



## OMI FAMILY CONSULTATION REPORT SUMMARY

### Background

On Thursday 28 October 2010, the Office of Multicultural Interests held a consultation forum on how to support families from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds in Western Australia. The forum, held at the Agonis Centre, Gosnells, was followed by a roundtable held on Monday 1 November 2010 at the Metropolitan Migrant Resource Centre's Youth Centre in Mirrabooka. The consultations were held in partnership with the Department for Child Protection (DPC) and the Department for Communities (DfC).

Eighty-nine people attended the consultation at the Agonis Community Centre and 19 people participated in the Mirrabooka roundtable.

The consultations aimed to:

- provide information about parenting-related services and programs provided by relevant government agencies
- listen to concerns of community members and service providers about parenting issues and explore possible solutions.

### Key issues and solutions

Priority issues identified at the two forums were:

- **Loss of parental control**—considered to result from a focus on children's rights, the extent to which children in Australia are given autonomy, and the relatively rapid acquisition of English compared with their parents. **Intergenerational conflict** between parents and children was identified as a common result and a priority issue in itself.

Suggestions to address these issues included education for young people to develop a sense of responsibility and respect for their parents and families, and increasing the number of parenting programs that focus on how to deal with teenagers.

- **Information provision**—the need for agencies to reduce their reliance on written communication and to adopt a multi-faceted approach to information provision. Participants supported a community development approach in the design and delivery of information, with greater involvement of CaLD communities. Concerns were raised regarding the volume of information provided soon after arrival in Australia.

Suggestions for improving information provision included using alternative community education mechanisms, such as theatre and DVDs, to deliver messages and working with community members to identify the most effective mechanisms through which to convey information, including pictures and multicultural images where written information is used. It was also suggested that information and parenting support should be delivered over an extended period of time.

- **Social isolation**—as a result of the loss of the support network of neighbours and the extended family once in Australia. Suggestions to address this issue included offering programs that create community spaces for families to come together and develop support networks.

- **Parenting programs and services**—a key message for DCP was to focus on parents as well as children in developing their programs, to improve connections with communities and to be aware of cultural parenting practices when making decisions. Participants also called for more education for parents regarding the cultural differences in parenting between Australia and some other countries.

Participants identified a need for agencies in general to increase their levels of cultural competency and employ more mediation, bilingual and outreach workers, introduce community development models of service delivery, adopt a flexible approach to parenting models that accommodates cultural differences, and to increase collaboration and partnerships between agencies as well as between agencies and CaLD communities to improve service delivery.

## Other key issues

Other key issues identified by participants were:

- **Settlement issues**—the need for agencies to acknowledge and respond to the many pressures experienced by many CaLD families as they settle and adjust to life in Australia.  
Suggestions to address these issues included ensuring agency staff are aware of the ongoing impact of torture and trauma and to take this into account when delivering services and providing information about torture and trauma services; and addressing housing issues, including providing opportunities for large families to be housed in duplex accommodation, adopting community housing models and increasing rental and bond assistance to facilitate access to the private housing market.
- **Language services**—scope for improvement in the use of interpreters and translators by agencies and a need to monitor the effectiveness of language services. Suggestions to address this issue included promoting and monitoring implementation of the Western Australian Language Services Policy 2008.
- **Targeted programs**—a need for programs targeting specific groups, including services for young people aged between eight and 14 years, support for CaLD parents in terms of dealing with adolescents, and increased support for CaLD men.
- **School education**—the challenges faced by children in school and the impact on families in terms of the extent to which children adjust to school. Participants expressed concerns regarding the consequences of students leaving the school system, especially the potential for young people to become involved in the criminal justice system. It was suggested that difficulties with schooling could exacerbate intergenerational conflict.  
Suggestions to address these issues included encouraging greater interaction and collaboration between CaLD parents, families and communities and schools; providing specialised support for new arrivals and ongoing support thereafter as required; and schools organising homework assistance for students and establishing a pool of volunteers to help with homework.

## Next steps

The Office of Multicultural Interests is forwarding a copy of the full consultation report to relevant State and Federal Government agencies for their information and comment and will monitor responses and subsequent initiatives arising from the consultation.

A full copy of the consultation report is available at [www.omi.wa.gov.au](http://www.omi.wa.gov.au).