



Communities Council on Ethnic Issues  
Eastern Melbourne

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

## 2013

*Promoting harmony and social inclusion*

Registered Association Incorporation A0017562S

ABN 44148684508

## CCOEI Aims and Objectives

The Communities' Council on Ethnic Issues will continue to play a role in relation to public policy on multicultural matters. This is usually undertaken through the Migrant Settlement Committee (the standing committee of the CCOEI) where the focus is on advocacy.

### **Aims and objectives**

- ✚ Influence public policy relating to migrants and refugees.
- ✚ Advocate on behalf of migrants and refugees on immigration, multicultural and settlement matters.
- ✚ Encourage cooperation, social inclusion and harmonious relationships among all Communities.
- ✚ Provide avenues of communication between mainstream, ethno specific and other service providers, migrants and refugees.
- ✚ Work with government and non-government organizations to develop appropriate services for migrants and refugees.

## Who's Who at CCOEI

### **EXECUTIVE MEMBERS:**

Chris Cosgriff (President)  
Glenis Crocker (General Secretary and Public Officer)  
Clary Verbunt (Correspondence Secretary)  
Twanny Farrugia (Treasurer)  
Sam Navarra (Migrant Settlement Committee Joint Chair)  
Cynthia Shaw (Migrant Settlement Committee Joint Chair)  
Leonie Burnham  
Sui Ting Tse  
Marilyn Gurry

### **President's Report**

It is now a number of years since I was elected as President of the CCOEI. In retirement life has become busier. For the last 10 years and more of my working life, my wife Heather gave me her full support and became involved in many of the groups I was associated with. Since retirement we have been able to do many of those involvements together. Recently an opportunity arose for Heather to take a lead part and myself to work with and support her. As such, I will not be standing for the Executive, but we intend to remain members of the CCOEI.

2012 – 2013 has been a year of successes with the Forums and increased attendance at the Settlement Committee meetings. I wish to thank all those individuals and organisations that attend and give their valuable contributions to the meetings.

I would also like to thank the Victorian Multicultural Commission for their funding approvals that allow us to meet and run the Forums. I would also like to thank the City of Whitehorse for their continuing support. However, what we do would not happen without the input and in kind support for our members and on behalf of the Executive we thank you also.

The Migrant Settlement Committee is the only meeting of its kind in the eastern LGA's that brings together federal and state authorities, associations, groups and individuals to learn, discuss and represent all the diverse communities in the area. I had hoped that the VMC's Multicultural Regional Advisory Committee, covering the eastern area, would have been represented at our meetings. They were invited, however, maybe that will change.

The CCOEI does not operate without the support and time given by the members of the Executive. Some roles require more time than others. I thank all for their efforts which show by the MSC meetings becoming bigger over time.

Chris Cosgriff  
President

### **MIGRANT SETTLEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT 2012-2013**

The MSC role and core objectives are informed by CCOEI vision *Promoting harmony and social inclusion*.

**MSC key role:** *assist service providers to achieve better outcomes for migrants and refugees during their initial and long-term settlement periods, as well as address local settlement issues.*

**MSC core objectives:**

- *to provide a forum in which workers from local settlement service agencies (and related agencies) can discuss settlement service issues;*
- *to encourage settlement service agencies to work collaboratively by proposing strategies; and*
- *plan for effective service improvements*

For the 2012-2013 financial year reporting period the MSC maintained its focus on themes of perennial interest and relevance to its members as well as putting the spotlight on new areas. The membership of the MSC – a fluid network of government and non-government agencies and community members - once again shaped the MSC calendar in terms of meeting focus, forums and events. A range of topics provided members with the opportunity for discussion and learning, collaboration, sharing good practice and solutions. The MSC focus is settlement in the broadest sense so that areas as varied as fire and water safety are as important as education and training, employment, housing and health. The MSC views settlement not restricted by the length of time someone has settled in the region or whether people arrived as refugees or migrants, asylum seekers or international students.

The MSC calendar, a flexible framework of operation, is developed by its members and reviewed during the year to take into account emerging needs and changing circumstances. It is a guide that is based on consultation with the membership.

Networking is a key function of the MSC. *“Over the years, it has been noted that some lasting partnerships and interesting projects and forums have originated in the networking that takes place at the MSC”.* One cannot underestimate the value of networking where individuals meet and organisations plan and deliver programs and

services of benefit to their clients. Networking happens formally in discussions at meetings and after meetings when providers continue the conversation and work collaboratively for a common cause. Different organisations also work together to develop forums that are delivered as part of the MSC calendar. This collaborative approach is to be praised and nurtured.

#### Networker Profiles



The MSC were delighted to promote the valuable work being undertaken in the Eastern Region by some of our newer members: Saturnino Onyala – MIC (pictured left), Jaya Manchikanti – City of Knox (centre) and Railey Orger – City of Whitehorse (pictured right). For further information see our website on <http://www.ccoei.org.au/events.html>

**Forums 2012-2013.** Part of the financial year calendar is the planning and delivery of forums that assist providers and the community at large to better understand and support people from CALD backgrounds.

#### **Employment Expo – 19<sup>th</sup> October 2012**

The Employment Expo was held at the Swinburne University Croydon Campus. Around 100 students from Swinburne's Wantirna, Croydon and Hawthorn campuses participated along with many volunteers who supported the event. Participants responded positively to the forum and in particular to the opportunity to experience job interviews. The event was the combined work of many organisations including Swinburne, DHS (Centrelink), the Janssen Spirituality Centre, ECLC and the City of Whitehorse.

#### **disAbility Voices Forum – 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2012**

The forum on disability in CALD communities (information, education and raising awareness of the barriers faced by people from CALD backgrounds) was held at the Box Hill Town Hall. The forum was the combined effort of a range of organisations including CCOEI's MSC, Department of Human Services (DHS - Centrelink), Disability Action Group Eastern Region (DAGER), Eastern Access Community Health (EACH), City of Whitehorse. Presentations ranged from academic research to the sharing of provider practice that spanned mental health, refugee health, homelessness and other key areas. The participation of the Stroke a Chord choir was a great attraction. (For more information refer to the summary report included in this Annual Report).

#### **Diversity Week and Harmony Day – March 2013**

Even though the MSC did not coordinate specific activities, members were actively involved in many of the celebrations. It is good to see MSC members contribute to events that strengthen community. Some of the events in the region which involved MSC members included:

- Harmony Day activities at Eastland Shopping Centre show-casing the power and inclusiveness of diversity, e.g. postcards/art show, entertainment, food
- City of Whitehorse diversity event held at Box Hill Gardens attended by around 1800 people.
- A soccer tournament organised by Vicpol attended by around 800 people. Participants included people from various African countries, the Middle East and Afghanistan.
- Australia-Burma Society Harmony Cup Tournament. 12 teams participated and hundreds attended from across Metropolitan Melbourne, Geelong and Werribee.

## **Highlights of 2012 – 2013 MSC Meetings**

### **August 2012 - Water and fire safety and CALD communities**

David Holland, Multicultural Project Manager, Life Saving Victoria, and Stephen O'Malley, Multicultural Liaison Officer/Leading Fire-fighter MFB, spoke about the progress made in water and fire safety.

David highlighted Life Saving Victoria's multicultural projects which aim to educate the CALD public about water safety. David noted the commitment of Life Saving Victoria's Multicultural Department to these practical projects, and which have increased over the years indicating the importance of swimming education. The projects attract men, women and children of all backgrounds.

Stephen spoke of the work of the MFBs Multicultural Liaison Officers who participate in a range of networks to reach multicultural communities, and who engage with the CALD community directly. The officers have educational and liaison functions. They promote fire safety projects and partnerships. In addition to fire fighting, the MFB has also a First Response role providing emergency medical response.

### **September 2012 - Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)**

Con Pagonis, MAV's Multicultural Policy Adviser presented the work of the MAV. He gave an overview of the MAV which is an association of local councils established in 1879, representing the interests of local government in Victoria. Con spoke of MAV's history, aims & objectives, role and responsibilities, and current challenges in settlement and multicultural affairs policy.

In 2011 the MAV Board established a Multicultural Committee to advise it on policy development in this area. The role of the multicultural policy adviser addresses sectoral local government issues to enable increased responsiveness to cultural diversity, supports strategic and local planning, develops partnerships and relationships between local government and ethnic communities, and networks with peak government and non-government bodies

It is worth noting that the EMR comprises 7 municipalities and some are regularly represented at MSC meetings and forums. At this meeting Boroondara – Fiona Brown, Senior Policy and Project Officer; Monash – Eugenia Grammatikakis, Community Development Officer; Whitehorse – Railey Orger, Diversity and Healthy Ageing Officer; Knox – Belinda Gillam - Community Development Officer provided updates about initiatives in their cities and contributed a local perspective.

### **October 2012 – the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC )**

Sherrine Clark, the ASRC Casework Coordinator spoke of the work of the ASRC, the largest asylum seeker organisation in Australia. In 2001 the organisation started with \$100 and a bag of groceries. Since then it has assisted over 7000 asylum seekers. 95% of its funding comes from donations and philanthropic associations. In 2012 the ASRC had 35 paid staff and 750 active volunteers. It delivered 25 programs under aid, justice, empowerment and community. Its 2012 operating budget was over \$2 million.

The ASRC assists the most vulnerable in our community and adheres to the Refugee Convention that Australia became a signatory to on January 22<sup>nd</sup> 1954. Sherrine spoke of the challenges faced by asylum seekers, who in many instances are people with a history of trauma and torture and suffer health and mental issues. Many are not entitled to government assistance or services. She noted that asylum seekers are people of resilience and skill and who desire to settle effectively and make a genuine contribution to Australia.

### **November and December 2012 – MSC review 2012 program and planning 2013 program**

The MSC calendar was acknowledged as responsive, and MSC processes 'affirming and supporting', and 'collaborative' as evidenced in forum working groups and networking which are essential activities of the MSC. The 2013 calendar continued its focus on settlement, education, employment and training. Reporting and networking remained key informative and interactive features of the MSC.

### **February 2013 - The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) - Reporting Racism Project and the anti-hate website.**

Michelle Burrell Manager, Strategic Projects and Policy Unit, VEOHRC, provided members of the MSC with an overview of the anti-discrimination laws in Victoria and an update on the Commission's research in relation to reporting racism, and the Commission's anti-hate campaign.

The Commission's Reporting Racism Project research aims to learn more about the experience of racism in Victoria and inform the development of third party reporting.

The Commission's Anti-Hate campaign addresses vilification, hate and other forms of discrimination. The development of the campaign was based on academic research as well as the Commission's own research on preventing and responding to discrimination. The Commission also drew on data from the complaints it had received. Michelle took members on a tour of the Anti-Hate website <http://www.antihate.vic.gov.au/>

The VEOHRC makes referrals to relevant and/or appropriate agencies or acts directly if it is something it can deal with under the Equal Opportunity Act or Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (RRTA). The Commission also assists respondents to make formal complaint.

### **February 2013 - Settlement Needs in your Area: immunization**

At the February 2013 meeting, Meg Scolyer, Health Promotion Officer, EACH, presented information on the very low uptake of immunization in CALD communities. The discussion paper *Factors that Impact on access to immunisation in newly arrived refugee communities* (See this link: [http://www.ccoei.org.au/docs/Refugee\\_Immunisation\\_Discussion\\_Paper.pdf](http://www.ccoei.org.au/docs/Refugee_Immunisation_Discussion_Paper.pdf)) was developed by the Refugee Health Nurse in consultation with members of the health network and health workers. The issue/unmet need was formally reported via the *Settlement Needs in Your Area* DIAC form and circulated widely to relevant bodies such as the Department of Health, members of Parliament and DIAC.

### **March 2013 – Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS): Settlement of Refugees in the EMR.**

Adam Warzel, Acting Director, Settlement and Multicultural Affairs, DIAC, provided information about HSS and referred to the Settlement Grants Program which continues settlement support for refugee and humanitarian entrants once they exit the HSS program.

The key goal of HSS is to support recently arrived refugee and humanitarian entrants to effectively settle and participate in Australian life. HSS services include on arrival reception and assistance such as finding accommodation; start up household goods and help with Centrelink, Medicare etc. HSS orientation and case management support is for 6 to 12 months.

Adam highlighted recent changes stemming from recommendations of the Houston Report, including the immediate increase of the refugee intake from 13,750 to 20,000 (Victoria's share is around 6,600).

The increase to 20,000 makes Australia the leading country per head of population in the resettlement of refugees. The increase challenges service providers due to short timeframes. Adam noted that in 2012 across Australia the program assisted 15,000 people with 4,500 settling in Victoria.

In addition to HSS, DIAC funds the Refugee Action Program (RAP), the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP), and Complex Case Support (CCS) for those who need intensive extra support during and after their HSS entitlement.

Ramesh Kumar, Manager, HSS & Asylum Seeker programs, AMES provided the MSC with information about the work of AMES in settlement, employment, education and training.

HSS assigns a case manager to assess the entrant's needs and develop a case management plan to achieve initial settlement outcomes. The plan is based on the strength and skills of each person. A team of HSS staff consisting of a case manager, community guide (many are former refugees), volunteer or proposer and personnel from service providers e.g. the Refugee Health Nurse, support the settlement journey. HSS is also responsible for an 11 week Orientation program consisting of 11 key settlement topics which build on the

AUSCO training provided offshore (housing, money and budgeting, Australian law, the education system, health system, employment and others). Resources are in the clients' own language wherever possible.

Ramesh acknowledged the partners, subcontractors, agencies across Victoria who deliver the HSS. Victoria receives 1/3 of total arrivals to Australia. This high figure is further increased by interstate migration, making Victoria the state that resettles the highest number of refugees.

He also noted that HSS has been acknowledged globally as the best suite of settlement services to support refugees. Apart from HSS, AMES delivers Complex Case Support (CCS), the Community Detention program (CD); the Community Assistance Support (CAS) program; and the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme (ASAS).

Brook Shearer, Acting Manager Asylum Seeker Program, AMES gave an overview of asylum seeker programs delivered by AMES including Community Detention and Bridging Visa E programs. Asylum seekers in these programs are formally described as Irregular Maritime Arrivals (IMA).

AMES manages the Community Assistance Scheme Transitional Support (CAS TS). Most of these clients are single men on Bridging Visa E. They receive a reduced Centrelink living allowance and have a right to work, and access to various support. Since September 2012, 2500 clients have been assisted through this program while their claims for refugee status are under consideration.

After 6 weeks under CAS TS, clients who are not deemed vulnerable but not financially independent progress to the Asylum Seeker Assistance Scheme (ASAS). They are mainly single men (Afghan, Iranian, Iraqi and Sri Lankan). The rules have changed since the Houston Report: pre August 13 clients in this category had work rights but post August 13 they have no work rights. ASAS delivers programs to meaningfully engage these clients to increase skills, capacity and motivation. It is not uncommon to find many suffering mental health and so need to link them quickly to GPs.

AMES supports around 450 clients in CAS and ASAS who arrive in Victoria either directly or from interstate. These clients have the same issues as HSS clients.

AMES also delivers CD programs. Clients in these programs are Irregular Maritime Arrivals mostly families and single women with no right to work. They receive 70% of the basic Centrelink living allowance and have access to health care, education for school age children, and limited adult English language classes.

#### **April 2013 - Living in Community Detention at the Janssen Spirituality Centre (JSC).**

Michael Hardie, Director, JSC provided information about JSC, which has been a retreat and conference centre, and which for some years has had a connection with Knox Council through the Interfaith Network undertaking Pastoral outreach to refugees.

The Centre's involvement in the Asylum Seeker Community Detention (CD) program began as a new initiative in December 2011 when JSC was approached by government to assist with the CD program. Throughout the program JSC has cooperated with agencies like Catholic Care, Jesuit Refugee Services, MacKillop Family Services and DIAC, and linked with organisations and networks like Knox City Council, City of Whitehorse, Victoria Police, AMES, CCOEI, Knox Leisure Works (run by YMCA, to teach swimming and drowning prevention skills), the Afghani community and wider networks.

Asylum seeker residents under this program were 10 young Moslem men aged between 18 and 24 years, mainly from Hazara ethnicity who had all experienced trauma. They needed activities such as outings, sport, community events, preparing halal food, education and skills training, communicating with family and friends, and acceptance by the wider community. In addressing these needs, JSC worked cooperatively with many community organisations and agencies.

Despite the success of the JSC program, DIAC has withdrawn funding. Michael sees the changed circumstances an incentive to find alternatives to address the needs of people in Community Detention.

### **May 2013 - Blackburn English Language School (BELS)**

Robert Colla, Principal, provided information about their funding which is both federal and state, and the rules governing student eligibility. He spoke about the history of the school, now in its 35<sup>th</sup> year as well as the sites from which it operates - the Whitehorse campus and the new campus in Croydon North which opened in July 2011.



Blackburn English Language School

The school operates like other schools and prepares students and their families for mainstream schooling. Students are enrolled full time.

The average class size is 13 and students are grouped according to their age and language ability.

Withdrawal one-to-one assistance is also available, and bilingual assistants work with students and families. Students are assisted with transition to mainstream schools (particularly refugee students).

In 2012 enrolment was 165 Primary and 160 Secondary students who come from 25 countries but mainly China; Burma; Iran; Thailand; Malaysia; Korea and Sri Lanka.

BELS also provide Outreach services; Outpost services; Isolated Students Program; Transition Services. Robert noted that in 2010 BELS was one of 3 schools which went to the Shanghai World Expo to promote DEECD and new educational learning spaces.

Robyn Antrim, the BELS Outreach Services Coordinator spoke about her role which is to assess new arrival students enrolled in government mainstream schools (provide a report to the school); advise schools of the appropriate program for the student; liaise with the parents and mainstream school to enroll the student in an appropriate program; assist class teachers.

### **June 2013 - Education/training and employment for people from CALD backgrounds**

Speakers from AMES (Margaret Davis, Educational Counselling Coordinator; Sally Hearn, Employment Pathways Manager; Simon Yang, Employment Manager Central East Region; Thoa Nguyen & Diana Riano, students in the *Work Skills Class*) presented on the topic of education/training and employment. The presentations covered various areas including the AMEP's educational counselling, and programs such as the Settlement Language Pathways to Employment/Training (SLPET) and Employment Readiness, as well as specialist services provided by AMES Employment as a Job Services Australia provider.

The AMEP contract has a strong focus on educational counselling to enable clients to plan their career journey both during and after completing the AMEP. The AMES Education Counsellor meets with new clients before class commences, during the 510 AMEP hours of study and makes referrals to other services as required.

The SLPET programs provide clients with 160 hours specific training and an additional 40 hours work experience. They assist AMEP clients to learn English and gain familiarity with workplace language, culture and practices. Work placements have been undertaken in various work contexts such as the "Dream Nails" Salon where students experienced the different roles of a typical salon; DREAM Chisholm Electrical & Engineering; Preston Market waste management etc.

The two students from the *Workplace Skills* class, Employment Readiness program shared their experience of the program and their motivation to embark on the two-week work experience placement. They both spoke about the importance of having a good cover letter and CV for job applications.

Simon Yang, AMES Employment Manager Central East Region, talked about the many backgrounds of AMES Employment clients and how important it is to have realistic expectations. He said that it is important in his job to know employers and their needs and to be open and upfront about any assistance such as a Wage Subsidy. Assessing whether a client is right for the job is also important and areas such as workplace language ability (safety being paramount), the ability to follow instructions, life skills as well as previous work experience, and the ability to work as a member of a team.

### **June 2013 – Refugee Week**

As for Diversity Week and Harmony Day activities, many members of the MSC were involved in Refugee Week activities held in different areas in the EMR.

### **MSC Documents on the CCOEI Website**

Many of the 2012-2013 presentations are available on the CCOEI website. The agency reporting component that regularly keeps members of the MSC informed about developments, services, practices, innovations, events and forums is a regular and essential feature of the MSC meetings. Meeting minutes (and agendas) are all on the CCOEI website accessible to the public.

To access these documents go to: <http://www.ccoei.org.au/msc.html>

### **MSC Participants in 2012 - 2013**

Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES), Education - Box Hill and Oakleigh centres  
Adult Multicultural Education Service (AMES) Outer East Volunteer Tutor Program  
Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) Settlement  
Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) Employment - Box Hill  
Anchor Inc.  
Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC)  
Blackburn English Language School (BELS)  
City of Boroondara  
City of Knox  
City of Manningham  
City of Maroondah  
City of Monash  
City of Whitehorse  
Communities Council on Ethnic Issues (CCOEI)  
Community members and volunteers  
Consumer Affairs Victoria Eastern Metropolitan Region  
Corranderk (Aboriginal Station) Festival Committee  
Deakin University (International Students)  
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD)  
Department of Health (DoH)  
Department of Human Services – Centrelink (Box Hill, Glen Waverley, Ringwood etc.)  
Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)  
Department of Justice (DOJ)  
Dutch Community  
Eastern Access Community Health (EACH)  
Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC)  
Eastern Health Child and Youth Mental Health  
Eastern Health  
Holmesglen TAFE  
Inner East Melbourne Medicare Local  
Janssen Spirituality Centre  
Life Saving Victoria  
Louise Multicultural Community Centre  
Maurice Blackburn Lawyers  
Melbourne Fire Brigade (MFB)  
Migrant Information Centre (MIC) Eastern Melbourne  
Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)  
PHaMs Mind Central East-Whitehorse  
Proability  
Sheriff Offices Box Hill and Ringwood  
Swinburne University  
Victoria Police, Region 4 Multicultural Liaison Unit  
Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC)  
Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture and Trauma (Foundation House)  
Yarra Ranges Council

## **Project Report**

### **disAbility Voices Forum Report**

Held on 3<sup>rd</sup> Dec 2012 in the Box Hill Town Hall.

Focus on Disability within  
Cultural and Linguistically Diverse Communities

#### **Background:**

Research and anecdotal information indicates that people from diverse backgrounds have different experiences of disability. In some languages there is no direct translation for 'disability', the person may be described by their limitation for instance; "the man whose ears do not work". For many communities the presence of disability at birth signifies a punishment and shame to the family, other communities view disability as a blessing. It is also acknowledged that communities may not perceive disability acquired through accident or illness in the same way as disabilities present from birth.

Concerns were raised that people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities have been under-represented in disability and other service provision. For instance, many eligible people from a range of diverse backgrounds are not accessing Home and Community Care Assistance to the same extent as eligible people from English speaking backgrounds.

Amongst service organisations in the Eastern Region, there is a growing awareness and desire to provide culturally responsive services to people with a disability. There is an understanding of the need to overcome the barriers and to encourage the CALD community to access their entitlements to services.

Following a decision to hold a disability forum the MSC through Cynthia Shaw initiated a partnership with the Disability Action Group Eastern Region (DAGER). DAGER is an active community based advocacy group for people with disabilities. Their input and support from a disability knowledge and experience base was critical to the success of this project.

#### **Project Working Group**

The Project Working Group consisted of 12 members from the following organisations:

- Disability Advocacy Group in the Eastern Region (DAGER)- Chairperson, Secretary and Members,
- Communities' Council on Ethnic Issues (CCOEI) – CCOEI Treasurer
- Migrant Settlement Committee (MSC) – MSC Chairperson and members
- Councillor Ann Fraser (Mullum Ward - Maroondah)
- Whitehorse City Council – Metro Access Development Officer
- EACH – Social and Community Health, Manager Group Options, Community Inclusion Support Services;
- Department of Human Services – Centrelink, Multicultural Service Officer

The Project Working Group was responsible for all aspects of the project development and implementation including evaluation and report writing. The range of knowledge, skill and interests of the Project Working Group contributed to the success of planning and delivering the Disability Voices Forum.

**Target Audience:**

- Staff members of community organisations and service provider organisations who wished to broaden their knowledge and skills in providing culturally and socially responsive services to all people with a disability
- Volunteers, as well as interested members of the community.

**The Forum**

The Disability Voices Forum was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2012 in acknowledgement of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of International Day of People with a Disability (IDPwD).

**Presentations:**

The Project Working Groups sought presentations from individuals and organisations that could provide a broad overview of the interaction between immigration and experience of disability, the role of local services and the experiences of people with a disability from diverse communities.



*Photo: Prof Edmond Chiu at the podium*

Professor Edmond Chiu AM: - Emeritus Professor, Melbourne University.  
Presented: "*Disability, Cognitive Dissonance and Survival.*" Professor Chiu also provided "*an overview of the relationship between migration and the experience of disability*"

Keith Hitchen: - Executive Director, Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities  
Presented: "*Myths, stigma and stereotyping relating to providing services to people from CALD backgrounds*"

Robyn Kilpatrick: - Migrant Information Service (Eastern Melbourne)  
Presented: "*Raising awareness of barriers to participation for the CALD community*" and "*Exploring Social Inclusion Perspectives*"

Dorothy Docherty: provided a personal overview of the experiences of a person with vision impairment.

Merilyn Spratling: Refugee Nurse – EACH  
Outlined the definition of "Refugee" and discussed her role and examples of issues and barriers for refugees with chronic illness or disabilities. In addition Merilyn provided a relevant and interesting case study that demonstrated the complexity of issues dealt with on a daily basis.

Teena Lee: Centre for Youth Mental Health Services (CYMHS): Discussed barriers and strategies to assist young people from CALD backgrounds to access mental health services.



*Photo: Merilyn Spratling; Teena Lee and Robyn Kilpatrick*

### Elinor Porat:

MIND Australia (Sanridge Project): Outlined strategies, challenges and principles adopted through this program to assist people from CALD backgrounds with disabilities to access homelessness services.

### Choir Performance - Stroke a Chord:

This choir is composed of stroke survivors with aphasia (loss of speech after stroke). Members can sing even though they struggle to speak. Whilst entertainment was seen as a great lead into a networking lunch, the performance also highlighted a very successful activity that increases self-esteem and improves social communicative interaction leading to improved quality of life. For more information about Stroke-a-Chord go to: <http://www.strokeachord.com/>



### **Evaluation**

Evaluations submitted on the day indicated:

- The speakers were highly praised for their expertise, knowledge and presentations.
- Stroke a Chord received extremely high praise
- A wide variety of possible future forums were identified on the evaluation forms and have been incorporated with the bulk of other suggestions received.

In addition to this, most people who attended would like to be kept informed of future forums or workshops.

### **Thank you**

The Communities' Council extends their congratulations and thanks to everyone who helped to organise and undertake this event.

*The full version of this report is available on the City of Whitehorse website at:*

<http://www.whitehorse.vic.gov.au/MetroAccess.html> (bottom of the page)