know my children better", Parent from the Tuesday Multicultural Playgroup.



**Hinchinbrook Multicultural Playgroup
- Hair Salon Playgroup Activity -**

Community Visitors Scheme (CVS)

The Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) is funded nationally by the Australian Government through the Department of Health and Ageing and has been operating at the Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre since 1993.

The Community Visitors Scheme program at the Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre operates within the South West Sydney Aged Care Planning Region.

The aim of this program is to enrich the quality of life of residents in Aged Care Facilities such as (Nursing Homes and Aged Hostels) who have been identified as being lonely or socially isolated and might benefit from having a regular friendly visitor.

In addition to the above, the CVS also helps to establish links between people living in Aged Care Facilities and their community, this becomes even more relevant for residents identified as of a Culturally and Linguistic Diverse background, and who have limited fluency in English and therefore are faced with a language barrier.

A compulsory National Criminal History Record Check (NCHRC) has been undertaken for each potential Volunteer/Community Visitor as it is currently required under the Aged Care Act.

The Community Visitors Coordinator provided the Community Visitors/Volunteers with on-going support, orientation and relevant training as well as organising group monthly support meetings. All Community Visitors/Visitors were also reimbursed for out of pocket expenses.

Towards the end of the year all Community Visitors/Volunteers were invited to lunch in appreciation of their wonderful support throughout the year, this is always well attended and everyone shares this time to relax and enjoy each others company and it is a great way to conclude the year for this very worthwhile program.

It has been noted, that Community Visitors enjoy their new found friendship as much as the residents of aged care facilities do, and that the relationship proves to be a very positive experience.

The Liverpool MRC Management Committee, Manager and Staff would like to take this opportunity to thank each of our dedicated Volunteers/Community Visitors past and present that have been involved with the program for their constant dedication and commitment.



Youth Worker

Casework

Casework operates on an outreach basis where students at Lurnea and Miller IEC get one on one support from the youth worker on youth related issues. The strong link between the youth worker and the IEC staff means that students are well equipped with information, referral and resources towards a smoother transition to life in Australia.

Community Lincs

Bus tours designed for students exiting the IEC unit to increase their knowledge and access to services, educational institutions and youth centres. These tours were conducted in partnership with Startts.

Vacation Care Programs

DoCS Funding was received via Fairfield City council for Vacation Care programs for youth during the School holidays. April 2009 School holidays took off with 3 days of activities for Sudanese youth. 19 young people participated in the following activities; Laser Skirmish, Bowling, and Ice Skating.

Employment Workshop

Two employment workshops were held in April 2009. The workshop was held for Iraqi and Samoan young people aged between 14-18 years old. 18 young people were registered for the workshop which covered the following topics; Resume writing skills, Interview techniques, Application and letter writing, and Job skills. It was an excellent workshop for youth who especially enjoyed the mock interviews.

Homework Support Program

Homework Support Program continues to run successfully for young people in the Liverpool surrounding areas. It is held every Wednesday from 3:30pm-5:30pm. The age range of students is between 12-17 years. Students come from diverse ethnic backgrounds such as, Iraqi, Mandaean, Fijian, Assyrian, and Sierra Leone to name a few.

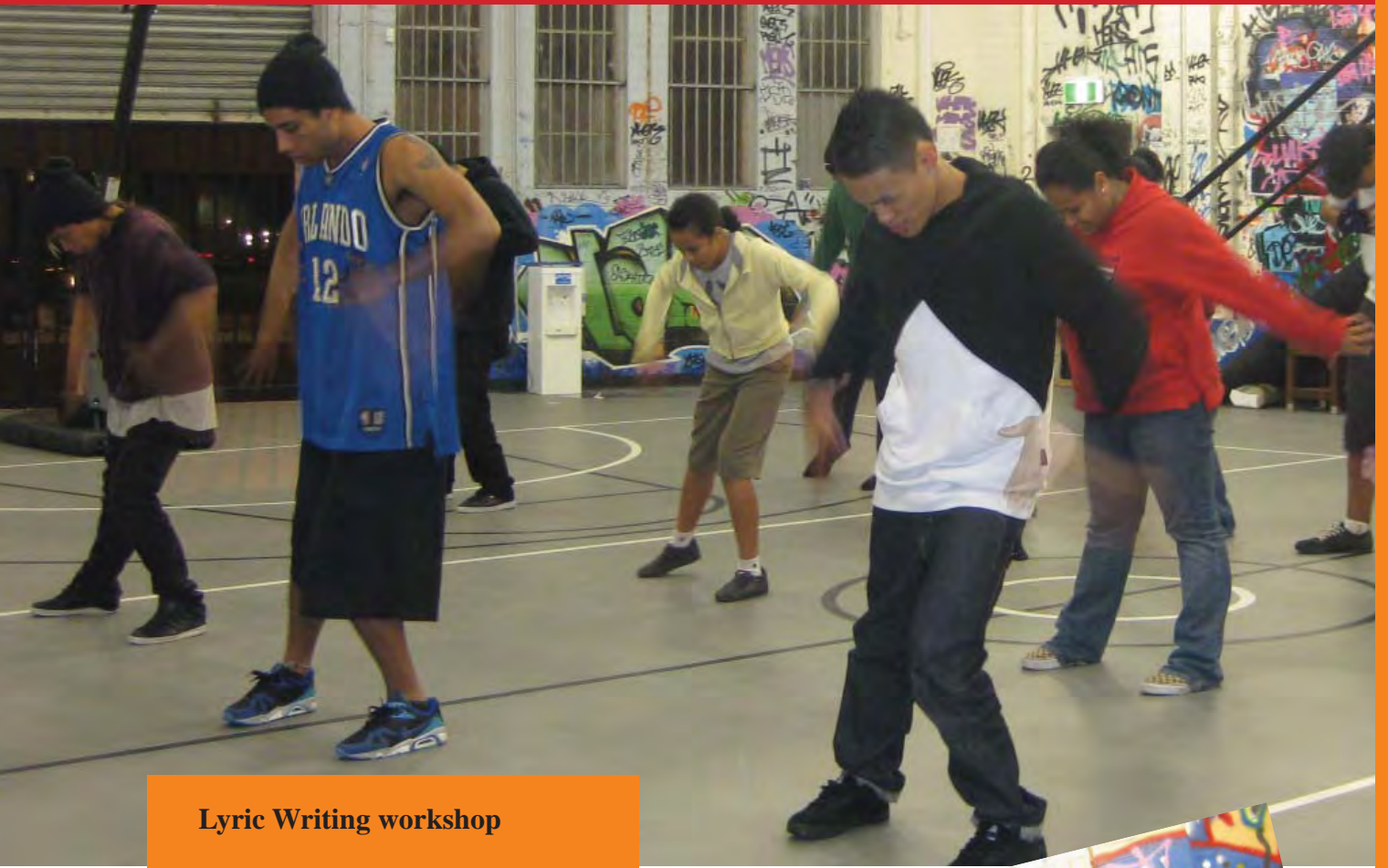
Soccer Program

In December 2008, Lurnea and Miller IEC soccer teams were part of a Diplomacy Training Tournament. 30 Human Rights Defenders from 18 countries in the Asia-Pacific joined with refugee communities in Sydney, to play soccer and celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Miller IEC reached the Finals and Lurnea IEC reached the Semi-finals in the tournament, it was a successful and fun development day. Football continues to provide after school soccer programs at both IEC's.



Soccer Program





Lyric Writing workshop

In June 2009 Lyric writing workshops was held for Samoan youth at the Street University. It was an opportunity for Samoan youth to express their life experiences in a song written and sang by the youth. It was a great achievement in a short time. The youth also had the opportunity to practice break dancing.



Community Projects Officer (CPO)

As a Community Projects Officer, I worked very closely with all the staff to help develop links across all projects so that a more cohesive and efficient means of service delivery was offered to the clients. The CPO continues to help support, plan and facilitate information sessions and consultations with support and direction from other project staff.

I continued to work with different CALD community groups residing in Liverpool. Some of the main community groups I worked with included Mandaean, Sudanese, Congolese, Ethiopian, Christ Preachers International group which includes Sierra Leonean, Liberian and Ghanaian community members and the Fijian Indian community.

Community Consultations

The Community Projects Officer has helped conduct community consultations that have centered on gaining a better understanding of the settlement needs of the community. This includes the participants understanding or perceived understanding of services and their roles. The CPO helps to interpret the information obtained through various social research methods including focus groups surveys and questionnaires. The Community Projects Officer took a proactive role in facilitating these community consultations, worked closely with community leaders. Some consultations included:

- The Fijian Indian community consultation
- Arabic Aged Consultation
- The Mandaean Community consultation.

The consultations were well received by the community and will help to plan for future initiatives, programs, projects and activities, as well as helping to provide immediate assistance to needs identified as a result of consultation findings.

Information Sessions

The orientation and life skills sessions are held to give a better understanding of services available in Australia and how the system works, as well as providing life skills sessions to overcome issues that arise during the challenges of settlement in a new country.

Information sessions were delivered to various community groups with the help of the CPO across a range of ethnic background with numerous service providers involved. The information sessions are organised and planned according to the settlement needs of community groups and are therefore conducted in the language of the group through an interpreter.

LEARN ABOUT
SHOPPING
MONEY
RENTING

Join our class on Tuesday mornings
starting at 10am on the 28th April 2009
For more information, Call Dany: 9601 3788

MRC
This program is run by the Liverpool MRC in collaboration with the NSW Office of Fair Trading.

Info Session About Budgeting

Interagency and Networks

Over the year there has been involvement in interagency and networks to help build links to better advocate and support the needs of refugees and migrants. The CPO has co-convened the Liverpool Refugee and Migrant Interagency, with involvement in the Warwick Farm Interagency, Warwick Farm Steering Committee and 2168 Interagency. The CPO has also met with service providers through one-to-one consultation to raise awareness of the issues that new and emerging community groups are facing.

Funding

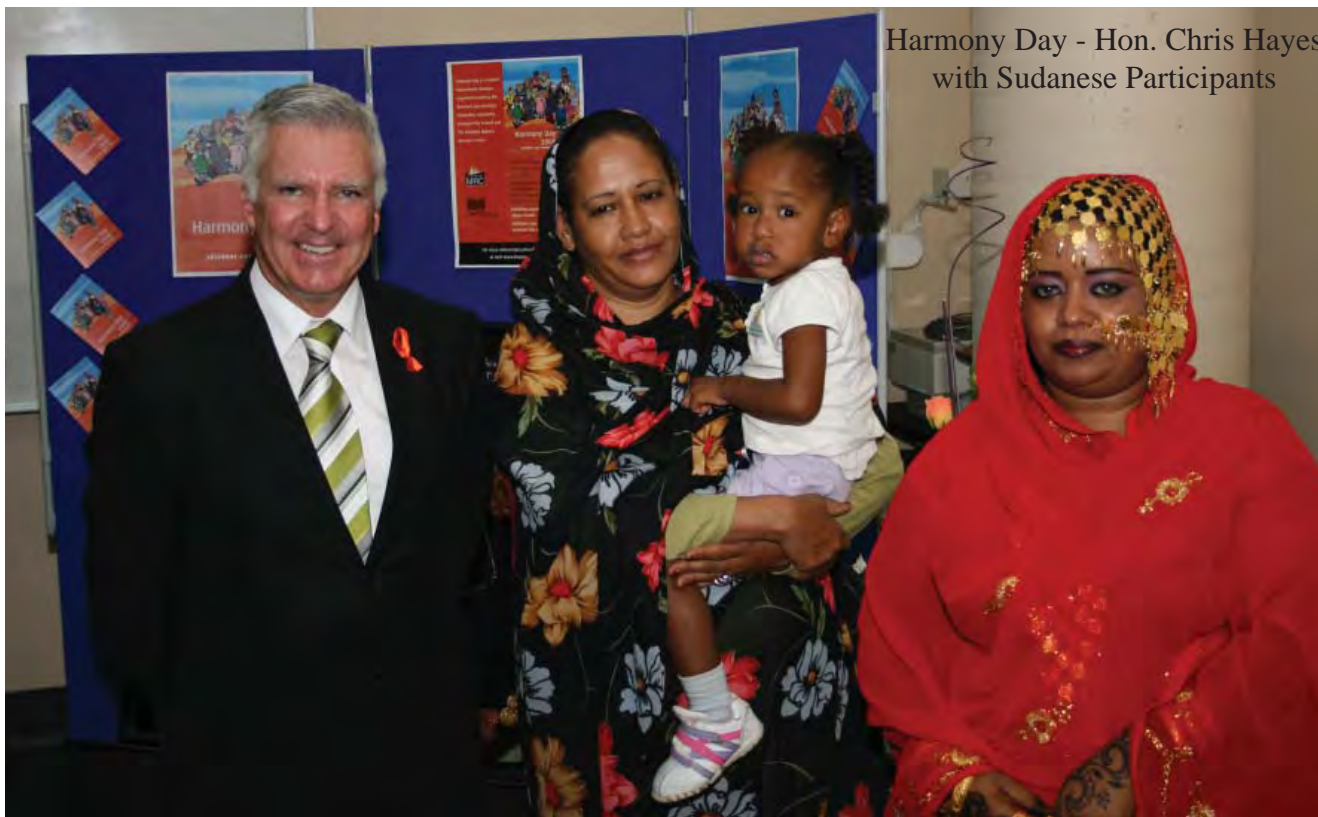
The Community Projects Officer has helped community groups apply for funding opportunities, including supporting leaders writing up applications and finding the right funding source for programs, projects and activities. The CPO has helped apply for CDSE funding as well as CRC funding and has helped in small funding for community events.

Harmony Day

The Liverpool MRC took part in Harmony Day celebrations at Miller where a great crowd turned out to celebrate this important event. The Community Projects Officer took part in the organisation and planning of the event. The CPO represented the Liverpool MRC on the Harmony Day working party to help promote cultural diversity and harmony in Liverpool.



Exhibition - Harmony Day by Karim Jari



Harmony Day - Hon. Chris Hayes with Sudanese Participants



Refugee Week

On the 19th of June this year Refugee week celebrations were held at a whole day event in Liverpool CBD. It was a meaningful event that acknowledged the contributions refugees make to Australia. This event drew crowds of hundreds to watch and participate in the various activities that took place. At this year's Refugee Week there were numerous information stalls as services took to the street to celebrate this event and making the day truly enjoyable.

There were competitions which included a popular free raffle draw that encouraged participants to visit information stalls to receive stickers which could be exchanged for raffle tickets. Three prizes were drawn during the day and the CPO had the pleasure of being the MC for the event.

A number of dignitaries were present and gave speeches during formal proceedings which involved the annual Refugee Awards ceremony which highlight the immense contributions and achievements by volunteers. The audiences throughout the day were dazzled by colourful performances that were on show. Some of the performances included belly dancers, singing, dancing and hip hop performance which drew upon audience involvement throughout the event. On the 20th of June the second half of celebrations got underway at Casula Powerhouse Museum. Intensive English Centre students gave a theatrical performance on their experiences of settlement as a part of refugee week festivities.

Complex Case Support Services

The Complex Case Support (CCS) Program is funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship to deliver a specialised and intensive case management services to refugee and humanitarian entrants.

The Complex Case Support Program is intended to work in partnership with existing settlement programs such as the Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Strategy (IHSS) and Settlement Grants Program (SGP).

The Complex Case Support Program targets the needs of individuals and families who are experiencing a level of crisis, who cannot access appropriate support via mainstream services and who require time intensive case management.

The CCS program delivers case management, advocacy, referral and the overseeing of issues experienced by the client and their family. The program aims to work in collaboration with other existing service providers to maintain relationships and to holistically address the needs of all family members.

The common issues presented by Complex Case Support clients include Family Violence, housing issues, mental health, physical health, Legal Issues and employment.

In 2009 The LMRC developed additional policies and procedures to ensure that staff employed to work under this program, were well protected when working with clients under the Complex Case Support Services, in particular in the areas of home visiting and work outside the normal office hours.

The LMRC undertook the advertisement and recruitment of a suitable experienced and qualified person to fill this role. We are pleased to report that the appointed person for this position has met the essential criteria as per the job advertisement and we are confident that in the future those clients who are eligible to receive support under this program will be well supported by the LMRC Senior Case Worker.

National Police Checks, a requirement by the funding body for this program, were conducted for the Senior Case Worker and relevant LMRC Staff.

Humanitarian Support Officer

2009 was a fruitful year in which we continued to provide a high level of support to the target group. The aim of the Humanitarian program is to provide orientation, develop communities, and promote integration of services to humanitarian arrivals in Liverpool.

Casework provision:

A total of 298 clients were serviced under provisions of casework. Some of the ethnic groups serviced include, Iraqi, Sudanese, Egyptian, Lebanese, Afghan, Assyrian, Iranian and Liberian.

The main issues addressed through casework were: document help which include (filling of forms), household management, financial support and accommodation. The highest outgoing referrals made included Utilities, which accounted for 18% of formal referrals, Centrelink which accounted for 6% and Housing (community), accounting for 6% of these referrals reflect the main issues that have been addressed by the Humanitarian caseworker.

Information Sessions:

Orientation on settlement issues and acquisition of life skills formed the basis of the information sessions. The information sessions were conducted with the support of service providers. These information sessions aimed to introduce clients to the various types of services available to them, as well as, to initiate a connection between the client and staff from the respective services.

Below are examples of information session undertaken by the humanitarian caseworker to address health issues identified during case work. The focus of these sessions was based on promoting the importance of healthy life styles whilst providing an orientation as to how to access the specific service.

- 'Safe ways to take medication'. This session looked at the importance of taking medication properly and as prescribed by health care professional.
- 'Healthy lifestyles and nutrition'. This information helped tackle the issues around nutrition and understanding how to interpret the nutritional contents table on food products.
- 'Emergency health services'. This session discussed the importance of emergency services and what to do if a situation arises requiring immediate emergency assistance.
- 'Mental health in African communities'. This session looked at mental health issues that affect African communities.

Key Achievements:

- The orientation and life skills sessions that were held at the Liverpool MRC allowed newly arrived Humanitarian entrants and Refugees to better interact and strengthen relationships with mainstream services. These sessions built confidence in accessing services and promoting social inclusion.

- Through developing and implementing effective strategies to assist new arrivals to interact, understand and connect with the boarder community clients were given the opportunity to have their stories heard and to raise mainstream community awareness of the predominant settlement issues facing new arrivals. Numerous newspaper articles were written in local papers highlighting these needs and also the positive stories of Liverpool MRC clients.

- Through consultation clients were assisted in addressing their needs directly and were helped to implement strategies to better assist their settlement process.

- A consultation held with an isolated women's group was such a success that the group requested that the Liverpool MRC help keep a close link with the group and find ways to work and provide outreach services.

The Humanitarian Caseworker, through consultations, gained a better understand of settlement issues in doing so, the Caseworker helped the Centre identify the changes in settlement issues and was able to take a proactive approach to future planning for projects and information sessions.



Iraqi Support officer

Casework

A total of 329 clients were serviced by the Iraqi Support Officer. The clients were from a range of ethnic backgrounds which included Kurdish, Assyrian, and Chaldean and with the overwhelming majority being Mandaean. A wide range of issues were addressed through provision of casework, including financial assistance, accommodation, citizenship, document help and household management.

Information Sessions

Information sessions were held to better orientate clients to settlement and mainstream services. Information sessions held a high level of interest and participation. Information sessions were held on issues identified in consultation with the community. These issues included financial assistance, citizenship, mental health, Centrelink and housing.

Consultation

The Iraqi support officer conducted a community consultation with the Mandaean community which included conducting research throughout the year to develop a range of methodologies such as focus groups to produce accurate research on the community. The focus group looked at a collection of issues which included housing, legal, health, immigration, employment and Centrelink. Findings from the consultation have been taken into account and strategies have been set to address the issues that were identified.

Breaking down Barriers

- The community and police were brought together through information sessions and meetings to raise awareness of policing issues, duties and the need to build positive relationships.
- The Iraqi support worker took an active role in the development, recruitment of clients and service delivery of the Iraqi Father's group called "Closing the Gap". This project was delivered in collaboration with the LMRC Therapeutic Arts Project. As a result of a well coordinated approach across LMRC staff, it has been noted that fathers who took part in this project have developed friendships; have helped each other to break down negative male stereotypes; and have gained positive interactions and parenting skills. This has been a great result for Iraqi fathers who otherwise would have not had an opportunity to engage in group work.
- The Iraqi support officer also attended numerous forums, meeting, consultations, workshops and focus groups to help recognise and address the needs and issues that have been identified through provision of casework, orientation and life skills sessions, consultations and programs such as the Iraqi fathers group.



Iraqi Community Consultation

Arab Australian Social Cultural Producer Initiative

The primary objective of the one year action research and development activity undertaken between April 2008 and March 2009 (funded by Arts NSW and Australia Council for the Arts) was to employ a cultural worker to deliver within cultural context an Arab Australian Cultural Development Strategy document.

This three year document was successfully produced using various processes and methodologies of research, community and cultural developments and engagements in partnerships with relevant and concerned communities and stakeholders.

As per initial funding proposal objectives, the AACI cultural worker actively engaged with community and cultural development and arts capacity-building processes; strategies and activities for artist and cultural practitioners; and stakeholders and communities. This included conducting needs assessment workshops and consultations, programs and projects design and development, cultural training, knowledge development about specific communities, sector and community linking and network development. It also involved the examination of training and professional development opportunities for Arab Australians including youth and emerging and established artists, as individuals and groups.

Aspects of the Arab Australian cultural development strategy document examined and addressed the following key objectives:

Researched Arab Australian culture.
Negotiated and developed models of cultural understanding through the Arts working across a range of concepts, genres, mediums and formats

Contributed to the development of new Arab Australian arts and cultural activities that are Western Sydney determined and produced

Empowered and supported Western Sydney Arab Australian communities

Increased the participation of people in the Arts in Western Sydney

Supported and nurtured the arts industry through employment and participant opportunities

Encouraged and supported the needs of an emerging arts industry.

Women's Support Project

The LMRC's women's support project assisted newly-arrived women at risk in Liverpool.

92 clients received support through casework. In addition, the needs of the clients identified through casework, were further addressed through delivery of:

- Culturally and linguistically appropriate information sessions,
- Training workshops and cultural celebrations.
- The project worked closely with an Afghan women's support group.

A consultation with the Afghan community was organised in October 2008 with local service providers, including Anglicare and NSW Refugee Health Service. This assisted the community in identifying common goals, interests and needs. The consultation highlighted the community's need for a parenting support program. This was proposed in partnership with Anglicare's Humanitarian Counselling Service to assist women from the Afghan community in learning positive parenting skills.

In November 2008 an information session was organized on women's health and was held in Liverpool Women's Health Centre, where participants were provided with information on breast-screening, mammograms, cervical cancer and pap-smear tests.

The LMRC Afghan Worker and the Liverpool Women's Health Centre identified that further support on health issues were required to address the needs of women at risk in Liverpool. As a result in June and July 2009 two information sessions were held under the heading of "Be Healthy". The two

sessions were conducted in Arabic with the support of an LMRC Bilingual Community Educator/ A project of Families NSW, Cultural Connect Project. These information sessions focused on:

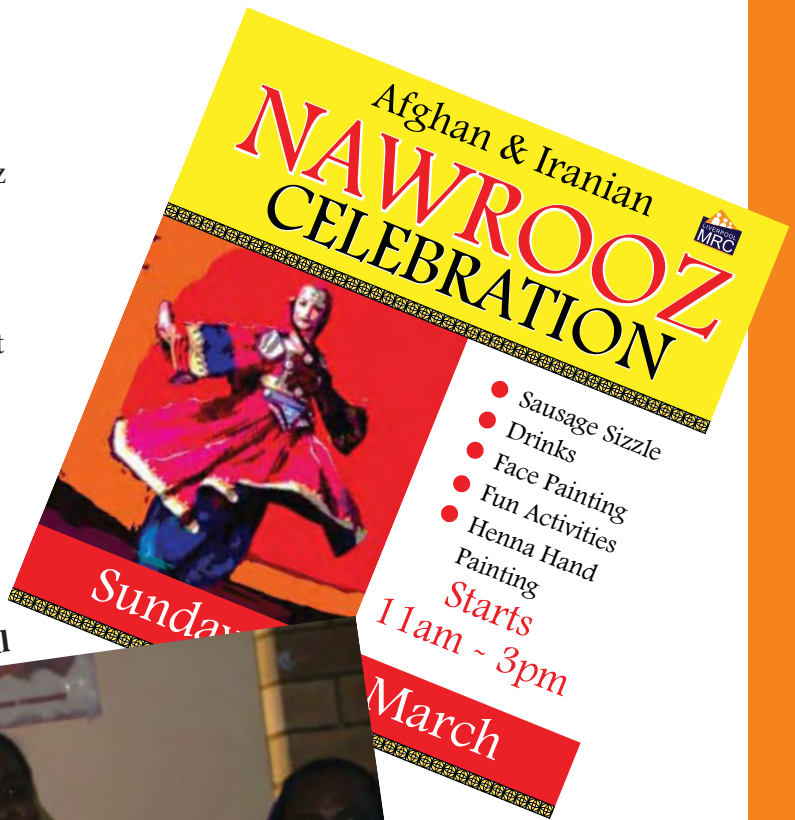
- Eating healthy
- Staying healthy
- Maintaining a healthy weight

In December 2008 a women's legal services information session was carried out for the Afghan community, which outlined aspects of criminal law, domestic violence legislation, court assistance and the services of Women's Legal Services NSW.

The above consultations and findings from the information sessions formed the evidence used by the LMRC to raise awareness at various forums and advocated for the needs of women at risk. Such issues were promoted and presented at:

- local inter-agency meetings such as Liverpool Refugee and Migrant Interagency and the Liverpool Family and Children's Services Interagency,
- The African Refugee Health Forum, which was organised by the Liverpool-Fairfield Multicultural Health Unit and NSW Refugee Health Services.
- Issues of women at risk were also discussed at a meeting with the Education Centre against Violence.
- Events such as Liverpool Australian Sudanese Community's event on International Women's Day also served to develop effective networks & strengthen links with mainstream services.

Finally New Year for Afghan and Iranian communities was celebrated with a Nawrooz festival in March 2009. This event gave participants an opportunity to celebrate together during a culturally significant time. A hundred people attended for entertainment and fun activities, including games for children, face-painting, henna-art, and traditional food.



**International Women's Day - Liverpool
Australian Sudanese Community with
Mayor Wendy Waller, Liverpool Council**



Afghan Women's Support Group



Therapeutic Arts Program (TAP)

As a result of funding received from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) under the government's 'Stronger Families and Communities Strategy', the Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre (LMRC) was given an opportunity to respond more effectively to the increasing numbers of clients presenting at the centre with symptoms resulting from trauma experienced in their countries of origin. This response took the form of a Therapeutic Arts Program and was implemented over 2008 and 2009. The aim of the program was to explore different creative pathways to healing for refugees and other migrants who had suffered torture or trauma in countries of origin.

The programme nurtured listening, sharing and learning in a friendly, non-confrontational environment. A creative process was adopted to allow for individual expression as well as group-work and the development of lasting friendships. Some of the initiatives, as outlined below, were unique and have paved the way for future similar models to be developed. The

use of arts and education proved to be very successful mediums to address the effects of trauma for those settling in the Liverpool area. It also worked towards breaking down some of the barriers to integration for culturally and linguistically diverse participants.

Traditional Kurdish dance classes proved a viable means for community expression engagement and individual healing. The classes were coordinated by more established Kurdish community members, to assist more recently arrived or isolated community members. The mediums of music and dance proved to be an effective way of bringing young and older community member's together and created opportunities for inter-generational support to be provided. Cultural performances at Refugee Week and promotion of the group's activities at the 2008 SWAN Festival enabled the group to promote their culture to the wider community in Liverpool.

Launch of Arts Program with the Hon Danna Vale



An emotionally-welcoming arts program,

enticed women from diverse cultural backgrounds to meet once a week, for two months, to produce a range of art works. Ten participants were given the opportunity to share their experiences in a safe environment while engaging in art activities. This prompted discussion among the group and development of friendships. A 'cultural quilt' was developed, where each patch reflected, in colour, how participants were feeling. A sense of group achievement was evident. Participants expressed the classes were an excellent way to help heal past suffering. A launch event was organized at the LMRC to display individual artworks and paintings and reach out to the wider community.

Workshops on relaxation methods were

held to increase effective parenting for parents. The aim of the workshops was to decrease stress and build resilient families by introducing the benefits exercise, relaxation and healthy diets for children and parents.

Artwork & Paintings from the Therapeutic Arts Program

A program focusing on 'Women at Risk'

complemented the 2009 LMRC Women's Support Project (DIAC Funded Project). From the information gathered during the Afghan Community consultation in 2008 it was realised that there was a need to develop parenting information to assist new arrivals, and in particular families from refugee background to gain further parenting skills and increase parent/child interactions. From May 2009 to July 2009 five parenting information sessions were held. The sessions were facilitated by a Counsellor from Anglicare and named 'taking care of self' with topics such as:

- Communication in families
- Relaxation techniques
- Emotional coaching for children
- Self esteem
- Guiding children's behaviour

Primarily participants were from Iraqi and Sudanese communities, 14 people attended the workshops. Facilitators noted some of the issues affecting participants which surfaced during workshops: including war \ trauma, loss and grief, the burden of family responsibilities, parenting problems due to the difficulty in settling in the new country and overcoming language barriers.



An Iraqi fathers group called “Closing the Gap” focused on Iraqi fathers enhancing their relationships with their children.

Six fathers with primary-aged children were involved. This Project was closely monitored by the LMRC Iraqi Support Officer and the LMRC CPO who assisted with the recruitment of participants, service delivery and data collection.

Many issues were raised about parenting in Australia and the cultural differences and expectations compared to Iraq. Strategies were developed by participants to understand and support good parenting. The program facilitator was an Iraqi father who talked openly about his parenting issues at home, which assisted other fathers to open-up, engage and learn from the process.

The Iran- Iraq Writers Group aimed to overcome barriers to participation by individuals that had experienced, and lived through, the Iran-Iraq war and to build confidence and abilities. Participant dialogue between the two nationalities allowed for commonalities and shared experiences to be recognised. Sharing and collation of personal stories assisted participants to identify with grief and loss. The process itself was flexible, relaxing and creative.

An Introduction to Computers

Classes began in February 2009, in an attempt to address the digital divide for new arrivals to the country, while providing an opportunity for people to meet. Classes introduced windows, creating files, Microsoft word, saving, printing, the internet and how to navigate websites, social blogging and Messenger. The course helped demystify what computers and the internet are.



Twelve workshops were organized, including two discussion workshops, four emotional exploration workshops and six writing sessions. Participants were encouraged to engage and write about the issues affecting them. The activity greatly benefited Iraqi and Iranian communities, as they developed skills to express and share their feelings, listen and learn from other stories. An understanding of one another's experiences and the similarities of the emotions they faced was acknowledged among the group.

Participants expressed that they felt competent to search and navigate websites and how to look for employment using the web. The workshops led to lively discussions on the impact of computers on the family and its use or overuse in the home. Participants reported they left feeling empowered and happy to have participated in the program and developed new skills.

Citizenship Support Grants Program

This was a pilot program funded by DIAC. The aim of this program was to deliver a Citizenship Test Preparation Course.

The program was delivered in three stages:

Step 1: Develop Course Material Based on 'Becoming an Australian Citizen' Book.

These were training modules that were flexible in delivery and made to cater different learning styles.

Information sessions plus a 10 hour course was developed which included class work, small group work and computer time.

Power point presentations, handouts, questionnaires, quick verbal quizzes, white board diagrams, maps and computer based practice tests were also created.

Funding for the Citizenship Grant Program was received during the initial stages to deliver this program in Northern Sydney and not within the Liverpool LGA. Due to the geographical location of the program, we had to overcome some challenges.

The biggest and continuing challenge was to create an awareness of the Citizenship Support Program in our targeted areas that reached from Manly to Hunters Hill, North Sydney to Hornsby/Kurringai and across to Dee Why. What added to this challenge was that there are no supporting agencies in our targeted region. Therefore we implemented a thorough marketing schedule to generate local interest.

Step 2: Networking & Marketing-

Understanding the demographics of the target area eg: Which community groups are there and where is the concentration?

Our first step was to connect with key stakeholders such as AMES colleges, Local council development officers, TAFE, community colleges, libraries, Centrelink,

NSW,

Health officers,

local community centres. Ethnic communities eg: Korean welfare Assoc, Chinese Community, Tibetan Community, Christian Community Aid, Manly Community centre,

Networking at inter-agency meetings also provided a positive awareness for the Citizenship Support Program.

A great example of the methods used to network was the support received from the Centrelink Representative who sent our email posters & flyers to 11 LGAs. As well as the NSCCAHS-Multicultural Health Regional Manager who sent information about our project to 8 LGAs. The TAFE Northern Regional Manager helped to promote the program through their networks. Posters in 14 local Libraries.eg: Avalon, Mona Vale, Hornsby Library, Manly Library etc were distributed.

Step 3: Advertising /Press Releases and Radio Announcements

A strong advertising campaign included a thorough mailing /emailing of promotional material to all local newspapers. Regular community radio announcements were heard across the Northern Beaches. 60 radio spots plus banner ads were placed in the Indian press,

Finally, feedback from students that attended our citizenship course was 100% positive. 'Of course, getting that telephone call from participants with good news of passing the citizenship test and hearing the relief and happiness in their voices always placed a smile on my face.

