



ASHRA Newsletter

Agencies Supporting Housing for Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Volume 2 Issue 9

May 2008

Special points of interest:

- ASHRA Multicultural Directory reprint and art competition announcement!
- Latest research regarding youth, emergency accommodation for people from CaLD backgrounds and settlement issues in Tasmania.
- Upcoming conference *Social Inclusion for new and emerging communities*
- Home ownership for low income families

Editorial comment: Inform yourself!

Once again Australia's most recent arrivals are the target of misinformation and innuendo. You may remember Kevin Andrews' statement in October last year to reduce the African intake from 70% to 30% 'because some groups were not settling into the Australian way of life'. In March of this year, WA Shadow Housing and Works Minister, John McGrath called for a 12 to 24 month halt to its refugee intake 'to help solve WA's growing housing crisis'.

It is appalling to me, both professionally and personally, that those in leadership positions should conflate some of the most pressing issues facing Australians today. It is true that we are currently in a housing crisis and have been for the past three years. House prices have quadrupled over the past twenty years, rents in the private rental market have doubled in the past ten years and vacancy rates have been below 2% for the past three years. In South Australia at least, competition for accommodation in the private rental market has been exacerbated by the sell off of our public housing stock. It is well

documented that low income families and individuals are finding it EXTREMELY difficult to make ends meet. And this in turn has forced many to seek assistance from Welfare Centres for emergency relief.

What I am suggesting here is that the current housing crisis has been a long time coming, with all governments having plenty of lead time to anticipate and attend to these issues well before they reached the crisis we now find ourselves. Our most vulnerable citizens are the countries barometer and will be the first to feel the impact of any changes to the economy. New arrivals, young people, Aboriginal people, low income families and individuals have ALL been feeling the pinch for some time now. This has been evidenced by a 2005 ACROSS report that estimated 132,000 people who were eligible for assistance were turned away because services were already operating at capacity and needed to ration access. In SA this equated to 28,000 people being turned away and a third of these requests were for housing.

Given that Australia is arguably

the second most multicultural country in the world and has had multicultural policies in place since the late 1970's, it is surprising that we continue to struggle with the settlement needs of new arrivals. Refugees, unlike migrants, are chosen for their settlement need, not their integration potential. Conversely, the increased intake of skilled migrants is aimed at addressing the skills shortage in Australia.

So if you are confused by the amount of misinformation that surrounds refugees in this country, I urge you to inform yourself and there are lots of ways to get involved: why not volunteer at a Homework Club, or help families acclimate by volunteering with ARA. You could also become an ESL Home Tutor at TAFE, or support asylum seekers through Red Cross's new Bridging Support Program, or what about joining a Circle of Friends?. First hand experience of the needs of new arrivals while contributing to your community will go a long way to countering the misleading information that surrounds new arrivals and will send a strong message to our politicians.

How to say g'day in Greek...Ti kanis?

Australia has a long history of Greek settlement, with the first census conducted in 1901 recording 878 Greece born people.

Substantial immigration happened between WWI and WWII and by 1947 there were 12,291 Greece born people living in Australia. Today,

Australia boasts a Greece born population of 109,980 and the South Australian Greek population is 10,780. The majority arrived prior to 1996. 85% of Greece born people living in Australia speak Greek and the median age of the Greece born is 63.4 years of age. The Greek Orthodox Community of SA is an

established multi purpose organisation for people of Greek background. GOCSA has developed services such as Greek language schools, cultural and educational packages, community services, Community Aged Care Packages, Respite, child care and much more. For more information, go to www.greekocsa.org.au



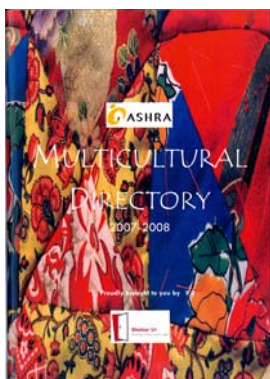
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What does multiculturalism mean to you?

Wanna win \$100?

Why not enter our art competition? The winning entry will also be featured on the cover of the 2008~2009

ASHRA Multicultural Directory

Conference details:

25~27 June 2008
Banquet Room
Adelaide Festival Centre

Contact:
Matti Spellacy
matti@mrca.com.au

Tel: 8217 9510

Reprint of ASHRA Multicultural Directory and Art competition!

The ASHRA Multicultural Directory has been enormously successful - we originally had 500 copies printed and the first half were sent out free of charge to our networks, focussing especially on community centres and neighbourhood houses, local government and ESL tutors. Clearly we have underestimated the amount of people who work directly and indirectly with new arrivals to South Australia – we would have run out of copies completely in a matter of weeks if we had given them out to everyone that wanted a copy! At Shelter SA we believe that the better connected up we all are, the better able we are to provide appropriate and timely support to those in need of assistance – and the ASHRA Multicultural Directory was our contribution to this dialogue. Yet even over a period of 10 months, things are changing or have changed

and we are now looking to do an updated version for 2008 – 2009.

Fliers will be sent out shortly to our existing network requesting updates on their entries in the directory. We have a number of headings as this allows services that offer a variety of supports to be listed multiple times – so if your service offers employment support, financial aid and tenancy training – your service can be listed separately under each heading. Please distribute these requests to your networks so that we continue to have a really comprehensive list of services that support refugees and asylum seekers AND that are South Australian specific.

The cover of the first edition was a quilt I was working on at the time. Some of the fabrics were more than 50 years old, each with distinct

and individual designs and combined to form a vibrant and eclectic whole. This to me is analogous to multiculturalism as it can be: acknowledgement and maintenance of our cultural and linguistic differences with supports to link with and embrace our multiple and changing identities. So what do you think multiculturalism is? The team at Shelter SA is offering \$100 for the best artwork (any medium) and the winning entry will be featured on the cover of the updated 2008 – 2009 ASHRA Multicultural Directory. Send your entries (or photographs if the finished piece is too large) to Shelter SA c/- Margo Johnson, 220 Victoria Square, Adelaide SA 5000. We will try to include entries in upcoming editions of the ASHRA newsletter and *Sheltershortz* (the Shelter SA newsletter). The competition closes June 30th 2008.

Conference: Social Inclusion for new and emerging communities

The conference will build on the 2006 conference *When do I stop being a refugee?* And will seek to address the key challenges identified by the Federal Government in the Australian Social Inclusion Agenda 2007, with a particular focus on new and emerging communities, by exploring the following:

- Defining community and expanding our understanding of a national identity that fosters and supports social inclusion.
- Engaging diversity in making changes so that all Australians, regardless of where they live or who they are, can participate in the social and economic life of the nation
- Developing strategies for ensuring that people do not fall through the safety net
- Developing tools for measuring positive change so that we know we are making a tangible difference to people facing entrenched disadvantage.

Conference themes include regeneration through capacity building towards greater inclusivity and where do we go with what we know in achieving meaningful and sustainable social inclusion?

Home Ownership for Low Income Families

Many of our readers would be aware of the affordable housing crisis we are currently experiencing – rents have nearly doubled over the past ten years and house prices have quadrupled over the past 20. And while there have been lots of discussions and plans to address these concerns, their implementation can seem a long way off. This has meant that many South Australian families and individuals are struggling in this highly competitive and extremely expensive housing market. This is of particular concern for recent arrivals to Australia with large families and limited awareness of our housing market. Getting low income families into affordable home ownership is one way to relieve some of this demand and stabilise communities.

Habitat for Humanity's mission is to eliminate low-income housing from the world, and to make decent shelter a matter of conscience and action and to promote home ownership as a means of breaking the cycle of poverty. It is a not-for-profit organisation which partners with low income families to build simple, decent and affordable

homes. Established in 1988, H4H built more than 60 homes in Australia providing home ownership to families in need through its network of affiliates located in Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia. In South Australia, six homes have been built and another two are under construction in Smithfield Plains. Others are on the drawing board for later this year.

Houses are financed through interest-free mortgages to partnering low-income families. The houses are built with financial support from individuals, businesses and community groups and by collecting donations of money, materials and volunteer labour. Under supervision, volunteers work on the construction of the homes alongside the partner families who each contribute at least 500 hours in "sweat equity" on a Habitat build.

Using a non-discriminatory selection process, Habitat's partner families are chosen by their local community according to their need, their ability to repay an interest-free mortgage and their willingness to partner with Habitat for Humanity.

Partnering families also undertake training in basic home maintenance and household financial management to help them on their way to successful homeownership. In this way, partnering families are given a hand up, not a hand out.

In 2007, Habitat for Humanity undertook to build an extension and renovate a property in regional New South Wales for a large Sudanese family who had moved there to be close to their social contacts. And in May 2007, construction on two properties began in Smithfield Plains, South Australia; one for a refugee family and the other for a single parent with three young children. If you would like to learn more about Habitat for Humanity, would like to donate your time or money, or if you would like to apply for a house; go to www.habitat.org.au click on the *get involved* icon and follow the prompts.

Special thanks to:

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Margo Johnson

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Effie Roubos

Bill Peterson

Kerry Gray

Kim Duncan





**Also worth
checking out:
Working with
Multicultural
Youth:
Programs,
Strategies and
Future
Directions**

New research: Multicultural Youth in Australia: Settlement and Transition

This paper addresses the particular issues facing multicultural youth highlighting differences in experiences and needs among the groups of 'multicultural youth' for example, migrant, refugee and second generation young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and covers a range of key areas. The following is drawn from the paper. The paper is presented in three sections; statistics, theoretical concepts and the needs of multicultural young people. The key areas of need include settlement, income and housing, education and employment, health, identity and racism, family and community, and justice and law.

There are some fundamental differences in the concept of 'youth' across cultures and specific issues being experienced that warrant a deeper understanding for anyone working with multicultural groups and particularly young people. Youth, for example, is understood differently across cultures in relation to life stages, family roles and social expectations and 'Many cultures have no concept of youth as a transition phase characterised by leisure and limited responsibility' (p3).

To highlight just a few of the areas covered: Due to the experiences of the young people in their country of origin or during their time in refugee camps, 'many newly arrived young people have had little or no formal schooling' (p7). Without literacy in mother tongue it becomes

increasingly difficult to acquire second and subsequent languages without additional language support. Further, young people tend to acculturate more quickly to the adopted country than their older family members. Parents can experience fears about their child's safety, concern about their child's exposure to negative influences and concerns about a perceived loss of values or culture. This would suggest that youth focused services targeting multicultural groups need to consider how to best engage with the young person within the context of their family and community.

In this report, good settlement practice for multicultural youth should include: stable housing, access to appropriate health services, stable income or appropriate education and training, living in an environment free from discrimination, having a sense of hope for the future and solid support networks, having a positive sense of self and identity, feeling a capacity to shape their future, and having confidence accessing and navigating available services.

This paper is partnered by *Working with Multicultural Youth: Programs, Strategies and Future Directions*. This second paper outlines programs available across Australia addressing these needs.

For further information or to download a copy of this report, go to the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth www.aracy.org.au click on publications and go to *evidence into action topical papers*.

New research: Dropped from the Moon: the settlement experiences of refugee communities in Tasmania

This report looks at the settlement experiences of refugee communities in Tasmania and follows an earlier report *A Place To Stay* (2000). Tasmania has a long tradition of refugee settlement, however has struggled to retain refugee communities; the Vietnamese, Hmong, Bosnian and El Salvadoran communities have all largely left and it appears the African community has begun to leave seeking employment and other opportunities available in larger communities on the mainland.

The report acknowledges the changing social and economic climate that Australia has experienced over the past decade or so including; an increase in 'visibly different' refugees (Middle Eastern and African), 'muddy definitional debates about 'legal' and 'illegal' refugees', rising 'cost of living', great social stress for low income Australians, increased competition for public housing and the private rental market and high unemployment rates, especially for people with low literacy and numeracy.

Refugees highlighted the need for services to go beyond the period of eligibility for intensive settlement services as they are trying to deal with unemployment, competing for insufficient supplies of accommodation (often leading to overcrowding) and dealing with 'racial tension in the Tasmanian community' (the latter point exacerbating post traumatic stress already experienced by refugees).

The report lists 34 recommendations covering everything from a call to review the cultural definition of 'family', to an increase in driver training and the development of a food co-operative. Housing and supports are also naturally high on the list. To download the report: go to www.anglicare-tas.org.au and click on *publications*

New research: No place to go

No Place to go: report on the needs analysis of crisis accommodation for culturally and linguistically diverse background people (Islamic). The following are excerpts from this Western Australian research.

Domestic violence and homelessness are issues that affect ALL sections of the Australian community. While the government and service providers acknowledge the need to deliver services within a framework which is sensitive and responsive to the needs of diverse clients, there has been little research into the needs of specific ethnic or religious groups to inform the delivery of crisis accommodation services.

This report seeks to address the lack of documented evidence of the needs and experiences of Muslims in relation to crisis accommodation. The objectives of the needs analysis are:

- To identify barriers to accessing crisis accommodation services for culturally and linguistically diverse Muslims, and

- To investigate the specific needs of Muslims in relation to crisis accommodation services and whether these needs are being met by current service provisions, and
- To raise awareness of issues and barriers for Muslims in accessing crisis accommodation services.

Since 2001, 'Australian Muslims have experienced unprecedented levels of aggression, vilification and discrimination. Women, the most visible but also most vulnerable members of Australia's Muslim communities have, unfortunately suffered the most victimisation. This has forced Muslim women back into their homes; compounding their isolation and preventing them from accessing available support services including crisis accommodation services'. The literature review found that while there is some research available regarding CaLD people in crisis accommodation, there is NO AVAILABLE research or statistical data on this specific issue. The literature review

also highlighted several issues around service provision, including:

- Women from CaLD backgrounds are less likely to use mainstream services for a range of reasons
- Women from CaLD backgrounds are less likely to report cases of domestic violence or to access support services
- There is a lack of access to relevant and linguistically appropriate information about domestic violence, and
- Current service models do not support culturally appropriate practice

The report raises a number of issues pertinent to mainstream and CaLD specific services and well worth reading. For further information about this report or to download the document, go to www.fahcsia.gov.au then go to publications and then homelessness. The report is listed under *Dar Al Shifah No place to go*



The research found that while there is some research regarding CaLD people in crisis accommodation, there is NO available research or statistical data on crisis accommodation for Muslim communities.

Show your support for refugees and have a good time with ARA!

There are heaps of ways you can show your support for refugees, get to meet loads of new people and raise awareness to the wider community all at the same time!

The Australian Refugee Association (ARA) regularly hold events and have just announced their upcoming fundraising activities:

25 June 2008

Gourmet Greek Banquet
Zak's Café Restaurant
West Lakes
\$55 per person

20 and 27 July 2008

Double Feature: Mamma Mia and Hancock
Chelsea Cinema Kensington Park
Tickets \$14 Students \$8

Community Lottery

ARA retains 100% of funds from ALL tickets it sells!
1st prize Mitsubishi Lancer
2nd prize \$25,000 Harvey Norman Shopping Spree
3rd prize Mitsubishi Colt
113 prizes in total (go to www.australiancentral.com.au for complete prize list)
Tickets are \$2 each or you can buy a book of tickets.

**Contact Erika at
ARA on 8354 2951
or email:
fundraising@ausref.net
for more
information.**

ASHRA Vision Statement

ASHRA is committed to developing our network of interested groups and individuals working with refugees and asylum seekers. We wish to provide greater opportunity for leadership and skill development, create strong informal networks between organisations, provide greater transparency in information sharing, potentially reduce the duplication of services and more readily identify the gaps in services.

You give but little when you give
of your possessions. It is when
you give of yourself that you
truly give

Kahlil Gibran

ASHRA Meeting dates for 2008

14th February

9th April

11th June

8th October

13th August

3rd December

All meetings are held in the Torrens Building, 220 Victoria Square, Adelaide at 3-5pm. Meetings are informal and everyone is welcome.

Upcoming events

Conference:

Making a difference: Social inclusion for new and emerging communities
25-27th June 2008

Contact: Matti Spellacy MRC Tel: 8217 9510 or email: matyti@mrcsa.com.au
The conference will build on the 2006 Conference and seek to address the key challenges identified by the Federal Government in the Australian Social Inclusion Agenda 2007.

Training:

ARA Volunteer Induction training
6th June 2008 1-3 pm

Contact: Bok 8354 2951 to make a booking. Training is held at ARA, 304 Henley Beach Rd, Underdale (parking in the church car park next door)

This training is available to all of those volunteers who have not attended the induction training so far. It covers a range of topics just to help you get started such as: your rights and responsibilities as a volunteer, the refugee experience, the settlement experience and mandatory notification. This training is important in getting you started as a volunteer working with new arrivals.

refugee week June 15-21 2008

Refugee Week:

15-21 June 2008

32.9 million people world wide are already uprooted by violence and persecution. The theme for the Australian Refugee Week is 'a Place to call home'. This theme will encourage people to think about the global themes of protection and human rights by focusing on the fundamental right to a secure place to call home. To register your event, to download a resource kit or poster, go to:

www.refugeecouncil.org.au



for information please visit: www.refugeecouncil.org.au



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