



Fostering Multicultural Values

Minutes of **Darebin Ethnic Communities Council** Held 17th February 2005.

1. Present:

Marlene Kairouz (City Of Darebin), Dalal Smiley (City Of Darebin), Nevenka Bajer (Australian Croatian Community Northern Region, Melbourne), Vincenzo Balestra (Circolo Pensionati Italiani di North Fitzroy), Louis Krushorovski (The Federation of Macedonian Senior Citizens Groups, NE region), Kosta Ristovski (Bigla Pensioners Group), Saady Sharib (Australian Kurdish Community), Antonil Polykarpou (Keon Park Greek Senior Citizens), John Nicolau (Reservoir Greek Elderly Citizens Club), Peco Sijakoski (TANEC), Anne Giddens (NMIT), Tabitha Scott, Pece Siljanovski, John Zika, Vukasin Aleksoski, Simone Battiston (DECC project officer), George Kanjere (DECC administration), Nalliyah Suriyakumaran

2. Apologies:

Andy Mylonas, Sophie Kostanidis, Carmel Guerra, Mohamad Elturabi, Dusadee Coulson, Jenny Mikakos, Arthur Yong, Christine Cao

3. Correspondence and Minutes Tabled

4. Welcome by Gaetano Greco.

Introduction of George Kanjere as the new administrator for DECC.
Everyone at the meeting introduced themselves.

5. Mayor's Welcome by Diana Asmar.

The Mayor spoke of the importance of multiculturalism in Darebin, and of her wish for the City of Darebin to continue to work closely with DECC. She invited any members of DECC to approach her at any time with any queries or suggestions that they may have. She had to leave after this speech due to a death in the family.

6. Election of the DECC steering committee.

Members were elected to the steering committee as follows:

Chairperson – Gaetano Greco
- nominated by: Nalliyah Suriyakumaran
- seconded by: Vincenzo Balestra

Dep. Chairperson – Katarina Brozovic-Basic
- nominated by: Gaetano Greco
- seconded by: Louis Krushorovski

Treasurer – Lionel Bopage
- nominated by: Nalliyah Suriyakumaran
- seconded by: John Zika

Secretary – Jackie Mansourian
- nominated by: Nalliyah Suriyakumaran
- seconded by: Lionel Bopage

Public Officer – John Zika

Four Special Expertise Members, co-opted:

Jackie Mansourian
Carmel Guerra
Parag Mody
Katarina Brosovic-Basic

All four were accepted onto the Special Expertise Committee

Four smaller co-opted ethnic groups:

Lionel Bopage – SriLankan
Mohammed El Turabi - Sudanese
Nevenka Bajer – Croatia
Nalliyah Suriyakumaran - Tamil

El Turabi and Suriyakumaran were previously accepted, Bajer and Bopage were added.

7. Cr Marlene Kairouz informed DECC that she was involved in the selection of the new CEO of Darebin City Council at a planning weekend in the near future. She is a part of the panel that will choose the next CEO when Phillip Shanahan, the current CEO, retires from local government in July. She said that she would do her part to ensure that the next CEO of Darebin City Council had multiculturalism and cultural diversity foremost on his or her list of priorities. She invited suggestions from DECC to take with her to the planning weekend.

8. Dalal Smiley reported on the activities that DECC and Council are currently involved in:

- The organization of the seminar titled Community Engagement: Smokescreens and Mirrors? This will be held on 14th April from 8:00am to 5:00pm, and has received funding from the Victorian Multicultural Commission. Discussed will be the relationship between community engagement policies and multicultural policy.
- The film, Faith: The Art of Believing, which is a documentary about the main religions in Darebin and how they affect young peoples lives. It will be shown and in schools and used in workshops.
- A consultation to be held on gambling in and its effects, to be held on the 2nd of March in the Shire Hall, at the Council Offices. This consultation will be facilitated by the Victorian Multicultural Commission.
- Cultural Diversity Week, 16 – 24 March. This will include events such as Multicultural Women’s Day, A Breakfast Seminar, and screenings of the Faith: The Art of Believing documentary.
- The Heritage project about the histories of ethnic groups in Darebin and its surrounds. Already there have been a set of collectable cards and theatrical show produced by The Connies which is being performed at festivals and functions. Simone is

writing a book which expands on these stories to give more depth to the history of Darebin and the people who live here.

9. The tsunami relief efforts by DECC were noted, as well as the proposal to write to relevant government bodies to put pressure on them to relax immigration regulations particularly where tsunami affected people and families were concerned.

10. Lionel Bopage pointed out that multiculturalism must be more than festivals and other shows of culture. In local government it must be shown to be effective by a demonstrated diversity of Local Council staff.

11. John Nicolau mentioned that his club had lost \$700 in funding due to new regulations which prevent senior citizens club members from being funded by the government for more than one club. He said that this has resulted in less funding and less activities for his club members. It was pointed out by Dalal Smiley that this was an equity issue – that other smaller clubs which previously received no money now received some money because of these reforms. John said that each individual member his club had to fill out a form of membership to receive funding, and that if this form was not filled out perfectly it would be rejected. This issue is to be raised at the next EMT – DECC meeting.

12. Jackie Mansourian spoke of the review of many Iraqi TPV holders, and the fact that many are going to be sent back to Iraq because their visas are due to expire, despite the fact that they have settled and built lives here for several years now. She said that DECC and City of Darebin and other city councils must collectively put pressure on the Immigration department, the Iraq Embassy and other relevant bodies to try and prevent this from happening.

13. Nalliyah Suriyakumaran mentioned that since there was the multilingual Chinese New Year sign in front of the council, Darebin must endeavor to do other ethnic communities New Year signs. He also gave information about the Melbourne 2030 development of Preston Market, and was subsequently asked to invite the developers of Preston market to a DECC meeting to receive feedback from different communities represented.

14. Gaetano Greco emphasized that this year DECC needs to make itself felt in the areas of advocacy and lobbying. DECC could increase its public

profile through holding forums on issues that are of concern, such as forums on TPVs, gambling and the funding structures of senior citizens clubs.

15. John Nicolau said that something needs to be done about the fact that retirees are having their pensions cancelled because they own holidays houses (considered assets), even though they do not rent them out.

16. Northern AMEP (Anne Giddens) asked what DECC could do in relation to newly arrived immigrants and communities. Suriyan suggested that DECC facilitate a linkage between the newly arrived communities and existing established communities.

Meeting closed at 8:45pm