

Office of Multicultural Interests Albany/Mount Barker Consultation Report

January 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) Strategic Plan 2009–2013 commits the agency to engaging individuals, community organisations, the private sector and local government in policy development and long-term planning to support and promote cultural diversity. In 2009, Hon G M (John) Castrilli MLA, Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, asked OMI to undertake a community engagement strategy that has resulted in a number of regional and issue-based consultations. The aim of the strategy is to facilitate the engagement of people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds in government decision-making processes, policies and programs and to provide information, skills and opportunities to support settlement, integration and citizenship.

Following a community request, a consultation on the needs of CaLD communities in Albany was held as part of the strategy. The City of Albany, Great Southern Institute of Technology and Rainbow Coast Neighbourhood Centre joined OMI as partners in the consultation.

The consultation aimed to:

- identify issues and their associated impacts faced by people from CaLD backgrounds in Albany and Mount Barker
- explore possible solutions, and find ways to achieve them.

Two OMI officers conducted the consultations which also benefited from the presence of staff from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and Department of Human Services (DHS) at all meetings. The consultations involved two community forums and a series of meetings with key individuals and agencies.

Thirty-eight people attended a forum at the Albany Migrant Resource Centre on Monday 17 October 2011 and 26 people attended a forum at the Great Southern Institute of Technology on Tuesday 18 October 2011. Of these, 55 (86 per cent) were community members, six (nine per cent) were from government agencies and three (five per cent) were representatives of non-government organisations.

Information gathered at the forums was supplemented by individual meetings with key individuals and agencies in Albany and Mount Barker. Meetings were conducted between Monday 17 October and Wednesday 19 October 2011.

It should be noted that while the consultation model is effective in raising issues and identifying CaLD community perceptions of government services, it does not necessarily yield recommendations or solutions which can readily be implemented.

Key issues and solutions

The consultations in Albany and Mount Barker revealed that the community was becoming increasingly culturally diverse and that this presents both opportunities and challenges. Migrants and refugees who had recently arrived highlighted many positive features of the area including its physical attributes and the willingness of community members, employers and agency staff to support their settlement.

Some gaps in service delivery were evident, particularly in the areas of transport, information provision, employment, housing and language support. Many comments were made regarding the need for service delivery agencies to increase their use of interpreters and translators.

Participants at each forum were invited to nominate their top three priority issues. The top five issues identified were:

- **Language**—the need for increased access to English language learning opportunities and for agencies to increase their use of interpreting and translating services.
- **Employment**—the need for increased access to career guidance services, recognition of overseas qualifications, opportunities for adult learners to access a wider range of education programs to enhance their job opportunities and increased employment opportunities for people from CaLD backgrounds.
- **Transport**—the need for a more frequent public transport system and assistance for people to obtain their driver’s licence.
- **Information provision**—the need for improved access to information to facilitate the settlement process and the provision of settlement information and advice for all migrants and refugees.
- **Community integration**—the need for the community to embrace a wider range of multicultural community events, increased competency of service delivery staff, and capacity building among ethnic community organisations and community members.

Other issues raised included the need for:

- assistance accessing public and community housing
- increased access to specialist health services
- the high, and sometimes prohibitive, cost of dental health services
- information and assistance to reunite with family, including those still residing in refugee camps
- increased access to childcare.

Despite these issues, the overriding sense was of a welcoming community that was poised to enjoy a period of economic growth and an increasingly culturally diverse population.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Office of Multicultural Interests (OMI) Strategic Plan 2009–2013 commits the agency to engaging individuals, community organisations, the private sector and local government in policy development and long-term planning to support and promote cultural diversity. In 2009, Hon G M (John) Castrilli MLA, Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, asked OMI to undertake a community engagement strategy that has resulted in a number of regional and issue-based consultations. The aim of the strategy is to facilitate the engagement of people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds in government decision-making processes, policies and programs and provide information, skills and opportunities to support settlement, integration and citizenship.

Following a community request, a consultation on the needs of CaLD communities in Albany was held as part of the strategy. The City of Albany, Great Southern Institute of Technology and Rainbow Coast Neighbourhood Centre joined OMI as partners in the consultation.

The consultation aimed to:

- identify issues and their associated impacts faced by people from CaLD backgrounds in Albany and Mount Barker
- explore possible solutions, and find ways to achieve them.

1.2 Methodology

Two OMI officers conducted the consultations in partnership with staff from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) and Department of Human Services (DHS). The consultations involved two community forums and a series of meetings with key individuals and representatives of key agencies.

Community forums

Thirty-eight people attended a forum at the Albany Migrant Resource Centre on Monday 17 October 2011 and 26 people attended a forum at the Great Southern Institute of Technology on Tuesday 18 October 2011. Of these, 55 (86 per cent) were community members, six (nine per cent) were from government agencies and three (five per cent) were representatives of non-government organisations.

A list of communities and organisations represented is provided in the appendix.

The forums comprised facilitated discussion in small groups. Each group had a facilitator and scribe who recorded the issues raised by participants. Two interpreters were used for the first forum: one to assist speakers of Karen and the other for speakers of Burmese. The bilingual DHS officer interpreted for Burmese participants at the second forum.

Participants were also provided with individual feedback sheets on which they could make any additional comments. Participants were invited to:

- i) identify what contributed to their settlement in Albany
- ii) identify issues and their associated impacts faced by people from CaLD backgrounds in Albany
- iii) explore possible solutions, and find ways to achieve them.

The issues were summarised and each table voted to prioritise three key issues and their solutions. These are highlighted in the report's conclusion.

It should be noted that while the consultation structure is effective in raising issues and in identifying CaLD community perceptions of government services, it does not necessarily yield recommendations or solutions that can readily be implemented.

Supplementary meetings

Information gathered at the forums was supplemented by individual meetings with key individuals and agencies in Albany and Mount Barker. Meetings were conducted between Monday 17 October and Wednesday 19 October 2011. A list of meetings is provided in the appendix.

1.3 Evaluation

Following the forum, participants were asked to provide feedback on the presentations, quality of discussion and overall organisation.

Twenty four of the 64 participants (38 per cent) at the two forums completed the questionnaire. Language difficulties restricted completion of the feedback forms by most participants at the first forum, with only seven (18 per cent) feedback forms completed. Seventeen participants (65 per cent) at the second forum completed the form. Not all participants responded to every question.

Of the 23 participants who responded to the question regarding the relevance of the discussion, 21 (91 per cent) found the discussion relevant. Fourteen (61 per cent) respondents gave a rating of 'excellent' and seven (30 per cent) respondents gave a rating of 'good'. All respondents believed their views were heard to varying degrees. Of the 20 participants who responded to this question, 15 (75 per cent) respondents gave a rating of 'excellent' and five (25 per cent) respondents gave a rating of 'good'.

The question asking participants to rate the value of OMI's consultation program was completed by 19 of the 24 respondents. All respondents (100 per cent) valued the consultation program as 'good' or 'excellent'. Of these, 12 (63 per cent) gave a rating of 'excellent' and seven (37 per cent) gave a rating of 'good'.

Qualitative feedback indicated appreciation for the opportunity to share experiences and to acquire information to assist the settlement process:

I really enjoyed. It was very helpful and I was able to express some point of views [sic] about the difficulties that I faced in order to integrate to the Australian culture ... Could this be presented more often.

Future consultation topics

Suggestions for future consultation topics reflected participants' desire for knowledge and support to assist them in the settlement process and included:

- English teaching and language
- employment
- information on Centrelink issues relevant to people from CaLD backgrounds
- information on education opportunities for children
- life skill programs that address issues including transport, the law, legal services and the role of police.

1.4 Lessons

The consultation highlighted the value of:

- attendance at all meetings by OMI staff, a DIAC staff member and a DHS Multicultural Services Officer who enabled:

- a range of areas to be explored
- a range of information to be provided to participants and interviewees
- quicker investigation to address service gaps in a number of areas
- two community forums, rather than one, which attracted different groups of participants
- organisation and promotion of the community forums by local agencies
- a broad range of supplementary meetings that encouraged links between agencies and the potential for partnerships to be identified and networks formed
- attendance of an officer who was bilingual and was able to interpret for some participants without prior warning of the need for interpreting services
- organisation of the consultation schedule by the City of Albany which facilitated access to meetings with a wide range of relevant agency representatives.

Limitations of the consultation included:

- a limited period of time for consultations and meetings which restricted the number of meetings that could be held with relevant agencies
- reliance on an external agency to identify agencies to be involved in the consultation, which may have led to the omission of some key organisations.

2. ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS

Participants at both forums were invited to share both their positive and negative experiences of settling in Albany. The discussions revealed a keen appreciation of the city's environment and the support provided by the local community. Participants made particular mention of the:

- physical environment including the relatively small size of the community, the natural beauty of the area and the availability of sporting activities
- good standard of living and sense of safety
- support from neighbours, co-workers and employers, TAFE lecturers, school staff, the migrant resource centre and the local churches.

Several participants from the Burmese community at the first forum had moved from Sydney to Albany on the advice of friends who highlighted the benefits of living in a smaller community. The attraction of a smaller community was also evident in the settlement of a number of families from the Afghan community in Mount Barker.

Participants frequently expressed gratitude for the policies and programs of the various levels of government that provided support in the settlement process. One participant at the first forum, who had been in Australia longer than many of the others, urged them to 'give back' to Australia, commenting on their feedback form:

I hope this [sic] people will give back to Australia!!! Cause Australia have given them everything they can possibly want!!!

While participants overwhelmingly voiced their appreciation of living in Albany, participants noted the emotional strains involved in the settlement process and commented that their family and their faith in God were critical sources of support. The consultation identified the following key issues and suggestions for addressing them.

2.1 Language

The consultation highlighted the effect of language barriers on the settlement and integration of migrants and refugees. Participants commented on the frustration, social isolation and limited employment opportunities that can result from language barriers. The key language issues identified by participants were as follows:

Availability of English as a Second Language (ESL) support

Participants at the forums expressed a need for ESL classes to be provided not only during the day but also at night and more frequently. One participant identified a need for a more intensive English language course, noting that, although these were available in Perth, the cost of travel and accommodation for the period of time required was prohibitive.

A representative of Mount Barker Community College also identified a need for English language support for students from CaLD backgrounds:

There is a need for ESL support because the kids are in normal classrooms in secondary school and they struggle with grammar and things go over their heads ... There is [also] an issue with NAPLAN testing because they don't understand everything they're taught.

Students at the school come from Afghan, Filipino, Kenyan, Russian, South African and Ugandan backgrounds. The school recently benefited from an OMI grant for homework support and representatives remarked on the value of the additional resources to enable the school to support its CaLD students.

Access to language services

Participants expressed a need for improved access to interpreters, translators, translated material and assistance to understand information. A major issue of concern was the difficulties faced in accessing interpreting services at doctors' surgeries. There was a perception that general practitioners were either unaware of the availability of free interpreting services or reluctant to use them due to the additional time and work involved. A strong preference was voiced for face-to-face rather than telephone interpreting services. A need for more Burmese language interpreters was identified.

Other specific areas of need in relation to language services were the provision of information and assistance in other languages to assist in obtaining a driver's licence and understanding general medical issues and processes.

Suggestions

Solutions to address issues raised were:

- provision of additional, and more intensive, ESL classes, including night classes
- use of the Read Write Now program, which offers the services of volunteer tutors
- development by Great Southern Institute of TAFE of ESL classes that include a vocational component such as cooking, sewing, painting, soft furnishing, bricklaying and occupational health and safety
- a recruitment drive to procure local bilingual community members as interpreters
- widespread promotion of the availability of interpreters and translators
- establishment of a 'learning exchange' program that matches English speakers who wish to learn another language with a person who speaks that language and is learning English
- increased use of interpreters (both telephone and on-site) by employers and service delivery agencies, particularly health services
- promotion of the:
 - Doctor's Priority Line, which provides a free telephone interpreting service
 - Telephone Interpreting Service for pharmacies, which provides a free interpreting service for the purpose of dispensing Pharmaceutical Benefits medications
- increased cultural competency training for front-line staff of key agencies to ensure they are able to identify clients' language needs and access interpreting services.

2.2 Employment

Meetings with representatives of Regional Development Australia Great Southern WA Inc, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Great Southern Development Commission and the Great Southern Employment Development Committee highlighted the economic growth occurring in the region that is attracting an increasing number of migrants to fill skills gaps.

It was noted that the Great Southern is experiencing a tight labour market, particularly for occupations such as boilermakers, welders and sheet metal workers. It was noted that the demand for labour was likely to increase with the prospect of a magnetite mine in Wellstead which would provide an economic boon to Albany, particularly for the port, with an estimated quadrupling of tonnage. It was estimated that the mine would create approximately 2000 jobs in its construction phase and 400–600 jobs subsequently.

Frequent mention was made of the role that Fletchers International Exports had played in attracting migrants and humanitarian entrants to the area. The abattoir, which was established in 1998, has actively recruited workers from overseas. This began with a recruitment drive in the Philippines which resulted in the employment of 160 Filipinos who entered on the 457 sub class visas. The visa-holders were subsequently transferred to sponsorship through the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS) and are now gradually obtaining Australian citizenship.

Fletchers' strong support for its migrant workers, including assistance obtaining accommodation, transport, and information to assist settlement, has resulted in a culturally diverse workforce which includes workers not only from the Philippines but from South Korea, Germany, Afghanistan, India, Malaysia and Burma. The company also employs a number of Indigenous Australians.

Participants at the forums highlighted the importance of work in the settlement process. Key issues raised were:

- a need for career advice for both adults and young people to locate appropriate work
- employment opportunities for older people
- difficulties obtaining recognition of qualifications gained overseas.

Career advice

A number of participants commented on the need for people from CaLD backgrounds to be informed about the range of employment opportunities available to them and the steps necessary to realise their career aspirations.

Comments also were made about the importance of career advice for those who may wish to transition between occupations. For example, many of the young people from the Burmese community at the first forum had found, or been referred to, work at Fletchers, located north of Albany. While they expressed gratitude for the opportunity and the support provided by the company, they also expressed a desire to explore employment opportunities in other occupational areas including policing, law, the armed services and interpreting.

While some participants suggested a careers expo as a means of addressing this need, others highlighted the importance of individual counselling. This was considered particularly important when dealing with people from diverse cultures whose approaches to careers may differ from those promoted in Australia. For example, a number of participants commented on the tendency for young women from the Afghan community to eschew their education in favour of a familial role.

Employment opportunities

Participants at the first forum highlighted the increased difficulties faced by older migrants seeking work and the importance to their families and community of ensuring that older people in their communities were productively employed. Some participants expressed a desire for access to a wider range of education programs to enhance their job opportunities. For example, one participant noted that mature-aged Year 11 and Year 12 mathematics and science subjects were not available in Albany and that these were needed for entry into some university courses.

Participants noted that employers preferred to employ people who had obtained their qualifications in Australia and had local work experience. It was also observed that employers tended to 'back off quickly' if any communication difficulties were identified and were reluctant to allow staff time off to attend English language classes.

Echoing concerns expressed in other regional areas, participants also highlighted the limited employment opportunities available for young people.

Recognition of overseas qualifications

Difficulties obtaining recognition of qualifications gained overseas were noted. One professional who had migrated to Australia three and a half years ago with her husband and son expressed her frustration regarding her husband's attempts to have his electrical qualifications recognised, despite gaining permanent residency status based on his skills.

Suggestions

The consultation identified the following suggestions to address some of the issues raised:

- provision of career advice and job search support for people from CaLD backgrounds
- work experience, including opportunities for qualified professionals to work in jobs commensurate with their qualifications, skills and training
- more opportunities to obtain recognition of qualifications through practical workplace assessment processes.

2.3 Transport

Participants identified transport as a critical issue for their settlement, affecting their access to work, study and services. Issues related to a need for a more comprehensive public transport service and assistance obtaining a driver's licence.

Public transport

Albany is currently serviced by a limited bus service that is contracted by the Public Transport Authority to Loves Bus Service. The service operates two journeys and runs on approximately an hourly basis. The earliest departure takes place at 7.45am and the latest at 4.10pm. It was noted that the limited service made it difficult, particularly for people who work, and increased the need for people to have a driver's licence. Concerns were also raised regarding the difficulty accessing information about bus timetables and the lack of shelter at bus stops.

Driver's licence

It was noted that many newly arrived migrants and refugees do not have a driver's licence and participants expressed frustration at the difficulties they faced obtaining one. Of particular concern were the lack of translated information and resources, and the cost of driving lessons.

Suggestions

Suggestions made to address the issues were:

- timetables displayed at bus stops and the provision of bus shelters
- publication of translated information to assist people to obtain their 'L' plate driver's licence.

2.4 Information provision

It was apparent that participants relied strongly on the support of family and friends for emotional support, access to information about available services and an understanding of Australian laws and systems.

'Migrant worker/asylum seeker services' was identified as a strategically important initiative in Regional Development Australia's regional development plan for the Great Southern. Participants at the community forums confirmed the importance of this, identifying a strong need for improved access to information to assist their settlement process.

Settlement support services are available in Albany for some migrants and refugees through Rainbow Coast Neighbourhood Centre's Albany Migrant Resource Centre, which is currently funded through DIAC's 2011–12 Settlement Grants Program (SGP).

The SGP target group comprises permanent residents who arrived in Australia during the last five years as humanitarian entrants, family stream migrants with low levels of English proficiency, or dependants of skilled migrants with low English proficiency who have settled in rural or regional areas. Select temporary residents (Prospective Marriage, Provisional Partner, Provisional Spouse and Provisional Interdependency visa holders) in rural and regional areas who arrived in Australia during the last five years and who have low English proficiency also fall within the target group.¹

DIAC's SGP program is directed to those considered to be in most need. Dependants of skilled migrants in rural and regional areas who are proficient in English are not included in SGP service provision. However, participants at the consultations suggested that some service delivery agency staff assumed that a person was aware of what was available if their English language skills were good and that this was clearly not the case.

Currently, the Rainbow Coast Neighbourhood Centre is funded by DIAC to provide services to the SGP target group. Funding from other sources would be required in order for services to be provided to a wider migrant population.

Given the relatively low numbers of humanitarian entrants in the Lower Great Southern region, funding allows for delivery of a part-time service that operates on Tuesdays between 11.00am and 3.00pm, Thursdays between 2.00pm and 6.00pm, and Fridays between 11.00am and 3.00pm. SGP funding also provides for an outreach service to be delivered in Katanning.

The consultations revealed that many migrants were not aware of the Albany Migrant Resource Centre and relied heavily on the support of families and friends for a range of information important to their settlement including education, employment (such as Job Network services), health services (such as the Medicare and private medical systems) and Australian laws and systems including taxation and superannuation.

It was also noted that information sharing between service delivery agencies could be improved.

Suggestions

Suggestions to address the issues raised at the community forums were:

- additional funding to be sourced by the migrant resource centre
- information sessions conducted by agencies such as DHS (Centrelink and Medicare) and Job Network agencies
- meetings or 'get togethers' for information sharing among new arrivals
- information sharing between relevant service delivery agencies
- development of an 'Albany multicultural directory'.

2.5 Community integration

Meetings with Regional Development Australia and the Great Southern Regional Development Commission highlighted the growth potential of the region and the increasing reliance on skilled migration to fill labour needs, suggesting that the region would experience increased cultural diversity.

Both the forums and meetings with individuals and agency representatives revealed a need for greater focus on the integration of CaLD community members of Albany and Mount Barker. Although the cost of membership fees and uniforms could be a barrier to participation, sport and recreation activities were identified as an effective way to establish links between newly arrived migrants and refugees, particularly for young people.

¹ See: <http://www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/delivering-assistance/settlement-grants/what-sgp-providers.htm>

However, participants also noted that there was a need to increase the extent to which the towns celebrated their multicultural community and promoted the benefits of cultural diversity. It was felt that more opportunities for social gatherings that embraced the range of cultures and traditions of its migrant community members would have a number of benefits.

On several occasions, comparisons were drawn between Albany and Katanning. Katanning was heralded as a best practice example in its efforts to embrace the cultural diversity of its community and it was suggested that it was timely for Albany to follow Katanning's lead. It was noted that although in percentage terms Katanning has a higher proportion of people from CaLD backgrounds, the number of people from CaLD backgrounds in Albany is significant.

Local government representatives consulted in Albany and Mount Barker noted that engagement with CaLD residents was limited by available resources. It was noted that the City of Albany had hosted a Harmony Festival in 2004, however, the resources to host such an event were no longer available. Cultural activities in the town were limited and currently included participation by the Filipino community in the Christmas pageant and activities such as a sausage-making day initiated by the Italian Club.

Participants in the consultation also expressed a desire for a greater range of culturally diverse food and dining facilities. One participant noted that the South African community had established an online shop, 'A Slice of Africa', which provides access to South African foodstuffs. Another participant suggested that cultural associations found it difficult to engage with the wider community and that there was a need for capacity building for community members and representatives to:

- acquire the necessary administrative and governance knowledge and skills to enable them to host their own events
- learn the skills to enable them to become effective advocates and facilitators for their communities.

Participants also identified a need for more cultural awareness among service provider staff to improve service delivery to CaLD clients. Several participants remarked upon the value of a cultural worker who was able to liaise directly between the agency and the community.

Suggestions

Suggestions made to address these issues were:

- introduction of community events
- establishment of a multicultural group, seniors group, hobby club and mothers group to encourage participation by people from a range of communities
- information sessions for ethnic organisations and members of CaLD communities regarding event management and responsibilities
- cultural competency training and relevant resources for service provider agency staff
- employment of multicultural community workers in key agencies to liaise with members of CaLD communities, particularly those who have recently arrived in the area
- introduction of a wider range of ethnic cuisines by shops and restaurants.

2.6 Housing

Participants at the first forum also expressed concerns regarding the availability of housing and understanding public and private tenancy forms and processes. Several participants at the first forum had moved to Albany from Sydney and were perplexed that there were differences in public housing processes between the two states. Participants from Burmese and Karen communities stated that they had been in Albany less than 12 months and that many were sharing houses or living with extended family.

This was confirmed in a meeting with a representative of the Great Southern Community Housing Association (GSCHA) who commented that many families were sharing houses because of high rental costs. It was noted that people from CaLD communities access the association only if referred by the Rainbow Coast Community Centre. It was also noted that to have the option of community housing in addition to public housing, people must tick the 'community housing' box on the relevant Homeswest application form and that many people may not be aware of this. It was also suggested that:

- the form's reference to 'metropolitan' may confuse some people who might assume that it is not relevant for residents of Albany
- people may not be aware that nominating community housing as an option not only offered access to a wider pool of accommodation options but could also mean that they might get housing more quickly.

Suggestions

Suggestions to address this issue included:

- provision of assistance in accessing public and community housing by the Albany Migrant Resource Centre, including the provision of information and advice in relation to filling in forms and understanding processes such as property inspections
- distribution of a brochure about GSCHA by Department of Housing front-line staff and translation of the brochure into relevant languages, and placement of the brochure about GSCHA on the Department of Housing website.

2.7 Other issues

Participants also highlighted:

- difficulties accessing specialist health professionals
- the high, and sometimes prohibitive, cost of dental health services
- limited access to childcare.

No suggestions were made to address these issues, however, it is noted that attracting general practitioners, dentists, specialists and allied health services to the region is identified as a strategically important initiative in Regional Development Australia's regional development plan for the Great Southern region.

3. CONCLUSION

The consultation in Albany and Mount Barker revealed a community that was becoming increasingly culturally diverse and that this presented both opportunities and challenges. Migrants and refugees who had recently arrived highlighted many positive features of the area, including its physical attributes and the willingness of community members, employers and agency staff to support their settlement.

Some gaps in service delivery were evident, particularly in the areas of transport, information provision, employment, housing and language support. Many comments were made regarding the need for service delivery agencies to increase their use of interpreters and translators.

Participants at each forum were invited to nominate their top three priority issues. The top five issues nominated were:

- **Language**—the need for increased access to English language learning opportunities and for agencies to increase their use of interpreting and translating services.
- **Employment**—the need for increased access to career guidance services, recognition of overseas qualifications, opportunities for adult learners to access a wider range of education programs to enhance their job opportunities, and increased employment opportunities for people from CaLD backgrounds.
- **Transport**—the need for a more frequent public transport system and assistance for people to obtain their driver's licence.
- **Information provision**—the need for improved access to information to facilitate the settlement process and the provision of settlement information and advice for all migrants and refugees.
- **Community integration**—the need for the community to embrace a wider range of multicultural community events, for increased competency of service delivery staff, and for capacity building among ethnic community organisations and community members.

Other issues raised included the need for:

- assistance accessing public and community housing
- increased access to specialist health services
- the high, and sometimes prohibitive, cost of dental health services
- information and assistance to reunite with family, including those still residing in refugee camps
- increased access to childcare.

Despite these issues, the overriding sense was of a welcoming community that was poised to enjoy a period of economic growth and an increasingly culturally diverse workforce and population.

4. KEY ACTIONS

OMI will undertake the following actions to encourage responses to the issues raised.

Language

- Forward a copy of the report to the Great Southern Institute of Technology highlighting the need for English language classes during the evening.
- Forward a copy of the report to the Department of Health highlighting the need for:
 - greater use of interpreters by health services and professionals
 - promotion of the:
 - Doctor's Priority Line, which provides a free telephone interpreting service
 - Telephone Interpreting Service for pharmacies, which provides a free interpreting service for the purpose of dispensing Pharmaceutical Benefits medications.

Employment

- Forward a copy of the report to the Department of Training and Workforce Development and the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations highlighting the need for increased access to career guidance services, overseas qualifications' recognition and employment opportunities for people from CaLD backgrounds.

Transport

- Forward a copy of the report to the City of Albany and Public Transport Authority, highlighting the need for a more frequent public transport system and the provision of timetables and shelters at bus stops.
- Forward a copy of the report to the Department of Transport highlighting the need for assistance to be provided to people from CaLD backgrounds in Albany and the surrounding region to obtain their driver's licence.

Information provision

- Forward a copy of the report to the City of Albany highlighting the need for information regarding the range of services available to Albany's CaLD communities and the suggestions for the development of a multicultural services directory for the city and community events that provide opportunities for information exchange and networking among Albany's CaLD communities and longer-term residents.

Community integration

- Forward a copy of the report to the City of Albany highlighting the need for community events that celebrate the cultural diversity of the city, capacity building among ethnic community organisations and community members, and potential opportunities to develop a welcome pack.

Housing

- Forward a copy of the report to the Department of Housing highlighting comments made in relation to access to community and public housing in Albany.

Regional development

- Forward a copy of the report to the Department of Regional Development and Lands highlighting comments made regarding opportunities for Community Resource Centres to access special project funding to run English language support classes and to organise community Harmony Week events.

5. APPENDIX

Attendees: Albany Migrant Resource Centre Community Forum

Monday 17 October 2011

Government

Centrelink

City of Albany

Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre

Great Southern Institute of Technology

Western Australian Museum

Non-government

Albany Migrant Resource Centre

Community First International

Community

Albany Filipino Association of Australia Inc

Australian Karen Association

Community members who listed their countries of birth as Burma, Philippines, Somalia and Thailand.

Attendees: Great Southern Institute of Technology Forum

Tuesday 18 October 2011

Government

Great Southern Institute of Technology

Non-government

Albany Migrant Resource Centre

Community

English language students who listed their countries of birth as Afghanistan, Burma, China, Columbia, France, Germany, Japan, Malaysia, Russia and Vietnam.

Supplementary meetings—attendees

Albany Youth Support Association

Centrelink

City of Albany

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Fletcher International Exports

Shire of Plantagenet

Great Southern Development Commission

Great Southern Community Housing Association

Great Southern Employment Development Committee

Mount Barker Community College

Regional Development Australia Great Southern WA Inc