

MULTICULTURALISM

News Magazine of the Multicultural Services Centre of WA Inc.

Autumn 2014



Multicultural Services Centre
of W.A. Inc

From the MSC Chairperson



Dr Prabha Karan Krishnan

MSC Chairperson

Since 2002 MSC has witnessed phenomenal growth in its services and in the Winter 2013 edition of this news magazine we included a message from the then Prime Minister Gillard about the Centre on the occasion of its 30th anniversary celebrations.

The Centre is now at another important stage of its development but before I address that in some detail, I wish to draw the attention of readers to the proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination Act and its potential impact on ethnic and

indigenous minorities. My task has been made easy by Hanifa Deen the celebrated author of the lead article below and a former Chairperson of this Centre. Hanifa has succinctly summed up why agencies such as ours should vigorously oppose the proposed changes.

The Centre is working on its submission regarding the proposed changes and when completed it will be posted on our website. The Centre will also be a signatory to the submission that the Jewish Community of WA and the Ethnic Communities Council of WA are drafting/have drafted.

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Humour Isn't A Total Defence Against Bigotry

By Hanifa Deen in New Matilda

So far it's been largely left to lawyers, academics, media buffs, public servants and politicians to carry forward the public debate over changes to the Racial Discrimination Act. Yet those Australians who are most affected by hate speech in their day-to-day lives are barely heard above the din, listening in as it were, while the dispute rages over their heads.

The race hate law is designed for their protection and wellbeing, not to safeguard media honchos with inflated egos and flawed research skills. The power imbalance needs redressing. Submissions closed on 30 April 2014 . Organisations representing indigenous and other minorities will have their work cut out making their voices heard.





I assured her I wasn't "doing a Michael Jackson"

Hanifa Deen is an award-winning Melbourne-based author. Her most recent book is "On the Trail of Taslima".

I grew up in the days of the old White Australian Policy — we were well acquainted, you might say. The "keep Australia white" movement affected my childhood, my teenage years, shaped my identity and sharpened my tongue. Being "Mohammedan" wasn't really a problem; Australians were indifferent to Muslims at the time. But I stood out because I was brown-skinned and, under the hot West Australian sun, a very dark-brown little girl at that.

Over the years I grew tired of explaining where I was born (in Kalgoorlie, by the way), the details of my Pakistani ancestry and my two grandfathers who had come out in the 1890's before the door was slammed in "our" face. We were "the Other", inferior on the basis of skin colour, a view bolstered by the Social Darwinist theory of the day that made racism seem "scientifically respectable". In the 21st century the same elite white male politicians are playing similar games, still feeding people's fears and picking favourites.

One of my safety nets against prejudice has always been an Aussie sense of humour: sending oneself up with a touch of the larrikin. Newcomers to Australia find this trait bewildering at first but it's a tool that has always stood me in good stead.

A few years ago, a perfectly charming woman at a "meet the author" dinner in Perth where I was speaking asked me during open question time why I appeared "whiter" than when she'd seen me years before — when my skin looked "so much darker". My publisher was shocked and tried to move the discussion along, spectators were gobsmacked, but I thought it was a hoot. My interrogator would not be diverted and persisted — she was a woman of great curiosity.

I assured her I wasn't "doing a Michael Jackson", nor was I using make-up as camouflage, but that it might have something to do with living far away in wintry Melbourne. I even cited a Vitamin D deficiency in my defence to keep her quiet.

Did I feel insulted? No. Did I feel humiliated? No. It was hilarious, because she didn't mean to offend or embarrass me, and it all seemed so bizarre. I still wonder why my skin colour became part of a "literary" conversation. She remained oblivious to the fact that someone else (less hardened or much younger) might have been offended or felt humiliated. Well at least she was doing it right to my face, not behind my back. To me it serves as an example of the effrontery that people of "a whiter shade of pale" display in discussing one's skin colour as if it was something abstract.

Would I have lodged a complaint against her under the present Federal Act? No. Could I imagine that someone else might feel insulted, humiliated or even intimidated? Yes. Would lodging a complaint have been a wise move? In the circumstances, I think not. Anyway the remark may not have crossed the "insult threshold". Come what may, I'm sure it would have been conciliated swiftly and discreetly with a simple, "Sorry, I didn't realise..."



"Be proud of the steps we have made towards the recognition of Australian Aborigines, and the admission of terrible wrongs done in the past, but don't pretend that this current move to amend the law is not a set-

"Yes, there is a cost to society of using hate speech laws, but it needs to be weighed against the cost to society of remaining silent."

"Legally fixed ground rules may not transform attitudes but they certainly modify behaviour."

This brings me to the current debate on the proposed amendments to the federal government's Racial Discrimination Act. As a non-lawyer, non-academic, (dare I say non-white before my "non-basket" overflows) my opinion has little to do with legal interpretations or philosophical points of view. Others have identified the weaknesses in repealing sections 18B, 18C, 18D and 18E and how this will undermine the legislation's intention. The draft exemptions are so broad as to be useless; everyone's right to be prejudiced is put ahead of the person at the receiving end of hate speech.

Australia has a racist past that's not easy to exorcise. We need only look at USA or South Africa for the long-term effects. But living in denial is not the answer. Be proud of the steps we have made towards the recognition of Australian Aborigines, and the admission of terrible wrongs done in the past, but don't pretend that this current move to amend the law is not a setback to race relations.

I see loads of empathy on display for a well-connected journalist like Andrew Bolt who can call on the Prime Minister or the Attorney General when in need. But where is the empathy for Australians whose dignity as human beings has been treated with contempt? For those standing "on the outside looking in", the Act as it stands may not be ideal but symbolises our values and protects vulnerable citizens from the toxic prejudice of race hate. In this instance the law as it stands is not an ass, but I can't say the same for those who trumpet asinine statements on the rights of bigots.

I'm grateful that my Muslim parents were strong and cared about the society that their children were a part of in the days of White Australia. Even as a nine-year-old I understood what my mother meant when she comforted me after I'd come home from school upset. She would tell me her Jesus story: "Even if Jesus Christ wanted to come into this country 'they' wouldn't let him in." I remember feeling comforted that Jesus really was a brown man — no mistake about that!

Yes, there is a cost to society of using hate speech laws, but it needs to be weighed against the cost to society of remaining silent. Ignoring racism doesn't make it disappear. A fine line separates freedom of speech from freedom of vilification, and in the end everyone may have their own litmus test — that is why we need a law to act as arbiter, so that we stop living in our own little ghettos of the mind, throwing rocks at each other.

Legally fixed ground rules may not transform attitudes but they certainly modify behaviour. This allows time for community education and changes in how we look at one another to develop in the interim, to help break the ugly cycle of hate speech. Or as Umberto Eco put it, "In order to be tolerant, one must first set the boundaries of the intolerable".

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Passing of Sahardeed Roobleh

Sahardeed Roobleh lost his long fight with cancer on 28th February 2014.

For those who have not met or known Sahardeed, he worked for about seven years for MSC in various capacities and did a fantastic job. He was kind and supportive of his colleagues and very effective in dealing with whatever client situations he had to handle. MSC was fortunate to have had his services for that long. Sahardeed virtually "brought his job over to MSC". It was he who recommended to DIAC that the SGP grant be transferred from the Somali community to MSC at a time when MSC was seeking to expand its operations. The administration component of that grant was not large but it was a useful contribution towards the operational expenses.

Those of us who knew him know that he was a remarkable person and the model humanitarian. He was truly one of a kind and it's an irreplaceable loss for MSC, the Somali community and wider society. The following comments of his colleagues is testimony of the incredible impact he had on MSC:

"We have lost a very dear colleague, a great team player, an amazing professional. We were lucky to have him and now sad to lose him. "; "This is devastating news, he was a very good man and a true CaLD advocate, we will miss him at



Sahardeed at work

MSCWA."; "Very sad, very sad news that my dear colleague past away. I am fortunate to know and work with Sahardeed at the Mirrabooka office. He was very kind, supportive and always positive. He was always ready to help everyone He had a soft heart and beautiful soul. He had a great sense of humour and all at the Mirrabooka office will miss him greatly. He promised that he would fight to the end and he did. He always used to say that he has no regrets, that he has done everything he wanted to in his life. He always achieved the best outcomes for his clients."; "We've lost a few of the soldiers from MSC over the years and I spent a great deal of time working side by side with Sahardeed "in the trenches" at most of the MSC offices. Not too many days passed where we did not have a political/religious/philosophical discussion of some sort and I miss them and of course I will miss him too.

We were hopeful he would win his fight against cancer and hence he was persuaded to take LWOP rather than resign. Unfortunately the outcome that he and we desired was not achieved.

Vale Sahardeed Roobleh

Future of Wellness Centre Hangs in the Balance

After many years of seeking to upgrade the current Day Centre premises at 10 Farmer Street, North Perth the City of Vincent approved the construction of a new standalone Wellness Centre at the entrance of that property. It also approved the construction of a Men's Shed behind it and a community garden adjacent to that. If this had proceeded as planned it would have been a dream come true for clients and staff.

Sadly things started going pear shaped with the Abbott government withdrawing the grant offer of \$140,000 made by the Rudd government. There is now enormous pressures for the building to proceed as per the original plan. The Centre and its architect are now reviewing it to see if adequate savings can be made to make this a valuable proposition. It is rather ironic that given the significant emphasis that the Abbott government has placed on building new infrastructure, that this project of which the Commonwealth's share is less than 10%, may not proceed. In terms of value for money alone, that grant offer should never have been withdrawn!



News Snippets

Forum of Repeal of Section 18c of the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA)

The above forum was organised by the Hon. Alannah McTiernan, Member for Perth at the Hellenic Centre in Perth on 2nd April 2014. It was a well-attended and sprightly forum with a range of indigenous, religious and ethnic minority representatives participating. MSC was represented by its board member Pendo Mwaiteleke as well as its Executive Director Ramdas Sankaran and HSS Coordinator Devlin Bose.

All those who spoke including the MSC representatives were critical of the proposed changes as it would adversely impact on ethnic, religious and indigenous minorities as well as on harmonious community relations.

Funding uncertainty for Homelessness

The funding uncertainty that was associated with the National Homelessness Partnership Agreement projects has been resolved with Minister Andrews recently announcing that all but the infrastructure projects would continue at least for another year. The Centre's three housing projects are assured funding until end June 2015.

Katanning Alive project

Using local images and interviews MSC has produced a DVD which demonstrates/explains the benefits of regional repopulation to businesses and local government as well as CaLD people. While it has increased cross cultural awareness and engagement at various levels within Katanning it can be used as a tool by others to achieve the intended objective of enhancing repopulation across rural and regional Western Australia.

The original project budget was \$45,750 but we secured only \$10,000 from OMI and none from other sources. This placed enormous financial pressures on project implementation. Thanks to the substantial in-kind contribution of Brian Balen (MSC's Director of Media Services) who was the project consultant/coordinator and MSC we still produced a 25 minute quality DVD which achieved the main project objective.

The DVD will soon be made available online via MSC's website.

Bunbury SGP Grant

We have drawn the possible cessation of the Bunbury SGP to the attention of Liberal Senator and Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, the Hon. Michalia Cash and the member for Forrest, Nola Marino. It would be tragic if this program ceases at the end of June when the current grant ends as it is the only service of its kind in Bunbury and will also lead to the closure of MSC's Bunbury Office.

Meeting with Colleen Longmore

Colleen Longmore, who replaced Vlasta Mitchell as the Executive Director of the Fremantle Multicultural Centre met with Ramdas Sankaran, MSC's Executive Director and Pius Joseph, MSC's Executive Officer. Colleen was keen to explore partnership arrangements including joint funding applications and so were Ramdas and Pius. It was decided to wait until the May 2014 budget is handed down to explore partnership possibilities.

MSC Outreach Offices

The current Midland office is proving to be very inconvenient to staff and clients alike due to the high security of the building which necessitates staff having to escort clients to and from the reception area, and other facilities. Alternative premises are being sourced from two agencies operating in the area.

MSC has commenced the sourcing of suitable premises in the Joondalup area for an outreach office.





MSC Staff & Vice Chair, Russell Raymond with Michelle Rowland, Federal Shadow Minister for Citizenship & Multiculturalism and Alannah MacTiernan, Federal Member for Perth.

From the MSC Chairperson

(Continued from Page 1)

The important stage of the Centre's development that I referred to at the outset is about the impact of the HSS tender outcome which is yet to be made public. If the Centre's bid is successful it will lead to a significant increase in the annual turnover and an increase of about 12-15 staff. This will lead to the establishment of much needed admin positions and increased emphasis on quality assurance and continuous improvement to address increased staffing levels and complexities of program administration.

If the tender bid turns out to be unsuccessful, the board and senior staff will quickly review the Centre's strategic directions document and consider how best it can effectively use the accumulated knowledge, skills and expertise of its board and staff, to ensure its continuation as the largest/most diversified multicultural service provider in WA.

Some of the articles in this edition of our newsmagazine highlight the excellent work being done by our staff, coordinators and managers. That together with unsolicited positive feedback that the Centre receives on a regular basis from those receiving its services is what keeps my fellow board members and me very motivated and keen to do whatever we can to ensure that the Centre continues to achieve its objectives cost-effectively.



MSC at ECCWA's International Women's Day Event

Our Centre was well represented at the Ethnic Communities Council of Western Australia's (ECCWA) International Women's Day function held at the North Perth Town Hall on 8th March 2014. The function was well attended by about 175 people including several politicians. The Hon. Liz Behjat MLC represented the Minister for Multicultural Interests Dr. Mike Nahan and the ALP was represented by Mark McGowan, the leader of the opposition. Also present were Margaret Quirk, Shadow Minister for Multicultural Interests and Member for Girrahween; Janine Freeman Member for Mirrabooka; and Alannah McTiernan Federal Member for Perth.



Our Vice Chair Russell Raymond (who unfortunately was unable to attend) played a significant role in the event organisation including organizing the catering, booking of the Hall, guest reservations and arrangements.

The fact that ECCWA was able to host such a high profile function, whilst not having received any core funding from the state government for more than three years, is testimony to the dedication of its President Dr. Zarrin Siddique and her team including Andrea Creado, the CEO of Ishar and the ECCWA Vice President (Womens Issues) and Russell Raymond, former ECCWA President.



Multicultural Children Support Service (MCSS) Leading the Way

The results of the Consumer Perception Survey of November 2013 commissioned by the Department of Child Protection and Family Support show that the Centre's MCSS is more than meeting its contracted objectives thanks to the efforts and commitment of Jadranka Grubic, the Case Manager of the program and Bronwyn Kitching, the Coordinator of the Centre's Multicultural Housing Services Program (MHSP). The results were:

1. Did Multicultural Children Support Service meet your needs?

100% responded "Very well"

2. Did Multicultural Children Support Service involve you in finding a way to meet your needs?

100% responded 'Yes'

3. How satisfied are you with the service you received from Multicultural Children Support Service?

90% responded 'Very satisfied', and 10% responded 'Satisfied'

4. As a result of coming to Multicultural Children Support Service, did you learn new skills to help you manage in the future?

100% responded 'Yes'

5. As a result of coming to Multicultural Children Support Service, how confident are you that you will be able to manage in the future? (mark one)

90% responded 'Very confident' and 10% responded 'Confident'

6. If the service you received involved providing care and safety to your family, how well did Multicultural Children Support Service support

you? (Care and safety could include financial security, stable accommodation or protection from harm).

80% responded 'Very well' and 20% responded 'Well'

7. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about how you felt working with Multicultural Children Support Service.

"The workers were always open in their dealings with me".

90% indicated 'Strongly agree' and 10% indicated 'Agree'

"The workers valued my knowledge of my own situation".

90% indicated 'Strongly agree' and 10% indicated 'Agree'

"I trusted the workers".

90% indicated 'Strongly agree' and 10% 'Agree'

"We worked in partnership in finding solutions to meet my needs".

90% indicated 'Strongly agree' and 10% 'Agree'

There were four comments from clients about their need for assistance with transport for children to attend and participate in activities outside school hours or outside the home.

The Centre's other two housing services under MHSP namely Private Tenancy Support Service and Housing Advocacy Support Service covered in the next edition of this magazine. The Centre extends its thanks to Feloora Kiani, the Assistant Coordinator of the program, Gaston Kurbone, Francis Adupa-Ekwang, Majid Jamshidi, Ojdana Druskovich and Bronwyn Kitching for their efforts and commitment.



MSC's Multicultural Disability Services Program Continues to Grow

When MSC became a member of the Disability Services Commission's Panel of Disability Sector Organisations to deliver a range of diverse, innovative and flexible services to individuals with disability, living in Western Australia, in accordance with individual plans and funding packages, it received approval to provide services including Alternatives to Employment, Intensive Family Support and After School Options in addition to the disability accommodation support service that it was already providing.

The program has been receiving a large number of referrals but unfortunately few of them are being converted to "funded cases".

MSC intends persevering with the program as it is the only multicultural services provider on the Disability Services Commission's Panel. It is one of the very few "growth funding" areas given the magnitude of the

NDIS and the funding that DSC gets from the state government from absolute and comparative perspectives.

DSC country service

MSC and 10 other providers including Baptist Care, Active, Life Without Barriers, MSS, Active, Senses Australia, Strive Warren Blackwood, Enable South West, Intework, Cam Can have been selected for servicing the Lower South West.

NDIS registration

The Commonwealth and WA Governments have signed an agreement to establish a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) trial site in WA from 1 July 2014. MSC has been approved as a provider for NDIS trial in the Lower South and we have nominated Adeline Taylor as a contact based in Bunbury.

Migration Journey

The Multicultural Services Centre WA is pleased to present a month of activities (18th April – 18th May 2014) to celebrate A MIGRATION JOURNEY as part of the WA Heritage Festival 2014.

Throughout the month of the Heritage Festival, migrants and the wider community are invited to join a variety of FREE activities in Bunbury while learning more about stories of migrants and refugees.

Esther Schipp, MSC's Bunbury based SGP officer said "The theme of the WA Heritage Festival 2014 is **JOURNEYS**. It is therefore appropriate that we use this time to recognise the journeys of migrants who have made Australia home as we celebrate the stories behind these journeys, through art, dance, games, storytelling and much more.

One of the many activities being organised by MSC's Bunbury staff and volunteers is to **Learn to write in a different language**.

Arguably, Australia is the most diverse "multicultural nation" from an ethnic perspective but sadly this diversity is not reflected in many languages every Australian is fluent in. This is an auspicious activity for it reflects our fond hope that Australians regardless of their ethno-linguistic backgrounds will seek to become bilingual/multilingual as the case may be.



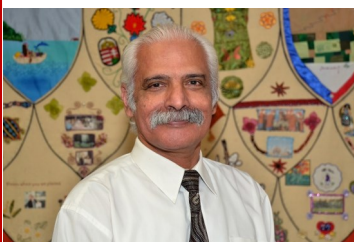
“Games People Play”

The Centre’s Games People Play project funded by the Department of Local Government and Communities is set to exceed the contracted outcomes.

The project which seeks to promote awareness amongst migrants and refugees of the adverse impact of problem gambling on individuals and their families commenced in July 2013, and was funded for a year.

The Program has already implemented the Diversity forums to be held within various communities; peer support group psycho-education sessions to be run over 16 hours for each group representative as well as Cultural Competency Training to service providers. The project has also provided Bi-lingual Psychological/Counselling Services to identified problem gamblers who may self-refer or be referred for this service.

Musings of the Executive Director



Ramdas Sankaran
MSC Executive Director

The passing of Sahardeed Roobleh was hard to accept despite the fact he had terminal cancer. The article about his passing in this newsmagazine sums up why he is so highly regarded by colleagues, clients and the community at large. Since 1978, I have had the pleasure of knowing/working with

many a fine grant in aid worker who are now called SGP officers and Sahardeed was easily one of the very best. He joined the Centre at a very crucial stage of its resurgence and he was instrumental in the Somali grant being transferred to MSC by the then DIAC. It was extended to cover all African communities and his contribution was very substantial in addressing the needs of those communities.

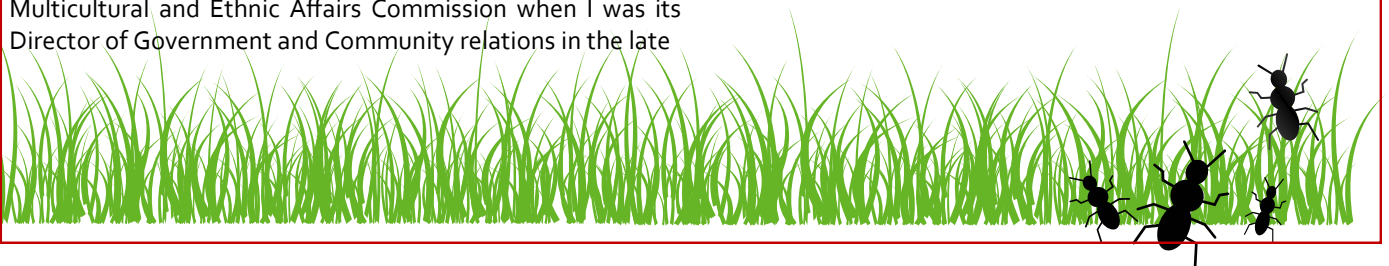
Events such as this and my recent heart attack which resulted in incredible support from the MSC board and staff members, MSC clients, funding bodies and many mainstream and multicultural agencies have been overwhelming and thought provoking. They have further reinforced my belief that being MSC’s Executive Director has been by far the best job I have had since migrating to Australia in 1978. I take this opportunity to again thank all those who extended me their support in person and via prayers, emails etc. whilst I was awaiting bypass surgery.

The lead article (about proposed changes to the Racial Discrimination Act) in this edition of Multiculturalism is by Hanifa Deen who was the Deputy Commissioner of the WA Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission when I was its Director of Government and Community relations in the late

80s. Hanifa was also a Chairperson of the Centre in its early days when it was called the North Perth Migrant Resource Centre. As a celebrated author with an extensive background in many aspects of multiculturalism, we were fortunate that she readily agreed to allow us to use the article she wrote for New Matilda, in our newsmagazine.

The relevant sections of the Racial Discrimination Act which the federal government is seeking to repeal have been around for 19 years under ALP and Coalition governments and no one has provided concrete evidence to suggest that the provisions that the Abbott government is now seeking to remove have in any shape or form inhibited, let alone stopped informed debate about race related matters. Let’s not forget that the Hansons, Blaianeys and shock jocks across Australia have ranted and raved about race related matters throughout this period with gay abandon.

As a multicultural services provider which services thousands of ethnic minority clients each year I believe that the Centre should take a strong stance in opposing the proposed changes. It is accordingly supporting a the submission that has been drafted by the WA Jewish community and board member Pendo Mwaiteleke is drafting a submission on behalf of MSC, which will be considered at the April 2014 board meeting.



MSC Offices and Service outlets

MSC now provides its services from the following premises:

MSCWA Offices/Service Outlets	Services Provided
20 View Street, North Perth	HSS, FMP & ER
4 View Street, North Perth	SGP, MDSP, MHSP, Problem Gambling services, ER, & Maitri psychological services
10 Farmer Street, North Perth	HACC
Vietnamese Catholic Community Centre, Westminster	HACC
Manning Senior Citizens Centre, Manning	HACC
Unit 13, 64/66 Kent Street Cannington	WDC, SGP, MHSP, PTS and ER
14 Brewer Place, Mirrabooka	MCSS, MHSP, PTS, ER, Maitri psychological services
Hamilton House, 1/14 Stafford Street, Midland	SGP, MHSP, ER & Maitri psychological services
9 Wittenoom Street, Bunbury	SGP

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Food for Thought

Perhaps "All in A Day's Work" is a better title for the email below from an MSC staff member who shall remain nameless for now!

"On Monday, I held an information booth for MSC at the White Ribbon Day ceremony. While merrily manning the booth, a Middle Eastern man came up and asked if 'he could expose himself!'

I explained as quietly and slowly as I could that it was not appropriate for him to behave that way in a public place.

He protested that he was a migrant! I said 'So what?'

He left and returned with a Caucasian lady and I thought 'Oh no, he wants so badly to expose himself he has found an 'advocate'!

It turned out that the lady had asked him 'to visit my booth and obtain information; while exposing his status as a 'refugee'.

Of course, the translation was totally different.

Love my job. Exposes me to so much!

Regards,"