
Tenth Annual General Meeting Wednesday 9 November 2016

Chair's Report

Introduction

I wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. We respect their continuing culture and the unique contribution they make to the life of this area. We acknowledge all the people who have come to settle in the land of Australia as their home, the rich cultures these people have brought to this country and for the contributions they make to this country. We are all proud to be Australian as we embrace and celebrate the success of Australia as a multicultural society.

It is my great pleasure to present my second term report as the CMCF Chair to the members of the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum (CMCF) Incorporated at this tenth Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 9 November 2016 at the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre.

A year in review – steady move forward

It has been ten years since the inception of the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum (CMCF) Inc. and we continue to work towards providing strong leadership and act as the Multicultural Voice of ACT. As an effective peak community organisation we currently have financial membership representing over 100 ethnic community organisations and 30 individual members.

CMCF's vision is a fair and harmonious Canberra community, which supports and celebrates cultural diversity. The role and work of CMCF is to support its members, the ethnic communities in the ACT, while ensuring the concept of multiculturalism is represented positively to the Australian community at large.

The year started off on a positive note for me personally. I was awarded a medal of the order of Australia, known as an OAM. I was awarded this prestigious medal for 25 years volunteer work for the multicultural community and the Muslim community in the ACT. It was a great honour to be awarded such a prestigious medal and it was equally as humbling to know that my peers supported me in receiving this award.

In the many media interviews I conducted during this period I highlighted the importance of multiculturalism and the need for strong policy at both a national and local level. I spoke of how important it was to have such policy when a country like Australia is built on bringing people from all parts of the world together. This was reiterated during the lead up to the ACT Elections this year. CMCF in cooperation with ACTCOSS developed a policy statement of the needs of Canberra multicultural community. The statement read:

Develop an inclusive community-consulted and led multicultural policy that listens to, understands and commits to addressing the priorities and needs of ACT Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, newly arrived migrants, refugees and established multicultural communities (including the health and pastoral care needs of multicultural seniors) and their faith-based groups.

Defending multiculturalism, build on multicultural celebrations and take action to engage at grass roots, build broad community acceptance with understanding and address racism and exploitation.

This statement continues to be relevant and will be pursued with the new government.

Another constructive and important project CMCF instigated was the setting up and establishing a dedicated multicultural women's organisation. There was an important need to fill a gap in the service area to deliver the specific needs of CALD women. Seed funding was provided by the ACT Office of Multicultural Affairs and CMCF set about to set up a new organisation.

CMCF conducted a series of meetings and consultation with a broad selection of CALD women who highlighted unmet needs in the areas of domestic violence, health matters, legal matters, seniors, housing, and community services. We attracted strong candidates for this new organisation and in March 2016, CMCF held an International Women's Day event to attract the interest of CALD women, and gauge support. This event was very well attended by key women advocacy and service provider groups. Our key note speaker was the Ambassador for Guatemala.

Following this successful event, several preliminary meetings were held to consult and measure the needs of setting up a new organisation. In total, more than 90 people attended these meetings, and we have a growing list of community organisations, support groups, service clubs and individuals willing to support this process. Two months ago the Canberra CALD Women's Forum (CCWF) was established and an interim committee with Laura Aoun as interim Chair and Saba Awan as the interim Secretary. CMCF is the auspicing body. In the coming months a series of training packages are being conducted to ensure all members of this organisation will be fully trained in the area of governance, leadership, financial management and other relevant training. This will ensure a sustainable and successful organisation once incorporated.

CMCF will be meeting with the new Minister for Multicultural Affairs in the coming weeks and will work with new members of the ACT Office of Multicultural Affairs. We are excited of the prospect of new changes ahead in this area.

We continue to represent the ACT multicultural community at community participation forums, and we continue to put forward a strong voice and views in response to various national / local issues that are of significant interest and concern to our community.

CMCF current activities and achievements so far for the period ending October 2015:

November 2015:

- I attended the morning tea to launch the 2015 National Day of Unity as part of the Canberra Interfaith Forum at Parliament House. This was an event held on behalf of The Honourable Malcolm Turnbull MP, Prime Minister of Australia, The Honourable Tanya Plibersek MP, Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Mr Adam Bandt MP, Green's Treasury Spokesperson - as well as the Lebanese Muslim Association and Welcome to Australia.
- I participated in the Anzac conversations: citizen voice for peace
- Progressive Canberra Summit: I was part of a panel to discuss Refugees and Multiculturalism at the National Gallery of Australia
- Human Rights consultation: The ACT Human Rights Commission held consultation session with community groups.
- University of Canberra Public Hospital (UCPH) Consultation providing feedback from the multicultural perspective.
- ACT Quality in Healthcare Awards. I attended these awards to support the work of the ACT Multicultural Health Care Reference Group who were nominated for an award.

December 2015

- CMCF supported the project 'Walk in My Shoes: Stories by Muslim Women in Canberra' I attended the official launch of the screening of this project.

- I attended the Jewish community Chabad Event, which was held at the ACT Legislative Assembly

February 2016

- I presented a talk to the U3A Current Affairs group
- I attended and presented at the Restorative Communities Network Workshop - Restorative Practices in Schools
- NDIS Stakeholder engagement: I attended this event and provided feedback from a multicultural perspective

March 2016

- Launch of CCWF with key note speaker the Ambassador for Guatemala
- I spoke at the Attorney-General's Department for International Women's Day
- ACT Women Awards, held at the High Court of Australia: I attended on behalf of CMCF
- I attended the Victim and Witness Rights under the ACT Human Rights Act Launch
- UN Youth ACT Conference at the ANU: I was a panel speaker
- We attended the Governor General's Long Lunch in recognition of Harmony Day at Government House, Yarralumla, on Monday 21 March. This was a historic event, with hundreds of people from most nationalities sharing lunch on one extraordinarily long table dining table on the ceremonial lawns of Government House. I was honoured to sit at the Governor General's table

May 2016

- 2016 Women's Budget Briefing Morning Tea
- Institutional Commission on Child Sexual exploitation forum.
- Faith, Fashion Fusion, National Archives of Australia

August 2016

- Restorative Justice: Project Restore information night
- ACTCOSS Conference
- The ACT Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment: 2016 Youth Technology Sustainability Forum. I was a panel member

September 2016

- I attended the Australian Citizenship Day celebration at Government House.

CMCF programs:

CMCF Multicultural Seniors Network – SMILE program

The senior multicultural information learning exchange (SMILE) program is part of the CMCF Multicultural Seniors Network activities. The Multicultural Seniors Network continues to meet regularly on the first Saturday of the month with the aim to connect our seniors and community leaders together to promote community participation and healthy ageing activities, build links with community sectors and improve access to information on aged care and community support services. CMCF acknowledges Chin Wong's significant contribution in facilitating this network.

Community Language and Education

CMCF is working closely with the Bilingual Education Alliance, the ACT Community Language School and other education and community interested groups to explore means to influence the ACT Government's policies on language education. CMCF acknowledges the tireless contribution made by Dr Mandy Scott for organising various successful events to promote children learning languages.

Community Interpreter Training and Network

Community interpreter training

CMCF was again involved, together with CIT Solutions and the ACT branch of the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators (AUSIT), in organising and running a course to prepare participants for the NAATI paraprofessional interpreter test. The course ran from November 2015 to June 2016, and 17 participants completed it. Several have now applied for or taken the NAATI paraprofessional test (OMA provided scholarships to cover costs). CMCF is currently organising an end-of-year event to present this year's participants with Certificates of Completion. Participants from previous courses will also be invited. This will be a good opportunity to see how many have successfully gained NAATI accreditation and hear about their interpreting experiences (Function Room, Tuesday 22 November, 6pm to 8pm).

Languages education

CMCF continues to support meetings four times a year with the curriculum area of the ACT Directorate of Education. These meetings were started at the behest of CMCF several years ago. They have proved a valuable opportunity for the ACT Community Language Schools Association and other groups involved in promoting language maintenance and learning, such as the ACT Bilingual Education Alliance, to share information and encourage cooperation across sectors.

Review of ACT Languages Policy 2012-2016

Mandy Scott, one of our committee members, assisted the ACT government to gather community input for this review. CMCF made a written submission, and helped coordinate two public forums to discuss written responses and provide more input to the review. A summary of all the community ideas and suggestions has been submitted to the Community Participation Group in the Community Services Directorate, the area that is drawing up recommendations to government on the form and content of the Languages Policy 2017-2020.

CMCF acknowledges the work of Dr Mandy Scott for her commitment and dedication to this area of work.

2XX Multicultural Voice

The Weekly Multicultural Voice Radio program Presented by CMCF committee members with Victor Marillanca as the regular and lead presenter is another CMCF initiative that provides opportunity for smaller community groups to promote their organisations and provided regular interviews with prominent leaders including politicians to discuss variety of current affairs and issues of interests.

Community Public Liability Insurance

CMCF has established an affordable community public liability insurance policy scheme for \$20,000,000 cover renewable yearly. Over 60 organisations have now joined the scheme and are benefitting from the reduced premium fees. The scheme is administered by Carol Keil and CMCF acknowledges her dedication to ensure that the renewals and new applications are processed in a timely manner.

ACT Policing and Crime prevention

CMCF and ACT Policing continued to work closely together to develop strategies to connect with communities to promote the community interface between ACT Policing and the multicultural community. CMCF is working closely with the Multicultural Police Liaison Officers and the Crime

Prevention team unit with various projects, targeting community safety; youth at risk and young refugees' activities programs, neighbourhood watch programs and multicultural policing volunteers programs.

Relationships with Federal/Territory agencies

As an independent peak community organisation representing the interests of the ACT Multicultural community, CMCF has been proactive and has been well represented and participated in various peak organisation consultation forums at both Federal and Territory Government levels, thus enabling us to represent our communities, influencing new policy developments, especially in the area of migration and settlement planning; aged care reforms, transport issues, housing issues and urban planning issues.

CMCF continues to liaise with the Multicultural Liaison Officers from the Department of Immigration. We provide feedback of the current state of affairs in the multicultural community and feedback on the skilled migration and family reunion.

CMCF continues a strong working relationship with the ACT Health Multicultural Policy Unit by meeting regularly and providing input into valuable policy and strategies in developing the ACT Health Care Services Framework. This included profiling various communities and providing information in their languages.

CMCF is looking forward to working with the new Minister for Multicultural Affairs and will also be looking forward to working with all new members of the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

CMCF continues to assist the Federation of Ethnic Community Council of Australia (FECCA) throughout the year, providing support as ACT advocate with various national community projects, attended various consultation forums and is currently a member of the National CALD communities Aged Care Reference Committee, thus ensuring that there is an united voice being heard that is truly representing the ACT multicultural community at the National level. We are still hopeful that FECCA will make changes to ensure CMCF is the representative body on that organisation.

CMCF is currently working on redeveloping the logo and branding. There will also be improvement to the website as a result of the new changes. It is hopeful that this will happen before the end of the year.

Funding and resources

CMCF, like many other organisations, rely on grants for funding. CMCF acknowledged and thanks the outgoing ACT Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Ms Yvette Berry, for the ACT Government's support and its acknowledgement of CMCF as the peak community organisation.

The provision of annual funding of \$15,000 under the multicultural community Sector Development funding program in 2016 enables CMCF to maintain a small office at the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre and to provide advocacy services for the multicultural community; organise community consultation forums to seek new ideas about the National Multicultural Festival; organise activities as part of community support to celebrate the National Multicultural festival.

Influencing Public Policy and Decision Making Process

Throughout the year, CMCF responded to ACT Government invitations and attended various community consultations and focus group meetings to speak on issues affecting the multicultural community in the ACT.

Strengthening CMCF Strategic partnership

CMCF continue to nurture the productive working relationship established with key representative/ Peak organisations that form part of the ACT Community:

- As an affiliated community organisation of Health Care Consumers Association, representing the multicultural community to address issues relating to health care needs and well beings of the

community, especially matters affecting the heightened needs of multicultural community and participated as a health care consumer representative.

- As a member of ACTCOSS (ACT Council of Social Services), participating in various community sector consultations, representing the CALD community to identify, discuss and address social policies and community issues ;
- Working closely with Centre for Women Health Matters to set up the CALD Women's Reference Group to build linkage with Women Services and agencies to discuss issues affecting CALD women and identify strategies to connect with CALD women so their needs could be addressed. CCWF will also work in this area.
- Working closely with ACT Multicultural Mental Health Network as the auspicing body, promoting mental health and well-being; develop strategies to disseminate information to community related to mental health care and reducing stigma relating to mental illness.
- Attended regular meetings organised by the Department of Immigration in relation to Migrant Planning and Settlement Services; the ACT & Regions Client Reference Group. This enables CMCF to be more aware of the issues concerning new migrants and settlement services in the ACT.
- Attended RASH (Refugee Asylum Seeker and Humanitarian Co-ordination Committee) meetings which address issues of concern to these groups.
- Neighbourhood Watch program to address community issues relating to housing, neighbourhood harmony and safety.
- National Ethnic Disability Alliance promoting the interests of disabled people by lobbying government to ensure the needs of multicultural community accessing disability services are being met in a culturally appropriate way.
- Working closely with Council of the Ageing (COTA), supporting various projects initiated by COTA especially in relation to transport and housing issues.

The future

The fast changing pace of issues facing society in general and the needs of the multicultural community specifically means that we need to ensure we are prepared to take on the issues that arise. There is concern that there may be another push to change 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act and we must be prepared to move quickly to ensure our voices are heard loudly and clearly. Preparations are in place to conduct programs in the coming months and we encourage you and your membership take the opportunity to attend these programs. There is more work for the CMCF to find ways to work with and help vulnerable communities, including refugees and asylum seekers. There is also a need to find young leaders from our respective communities prepared to take on further roles in the multicultural community.

I present the report to you.

Diana Rahman, OAM
Chair
9 November 2016