



Fostering Multicultural Values

Minutes of DECC Meeting held Thursday 19 May 2005

Present:

Simone Battiston, John Nicolaou, Vincenzo Balestra, Sofia Kotanidis, Indah K Morgan, N. Suriyakumaran, Bigla Corci, Bigla Kosta Ristovski, Reece Cocks, Alma Hernadez, Carlos Montalvo, Angela Santamaria, Rosemary Jimenez, Debora Barros, Lionel Bopage, Nevenka Basor, Stsepan Novak, Jackie Mansourian, Bohe Despotovski Tanec

Apologies:

David Diaz, Katerina Brosovic-Basic

1. Welcome

2. Confirmation of Minutes

3. Guest Speaker: Debora Barros. Debora Barros a representative of the indigenous Wayuuan people of Columbia. Speaking through an interpreter she described to those present how her village elders and children were massacred by paramilitary on April 15 2004. She has come to Australia, sponsored by the Columbian Miners Union, to speak to trade unionists and to appeal to BHP Billiton for help to discover who is responsible for the attack. BHP Billiton conducts various mining activities near Wayuuan land. DECC unanimously supported a resolution to assist Debora Barros in her struggle to find justice.

4. Reece Cocks of the Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade informed DECC that soon the MMFB will have a permanent Multicultural Liaison Officer. This position will be devoted to enduring that the MMFB has a good relationship with all in the community and amongst other duties will also conduct fire safety education programs for new arrivals in Australia.

5. A new DECC news letter has been launched named "On The Record". It is focused on multiculturalism and the activities of Darebin City Council. It will be published every two months and will document the events and progress (or lack of) concerning local council and multiculturalism.

6. The Community Grants application and evaluation process is continuing. Simone Battiston has been assisting various ethnic based community groups in filling out grant applications. These applications are for a variety of things, from funding for a specific day or event to funding for ongoing costs of meetings such as a water and electricity.

Two projects which are in motion at the moment are the Disabilities within Ethnic Communities Forum and an addition of four cards to Darebin's Australian's cards. More information on these projects will be available as they develop.

7. John Nicolaou expressed his dissatisfaction at the new senior citizens club funding structure. Others pointed out that the new structure was fairer to all groups including new groups which before the restructuring had no money. It was suggested that perhaps the total funding for senior citizens clubs needs to be increased so that all clubs have a reasonable amount of money to spend.

8. A reply was received to DECC's letter sent to the immigration department earlier this year regarding the relaxing of immigration laws for tsunami affected victims. The reply, written not by Amanda Vanstone but one of her associates, said that it would be inappropriate to do this because (i) the governments of tsunami affect nations have not directly asked for such assistance and (ii) the government believes that it is better for people to rebuild in the own environment.

9. Reece Cocks and Vincenzo Balestra are to represent DECC at a series of community safety meetings concerning issues such as policing, public lighting, etc.

10. John Nicolaou, Jackie Mansourian and Indah Morgan will represent DECC at the Commonwealth Games participation Committee.

11. Bone Despotovski and Kosta Ristovski are going to represent DECC in the organization of the Darebin Music Festival.

12. DECC members were invited by Sofia Kotanidis to attend the commemoration of the Pontian Genocide on 22 May.

13. The date of the Iraqi Temporary Protection Visa forum has been changed to the 7th of July due to parliament sitting on the date previously chosen.

14. DECC agreed that the recent revelations about the conduct of the department of immigration is unacceptable. A letter will be sent to relevant political figures expressing DECC's condemnation of the actions of the immigration department.