Welcome to the October issue of Multicultural Victoria.

I recently celebrated my one year anniversary as Chairperson of the VMC. It’s been a busy and rewarding 12 months with many successes. This was the first year the VMC operated under the Multicultural Victoria Act 2011, which was proclaimed in Parliament on 1 September 2011. You’ll find a comprehensive record of our year outlined in the 2011–12 Annual Report, available on our website at www.multicultural.vic.gov.au.

In this edition of Multicultural Victoria, we’ve stories on some of our most recent projects. I’d highlight the launch of our eight new Regional Advisory Councils (RACs). Established this year, the RACs provide advice to the VMC on a range of multicultural issues within the regions that they operate. Already the RACs have greatly assisted the VMC. Another smaller program, but no less important, has been the ‘Stories of Hope’ initiative. These workshops have been well received and produced some truly moving stories.

The Multicultural Media Internship Program, established this past year by the Victorian Government, is a new initiative administered by the VMC. I congratulate this year’s recipients and look forward to their—and the program’s—continued success.

The Victorian Government recently released its Vision for Citizenship in a Multicultural Victoria statement. I encourage you to submit your ideas on how the Government can best assist all residents to live engaged, fulfilling lives within our diverse and cohesive community. More information about the Vision is available on the VMC website.

During September and October, the VMC is hosting a series of Community Consultations throughout Victoria, and I invite you to come along and provide your feedback on how the Government is meeting the needs of Victorians from diverse cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds.

I hope you enjoy this edition of Multicultural Victoria.

Chin Tan Chairperson

 MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

The VMC’s eight new Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) met for the first time across Victoria in April/May. The Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, the Hon. Nicholas Kotsiras MP, and the VMC Chairperson, Mr Chin Tan, attended to launch the RACs and congratulate members.

The three Melbourne-based and five regional RACs have been established to provide advice on multicultural affairs, settlement and citizenship issues; advocate on behalf of diverse communities; and promote the benefits of cultural and religious diversity at the local level. RAC members are volunteers and include local residents; representatives of community organisations, service providers and local business organisations; and local government representatives. The 87 RAC members across Victoria were selected for their understanding of multicultural issues and their experience and commitment in assisting local communities.

The first round of RAC meetings focused on identifying the priority issues in each region with regards to multicultural affairs and settlement. Members across Victoria discussed issues including the need for effective settlement data and coordination, support for housing, employment and training for newly arrived migrants and refugees, ensuring culturally-responsive health and aged care services, supporting skilled migrants, combating racism and discrimination, and promoting the benefits of cultural diversity.

Issues and ideas raised by RAC members informs the work of the VMC and its advice to the Victorian Government on the development of policy and legislative frameworks and the delivery of services. In 2012, RAC meetings will also be held in December.

For further information, or to suggest an issue for discussion by your local RAC, phone (03) 9651 0652.

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VMC update

REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETINGS TAKE PLACE ACROSS VICTORIA

Right Grampians RAC members with Minister Kotsiras
In celebration of Refugee Week 2012 and its theme of Restoring Hope, the VMC launched a new Stories of Hope initiative. Aspiring writers, poets and spoken-word artists from new and emerging communities were provided with assistance to share their stories of hope through workshops and support from celebrated author Arnold Zable and Co-Director of the Centre for Poetics and Justice, Alia Gabres.

Over 15 participants from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds including Kurdish, Sierra Leonean, Afghan, Colombian, Thai and Tuvaluan took part to develop their storytelling skills. Participants will be provided with opportunities to publish or perform their stories through VMC initiatives and events, as a way to build understanding and awareness of the perspectives and artistic talent of members of Victoria’s new and emerging communities.

Alia Gabres explained to spoken word participants that poetry is everywhere, and everyone has a fascinating story to tell. Participants worked on creative writing exercises and on techniques for performing poetry. Rick Kiembe Mwamba, a creative writing participant said he found the workshop ‘encouraging, fun and interesting. I was able to write a poem titled ‘Touch the Sky’ and Arnold Zable gave positive feedback and encouraged me to write more.’

Afghani Zakia Baig, a participant in the creative writing workshop, wrote the poem, above left, for those children who live in the caves of the Bamyan mountain in Afghanistan.
COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM

In July 2012 the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship Nicholas Kotsiras announced more than 990 grants in excess of $2.2 million for Victoria’s multicultural community organisations through the Community Grants Program. The grants will benefit more than 600 community organisations that work to support Victoria’s vibrant and diverse multicultural communities.

The funded projects provide a wide range of necessary support, including: for the operational costs of organisations; to address specific areas of need within communities; to run festivals and events that celebrate Victoria’s diversity; to enhance community buildings; and for community language schools.

The funding is provided to organisations across Victoria according to the following categories:

- **Organisational support** – more than $700,000 to over 500 community organisations
- **Strengthening Multicultural Communities** – more than $500,000 to over 100 community organisations
- **Festivals and Events Round 1** – almost $500,000 to around 300 community organisations
- **Buildings and Facilities** – $300,000 to 40 community organisations
- **Educational Program** – more than $110,000 to over 50 community organisations

Some examples of projects funded through the Festivals and Events grant category include: National Day celebrations; Diwali; Ramadan and refugee celebrations. Other projects funded through the Strengthening Multicultural Communities grant category include: social isolation prevention projects for refugee women; heritage projects that document the contribution of migrant communities to Victoria; and leadership programs for marginalised youth. One of the examples from the Building and Facilities category is a grant to the Hellenic Community of the City of Moorabbin, which will use the funding to install disabled toilets and improve disability access for members and other community groups.

Since May this year the VMC has awarded grants totalling $25,000 as part of the Multicultural Media Internship Program.

The program was established by the Victorian Government to support multicultural media organisations to deliver work experience, professional development training and leadership to aspiring journalists.

Five grants of $5000 were each awarded to interns at SBS, Australian Chinese TV, the Serbian Voice Newspaper, Greek newspaper Neos Cosmos and Multicultural Media Exchange.

Chairperson Chin Tan said ‘Victoria’s multicultural media organisations provide a powerful voice for our culturally and linguistically diverse communities.’

‘My hope is that the Multicultural Media Internship Program will help increase the knowledge of emerging journalists about the operations of multicultural media, and develop their skills through hands-on experience,’ he said.

Naomi Selvaratnam, who received a grant to intern at SBS, is studying journalism at Monash University and has worked as a student reporter in Finland and Norway.

‘Having the opportunity to complete an internship at a multilingual and multicultural broadcaster like SBS is a wonderful opportunity, and I’m very grateful for this grant from the Victorian Government,’ she said.
Our community

TAUGHT BY THE WORLD

VMC Policy Officer, Sarah Jaggard, recently joined the team delivering the 2012 Community Consultations. Here, Sarah offers some personal reflections on the program.

I’ve worked in the public health sector my entire career, so it is a strange turn of events that sees me now working at the VMC.

I knew a little about multicultural issues, but already the job is showing me how much more there is to learn!

I am, however, a very capable organiser and as a result, I (and a team of very proficient colleagues) found myself pitching in to conduct 12 multicultural community consultations across Victoria.

The consultations provide an opportunity for people to comment on Victorian Government multicultural programs and services.

This year, the VMC has also included three specific consultations for women only, youth, and peak organisations and service providers.

The logistics of holding so many consultations across such a short time frame is always a challenge, as is attracting a good number of participants.

That said, it’s beginning to feel like smooth sailing.

The women’s only consultation struck a chord with me—who doesn’t enjoy the company of strong, passionate women?—but the young people that attended the youth consultation knocked my socks off. They were articulate, insightful and determined. There was an energy in the air and at times, I’m not embarrassed to say, a mistiness in my eyes.

They talked about feeling disenchanted with their inability to speak or write English well, and how this affected their education and employment prospects.

I heard about their struggle to fit in to Australian culture versus their parent’s desire for them to retain their own identity and culture—and how confusing this tension could be.

Many of the young people felt that their parents needed assistance in understanding the challenges that young people face.

I was captivated when a young Sudanese man remarked: “there is something that I have heard said, that if you are not taught by your mother, you are taught by the world.”

He went on to say that since migrating to Australia, he takes every opportunity to learn from being in a new country.

That evening I learned a lot about the issues our multicultural young people face—and they’re not issues I’ll soon forget. I can’t help thinking that the world has a lot more to teach me.
The VMC has recently welcomed to Melbourne a delegation from the People’s Republic of China.

The Chairperson of the VMC, Mr Chin Tan, formally greeted the delegation in his office on Thursday 27 September.

The delegation—led by Mr Li Xiaoman, Vice Minister of the State Ethnic Affairs Commission and Vice President of the China Ethnic Minorities Association for External Exchange—was visiting Australia on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of Australia-China Diplomatic Relations.

Mr Tan said his meeting with the delegation allowed for a positive exchange of views and inquiries into Victoria’s approach to multicultural matters.

‘The delegation was really struck by Melbourne and Victoria’s cultural diversity,’ he said.

‘And I think they were genuinely impressed by how well we manage, foster and celebrate diversity.’

While in Melbourne, the delegation attended a performance at Hamer Hall of the Chinese Ethnic Song and Dance Ensemble. Mr Tan and several other VMC Commissioners also attended the concert.

‘The VMC is proud to promote the tremendous benefits of living in a multifaith and multicultural society, and we recognise the fundamental right of community members to freely practice their cultural and religious traditions without fear of vilification or discrimination,’ he said.

‘The VMC and all fair-minded Victorians abhor and reject any activities which denigrate other communities or religions.’

Mr Tan said he believed that “Victoria’s commitment to multiculturalism and strong multicultural policies and programs are working well to diffuse tensions and to forge solutions in response to those—from any background—who would undermine the unity, peace and harmony of our community.”
The first ever Antipodes Writers Festival, held 15–17 June at the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne, attracted an audience of more than 1,000 people to hear over 50 writers discuss their work and their inspiration.

The event show-cased Greek-Australian writers with the opening session on Friday evening featuring author of *The Slap*, Christos Tsiolkas. Writers of the calibre of Christos Tsiolkas, Arnold Zable, George Megalogenis and Nikos Papastergiadis, participated in the key events, helping attract new audiences and promote other featured festival writers.

"It means so much to me that my work is appreciated by the Greek community here in Australia," said Australian Slam Poetry champion Luka Haralampou. The Antipodes Writers festival follows successful Greek History and Culture Seminars, launched in 2011, which were aimed at second generation members of the Greek community who had shown an interest in Greek culture but didn’t speak the Greek language. It has given younger generations, who are usually dispersed in the wider community, a meeting place and a way of reconnecting with their Greek identity.

Josip Grgic, 20, is a proud member of the talented Croatian Cultural Artistic Association ‘LADO’ Geelong, who along with the other 100 LADO members—including dancers, singers and musicians—have been bringing the lively and joyful songs, music and choreographies of Croatia to Australia for the last forty years.

Josip describes his performances with ‘LADO’ Geelong as intense, energetic and visually spectacular. ‘The dancers dress in traditional ‘nošnje’ with the women wearing traffic-stopping red lipstick and the men wearing black boots, magnificent red vests and white pants, and shirts complementing the uniqueness of the music,’ he said. Having migrated to Australia during the Croatian War of Independence at the age of one, Josip explains that his holiday trips to Croatia were always something he looked forward to and one of the main reasons he joined LADO. ‘Croatian people have this natural enjoyment for the finer things in life. We love food, music and socialising with people. LADO is my slice of home, my connection to a beautiful country and I love sharing that with others,’ he said.

Of course, just like any eight year old boy at the time there was some persuading to be done and it wasn’t until the age of 11 that Josip decided to give music a chance. ‘My parents persuaded me to get into music, mainly piano and at first, to me, it was quite nerdy. I didn’t really decide to give LADO a shot until my friends convinced me.’ When asked if he was thankful that he gave the multicultural group a chance, Josip responds with a reassuring yes. ‘I joined LADO mostly for the social aspect but over time I started to enjoy performing in front of people and seeing their appreciation for the Croatian culture.’ he says. ‘LADO lets me do that with the added bonus of being in the company of people that I’ve known for years and care about.’

And what of Josip’s plans for the future in regards to LADO? ‘I definitely want to continue performing. I love music and the travelling that we get to do. Plus, the free food is always a bonus.’

Josip plays the brač, a traditional instrument of Croatia. Story Andrea Borsos
SCHOLARSHIPS TO COMBAT INTERPRETER SHORTAGES

The Department of Premier and Cabinet’s Interpreter Scholarship Program, administered by the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship (OMAC), is part of the Victorian Government’s Multicultural Language Services program, which aims to improve the supply and quality of interpreters in Victoria.

Scholarships of $2,000 are provided to students studying the RMIT Diploma of Interpreting in new and emerging languages. Now in its tenth year, the scholarship program provides not only funds to students studying interpreting, but also a stepping stone to formal education for participants, as well as a pathway to employment in the interpreting industry.

At the 2012 Presentation Ceremony, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, the Honourable Nicholas Kotsiras MP awarded scholarships to 28 students studying the Diploma of Interpreting at RMIT in the Oromo and Tedim (Chin) languages. The Minister also applauded a further 23 students who undertook the Diploma of Interpreting in Haka (Chin) and Pashtu through the 2011 Interpreter Scholarship Program, and subsequently gained interpreter accreditation through the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI).

Since the Interpreter Scholarship Program commenced in 2003, a total of 284 interpreter scholarships have been awarded through the program, in 18 different languages including Burmese, Dari, Karen, Nuer, Swahili and Tigrinya. Many graduates of the program go on to work in the interpreting industry and to provide language assistance to Victorians with low English language proficiency, when accessing government services. With Victoria’s increasing diversity, the provision of language services has never been more important. The interpreter scholarships are just one of ways in which the Victorian Government is working towards increasing the number of accredited interpreters in Victoria.

A GREENER TOWN FOR MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

GreenTown is a sustainable living program for multicultural communities, delivered by Environment Victoria—the state’s peak non-profit environmental organisation.

Since 2008, six communities have been involved in Greentown, including: the Arabic-speaking community in Moreland; Turkish-speaking community in Hume; East African community in Flemington; Indigenous community in Darebin; the multicultural community of Collingwood public housing estate; and newly-arrived refugee communities from Burma in Ringwood.

Evaluation of the first four communities has discovered some very positive environmental outcomes. Through taking a series of recommended energy, water and waste saving actions, participants are saving on average:

- 4 tonnes CO2e per household per year
- > 61,000 litres of water per household per year
- > 191kg waste to landfill per household per year

To put this in context, the state government’s goal for a household taking part in a sustainable living program is a saving of one tonne CO2e per year. GreenTown’s reduction of four tonnes is roughly one-third of the average Victorian household’s greenhouse emissions, an exciting achievement. These combined energy and water savings also equate to average savings of $884 off household bills each year.

A key reason GreenTown’s participants have made savings higher than previous sustainable living programs is the use of a train-the-trainer approach. This involves recruiting well-networked community leaders to deliver sustainability messages to their peers, in their respective language, in a culturally appropriate way, and with the provision of free energy and water saving products to help people get started.

So far Environment Victoria has trained 63 people to be Home Sustainability Assessors and through assessments and community workshops, they’ve reached 2,800 people in their communities. Environment Victoria is keen to partner with organisations and local Councils who would like to deliver GreenTown-style programs with multicultural communities. For more information visit www.environmentvictoria.org.au/green-town or contact Nina Bailey, Sustainable Living Project Manager nina.bailey@environmentvictoria.org.au
VMC Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer of Australian Multicultural Community Services, Elizabeth Drozd, tells MV Magazine about braving the cold at this year’s St Vincent de Paul’s CEO Sleepout.

In capital cities across Australia, 1,032 CEOs braved a cold and long night on 21 June 2012, raising just over $5 million nationally to assist the 100,000 people who at any one time experience homelessness. In Victoria, 161 CEOs slept in the open at Etihad Stadium and raised $628,754.

What a great effort! For those of us that participated in this event, it was a privilege. It is a great feeling knowing that because of our effort fewer homeless people will be cold and that they will have a higher chance of having a meal, and in time, hopefully secure long-term accommodation.

When I made my decision to participate on 4 June 2012, I also decided to prepare well so I would not be too cold on the night. Having lived in my native Poland for the first 21 years of my life, I know what cold weather means. After reviewing my wardrobe, I concluded that I needed to buy warmer shoes and a warm head cover. Now, I am an owner of ugg boots (which will come in handy for the next Sleepout) and a crocheted woollen cap bought specifically for this purpose. Friends and colleagues offered advice and other pieces of clothing—my gloves, for example were borrowed from a member of my local Rotary Club.

The night of the Sleepout, 21 June, was a very cold day. It was eight degrees on my arrival at Etihad Stadium at 6 pm that evening. Almost 100 participants were already there, together with the wonderful staff and volunteers from St Vincent de Paul. Our evening meal consisted of soup and a roll from a soup van, and some fruit. Tea and coffee were available throughout the whole night.

In addition to a pillow and a sleeping bag that we were allowed to bring, each of us received three pieces of flat cardboard sheets. This was our bed. Some people used one of the sheets to make a shelter from the wind.

After our meal, we had a presentation about the issue of homelessness in Australia, which included three people who had experienced homelessness in their lives. One of them mentioned that every day he still appreciates the ability to pull a key from his pocket and put it in the key hole to a place that is his home—a place where he is safe and warm, where he can pull the blinds down once the evening sets, and where he can rejoice in certainty, a warm shower and breakfast in the morning, every morning.

As the night progressed, some CEOs went to their ‘bed’ and some continued to talk long into the night. I decided to talk for as long as possible as this meant standing and thus getting less cold. Right throughout, there was a great atmosphere of friendliness and camaraderie: strangers talking to strangers.

At 12 am I went to ‘bed’ because I planned to go to work the next day. Tucked in my sleeping bag, with seven layers of clothing on me, I managed to get about four hours of sleep. It was the first time in my life that I slept on concrete. It is a very hard surface and the cold really seeps through!

At 5 am we were all woken up for breakfast. My first feeling of reflection was that it was not so bad. When I asked my ‘Sleepout’ neighbour how he was, he responded that he would reserve his judgment until later. Another neighbour said that she was quite cold during the night; I could see that she was shivering when we were talking.

We were given breakfast consisting of porridge and coffee from an espresso machine (what a treat that was!). Then a thank you from Vinnies Management (including a request to donate our sleeping bags) and on we went to our usual lives, all knowing that we made a positive difference.

St Vincent de Paul is still seeking donations to support the homeless during this winter. Online contributions can be made until the last day of winter, 31 August 2012, via www.ceosleepout.org.au. Alternatively, cheques can be sent to the address on the website.

I hope that CEOs of other multicultural and ethnic organisations can join me for the 2013 CEOs Sleepout, for which registrations are already open.
INCREASING CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Jieh-Yung Lo, Deputy Mayor of the City of Monash, talks to MV Magazine about his experiences working in local government and his hopes for increasing its cultural diversity.

As a Councillor from a multicultural background, my experiences have informed me that multicultural communities tend to feel more engaged and empowered when they can see that an individual from a similar cultural or religious background is serving in a civic position. Realising the full potential of people from non-English speaking backgrounds in civic positions will create tremendous cultural, educational and social benefits to the Council and the decision making process.

TAX VOLUNTEERS HERE TO HELP

During Tax Time 2012, the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) is offering free assistance to help taxpayers complete their tax returns through the Tax Help program.

Established in 1988, Tax Help plays an important role in helping people meet their tax obligations. The program trains and accredits volunteers to provide free, confidential help to people in completing their tax returns.

Tax Help is available from 1 July to 31 October each year, and is open to individuals who earn around $50,000 or less and have simple tax affairs. The service is offered by appointment in local tax help centres across the country.

Tax Help volunteers can advise those who are unsure whether they need to lodge a return, and they can help people use e-tax to lodge electronically wherever possible.

As demand for multicultural services continues to grow, the ATO has focused on ensuring the program attracts volunteers from a wide variety of linguistic backgrounds. Of the 1,200 volunteers participating in the program this year, more than a third are able to provide assistance in a language other than English.

If someone in your community needs help with their tax return, encourage them to visit the ATO website at www.ato.gov.au/taxhelp or call the ATO on 13 28 61 to find out more. Those who do not speak English well can phone the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 13 14 50.

CULTURAL PRECINCTS AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

The Victorian Government’s Cultural Precinct and Community Infrastructure Fund (CPIF) supports community organisations to upgrade community spaces to enable greater access by Victoria’s culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and facilitate an increased number of community programs. The CPIF also supports refurbishment works to community facilities.

Recently completed works include: new flooring at the Benevolent Association of Naupaktians of Melbourne-Victoria; new roofing at the Australia Light Foundation; a new commercial kitchen at the Calabria Club; and upgraded kitchen and toilet facilities at the Australian Slovenian Social and Sporting Association.

Upgraded community spaces include; the top floor at the Islamic Council of Victoria to provide a large multi-function community space; and office space on the first floor at the Beth Weizmann Community Centre to allow for the co-location of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria and B’nai Brit Anti-Defamation Commission.

With local government elections in October, I would like to see more people from multicultural backgrounds put their hand up to stand as candidates this time round.

BEING A COUNCILLOR

My first term at the City of Monash gave me an opportunity to be involved in community development, strategic management and policy implementation, not to mention meeting lots of people.

I generally spend at least 20 hours a week doing Councillor duties. There are a number of meetings, both at councils and with community groups that Councillors have to attend on a regular basis.

Being a Councillor not only provides you with an opportunity to represent your community’s views, but also strengthens leadership, confidence and managerial skills. You would be surprised how much your decisions can shape communities. Don’t walk away from this opportunity, embrace it!

To get more information about the upcoming local council elections and processes, visit the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA) website www.vlga.org.au
When you ask a bunch of smart, young Muslims if the media coverage of their community is based on fact, the answer is a resounding ‘No’.

Over a weekend in May, 60 young Muslim men and women, selected on the basis of their interest in the media, met with 30 journalists to discuss reporting of their community in the mainstream media.

The Media and Young Muslim Conference was held at the Melbourne Town Hall with forums, small group discussions and practical workshops on interviewing and dealing with a public relations disaster.

Rohan Wenn, the National Communications Director of Getup, said the conference signalled a changing of the guard in the Muslim community. ‘The young people seemed to understand they have a lot more control over how they are portrayed. They also seemed keen to work on the skills they need to do this.’

Freelancer Katherine Kizilos said she ‘enjoyed the contact with the young people and was moved and encouraged by their intelligence, open-mindedness and thoughtfulness.’

The Multicultural Media Exchange, which works to build media skills in people from refugee and migrant communities, organised the conference. It set out to convince young Muslims to engage with the media—a message that appeared to hit home. ‘I found out that journalists work with very demanding deadlines and the onus is really up to the Muslim community to seek them out in order to inject balance into the reporting,’ was a typical response.

Negative media stereotyping of Muslims was a major issue for the young people. However, some acknowledged that stereotyping was a two-way-street, ‘The media aren’t a homogenous group you can stereotype, just like Muslims aren’t.’

The young people showed remarkable insight into how negative media coverage forced Muslims to confront difficult issues. While some said it had galvanized them into action to improve perceptions of their community, others felt they were part of a ‘tug of war’ between old and new Muslim identities.

George Negus told them, ‘Probably it is a young person’s battle that you’re fighting... on behalf of the rest of the community, because—rightly or wrongly—Australians will take more notice of somebody who was born here than somebody who wasn’t.’

Given findings of strong negative community attitudes to Muslims in the past few years, skills training was an important component of the weekend. Media trainer Lina Caneva found herself teaching interview techniques to young people from the Middle East, Europe, Asia and Africa. Caneva said, ‘I gained an understanding of the diversity within the Muslim community... this is a topic (in all its forms) that will only continue to grow. Education is the key!’

In small group conversations with journalists, young women reported racist attacks following negative reporting of the Muslim community. Sarah Malik, a journalist with AAP who is also a Muslim said, ‘Continued dialogue will make journalists more aware and the Muslim community feel more empowered in dealing with media.’

Bill Birnbauer, from Monash University joined Melissa Fyfe, Investigative Reporter with The Age, in explaining how newsrooms work, and Denis Muller spoke about media ethics. They helped change attitudes, ‘I came to this conference thinking media is the cause of most of society’s problems; however this conference has opened my mind and given me more insight into the way media operates.’

The Herald Sun’s John Masanauskas was a prime target for those angry about media representation of Muslims. He was part of a Sunday morning panel including journalist-author Cameron Forbes, former television journalist and academic Jill Singer, Channel Nine’s Brett McLeod and Fairfax Community Newspaper Editor, David Bonnici.

Masanauskas explained that newspapers were obligated to report both sides of the story and that it was not his job to take sides in a debate. He said, ‘This engagement with young Muslims will influence my story selection and how I portray Muslims. This type of event has a big role to play in fostering understanding between journalists and Muslims.’

Brett McLeod described the discussion was a ‘door-opener’. He said, ‘It was valuable to hear the views... in particular, the sense of grievance over the way Muslims are represented in the community, as well as some of the understanding—and misunderstanding—of how journalists work in practice.’

The conference ended with the young Muslims promising to develop links with journalists and reporters calling for similar sessions with other minority communities.

Larry Schwartz summed it up this way, ‘It reminded me that we need to think outside the narrow sense of particular groups and at the attitudes and anxieties in the broader community that shape media response. It would be interesting to look at broadening the conversation to look at other minorities and the media.’

The conference was supported by the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship.
WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR VIEWS ON MULTICULTURALISM

The Victorian Government Community Consultations program, hosted by the VMC, invites multicultural service providers, peak bodies, community representatives and other interested parties to provide their feedback and input on how the Government is meeting the needs of Victorians from diverse cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds.

The public consultations will be held at 10 locations across Victoria from 19 September to 25 October and are a way for communities to find out first-hand the support that government is providing to Victoria’s diverse communities.

‘This is the ideal way to let us know what is working well and how we can improve on our work. I would encourage anyone who is interested to join in and make sure the voice of your community is heard,’ Mr Chin Tan, VMC Chairperson said.

Each year, the consultations focus on the report Victorian Government Initiatives and Reporting on Multicultural Affairs 2010–11, which is released annually by the VMC and contains information from all government departments.

The consultations are taking place across Victoria as follows:

- Western/Northern Metro (Sunshine) – Monday 8 October
- Western Metro (Wyndham) – Tuesday 9 October
- Eastern Metro (Box Hill) – Wednesday 10 October
- Grampians (Ballarat) – Thursday 11 October
- Southern Metro (Dandenong) - Monday 22 October
- Loddon Mallee (Bendigo) – Tuesday 23 October
- Hume (Shepparton) – Wednesday 24 October
- Peak Bodies and Service Providers (Melbourne) – Thursday 25 October

To RSVP and for more information, please visit: www.multicultural.vic.gov.au or call (03) 9651 0652.

VISION FOR CITIZENSHIP IN A MULTICULTURAL VICTORIA

The Victorian Government recently launched its Vision for Citizenship in a Multicultural Victoria statement.

The Vision is part of developing a new whole-of-Government multicultural affairs and citizenship policy for Victoria. It re-affirms the Government’s commitment to promote a socially cohesive, multicultural society and outlines how the concept of citizenship sharpens the Government’s vision of reconciling diversity with unity.

‘The Government maintains that the promotion of citizenship and civics to new migrants, including refugees, strengthens people’s commitment to uphold the democratic values and institutions that all Victorians cherish.

‘We stress that all Australians benefit from our cultural and linguistic diversity, and that citizenship unites our diverse community through a commitment to our nation’s democratic institutions, laws, values and the notion of a ‘fair go’ for all,’ said Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, the Hon. Nicholas Kotsiras MP.

The Vision is now open for public comment. You are invited to submit your ideas on how the Government can best assist all residents to live engaged, fulfilling lives within our diverse and cohesive community.

‘I trust this document will be the start of a broader conversation about the role of diversity within our State, and I invite all Victorians to share their ideas on how we can continue to improve the Government’s role in supporting all Victorians,’ said Mr Kotsiras.

Comments and suggestions are sought by 26 October 2012. People wishing to contribute their ideas are encouraged to contact the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship.

Telephone: (03) 9651 1101
Email: info@omac.vic.gov.au
Post: Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship
GPO Box 4698, Melbourne VIC 3001
Submissions will be accepted in languages other than English.
UNITED NATIONS DAY 2012

Join UNAA (Victorian Division) to celebrate this year’s United Nations Day with a screening of Not My Life followed by a public forum to raise awareness about human trafficking worldwide and discuss Australia’s contribution to address trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

The forum is held in partnership with AusAID, World Vision, Child Wise, STOP THE TRAFFIK and the Border Crossing Observatory.

When 29 October 2012 (5.30pm registration for a 6pm start)
Where ACMI Cinema 1, Federation Square, Melbourne
Details unaavictoria.org.au/events/
Free event. RSVP Essential.

HEPBURN SPRINGS SWISS AND ITALIAN FESTA

2012 is the 20th anniversary of the Hepburn Springs Swiss & Italian Festa—10 days of events that bring everyone together. Program highlights include: the official opening parade in Main Road, Hepburn; the family festa with a concert, food, drink and entertainment for the whole family; and the landscape art prize at the Savoia Hotel. The festa program will feature Swiss and Italian food, wine, music, cinema and more for 10 days in Spring.

When 30 October–4 November 2012
Where Main Road, Hepburn Springs
Details www.swissitalianfesta.com

QUEEN ELIZABETH CENTRE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

QEC’s annual conference brings together professionals from a wide range of disciplines, sharing a common interest in child and family wellbeing and the essential role of supporting the development of sensitive and responsive parenting. This year’s program has CALD specific sessions including: engaging newly arrived families from refugee backgrounds in early years services; and, feeding babies in CALD Families.

When 14–16 November 2012
Where The Sebel Hotel, Albert Park
Details www.qec.org.au/conference or phone (03) 9549 2777

MANNINGHAM MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL

The festival will celebrate the many diverse cultures within our community and will feature a range of free areas for you to explore and enjoy. The 2012 festival line up has something for everyone including free entertainment, children’s rides, roving performers, market stalls, interactive displays, giveaways and more! The Main Stage will offer a dynamic performance program showcasing some of the finest cultural groups in Melbourne. With a focus on performers that reflect the interests and cultures within our local community, the Main Stage will play host to an array of acts including the D³Drumline, Fuekukuro and the Fruity Hooties!

When 17 November 2012
Where Ruffey Lake Park, George Street, Doncaster
Details www.manningham.vic.gov.au/multiculturalfestival or phone (03) 9840 9405

MULTICULTURAL IDENTITY STATE CONFERENCE

Presented by the Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria, Victoria’s Multicultural Identity State Conference 2012 will provide five key strategic benefits for its delegates: address key multicultural issues; enhance strategic relationships; best practice policy and projects; develop multicultural identity strategies; access latest policy developments. Includes conference address by the Hon Ted Baillieu MP, Premier of Victoria.

When 20 November 2012
Where Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre
Bookings eccvconference.eventbrite.com

RISE REFUGEES 3RD ANNUAL MUSIC AND ARTS FESTIVAL

RISE Refugees is excited to announce its 3rd annual Music and Arts Festival, celebrating the creative talent of our refugee and asylum seeker members.

Hosted by award-winning comedy duo Fear Of A Brown Planet, this year RISE is excited to announce an incredible line-up of gifted refugee and supportive performers including Hip Hop Massive Choir, Robert Champion, Angels Voice Band, Indian Dance Academy and more.

This year’s Festival will be expanded to include food stalls, a market place, theatre performance and activities for children and families.

When 15 December 2012
Where Main Stage, Federation Square, Melbourne
Details riserefugee.org
HOW TO CONTACT THE VICTORIAN MULTICULTURAL COMMISSION

Post to: Victorian Multicultural Commission
GPO Box 4698
Melbourne VIC 3001
Phone: (03) 9651 0651
Facsimile: (03) 9651 0612
Email: info@vmc.vic.gov.au

Visit our website: www.multicultural.vic.gov.au for all the latest information about what’s happening around multicultural Victoria including events, initiatives, news and the work of the Regional Advisory Councils. You can also access copies of VMC media releases plus previous e-newsletters and issues of MV Magazine.

To contact a Commissioner, email info@vmc.vic.gov.au
SAVE THE DATE!
CULTURAL DIVERSITY WEEK 2013: SATURDAY 16 TO SUNDAY 24 MARCH

A week of statewide events celebrating Victoria’s extraordinary cultural diversity, culminating in the free Viva Victoria Festival at Federation Square, Sunday 24 March.
Disclaimer

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Copies of this magazine can be obtained from the Victorian Multicultural Commission.