

FECCA E-NEWS

The Newsletter of the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia

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2015 FECCA NATIONAL BIENNIAL CONFERENCE: WEBSITE LAUNCHES & CALL FOR ABSTRACTS



We are pleased to invite you to the FECCA 2015 National Biennial Conference, "Multiculturalism in Action: Building a better future for all Australians". Organised in partnership with the Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW, it will be held in Sydney, NSW on 5-6 November 2015. The 2015 Conference website has been launched and we are putting out a call for abstracts. For more information click [here](#).

FROM THE FECCA CHAIR



Hello, and welcome to FECCA's April 2015 update.

This month, it is our pleasure to invite you to the FECCA 2015 National Biennial Conference, "Multiculturalism in Action: Building a better future for all Australians". The Conference will be held in Sydney, NSW on 5-6 November 2015. This year's conference has been organised in partnership with the Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW (ECC NSW). We would also like to thank the NSW Government's Multicultural NSW for its sponsorship.

This year's Conference will draw together leading decision makers, thinkers and practitioners to discuss and debate key issues that relate to Australia's multiculturalism. These will be explored through a series of plenary addresses, panel discussions and presentations. We invite everyone with an interest in multicultural affairs to contribute to the debate that will undoubtedly lead to new collaborations and opportunities. We look forward to seeing you in November 2015.

FECCA is proud to be a partner in supporting the 'Advancing Community Cohesion – Towards a National Compact' Conference, organised by the University of Western Sydney (UWS). This Conference, also supported by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, will be held at the UWS Parramatta Campus from 15-17 July 2015. We encourage individuals and organisations to attend this Conference and if you would like more information click [here](#).

Many of you will be interested to know the FECCA Secretariat and Advisory Committees conducted a number of access and equity consultations across the country throughout March and April. The consultations were in the areas of youth, women and disability. They are an important opportunity for FECCA to speak directly to community members and are imperative to find out about the barriers the groups face when accessing federal government services. FECCA will convey this information in our annual Access and Equity Report published later in the year.

In April, in a submission to the *Senate Community Affairs References Committee's Inquiry on the Impact on Service Quality, Efficiency and Sustainability of Recent Commonwealth Community Tendering Processes by the Department of Social Services*, FECCA raised concerns over the loss in funding of multicultural community organisations and the adverse impact this is having on client service delivery. FECCA sought feedback on the outcomes of the DSS grants rounds from members and stakeholders. The submission is available [here](#).

Finally, National Youth Week was held from 10-19 April. FECCA would like to recognise the significance of the week and the very real issues that are facing our CALD youth. Services need to be more accessible to young people from a range of cultural and language backgrounds. There is a real need for bilingual workers, ethno-specific youth housing services, employment support and access to education.

JOSEPH CAPUTO OAM JP

FECCA NEWS

FECCA ENCOURAGES PARTICIPATION IN *ADVANCING COMMUNITY COHESION* AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY: 15-17 JULY 2015

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is proud to be a partner in supporting the '**Advancing Community Cohesion – Towards a National Compact**' Conference, organised by the University of Western Sydney (UWS).

The Conference, also supported by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, will be held at the UWS Parramatta Campus from 15 to 17 July 2015. It will bring together leading decision-makers, thinkers and practitioners in multicultural affairs to discuss and debate key issues and national initiatives in place to advance community cohesion within Australia and search for new directions.

FECCA encourages individuals and organisations to attend this very timely Conference, which is expected to attract over 300 delegates including politicians, senior public servants from the Australian Government, and the state/territory as well as local governments, academics and students from various disciplines in a range of Australian and international universities, and community sector leaders and practitioners.

In responding to recent unrest and rallies that took place Australia-wide on 4 April 2015, FECCA has reiterated the necessity to reach out to the multicultural community and foster cohesive, accepting and unified Australia. The UWS '**Advancing Community Cohesion**' Conference provides a unique opportunity to do so.

As the FECCA Chair, Joe Caputo who is also a member of the Conference Advisory Committee, pointed out in expressing support for this Conference in February 2015, "*Cultural diversity is one of Australia's greatest strengths ...*" and *one of the ways "to nurture harmonious diversity is through ongoing discussion on ... strategies to facilitate greater social cohesion and inclusion for all Australians."*

By attending this Conference, participants will be able to:

- engage and network with key leaders, decision makers, thinkers and practitioners in multicultural affairs;
- establish relationships with key players in this field, including Australian and international experts on social cohesion;
- discuss and debate national and local issues regarding social cohesion, including exploring its philosophical and pragmatic aspects in diverse societies; and
- gain knowledge on possible successes and initiatives aimed at addressing difficulties and challenges in advancing social cohesion.

If you are interested in attending either as a participant and/or as a contributor of a paper, please register by accessing the following website which also includes more details on the Conference themes and confirmed speakers:

<http://www.advancingcommunitycohesionconference2015.com.au/>

FECCA NEWS

FECCA ACCESS AND EQUITY YOUTH CONSULTATION

FECCA Youth Advisory Committee successfully held a community consultation in Logan, Queensland on 20 March 2015. The focus of this consultation was on barriers to youth employment, education and housing issues of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) youth. There was a general perception that even though there are numerous government services that are in place to assist youth, they are not proactive and responsive to the needs of CALD youth. A number of concerns in relation to the aforementioned topics were raised by the participants and highlighted certain services provided by both federal and state governments which have been effective in delivering services to youth from CALD communities.

Language barriers, perceptions and attitudes towards government service providers were the major hindrances to accessing services by CALD youth. A participant from youth correctional services stated that *“for most CALD youth, especially those coming from a migrant or refugee background, obtaining services from the government organisations is foreign or terrifying. They don’t know the right questions to ask or whom to reach. Often they are sent to meet different people in different departments and it confuses them”*.

Once their initial experience is clouded with doubt and confusion, they are reluctant to seek assistance from government departments. In most instances, CALD youth seek advice from their friends or peers. This could potentially lead them to undesirable paths and often disrupt their education. As many employers require police or other forms of security clearance, CALD youth who have been imprisoned for petty crimes are considered unemployable or a risk. The government should take measures to focus on rehabilitation rather than imprisonment for young offenders so that their past behaviour does not impact on the future prospects of employment.

Parents are unaware of the available government services and sometimes deliberately discourage children from obtaining assistance from government institutions out of fear it may affect their visa status, income generation or tax benefits. Furthermore, a community liaison officer stated that *“parents who are coming from refugee backgrounds are too traumatised to focus on their children’s education or lack the financial capacity to educate them. This leads to CALD youth opting for ‘cash in hand’ jobs which are risky and unsafe. They work under horrendous circumstances for very low pay and the authorities are not aware of these unsafe working conditions”*.



FECCA NEWS

FECCA ACCESS AND EQUITY YOUTH CONSULTATION CONTINUED

One of the major impediments to youth employment is the inability to obtain a drivers licence. There are numerous job opportunities, apprenticeships and training programs for youth provided they possess a drivers licence. There are numerous job opportunities in remote parts of Queensland where public transport is scarce or too time consuming. The process of obtaining a driving licence can cost between \$600-\$800 and young people coming out of school do not have the capacity to pay for driving lessons and associated costs. A local organisation with the support of Commonwealth and Queensland governments introduced 'Breaking the Cycle', a program where youth between 16-25 years of age are provided with free driving lessons to obtain a valid licence. Although this program is highly commendable, there are long waiting lists and many felt that this project is under resourced.

Another commendable program for CALD youth in Queensland is the Community Learning and Training Program (CLTP), where the state government provides additional support for learners with diverse needs to gain qualifications up to certificate level III. CLTP has a responsive funding model that supports partnerships between registered training organisations and community-based organisations to develop innovative training projects that help disadvantaged learners in their local communities. However, some raised doubts in relation to the continuity of this program following the change of the state government in Queensland. It was also stated that with changes to the government, often the nature of programs, names of programs and government departments change and this causes confusion amongst CALD communities. Many expressed their concerns over these type of changes and suggested that there should be continuity and uniformity of programs and projects despite the change of political parties.

WOMEN'S CONSULTATION ON ACCESS AND EQUITY

The FECCA Women's Advisory Committee conducted an access and equity consultation in Sydney on Tuesday 24 March at the offices of Ethnic Communities Council of NSW. The consultation gathered information on issues affecting CALD women in general, with a special focus on health, wellbeing and domestic violence services. The effect that an individual's visa status has on their eligibility to access services, particularly family violence services, was of key concern to participants.

Tricia Flanagan (National Manager of the Multicultural Services Branch, Department of Human Services) made a presentation about the services provided by DHS including new ways that individuals can access services such as through the [mygov portal](#) and apps developed by the Department. Tricia's presentation stimulated discussion about the accessibility of these modes of service delivery for CALD communities.



FECCA NEWS

FECCA DISABILITY COMMITTEE'S ACCESS AND EQUITY CONSULTATION

FECCA Disability Advisory Committee conducted a successful consultation with people with disabilities, carers, community leaders and service providers in Darwin on 31 March 2015. The consultation focussed on the issues faced by CALD people with disability in accessing government services. During the morning session, the committee gathered information and experiences of CALD people in accessing the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), employment and other government related services. During this session, it was revealed that many people in the Northern Territory are

concerned about the lack of information available to them through channels and media that are more commonly used in the area. The government's push to use online services was said to be practically futile in certain areas of the Northern Territory as there are a number of communities where people do not have access to the internet.

The afternoon was dedicated to a question and answer session with the participation of a panel of experts including Bruce Smith (Branch Manager, NDIS Group, Department of Social Services), Janet Brown (Advocate, Darwin Community Legal Services) and Jane Flanagan (Senior Research and Policy Officer, National Ethnic Disability Alliance).



STAKEHOLDER UPDATES

INFORMATION ON DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES' FREE INTERPRETING SERVICE, DELIVERED BY TIS NATIONAL

There have been no funding cuts or policy changes to the Free Interpreting Service.

In July 2013, the Department of Social Services (DSS) began a review of the Free Interpreting Service for non-government organisations (NGOs), to ensure that NGOs accessing the Free Interpreting Service were doing so within the existing policy parameters. More information on eligibility for the Free Interpreting Service for NGOs is available [here](#).

So far, around 200 agencies that held the most longstanding registrations for the Free Interpreting Service were reviewed. As a result, some NGOs were found to be ineligible for continued access to the Free Interpreting Service and were encouraged to discuss alternative interpreting support with their government funding agencies.

These NGOs may be able to maintain interim access to the Free Interpreting Service while they are negotiating funding for interpreting services from their funding body. In addition, DSS may be able to assist NGOs negotiate with their funding body.

Please contact the Department of Social Services at language.policy@dss.gov.au if you have any further questions.



NEDA ANNOUNCES THE RELEASE OF ITS REPORT:

“The Plight of People Living with Disabilities within Australian Immigration Detention: *Demonised, Detained and Disowned.*”

This report explores the significant challenges asylum seekers living with disabilities, their families and carers, experience while being mandatorily detained in Australian managed immigration centres.

The report is mainly limited to secondary sources and published research. Nonetheless, NEDA did obtain data from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) and also collated case studies from advocates and/or organisations within the sector.

The evidence presented, particularly the case studies supplied, are profoundly disturbing and clearly demonstrates how people living with disabilities in immigration detention are not having their basic - let alone disability related - needs met.

The report concludes by supporting the overwhelming consensus that Australia is not meeting its human rights obligations pertaining to asylum seekers, and to asylum seekers living with disability.

NEDA President Suresh Rajan stated *“this is an important document that highlights the plight of people in detention who live with disability. This is an issue that NEDA has been discussing for several years now as we have been aware of stories and reports of people with disability in detention not having access to medication, aids and equipment, support services and appropriate communication supports or translation services. It is obvious from the information gathered that the Australian Government is not upholding its obligations with regard to the CRPD”*.

We ask those concerned, together with organisations within disability, refugee and advocacy sectors to share the document and to help with its exposure.

For further information please contact NEDA President Suresh Rajan on: 0413436001.

To access the report click [here](#).



STAKEHOLDER UPDATES

PROFILE: ZULKARNAIN NAIM, ADVISOR ASSISTANCE, NAVY ISLAMIC CULTURAL AFFAIRS, ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY

What is your role?

My role as the Chief of Navy's Strategic Advisor on Islamic Cultural Affairs Assistant, entails the involvement in planning, coordination and management of initiatives to meet the Chief of Navy's objectives for:

- The education of Navy Personnel on the Islamic faith and traditions in support of better understanding of both fellow colleagues as part of the Navy's inclusion, diversity and reform agenda as well as greater operational effectiveness when working with allied Navies or in regions whose people are predominantly Muslim; and
- Better engagement with the Australian Islamic community to understand any potential barriers to recruitment and to promote the Navy as an employer of choice.

My day to day role consists of enhancing the Navy's relationship with the Muslim communities through outreach programs and youth development programs through Australian Navy Cadets. Revising and developing our Islamic educational content for educating our Navy personnel within the Fleet, to continue raising awareness. I also work with the Advisor to develop initiatives to improve the future Muslim recruitment rate in the Navy.

What are the barriers to young Muslim Australians joining the Defence Force?

There are many cultural barriers for young Australian Muslims to joining the Australian Defence Force (ADF). The main barrier is having an understanding of the ADF and the appreciation of what servicemen and women do within the organisation. During my community engagements and school visits, this is truly evident. Muslim communities are an amalgamation of various nationalities living together in many areas of Australia, a lot of these areas have very minimal exposure to the ADF. Without the exposure or engagement by the ADF the young Australian Muslims do not even consider the ADF as a career.

Parents and grandparents are also very influential in these communities. Depending on the country of origin, their perspective on Defence Force may be very different to how the ADF operates here. With consultation and education, this group within the community may gain a better insight to the ADF as an organisation and potentially an employer of choice for them and their children.

What changes have you seen in the culture of the Defence Force regarding Muslim servicemen and women?

Since the establishment on the Islamic Advisor role in the Navy, many changes have been affected. The policy of wearing the head dress was amended to include the Hijab for Muslim women and for the youth in the Australian Navy Cadets to grow and maintain beards in line with their beliefs. In recent times, we have established a Reserve position in the Navy for an Imam as a Chaplain. As a Chaplain, the Imam becomes a key resource to all sailors in the Navy for their pastoral care and is pivotal for the Muslim sailors in terms of spiritual guidance and counselling. Not only will the Imam be important to the sailors of the Navy, but also to the Senior Leadership Group for advice on religious and spiritual matters.

What are the benefits of a career in the Defence Force?

A career in the Defence Force is a lifestyle filled with excitement, adventure, challenges and a sense of belonging to a family. I have been in the Navy for 17 years and have loved every minute of it. There are many benefits of having a career in the Defence Force and a lot of them don't appear in glossy pamphlets or magazines. The life friendships you establish, the personal challenges you overcome in adversity, encouragement in personal development and the various roles you may be tasked to do, that you may never thought you were capable of. These are just some of the things I personally think are benefits in my career in the Defence Force. But above all else, I can be myself in the Navy and be proud of who I am, where I come from and who I represent. The Navy has undergone a major culture change in recent years and I believe this only creates a far more inclusive and diverse workforce to defend our shores.

STAKEHOLDER UPDATES

MUSLIMS IN AUSTRALIA AND THEIR AGED CARE NEEDS



Mahjabeen Ahmad is an independent researcher and policy advocate who is actively engaged in advocating culture-specificity in care issues covering aged care, dementia care, palliative care, and end-of-life care to help the Muslim community in Australia to receive appropriate services.

The Report [*Muslims in Australia and their Aged Care Needs: An Exploratory Study with Special Reference to South Australia*](#) has been included in the landmark review report [*Review of Australian Research on Older People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds*](#) that was released in March 2015.

In the absence of holistic and faith-oriented aged care service spectrum, the report *Muslims in Australia and their Aged Care Needs* argues that faith considerations must form an integral part of aged care in order to truly embrace the concepts of holistic and person-centred care. It makes a case for enhancing the choice of Muslims when it comes to choosing the right care for their twilight years. The overarching theme of the report is the context in which such choices can and should be provided. Thus, the report traverses different related areas and draws on some relevant concepts that help to put the case for Muslim aged care in a broader framework; concepts such as multiculturalism, social inclusion, and integration.

It is also essential not to paint the concepts of spirituality and religion with the same brush. The report stresses that religion has an enormous role in the planning, development, and delivery of aged care services. When considering diversity of older CALD communities in services provision, religion (an important indicator of diversity) seems to take a backseat. There is a danger that a 'spirituality only' emphasis would obscure the importance of religion. The danger is even greater in regards to Muslims; Muslim spirituality is religion-based and, therefore, the right care cannot be offered if it is not planned around religious beliefs.

It is important for the government and aged care industry to know that their efforts to meet the language and culture needs of the CALD population do not necessarily coincide with satisfying the requirements of the Muslim older people. It is likely that the specific needs of Muslims, based upon their faith, may get lost within issues of culture and language, and diversity in general.

This Report suggests that although the factors associated with limited accessibility of available services by CALD communities largely apply to Muslims as well, the concern in regards to Muslim aged care is essentially driven not just by accessibility issues but also by lack of appropriate aged care services that support their faith. This may cause some to dwell on the 'triple jeopardy' of being ethnic, old, and Muslim.

MULTICULTURAL NEWS & EVENTS

'GIRLS CAN DO ANYTHING' RESOURCE FOR GIRLS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

Young women in Australia consistently do better than young men in secondary school, but are less likely to get jobs in high-income, in-demand fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) or in skilled trades.

'Girls can do anything' is an online resource which was launched by economic Security4Women (eS4W) to counter this. It has been specially developed for girls in secondary school to encourage them to consider a career in typically male dominated occupations or industries.

The website launched on 22 April 2015 and focuses on 'non-traditional jobs', pathways to these jobs and will include links and range of innovative programs to encourage girls to explore all career options.

For more information click [here](#).

NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK

The National Broadband Network (NBN) is Australia's new phone and internet network. It's designed to provide Australians with access to fast and reliable phone and internet services wherever they live. Due to the nature and size of the country, the NBN are planning to use a mix of technologies to deliver the NBN, using the best fit solution for each area. It's important to check your address at nbnco.com.au to find out about the rollout in your area, as the steps to prepare for installation differ for each location.

Connecting to the NBN presents opportunities in education, business, entertainment, health care and sociability. Everyone has the potential to be more productive, more creative, more efficient and more connected for decades to come:

- Improving the education landscape, extending learning opportunities beyond the classroom
- Enjoying great quality video calls with loved ones without the constant dropouts
- Watching movies or streaming video from across the world, without the frustrating interruptions¹
- Greater work, life balance as working from home becomes a real option for many.

For more information or to find out if the NBN is available in your area visit nbnco.com.au

NBN Co also offers information in other languages. Visit nbnco.com.au/translation

1. Your experience including the speeds actually achieved over the NBN depends on the technology over which services are delivered to your premises and some factors outside our control like your equipment quality, software, broadband plans and how your service provider designs its network.



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Bringing broadband to life