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CULTURAL DIVERSITY WEEK
Celebrating multiculturalism
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It is with great pleasure that I introduce this very special edition of Multicultural Victoria. Each year during March we celebrate our rich cultural diversity through a host of activities and events. The enthusiasm that marks the Week is wonderful and I enjoy attending and supporting as many of the events as possible. This edition looks at just some of the ways we celebrated, from Wangaratta to Mildura and beyond. I would like to extend my thanks to all our sponsors and supporters for this year’s Cultural Diversity Week. Their support was invaluable to the success of the week.

One of the highlights of the week is of course Viva Victoria. For the second year in a row thousands of Victorians visited Federation Square to enjoy entertainment from a range of different cultures and sampled cuisine from around the world. The Premier’s Gala Dinner was also a great opportunity for more than 1400 people to come together and celebrate the diversity that makes Victoria a prosperous and harmonious state. Turn to page 20 to find out what else took place during the week.

In other news, the 2010–2011 State Budget was released on 4 May and will deliver $19.7 million in funding to multicultural communities. This is excellent news and we are hard at work to make sure this funding benefits those who need it the most.

A Fairer Victoria, the Government’s $1.35 billion plan to tackle disadvantage across Victoria was also launched on 6 May. Refugee Week is also on the horizon, from 20–26 June a series of events will be held and I encourage you all to find out what is happening and get involved. Supported by the Victorian Multicultural Commission, this year’s theme is “Freedom from Fear”, which helps put the spotlight on the lives people from a refugee background encounter before reaching safety in Australia.

We also recently celebrated the contributions of the Polish community at a Premier’s reception to mark the anniversary of the famous Polish pianist Frederik Chopin. The Greek community was also welcomed at a series of events to mark Greek National Day as well as their own celebrations for the Antipodes Festival, which runs until October.

I am constantly impressed by the contributions our younger members of society make towards helping create a cohesive and harmonious society. At a recent forum in Swan Hill, youth travelled from Robinvale, Mildura and Melbourne to participate and discuss their ideas for the future. I look forward to hearing the outcomes and seeing their ideas develop.

I hope you enjoy the read.

GEORGE LEKAKIS
CHAIRPERSON
During February and March, the Victorian community came out in strength to show support for international students.

On 2 March the Premier of Victoria, John Brumby joined Australian cricket legend Shane Warne and more than 20 Indian students studying in Victoria to discuss their experiences and re-affirm the commitment to solidarity with the Indian community.

Mr Brumby also joined thousands of Victorians participating in the Vindaloo Against Violence initiative on 24 February by having lunch at an Indian restaurant with people from Victoria’s Indian student community. International students arriving at Melbourne airport in February also received a warm welcome through a student welcome desk initiative, co-funded by the City of Melbourne and the State Government. The Student Welcome Desk will be open again in July, to meet peak arrival times for students.

ABOVE Premier of Victoria, John Brumby with cricketer Shane Warne and Indian students.

**NEW EQUAL OPPORTUNITY LAWS IN VICTORIA**

The Victorian Government’s commitment to a fair go for all Victorians has been enhanced by the passage of new Equal Opportunity laws.

Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Rob Hulls welcomed the passage of the new reforms on 15 April and said the new laws would help stamp out entrenched and systemic discrimination against minority groups by giving the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission the ability to investigate persistent and systemic discrimination without first requiring a complaint to be made.

“Overall, these reforms equip Victoria to prevent discrimination, rather than just react to it; to resolve it in a more enduring way; to build collaboration with business; and to remove the obligation from individual shoulders and assume it together,” Mr Hulls said.

FOR MORE INFORMATION www.veohrc.vic.gov.au

**CELEBRATE SENIORS WHO ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

We all know at least one person whose achievements and service to our community are truly inspirational. Each year, the Victorian Senior of the Year Award recognises men and women, aged 60 and above, whose passion, drive and commitment inspire us. If you know an older person who does extraordinary things in your community, nominate them for an award.

FOR MORE INFORMATION www.seniors.org.au or (03) 9208 3170

**REFUGEE WEEK COMING UP**

Each year, the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) works with agencies around Australia to coordinate Refugee Week, a national celebration held since 1986. This year, Refugee Week will be held from June 20–26, to include World Refugee Day on 20 June.

Supported by the VMC, a series of events will be held during the Week and all Victorians are encouraged to find out more and take part. In the lead-up to next year’s 60th anniversary of the UN Refugee Convention, the RCOA has chosen the theme for Refugee Week to be “Freedom from Fear,” to draw attention not just to the fear that compels refugees to leave their home country, but the relief they feel when they are welcomed into another country and given the opportunity to rebuild their lives.

FOR MORE INFORMATION www.refugeecouncil.org.au
A FAIRER VICTORIA
The Premier of Victoria, John Brumby, launched the sixth A Fairer Victoria on 6 May.
Mr Brumby said the $1.35 billion investment designed to tackle disadvantage across Victoria brought the total funding to over $6 billion since A Fairer Victoria started in 2005.
“A Fairer Victoria ensures that we tackle social disadvantage in a cohesive and strategic manner.
“This funding is proof of our long term commitment to reducing disadvantage in all aspects of our communities, regardless of where they are located,” Mr Brumby said.
The funding includes $7.7 million towards strengthening Victoria’s cultural diversity and helping refugees settle into Victorian communities, including $3.8 million over four years for refugee youth.
The 2010 A Fairer Victoria also includes additional support for the International Student Care Service, which was established in January.
In launching the plan, Mr Brumby said, “multicultural harmony was born of the struggle of migrant communities in Victoria over the last 150 years and was encouraged by countless Victorians ... who recognised that welcoming cultures from around the world makes us all richer.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION
www.vic.gov.au

SEEKING YOUR FEEDBACK
Each year, the Victorian Multicultural Commission invites community members to attend consultations to provide direct feedback on how well the services are meeting the needs of Victorians from diverse backgrounds.
This year, consultations will be held across Victoria in August and all Victorians are invited to attend.
Please check the website in the coming weeks to find out when and where the consultations will take place.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
www.multicultural.vic.gov.au

Taking in Tea and Zen
The National Gallery of Victoria is currently hosting Tea and Zen, a fascinating exhibition exploring the art and ritual behind the Japanese and Chinese tea ceremony.
Drawing from the NGV Collection and several private collections in Victoria, the exhibition features an incredible selection of tea utensils in the form of ceramics, lacquer and bamboo as well as Zen paintings and calligraphy, creating a meditative setting.
A contemporary tea house by Japanese designer Uchida Shigeru is the centre-piece of the exhibition. The contemporary tea house is constructed from black stained oak wood and bamboo lattice walls, displaying traditional Japanese aesthetics.

FOR MORE INFORMATION www.ngv.vic.gov.au

SOLIDARITY WITH CHILE
On Saturday 27 March at the Sandown Racecourse, Noble Park, more than 4,000 people attended “Melbourne helps Chile”.
The purpose of this charitable event was to offer support and financial contributions following the terrible earthquake and tsunami that hit the people of Chile on the evening of Saturday 27 February.
The response from Victorians was overwhelming. The total amount raised at the event was $86,000. Thousands of people offered their time and energy to help and be part of this emotive and touching event.
The Premier of Victoria, John Brumby announced on 9 March that the Victorian Government would contribute $250,000 towards the international aid effort to support Chilean communities after one of the most powerful earthquakes in recorded history.
“We have all been deeply moved by the terrible tragedy in which so many Chileans experienced such terrible grief and trauma,” Mr Brumby said.
Mr Brumby said the $250,000 contribution would go towards the Caritas Australia Chile Earthquake Appeal, which will fund relief efforts in Chile.
Enrolments are now open for English as a Second Language (ESL) courses at the Centre for Cultural and Linguistic Diversity at Swinburne University. Courses range from beginner level to advanced level accredited courses with a focus in the lower levels on English for settlement whilst at the upper levels emphasis is on preparation for employment or participation in training or study.

The Centre offers the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) to provide English language services to newly arrived migrants and refugees. AMEP clients are provided with 510 hours of English language tuition.

Excellent hands on practical courses incorporating work experience have attracted enthusiastic students learning welding, carpentry, office and health assistance skills. Many students have gained employment or have gone on to further training such as Certificate II in Engineering or pre-apprenticeship courses, or consolidated English skills to work successfully in Australia.

All students are supported by Swinburne Student Services and volunteer tutors. Learning is flexible with e-learning materials, computer training, excursions and workshops on pronunciation. Students may enroll at any time throughout the year.

There will be a large intake at midyear, for which students are advised to get in touch with their nearest campus by Friday 4 June.

FOR MORE INFORMATION www.swin.edu.au or phone Croydon (03) 9726 1618, Hawthorn (03) 9214 8608, Prahran (03) 9214 6985, Wantirna (03) 9210 1175

ABOVE ESL students at Swinburne University.

**EMERGING TALENTS ON SHOW**

From Africa to the Far East, from the traditional to the contemporary, from the emerging to the established, music, dance, visual arts, exotic foods, ancient crafts and ceremonies.

Emerge Festival is a dynamic celebration of Victoria’s many rich and undiscovered refugee and emerging cultures. Emerge Festival commemorates the United Nations World Refugee Day and celebrates Refugee Week in Australia with a series of amazing performances and unique cultural experiences around Melbourne from 20 June to 3 August.

The magnificent Fitzroy Town Hall will open its doors and Napier Street is closed for three non-stop stages of world music, a vibrant cultural marketplace, tasty authentic foods from all corners of the globe and cultural workshops.

FOR MORE INFORMATION www.multicultural.arts.org.au

**INSIDE RUNNING FOR STUDENTS**

A new publication that will give international students the inside scoop on some of Melbourne’s favourite spots was launched by the Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation, Bronwyn Pike.

*The Insider – International Student Guide to Melbourne* is a free, annual publication, written by local and international students (past and present) to help international students integrate into the city.

It does this by bridging the gap of knowledge between local and international students, and encouraging students to step outside their comfort zone and explore Melbourne and its surrounds.

It is the first of its kind in Australia, including helpful tips like how to avoid getting in trouble with your landlord, festival tips, where to find a great coffee or just how to work your way around the public transport system.

Ms Pike said the guide is based on insights provided by international students about their own experiences and is an excellent resource for new arrivals.

“The Insider Guide to Melbourne will be an invaluable resource to international students that are not only studying, but living in Melbourne,” she said.

Students are encouraged to use the guide and spread the word to their fellow students who may not have heard about the resource.

FOR MORE INFORMATION www.insider.net.au
George Bisas

George has recently taken on the role of Chief Executive Officer of VITS Language Link. His main objective is to position the organisation as the leading provider of language services in Victoria. He emphasises the benefits of receiving these services from the Government provider which maintains a commitment to quality and responsive service provision, values the interpreting profession and approaches the provision of language services as a fundamental right of all Victorians.

**My Role** is Chief Executive Officer of VITS LanguageLink, a provider of language services in Victoria.

**The Favourite Part of My Job** is the opportunity to promote interpreting and translating as an essential service that enables people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds the opportunity to access the programs and services they need.

**My First Job** was at a confectionery factory packing chocolates in Year 10.

**I am inspired** by people who demonstrate a strong commitment to what they believe in.

**Three Things I Can’t Live Without** are my partner, my friends and my family.

**I’ve Really Enjoyed** reading Christos Tsiolkas’ *The Slap*.

**My Most Rewarding Moments** have been working as a volunteer on a number of community based boards of management including ADEC, VC OSS the Head Injury Council of Australia and more recently the ALSO Foundation.

**Cultural Diversity is** a central feature of our national identity and one of our greatest attributes. It recognises we are all different and it is the differences that enrich our society and realise benefits for all Victorians.

**What I Love the Most** about Melbourne is the food – I can be transported to every corner of the world through the best and most diverse selection of restaurants in Australia and probably the world!

**Multiculturalism** is about recognising the value of diversity. It is about retaining, valuing and enjoying difference. In Victoria, through multiculturalism, we demonstrate a rich, diverse and cohesive community that strives to be socially just and inclusive in every facet of life.
Budget delivers $19.7m

Funding boost to strengthen multicultural Victoria through a range of initiatives.

The Premier of Victoria, John Brumby announced on Tuesday 4 May the Victorian Government will invest $19.7 million in the 2010 State Budget to strengthen Victoria’s cultural diversity and help support refugees settle in Victorian communities.

“The 2010 State Budget shows we are listening to families in Victoria’s vibrant multicultural communities and taking action to strengthen multicultural Victoria,” Mr Brumby said.

Under the investment, $12 million will be provided through the Cultural Precincts and Community Infrastructure Fund, which will help upgrade public streetscapes in identified precincts and enhance the cultural character of local areas across Victoria.

The fund will help refurbish existing facilities or build new ones to allow greater access for Victorian communities.

Building on the successful $10 million Cultural Precincts Fund, which aims to revitalise Melbourne’s Chinese, Greek and Italian precincts, this new funding provides an opportunity for areas of significance around Victoria to be enhanced.

“This funding provides an opportunity to partner a range of communities to develop innovative and fresh ideas, and to make a mark on some of Victoria’s most vibrant precincts and community facilities,” Mr Brumby said.

The budget also provides an additional $1 million for VMC’s community grants – bringing the total to $5.6 million in 2010–2011 year, which is more than a seven-fold increase in just over a decade.

Other multicultural highlights of the 2010 State Budget include:

- $1.6 million over two years for the Vulnerable Refugee Support Package;
- $3.8 million over four years for refugee youth;
- $750,000 to continue the International Student Care Service – a 24-hour support and welfare service for international students; and
- An additional $500,000 for the Victorian Promoting Harmony initiative, which supports events such as Cultural Diversity Week, Viva Victoria, and various multifaith and interfaith networks and projects throughout Victoria.
Speaking your language

Patients and their families are benefiting from a pilot program to capitalise on the skills of bilingual staff.

Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs, Liz Beattie launched the Bilingual Staff at the Women’s Language Aide Pilot project at the Royal Women’s Hospital on 19 March.

For the duration of this six-month pilot, language aides will be called upon by staff to assist women and their families who do not speak English well. They will help with giving directions, making an appointment or settling accounts. Most importantly they will help make the experience of visiting the hospital a little bit easier.

While it is Victorian Government policy that clients who are not able to communicate through written or spoken English should wherever possible have access to professional interpreting and translating services, there is increasing recognition that in some circumstances the specialist skills of a professional interpreter may not be required.

Instead in these cases, language aides may be the most efficient option to use.

The Victorian Multicultural Commission will encourage more workplaces to capitalise on the diversity of their bilingual workforce and adopt language aide programs to complement the provision of accredited interpreters.

BELOW VMC Chairperson George Lekakis, CEO Royal Women’s Hospital Dale Fisher, Parliamentary Secretary on Multicultural Affairs Liz Beattie, VMC Commissioner Elenie Beneded-Samuel, VMC Commissioner Hang Nguyen at the launch of the bilingual program.

Polish reception commemorates Chopin

The Premier of Victoria John Brumby hosted a reception for the Polish community of Victoria on 29 March to commemorate the 200th anniversary of renowned Polish composer Frederik Chopin.

Mr Brumby was joined by Dr George Luk, Honorary Consul General of Poland, VMC Commissioner Elizabeth Drozd and many members of Victoria’s Polish community.

Mr Brumby acknowledged the community’s influence on the cultural landscape of Victoria and paid tribute to Chopin as one of the most famous composers and pianists of all time.

“Poles have made significant contributions to many facets of Australian life, the Polish influence can be felt right across Australia,” said Mr Brumby.

“We also acknowledge the 200th anniversary of Frederic Chopin’s birth, who was famously described as ‘more Polish than Poland’. And indeed, the legacy of Chopin’s music remains central to Polish national identity.”

The audience was treated to a performance by Mr Krzysztof Malek – a Polish pianist residing in Australia, who played Chopin’s Ballade No.1 in G Minor.

FROM TOP Dr George Luk, Honorary Consul General of Poland, Premier of Victoria John Brumby, Mr Krzysztof Malek and VMC Commissioner Elizabeth Drozd; Mr Malek performed Chopin’s music.
Understanding cultural diversity

A new resource is now available for teachers to help students better understand the value of cultural diversity and is full of practical activities for students to use in the classroom.

*All of Us: Multicultural perspectives in Victorian schools* provides teachers with a practical guide for assisting students to explore and understand cultural diversity and the values and practices common to ‘all of us’.

The resource consists of activities and suggestions for embedding multicultural and global education within the Victorian Essential Learning domains and cross-curriculum perspectives including values education, Asia education and global education.

An accompanying DVD provides a 15-minute video that poses the question ‘Why include multicultural perspectives in your curriculum?’ supported by a professional learning program for school staff.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
www.multicultural.vic.gov.au

Healthy People, Healthy Parks
African delegation

The Inaugural International Healthy Parks Healthy People Congress held from 11–18 April explored how nature significantly contributes to our wellbeing and broader societal benefits. More than 1000 delegates from many different sectors attended the week-long congress.

A highlight was a special seminar hosted by the Victorian Multicultural Commission and Parks Victoria to welcome four respected international speakers from Kenya and Uganda.

Edwin W. Wanyonyi, David Nkwanga, Lawrence Zikusoka and Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka discussed their experiences in conservation and rural development with an emphasis on community involvement at the well-attended forum.

WORK UNDERWAY ON NORTHERN COMMUNITY HUB BUILDING

The Northern Community Hub is a new development being built as a multi-purpose community and educational centre that will provide a comprehensive range of services and programs for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and disadvantaged communities in the northern region of Geelong.

The site currently houses the German, Filipino and Spanish club rooms and the Hub will be built around these facilities. It is an innovative approach that brings together 39 different ethnic community groups who are able to share ideas, cultural values and beliefs and most importantly the challenges they experienced settling into a new country.

The Northern Community Hub is a long term project that will be delivered in 3 stages over the next 10 years. The project received $1 million from the State Government through the VMC and $1.5 million from the Federal Government. The land was gifted by the City of Greater Geelong and along with other philanthropic funding and Diversitat the construction was able to commence in October 2009.
Young leaders gather for forum

On Thursday 15 April over 60 young people convened at the Swan Hill Town Hall to share their ideas on the theme ‘Identity and Place’ and celebrate National Youth Week.

The Youth Forum provided young people with an opportunity to come together and share ideas about the issues that are important to them and provide advice to decision makers, including the Victoria Government. Participants discussed a range of topics including identity; feeling connected to your community; positive body image and self esteem; and stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination and the media.

Young people from a range of diverse backgrounds attended the Forum travelling from Swan Hill, Robinvale, Mildura, Gannawarra and Melbourne to participate.

Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs, James Merlino officially opened the Forum, via video conference as Parliament was sitting, and held a discussion about the key concerns for participants and their peers.

“For young people in particular, we want you to feel respected in your community and to feel comfortable in the knowledge that your values, feelings and beliefs are respected by everyone,” said Mr Merlino.

The Forum was organised by the Office for Youth in partnership with the Victorian Multicultural Commission and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria.

ABOVE Participants at the Swan Hill Youth Forum listen to Mr Merlino via video link and join in group discussion and enjoy performances from local artists.
Pako Festa 2010 presented more than 2000 performers over eight stages, a range of street stalls, buskers and fabulous food from all corners of the world.

Pako Festa is one of Victoria’s most popular multicultural festivals and a vibrant celebration of our rich diversity, each year attracting more than 100,000 people. Launched on 27 February by the Premier of Victoria, John Brumby, Pako Festa 2010 had theme ‘Many Faces’, and invited visitors to see and appreciate the diversity of faces in the crowd. ‘Street Face’ was a community arts project that ran in conjunction with the festival and presented larger-than-life portraits on city buildings, creating a massive outdoor gallery.

The event really kicked off with the grand Pako Parade at 11am. This spectacle brought together hundreds of performers, cultural community members, school groups, local businesses and agencies, many with highly-decorated floats, to parade along the length of Pakington Street.

Performances included groups from the Spanish to Serbian, Indonesian to Indian and every country in between. On the Petrel Hotel and Barking Dog Stages the program included Australian and International performers – from folk song to reggae, soul and hip hop. Other stages featured local youth talent, a fashion parade, drum and dance workshops, activities for children and wonderful community choirs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION www.pakofesta.com.au

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Festival-goers enjoyed the Street Face community arts project; dancers took to one of the many stages, as well as the street!
Multicultural flavours in the Grampians

Despite strong chilly winds, the inaugural ‘Viva Victoria: Grampians Pyrenees Multicultural Festival’ held outside the Ararat Performing Arts Centre in Western Victoria on 11 April attracted a large crowd and proved to be a wonderful day for all involved.

With over 14 different cultures represented in the Global Food Village there was food to suit every palate. This was complemented by an eclectic range of performances which kept the crowd enthralled. The event was officially opened by the Honourable Raul Hernandez, Filipino Consul General to Victoria, who had also arranged for a traditional Filipino dancing group called ‘Gingtong Cultura’ to travel from Melbourne to perform.

Other highlights on the performance stage included ‘Wadaiko Rindo’, a traditional Japanese drumming group whose loud rhythms reverberated around Ararat’s Barkly Street shopping district. Local performers included Scottish and Irish Highland dancing, Taekwondo martial arts demonstration, salsa dancing, circus performers and Tai Chi demonstrations.

The event was made possible through funding made available by Regional Development Victoria as well as the combined efforts of the Ararat Rural City Council, Pyrenees Shire, Northern Grampians Shire, Grampians Pyrenees Regional Development Board and the Victorian Multicultural Commission.

Thai style at festival

Blessings by monks, kick boxing, mouthwatering treats and traditional dances, this year’s Thai Festival was a popular event for many.

In a gesture of support for the bushfire ravaged town of Marysville, the Thai Food and Culture Festival set up camp in the regional Victorian town during Cultural Diversity Week.

From 19–20 March, the Festival entertained the town and presented the Marysville community with a rhododendron, which will be planted in their memorial garden as a symbol of the rebuilding of Marysville. Buddhist monks blessed the tree with water and also blessed the children who planted bulbs. Organisers then headed back to Melbourne to set up the 2010 7th Annual Thai Culture and Food Festival at Federation Square on 21 March 2010. In addition to the fabulous choice of Thai food, amazing cultural shows, stalls selling Thai products and the traditional Thai Beauty contest and drum parades, the 2010 Festival featured live performances by the amazing Thai International Dance Group Sbun-Nga direct from Thailand and an eight-round Muay Thai Kick Boxing competition.

Interactive Thai Cooking demonstrations throughout the day, plus the Sunshine Friends Concert for Marysville featuring Normie Rowe, Doug Parkinson, Kevin Borich, Issi Dye, Tony Barber of The Aztecs and Tiara kept the crowd going until late into the night.

FOR MORE INFORMATION www.thaifestvic.com
Talking Turkey

Dancing, music and plenty of tasty cuisine drew crowds to this year’s Turkish Pazar.

A traditional Turkish Tea Garden, plus many stalls offering the opportunity to purchase Turkish handcrafts, jewellery and ceramics gave visitors an insight into the work of some of Melbourne’s many Turkish community organisations.

Each year, the Turkish Pazar is a colourful and popular event on the multicultural calendar, with more than 40 stalls providing visitors with an opportunity to taste Turkish food, including gözleme (the popular filled Turkish pancake), simit (crusty rings of bread covered with sesame seeds), döner kebab and many other foods.

Highlights of the Festival were the “Ankara State Turkish Folk Music Choir” from Turkey, the Ottoman Military Band (Mehter), performances of traditional Turkish folklore, music and dance, a wandering minstrel, and a taste of modern music from Turkey.

The festival was officially opened by Oguz Ozge, Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey, George Lekakis, Chairperson Victorian Multicultural Commission, Jill Morgan, Executive Officer Multicultural Arts Victoria and Huss Mustafa, General Manager Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

The festival was organised through a partnership between the Moreland Turkish Association, Commonwealth Bank, Queen Victoria Market, City of Melbourne and the Victorian Multicultural Commission.

La Faya Festival

La Faya means ‘to party,’ and a record number of festival-goers did just that at the Mauritian community festival held at Federation Square on Sunday 28 March.

The theme of this year’s festival was celebrating harmony and promoting respect, tolerance and acceptance of diversity.

This inclusive event engaged people from various faith groups and diverse backgrounds. An inspiring and uplifting spiritual Opening Ceremony brought together various representatives from many faith groups. The prayers and blessings were beautifully complemented by spirituals songs performed by the St Paul’s Apostle North and South Primary Schools. The Mauritian Golden Age choirs led the National Anthem of Australia and Mauritius, followed by a great repertoire from the Cranbourne Lions Concert Band.

Entertainment on the main stage featured a great line-up including guest performances from the Burmese Cultural Dancers and Chilean dancers Violeta Parra. Naturally, the traditional séga dances from Mauritius and the Kotis from the island of Rodrigues were also a highlight.

Various talks by prominent guest speakers focussed on hot topics such as Stress & Trauma, Asylum Seekers and Refugees and WWII Jewish Refugees in Mauritius. The community exhibition Beyond the Postcard Image, Mauritians & Rodriguans in Victoria also attracted much interest.

The festival ended on a high note with a variety concert showcasing the rich and diverse culture of the people from the Indian Ocean Islands of Mauritius, Rodrigues & Seychelles.
Meet the Ethiopian community

A one day festival celebrating Victoria’s Ethiopian community was held at the Immigration Museum on Sunday 18 April.

The Ethiopian community in Australia is a recently established community, with the earliest migrants arriving during the 1970s. Since then, Ethiopians have arrived in Australia as refugees or to escape drought, famine and political persecution.

Victoria is now home to Australia’s largest Ethiopian population. The majority of the population lives in Melbourne’s western suburbs and represent a vibrant mix of cultures, including the Tigray, Oromo, Amhara, and Harari.

Visitors to the Ethiopian Festival enjoyed Ethiopian culture and traditions, including food, music and dance performances and family activities while learning more about Ethiopian migration to Melbourne and Victoria.

Some of the activities included a traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony. Visitors also sampled tasty chicken, lamb and vegetable stews the Ethiopian way: scooping it up with injera bread, and listened to the sweet sounds of the masenko, an Ethiopian stringed instrument.

Traditional dance and singing performances, circus workshops and a screening of the film Ethiopia also provided visitors with plenty to see and do. The Ethiopian Festival is one of three cultural festivals developed annually by the Immigration Museum in collaboration with Victoria’s culturally and linguistically diverse communities to showcase their cultures and help others understand more about their community.


CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Members of the Ethiopian community showcased their culture at the one-day festival
The Zoroastrian Association of Victoria (ZAV) celebrated Nowruz on 21 March 2010 along with its members and guests. Nowruz, which is held each year on 21 March, is an ancient and important spring festival in the calendar of the Zoroastrian people. Nowruz, with its uniquely Persian characteristics and rich history, has been celebrated for over 3000 years and is deeply rooted in the traditions of the Zoroastrian religion.

One of the rituals of Nowruz is the setting of a special (Haft Sin) table in every home on the eve of the spring equinox with seven symbolic items:

- **Sabzeh**: wheat, barley or lentil sprouts (symbolise rebirth)
- **Samanu**: sweet custard made from wheat germ (symbolise affluence)
- **Senjed**: dried fruit of the oleaster tree (symbolise love)
- **Sir**: garlic (symbolise medicine)
- **Sib**: apple (symbolise beauty and health)
- **Sumac**: (colour of sunrise)
- **Serkeh**: vinegar (symbolise old age and patience)
- **Sekeh**: coins (symbolise prosperity)
- **Sonbol**: hyacinth (symbolise coming of spring)

The 21 March marks the spring equinox in the northern hemisphere and is celebrated to fete renewed life of the earth that comes with the spring.

The Australian Albanian Women’s Association is a small but very active group that involves itself in many activities around Victoria. High on the list of activities the group is involved in the Albanian Festival at Footscray Park, which has been held every December since 1994 and attracts up to 5,000 people. Each year at the Festival, the group organises its members to provide traditional food, combined with cultural displays, including a colourful quilt made by members. Other entertainment at the festival includes soccer matches, rides, face painting, food and retail vendors, plus entertainment from professional artists from Albania. The members are many and varied and enjoy coming together regularly to discuss ways to continue to contribute to the cultural landscape of Victoria. Currently, the community is working with the Marysville School Council and have committed to providing a storage shed for the school which was destroyed in the bushfires on Black Saturday.

The members of the ZAV gathered outdoor for a special prayer ceremony known as ‘Jashan’ to celebrate the new day or Nowruz and welcome in the new year. The Jashan was held outdoors and three Zoroastrian priests incanted ancient prayers from the Zoroastrian holy book the Avesta to the holy fire or ‘atash’.

During the Jashan ceremony, the basic principles of Zoroastrianism, which is linked to the elements of nature are celebrated and blessed. Young children from the Sunday school gave a brief explanation about the importance of the day, which they then followed with prayers.

The ZAV choir who sang traditional devotional songs to usher in the new day. The festivities and cultural activities continued with the ZAV ladies dance troupe performing a Persian dance.

The Zoroastrians celebrate Nowruz

**The Australian Albanian Women’s Group Out and About in Community**

The Australian Albanian Women’s Association is a small but very active group that involves itself in many activities around Victoria. High on the list of activities the group is involved in the Albanian Festival at Footscray Park, which has been held every December since 1994 and attracts up to 5,000 people. Each year at the Festival, the group organises its members to provide traditional food, combined with cultural displays, including a colourful quilt made by members. Other entertainment at the festival includes soccer matches, rides, face painting, food and retail vendors, plus entertainment from professional artists from Albania.

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**Russian senior’s group**

A group for Russian-speaking seniors is keeping its members active, and in tune.

The Nadezhda Russian Senior Citizen Club (NRSCC) was established in April 1998 to unite elderly people from former republics of USSR and help them cope with their new life. Currently there are 300 people from Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, Uzbekistan and Moldova. A choir was established in Victoria in 2003 and now performs in Russian, English, Italian and Ukrainian. It aims to provide social support and build strong connection both within the group and with other members of the Port Phillip community.

The President, Miss Lidiya Sumtsova and the Public Officer, Miss Larisa Pasika organise a program of activities intended to enhance the well-being of members, strengthen the sense of community and assist migrants in their settlement and integration. The club holds meetings for monthly concerts and hires professional singers, musicians and artists.

Miss Sumtsova says some of the benefits of the group have been new friendships to help ease homesickness and achieve better mental health.

“Furthermore every month our club organises tours in Victoria and interstate to help our members explore Australia and learn about its geography and history.

“We have visited museums and art galleries in order to learn about and understand Australian culture and history, resulting in a better understanding of Australian society,” Miss Sumtsova said.

**Honouring the Long Walk Women**

A group of Indigenous women from Victoria who joined Michael Long on his inspirational walk from Melbourne to Canberra in 2004, are to have their names included on the Shilling Wall at the Queen Victoria Centre.

The four women, Merryn Apma, Patricia Sinclair-Atkinson, Jacqui Marion and Julie Phillips, dubbed the “Black Chicks Walking”, believe the Long Walk helped bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians together.

The women are proud to have their names etched into the Shilling Wall and delighted to know their achievements will live on through the beautiful glass sculpture in the grounds of the Queen Victoria Centre.

**WHAT IS THE SHILLING WALL?**

The Shilling Wall was inspired by the work of a provisional Committee, led by suffragette Annette Bear-Crawford, who devised a fundraising scheme called the Shilling Fund in 1897 to raise money for the Victoria Hospital.

Every woman in the colony of Victoria was asked to donate one shilling (roughly $40 today) to fund a hospital for women and children.

Celebrations were high on 22 June 1897, Jubilee Day – the Shilling Fund had raised 3162 pounds, 11 shillings and nine pence. The Provisional Committee bought the old Governess’ Institute on Mint Place, off Little Lonsdale St, for £2000 and moved there on 12 July 1899. It opened amongst much fanfare, with an outpatients’ clinic, a dispensary, eight beds for inpatients and an operating theatre.

The work of these forward thinking women inspire the QV Women’s Centre everyday and their work and memories are honoured through the Shilling Wall. Any woman can be nominated for the Shilling Wall. The main criterion for inclusion is to have made a positive impact in the lives of others, and this can be in any walk of life.

FOR MORE INFORMATION www.qvwc.org.au
Family fishing day

Overcast and at times wet conditions didn’t deter more than 270 children and their families attending the Eildon Pondage Family Fishing Festival on 10–11 April, making it the biggest fishing event at Eildon Pondage in the Go Fishing in Victoria’s initiative’s four year history.

Families from Melbourne and many regional centres descended on Eildon to try their hands at catching some of the trout specially stocked for the day.

Director of Fisheries Management with Fisheries Victoria, Travis Dowling, said staff and angling club volunteers were kept busy with fish being caught regularly.

“Some children experienced the excitement of catching their first ever fish,” said Mr Dowling.

“A shuttle bus to the Freshwater Discovery Centre at DPI’s Snobs Creek facility was kept busy with many families taking the opportunity to tour the centre and view fish and other aquatic species. Many of the children not only tried their hands at fishing but also had the opportunity to help release another 100 rainbow trout into Eildon Pondage,” said Mr Dowling.

Other attractions kept the whole family entertained including Pirate Pete’s balloon creations, mouth watering food from the chefs and singing and dancing at Flathead Fred’s Fun Fishing Show.

Young people bridge the faith divide

The drumbeats start tentatively. Young eyes flit across each other’s faces. The rhythm builds. Soon the smiles are wider and the rhythms loud. Dark arms cross with pale, a turban nods, a Star of David swings.

This is the Multifaith Future Leaders Program, a program to bring together young people from different faith backgrounds so they can learn about each other and become better leaders of their own communities.

Thirty-six young people participated in a three day residential workshop 22–24 February. Aged 18 to 26, they represented eight faith groups: B’hai, Buddhist, Christian, Hare Krishna, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh.

Young people who were identified as potential leaders of their own communities were invited to participate so they could gain leadership skills and spread the interfaith message to others in their communities.

Participants learnt practical leadership skills such as conflict resolution and public speaking, joined in encounter sessions to learn about the commonalities and differences between their faiths and had opportunities to network and develop friendships.

Some of the best conversations happened as each of the participants worked on a patch to contribute to a quilt illustrating the variety of faiths. As they shared their individual faith journeys they discovered none was a simple representative of a belief system and each of them had so much to share and learn.

All the participants were keen to continue as a group and plan to be involved in social service activities, more discussions about each other’s faiths and maintaining their connections.

This was the second such program after a pilot program involving Jews, Muslims and Christians last year, which has also developed into an on-going multifaith group.

The program was organised by the B’nai B’rith Anti-Defamation Commission, a Jewish community organisation dedicated to countering racism and antisemitism and was funded by the Victorian Multicultural Commission.

By Deborah Stone, Executive Director of the Anti-Defamation Commission

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Young people come together to learn leadership skills and more about other faiths.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Hesseen family with Hunter Hesseen holding the Premier trout he caught at the Eildon Family Fishing Day.
March saw a host of celebrations for the Greek community as it kicked off the annual Antipodes Festival and recognised Greek National Day.

The Premier of Victoria, John Brumby opened the Antipodes Festival on 27 March. The Festival runs from March to October, celebrating Melbourne’s Hellenic culture through a series of events promoting Australian Greek arts and culture.

Mr Brumby said the Antipodes Festival was a major highlight on Melbourne’s cultural calendar and a great way to focus on the Greek community’s contribution to Victoria.

“The Antipodes Festival has become a greatly anticipated tradition in Melbourne, celebrating the wonderful culture and the vast contribution of our Greek community, which is one of the largest in the world outside Greece,” said Brumby.

The first weekend of the Antipodes Festival involved a giant street party with music, dance, food, carnival rides, stalls and children’s activities. Other events leading up to October include film screenings, musical performances, art exhibitions and a play, Salonika Bound, which explores Greek culture through the eyes of three migrants from Thessalonika.

Mr Brumby also joined members of the Greek community to commemorate Greek National Day with a traditional march to the Shrine of Remembrance. He also hosted a special reception for the Greek community to acknowledge the contribution it has made to Victoria.

Mr Brumby laid a wreath at the Shrine to show Victoria’s appreciation for the enduring cultural legacy of Victoria’s Greek community, and the strong bonds of friendship between Australia and Greece.
Each year during Cultural Diversity Week, the Victorian Multicultural Commission funds hundreds of events that take place as schools, community groups, libraries, local councils and private companies take the opportunity to focus on the wonderful diversity Victoria offers. This year was no exception. Cultural Diversity Week ran from 14–21 March and kicked off with a free multicultural festival at Federation Square. Viva Victoria attracted almost 40,000 people and turned Federation Square into a colourful and lively display of music, dance, art and food stalls. Turn the page to find out more about this exciting new event.

Premier of Victoria, John Brumby, welcomed the crowd and said the festival was a wonderful example of the harmony and diversity in Victoria. He also used the opportunity to announce the start of Cultural Diversity Week 2010. “I’m sure you will all agree Viva Victoria is a colourful, lively and engaging celebration of Victoria’s diversity,” said Mr Brumby. “Victorians are a great mix of people. We come from more than 200 countries, speak more than 230 languages and follow 120 different faiths. Cultural Diversity Week is a chance for all Victorians to join together to be informed and entertained about our rich diversity.”

Festival-goers enjoyed a range of dynamic performances across two stages, ranging from an interactive tango workshop, drumming from the Cook Islands, a Mexican mariachi band, to music from popular bands Sol Nation and Public Opinion Afro Orchestra. As well as the amazing entertainment on stage, the festival provided a showcase for talented local artists and designers in the world market area, with almost 20 market stalls offering unique and quality art and crafts. There was also an exhibition from Box Hill Community Arts Centre, entitled ‘Art Without Borders’ which featured beautiful textile work representing the stories of migrant women living in the Whitehorse area.

Thank you to our sponsors and supporters for making Viva Victoria such a welcoming and exciting event.


“Viva Victoria is a colourful, lively and engaging celebration of Victoria’s diversity.”

Premier of Victoria, John Brumby
Gala dinner

More than 1400 people gathered at the Premier’s Annual Gala Dinner to celebrate the end of Cultural Diversity Week 2010 at the Crown Palladium.

This year government, community and business leaders attended the dinner with more than 1400 guests. The event was hosted by the Premier of Victoria, John Brumby and attended by special guests including Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs, James Merlino and Leader of the Opposition, Ted Baillieu.

Mr Brumby said the annual dinner was a wonderful way to end Cultural Diversity Week, which celebrates and recognises the contributions of Victoria’s multicultural communities through a range of events and activities.

“Migrants from more than 200 countries have brought so many new skills and new ideas to Victoria and turned our State into a thriving multicultural democracy,” Mr Brumby said.

“This dinner is just one way we celebrate that cultural diversity and acknowledge the lasting contribution our multicultural communities have made to Victoria.”

Mr Brumby thanked the guests and said celebrating Cultural Diversity Week was a wonderful way to share cultures and learn more about other Victorians. Entertainment at the dinner was provided by a range of performers, including a Bhutanese dance display, a performance of opera tunes by Josh Piterman, the Mua Lan Buddhist Youth Group Lion Dance, Chilean group Violetta Parra and the Natyalayaa Indian dance troupe.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Premier John Brumby and Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs James Merlino with La Voce Della Luna; the Vietnamese Buddhist Youth Association; the Violetta Parra Chilean Folkloric Group; Leader of the Opposition Ted Baillieu.
Day at the zoo

English language students from new and emerging communities were treated to a day out at Werribee Open Range Zoo as part of Cultural Diversity Week.

The event, held on Thursday 18 March, was organised by Footscray Police, the Victorian Multicultural Commission and City West Water, and follows on from the success of a similar event held at Melbourne Zoo last year.

The group, made up of around 800 newly-arrived African, Asian and Middle Eastern students enjoyed viewing African and Australian animals during a tour of the open range zoo. They were also entertained with music from the Victoria Police Pipe Band, and the Victoria Police Showband – who had the crowd up and dancing and demanding an encore!

An African band also put on an energetic performance of drumming and dancing, and provided an opportunity for the students to take part in an interactive drumming workshop.

Maribyrnong Community Liaison Officer, Leading Senior Constable Craig Spicer said the participating organisations hoped to hold similar events every year. “It helps promote positive relationships between those involved in the initiative,” he said.

The day also provided guests with the opportunity to learn about the important roles played by service providers in the community. Information and advice was available from displays set up by the Melbourne Fire Brigade, City West Water and the Victoria Police and Life Saving Victoria.
Viva Italia – Wangaratta

Wangaratta offered participants the chance to celebrate the Italian way of life.

More than 5,000 people turned up to partake in the festivities at the Viva Italia Festival in Wangaratta on the banks of the Ovens River in March.

The celebration was a merging of the past and present, recognising the immigration of the Italian people and their on-going contribution to the region. People from all walks of life attended the festival, including some who had arrived to the area from Italy with only a suitcase in their hand.

Music drifted over the crowd, as accordionists played crowd favourites such as Arriverderci Roma, as well as music from Italy’s southern region of Calabria. A beautiful rendition of Con Te Partiro, accompanied by solo guitar, temporarily silenced the raucous crowd.

Many entertaining competitions were included in the line-up of events. Women participated in pasta-making competitions and coffee-makers maintained intense concentration and composure in the Grinder’s Barista Competition. Men in gondolas paddled furiously down the Ovens River, ferrying their female passengers to the finishing line amidst laughter and the odd accidental drenching.

The deciding of the winner of a trip to Italy was a major spectacle, as 5,000 soccer balls were tipped in to the river and ‘raced’ towards a finish line. Participants in the competition cheered on their numbered soccer balls (which they had purchased in the lead up to the event) as they floated downstream.

Hampton Park multicultural month

It was “Multicultural March” at Hampton Park Primary School, as the whole school celebrated “Connecting Cultures”.

Amongst the activities was an evening of cultural foods and dance displays from around the world on Wednesday 17 March. Families were asked to bring a plate of food which represented their culture. Students from the school demonstrated dances from many countries including Samoa, Cambodia, Philippines and India. Also Natya Kala Mandir (School for Indian Classical Dance) gave a spectacular performance to complete the evening.

The highlight of Multicultural March was the school “Connecting Cultures” concert, held on 25 March. Visiting Polynesian dance educator Bernard Mangakahia, led student workshops in the lead up to the concert. The huge audience was taken on a song and dance journey from Early American Indians through Hawaii, Samoa, New Zealand to an Australian dance spectacular.

Activities taking place during Multicultural March helped students learn the depth and beauty of the many cultures that make up the school community.

A grant received from the Victorian Government, through the Victorian Multicultural Commission assisted the school to produce five Quest Award entries, as well as fund further Cultural Diversity Week activities.
Harmony by the side of the river

Held on the banks of the Yarra River on 21 March, the 7th annual Black Harmony Gathering provided the opportunity for indigenous and multicultural communities to come together in the spirit of reconciliation.

The picturesque Fairfield Amphitheatre once again was the venue for the afternoon concert, presented by Multicultural Arts Victoria. The annual event spreads the message “Say no to racism!” and provides an opportunity for engagement and collaboration between indigenous, non-indigenous, African and refugee communities. Black Harmony Gathering showcases both top professional and talented emerging artists from these diverse communities. As well as the music and dance on offer, stalls, workshops and cultural activities were also enjoyed.

The Cultural Stage was the platform for some great performances from indigenous artists Koori Youth Will Shake Spears, Skye Taikato and Friends, Meriki Hood, Johnny Mac and more. They were joined by peers from Victoria’s multicultural music and dance scene, including the African Royal Drummers, Narasirato Pan Pipers from the Solomon Islands, Shiamak Bollywood dance group and the soul pumping vibes of African band Blak Roots.

The Black Harmony Gathering continues to assert itself as an important and inspirational event, providing a platform for established and emerging artists to perform, and engendering a spirit of positive engagement and mutual support across a range of community groups.
Harmony and human rights on the agenda in Whitehorse

Two key community events were held in the City of Whitehorse during Cultural Diversity Week to celebrate the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of the area.

The first was the Whitehorse World Harmony Day Concert, which was held on Sunday 21 March in the Box Hill Gardens. The event featured a Community Village in the afternoon, followed by a World Music concert in the evening.

To create the ‘village’ atmosphere, over 20 community groups hosted a wide variety of activities, information displays, art and craft stalls and food marquees.

Soon after the opening of the event the Harmony Day Community Village was bustling with people of all ages and backgrounds, trying mah-jong and meditation, participating in age-old tea making ceremonies, and learning about the Charter of Human Rights through a fun handball activity. The diverse stage performances included a performance of a song entitled Harmony in sign language, traditional dances from around the world, performances that blended cultures (including a creative Chinese-inspired dance to the song Click Go the Shears), harmonic choral performances, original songs to drum beats and guitar strums, and a theatrical act to highlight the wonders of science and nature.

As evening fell and the Community Village stalls closed, attendees settled on their rugs and chairs to watch and be engaged in exciting world music performances by Klova, Zazu, Tribe 2 and Whitehorse Batacuda.

The City of Whitehorse was also privileged to receive an exhibition of artworks from the AFALYCA Arte Moris School in Dili, Timor Leste. The exhibition, held at the Box Hill Community Arts Centre, was the first opportunity for the art school to exhibit their works overseas.

BRIMBANK CELEBRATES WITH A HUGE RANGE OF EVENTS

Brimbank Festival kicked off a huge week of events across the area celebrating Cultural Diversity Week.

An estimated 20,000 people showed up to enjoy the festivities which opened with a traditional parade of local community groups and performers, including the extraordinary Roy Maloy as King of the Parade, the Vietnamese Buddhist Youth Association’s Chinese Dragon, the Kirrip Rainbow Serpent, Uruguayan dancers Urucdombe and the United African Communities of Victoria, amongst many more.

Festival patrons were spoilt for choice with a fantastic range of multicultural food and market stalls, environmental displays and talks, carnival rides and interactive play activities for kids.

Special visitors included Vasili Kanidiadis, who stopped by to present the awards to the (Backyard) Super Growers Competition winners and Chanel 9’s Peter Hitchener.

There were three stages packed with music, including King Marong’s SAFARA group, Tunari, Croatian Dawn, Unified Gecko, hip hop group Curse ov Dialect, and veteran performers Vika and Linda Bull.
Students and teachers were recognised for their efforts and creativity during a ceremony held at Parliament House on Thursday 18 March. An original musical about Vietnamese refugees, a Chinese dragon parade and a mural of Indigenous stories were among the 315 entries in this year’s Quest Awards.

Mr Nazih Elasmar MLC congratulated students, teachers and schools that celebrate Victoria’s diversity and promote social inclusion at a ceremony held during Cultural Diversity Week.

At the Queen’s Hall, Parliament House ceremony, Mr Elasmar presented prizes and awards to three individual students, 13 school groups and four teachers.

The Quest this year has seen a boom in entries, with 315 received from 105 schools, compared to 74 entries last year. There were also 45 multimedia entries received in 2010, compared with just five in the previous year.

Multicultural Education Unit manager, at the Department of Education and Early Childhood, Lynn Pickles said the entries displayed a deep understanding of our cultural diversity and that the entries were often part of a larger unit of work or a whole school project. Schools used various ways to explore cultural diversity, including picture books as springboards, food and recipe books and Asian studies.

Mr Elasmar said the Quest Awards showcased the outstanding work being done in Victorian schools to promote inter-cultural understanding.

“We’re incredibly lucky that our schools are buzzing hubs of multiculturalism,” he said. “I’m proud to be able to say with absolute conviction that Victorian schools facilitate and support respect and tolerance.”

More than 140 people attended the Quest Awards ceremony. The winning entries are to be displayed at an Immigration Museum exhibition in June this year. The Quest Awards is an annual inclusion in the Cultural Diversity Week calendar.
Mildura Multicultural Fair

Samosas, pides, kebabs, kangaroo steaks, pizza and dolmas were just some of a diverse range of multicultural dishes that Mildura Senior College students sampled at a Multicultural Fair on Friday 19 March, in celebration of Cultural Diversity Week.

With more than 25 different cultural backgrounds represented amongst the students and staff at the college, the theme ‘Many Cultures, One Community’, was very fitting.

A rap performance by Year 11 indigenous student, Phil Murray, was a definite crowd pleaser and was followed by other aspiring rappers demonstrating their moves. Phil was recently awarded the prestigious Noel Tovey Achievement Award for achievement in the arts.

Coordinator of the Multicultural Fair, English as a Second Language teacher, Dawn Frankel, commended all involved. “The efforts of teachers and students involved in planning, organising and running the lunchtime event were outstanding.

“It has been a very positive and enjoyable way to work together to recognise and celebrate the different cultural backgrounds of staff and students in our college community.”

Students gather at roundtable

Haileybury College students acknowledged Cultural Diversity Week with a roundtable discussion aimed at eliminating misconceptions about faith and culture in their school and community.

Members of the Premier’s Multifaith Multicultural Youth Network and the Ethnic Youth Council’s Multifaith Leaders program joined with students from Haileybury College on Friday 19 February to discuss issues affecting young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.

The roundtable gave students the opportunity to share stories and ideas openly, without fear of prejudice, and to actively participate with members from diverse backgrounds.

Victoria: The place to be for women

The Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women’s Coalition (VIRWC) came together with female international students studying in Melbourne to celebrate International Women’s Day on Friday 5 March.

Dubbed as a March for Harmony, the women assembled at the State Library and marched to the steps of the Parliament House wearing mostly orange and purple dresses, hats, ribbons and scarves. They carried colourful banners reading “Hope not Fear” and “Freedom, Justice and Respect”. As they marched, the women chanted inspiring messages such as “Victoria, the place to be for women”, “Sisterhood, Feminism: alive and powerful.”

The march was also a reminder to Victorians that women who come to Australia as international students add to the diversity of our communities, and bring with them fabulous opportunities for creating life-time relationships.
Emerging communities come together

Held at the Collingwood Town Hall on 15 March, the 2010 Victoria Police New and Emerging Communities Reception was an unforgettable and magical event. Over 300 guests from Victoria’s newest Communities, established communities, and Victoria Police joined together to celebrate Cultural Diversity Week.

The Master of Ceremonies for the evening, Commander Ashley Dickinson APM, officially opened the evening by inviting Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Di Kerr to the stage to perform the traditional Welcome to Country Ceremony.

Chief Commissioner Simon Overland APM encapsulated perfectly what the event was all about not only in his keynote address but more so in a physical sense by leading the room in a Conga Line that danced in rhythm to the musical accompaniment of African band “Vox Congo”. The event included music from Afghanistan, dancers from Bhutan and songs and rhythms from Africa. It provided an opportunity for New and Emerging Community members to get to know their Police and for Police to get to know the newest members of the community they serve and protect.

In the process everyone enjoyed traditional food, excellent entertainment, great company, and celebrated Victoria’s growing diversity with great gusto.

A major highlight of the Reception was a presentation made by members of the Victoria Police New and Emerging Communities Liaison Officer Program which was launched in June 2009 by Victoria Police to improve mutual communication and a better understanding between police and New and Emerging Communities.

For further information about the Victoria Police New and Emerging Communities Reception or the Victoria Police New and Emerging Community Liaison Officer (NECLO) program please contact Marie Piu, Manager of the Victoria Police Multicultural Advisory Unit or Ruth Milligan – Program Coordinator | NECLO Program Victoria Police.

Above: Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, Simon Overland joins a conga line at the Emerging Communities reception.

AMES CELEBRATES WITH MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

As Victoria’s largest provider of services to the multicultural community, AMES commitment to a cohesive and diverse society was especially evident during Cultural Diversity Week.

Over nine days, more than 2,000 clients and staff from 20 AMES sites across Melbourne came together in a jam-packed series of activities including excursions, information sessions, fashion parades, games, cuisine sampling, dancing and entertainment. Activities happened on site, at local parks and gardens and throughout city centres. AMES sites also worked in partnership with local governments in Brimbank, Wyndham, Maribyrnong and Monash City Councils and local agencies including Victoria Police, MFB and Parks Victoria to help clients celebrate. Local governments looked to AMES to help engage with their residents and provide important information, resources and excursions to promote services available for their multicultural communities.

But there was plenty of time for celebrating with art installations, concerts, fashion parades, coffee making ceremonies and great Aussie BBQs!

Cultural Diversity Week is a formal opportunity for AMES as an organisation to celebrate what it strives towards every day – clients celebrating who they are, where they come from, and their new future.

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Above: Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, Simon Overland joins a conga line at the Emerging Communities reception.
Hoppers Crossing was the site for a new program specifically designed to meet the needs of multicultural groups wanting to learn to swim and create better water education awareness.

The VICSWIM Summer Kidz program has resulted from a successful partnership between Aquatics and Recreation Victoria and the New Hope Foundation, which began in 2008. It has since been joined by SpiritWest Services, the community arm of the Western Bulldogs Football Club.

“With the growing need to provide aquatic education to the many and varied multicultural groups that make up our communities, the VICSWIM Cultural program will go some way to providing the necessary skills and knowledge to enjoy Australia’s aquatic environments safely”, said Mr Ian Swan, CEO of Aquatics and Recreation Victoria, which runs the respected VICSWIM programs.

The program at Hoppers Crossing has resulted from an initial pilot program that involved refugees from Burma and Sudan, some of whom have gone on to train as AUSTSWIM swimming and water safety teachers. One of the aims of the VICSWIM Cultural program is to see bilingual instructors use their new skills to teach those within their own community about water safety and awareness.

With the help of the Western Bulldogs’ Settlement Grants Program, both ARV and the New Hope Foundation, in conjunction with the Wyndham Leisure and Events Centre have seen the program blossom.

Over 100 participants from the local Karen, Sudanese, Ethiopian, Chinese and Croatian communities are being exposed to and taught aquatic education and water safety lessons by VICSWIM/AUSTSWIM trained teachers.

By gaining their AUSTSWIM teacher qualification, after completing their training hours and practical experience at the Wyndham Leisure and Events Centre, some of the original students have also been able to gain subsequent employment at the Centre, with others from the Sudanese and Karen communities keen to follow in their footsteps.

For more information
www.aquaticsandrecreation.org.au or
www.vicswim.com.au
Documentary gives insight into lives

A new documentary is available to provide an insight into the daily lives of three people with disabilities, their older carers and their Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre support workers.

The documentary, You Can Do, I Can Do was filmed over a period of six months and the script was developed in collaboration with the actors, Mustapha Khan (from Fijian/Indian background), Lisa Azzopardi (Maltese) and Snezana Pejcinovska (Macedonian), following their passions, exploring their philosophies on life and sharing their struggles as they pursue hopes and dreams for the future.

It shows a way to addressing the isolation experienced by people with disabilities and their carers from migrant backgrounds, by creating opportunities for social connection, developing trust with families and demonstrating that the service system can respond to their needs.

As a new player in disability services, Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre’s approach has been explorative and developmental, trialling initiatives, developing rapport and trust between families and their bilingual support workers and, ultimately, demonstrating that the service system can respond in culturally sensitive ways, drawing on extensive relationships with migrant and refugee communities.

Many disability carers are not aware of the support that exists specifically for them so they can take care of their loved ones. For this reason, the DVD was produced and is already proving to be a useful resource for many people.

You Can Do I Can Do was funded by the Victorian Department of Human Services and by the Federal Department of Families, Community Services, Housing and Indigenous Affairs (FACSHIA) and was launched in February by Parliamentary Secretary for Disability, Bill Shorten.

Copies are available from the Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre.

FOR MORE INFORMATION (03) 9496 0208 or visit www.spectrumvic.org.au

SUNSMART PROMOTES VITAMIN D MESSAGE FOR WINTER

As Victoria heads into winter, now is the time to build up your vitamin D levels.

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun is the main cause of skin cancer but also the best natural source of vitamin D, which is important for general health, in particular bone and muscle health.

UV exposure recommendations change from May to August in Victoria, as UV levels drop and people need more sun exposure to make enough vitamin D.

The majority of the population (who have fair to olive – not tanned – skin) should get enough vitamin D from two to three hours of sun exposure to the face, arms and hands spread over the week. People with naturally very dark skin need three to six times these exposure levels. But these levels may not be achievable for some parts of the population, leaving them at risk of low or deficient vitamin D. These groups include:
- people with naturally very dark skin and those who cover their skin for religious or cultural reasons
- older Victorians who are housebound
- people hospitalised long-term; and
- breastfed babies of vitamin D deficient mothers.

It is recommended that these at-risk groups – or anybody who has concerns about their vitamin D levels – consult their doctor to discuss options such as supplementation.

SunSmart can provide further information on vitamin D and sun exposure requirements including:
- Information sheets in English and eight community languages on UV and vitamin D for people with naturally very dark skin.
- Low vitamin D in Victoria: Key health messages for community health workers outlines at-risk population groups and safe sun exposure levels and testing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION www.sunsmart.com.au/vitamin_d or (03) 9635 5148
Volunteering portal provides pathway to helping out

A new resource is available online for volunteers
A unique, innovative website will make volunteering more visible and accessible to Victorians. The portal is a one-stop shop of volunteering resources throughout the state, and brings together a wealth of information for volunteers and volunteer organisations. The portal provides a pathway to volunteering for both existing and new volunteers, and enables people to find volunteering opportunities which suit their interests and skills.

Stage two of the Volunteering Portal will be launched later this year and will include online discussion and collaboration tools to help share knowledge; a comprehensive matching tool linking volunteers with volunteering opportunities across rural, regional and metropolitan Victoria; a free web presence for large, medium and small Victorian volunteer-based organisations.

For more information www.volunteer.vic.gov.au

Fisheries
Victoria grants

The Department of Primary Industries is currently accepting applications for the 2009/10 Recreational Fishing Grants Program (RFGP).

Two new separate grant programs of the 2009/10 RFGP have been established.
1. A Small Grants program that is continually open to fund small recreational fishing projects up to $5,000 (GST exclusive).
2. A Large Grants program for projects from $5,001 to $100,000 (GST exclusive).

The Small Grants program will be open all year round, with a user-friendly two-page application form and quick turn around, making it easy for angling clubs to apply.

Applications in the Large Grants program will be accepted until Monday, 31 May 2010, with $600,000 (GST exclusive) of Recreational Fishing Licence Trust Account funds available to fund successful projects.

There is also a third tier of the new grants program. This will provide up to $400,000 (GST exclusive) to fund major projects that will be determined by consulting directly with recreational fishers from around Victoria.

To obtain information about Victoria’s Recreational Fishing Grants Program please contact The Secretariat, Recreational Fishing Grants Program, Fisheries Victoria GPO Box 4440 Melbourne VIC 3001 (03) 9658 4779 (during normal business hours), Fax (03) 9658 4333, or e-mail rec.fishinggrants@dpi.vic.gov.au

Free entry to Victoria’s national parks

Entry to all of Victoria’s national parks and metropolitan parks will be made free of charge to encourage people to get active in the great outdoors, Premier John Brumby announced on 11 April.

Opening the Healthy Parks Healthy People Congress at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Mr Brumby said the health benefits for people getting out and about far outweighed the benefits of collecting entry fees from parks.

“Victoria has one of the best park networks in the world and we want them to be as accessible as possible to all Victorians,” Mr Brumby said.

“From 1 July 2010 there will be no entry fee to any national park or metropolitan park in Victoria.”

National parks that will be free are: Wilsons Promontory, Mount Buffalo, Baw Baw, Mornington Peninsula, Yarra Ranges (Mount Donna Buang) and Point Nepean as well as Werribee Park, Coolart, National Rhododendron Gardens and William Ricketts Sanctuary.

“Tens of millions of people enjoy our parks each year so making them more accessible will mean Victoria is an even better place to live, work and raise a family,” Mr Brumby said.

He also said while there were overwhelming benefits to the community from encouraging more people to visit parks, there were costs to providing the necessary services and infrastructure.

“To ensure that we continue to fund parks sustainability in the future, we will conduct a review of all the revenue streams and costs associated with parks management.”

Interested groups will have the opportunity to participate in this process.

For more information www.parkweb.vic.gov.au