



## **Seminar Proceedings**

# **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY: SMOKESCREENS AND MIRRORS?**

Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre  
Preston, Vic, 14 April 2005

Compiled and edited by  
Josara de Lange and Simone Battiston

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Preston, Victoria, 14 April 2005

Convened by  
City of Darebin and Darebin Ethnic Communities Council

Proudly funded by  
Victorian Multicultural Commission

Compiled and Edited by  
Josara de Lange and Simone Battiston

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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY:  
SMOKESCREENS AND MIRRORS?

Proceedings of a seminar held at the Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre,  
Preston, Victoria, on 14 April 2005

Compiled and edited by Josara de Lange and Simone Battiston

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## **Preface**

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This seminar was a collaborative project planned, organised and managed by the City of Darebin and the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council (DECC) with funding from the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC).

The seminar examined the relationship between multiculturalism and community engagement with the following objectives:

- To critically discuss and analyse the policies of building community engagement, and community development in relation to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities;
- To ascertain the performance of these policies in relation to a multicultural society;
- To examine the extent to which policies of community building, community development and community engagement intersect with the policies of multiculturalism and productive society;
- To discuss examples and strategies for effective practice in engaging culturally diverse communities.

The seminar was very successful, both in terms of attendance (it attracted over 200 participants from various cultural and professional backgrounds) and of quality of the papers presented along with the debates and considerations that followed.

The proceedings of the seminar, edited and compiled by Josara de Lange and Simone Battiston, offer a valuable insight into the policies and strategies revolving around the issue of community engagement in a multicultural society.

We finally take the opportunity to thank all those who offered their kind support in organising this seminar, especially those from the City of Darebin and Darebin Ethnic Communities Council.

The Seminar Steering Committee

## Abbreviations

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ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACOSS	Australian Council of Social Services
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CALD	Culturally And Linguistically Diverse
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Commission
CMYI	Centre for the Multicultural Youth Issues
CSTDA	Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement
D2H	Doggies to Highpoint
D2HRAG	Doggies to Highpoint Residents Action Group
DECC	Darebin Ethnic Communities Council
DHS	Department of Human Services
DVC	Department for Victorian Communities
ECCV	Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria
ECCOSE	Ethnic Communities Council of the South East
MVA	Multicultural Victoria Act
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal Islander Day Observance Committee
NEDA	National Ethnic Disability Alliance
NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NMRC	Northern Migrant Resource Centre
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PACMAC	Police and Community Multicultural Advisory Committee
QUANGO	Quasi Autonomous Non Government Organisation
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VLGA	Victorian Local Governance Association
VMC	Victorian Multicultural Commission
VOMA	Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

## Glossary

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- Community Building** It is a policy which places priority on a resident-driven approach that values local knowledge and participation in all stages of revitalisation efforts, from initial goal setting through evaluation and policy change. It aims to strengthen and build capacity at the neighbourhood level for a continuous process of local improvement. It is a policy of greater inclusiveness and involvement, in which members of the community have more control over the decisions that affect their lives. Hayden Raysmith proposes four principles of community building: *a) participation/empowerment; b) inclusion/access; c) tolerance/diversity; and d) sustainability.*
- Community Development** The term was first coined in the 1970s as a new policy that was a more inclusive form of governance. Community development means collaborative, collective action taken by local people to enhance the long-term social, economic, and environmental conditions of their community. The primary goal of community development is to create a better overall quality of life for everyone in the community.
- Community Engagement** The term community engagement broadly captures public processes in which the general public and other interested parties are invited to contribute to particular proposals or policy change. Community engagement has the potential to go beyond merely making information and viewpoints between the sponsoring organisation and the public, however this public is defined (New South Wales Plan State Planning Information Website).
- Multiculturalism** Often used interchangeably with diversity and pluralism to refer to an environment in which differences such as culture and language among people and groups are recognized, respected, and valued. The policy of multiculturalism was

introduced in the 1970s to improve access and equity for the growing ethnic minorities in Australia. It has continued to develop and today it addresses all Australians. The four dimensions of Australian multicultural policy are:

*Responsibilities of all* – all Australians have a civic duty to support those basic structures and principles of Australian society which guarantee us our freedom and equality and enable diversity in our society to flourish;

*Respect for each person* – subject to the law, all Australians have the right to express their own culture and beliefs and have a reciprocal obligation to respect the right of others to do the same;

*Fairness for each person* – all Australians are entitled to equality of treatment and opportunity. Social equity allows us all to contribute to the social, political and economic life of Australia, free from discrimination, including on the grounds of race, culture, religion, language, location, gender or place of birth; and

*Benefits for all* – all Australians benefit from productive diversity, that is, the significant cultural, social and economic dividends arising from the diversity of our population. Diversity works for all Australians (Multicultural Australia, United In Diversity, 2003-2006).

**WELCOME  
AND  
OPENING ADDRESSES**

## **Philip Shanahan**

CEO City of Darebin

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The current volume contains the proceedings of a one-day seminar entitled 'Community engagement in a multicultural society: smokescreens and mirrors?' The somewhat provocative second part of this title suggests that when it comes to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, not all may be well with policies of community building and community engagement. Indeed, the seminar addressed the performance of such policies are in delivering outcomes to our CALD communities. One of the aims of the seminar was to assess to what degree current policies are not doing well, and why: what are the barriers, and are they situated in design, in delivery, or both?

In her 1995 Boyer Lectures Eva Cox said, among other things, that 'Australia has the potential to be a very inclusive society. [But] we must learn to travel hopefully in a discomfort of contradictions, a concordance of contraries, and a conjunction of opportunities' (Cox and Australian Broadcasting Corporation 1995: 80-81). She indicated that while the path to social inclusion may be fraught with challenges, it will be rich in rewards, and although it can be difficult and confronting and confusing, we have an obligation to persevere until we get it right. Similarly, in 1996, when Justice Kirby was welcomed to the High Court, he reminded the audience that the good old days in Australia were not always so good if you happened to be Aboriginal, a woman, an Asian Australian, gay, with little English, or a member of another disadvantaged minority excluded from full participation in the Australian way of life (Kirby 1996: 276). Now, after thirty years of multicultural policies, one would expect that our skills in responding to CALD communities, as policy makers, heads of organisations, bureaucrats or service providers, should be second nature to us. Many people who work in community building and community engagement are either from non-English-speaking backgrounds or would have been born in the mid-seventies, and have known no policies for managing cultural diversity other than multiculturalism. So what is happening?

The following is drawn from my own experience as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a large local government authority in metropolitan Melbourne. In 2000 we made a serious commitment to focus our attention, our energies and our resources on setting a benchmark as a leader in terms of engaging with diverse communities. Whereas the road we have travelled has not been a very smooth one, the journey has gathered momentum over the time, as the number of travellers – both passengers and drivers – grew exponentially. When the Council took the decision to actively champion multiculturalism rather than chant the mantra of support, a memorandum of

understanding was signed between the executive members of the Darebin Council Management Team and the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council (DECC). That memorandum commits both parties to work together to achieve accessible, diverse and improved services to our CALD community. And in this context, 'work together' means literally 'work together' – as members of the Darebin Council Management Team we sit down with and disclose to representatives of the DECC our weaknesses, our failings, our shortcomings, our dilemmas, the constraints, the politics, and we say to them, 'OK, how do we do this better?'

We have learnt a lot from our journey: we have learnt not to reinvent the wheel – many ideas have been tested and tried, so we go ahead and apply them. Many problems in serving and governing a diverse community require simple and obvious solutions, such as hiring bilingual customer service staff who speak the languages spoken across our community; instituting standardised language services across the organisation; having clear policies, guidelines, and support mechanisms inside the organisation that help staff engage and better understand the needs of a diverse community. Setting up the basics should not have to be guesswork anymore. The more the organisation employs people to whom the community can relate in terms of language and identity, and the more we look like the community we serve, the less the distance and fewer the barriers to engage them – as we continue to break down the concept of 'us and them'. Much has been achieved through our commitment to working closely with DECC; much is yet to be achieved, and many areas of endeavour are being tested and the jury is still out on those.

Serving and governing a diverse community is the most challenging and rewarding of tasks. Many times we really do not have the answers, nor does the community, but it is important that we persevere until we find solutions, reach compromises, gain new understandings. Whereas the frustration and irony reflected in the title of the seminar is understandable, some optimism must be expressed about the State Government of Victoria, which extended an invitation to local government to play a more active role in driving the policies of community strengthening and community engagement. This is an invitation that local government must take on board and pay attention to. It is not a new concept, and many people in local government might say that they are already playing that active role, that it is their business to do so and that they have done so for years. However, I do not think that that is a fact – we do need to accept the invitation of the Victorian State Government and embed these practices in the programs that local government delivers. We need to make community strengthening a value that underpins all of the work that we do in local government.

As Justice Kirby stated in a public address in 2002, while there are many different instruments that can be used to create an inclusive society

(instruments such as the law, the media, the engagement in political debate), strengthening civil society and its capacity to participate in all matters of civil, economic, social and political life is the most important instrument of all (Kirby 2002). I could not agree more strongly. As policy makers, public servants, community workers, community leaders, politicians and advocates, it is incumbent upon us to be mindful of the impact and consequences of our own positions of power and privilege, our access to resources, and our decisions on how such resources are distributed and used. How inclusive and empowering are they to the community we are accountable for and accountable to? My experience has taught me that the most effective strategy for engaging with CALD communities involves long-term, ongoing dialogue. Darebin Council's ongoing dialogue with the CALD community, mediated by the DECC, has helped us both, as a bureaucracy and a community, understand each other better, share each other's worlds and dilemmas, and challenge solutions. In my view much of the success we have been able to achieve has been premised on the investment we made in hours of discussion and debate, and the subsequent implementation of the ideas that taught us a lot. Of course there are areas where we have not done well, and where action has not necessarily followed dialogue. When that occurs we revisit our deliberations and explore the hurdles that stand in our way and discuss ways to overcome them. And all of this takes time, commitment and engagement, both in the heart and in the mind.

There are untested territories, areas that are familiar to both DECC and Council, but where neither has the answers and we have no example to draw on. One such area is open space planning, where competing interests converge – where there is a need to retain our link with the past, yet create a space that also reflects a sense of identity and belonging to the communities that make Darebin what it is today. Addressing such issues is not an easy task, and a solution does not reveal itself in just a few conversations – it is complex, difficult to communicate, and difficult to extract from people's consciousness and imagination. However, we must give it our best shot. Community building projects rest on the ability to mobilise members of a substantial geographical area who may previously have had little or no connection with each other. This is a mammoth task indeed, and one that can only bear fruits in the long term.

These proceedings of the seminar 'Community engagement in a multicultural society: smokescreens and mirrors?' address some of the hard questions. How do you sustain the interest of people involved and convince them to stick around and have faith that the process can be just as empowering as the outcomes? How do you reach out to communities of interest, who may not yet have any links with their locality? How do you drive an agenda of community strengthening in an area of high disadvantage without addressing economic disadvantage and resource allocation? Are we wasting resources on fanciful, jargonistic, government-imposed policies and programs that simply

cannot impact on the underlying inequalities in society? Or are we being closed to the vast opportunity, made available to us by the State Government, to really work closely with our communities and to figure out the best way forward together?

## Gaetano Greco

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Chairperson DECC

Firstly, as the chairperson of the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council (DECC), let me introduce the DECC to those who do not know about it. The DECC models itself somewhat on the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV), but acts very much at a local, municipal level. The DECC is essentially an advocacy organisation. Our role is to engage with local service providers, in particular with the local City Council, and to advocate on behalf of the ethnic communities in and around the City of Darebin. Over the years, we have been involved in our own ways in the whole notion of community building.

When I first came across the notion of community building projects at a DECC meeting a few years ago, I must admit I thought it referred to building *buildings* – building centres, building public infrastructure, building meeting places. Within the DECC we were very excited about *this* notion of community building, because for many years we tried to set up a intercultural community centre in this area, a centre that would allow people from different organisations to actually meet and carry out activities. However, the excitement was taken away somewhat when we heard what community building actually was, namely a much more intangible type of activity.

In order to inform myself I visited the Government website on community building and I became, again, a little bit more optimistic. The website featured wonderful words, phrases such as ‘empowering communities’, ‘social cohesion’, ‘environmental well-being’, ‘community renewal’, and ‘place management’. It talked about civil rights and about a healthier life, about participation, about social capacity building – it almost seemed as if community building were a cure for everything. At first – being an old lefty and community activist – I thought, ‘wow, this is revolution! It is on our doorstep, we are really going to change the way we do things. We are going to have our own Velvet Revolution here in Victoria.’ However, I quickly reconsidered, suspecting that it was a trick, a mirage created with smokescreens and mirrors. It seemed to me that these community-building notions involve many beautiful words, a great number of experts and consultants, a wealth of promises and relatively large sums of money – a lot of which, ironically, is raised as gambling revenue, and thus stems from activities that themselves constitute a destabilising factor in terms of community building. Coming from a non-English-speaking background (NESB) myself, I wondered whether community building is perhaps a diversion away from tackling issues that are very close to our heart, issues of racism, of the demonisation of particular ethnic communities, and also of systemic discrimination that is very present in our society. I considered the

possibility that the concepts of community building are really a means to deflect us from the real issues of structural power, and a substitute for addressing issues of inequality. How is community building going to address the real issues of access to resources and services?

Community building strikes me as being very much a middle-class model, a middle-class type of language. Interestingly, community building tends to involve ideas that have been imported from overseas, mainly from the UK and the US. Thus, it is a model that has more-or-less been imposed on us, on ethnic communities. But ethnic communities have their own ways of organising, their own ways of community building, which I feel are somewhat more organic in nature. The pressure to fit into this community-building model sometimes does not sit well with our community organisations. Being involved in DECC I have witnessed the frustrations within smaller community groups about how to get their ideas, their projects or their activities recognised, and how to apply for money to get them funded. These observations have led me to wonder whether the model of community building and the language it entails are foreign to the way we naturally and organically do things, particularly in ethnic communities. And flowing from that, I cannot help but think (and I put it in a very provocative way): is community building a new form of assimilation? Is it trying to get us to be, to behave and to be active in ways the existing power structures in our society want us to? To me, community building (the way I have seen it being played out) has those elements in it, and I am very concerned about that.

It has become clear from the seminar that the subject matter of community building is very complex. While I am hesitant about it all, and I do not envy the task of the people who actually have to face implementing some of the ideas associated with community building, the papers presented at the seminar did spark some optimism in me. They aptly illustrate the conceptual complexity of community building, as well as the ways in which these rather abstract ideas and concepts can be translated into positive activities on the ground level. However, on the note that I sound critical and somewhat negative, I do think that one of the main reasons why the DECC, together with the Darebin City Council, organised the seminar on community engagement in a multicultural society was to have a critical look at community building. We did not want to spend our time patting each other on the back and saying how wonderful our community engagement activities are, but instead look critically at these issues. Indeed, I think we need to maintain a certain level of scepticism in relation to community building because, after all, there is a lot at stake.

## **George Lekakis**

Chairperson VMC

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First of all, I would like to congratulate the Darebin City Council on hosting the seminar 'Community Engagement in a Multicultural Society: Smokescreens and Mirrors?' Particularly, I would like to congratulate the Council on its relationship with the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council (DECC), which by all accounts is a very genuine one, and one which leads to a great deal of progress and discussion on how to look after a very diverse community like Darebin's. They have done well in bringing forward this agenda, which is an agenda that should have been discussed four years ago in partnership with ethnic community organisations and other people who have a genuine interest in this debate.

Hosting the seminar was an excellent initiative, yet the title betrays such cynicism – 'smokescreens and mirrors'. Unfortunately, it is well placed sometimes. Whereas I try to remain optimistic, experience has shown me that not only have smokescreens and mirrors been used, but downright resistance has also been displayed.

In recent times the social policy lexicon has changed to incorporate concepts such as community capacity building, creative communities, innovation, community strengthening, community engagement and the pursuit of the triple bottom line - all lovely terms that we would all support and embrace. These terms and concepts have replaced the past terms of the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s, ranging from community development and empowerment to social justice and from access and equity to productive diversity..

However, while there might be more sophistication associated with the language that describes current policy and service delivery frameworks, all of which is underpinned by more research and data, the fundamentals of really engaging in a community have never changed. Put simply, what social workers and community development workers endeavoured to do in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s remains relevant today: talking to the community and the different strains of community groups that exist; identifying what their needs and issues are; supporting the establishment of community organisations; supporting community leaders; supporting local action and ownership; facilitating partnerships; and collaboratively trying to garner appropriate resources and supports to address the community's needs. Most of these involve common sense – which, I know, is often missing.

In other words, the strategies from which the broader social policy frameworks have been developed, redeveloped and recast remain the same. The fundamentals of community engagement are no different from the

principles of social justice, community development and access and equity that existed in the past. Ownership, empowerment and access to information are still critical to having a strong and viable community that is capable of proposing solutions to its own problems.

This is the reality for those of us who have worked and engaged with ethnic communities. They have established hundreds of senior citizens' clubs, for example, to provide support to elders to reduce their isolation. They have established women's support groups, youth groups, social groups, artistic groups etc. They have developed specific and relevant services to address disadvantage – you name it, they have established and delivered it. Many in our ethnic communities have been volunteering for the benefit of the community since their day of arrival in Australia. My experiences over the last 20 years have shown me that volunteering is vital for the survival of our ethnic communities and their organisations. Moreover, it is also beneficial to the individuals involved.

However, the message to government is that volunteering cannot replace dedicated funding and resources. We have been strengthening our communities, we have been creative and innovative, simply because in the past, ethnic communities have hardly had the resources and support to really go forward. Thus, they have relied extensively on being creative and innovative. Governments at all levels must ensure that they provide ethnic communities with a level of ownership, empowerment, and access to information and resources, so as to allow them not only to build their own capacity to address relevant issues in the future, but also to participate within the wider community on an equal footing, to build a stronger society together for the benefit of all Victorians and Australians.

As was the case in the 1970s, 80s and 90s, the critical challenge for our sector has been to try and ensure that ethnic or multicultural affairs, or more specifically our cultural, linguistic and religious diversity and demography, are not only incorporated within community building frameworks as a critical factor, but also embedded within the consciousness of senior bureaucrats and managers in our public services.

Unfortunately, to date, the Victorian Multicultural Commission's experience with higher echelons of the bureaucracy in Victoria is that, apart from occasions where a senior bureaucrat or manager has shown a personal interest or commitment (and they are very few), the area of multicultural affairs has been paid lip service. Indeed, it has only been included on an *ad hoc* basis – certainly not strategically, like Phil Shanahan has done in Darebin, or as a key component or determinant of how policies are developed, resources allocated and services delivered. This is particularly disappointing considering the degree of support demonstrated by members of Victoria's parliament and by ethnic community leaders, and the development in recent

years, for example, of the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act, the Multicultural Victoria Act, the Whole-of-Government multicultural affairs reporting requirements, the expansion of the VMC's Grants program, and increased funding towards attracting skilled migration. However, all of these examples were substantively pre-election policy commitments, where the bureaucracy *had to* deliver. It is my belief that otherwise, we would not have had the Multicultural Victoria Act (MVA), the expansion of the Commission's Grants programs, or the departmental reporting requirements.

We have had to advocate and work incredibly hard on various fronts – at times a rearguard action to defend what we had or limit the losses, and at times an action to ensure some growth. In fact, opposition has been quite obstinate and very difficult, but the level of advocacy within, and the support from the community outside, has ensured that some measures were finally implemented. By repealing the Victorian Multicultural Commission Act and establishing the Multicultural Victoria Act, the Victorian government has conveyed its belief that our cultural, linguistic and religious diversity is important and relevant to everyone. It was quite a struggle to actually initiate that, rather than focusing only on legislative terms, on a commission, its roles and functions – and that is a shift from the past. An amendment to the Commission's consultation function, which was really garnered in the last minute, effectively acknowledges the Commission's role in conducting public consultations and engaging genuinely with the community on the Whole-of-Government multicultural affairs report. The Multicultural Victoria Act provides a legislated mechanism (a first in the world) that engages and puts into legislation a function of community engagement. It allows the community to have a direct say and provide feedback on the government's policies and programs – which, for a long time, was resisted in Victoria. The issue of it being legislation is very, very important: it has to be adhered to, and people will have to be engaged, and people's views will have to be acknowledged. Thus, we have been able to achieve at a Victoria-wide level what Philip Shanahan has done in Darebin, with Gaetano Greco and all the other representatives from the different groups. Through the Whole-of-Government reporting framework ethnic communities will have a more direct say on the services provided by the State Government and be able to make a substantial contribution to the future operation of government services and programs. The next round of community consultations, tentatively scheduled for June 2005, will present an opportunity for the community to provide constructive input to the government, through the Commission. The Commission will document the community's input, and provide an independent and public report to the government, outlining good practices.

And really, there are some terrific practices being implemented. Let me highlight the Dispute Resolution Centre, which has recruited people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. According to Teresa Zerella, the Centre currently has a high case rate of disputes within the different ethnic

community organisations that have developed over the past thirty years. Members of staff at the Centre, who speak the different languages, have assisted successfully in resolving such disputes on governance matters. This is really a terrific service, and hopefully communities will outline what other good practices and terrific services are out there already. Indeed, the role of the community, and your role in supporting communities to come out and have a say, will be fundamental. After all, we do not want the same people constantly turning up to the community consultations and saying the same things. If you see a problem within local communities or you perceive that they are disadvantaged, encourage them to attend, to put pen to paper, to get up and speak out – facilitate an ongoing dialogue with the Commission, tell us where the problems are and discuss with us how we can address them.

Governments have been conveying the right message most of the time – that our cultural, linguistic and religious diversity is one of our greatest assets. It is now time to translate this message into practice, and make the bureaucracy own the issues and address the gaps. Change will come – it will be incrementally, but I am confident that it will come.

I would like to conclude by briefly discussing the strategic evaluation framework by Cultural Perspectives on our community grants program that the Commission recently received. This evaluation framework concerns the community grants program currently offered by the Commission. The framework contains a number of recommendations that the Commission will be adopting in the next financial year. Whereas the Commission's grants program has expanded almost fourfold over the past five years, so has the demand. Some of the grant categories have received applications for three, four, and even five times the amount of money that is actually available. Our longstanding approach has been to try and stretch the money so as to provide funding to as many community organisations as we possibly can. We will continue to go along that path, because it is very difficult to decide which groups are more deserving than others – within ethnic communities that is the road to division and discontent. One has to practice what one preaches, so the dollars that we do have are spread as wide as possible, so as to allow communities to continue pursuing what they want to achieve.

However, one of the points made in the evaluation framework (and we acknowledge its validity) is that there is a need for larger grants that would allow communities to engage in world-class programs and outstanding community capacity building projects. For instance, in the past there was quite a marked division within the Somali community in Melbourne. For nine months members of the community met on a weekly basis and, despite scepticism amongst opponents of some of the community's leaders, finally came up with a structure that allowed them to unite and come forward to us. As a result they can now apply for some larger community grants that will allow them to provide services to their own community. And Serenella Prelaz

and her Community Support Fund team are to be commended for assisting the Ethiopian community in Hopper's Crossing in establishing their first community centre. That process took a great deal of deliberation and discussion and caused some anxiety as well – after all, why should the Ethiopian community have its own community centre? After a lengthy and very serious debate they have now moved into the new centre and will be able to develop their own infrastructure and move forward. Similar processes are happening in different communities, and larger grants will allow such communities to build an infrastructure and develop their services much better.

It is an unfair situation in which ethnic community organisations put such a great amount of time and effort into building capacity within their own communities without any real assistance from the majority of senior people employed to do so. Unless the Commission is able to continue to find alternative resources, as it has fought hard to do in the last few years, the tremendous community capacity building potential within Victoria's ethnic communities will unfortunately not be fully realised. It has therefore become obvious that it is time for the rhetoric on community strengthening and community engagement to be matched by inclusive relationships and, in monetary terms, through increased funding for grants programs that empower community organisations to strengthen themselves.

Through the evaluation framework the Commission has actively sought to enhance the existing strengths and capabilities of our ethnic communities. As a result, community building and the empowerment of communities have become a central theme in our grants program. The community organisations in receipt of grants saw the Commission as pivotal in the pursuit of capacity and community building because of its role in supporting the aspirations of ethnic communities through a community-based, collaborative process. Some of the big issues and key themes put forward by these community organisations are: the need to increase confidence in ethnic community leadership; the need to increase their effectiveness; and the need to create accessible community venues for ethnic groups. Twenty years ago ethnic groups met in the worst possible facilities, because hovels were all that was made available to them. We need to ensure, as mentioned by Gaetano Greco, that communities meet in appropriate community facilities. One of the foremost, critical issues put forward by ethnic communities is the need to increase safety at home and in public, an issue that is being addressed by the Victoria Police team under the leadership of the Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon. Its work on this front has been exemplary, both in terms of recruitment and in terms of community engagement across Victoria – it is a genuine attempt to deliver services on the ground, and we can already see some of the fruits of those interventions and strategies. Another issue raised by community organisations is the need to increase a sense of belonging within local ethnic groups, as well as the need to create connections, both

within and between ethnic groups. That is why the Commission has made the critical decision to fund almost every Ethnic Communities Council within Victoria – whether it is in Myrtleford, Wodonga, Bendigo, Ballarat or Darebin. We have given these priority because ethnic groups have conveyed to us that the more they co-operate with one another, the more connected they feel with their local community.

As a primary mechanism for funding ethnic community initiatives and programs, the Commission is perceived as a fundamental part of the foundation for building better and stronger communities and strengthening Victoria's diversity. These findings are encouraging for me personally, as it reinforces the achievements of the Commission in strengthening Victoria's ethnic communities. However, I fear that unless the senior-level bureaucrats and managers begin to support community capacity-building and community engagement strategies in real terms, directly with ethnic communities, we will be discussing the same issues in five years time – for at present, very little appears to be changing.

## **Barbara Mountjouris    Serenella Prelaz**

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Acting Director  
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DVC

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This paper is concerned with the role of the Department for Victorian Communities (DVC). It hopefully puts to rest some of the concerns that have been raised during the seminar about the role of bureaucrats in community strengthening. Before discussing the role of the Department and how it has been set up, it needs to be acknowledged that the Department is a new department that has only been around for a few years. As such, we are in the process of dealing with many very new ideas and methods that have been introduced into the way in which government works in Victoria. Gaetano Greco mentions some of the issues that exist within the theory of community building; currently, the Department is grappling with these in trying to get the government's agenda for engaging communities off the ground.

As mentioned, the Department is only a few years old: it was established after the 2002 elections, putting into effect the government's commitment to building active, confident, and vibrant communities. With its focus on community engagement, it is the first department of its type to be set up in the world, under the Westminster system. DVC is bringing together ten different portfolios: Victorian communities, employment, youth, multicultural affairs, local government, women's affairs, Aboriginal affairs, ageing (senior Victorians), sport and recreation, and the Commonwealth Games. Each portfolio area has key community strengthening interests and responsibilities, and bringing them all together allows DVC to respond to the complexities of community strengthening, which challenge traditional government structures.

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It is by now very clear that strong communities share similar characteristics. We know that in those communities there is collaboration; there are partnerships between all sorts of groups, both within their boundaries and beyond them. We know that there is local leadership, and we know that there are high levels of volunteers. Communities that are seen to be strong, resilient, active – and those are the ones that we hold up as a model that is worth striving for – have growing numbers of active volunteers. And we know that those communities are innovative, sustainable, creative – they can respond, they have the flexibility to deal with ageing population, with youth moving on, and with a variety of groups that have issues.

We are talking the talk, we have been talking the talk for a long time, but the terms that we throw around do not necessarily have a set meaning that is the

same for everyone. If we talk about strong communities some of the critical issues that need to be considered are: how do they come together, how do we describe them and, in particular, how do we measure and track them over time? DVC and other parts of government have made a concerted effort to identify some measures that resonate with communities and that would give us the opportunity to identify, over time, if they are becoming stronger. We have had some very positive movements in some of these areas: how safe do we feel walking home at night? Do we enjoy diversity and our multicultural community? Are we valued by society? Do we have volunteers? In an emergency, can we get a couple of thousand dollars money that we need very quickly? How do we connect with family and the people around us? These are critical things for us to consider, and we are now able to use a language that we understand and that adequately addresses what we are talking about when we talk about strong communities and the sorts of things we need to monitor in order to assess whether our approaches are having an impact. Up until now we have spent much time talking around that, without having a common understanding of what it might actually mean.

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DVC is listening and connecting with communities on a number of different levels. We understand that it is not the case that 'one size fits all', and that there is not one type of activity or one type of approach that will work. We approach capacity building within communities on various levels, from the individual level (where we are looking for local leaders with the very specific type of skill base that a particular community might need) through to community levels of activity. Whereas community building is not necessarily about a building (see Gaetano Greco's paper), for some groups it *is* about a building: if the building is not there the community cannot come together, and community building becomes very problematic. In other words, infrastructure and planning can be very important. With regard to the organisational level, there are various papers in this volume that discuss some of the activities initiated within the context of community building demonstration projects – although these projects of course tend to involve activities on most or all levels. Finally, the systemic level is in some senses the most difficult level. It is still the biggest challenge to get to a point where we are able to say, over the longer term: 'we have got this right, we are changing the system, and we are working in a different way'. But we now understand that all of those areas need to be addressed.

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We understand that we are trying to change the way in which government works, and the work of DVC is underpinned by three key values or principles. The first one is 'communities first'. The government wants us to take the time to listen and actively involve the views of others when we are planning service delivery. The second key value is 'people and place', which involves understanding and appreciating the differences between people in

local areas. Finally, the third principle is 'doing government differently', which involves acting as broker for the community, seeing it as a catalyst for change, being responsive to change, and being approachable and flexible.

It needs to be emphasised that it is easy to talk about these things, but putting it into practice is a much more difficult. To achieve this, our staff has been asked to work according to six principles: the client-focussed principle (viewing the world through the lenses of the clients), the principle of place (giving a simpler or a single face to local government), the enabling principle (changing the role of the government from controlling and directing resources to playing the role of facilitator and enabler), the principle of subsidiarity (involving the devolution of service planning and the delivery of services at the local level), the principle of partnership (involving the development of cross-sectoral partnerships between governments, community agencies and the corporate sector), and the principle of local capacity and ownership (which involves harnessing the capacity of local leaders and entrepreneurs).

Another aspect of the work within DVC is actually defining communities. By 'communities' we mean groups of Victorians who share a common level of belonging and amongst whose members there is a level of trust. Communities can be based on where people live (for instance, neighbourhoods, suburbs or towns), around common interests (such as water conservation or sporting interests), or around a common identity (such as age, culture or lifestyle). The main point, however, is that we recognise that communities identify themselves. DVC places less emphasis on the administrative boundaries between departments and programs, and much more emphasis on accessibility and on enabling communities to determine their own priorities.

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Our department in particular is setting an example of working in a different way. All the paradigms we had that state how, as public servants, we relate to the community and provide services have really been tipped on their head for us in the last couple of years. As a result, our role within the community has been redefined. It is about making it easier, about being easier to work with; it is about sharing knowledge and information, about using simpler language, about working *in* the community; it is about partnerships and collaboration, about streamlining grants and other programs. Many of the ways in which government has traditionally operated just do not deliver the sorts of outcomes that we need to deliver. We now have one entry point, one contact number; we are trying to simplify the materials behind grants and other programs; and we make a concerted effort to take on board the comments we receive on a daily basis and to use them to reflect on what we do and how we can change what we do. We have not achieved perfection yet, but we are trying every day and it is important to acknowledge that.

We may not have achieved perfection but we have achieved some successful outcomes. We are engaged in a number of projects that link up government with the needs ethnic communities. Take, for instance, our local-presence teams, which consist of regional DVC staff members who are working in a community engagement capacity. Through the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs our local-presence teams work with local councils in regional Victoria to extend radio transmissions of SBS to regional Victoria. Our local-presence teams are also working on the DIMIA Regional Humanitarian Settlement Pilots. We are working with the Victorian Schools Promotion Commission on a project to set up services around the needs of refugees in Victorian schools, and we are working with the VMC, the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) and the Office of Women's Policy on a CALD women's project that will examine gaps in service delivery and priorities for CALD women across Victoria. George Lekakis mentions the government's Skilled Migration Strategy; underneath that sits the Regional Migration Incentive Fund, which makes funds available to community agencies and local government to assist communities in welcoming new migrants to local areas. Finally, there is the language services strategy, which has been operating for ca. two-and-a-half years with 2.75 million dollars funding from the State Government, and the purpose of which is to link up, across government, the efforts that are being made to improve the delivery of interpreting and translating services.

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As an example of what we have done: there are ten community involvement demonstration projects across the State, in which government is working with local communities to address issues that are important to them. There are the Victorian Community Support Grants, which are sourced from the Community Support Fund, a new grant application process that was launched last year. This process is really about making it easier and simpler and about demystifying the process by which communities can obtain funding for projects in three areas: planning, community strengthening and infrastructure. Victorian Volunteering Small Grants are a fairly recent development. Ten CALD communities in Darebin alone have managed to access these grants, which consist of small amounts of money that allow volunteering groups to build some resources to attract new volunteers, to create new volunteering opportunities, and to better do what they do. There are the In Community Sessions, in which senior public servants go out there and talk to groups across Victoria. The main purpose of these sessions is for us to listen, to identify where local issues and local priorities lie, and to see what role we can play in supporting a whole range of groups that are tackling them already, be they government or non-government groups. Finally, without going into detail about the local government community-strengthening project mentioned by Phil Shanahan in this volume – the office of local government will be releasing a public report very shortly – it is worth noting that the location of local government within DVC ensures that there

will be a 'people focus' in the work of the local government community-strengthening project.

# **PAPERS**

# **Development and Overview of Community Engagement Policies and Framework**

by Hayden Raysmith (Adjunct Professor, School of Social Science and Planning, RMIT)

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My involvement with community development and community building goes back 40 years, and some of that involved work on the Poverty Inquiry, which for the first time conducted community-based studies that looked at the impact of communities on poverty. After that I was involved in the development of the Australian Assistance Plan of the Whitlam government, which was Australia's largest community development program. I was involved in the policy writing and in exploring the ways in which it could be implemented on the ground in Geelong, which was where the first experiment in putting in place regional councils for social development was run.

It needs to be said that I am of a very different view to my old colleague George Lekakis; after 40 years it is my view that about every 30 years there is a cycle of interest in community development. There was a wave of interest in post-war in Australia, then there was that wave during the Whitlam years in the early 1970s, and now we have seen the re-emergence of the interest in community building, community strengthening etc. The same pattern has occurred in Europe and in North America, and it seems to me that we are beholden to grab those opportunities when they come around, and to make the most of them – they do not last very long and it is important to squeeze every bit of opportunity out of that cycle when it comes around.

In my view this cycle is a particularly interesting and exciting one. I know that some people say that community building, social exclusion and partnership are the buzzwords of the new millennium, and that they are used and abused in a variety of ways. But that does not matter: we have an opportunity here and now and we need to work to make the most of it. I do not think I have previously seen a more interesting or exciting time in local government: the amalgamation process is through, the new seventy-nine local governments are well and truly on their feet, democracy has been restored, and we are finding ways in which local democracy can now take a bigger role in the overall development of communities and progressing the agendas, which include improved outcomes in education, safety, transport and a whole range of other areas.

I have spent some time pulling together the theory behind this, as well as the very practical measures that one might take to make it work, and I have endeavoured to weave those two together. First I will give an overview of the context in which we are operating, and then I will focus on some of the practical tools that you can use in making it work.

It is very important to understand that there are three strands to community building, and they come with different categories. The first is community building or community strengthening based on the notion of social capital. And by now everybody is familiar with those popular words. The ABC Boyer lectures by Eva Cox in 1995, put social capital on the agenda in Australia. At the same time the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Canadian Broadcasting Commission (CBC) ran a series of similar lectures, which raised the same issues. It was as if, after the period of economic rationalism, there was an explosion of interest in the notion that we all live in communities, and that if we let the market completely fragment people and reduce them to consumers making choices about individual products, we would lose some things that are very valuable. Some of those valuable things were identified as knowledge of people that we work with and live with and that surround us.

For example, it was found that the level of fear in the community correlates with whether people know the first names of people in their street, as well as with the level of television watching, in particular news and current affairs programs. So if you do not know the names of other people in the street, and you watch a lot of television, chances are you are afraid. And that was a direct correlation that came out of the work on social capital. Another dimension is trust – we began to realise that trust is an important ingredient. We rediscovered reciprocity – I do something for you, you do something for me and that is what makes communities tick. These things were often referred to as the glue that binds communities together. And a sense of belonging: people's identity was found to be linked to whether they belong to a community or with other people in a community. When research, particularly by Professor Jenny Onyx and Paul Bullen of the University of New South Wales, teased out the different factors involved in social capital, most of them were found to correlate. Knowledge, trust, reciprocity and belonging, tend to go up and down together. The one dimension that did not move with the others was tolerance. You can have high levels of trust, knowledge, reciprocity, and belonging, but low levels of tolerance. This finding led the people working on social capital to discover that there were two types of social capital: bonding social capital, which makes people feel close to the group, and bridging social capital, which enables one group to connect with other groups that are not just like them.

The second category of community building is consultation and engagement, which tends to emerge out of a resurgence of interest in democracy and the rights of citizens. There is quite a strong push in Victoria at the moment for a Bill of Rights. There was a similarly strong push for underpinning the return of democracy in local government with various codes, like the Code of Good Governance, which respected local democracy. Now, as part of local democracy, there has been an emergence of new techniques for consulting and engaging the wider community, and it is very important to take notice of

these because we have become much more skilled at working with broad-based and diverse communities than in previous community building processes. For example, there is a school of thought called 'Appreciative inquiry'. According to this school of thought we create our own reality, and what we focus on defines that reality. It similarly says that in defining the future we want, we always bring our past into that visioning exercise. If we bring the negative aspects of our past into our consideration of the future, chances are we come up with a relatively negative view of the future. If we can take the positive things from our past into our consideration of the future, we will create a more positive reality for the future. I think there is a lot to be said for that approach. It gives rise to a process in which we go through the things that we appreciate about each other and about our past, and in which we bring those into our consideration of the future. And that helps to build a solid and positive base enabling us to move forward. Of course, if we do engage in a form of appreciation we are more likely to acknowledge and respect the diversity that exists within our communities as well.

Alongside the 'Appreciative inquiry' school of thought there is a school of thought called 'Asset-based community development'. This school of thought employs the metaphor of a glass half-full and a glass half-empty. Proponents of this school of thought say, 'we do not want to focus on what we do not have' – the old needs-based analysis – 'we want to focus on those things that we do have.' In some of the literature that the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council (DECC) and the Darebin City Council have pulled together we start to see not only an appreciation of those core groups, but also an acknowledgement that there are many good things about Darebin. Some communities have rivers, some communities have a sense of history about themselves. Take, for instance, Ballarat, which is now considered the centre of republican thought and democracy because of the Eureka stockade. Unlike ten years ago, there is a sense that the events of the stockade and the uprising and the struggles of the miners in those early years are a proud part of Ballarat's history, an asset. Going through processes of identifying assets that you can build upon (not all tangible but some intangible assets as well) is one of the great strengths that underpin community development of this era. There is now an International Association of Public Participation, IAP2, with a website ([www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org)); as recently as March this year the Australasian branch of IAP2 joined the International Association, which is a public association where people can exchange views about consultative processes. And let us not forget the fact that the Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA), during those years of struggle when local government was forced out and administrators were imposed, went back to really re-appreciating the importance and the value of local democracy, and did some remarkably good work around the issues of engagement and consultation.

The final technique I would like to mention is deliberative democracy. Perhaps the best-known deliberative democracy process was the republic

debate, when people from a diverse range of backgrounds were selected to go to the old Parliament House and have a debate over whether Australia should be a republic. People representing different positions would come in, the issues would be talked through, and at the end there would be a vote on the issues addressed in the debate. The deliberation process enables people to move ground in such a way that they do not lose face as they work towards a better understanding of the issues. Of course local government has also set up community panels; Dandenong, for instance, has about six or seven hundred people involved in their community panel. I think that is a very interesting innovation because not only are the people involved in those community panels surveyed in relation to the development of local government policies, but they become more informed about what local government is endeavouring to do, and therefore local government receives more informed responses to the sorts of policies it might develop. Community panels also allow for diversity: when a broad range of people are involved in those panels, sections of them can be brought in for deliberative democracy processes.

Community building is thus about social capital, it is about rediscovering democracy and consulting processes and, finally, it is about strategies addressing disadvantage. In the language of the previous era, it is about social justice. It is interesting that, in the 1990s, it was taboo to talk about community development, and it was certainly taboo to raise the concept of social justice. Now, the language has allowed those two concepts to be brought back onto the agenda and be given prominence. That in itself is significant – we are allowed to talk about it, we are allowed to write about it, we are allowed to discuss what it might mean for us. Under the concept of social justice we tend to use the Blair language of social exclusion (Scotland chose social inclusion rather than exclusion) and we have seen some very positive developments in that direction, one of which I refer to below.

In the notes that were given around there is reference to four principles that underpin community building (see 'Community building' in the Glossary): participation/empowerment, inclusion/access, tolerance/diversity, and sustainability. To that list I would like to add a fifth: fairness/equality. Empowerment is a word borrowed from the 1970s. There are five elements to the empowerment of local communities: communities are given more control over information, more control over relationships, more control over resources, more control over decision-making, and more control over skills. The reason why I have found those five elements to be useful is that they can be used as a litmus test to assess whether one's engagement with communities is really about empowerment or whether it is just a token engagement, or in the words of this seminar: smoke and mirrors. If you can genuinely identify that you are giving greater control, in those five areas, to the groups you are working with, you can guarantee that those processes are going to have a positive outcome.

Community building and community engagement have really gone beyond being one-off programs. It is a real achievement of this government that it has been prepared to create a Department for Victorian Communities. Setting up this Department has been a struggle; it is a complex department dealing with complex issues. But it is a very brave move to put communities that high on the agenda and to have the deputy premier lead the ministerial group that is trying to make this work. One of the reasons why it is such a brave move is that it ensures that community building and community engagement is no longer merely a program that runs out of one department or two departments – it is about embedding these principles in the whole way in which government works, and DVC is part of that, along with all the other departments. This is what makes it so exciting for local governments: at long last there is an acceptance that this can only work if local governments are not just engaged in it but are at the forefront in making it work on the ground.

One of the success stories (among the many good things that have been done in the last five years) has been neighbourhood renewal. Neighbourhood renewal involved the selection of 15 very disadvantaged neighbourhoods with mostly public housing, which showed all the problems of communities around the world that were left behind during a period of economic rationalism, market-driven forces and economic growth – these were the ‘losers’, the ones that did not get to share in all the benefits that came with economic wealth. These communities had had numerous programs injected into them, but they had failed time and again because single programs were unable to deliver the outcomes that were needed. As I have argued in my paper ‘Has neighbourhood renewal succeeded?’, there are five reasons why the neighbourhood renewal program worked, which may be transposed to other community engagement projects. Firstly, it came from a shared vision and had clear objectives from the outset. Secondly, at the same time as the objectives were set, the evaluation was designed, so the evaluation was based on the objectives right from the start. We took the principles of empowerment and applied them to the evaluation. Residents in those areas were paid to be trained in survey techniques, they were involved with Professor Mike Salvaris, then at the Institute for Social Research at Swinburne University, in the development of the questionnaire, and both the person doing the interviews and the person being interviewed were paid for their knowledge and their time. A remarkable achievement with a remarkable outcome, and those surveys are now certainly regarded worldwide as a breakthrough in evaluation techniques in this sort of work. Thirdly, we had a political mandate – every good program that is about empowering people and working with communities needs a clear and strong political mandate, which is particularly relevant at local government level. Officers must not go off and do things as if what the councillors might think does not matter; such a program needs a strong mandate from the elected representatives. Fourthly, it had resources. We do not do these things for nothing, and resources need to

be there to back up whatever these processes are, particularly the bottom-up processes. And fifthly, we had a governance structure in place. Governance structures are vital, in that it is important to work out how the decisions are going to be made and who is involved in those decisions. They are the five things: clear objectives and a clear vision, an evaluation that travels right from the start, a clear political mandate, resources and a good local governance structure.

Two cautions need to be expressed, however. Firstly, do not romanticise localism. Localism can be discriminating, it can entrench disadvantage and it can reduce diversity. Localism has its place, and doing things bottom-up has its place, but do not think that somehow the world is going to be a better place if we decide to do everything at the local level. We have to integrate all the different levels at which things happen, and local and bottom-up processes have their place but they are no better than state-wide decisions to improve the transport system or to upgrade the education system. Secondly, do not disconnect your consultative mechanisms and your local government structures from democratic processes. There has been a trend to say, 'if we form a local group of stakeholders, they can get on with the job. All this stuff about elected representatives and local democracy is cumbersome, you cannot trust councillors, and local government will get in the way.' It is a recipe for disaster and it is a recipe for what is called 'stakeholder capture'. Indeed, it is a very good consensus model: you form a small group of people, who are able to work things out about how to move forward using affirmative inquiry techniques and asset-based community development. But it is not a mechanism for dealing with conflicts or competing interests. It can only work where there is consensus. Moreover, after a while such projects tend to have smaller and smaller number of stakeholders who are not accountable, and who start to think that they should be involved in all decision-making without an adequate level of accountability. The only protection from such a scenario is through connecting or re-connecting those local stakeholder groups back into democratic processes – and that, again, is why local government is so important, because that is the level of connection of stakeholder groups into democratic processes.

I do not think that what we need to do is all that complicated, but I do think that how we do it is difficult and requires some new skills. We need to work to broaden the level of engagement. At all times do we need to say to ourselves: 'Can we reach out to a wider range of people, and how do we do it?' We need to develop strong bottom-up processes that are consensus-based and can contribute to decision-making, particularly at the scale of local democratic decision-making processes. We need to get mainstream authorities to respond, and therefore our local processes have to lead to advocacy with those wider State and Commonwealth resource-allocating and decision-making bodies. And we have to weave the bottom-up processes into the Council planning processes, service delivery, and advocacy. If I were to

suggest 3 things to keep in mind in order to be able to ensure that CALD communities are going to be part of this new era and empowered to be able to help to make the decisions and influence the directions, they would be respect (at all times – we should be demonstrating and encouraging people to show respect to each other); ongoing dialogue (people have to be willing and able to engage in conversation with one another, to spend time speaking but also to spend time listening and learning); and the provision of structures and processes that enable people to have those conversations, and enable those conversations to be woven back into our democratic decision-making.

## **Community Capacity Building: Are Young People a Consideration?**

by Carmel Guerra (Director, Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues)

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What I have been asked to do (and I hope I deliver on that commitment) is to provide a migrant perspective on what is happening on the ground, in particular with regard to the manner in which some of the issues discussed during the seminar affect young people from multicultural backgrounds and their families. I will start with a couple of general comments before I go into the specifics.

The first comment is that the organisation for which I work, the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI), has always had a strong belief in equity and social justice. This belief has very much framed the way we work, and obviously it has framed my own personal perspective. Moreover, we operate from a framework that states that young people have a right to those opportunities. This very much comes as an analysis of the right space framework – which I think has definite links with the subject matter of the seminar. In the 90s we never talked about right space frameworks, but there has been a shift in approaches.

Furthermore, I would like to raise a few issues in relation to the current dialogue. I was taught around ‘CD’. I suspect that in theory, most of us would agree with the new language, the reincarnation of that around community building. However, I am also one of those who are starting to question whether we have actually seen real progress in changing the lives of the individuals and families with whom we work, particularly those that live in the most economically and socially disadvantaged areas. A cursory glance at most initiatives and at the anecdotal evidence seems to suggest that there is much more work to be done. And that is not to say that, as Hayden has pointed out, we are not playing some game, but I wonder whether a singular, place-based approach is the key, or whether the holistic approach is a more appropriate way. Are we really looking at structural intervention? Have we really addressed issues around infrastructure, transport, roads, income payment, education and school, as part of our initiatives? These are the questions that I would ask (and I know that some of these are being addressed, but I urge that they are raised regularly): what are the indicators to measure the impact of the initiative, particularly in relation to young people and the families and communities we work with? Do the approach and the angle at which it is pitched really lead to those changes? Is the investment in volunteering actually contributing in the way we want it to be? In particular, we need to assess whether the migrant and refugee communities are really engaging in mainstream community building.

To give you some background on what we do: as a state-wide organisation we operate on what I would call a global helicopter level because of our specialist work, but we also work in partnerships with some local government and community organisations across Melbourne metropolitan area. We operate from the premise that it is the right of young people from (and I will use the jargon) culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to be empowered and to engage in their community and in the broader society, and we see it as our role to facilitate that process within our own organisation, as well as to assist others in doing their work.

It is probably important that we start with the fundamentals. We know that young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds need to be considered within community building initiatives. They constitute up to a quarter of our youth population and, in some communities, up to 50 or 60% of young people under 25. It is their right as citizens to be involved. Secondly, adult members of the community often perceive young people as a problem rather than as being engaged in dealing with a problem that is perceived by adults. In areas of community building initiatives young people are often seen as perpetrators of crime or violence, although they are frequently the victims. What we are saying is that community capacity building and community strengthening are about empowerment, participation and the inclusion of individuals in decision-making on improvements in community life. We *must* engage with young people to make sure they are part of that process; we cannot engage in that process *for* them, without their leading role. And finally (the traditional motherhood statement): if young people are to be our future leaders, should we not be supporting, investing in and mentoring their participation early on, to ensure that they do become the leaders and pick up the work within our community? If we agree on these fundamentals, it then requires those of us who work in the community to commence questioning our own work and our own rhetoric rather than rely on others to do it for us. We need to start questioning what we are doing in our own practice, and ask whether we are demonstrating this through our own work. Particularly, we need to look at this from the eyes of a young person and from an immigrant context. When we think about the communities with which we work and the appropriateness of what we are doing, do we think about that in relation to a young person's context – their English language abilities, their migration status, their socio-economic factors, their age group?

What are the barriers for young people in accessing services? What are the kinds of things that young people tell us? Young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds often have problems with the language that is used – not just the English language, but the language that adults use to communicate with each other. The classic example is the way in which adults operate in meetings and forums. Young people want to participate, but often those kind of forums do not appeal to them. A second point is that often, information is passed on to parents, but that information

does not translate to young people in forms that are accessible to them or in a way that is obvious to them. The manner in which young people operate within an Australian system is different to many of the areas from which they have come. Like adults, they are generally unfamiliar with the mainstream system (particularly in the case of new arrivals). Obviously the influence of the family and the community is a really important factor for young people – which explains why young people are often regarded within the context of the family. But it is very important to also think about them outside of that role. Clearly there are issues of age and gender when it comes to services that are important to young people. Most services are now becoming holistic, mainstream services that lack any specific kind of focus, and that seems to be quite important.

The second part of this paper addresses some of the issues related to the service sector and to those agencies delivering services for CALD communities and wanting to engage with young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. We have often found that, within organisations, there is a very poor level of knowledge about the communities with which they are trying to make contact. Within communities there is often very poor networking and a lack of knowledge of what the relevant agencies are. Of course cross-cultural communication can be very difficult, and there are issues about knowledge of the interpreters. But we specifically need to think of such things within a young person's context.

When focusing on wanting to involve young people, what are the kinds of things we should be doing in the way that we run our programs? First of all, we need to inform ourselves. We cannot know everything about everybody, so we need to go out and collect specific information, in particular in relation to young people. For instance, we need to find out where they hang out, where they go to school, what they do on weekends, and who is important to them. We need to observe and learn; we need to inform ourselves about those kinds of issues. Making connections is another thing – we need to build links or partnerships that actually provide insight into the values and needs of the community of young people we are working with. We cannot assume that the young people will be wherever the adults are – that may be the case, but often we will need to find out what young people do and how to connect with them, and make those kinds of connections. We have to think about accessibility – young people are usually the most likely to want to seek help, and need to be able to access services and advocate on their own part. So if we are running a program or an initiative, we have to reflect on where we are based it at. Our program may work in the interest of the mother with the small children, but does it work in the interest of a young person in that community? This may involve looking at ways in which we can run our program differently, or running a range of different kinds of programs that connect. So we need to look at the model, the practices we use, the cultural backgrounds of our staff that we are engaging with. For example, take

opening times: most mainstream services operate from 9 to 5. Young people generally do not operate from 9 to 5 and they do not operate with appointments. With regard to translating information, we found that translation makes organisations feel good about themselves, but it does not greatly benefit the organisations or the people we are trying to get the information to. Certainly, when it comes to young people, just providing them with translated information will usually result in the information ending up in the bin. So we need to think about other ways of talking to them, and more creative ways of getting them involved in the community. Also, we need to create an environment that makes young people feel welcome – think about what photos we have in our offices; reflect on the kinds of things we have set up in our service or agency or program that really makes it welcoming for teenagers. Another important point is that we need to be clear about our role. We need to make sure that the young people with whom we are working understand how we fit into the bigger picture, and provide them with information that enables them to access the system. So we need to consider those kinds of simple things. And our most recent experience with refugee young people would suggest that it is even more urgent with regard to those communities – we really need start to think differently about the way in which our services operate.

Again, I think that many initiatives have been very good in engaging adults, but I am not sure how much of that has translated to the context of young people. With regard to the newly-arrived and refugee communities, young adults are often the people communicating with the outside world, so locking them out of that kind of process severely hinders communication. Obviously these things depend on the family, on the role of the individual, and on how they want to engage, but it is crucial that we do not make assumptions based on a young person's age, their stage of life, their involvement and what that means to their community – we have find that out rather than make assumptions. We need to learn whilst being cognisant of the family. To accommodate difference is to know that people are unique, just because our history would suggest that groups of young people we have worked with like to do this do not actually assume that that's what they are kind of interested in. We need to do what young people are interested in. That is the classic argument: it is really important to run activities around what interests young people. There are examples of attempts by local governments and community groups to involve young people in activities. They organise so-called 'paper activities', young-people-run activities, with bands and a whole lot of fairly traditional-natured activities, and then they wonder why young people are reluctant to go. On the other hand, we know that when people have run, for instance, a hip-hop dance group, young people have been much more interested. So we need to start thinking about using strategies and ideas that are relevant to the kinds of young people that we are working with, and we really need to think outside of those mainstream, skateboarding kind of ideas

with regard to young people from CALD backgrounds. If we want to engage them we have to rethink the very essence of the work we do.

We have also found that young people are generally very open; if we are unsure, a worthwhile strategy is to ask them and to actually engage with them about what will work. We need to feel confident that we are going with the right intentions. If we want young people to be involved in initiatives or community activities, we need to approach them directly and ask them questions. People do not usually approach young people directly. There appear to be unwritten but widely held protocols around who to ask – and we often ask the parents. Instead, if we go to the source, we will find that willingness and openness is often welcome.

Finally, we need to work on building trust. With young people, and particularly among groups such as newly arrived refugees, this issue of trust is an important one. Trying to engage with them in positive initiatives requires a long-term plan, and involves utilising existing groups and organisations as well as establishing new relationships that will be here in the long term. Young people will become involved if there is a commitment and a knowledge that trust is being built. As we know, trust does not come easily in these particular communities, but if we want to engage them in decision-making activities it is very important that that trust is there.

An example of one of our programs is the leadership program, which is really a youth involvement strategy that we have developed. This program aims to get young people to share their experiences, and learn skills from such interactions and experiences. There is a plethora of leadership programs around Victoria, run by a range of different organisations. However, we found that many of them do not target young people from CALD backgrounds, or engage them in a way that is culturally contextualised for them. So we developed a modelling partnership with the Red Cross. In this partnership we look at ways in which we can assist young people who are interested in community life to become engaged in the community. It is very much a training program, with a very important second component that relies on partnerships with other groups. How can we ensure that groups of young people who are skilled and want to be involved in the community and activate that in some way? One of the emphases is on partnership with community agencies, local government, schools, ethnic community groups, to actually ensure that these young people are linked back into opportunities that allow them to utilise their skills and knowledge in an informative and meaningful way. As a second part of this program we have developed a mentoring project for young people (aged between ca. 18 and 30) to act as mentors to some of the other young people and encourage them to become active in other community and government initiatives. For instance, young people have gone from the Eureka 150 project to being on a whole range of

activities such as the Commonwealth Games activities, young people who have been given opportunity and support to then make links in a policy area.

I would like to mention another model on which we have worked, which is the sports model. Sports is very much one of the issues that has troubled our organisation, and over the last couple of years we have worked hard to encourage young people and their families to get involved in sport. There is a perception that young people from CALD backgrounds do not want to play sport, but our program has shown that we just need to get them more engaged. Generally, young people want to participate in sport and recreation opportunities, but to move from this premise to their active participation in local soccer or football or basketball clubs requires that a much more developmental model is followed. Such a model may suggest, for example, a three-tier approach: we need to develop a plan and think about it long-term; we need to develop relationships and be sensitive to young people's needs and wishes; and we need to work in partnership with other groups. We now finally have, for example, groups of newly arrived Eritrean young people that are entering clubs and competitions and engaging in mainstream sporting groups. However, that kind of process has taken anything over three to five years. We feel that this is a model that is transferable to many other settings and other community groups. We start with 'where the young people are at' and where they feel comfortable, and move them into an environment where they have greater access to resources and information.

In summary, the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (alongside a whole range of other organisations) runs activities and programs that aim to engage young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and has actually developed a whole range of them around how we do that. Some of the work we do to try and connect people and engage young people (particularly those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds) does not happen automatically. But there are many groups who do it well, and who are willing to share their experiences and findings with those who find it difficult or challenging. We are constantly investigating new and creative ways to engage with young people, we are encouraged and happy to document good practices and good models, and share them so that acquired knowledge is made available to others. We support partner groups in their work and make a concerted effort to collect information across the sector for dissemination. I think there are some useful initiatives happening across the community with regard to engaging young people. There is probably much to be learned about working with young people in multicultural settings, and I think that people who are working on initiatives need to communicate or partner in an effective way with groups that do this work well, to ensure that the issues I have discussed are addressed.

## **A Conversation on Multiculturalism: Rhetoric, Practicalities, Challenges, and Solutions**

Dalal Smiley (Multicultural Affairs Co-ordinator, City of Darebin) interviewing Prof. Mary Kalantzis (Chair of Education, RMIT)

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*Could you tell us a bit about your background? When did you come to Australia? What was Australia like when you grew up?*

Like many people who have been brought here, my parents brought me here in 1953, on the invitation of Australia. In those years directly after the war Australia recruited people from all over Europe to come and work, and to contribute to making Australia a rich and comfortable country. I remember growing up in a communal household in Erskineville with migrants from wave after wave of migration living with us. Then they would find a house and move on. There was an enormous love and co-operation amongst people, and an enormous sense of ever trying to help each other. Those values were ones that I was raised in – that you had to help one another and that success was a collective success, not just an individual success.

But I also remember my first experience at school, as a child of poor people with a hand-me-down uniform without a belt, and a little hairdo. In those days there used to be a hairstyle that was like a little bread roll on top of your head, which was very fashionable in Greece in the 1950s but very peculiar in Australia. My mother would try to compensate for my poor clothing by giving me this fancy hairdo, but when I went to school people would of course mock this funny hairdo, and I was confused because mum took so long to do it, yet it created so much pain. And as I grew up in Australia, I thought I was in Australia – when we ate Greek food, I thought it was in Australia; when we went to Greek church, I thought it was in Australia; when we were sang our Greek songs, I thought they were Australian. Because that did not happen in Greece, it happened in Australia. I did discover that there were two realities, but they were not separate for me because I was moving in and out of them. I was in my home and in my school, in my home and in my neighbourhood. They were all Australia to me – it was just that in some places there were absences.

When I was growing up all these things just made me curious. I did not have any resentment or pain about it. Rather, I wondered, ‘what is this place? And *how* is it? Why are some things in and some things out, and why are some things valued?’ And it was from that curiosity that I felt that it would be worthwhile to contribute to stretching the idea of what it was to be Australian, so that we could all fit in comfortably, and not accuse each other but gain insight into how we made this country together.

*You grew up at a time of assimilation policies. As an adult you saw the development of multiculturalism, and you participated as an academic in the debate about multiculturalism. What does multiculturalism really mean to you?*

I engage with multiculturalism as a critic, and I still remember the day it happened. I was a young trainee teacher and I had gone to a seminar for the Catholic Education Office in Sydney. The Catholic Education Office was very progressive twenty or thirty years ago because it cared about the diversity in its schools. It wanted to figure out how many languages there were, get information about the different backgrounds – know how it could serve this diversity. At this seminar there was a well-meaning person who said, ‘there are a lot of Maltese kids in the Catholic system, and we need to teach them maths and English. Maltese people are going to be market gardeners – that is what they are mostly, and that is what they will be. So we are going to teach them maths and science through market gardening.’ So the school was going to establish a market garden for the Maltese to have their lessons, because that was where they were going to go – and this was described to me as multiculturalism! Therefore I was very critical of that first wave of multiculturalism, which was about describing our differences and then trying to teach our differences back to us. I insisted that multiculturalism is not about the “other” – multiculturalism is about *Australia*. The first wave of multiculturalism was about helping people feel they belonged, and to want to do this was a good thing, but it was so superficial. It was what we call ‘spaghetti-and-polka multiculturalism’: about food and dance, very superficial.

But then the migrant people themselves engaged with it and said, ‘we don’t want to go in this direction. This is not what we want. We want to participate in local politics. We want to be represented in our local council. We want our kids to get a good education that recognises their mother tongue as well as English. We want history to recognise what we have contributed.’ They did not want everything to go on as normal with the addition of some activities that focused on a particular culture or language. The real issue is that no country – whether it is Iraq, Australia, England, wherever – no country can go into the future without *seriously* addressing diversity.

*Is there not a dilemma here: to what degree does one tolerate certain aspects of other cultures and other religions that might conflict with some of the values that, perhaps, Australians feel are core, shared values?*

This goes back to a very difficult point I made earlier: what kind of a nation is any nation? And what mechanism does it have for allowing its citizens to negotiate those things? That really is a key question for all nations in the world today. If a nation claims to be a pluralist, democratic nation, it will have to have built into its mechanisms – its legal mechanisms, educational mechanisms, health mechanisms, all mechanisms that exist – the capacity for people to engage in making a decision. At different times different groups

will win, but you have to educate people to be advocates, to network, to make a difference, to have public conversations about those things. There is not a single answer – in a pluralist society you will have to have the morality of compromise. Everybody needs to be able to deal with the morality of compromise; everybody needs to be trained to engage in difficult dialogues. These are sensibilities that we need to train. We need mechanisms for participation in decision-making, in politics; we need to make sure that people have access to local government, to state government, to federal government; we need to make sure that the differences that are there are able to exert an influence. We need to regulate the media to make sure that people are able to find a voice. We need to create legislation that ensures that the media are not monopolised by one particular group and one particular voice. These are the processes of making society.

*Talking about access, you mentioned in some of your previous presentations the concept of access and diversity. It is common to speak of access and equity; you have introduced 'access and diversity'. You have described multiculturalism as a policy that makes diversity a resource for access and a framework through which access occurs without prejudice to diversity. One of the difficult areas in which multiculturalism has not made much of an impact is the area of employment and recruitment, for instance within the public sector. Indeed, the State Government public sector has a very low representation of people from a non-English-speaking background within its ranks. What would you say is causing that?*

That definition of multiculturalism as involving access and diversity is a very important one. There are people of difference in, for instance, the public sector or the university sector. Thus, such a sector will want to make sure it has in its ranks men and women, people of Indigenous background, people of Lebanese background, and so on. In our recruitment processes we will look for this, we will make sure we have a coloured face or someone who speaks another language and so on, and we will recruit them. But once they are in the school or public sector, we expect them to be like us! And then I say, ideally, there should be access and diversity; ideally, if we bring in people of difference, it is because we value that difference. However, it is true that mostly people want a workplace that runs smoothly and without conflict, and many people think they will get that if the people they employ are *more* like them rather than *less* like them – it is a natural, more-or-less human kind of reaction. This leads to the application of the so-called merit principle: 'I have a job, it requires these skills and these qualifications, and if somebody has these they will get the job, irrespective of their background.' But the way in which merit is implemented and the ideas of 'fit' that come with it – you want people who will fit in, people who are part of the culture – mean that you are really looking for somebody who is more like you rather than less like you, in often very subtle ways. Unless you actively say, 'I want somebody who will complement what we have, somebody who brings a different set of values, or a different lens on solving problems, or a different way of understanding, because we serve women or older generations or young people' – unless you actually value

diversity – unfortunately what you get is people playing it safe. What I am saying is that in this country, in the production of products for sale and in the services for people, if you want to maximise your returns in appropriate products and appropriate services, then you will bring in people of difference and value these differences – and your profits, your efficiency and your output will increase.

*Talking about that same issue, what are your views on the power relations between the mainstream, dominant culture and minority groups?*

That is a very important question, and that is where I come back to saying, personally, professionally, my work is about Australia. I think that unless you work on *what it is to be Australian*, you do not address the power question, which is very subtle. I think we are a genuine democracy – we have had discussions about reconciliation, gender equality, and so on. That is what happens in a democracy – citizens say: ‘I want to shape the future, I want to contribute to it’. And we have the mechanisms to do that. So whether it is Australia or Greece or, now, Iraq, if you are going to talk about freedom and democracy, you have to negotiate those values.

The hardest part of this is negotiating the symbols. We say, ‘OK, we will give you a job and we will give you a house, but don’t you muck around with our symbols, which are our identity’. And that is the difficult part, whether it is in Greece or in Australia or elsewhere. We have to be able to move to symbols that transcend and are inclusive. What symbols do we have now that, when we see them, make us *all* feel that they represent *us*? And when a country changes, sometimes it might need a change of some of symbols as well. I do think (for we cannot be naïve) that those who have power are reluctant to give it up, so they have to see why it is in their interest to negotiate that. What multiculturalism did not do was help mainstream people understand why it was in their interest; it did not help the people whose lives were changed, people (and it was not just Pauline Hanson) who said, ‘I did not move from my neighbourhood, and now all of a sudden we have Vietnamese around here. I did not ask for that, what has happened?’ That is why the public sector has a responsibility to produce sociality and cohesion: it can invite people from all over the world to debate this. For instance, a so-called conditioning program was run through the Good Neighbour Council, the Women’s Weekly and the television, in which they said, ‘nine out of ten people who migrate here are going to look like you, and they are going to make it better for you.’ So you do need a very robust multicultural program today, which enables all groups to see what benefits it will bring to them if they go in this direction.

*You have mentioned several times that you are a strategic optimist. What does that mean?*

What I mean by that is that we often spend too much time being critical and being negative and doing critique – and although there are good reasons to do that and it needs to be done, it makes people depressed. It does not move you forward. So in all bad contexts you have to find that bit that moves you forward, that bit that is strategic – ally optimistic. Where is the optimism, and how do you speak about it, so that it is strategic and garners force? If you only voice criticism, if you only accuse people of leaving you out, they get scared, ashamed and angry, and those are not positive things to move you forward. For instance, take the refugee and asylum seeker situation now. It is correct that we say that their treatment is wrong, but we also have to do something about it that is positive and forward-looking. We have to look at what it is in the Australian character that says that this is the wrong thing to do to human beings, find that, and strategically position it.

*Finally, the future: globalisation and multiculturalism. How are they going to affect each other? What is it going to mean?*

People have negative views and positive views about globalisation; my own belief is that the only possibility for a transcendent human agenda, beyond the narrowness of nation, will be globalisation. Within such an agenda we can be proud of the geographic space and the collectivity we are part of, but understand our humanity beyond that. There is one theory that says that globalisation will make us the same, but I happen to believe in human creativity – humans are creative, and as long as we are not cloned from one DNA strand we will always be creative, and determine our needs differently, and invent languages and clothing and food and ways of belonging. Diversity is part of being human, and there will be more diversity in the future rather than less diversity. Therefore we need to have the sensibilities to navigate it, to discern how we pick and choose, and to create services to ensure that everybody has access to a good life.

## **Cross-Cultural Analysis of Community Building Polices**

by Maria Dimopoulos (Myriad Consultants Pty Ltd, Victoria)

First of all let me acknowledge the local custodians of the land on which the 'Community engagement' seminar was held, the Wurundjeri, and pay my respects to their elders and their ancestors. It is clear that justice for Indigenous people has to lie at the centre of any discussion of community engagement, and it is important that we do not forget that as the overall framework. When I was approached to present a paper at the seminar, I was tossing over how I might best put down my thoughts. Then, in reading up, I came across a wonderful fairy tale that quite aptly explains what I want to share with you. It is a modern-day allegory of a very old fairy tale, by a British woman called Salma Siddique (2004), and it is paraphrased below.

*Once there was a young Asian woman named Kali, who was struggling with accepting just a single identity. Her community gave her the nickname of Snow White, indicative of the discriminatory notion of associating pleasant qualities with good and purity. Snow White was undoubtedly caught up in the colonised ideology of the majority communities.*

*When Snow White was young, her mother died of diabetes, which went undiagnosed and untreated. Her father, a respected but self-appointed community leader, decided to throw himself into local politics and offered advice to various agencies on the likes and dislikes of 'the Asian community'. Snow White did her best to please her father and uphold the values of the community by not speaking about taboo or difficult subjects.*

*In the community leader's possession was a magic mirror that would answer truthfully any questions asked it. Years of institutional racism and social conditioning in a white, middle-class, public-school-educated, male-hierarchical environment had left the community leader very insecure about his own self-worth. Speaking on behalf of 'the Asian community' and the ability to converse with politicians from far-off lands was the only standard that the community leader cared about and defined himself by. So every morning, the community leader would ask his mirror: 'Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest one of all?' And his mirror would answer: 'For all it is worth, oh my community leader, you are the fairest of all.'*

*This dialogue went on for a number of years until one day, the community leader's consultations with his people did not quite bear fruit. So desperately in need of support he asked his usual question and the mirror answered: 'Alas, if worth be based on more than beauty, Snow White has surpassed you and the masses, politicians are turning to her for guidance in the climate of policy change.'*

*The chance to work with Snow White and to form a strong bond in the struggle against racism and inequality was not to be; instead the community leader indulged in the power trip, because he loved the fame and public adulation, and he wasn't ready to share his rather spacious office. The community leader ordered the woodsperson to take Snow-white into the woods and silence her. The woodsperson was to return with the girl's heart as proof of disgraceful discharge.*

The woodsperson agreed to these orders and led the girl away. However, because the woodsperson had an extensive induction in anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice, which meant he understood the group dynamics at the heart of cultural competence, he could not bear to harm the girl. He told Snow White that he understood the oppressive nature of her relationship with the community leader; he knew the community leader had become angry when Snow White challenged the notions of forced marriage and domestic violence. The woodsperson said he was not going to collude with the oppression, and told her to run as deeply as she could into the forest.

The frightened Snow White did as she was told. The woodsperson, fearing the community leader's wrath but unwilling to indulge his fantasy and ego, went into town and managed to get a lamb's heart from the local halal butchers. Meanwhile, Snow White ran into the forest, and just as she thought she had fled as far as she could from urban life and its unhealthy influences, she stumbled upon a high-rise block of flats. Inside, she saw seven unmade beds in a row. She surmised that this single room belonged to seven people. The beds looked so inviting that Snow White curled up and went to sleep.

Waking a few hours later, Snow White saw the faces of seven bearded, vertically challenged equalities surrounding her. She sat up with a start and gasped. One of the equalities said: 'You see that? Just like a community worker: resting peacefully one minute, up and screaming the next!' 'I agree,' said another, 'she will disrupt our strong bond of non-hierarchical collective and create competition between us for her attention. I say let's throw her into the river.' Snow White finally regained her senses and she begged: 'Please don't, I mean no harm. I haven't been sent by the community leader to find out about capacity-building workshops or consultations.' 'Ah, you see,' said one of the equalities, 'sent by the community leader to capacity-build. The preoccupations are already surfacing. She will complain that we haven't made our beds, therefore we can't cope with the cultural shift, so we need to attend a workshop or three.' 'My name is Kali,' she said, 'but the people I work with call me Snow White. And as I have already told you, the community leader ordered a woodsperson to take me into the forest and kill me. But he let me go.'

Meanwhile, back in the enchanted kingdom, the community leader rejoiced at the thought that finally his rival had been eliminated. He decided to ask the magic mirror the same questions as in all the times before. 'Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the fairest of them all?' The mirror replied: 'Sorry pal, it is still Snow White.' At that news the community leader clenched his fists and yelled. For years the insecurities had been eating away at him, until now they turned him into someone who was morally out of the mainstream. With cunning and malice he began to devise a plan to ensure there was no more competition.

A few days later, Snow White was mediating when suddenly there was a knock at the door. Snow White opened the door to an older woman with a basket of apples. The woman spoke about how, now that she had retired, she needed to keep working to supplement her meagre pension. Snow White purchased a tiny red apple; on biting, she instantly fell into a deep sleep.

After a while, loads of the equalities came into the kingdom to challenge the community leader and his practices of speaking for all the communities on these very complex issues. There was much shouting and name-calling, but eventually the

*community leader gave way and the seven equalities began to speak for themselves. And things gradually began to change.*

*As for Snow White, the professionals were unable to wake her, because they did not know what drugs Snow White was given. The equalities joined together in a non-hierarchical way to govern the kingdom. The Common-sense Charter was passed, whereby all groups and communities were assumed as heterogeneous. And they lived happily ever after.*

There are a number of morals to this very enlightening fairy tale by Salma Siddique. Models of community development and community engagement clearly need to be conscious of a number of questions. Firstly: who is this community that policies of community engagement and community development speak of? Who is engaging with whom and for what? Why do so many community engagement strategies seek out our so-called community leaders, as if 'Asian communities', 'African communities' etc. existed and therefore could somehow be 'represented' as one unitary whole? What are the implications of such consultations for people who are further marginalised – women, people with disabilities, and so on? And, finally: building whose capacity, and the capacity to undertake what?

Contrary to popular wisdom and mainstream multiculturalist discourses that seek to naturalise the concept of community, the concept is not a natural entity. Rather than referring to a spontaneous or natural association of people, the concept of community, as Hermani Benati has pointed out, is a political and cultural ideological formation, projected upon the social relations that are the basis of social life. Benati has analysed the ways in which external forces, dominant ideologies etc. construct discrete and bounded ethnic or cultural communities, and attribute various characteristics to these entities – which are often characteristics that are racist, patriarchal, and colonial. Can anybody possibly describe who the African community actually is? Benati has also analysed the ways in which so-called ethnic or cultural communities create and sustain themselves on the basis of reinvented histories, problematic notions of tradition, and common linguistic and religious practices. In order to maintain the idea of a cohesive, unified, and natural entity (which is what the mainstream expects us to be) communities fall into the trap of suppressing their own internal divisions and seek to present themselves as seamless realities. Thus, the existence of an apparently cohesive, happy community relies upon the silence of its own members when it comes to differences and power relations. To speak out about violence within our communities is, often, to risk criticism for putting that community at risk of further racist attack – a powerful deterrent against women and men speaking out against family violence in immigrant and refugee communities. Indeed, when we talk of community, we must take great care to ensure that we are not inadvertently engaging in the very practice of assimilation, suppression and further denial.

Who is engaging with whom and for what reason? When an institution or an agency embarks on a community engagement strategy, it must be able to interrogate itself, its worldview, and its culture. It must also scrutinise its own desire to shift the inherent power that comes with setting the agenda for that dialogue. Many engagement strategies identify as a key objective the need to develop social cohesion. It must be said that, of course, social cohesion is clearly not the same as social inclusion. The former does not necessarily ensure the latter, for multiple forms of exclusion can exist in a so-called cohesive society. Nevertheless, the crucial questions persist: cohesion around what vision? Inclusion to what? Are we really talking about assimilation? Is this a new way of managing minority relations? Is this so-called Anglo-conformity, or even multiculturalism, in a new guise? And why do so many community engagement strategies, with their language of consultation, seek out community leaders as a first port of call – as if ‘Asian communities’, ‘African communities’ etc. existed and therefore could somehow be represented? It must be remembered that the concept of Africa only came into existence after the Berlin Conference, when the European western world decided to call that continent ‘Africa’ for its own purposes. This raises the problematic use and acceptance of ‘culture’, the language of ‘authenticity’ – who is and is not, for instance, an ‘authentic Greek’? Personally I am often asked if I was born in Greece or in Australia – if I were born in Australia I am considered not ‘authentic’. I frequently observe various agencies undertaking community consultation strategies by engaging community leaders, who are often self-appointed. Whereas that strategy is an important one (and I am not suggesting that we do away with it), it is not the only one. In fact, it is sometimes fraught with problems. As a particular example one can think of the obsession that community engagement strategies seem to have with western individualist notions that ignore collectivist ideas of leadership. It may or may not come as a surprise, but many languages in various parts of the world, including many Aboriginal languages, have no word for the concept of ‘I’ that can be translated literally. The implications of distinctions between individualist ideas of leadership and collectivist ideas of leadership must be taken into account – we cannot insist on having one or two leaders represent entire diverse communities. The issue of the ‘representative’ politician to whom is given the voice of a certain segment of the population is a major one that requires consideration in the implementation of community engagement strategies. It is based on a number of flawed assumptions: the homogeneity of communities, essentialist notions of culture, and fixed ideas of identity.

In a book called ‘Inessential woman: problems of exclusion in feminist thought’, Elizabeth Spelman (1990) makes reference to a scene in an Iris Murdoch novel called ‘The nice and the good’ (1969). An elderly gentleman called uncle Theo sits with his twin niece and nephew while they play on the seashore. The beach is a source of acute discomfort to uncle Theo:

*Uncle Theo [...] fingered the mauve and white pebbles on the beach. These stones, which brought such pleasure to the twins, were a nightmare to Theo. Their multiplicity and randomness appalled him. [...] The pebbles [...] looked at closely [...] exhibited almost every intermediate colour and also varied considerably in size and shape. All were rounded, but some were flattish, some oblong, some spherical; some were almost transparent, others more or less copiously speckled (Murdoch 1969: 158-59, as cited in Spelman 1990: 2).*

Theo is described as a man who can only negotiate the possibility of plurality if the many can be reduced to a few, or best of all, to one. I see community engagement strategies that might as well be uncle Theo. Diversity scares us. Many of us have the impulse to essentialise, just like uncle Theo: Greek people 'are like that', Chinese people 'do this'. Categorisation is easy as people fall back on stereotypes and imagery around the constructions of difference. However, the danger of categorisation is that it assumes an essence, or a series of traits, that somehow belong to a community. It needs to be remembered that there is no single public sphere, no single notion of citizenship, and no single notion of social cohesion. There are, instead, multiple spheres, in which multiple groups can develop their own sense of cohesion, to contest oppression, discrimination, and exclusion. Culture and cultural consideration are clearly important, and cultural competencies creep into the requirements around community engagement strategies.

Culture certainly promised to be a useful tool that would better implement (outcomes around) community development projects, but two quotes are often heard. Firstly, it is often said that, 'their society is based on kinship relations, and therefore we must too.' And so I witness elaborate discussions around culturally appropriate strategies of engagement. Later, however, when these same projects might fail, similar moves are made to explain why they were doomed from the start: 'You see, their society is based on kinship relations, and so they can't'. You cannot win. Culture is not fit, it is not static; we cannot persist in understanding culture in this way. I often tell the story of my mother, who is a wonderful source of cultural anecdotes to me. She often laments the fact that my brother and I lost contact with our Greek heritage, and she goes on and on about my cousins in Greece, who are so respectful of their elders, who do not come home at all hours of the night, and who certainly do not talk back to their parents. Several years ago I travelled back to the northern part of Greece and met up with my aunties and uncles. I asked my auntie: 'Where are these cousins, I really can't wait to find them.' My auntie looked at my uncle and said, 'well, your cousin Nikos, he is somewhere in Athens, you know, we haven't seen him for about three weeks. And your other cousin, she has eloped with somebody, but we are not really sure with whom.' And so the 'horror stories' continued – and of course, being a good lawyer, I meticulously took down every single detail, presented my mother with the record of proceedings, and said, 'Guess what, mum, over there they are as lousy as we are!' She was mortified and she said it was

because they are not really Greek! The true Greeks are the Greeks living in Melbourne...

Culture shifts and changes, and community engagement strategies can only respectfully engage with cultural difference if they do so in a way that respects *the sophistication of* cultural difference. So what is the way forward? How can we be, to use Mary Kalantzis' words, strategically optimistic? Perhaps, to some extent, we need to move away from these ideas of culture and cultural competence – what we really need to be talking about seriously is making room for previously marginalised or submerged voices, making a place and a space for the marginalised to speak of and from their own experience, without immediately trying to assimilate and package up that experience so it fits within our funding requirements. This will mean sitting with the contradictions and evidence (by various presentations) and recognising that, although we might not have a neat theoretical framework within which to fit everybody in, the speaking and the hearing is the most important part of the work. As Iris Young states: 'Doing justice to people requires attention to the specific voice or voices and languages that people speak and to what they are saying.' And it needs to be emphasised that this is certainly more than tolerance. Personally, I look forward to an engagement strategy that actually seeks to engage, not only with ideas of cultural competency but in a dialogue that seeks to discuss racism and its silencing in communities and that seeks to highlight issues of equity in our community. For social inclusion to really matter, community engagement must include discussions of anger, oppression, and discrimination, as much as it would like to promote diversity and its celebration. In conclusion, to quote black American civil rights activist Angela Davis: 'Multiculturalism has acquired a quality akin to spectacle: the metaphor that has displaced the melting pot is now the salad. A salad consists of many ingredients, is colourful and beautiful, and is, at the end of the day, to be consumed by someone. Who consumes multiculturalism is a question you must ask of yourselves.' When we are building capacity we must ensure we do not inadvertently consume, but allow growth.

# **The Ethno-Politics of Community: Middle Class Institutions, Middle Class Manners, Middle Class Solutions?**

by Dr Peter Kelly (Head of Behavioural Studies, School of Political and Social Enquiry, Monash University)

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*The great ideological struggle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was all about money. Would capitalism or communism triumph in the running of the economic system? This struggle has left mainstream politics drained of a framework and language to deal with the social issues of the new century. Public policy needs to emerge from what amounts to a civic conversation: political leaders engaging the public in a dialogue about moral values ... governments need to ... position civil society as an agent of moral dialogue, encouraging people to reassess and redefine their obligations to each other... This reflects what is known as a communitarian approach to politics (Latham 2001a: 24).*

From the perspective I want to employ in this presentation we can argue that community, as many such as Latham view it, is as an 'imagined territory' (Rose 1996) that promises to provide the spaces, the relationships and the techniques in which certain preferred ways of thinking and acting might be produced. And produced not through the actions of an easily demonised, and monolithic State, but by a wide range of Non Government Agencies (NGOs) and Quasi Autonomous Non Government Agencies (QUANGOs), under the stewardship of a so-called 'enabling state', in a multitude of settings, and in relation to a diversity of ends (Botsman and Latham 2001). These include the government of law and order, unemployment, health and wellbeing, education, and the spatial impacts of globalisation that see the emergence of new territories of government – such as 'action zones', 'regeneration zones', and 'communities' – in which individuals and communities must take on the responsibilities for dealing with these issues (Blair 2001; Straw 2001).

In this presentation I want to suggest that the *governmentalisation* of community (Foucault 1991) results in the etho-politics of community assuming a decidedly *middle class* character. That is, when a range of State agencies, QUANGOs and NGOs colonise *community* via the 'moral vocabulary' (Rose 1999) of communitarianism then we witness middle class institutions, with middle class manners/sensibilities offering a range of middle class solutions to the political, economic and social problems that impact most profoundly on the *disadvantaged*, the *underserved*, the *poor*, the *working classes* – the Others to these middle classes.

The key to this argument is that the governmentalisation of community is driven by a number of processes – (a) institutionalisation, (b) rationalisation and (c) abstraction.

- a) Institutionalisation in the sense that community, as an ideal, as a solution becomes firmly entrenched in the practices of various State agencies, NGOs and QUANGOs, and gives rise to certain funding, evaluation, and performance criteria and practices.
- b) Rationalisation in the sense that a variety of issues, and their solutions, are understood within a communitarian framework. Ideas about what constitutes community, or what community represents or promises are central to the ways these institutions understand issues and solutions.
- c) Abstraction in the sense that these ideals and promises, and these institutionalised practices require communities to operate or function within models that pay little attention to the peculiarities of places, individuals and groups.

### **Middle Class Manners, Middle Class Institutions, Middle Class Solutions?**

I want to begin with some initial thoughts on the speculative use of *middle class* in the title of this presentation. Class is an *unfashionable* term - so much so that in many settings people can make the claim that Australia is a *classless* society - a claim echoed in other places such as *cool Britannia*, where *class* is seen to be a part of an older, discredited discourse. Indeed, in 2002 a property development firm, with its sights set on the development of a luxury housing complex in Chelsea in London, sought a High Court ruling that the working classes no longer exist. Such a ruling would set aside a covenant placed on the potential development site in 1929 which reserved this area of London for housing for the working classes (see, J. Burchill, 'Call Me Middle-Class and I'll Punch You', *The Guardian*, 12 April 2002, and J. O'Farrell, 'Goodbye, Working Class', *The Guardian*, 13 April 2002).

Craig McGregor, in his book *Class in Australia*, points to some of the limitations of *classless* discourses, arguing that class remains fundamental to shaping life choices, life chances and life courses:

*'Australia? Classless? It's a sour joke...As the billionaire and millionaire entrepreneurs of post-deregulation rip slickly through the financial system, and hip techno-graduates dine stylishly beneath the grape-shrouded trellises of Carlton and Paddington, and neat little kids in white collars and slick backed hair lock themselves into their bank-tellers' cages, and generations of westies head for the data processor and the jackhammer and the factory floor, and 2.5 million Australians rehearse death by drowning beneath the poverty line, it seems obscene not to deal with class'* (McGregor 1997: 4).

At the outset I want to reintroduce class as a central element into any discussion of what I identify as the governmentalisation of community:

central to the ways in which community is positioned as an ideal and as a solution: and central also to understanding the roles played by *middle class* professionals who drive these processes in the range of institutions that seek to find in communities the solutions to any number of problems (Hinkson 1992a; Cass and Brennan 2002; Hinkson 1993; Sharp 1992; Watts 1993/94; Sharp 1993, 1995; Hinkson 1995, 1992b).

So, when community is named in terms of deficits or lacks - as contemporary concerns with *capacity building* would suggest - are we witness to middle class institutions, with middle class manners suggesting middle class solutions to a variety of problems? Solutions that rely heavily on often unstated assumptions that it is the deficits, or the lacks, of the poor (deserving or not) that contribute to their situation (Fine 1994; Swadener and Lubeck 1995).

### **The Etho-Politics of Community**

Indigenous communities. The Gay and Lesbian Community. Ethnic communities. School communities. The Ipswich community. Although there is less often talk about, say, a Toorak community. Communities of all shapes and sorts. If the concept of class is potentially so slippery as to lose meaning then the contemporary love affair with the idea of community faces the same risk. Communitarian discourses have attracted a number of critiques - often targeting the nostalgia that structures and accompanies the idealisation of community (Bauman 2001; Bryan 2001; Cass and Brennan 2002; Everingham 2001; Robin 2001).

In a substantial review article Nikolas Rose (1999) canvasses the political, economic and ethical terrain marked out by the invention of a so-called Third Way political agenda in many of the Anglo and European democracies - a Third Way that invests heavily in the idea of *community*. Rose (1999) argues that while the Third Way's project is in many respects hardly 'novel' and, indeed, is lacking in *inventiveness*, it is distinctive in the sense that it is grounded in explicitly defined 'values'. For example, British Prime Minister Tony Blair outlines a mission for New Labour that seeks to 'promote and reconcile four values which are essential to a just society which maximises the freedom and potential of all our people - equal worth, opportunity for all, responsibility and community' (cited in Rose 1999: 470). The first two of these values are, for Rose, familiar elements in a 'left of centre' political project. The final two are 'distinctive' but hardly original political ideals. In contemporary communitarian discourses these values suggest new forms of obligation (Burchell 1996) between - as Rose (1999) suggests - 'those who have the power to exercise power and those who have an obligation to be its subjects. While the former must provide the conditions for the good life, the latter must deserve to inhabit it by building strong communities and exercising active responsible citizenship' (Rose 1999: 471).

Rose (1999) argues that the 'etho-politics' of community searches for new ways of 'acting upon the ethical formation and the ethical self management of individuals so as to promote their engagement in their collective destiny in the interests of economic advancement, civic stability, even justice and happiness' (*ibid.*: 475). He argues that this etho-politics can be identified via the 'moral vocabulary' of communitarianism and its use of ideals such as 'partnerships, civil society, community, civility, responsibility, mutuality, obligations, voluntary endeavour, autonomy, initiative...' (*ibid.*: 474). An 'etho-politics' attempts to 'act upon conduct by acting upon the forces thought to shape the values, beliefs, moralities that themselves are thought to determine the everyday...choices that human beings make as to how they lead their lives' (*ibid.*: 477-478). For Rose (1999) the etho-politics of community 'puts new questions into play about the kinds of people we are, the kinds of problems we face, the kinds of relations of truth and power through which we are governed and through which we should govern ourselves' (*ibid.*: 478).

### **The Moral Obligations of a Communitarian Politics**

Political inventiveness, for Rose (1999), is suggestive of the 'kinds of *problems* that trouble political thought' - and the sorts of solutions that emerge on the horizons of our thoughts (*ibid.*: 468). I want to spend some time here identifying and analysing the horizons mapped out in a recent Australian based imagining of the Third Way.

Returning to the essay from which the opening quote in this essay was drawn from, I want to briefly examine Mark Latham's discussion of key Third Way principles of *Life Long Learning*, *Social Partnerships and Service Devolution*, and *Social Entrepreneurs*. In these principles we can discern the middle class etho-politics that shapes the governmentalisation of community.

#### *Life Long Learning*

The idea, and the obligation, of *Life long learning* is positioned as a primary objective of a Third Way agenda as it is, for Latham, the 'one public process dedicated to preparing people for the inevitability of change - developing new skills in the workplace, plus the habits of trust and tolerance in society'. The New Economy and the New Politics, in this sense, demands of its Subjects a 'richness of lifelong learning and self improvement' (Latham 2001a: 20).

A key element in Latham's idea of 'learning beyond the classroom' - an element that exists alongside such ideas as civic focused *Learning Circles*, internet cafes in licensed Clubs, and *learning accounts* to overcome 'attitudinal resistance' among 'blue collar males' - is the primacy accorded to *parents as educators* (Latham 2001b: 39-58). Latham argues that a parent's fundamental responsibility is to be an 'effective educator' in the home. Skills in play

activities, reading and homework assistance, are considered vital 'in breaking the cycle of long-term poverty', and dependence on welfare 'should be no excuse for poor parenting' (*ibid.*: 49).

In this obligation to life long learning we see attempts to make up individuals and communities in the image of the professional middle classes - an image comprised of an ensemble of behaviours and dispositions that promise the possibility of a certain type of ongoing ethical self-improvement. These ideas also assume that middle classness brings with it fully developed parenting and life skills.

It is not so much that the idea of life long learning is *bad*. Rather, it is the articulation of a moral obligation to continual self-improvement, and the accompanying responsibilities that attach to individuals and communities as a consequence of actively participating (or not) in this 'game of enterprise' (Gordon 1991), that is so problematic. Particularly when, as is the case in the provision of income support for *Jobseekers* (the persons formerly known as the *Unemployed*), 'active citizenship' attracts sanctions if it is not active *enough* (Dean 1995).

#### *Social Partnerships and Service Devolution*

(Latham 2001a) argues that in a networked society governments need to provide answers to questions such as: 'In tackling social problems, how many alliances and partners can we draw into the work of government?' Governments need to promote capacities, opportunities and imperatives to network and collaborate. Governments can produce these desirable collaborative partnerships by allocating funding in ways that 'lever' organisations closer together (*ibid.*: 21).

The 'enabling state', argues Latham (2001a), can rebuild social capital in the transfer of power from 'bureaucracies to communities of interest'. New forms of responsibility emerge for these 'communities of interest' as the development, delivery and evaluation of certain education, health, housing, employment, family and disability services becomes a task to be managed by a range of NGOs and community groups under the auspices of a 'clearing house' State (*ibid.*: 21).

Graeme Burchell (1996) has argued that the devolution to communities of formerly *social* areas of responsibility can be thought of as new forms of 'responsibilization'. Here, individuals, groups and communities are encouraged to govern themselves (*ibid.*: 29). However, the 'contractual implication' of these processes is that individuals and communities 'must assume active responsibility for these activities, both for carrying them out, and of course, for their outcomes' (*ibid.*). These processes of 'responsibilization' also encourage these communities of interest to 'conduct themselves in accordance with the appropriate...model of action' (*ibid.*).

An example: Third sector sellers of employment services to the Federal government have to *breach* those unemployed who fail to meet their obligations as *active jobseekers*. Breaching here involves a substantial loss of income support for unemployed persons for an extended period of time – a penalty incurred by the unemployed as a consequence of not meeting activity criteria within a framework of so-called *mutual obligation* (MacIntyre 1999; Wales 1988; Eardley 2002). Some have argued that this obligation to breach is contradictory to the *mission* of many of these organisations (C. Dore and T. Harris, 'Breaching the Limits of Charity', *The Weekend Australian*, 23-24 June 2001, p. 21). The moral vocabulary of *activity*, *obligation* and *responsibility* strips the experience of *jobseeking* of any cultural, social, geographical, economic or political context – these too become abstractions reflecting, in part, the class based experiences and values of those who develop and implement these policy frameworks.

### *Social Entrepreneurs*

For Latham (2001a) and others the character of the social entrepreneur is the self proclaimed 'big idea' in Third Way welfare policy. These *networkers* ideally 'combine the best of social practice, forging new connections and support between people, with the best of business practice, encouraging risk taking and creativity in poor neighbourhoods' (*ibid.*: 23). Social entrepreneurs, as brokers in social capital, are responsible for 'identifying small bursts of effort and achievement; linking these projects into new partnerships and alliances; facilitating a wider span of community success and self esteem' (*ibid.*: 23-24).

As many in the community sector would testify the idea of networked, small bursts of effort often translates into massive investments in the risky business of compulsory competitive tendering, non recurrent grant applications and network building and maintenance. An investment that can result in high staff attrition rates, limited attention to *core business*, and a sense that social problems transform into project planning meetings, into evaluations, and into a focus on identifying *deliverables* (even if these are short term and not sustainable). This is the present reality of a 'clearing house' State that acts as a purchaser of service development, delivery and evaluation from the agencies of civil society (Eardley 2002).

For many apologists of the Third Way social entrepreneurs are the 'successful', 'active' participants in a 'range of economic, education and social networks'. In Latham's (2001a) view *active* participation is determined, not by government spending or market forces, but, rather, by 'self esteem', 'confidence' and a 'common purpose' in people's lives. According to Latham the 'core demand' in settings and neighbourhoods of poverty is to 'make the neighbourhood normal' (*ibid.*: 23).

This view of *normality* continues an historical trend whereby middle classness is the norm against which the poor are positioned as the Other. An Other that is marked by deficit or lack - not only of the material and economic resources necessary for a good life, but also by the ethical and moral predispositions and commitments that would help secure this good life.

A current governmental concern with capacity building in individuals and communities at-risk is reflective, in this sense, of a history of Liberal government in which certain 'assumptions about the mind of the masses have been central to their regulation' (Walkerdine 1997: 15). Various governmental projects, which take as their objects the capacities of the working class, are structured, Valerie Walkerdine (1997) argues, by a rationality which positions 'middle classness' as 'normal', and 'working classness' as a 'deviant pathology' to be transformed where possible by 'correctional strategies that will make working class subjects more like their middle-class counterparts' (*ibid.*: 29). For Walkerdine (1997) these fictions have, historically, exhibited little 'interest in the way that working people actually survived and lived and coped during particular historical periods in particular places and circumstances'. Rather, what has been of central importance in these fictions are the 'discourses and practices of how they might become something else' (*ibid.*: 32).

### **The Governmentalisation of Community and a lack of Political Inventiveness – Some Closing Remarks**

The etho-politics of community displays a marked lack of inventiveness, and a narrowness of horizon in relation to many of the issues that confront and confound individuals, groups, localities, nations and the planet. This lack of imagination is most apparent in those rationalities that seek to create new obligations for individuals and communities without adequately accounting for the relations of power that shape the different life chances, life choices and life courses of individuals and communities.

The *governmentalisation of community* witnesses the institutionalisation, rationalisation and abstraction of community. (Foucault 1991) These processes seek to produce particular forms of ethical self-awareness and management in the Subjects of community. It can be argued that in many important respects these processes assume the appearance of middle class institutions attempting to make up communities and Subjects in their own image.

Political invention is an ongoing process and concern - a process that should involve looking back and forward. A key task in these processes might be to imagine such things as *obligations, responsibilities, activity* and *entrepreneurship* in ways that are different to those invented to date in a governmentalised communitarianism. These practices of invention would acknowledge that many of the processes that shape different life choices, life chances and life

courses at the individual and local level are structured by global processes - and by some quite fundamental 'human forces of greed and exploitation...complacency, prejudice and hypocrisy' (Rose 1999: 471). They would also acknowledge that the characteristics that constitute the figures of the *entrepreneur*, the *stakeholder* and the *community* are fundamentally shaped by the contours of a class divided society - even if we should continue to discuss the nature and consequences of such a society, and how these consequences might impact on our *capacities* for political imagination and inventiveness.

## **The Problem with Social Capital**

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by Dr Christopher Scanlon (Researcher, RMIT Globalism Institute)

The term 'social capital' has become a bit of a buzz phrase in recent years. Institutions like the World Bank, the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Productivity Commission use it and seek to measure it. In this paper I want to raise some problems with the notion of social capital and the ways in which it has become normalised as a way of talking about community. The arguments presented here draw on a paper I published in *Arena Magazine* (Scanlon 2004), which was a highly critical and in some senses polemical take on social capital. The feedback from that paper taught me that you invite some quite strange feedback when you talk about social capital in a critical way. Some people do not want to talk to you, or even become rude and uncivil – which is a rather odd way of building social capital. Many other people profess to have similar reservations about social capital, or feel that I have confirmed that they are not the only person 'who is thinking this'.

Although I believe the notion of 'social capital' does have a place in discussions of community, I am critical of the ways in which it has become interchangeable with community itself. I think that this interchangeability is both a mistake and a problem. While the ideas presented in this paper are still heavily critical of the ways in which the notion is being taken up, I feel it is important to approach the issues in the spirit mentioned by Mary Kalantzis in this volume, and reflect on how we can take this forward. I want to do so by re-introducing the older notion of 'social solidarity', which might strike a balance with regard to how we think about social connectiveness and the good things that social capital gives to us, such as trust and co-operation.

One of the main problems with social capital, in my view, is that it tends to limit how we think about public and social ethics. In particular, there is a tendency to subordinate relations of co-ordination, trust, reciprocity to the frame of capital. In other words, we come to think of co-operation, trust and reciprocity as marketable commodities that can simply be exchanged, as in a market place. Thus, it is argued here that the notion of social capital entails a transformation of mutual ethical obligations in terms of the distinctive social relations of capital.

There are a number of consequences that flow from this. The most important one, and the focus of this paper, is that it tends to debase 'ethics talk'. Discussions of ethics become an instrumental, rather undemanding affair that glosses over the deeper social sources of social obligations. Although social capital provides a framework for thinking about social relations of trust, co-operation and reciprocity, this framework has a tendency to produce some

quite perverse results — results that many of us would not necessarily agree with or want to adopt.

So what is 'social capital'? Social capital is a hot topic at the moment: no government document or funding application is complete without a reference to how the proposed activity will build or generate social capital and coming up with definitions of social capital is almost an academic industry in itself. Usually definitions of social capital are derived from definitions of two other forms of capital: physical capital and human capital. Physical capital refers to the material conditions of social existence — the things we use to produce things, such as infrastructure, buildings, and machinery. Human capital refers to the attributes of social actors — specifically, the skills and knowledge that those individual actors possess and use in productive ways. One of the chief proponents of social capital, James Coleman, whose work is central to many contemporary discussions of social capital, defines social capital as follows:

'If physical capital is wholly tangible, being embodied in observable material form, and human capital is less tangible, being embodied in the skills and knowledge acquired by an individual, social capital is less tangible still, for it exists in the social relations between people' (Coleman 1988: s100).

When people like Coleman and Robert Putnam, who has drawn on Coleman's work, discuss social capital, they are particularly interested in social relations of trust, co-operation, reciprocity, mutuality — the glue that binds people together and that can be used for productive ends. For Putnam, the core idea of social capital theory is that social networks have *value*. Just as a screwdriver (physical capital) or a college education (human capital) can increase productivity, both individual and collective, so can social contact affect the productivity of individuals and groups.

He goes further to distinguish social capital from civic virtue; the difference, he claims, is that social capital emphasises the social dimension of civic virtue. To paraphrase Putnam, a society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital. A conceptual distinction is thus made between being virtuous and being *socially* virtuous. Putnam also makes a distinction between *bonding* social capital — the relationships within social groups that bind those groups together — and *bridging* social capital, the external capital that links different groups together. Other people talk about horizontal forms of social capital, linking people who are roughly equal into a network, and vertical social capital, comprising those forms of trust and co-operation that work in a hierarchy (Putnam 2000: 19-24).

In policy circles most attention tends to be paid to those forms of social capital that are embedded within civic groups and communal organisations. Such groups are claimed to foster horizontal rather than vertical or hierarchically organised forms of social capital. Advocates of social capital also prefer

horizontally organised forms of social capital: loose, mobile forms of association that tend less towards rigid approaches to social integration. According to the literature, increasing levels of social trust and co-operation reduces crime and can increase academic performance, improve health and wellbeing, strengthen and revitalise participation in institutions of civil society, (thereby strengthening democracy), and increase economic efficiency. Some studies show these benefits hold even when other factors, such as gender, class, ethnicity, are controlled for, suggesting that social networks are a more powerful tool for understanding and advancing social and economic development than more traditional approaches, which focus on the distribution of tangible resources such as money or infrastructure. It is no wonder, then, that organizations such as the World Bank, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and people like Peter Costello, Mark Latham and members of the shadow cabinet, are interested in social capital: it does seem to be a very powerful policy tool.

In criticising social capital I am not suggesting that trust, co-operation and reciprocity are bad things. I make that qualification because when I once wrote a newspaper article criticising the notion of social capital, I got a flurry of emails of people asking what I have against trust and co-operation. I am not against trust and co-operation — I think they are good —but if these terms become a gloss for practices and activities that actually *undermine* trust and co-operation, then I think there is a problem. And I feel that social capital has a tendency to do that.

Moreover, I don't think that everyone who uses the term 'social capital' is compromised. People have a plethora of reasons for using social capital terminology, and they often do so in very strategic ways. Even people who admit to having reservations about the term often use it because it is the language that funding bodies understand. To use the contemporary buzz phrases is part of the politics of funding. (Incidentally, social capital as a buzz phrase appears to be on the way out, and the next buzz phrase will likely be 'creativity', which taps into the human capital discourse. Particularly in policy circles there has been a move away from social capital. New Labour in Britain has definitely moved away from social capital notions and I think it is only a matter of time before policy makers in Australia do so as well.)

Having made these qualifications, I do not believe that social capital should be abandoned completely. However, we need to acknowledge that it has been overused in order to justify a wide range of approaches. We need to get a much more explicit idea of what we are talking about when we talk about social capital. Indeed, there may be ways to transform social capital in a critical way — but before we can contemplate that possibility we first need to get a clearer handle on what it is we're talking about.

One of the problems with the discourse surrounding social capital is that there is a general lack of clarity as to the meaning and connotations of the term 'capital'. When people use the word capital, they generally use it to refer to tangible objects such as machinery or a plant — in other words, physical capital. However, this is a mistaken understanding of capital: capital is not a 'thing' but is always a social relationship. Karl Marx wrote three volumes on capital in an attempt to understand what is distinctive about capital. For Marx, 'Capital is not a thing, it is a definite social relation of production, pertaining to a particular historical-social formation (i.e. capitalism), which simply takes the form of a thing and gives this thing a specific social character' (Marx 1981 [1894]: 953). Particular objects such as land, machinery and money may *under certain circumstances* be regarded as capital, but they are not capital in themselves. It is only when they enter into certain kinds of social relations that they function as capital.

For instance, if a person simply hoards money, that money is not capital; if he or she uses that money to invest and get a return, it is capital. If a piece of machinery sits idle it is not capital; if a person uses that machinery to produce something and get a return, the person and the machine enter into a capitalistic relationship. So the question can be asked: if capital is always a social relationship, what is distinctive about capitalistic social relationships as opposed to other types of social relationships? Why do we call capital 'capital', rather than just referring broadly to social life?

I want to suggest that what distinguishes capital is that they entail exchange relationships, and these exchange relations are abstract in nature. By 'abstract' I mean that such relations are enacted and structured in ways that break out of the limits of particular places, times, locations, and people. For instance, when exchanging commodities in the market one does not even have to know that person that one is exchanging with. In fact, one might not even deal directly with a person. When you purchase a book on Amazon.com the exchange relationship is mediated by a server, rendering it highly abstract and not structured through any face-to-face or embodied connection between people. Writing is similarly abstract. For instance, I just quoted Marx; I have a relationship to Marx but we have never met and he has been dead for quite some time. Thus, I can communicate with Marx through the mediation of print; it is an abstract relationship. The distinctive characteristic of abstract social relations, such as those made possible by the commodity and print, is that they are more open and general than those that are structured through the embodied presence of another person. They are not based in particular communities and do not concern particular people. They therefore have the capacity to break out of the particular and the parochial to be structured across vast expanses of time and space.

The notion of social capital can be understood in a similar way. On this understanding, 'social capital' refers not simply to ethical relations of trust,

co-operation and reciprocity, but rather to abstract ways of enacting and constituting those relationships. Viewed through the lens of social capital, then, trust may refer to the 'transactional trust' between buyers and sellers in a market. Such forms of trust are relatively instrumental, fluid and short-term; they tend to be based on the short-term connection to another person — you only have to trust that you are not going to be cheated by a trading partner for the duration of the exchange relation. Taking such an approach to social relations in the domestic sphere, to friends and family, would be highly inappropriate, because the forms of trust in those contexts are based on long-term, abiding connections.

The problem with thinking and acting in this open and fluid way as a general rule, as the indiscriminate use of social capital suggests, is that ethical principles appear to become compatible with almost any course of action (see examples below). Realised in an abstract open form, ethical relations become undemanding good intentions and fleeting connections to others. Within the social capital model, therefore, trust is trust is trust, whether it concerns the trust you feel in friends or family, the trust you bestow on neighbours, or the trust you show in an online trader. When social capital becomes the dominant way of thinking about ethical relations, it tends then to flatten those relations out; when it become the dominant way of thinking about ethical relations, we are no longer able to clearly or easily distinguish between more intimate forms of trust and more transactional forms of trust.

Two brief case studies of on-the-ground practices serve to illustrate this argument. The first concerns the manner in which mutual obligation and welfare plays out in Australia; the second concerns education policy in Britain. The reader may be aware that that welfare in Australia has now been put on a mutual-obligation footing. Indeed, governments, both in Australia and Britain, routinely institute the principle of mutual obligation. In July 1999 Noel Pearson picked up the notion of mutual obligation, criticising mainstream government approaches to Aboriginal people as based on passive welfare. According to Pearson, these approaches actively work against giving incentives to people that they are supposedly intended to assist. Pearson's argument was that traditional approaches to welfare lack relations of reciprocity, whereas the traditional Aboriginal economy and the traditional Aboriginal way of life entailed reciprocity, as do market places. In a welfare system, however, there is no reciprocity according to Pearson: people get money no matter what they do.

In one way Pearson's comments are incontestable: market exchanges do entail reciprocity, as do traditional Indigenous economies. But using reciprocity in this undifferentiated way does little to deepen our understanding of what reciprocity means in either of the contexts. Thus, a conceptual slippage occurs in which there is no discernable difference between reciprocity within traditional Aboriginal communities and reciprocity in the global market. The

instrumental and abstracted forms of reciprocity in capitalist exchange therefore appear no different from forms of reciprocity in traditional Aboriginal economies, as the social capital approach glosses over any such differences. Pearson may hold the view that traditional Aboriginal forms of reciprocity are no longer viable, that the costs of trying to sustain them in the current settings is just too high (which is a debate for Pearson and the Aboriginal community to have), but such a decision, I argue, needs to be made on the basis of a clear understanding of what is at stake, regarding all forms of reciprocity.

The second case study concerns 'education action zones', which was an attempt by the Blair Labour government in Britain to leverage the networks of a community to improve educational outcomes in specific communities. The underlying idea is that one can draw on the social capital of all the networks of the community to build better schools and to get better outcomes. However, one of mandates of the 'education action zones' approach was to get companies involved in the management of these zones. These businesses used the language of social capital — trust, co-operation and reciprocity — to get their marketing materials into schools.

One particular case was Cadbury, which provided packs to schools informing children that chocolate is a wholesome food that tastes really good, is fun to eat at any time of the day and gives you energy and important nutrients. British Nuclear Fuels used the same means to provide school packs that suggested that 'accidents happen all the time', and asked the children to think of some accidents that had happened at school, at home, or locally, thus implying that a nuclear accident is more or less on par with a scrape in the school playground (Monbiot 2001: 333-34).

Although these are some of the extremes of where this approach leads us, I strongly argue that it is the concept of social capital, with its distortions of ethical language and its flattening of different kinds of relationships of co-operation, reciprocity and trust, that opens the way for these kinds of practices.

## **Is There a Disability Community in the NESB Community?**

by Margherita Coppolino (Disability and Diversity Consultant) and Elizabeth McGarry (Regional Ethnic Disability Advocacy Worker, Migrant Resource Centre North Western Region)

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*MC:*

For people with a disability, achieving change in their lives does not begin in the public sector. It originates in the private realms of their experiences of family and community, and then broadens out to the wider society. Statistics from the Commonwealth State/Territory Disability Agreement (CSTDA) 2003/2004 show that 4.9% of the population, or 902,082 people living in Australia, have a disability and come from a non-English-speaking background. It is estimated that in Victoria alone, 214,406 people from CALD backgrounds have a disability. Those same statistics show that a total of 2,016 Victorians who accessed disability support spoke languages other than English. Overall, people from CALD backgrounds were less likely than the rest of the population to report handicaps, less likely to be using services, and less likely to report unmet needs for help. Based on the Commonwealth Government figures, it is estimated that 3 out of 4 people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds do not access support from disability services. Thus, it is absolutely imperative that support services for people with disabilities recognise the significance of language and culture, as well as the great challenges confronting both people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds and service providers.

*EMcG:*

Before discussing the changes that are taking place in the formal ways in which disability services are being provided to people with disabilities and their families, it is important to acknowledge that, over the years, the bulk of care has been (and is being) provided within families. When one looks at a model of the formal care provided by the State it looks very clean and clear-cut, but in reality it is less so. In Victoria we have until recently worked across three paradigms. In the late 1890s institutions began to be established in the Western world, and it seemed that it was best to keep people with a disability apart from wider society. Part of the underlying motive for this was that people thought that many people with a disability were contagious, and that separation was the best way to manage the situation. Then, around the 1970s, the attitude towards people with a disability began to change in some areas, and governments began looking at alternative ways of assisting people with a disability. The recent paradigm shift of the 1990s (although it began a little earlier than that) has been a parallel experience. At a government level it has been economically driven; at the disability rights level it has been about

improving the control of people with a disability over what happens in their lives, in order to enable them to drive their own destiny.

As mentioned by Margherita, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds clearly have not found the ways in which services have been delivered within the program-based paradigm particularly relevant. These programs and services have been developed around a dominant, white, middle-class attitude, and therefore do not particularly fit many ethnic communities and ethnic families. Those of us involved in working with people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds in an advocacy role believe that this new shift towards individual support (and individual support includes the support of an individual's care network) creates a real opportunity for people from diverse backgrounds to take advantage of the funding that is available through government and to support what they already do in a manner that is more acceptable to them and that is of their choosing. For that to happen successfully, however, it is important that community workers, disability support workers and other people involved have an understanding of what *fairness* and *equity* mean to people from diverse backgrounds. They need to understand and respect this, and work in partnership with families but not be the ones driving it. And that is the great challenge for the disability sector within this paradigm. For ethnic communities the challenge is to know about what is happening, to be able to understand it, and to be able to find opportunities to engage.

The Victorian Government states that it is committed, within the person-based paradigm, to ensuring that disability support focuses on assisting people in participating in activities of their choice. This signals a shift in decision-making power; it means a change in the way in which disability support systems operate as a whole, as it takes the responsibility for developing services away from the programs. It entails the development of a framework that enables disability support to be more flexible, to work with people with a disability as partners, and to respond to their needs to pursue a lifestyle of their choice. The framework itself is called 'individualized planning and support'; however, the challenge for people from CALD backgrounds is to be able to look beyond the 'Anglo' terminology and to be able to be involved in the opportunities that are presented through this framework. Through the individualized planning and support framework, people with a disability can identify their own support needs, participate in implementing those supports, be involved in ongoing evaluation of those supports and instigate changes at any point if they are unhappy. Because the funding will be connected to the person and not to a program, the person with a disability and his or her family have the right, at any stage in this process, to make decisions as to what they want and where they want it to lead to. A major challenge thus concerns the ability of the person with a disability and their families to articulate what they want and to direct the process. For many people the capacity to do so is minimized, perhaps because

of an intellectual disability, or because there are language barriers, etcetera, so it is really important that people who experience this added layer of disadvantage have supports around them to ensure that they do not miss out, like they have in previous support frameworks.

*MC:*

The Migrant Resource Centre Northwest has been funded to assist people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds across the State in increasing their capacity to deliver outcomes of their own choosing. The particular project we are working on at the moment is called 'Voices Heard'. 'Voices Heard' enables people with disabilities from CALD communities to express their views in a safe environment where communication is accessible. It provides a think-tank mechanism for collective wisdom and it connects with other self-advocacy groups to crosscheck and share collective wisdoms. It aims at building self-confidence to advocate individually and collectively, at providing information and at raising awareness of the issues faced by people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds, so that these issues can be taken into account in policy development and implementation.

So what can people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds do to make sure that they are able to participate in a person-centred support framework, if they choose to do so? And what more can you do to support those who wish to drive their own destiny? The road to power and confidence lies in the journey of self-advocacy. Thus, it is important to recognize the capacities of people with disabilities and to support them in their quest for personal and professional fulfilment. Walk along the path of people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds, and think hard about what you as a service-provider can contribute to the journey, in terms of providing opportunities to people with disabilities from CALD backgrounds.

**CASE STUDIES  
AND  
STRATEGIES**

## **Greater Dandenong's Demonstration Project**

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by Hugh Kilgower (City of Greater Dandenong)

First of all let me highlight the diversity of cultural, faith and language groups within the Noble Park community. The focus of the project 'Proud to Participate' was Greater Dandenong, but more specifically the Noble Park area. What is very interesting about the population in the area is that it is not only diverse, but that there is no one individual cultural group that stands out significantly in terms of its size. The Vietnamese community rates the highest at 7.1% of the population, but that is actually a small percentage overall. In other words, we have a range of cultural groups to work with. In the earlier stages of the project we recognised the importance of getting diverse groups involved, so we met with community leaders and key people involved in various cultural groups and faith groups. However, we quickly recognised that these people were so busy that they did not need another meeting, project or activity to get involved in. They actually had a lot of work to do in terms of supporting their community, helping people fill out forms, getting resources for their community etc. So we had to ask ourselves: what was it that our project needed to do?

Let me illustrate that with some of the stories of our project. The community festival is an annual event of the Noble Park community, which is driven by the Chamber of Commerce and has been around for a number of years. Our project had a real opportunity, working together with retailers, community organisations and residents, to make things happen. However, as mentioned, we identified that it was very difficult to target a specific cultural group, because representatives of these groups did not have the time or resources to get involved. Instead, we set up a resource audit where we invited community members to get involved in our project. We trained them, linked them up with other members and provided them with an opportunity to go back to their respective communities and actually run workshops. We recruited 17 community volunteers who went back out and ran a total of 18 workshops in their communities. Very few came from the top-five cultural groups within the local area, and we actually found that some of the emerging communities and not-so-prominent groups within the area were the ones in which people lacked the networks, the social connections or the opportunities to get involved in their community. The resource audit provided them with an opportunity to develop their skills and become more connected with their communities.

One of our volunteers, Mural, became part of the project in the very early days. She was a very quiet, shy young woman from Arminian background, who had no connection with the local community or even her own community. She talked to us in the early days, when most of her life revolved

around television – Jerry Springer in fact – and she actually thought that the experiences on she saw on television were normal. She thought that those kinds of things are the kinds of things that happen in everyday life. It was actually a bit of a shock for her, but during her involvement in the project we watched her gradually progress from a quiet, shy, very introverted young woman to someone who got involved in running a relaxation night to which the community came along. She assisted with running ‘The Movie in the Park’, and when we launched the ‘The Future is Bright’ document, telling people about the directions in which our project was heading, she volunteered to help at the launch. The exciting part of Mural’s involvement was the fact that she started off as a person who was socially not connected to a community, but through the project she developed networks and found the confidence to go back to Technical And Further Education (TAFE). She has actually developed such strong networks that she is no longer involved in our project. That is exciting for us: she has connected with her community and she does not need to be involved in the project any longer.

Another story is that of Hasha, who came into the project as a community consultation leader. He had only been in the country for a very short time and had no connection with the local community. His parents came out to visit him a few months after he was established in Australia, and we learned that his father was actually a talented artist who had never exhibited his artwork. As part of our project we had a range of community volunteers who got together to organise an art exhibition, and while our project assisted that group quite substantially in the first year of the art exhibition, this year it actually ran again and we had very little involvement. In this art exhibition Hasha’s father put his artwork on exhibition for the first time ever.

The important issue I want to highlight is that a range of cultural groups within communities are struggling for resources, and that a range of individuals within the various cultural groups are not connected to their own culture or connected to their community. Opportunities need to be provided to them so that they can get connected to the community or to their cultural group. Some of the ways in which we have achieved this in the past is through the resource audit, in which we connected people. With regard to Noble Park, connecting people has actually led to other developments within the local area, allowing residents to work together and set up a resident group to get new play equipment to reclaim the local park. Safety was a major issue that was identified through the resource audit, and once again, the community got together after the resource process and continued to work together. They applied for Pride of Place funds through the Department of Sustainability, and set up a Pride of Place committee made up of members of a diverse range of groups such as the Ethnic Communities Council of the South East (ECCOSE), the police force, Connex, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, key community groups, and the Chamber of Commerce. The Pride of Place project was fantastic from the perspective that

groups were able to work together come up with some key strategies to beautify and improve their local area, while also addressing the issue of safety. We ended up with some really creative artwork in the railway underpass, and people's views of that area have changed.

The Mill's Reserve project and the Pride of Place project around the railway station demonstrate that communities can work together. Diverse cultures can work together to address local issues. We identified that you either need to have an issue or some sort of social connection as a driving force to be able to bring people together. Projects are driven by common issues or common interests and often, we need to have those issues or common interests to bring diverse communities together.

Over the last three years of the project we have really enjoyed sharing our journey with the people that live, work, learn and socialise in Noble Park, and as our project exits the community we can only hope that the local community continues along its journey, and that the people involved continue to share their diverse experiences and support one another.

# **Doggies to HighPoint, a State Demonstration Project**

by Klara Blazevic (Community Development Officer, Mission Australia)

Community Building is about local people working with government to strengthen their communities and improve the places in which they live. This talk focuses on the Melways Project and how it assisted community building in Maribyrnong through an emerging community leaders' group activity.

## **Background**

The Doggies to Highpoint (D2H) project is located in an area running along Gordon Street, from Footscray's Whitten Oval, in the north to Highpoint Shopping Centre in the south. The Whitten Oval is the home to the Australian Football League (AFL) football team, the Western Bulldogs hence the term 'doggies'. More than half of the area's 7500 residents are from non-english speaking backgrounds and include refugees and asylum seekers. Nearly a quarter of the residents are unemployed and many experience transient housing, homelessness and social isolation.

D2H is a State Government project auspiced by Mission Australia and managed in partnership with the Maribyrnong City Council and the Community Building Advisory Group ( a body representing local community interests), and supported by the Department of Human Services.

## **The Challenge**

One of the key challenges for the D2H project was to engage with and work alongside an emerging 'Community leaders' group for the area. Although the idea was sound, this challenge proved difficult given the very characteristics that I have described of this community. As we went back to the drawing board and reassessed our strategies we realised that we needed a much more grassroots approach. We started with identifying and working with a 'community working group'. The role of this group was to collect information about the area through a 'kitchen table' model of data collection. The raw data provided by the 'community group' was invaluable, both for a better understanding of the groups that lived within this area and for future proposed strategies and activities for the D2H project.

The community working group ran for about six months and the D2H project still needed to engage with 'emerging community leaders'. Where were they? Most of the contacts I have been given led to 'dead ends' as all nominated community spokespeople were already over-committed and stretched on

several fronts. Given current community spokespeople were stretched We decided to engage with emerging 'grassroots' leaders. That is try to identify and work with individuals who had the capacity to be leaders for their community. We put ads in the local newspapers and did leaflet drops. The result was that we got an impressive response of about 18 people from diverse backgrounds, and 15 of those became involved in the project. Interestingly, 6 of the original Community Working group moved to become involved in the Community Leadership group.

### **The germination of an idea**

We went through the normal practices and engaged in teambuilding exercises etc. However, it quickly became clear that this group needed a common cause/issue to unite and consolidate their learnings to date. The challenge was – to find an idea, a need or an issue to bind these people/ individuals together to get them to realise the power that they had as a group: Why were all these people sitting together at the table?

As a result of a conversation I had with one of these people it led to the Melway Project. Simply put – the person was complaining about his Vietnamese mother, who was quite isolated because of her own doing. Although she had a 'drivers licence' she refused to leave her home because she was scared and unsure of driving around Melbourne. And indeed had incurred many parking fines and got lost on more than one occasion in the city. I realised that this was an issue facing many of us. Faced with driving into unknown suburbs many of us felt uncomfortable using a Melway. To deal with this situation many of us turn the book upside down in an attempt to find the solution! Sound familiar?

We took this problem to the group and they all agreed that it was a very real issue. Indeed, the Melway, the book of maps that most people in Melbourne use to get around, is actually quite difficult to read if you don't spend the time to familiarise yourself with it and generally is inaccessible to the CALD community. For example, there is the presumption that users of the Melways book know the alphabet and can apply it. We realised that we had a great idea, and the group was ready to run with it. When we approached Melway people they were quite excited about our project; in the long time they have been producing this book, only two CALD community groups had ever approached them. Thus, Melways provided us with 40 free copies of the book, and in turn we agreed to give them feedback on improvements to the Melway book that could be made to make it more accessible to the CALD community living in Melbourne.

## **Running the Melway workshop – a team effort**

The D2H Community leadership group used all the tools they had learnt earlier on in the D2H Project, such as marketing, teamwork skills, public speaking etc to pull together a workshop for the community on how to read the Melway. They decided to run a workshop for the local community. They proceeded to create and disseminate flyers in ‘local community meeting’ areas, went on radio and found a convenient venue, near public transport for the workshop. Yet they were still quite concerned about what kind of response the project would generate. And what I think is a small success for this project is that those 15 people were so concerned that they went back into their respective communities and ensured that we would have the support of at least 5 people through their personal connections. Thus, we ended up running a workshop to about 35 to 40 people, ranging from middle-class Australian women who had problems reading the Melway to people who could not even speak or read English, as yet. Because we had such a huge group of people there, the 15 emerging Community Leaders took turns in presenting and interpreting for their respective groups. That was the fun bit!

The workshop was a great success. The group decided to work with the strengths of the book: that is it is colour-coded; has an excellent Contents page; and is broken into chunks which can be easily used and referred to. What was added, by the Community Leadership group was an alphabet chart, the use of strips of paper so that people could use them as bookmarks to identify the index or the grid. A quick session also on definitions and words commonly used in the Melway for example grid, or co-ordinates, and even why part of the book referred to ‘pages’ and the other part referred to ‘maps’. All in all it was a great win for that group of people, participants and organisers.

When we came back together to reflect on the workshop, most of the group were keen to move on and felt that they had learnt a lot but were not prepared to capture the “learnings”. It was at this point that I took it upon myself to undertake pulling this work together into a kit, the Melway Kit

## **Reflections on Community Building practices**

What I have learnt from this project is that personal networks are important and that they work. Trust is a central component to action. This community was highly disadvantaged – in fact, calling it a community in the early stages of the D2H project was incorrect. Rather, it was pockets of hard to reach groups. Quite a lot of outreach work needed to be done initially, and the Department for Victorian Communities was very responsive to that. The ‘Doggies to Highpoint’ project worked at the very individual level while moving towards a community-focus over time. And I can say that very

comfortably because a core group of that community working group decided to become **advocates** for their community, and they are now working toward becoming a residents' group. We are getting support from Council and are looking into how this group of people can be sustained, not with an imposed idea but rather because they care and really want to advocate for their community.

Positive outcomes are that the D2H Project now has a bank of raw data to use in any future work they may wish to undertake, the D2H Project has built the skill levels of over 50 individuals through the evolving community group structure, that is from a working group to an emerging community leaders group to a resident's group. Finally there is the Melway kit which will remain a positive contribution to other community groups wishing to empower their CALD communities.

To conclude I would like to recommend two strategies for working with community groups. These strategies particularly relate to the running of meetings, as we spent much time in meetings (every fortnight to be exact). Firstly, at the beginning of every meeting we always had a slot in which everybody had to say something positive. They needed to share with the group either a thought or happy event that had happened to them in the fortnight since their last meeting. In our society we are constantly on the move, and to just come in and try to start engaging with an agenda and a group of people does not create the right atmosphere. Indeed, there was one person in our group who was homeless, illiterate, and living in an extremely difficult situation, and who would always start with a negative. One day, however, he started with a positive and the group responded by spontaneously applauding him. He was so overwhelmed he got quite emotional. That was a small incident but a big step for both that person and the group who had accepted that person into the group.

Secondly, not only did every meeting start with a positive but it ended with an immediate evaluation: what worked, what was good about the meeting and what could we do better? This second strategy empowered the group at another level. They were asked to be critical in their replies about the meeting procedures, the content and their input. What they suggested was taken on-board and if there was support for the comment made then changes would ensue. In this way, change was not a threat but welcomed as part of an evolving mechanism which could work positively for the group's future. They realised this and valued the role of evaluation.

## **Conclusion**

That group has gone on, and I am confident that the people involved have taken on board what we have learnt during the Project and will become fine

leaders in their own rights. The two challenges that remain are the new incarnation of the group, which has named itself the 'Doggies to Highpoint Residents Action Group' (D2HRAG), and the Melway kit. And if you are in need of some positive bedtime reading, I recommend you read the story of the 'Doggies to Highpoint' group and their Melway experience in the Department for Victorian Communities brochure 2005, entitled "The Melways Project Brings Diverse Communities Together".

## **Darebin's Demonstration Project**

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by Sally Bruen (City of Darebin)

The Darebin Community Building Project was held in a location covering two suburbs of the City of Darebin, these being East Reservoir and East Preston. The project location has a population of approximately 10,000 people, and the 2001 census indicates that 48% of residents were born overseas. A significant proportion of the population experiences unemployment, homelessness, transient housing and social isolation. In the first stage of the project we undertook a large community consultation process that involved 24 focus groups, a leaders-and-services-and-agencies forum, as well as barbeques and family fun days, to gather information on people's issues. Focus groups were held with the following communities: Vietnamese, Chinese, Macedonian, Somali, Greek, Italian, Iraqi, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. After various individual consultation activities two large community forums were held where the community was invited to nominate their key priority areas. The key issues nominated by the community were youth issues, affordable housing, public transport, safety, economic development, unemployment and social isolation.

Social isolation was the key issue that locals chose to tackle, whilst the other issues were addressed through various strategies involving residents, service providers and government departments working together towards solutions. A resident group was established by residents who called themselves the Growing Together Group. The vision of this group was to create a community where people of all nationalities could come together and where people felt safe and happy. The group decided to organise events as a way of tackling social isolation. They held a community day in 2003, which was very successful: it was held at the local community health centre and was attended by 400 people. After the first event the level of confidence amongst the residents rose and they held a large planning day to discuss with members of the broader community how they could create opportunities for that community. A planning day was held in April 2004, which was attended by 52 people, including members of Iraqi and Greek women's groups as well as Italian, Somali, Chinese and Vietnamese. This was the first time that local residents from such diverse cultural groups came together to plan an event for themselves. The key difference with previous approaches was that this did not involve someone coming in and asking people what they wanted, and then going away and organising it. Here, local people took up the challenge of event management themselves. People were nominated for various working groups, and set about organising an event for later in the year. The event was held in September. It was attended by around 900 people this time, and for the first time there were eight food stalls. Prior to the event the various groups had food handling training and a variety of other event-planning activities,

which meant that people were developing cross-cultural relationships in their own time and through their own motivation.

In order for this solution to reducing social isolation to be sustainable, it had to be completely run by the local residents, with project staff taking a very hands-off approach. The 2005 event was organised and run by a group of residents comprising the following people: two young international students from Indonesia and China, a young Somali mother, a local pastor, and two elderly 'Anglo' residents. This event was very successful in extending the participation to young people, who had stalls to raise funds for local projects and were involved in the local Decibels Youth Music studio, which provided entertainment. The group continues to hold various events as a way of tackling social isolation, and the people involved are enjoying the ancillary benefits of learning about the development of small businesses. On the celebration day people from 18 different cultural groups answered surveys; 67% of people surveyed said that they would like more of these events in their local neighbourhood, as they had met people who lived nearby with whom they had not spoken in the past. This event, and the sausage sizzle that always brings people together, were some of the strongest symbols we had of different cultures moving from initial separation and misunderstanding to a place of understanding. In the first stages of the project, local 'Anglo' residents complained about having halal sausages at barbeques; evidence of people coming together is that in the last year of the project, all community barbeques were halal, with some locals saying that they now preferred halal to 'Aussie' sausages.

One of the key issues of engaging the multicultural community as part of the project has been that people often socialise within their cultural groups, in locations that do not reflect their housing location. This was a challenge: in the first stages of the project the Chinese community was approached to participate in an event, and although their participation was wonderful, most of the people were not from the project location. Community building is about building relationships at the local level. There was no easy way to do it, apart from the door-to-door and neighbour-to-neighbour and friend-to-friend approach. The actual numbers of people from some cultural groups were small, but the creation of local relationships was a huge outcome for them. A group of mothers from a local kindergarten, who were from Vietnam, China, Thailand and Croatia, posed an interesting translation challenge. These women found a common language and formed a group through the project, based on their shared location and their common experience of being displaced from their country of origin.

Other examples of the 'location complexities' of the Darebin Community Building Project are reflected in the example of a local primary school. This school has 170 students from 80 different nationalities. Of these families 95% are Commonwealth government concession-card holders. In addition, this

school has the highest levels of transience in Victoria, and the local catchment area has some of the highest numbers of child protection notifications in Victoria. Families from this school do not engage in activities at the school, which has been a long-entrenched problem. A recent Streetlife Project involving the local retailers has been a positive boost for the school community. Students created large sandwich boards with images of their local area and what they loved about it, and these boards were displayed on the Broadway shopping strip for a week. This mixing of the retail and school communities has been a positive first step in building relationships.

Another example of the challenge of involving the local community is the case of the local East Preston Islamic College. At the beginning of the project the school was not engaged with and felt apart from the local community. The student population is over 200, and students come from a large geographical catchment across the northern suburbs of Melbourne. Only 13 students are from the local area. The school embraced the opportunity that the project offered them to become involved with the local community. It participated in a project video that we made in the first six months of the project, as an easy means to get the word out there. Students also appeared in the project brochure, and in 2005 undertook a special project to promote their school and Islamic life to the local community. The students promoted the Community Day and their display in their local neighbourhoods. The power of networking was demonstrated when we received calls from Epping, Hurstbridge and Eltham of people wanting to attend the event after they had received flyers from the girls from the college. Involvement in the project also saw students attend local National Aboriginal Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) celebrations at Northland Secondary College for the first time.

The community building project required a very individual approach to building multicultural relationships, and it was the building of personal networks that built the sense of community at a local level. Regional cultural groups were not representative, and could not be expected to be representative, of people at a local neighbourhood level. At the beginning of the project I witnessed significant levels of racism and ignorance amongst local residents towards their newly arrived neighbours. The suburb of East Reservoir was known as little Chicago: only ten years ago it was not a safe place to be, and a culture of fear was palpable amongst local residents. A variety of activities took people from their ethnocentric groups and introduced them to a whole-of-community focus. The Somali, Greek and Iraqi women's groups worked together to contribute to the event, but this was the first time they were not directed where to go, what to cook, and how to decorate their stalls; people had to problem-solve for themselves. Many amusing and challenging moments were experienced; however, I can say that this process signifies the first steps of community building from a multicultural perspective. The biggest lesson we have learnt is that

community building takes time - it is not a process whereby one can add water, and 'Hey Presto!'

# **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix 1 – List of Seminar Participants’ Organisations**

The Seminar attracted over two hundred participants largely belonging to the following community and government organisations:

Australian Arabic Council  
Australian Multicultural Education Services  
Australian Polish Community Services  
Centre for Culture Ethnicity and Health  
Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues  
Centrelink North  
Centrelink West  
City of Banyule  
City of Bayside  
City of Brimbank  
City of Darebin  
City of Glen Eira  
City of Greater Dandenong  
City of Greater Geelong  
City of Greater Shepparton  
City of Hobsons Bay  
City of Hume  
City of Maribyrnong  
City of Melbourne  
City of Monash  
City of Moonee Valley  
City of Kingston  
City of Port Phillip  
City of Stonington  
City of Whittlesea  
City of Wyndham  
City of Yarra  
Community Health  
Council of Christians and Jews  
Council on the Ageing  
Darebin Community Health  
Dandenong Community Health  
Dandenong Youth Services  
Darebin Ethnic Communities Council  
Department for Victorian Communities  
Department of Human Services  
Department of Sustainability and Environment  
Dispute Settlement Centre of Victoria  
Diversitat

Family Court of Australia  
Greek Welfare  
Healthy Issues Centre  
La Trobe University  
Matchworks  
Metropolitan Ambulance Service  
Metropolitan Fire Brigade  
Migrant Resource Centre North West Region  
Mission Australia  
Municipal Association of Victoria  
North Yarra Community Health  
North Richmond Community Health Centre  
Northern Migrant Resource Centre  
OZ Child  
Panch Health Service  
Partners in Culturally Appropriate Care  
Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education  
Queen Elizabeth Centre  
Knox Community Health Service  
School Focused Youth Service  
South East Region Migrant Resource Centre  
Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau  
Vic Roads  
Victoria Legal Aid  
Victoria Police  
Victoria University  
Victorian Arabic Social Services  
Victorian Local Governance Association  
Victorian Multicultural Commission  
Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs  
Victorian Transcultural Psychiatry Unit (St Vincent Hospital)  
Vision Australia Foundation  
Western Region Ethnic Communities Council  
Western Region Health Centre  
Western Migrant Resource Centre  
Wise Employment  
Womens Health in the North

## Appendix 2 – Seminar’s Program

<b>8:00-9:00</b>	<b>REGISTRATION</b>
<b>9:00-9:10</b>	<b>WELCOME</b>
	Philip Shanahan (CEO, City of Darebin) Gaetano Greco (Chairperson, Darebin Ethnic Communities Council)
<b>9:10-10:00</b>	<b>OPENING ADDRESS</b>
	George Lekakis (Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission) Barbara Mountjouris (Acting Director, Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs) & Serenella Prelaz (Community Strengthening and Volunteering Division, Dept. of Victorian Communities)
<b>10:00-10:15</b>	<i>MORNING TEA</i>
<b>10:15-12:00</b>	<b>PLENARY SESSION 1</b>
	<b>Chair: Voula Messimeri-Kianidis</b>  <b>Adjunct Prof. Hayden Raysmith</b> Development and Overview of Community Engagement Policies and Framework  <b>Carmel Guerra</b> Community Capacity Building are young people a consideration?  <b>Prof. Mary Kalantzis</b> A Conversation on Multiculturalism, rhetoric, practicalities, challenges and solutions
<b>12:00-01:00</b>	<i>LUNCH</i>
<b>01:00-01:15</b>	<i>THE SIGNORAS, ANGELA AND LINA: “COMMUNITY ENTANGLEMENT”</i>
<b>01:15-03:00</b>	<b>PLENARY SESSION 2</b>
	<b>Chair: Roderick McIvor</b>  <b>Maria Dimopoulos</b> Cross-Cultural Analysis of Community Building Policies  <b>Dr Peter Kelly</b> The Etho-Politics of Community: Middle Class Institutions, Middle Class Manners, Middle Class Solutions  <b>Dr Christopher Scanlon</b> The Problem with Social Capital
<b>03:00-03:15</b>	<i>AFTERNOON BREAK</i>
<b>03:15-03:45</b>	<b>Margherita Coppolino and Elizabeth McGarry</b> Is there a Disability Community in the NESB Community
<b>03:45-05:00</b>	<b>CASE STUDIES AND STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE</b>
	<b>David Williamson: Chair</b> Hugh Kilgower, (City of Greater Dandenong Demonstration Project) Klara Blazevic, (Mission Australia, Doggies to HighPoint, Demonstration Project) Sally Bruen (Darebin’s Demonstration Project)
<b>05:00-05:15</b>	<b>CLOSE</b>
<b>07:00-10:00</b>	<i>SEMINAR DINNER</i> RUMELI ‘S TURKISH RESTAURANT, 618 SYDNEY ROAD, BRUNSWICK

## Biographical notes

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**Simone Battiston** came to Australia from Italy in 2000. He has been working as Multicultural Affairs Officer with the City of Darebin and the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council (DECC) since 2002. He is currently completing his doctorate in Italian Migration Studies at La Trobe University, and co-writing a book on the intercultural history of Darebin.

**Klara Blazevic** is currently working for The Smith Family on a federally funded project called the Communities for Children in Brimbank. This initiative is exploring the delivery of programs to services and agencies in the early-years field through a community development model. She was the Community Development Officer for the Doggies to Highpoint Project, one of ten State demonstration projects set up by the Victorian government in partnership with a range of public and private sector agencies to pioneer new ways of community building outside the framework of single agencies. She has more than ten years' experience in the community development sector, and has worked at both State and local government levels, as well as for non-government organisations.

**Sally Bruen** has been the Darebin Community Building Project Facilitator since the project's inception in 2002. Her previous experience spans the public, private and philanthropic sectors. She has held management roles with Department of Human Services, has been the Marketing Manger for the Leukaemia Foundation of Western Australia, as well as being a founding partner and Marketing Manager for Australia's first game meat export abattoir and winning Telstra's Exporter of the Year Award. Other key roles have involved various research and strategic plans for the youth and health sectors.

**Margherita Coppolino** is a disability and diversity consultant, working with government, business and social justice organisations. Margherita's inspiration and influence have been profiled in *The Australian* (Lifelines section), *The Gold Within* by Noel Waite, *Women's Business*, and *Women's Wealth* by Amanda Ellis, and a range of social justice and community publications. In 1999 Margherita was also the inaugural recipient of the Olive Zakharov scholarship for women in management. In 2003, she was invited to present at the third Global Diversity Conference in Hawaii and has also been honoured with an Australian Centenary Medal for contribution to the areas of Women's and Disability Rights. In 2004, she was invited to present at the Global Women's Trade Summit in Vancouver.

**Josara de Lange** came to Australia from the Netherlands in 1999 and is currently completing her PhD in Archaeology at La Trobe University. She has been living in multicultural Darebin for several years and regularly attends meetings of the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council. She is currently involved in Aboriginal heritage consultancy and is co-writing a book on the intercultural history of Darebin.

**Maria Dimopoulos** has a legal background, and incorporates her legal knowledge as an anti-discrimination and diversity trainer. She has worked extensively on the ground with immigrant and refugee communities around a range of projects,

particularly issues of domestic violence and sexual assault, and is a former chair of the Association of Non-English Speaking Background Women of Australia. Maria has had extensive experience in policy formulation for the government sector, research for social planning and in community education. Maria is also a recipient of an Amnesty International Human Rights Award for her work on the legal needs of women from NESB. Maria is currently enrolled at RMIT in a PhD program examining the emergence of the so-called 'Cultural Defence' to Domestic Homicides and its implication for judicial education.

**Gaetano Greco** is a tax accountant with the Australian Taxation Office by day, and a community/political activist by night. He is the Chairperson of the Northern Migrant Resource Centre (NMRC), executive member of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV), and an elected member of the Italian Consular Consultative Committee (COMITES). He is the Chairperson of the Darebin Ethnic Communities Council (DECC) since 1998.

**Carmel Guerra** is the Director of the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI). She has over twenty years experience in the community sector. She developed and co-edited (with Robert White) the book *Ethnic Minority Youth in Australia* (1995). She also contributed to *Wealth of all Nations* (Coventry, Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, and National Youth Affairs Research Scheme 2002), a report on the first comprehensive study undertaken into the needs of refugee young people in Australia. Carmel is currently a member of the Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council. She was awarded a Winston Churchill Fellowship in 1994 to investigate issues of refugee and migrant youth. In 2003, she was also awarded a Centenary Medal and in 2005 she was entered into the Victorian Women's Honour Roll for services to young people, migrant and refugee communities.

**Mary Kalantzis** holds a Chair in Education and is a Research Professor with the Globalism Institute at RMIT University in Melbourne. She is also the immediate past president of the Australian Council of Deans of Education. She has been a Commissioner of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Chair of the Queensland Ethnic Affairs Ministerial Advisory Committee and a member of the Australia Council's Community Cultural Development Board. Her academic research and writing crosses a number of disciplines, including history, education and sociology; and examines themes as varied as Australian history, leadership and workplace change, pedagogy and literacy learning.

**Peter Kelly** (PhD) is the current Head of Behavioural Studies in the School of Political and Social Inquiry at Monash University. He previously held the position of Senior Lecturer in Organisational Behaviour and Organisational Theory in the Faculty of Business and Law at Deakin University. Dr Kelly currently holds a position of Senior Fellow (Honorary 2003-2006) at the Institute of Learning of the University of Hull in the UK. His research interests cover a number of areas, including youth studies, where he has an extensive research background in the area of youth at risk. He is involved in developing research programs with colleagues at the University of Glasgow (UK) and Deakin University looking at two related areas - young people as workers and young people as university students.

**Hugh Kilgower** has worked in local government for the past fourteen years, commencing at the City of Greater Dandenong in 1991. He entered Council as a

youth worker and gradually progressed to coordinate the Youth Services Team in 1997. In 2002, Hugh moved into a role as Project Manager for the Greater Dandenong Community Building initiative called 'Proud to Participate.' In the context of this project, which operated in Noble Park from 2002 to 2005, he witnessed the positive transformation of people's perceptions of the local area. A number of initiatives will remain as legacies of the Proud to Participate project, operating from the local Neighbourhood House. At the completion of the initial 3-year funding period, Hugh moved on to the City of Melbourne as a Social Planner – City Safety.

**George Lekakis** has been the Chairperson of the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) since 2001. He is an experienced advocate for ethnic communities at the local, state and national levels, illustrated by his tenure as both the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of Victoria's peak multicultural umbrella organisation, the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria. He was the Director of the South Central Region Migrant Resource Centre and the New Hope Foundation, the former being one of the largest Migrant Resource Centres in the nation. He has served on many government and community-based boards and committees of management, including the Victorian Industrial Relations Taskforce, the Community Support Fund Advisory Council and the Community Jobs Program Advisory Committee. He is the current Co-chair of the Police and Community Multicultural Advisory Committee (PACMAC) and served as a member of the Social Security Appeals Tribunal. Commissioner Lekakis has formal qualifications in social work and nursing.

**Elizabeth McGarry** has steered the Ethnic Disability Advocacy Program in the Western Region of Melbourne for the past four years. This work has included working with individuals, families, community groups and service providers, as well as participating in the development of disability policy at the local, State and national level. This involvement has included, among others: NEDA (National Ethnic Disability Alliance) (Victorian Council Representation 2001-2003; Treasurer 2002-3), DHS - CALD Strategic Plan - Taskforce (Member), DHS - CALD Implementation Plan Working Party (Member), DHS 10 Year Plan - Advocacy Working Party (Member), Disability Australia (Member), Victorian Disability Advocacy Network (Member), Western Region Disability Network (Executive Member 1999-2003). Elizabeth's passion for the interface between cultural diversity and disability extends beyond her professional role and lies within the lived experience of disability in the family setting and of inter-cultural marriage.

**Barbara Mountjouris** is the Acting Director of the Victorian Office of Multicultural Affairs (VOMA), where she has worked for the last four years on key policy initiatives including the language services strategy and the whole of government multicultural affairs reporting framework. In her public sector career she has worked in policy and program development in foster care, homeless persons' programs, crime prevention, and corporate planning. She also has considerable experience in performance auditing, having worked in this area for both the Australian National Audit Office and the Victorian Auditor-General's Office.

**Serenella Prelaz** is currently the Director of the Community Support Fund, Department for Victorian Communities. In her previous roles in State government she has managed programs dealing with wide-ranging issues, including employment, education, regional development, and business development. Her

public sector career is complemented by her work in the manufacturing sector, which includes two years at Ford Australia in the role of Corporate Diversity Manager.

**Hayden Raysmith** is a partner in the social policy consulting company WWW Communications. He is sought-after as a speaker and presenter across a wide range of subjects, and maintains an active involvement in the business, philanthropic, community and government sectors. In 1998 he was appointed as Adjunct Professor at RMIT University in the Faculty of the Constructed Environment, with particular involvement in the School of Social Science and Planning. In recent years he has specialised in work relating to local government, service planning, governance and community development. Professor Raysmith has published on a wide range of social policy issues, including children's services, health policy and community development.

**Christopher Scanlon** (PhD) is a researcher with RMIT University's Globalism Institute and a co-editor of Arena Magazine ([www.arena.org.au](http://www.arena.org.au)). His research and writing has focused extensively on contemporary social democratic politics, including ideas of social capital, human capital and creativity. He is currently working on a research project examining the connections between community arts and cultural festivals and health and wellbeing. He lives in Melbourne with his cat Chifley.

**Philip Shanahan** has been CEO at Darebin City Council since February 1999. Prior to Darebin Philip held CEO positions at the Cities of Maribyrnong, Broadmeadows and Portland, the Shire of Heywood and at the Latrobe Regional Commission. He is now in his 29th year as a local government CEO.

**Dalal Smiley** is the Chairperson of the Victorian Arabic Social Services, first elected to the position in 1998. Her career involves extensive experience in language services, community development, policy development, access and equity, research and cross-cultural training. Dalal has also worked on a voluntary basis in community radio 3CR as broadcaster and program producer. A graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Community Development and a Masters degree in Public Policy and Governance, Dalal is a strong advocate for social justice issues and the development of an inclusive Australian society. She served as member of the Victorian Multicultural Commission from 2001-2005 and is currently employed by Darebin City Council as Coordinator of the Multicultural Affairs Unit.

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