



Canberra Multicultural Community Forum (CMCF) Incorporated

Chair Chin KF WONG

Fifteenth Annual General Meeting Tuesday, 9 November 2021 Annual Report

Acknowledgement

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 contributions 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 the Executive Annual Report as the CMCF Chair to the members of the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum (CMCF) Incorporated at this 15th Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 9 November 2021, at the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre Function Room.

Message from the Chair and Executive Committee

Canberra Multicultural Community Forum (CMCF) Inc. was established in December 2005 to have a unified voice and advocate for the multicultural community, promote the common interests and articulate the purpose and direction of the multicultural community in the ACT. CMCF currently has over 100 ethnic community organisations and associates as financial members.

I would like to thank my Executive committee and membership; it is your support that makes this organisation grow from strength to strength and fulfills our role as the peak body for the ACT multicultural community sector.

With so many organisations and associates being members demonstrates your continuing support for the work that we do. The strong membership acknowledges CMCF as an effective peak community organisation.

Who we are?

CMCF's vision is for a fair, inclusive, and harmonious Canberra community that supports and celebrates cultural diversity. We value respect, justice, integrity and diversity.

Strategic directions for 2019-2022 focussed on

- Strengthening the Multicultural Community Communication Network and promotion of community harmony
- Building capacity and community resilience and fostering integration into the Australian Society
- Promoting social justice, equity and addressing incidences of racial discrimination in the community
- Being an effective peak multicultural organisation by building strong alliances and partnerships

What we do – action and guiding principles

- Strengthen our governance
- Expanding CMCF's leadership and management to fulfil our commitments
- Advocate, collaborate, consult, advise, progress and grow capacities and capabilities
- Value integrity, respect, honesty and openness in our strength-based approach
- Value our membership – acknowledge and support their contributions
- Accountable with sector funding, grants, and acquittals
- Engage with our stakeholders and partners
- Sound financial management strategies and auditing processes
- Effective use of social media platforms
- Build capacity and community development strategies

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Secretary.cmcf@gmail.com
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Governance and representation

The twelve (12) CMCF Executive committee continued to work and raise our profile as the peak representative organisation. By supporting our member organisations, advocating and ensuring the voices and the needs of multicultural communities are heard at both the Territory and Federal levels of Government.

The Executive committee met monthly throughout the year via Zoom and used social media engagement to assist in decision making, oversight and control of work. We ensured our members were informed of matters affecting the multicultural community and regularly disseminated community information via emails to delegates, through direct communication with target communities; published information and linkage on our website and the CMCF face book page.

Impact of COVID 19 causing system-wide disruption to social, community, political and economic life in the ACT

It has been a challenging year for the nation. The restrictions and lockdowns mean that communities and businesses have had to adapt to change and unprecedented challenges. Our members are not able to conduct their regular community activities or enjoy the celebration of cultural events. It has also accelerated the demand for members to make greater use of online communication to connect with each other and much increased reliance on community leaders to assist with disseminating information and keeping the community safe.

CMCF responded to COVID-19 with a range of initiatives to ensure that:

- multicultural communities are supported
- community concerns and identified needs continue to be relayed to government
- every opportunity to engage with community service sectors through consultation forums is used to ensure cultural appropriate services are provided
- COVIDSAFE information is communicated through various communication channels

We are grateful that our communities responded positively with the COVID-19 vaccination program.

Key programs and events

Harmony Day

Unveiling of the 100 of 100 Peace Pole, May Peace Prevail on Earth – 21 March 2021. We were fortunate to be graced with the presence of the Governor-General, His Excellency Sir William Hurley and Mrs Hurley to the unveiling of the 100 of 100 Peace Poles. We acknowledge the support of the Rotary Clubs of Canberra and Canberra Burley Griffin for coordinating the Peace Pole project, partnering with CMCF to mark the celebration of the success of multiculturalism in Australia. The peace pole carries the wording "May Peace Prevail on Earth" in 14 languages.

Census August 2021

CMCF worked closely with the Australian Bureau of Statistics to organise community forums promoting Census night and arranged for community field workers to provide support to multicultural communities to complete the census form.

CMCF a year of achievement

Advocate and representing the ACT Multicultural community locally and nationally

CMCF responded to public policies and made submissions to voice our concerns locally and nationally. We made many submissions, for example, the proposed Multicultural Recognition Act, Home Affairs Visa and Citizenship program and Federal Labor's Multicultural policy statements - discussion paper.

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ACT Ministerial Multicultural Advisory Council

CMCF Chair is a member on the ACT Ministerial Multicultural Advisory Council. CMCF provided crucial input to the submission in support of the development of ACT Multicultural Recognition Act and stated that:

“The ACT should have a clear definition of ‘multiculturalism’ and a statement that recognises and respects the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Australian community, promoting social justice and community harmony, targeting ACT by:

- supporting and promoting the understanding of multiculturalism
- recognise and enhance the freedom to share culture, heritage, language and social cohesion.”

Federation of Ethnic Community Council Australia (FECCA)

CMCF acted independently and with confidence as the ACT Peak community representative body and established a good working relationship with FECCA in a non-member partnership. In doing so, CMCF was requested to provide input into various national consultation forums, co-design workshops including attending the Ministerial roundtable forums and various community engagement forums in our own right.

Multicultural Advisory Forum (MAF)

CMCF participates in Services Australia MAF advocating in response to various national/local issues. We provide feedback on issues impacting multicultural communities, providing regular feedback through forums.

ACTCOSS support of multicultural communities

Working with ACTCOSS, CMCF co-chaired the Multicultural COVID-19 Community Services Conversation Forum engaging with community sectors and providing feedback to improve better understanding of the needs of multicultural communities. We also liaised with community sector organisations to ensure that communities with identified needs are supported through the lockdowns and quarantine.

Flash back to 2020 ACT election statement – one year on

CMCF reminds law makers of the need to be serious in their commitment to multiculturalism. The following CMCF statement continues to be relevant and a timely reminder:

“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”.

“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”.

Reflecting on our achievements we continue to work with community member organisations, and multicultural communities at large ensuring multiculturalism does not slip off the agenda or radar, locally or nationally.

CMCF is determined to pursue all governments and oppositions, locally and federally, to develop an inclusive community-consulted multicultural policy. We require commitment and the addressing of priorities and needs of the diverse multicultural communities, as well as providing appropriate resources to ensure the achievable outcomes are actioned and supported.

CMCF acknowledges the support of the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, for her support of the multicultural communities and in particular, her recognition of CMCF being an effective ACT peak multicultural community organisation. We also acknowledged the support of Emma Davison, Minister for Mental Health / Ageing for her continuous support in attending our community forums. We also acknowledge the support of the shadow multicultural spokesperson Ms Giulia Jones, MLA particularly pursuing incidences of racial discrimination and vilification.

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A year that was – COVID-19 safe activities

Effective community engagement with our members

- Attending various community events and forums organised by our members' community organisations before the lockdowns.
- Conducting our own community Zoom forums to address local / national issues of significant interest and concern to our multicultural communities.
- Working in partnership with Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA) to deliver four COVID-19 vaccination program information sessions to targeted communities.
- Working in partnership with FECCA to work with targeted community leaders and host community forums to promote vaccination program and discuss issues impacting on two communities.

Continued support for dedicated multicultural women's voice and family relationships

- Auspicing the Canberra Multicultural Women's Forum in support of their work and projects to represent the voices of CALD women in the ACT.
- CMCF also continues to work with other women's organisations to encourage and motivate greater participation in building capacity and sharing their knowledge and experiences.

Community resilience, mental health wellbeing and capacity building programs

- This year we are fortunate to receive the "Hand Across Canberra" funding to develop various community development programs to build resilience and community capacity with various topics identified and ready to be delivered in early January 2022 onwards.
- Develop learning packages to be delivered as soon as we could resume our face-to-face community development programs.
- Digital workshops to enhance community communication and access to social media and digital technology.

CMCF liaison with ACT Policing

ACT Police has an in-principle agreement to attend CMCF's monthly meeting. These meetings provide opportunities for the ACT Police to liaise and build linkages with the multicultural community.

CMCF Multicultural Seniors Network

The Senior Multicultural Information Learning Exchange Support Program (SMILES) was established to promote and encourage seniors and community leaders to build links and improve access to information on aged care and community support services.

CMCF hosts senior round table discussions related to aged care services. The receipt of a Seniors' Grant will enable CMCF to develop the program and resume the network engagement from early 2022.

CMCF – MCCI partnership: Aged Care Services Encompass program - NEW

CMCF in partnership with MCCI has secured funding ensuring older CALD members, their carers and families, can better navigate the aged care system and other support services.

The project will be launched in December 2021 with the opportunity to develop community awareness programs relating to accessing aged care and community support services and working with target community groups to identify community needs in the aged care sector for the ACT.

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Community public liability insurance

CMCF has a long-established public liability insurance policy scheme for \$20,000,000 of cover, renewable yearly. The scheme has now expanded with cover for contents, volunteers as well as the important public liability insurance. Over 63 organisations have 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 new applications and renewals are processed in timely manner.

CMCF community development programs

CMCF acknowledges Suzanne Eastwood for contributing her time assisting CMCF to identify community learning needs, update and design practical workshops and to facilitate the various and very successful workshop and events.

We are looking forward to implementing our two funded projects that were put on hold during the lockdown periods. We plan to work in partnership with identified community groups and service providers to deliver a suite of training and information sessions focusing on community capacity building; community leadership; mental health promotion and wellbeing; health literacy; elderly abuse; and navigating the health system.

The Multicultural Voices of ACT – FM 2XX 98.3 Monday, midday

The weekly Multicultural Voice Radio program is presented by CMCF committee member Dr Mandy Scott. We thank her for her dedication hosting the program. Mandy conducts regular interviews with prominent community sector leaders and politicians discussing matters of interest to the multicultural community. The recent broadcasts may be heard at <https://www.2xxfm.org.au/Form/programdetail/?canberra-multicultural-voices>

Community language and multilingual education

CMCF also acknowledges Dr Mandy Scott's tireless contribution and her continuous work in pursuing the development of the ACT Language policies and promotion of the Mother Tongue Language celebration events. CMCF attends the regular Language Network meetings in support of the Community Language Schools, as well as monitoring the development of ACT Language policies and the review of the community languages.

ACT Multicultural Health Reference Group

CMCF is a member of the ACTH Multicultural Health reference group. We acknowledge the establishment of a community engagement officer position to promote better engagement with the multicultural community; translation of materials in various languages and the conduct of a number of community consultation forums. The reference group meets regularly and CMCF provides input into health care policies, especially in health literacy and addresses matters relating to quality of health care services and the use of quality interpreters.

CMCF relationships with Federal / Territory agencies

CMCF has been proactive to actively participate in various consultation forums at both Federal and Territory Government levels.

CMCF worked to influence new policy developments especially in migration and settlement planning, provide feedback on various federal grant programs and attend Ministerial roundtable forums hosted by Home Affairs to address the impact of COVID-19 on multicultural communities. CMCF continues to liaise with the Department of Home Affairs Multicultural Liaison Officer providing feedback on the current situation in the multicultural community including skilled migration and family reunion programs.

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Strengthening and building CMCF strategic partnership

CMCF is either a financial member or is an invited peak body representative to various key government and not-for-profit organisations. CMCF continues to build strong cohesive and productive working relationships by developing strategies to influence public policy and decision-making processes. The following are some of the member organisations:

- **Health Care Consumers Association**, ensuring that the multicultural community's health care and community services needs are being addressed through the appropriate forums.
- **ACT Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS)** peak community forum; participating in various community sector consultation, discuss and address social policies and community issues, especially in the areas of housing and employment.
- **The National Ethnic Disability Alliance** in promoting the interests of disabled people, participating in various community consultation and with NDIS agencies to promote services to multicultural communities.
- **Council of Ageing (COTA)** as a member of the Policy Committee, representing multicultural community's views on ageing and aged care issues and is a member of the Elderly Abuse Prevention Network.
- **Capital Health Network Community Advisory Council.**
- **Settlement Council of Australia** strengthening the support for new migrants, refugees and contributing to its publication / newsletters and provide inputs on submissions.
- **RASH Committee**, representing communities' concerns on the treatment of refugees, asylum seekers and people settling in the ACT on humanitarian grounds.
- **Regional Media (RiotACT)** collaborating to build bridges between the multicultural community of the Canberra Region in the areas of community education, culture, business, and friendship.
- **Breast Screening ACT Management Committee** promoting breast screening to multicultural communities.
- **ACTH Palliative Care Community Forum**, regularly contributing comments and advice on the development of resource materials and information sensitive to clients' needs from diverse backgrounds.
- **Elderly Abuse Network** to raise awareness of prevention of elderly abuse and resources available to the multicultural community.
- CMCF Chair and other members are often invited to speak on radio programs TV and media on issues impacting on multicultural communities.

Funding and resources

CMCF received grant funding from the ACT Government for the Multicultural participation grant program and the Hands Across Canberra grant to build community resilience programs. We acknowledge our Treasurer, Malcolm Mahon for his diligence in ensuring our finances are sound and all project funds are expended and acquitted according to the grant conditions.

As a volunteer organisation, it is important that we continue to lobby the government to financially support our continued work.

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Building on our key strengths

The current changing pace of issues facing the multicultural community and the importance of promoting social inclusion especially post pandemic recovery means that we need to ensure we are prepared to take on any issues that arise.

Our strengths include strong and committed committee members, good working relationships internally and externally. CMCF committee members are committed to building and extending partnerships across the not-for-profit sector and across multiple agencies and government bodies. CMCF is in a strong position to deliver significant benefits to our multicultural community and organisation members.

CMCF is looking forward to building on our key strengths to:

- Expand our role in advocacy and leadership on community needs
- Provide greater input and much needed feedback to submissions and public policies at local and national levels
- Gain a better understanding of the structural and cultural framework of our diverse multicultural communities, language groups and interfaith
- Enhance the resilience of the multicultural community individuals and sector
- Work with multicultural communities at grass roots levels

Our focus to the future

Looking at ways forward to:

- work together with supportive organisations to build community resilience and capacity
- to cultivate our multicultural communities and create opportunities to:
 - regain confidence
 - maximise their potential
- seek new opportunities to meet the changing post Covid-19 world
- become self-reliant
- achieve financial independence

And remember that all of CMCF's committee members are volunteers, most work full time, some are retired and also with multiple commitments in other community sectors.

I strongly believe that CMCF will continue to grow from strength to strength, as we prepare to elect the next two-year term of Executive Committee members. I am confident they will carry on the work to advocate for the community and take actions to ensure Canberra remains the welcoming multicultural city to the world.

Thank you

Chair CMCF 09 November 2021

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