

AUSTRALIAN

Mosaic



THE VALUE OF A
**SHARED
LANGUAGE**

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 **FECCA**

FECCA IS THE PEAK, NATIONAL BODY REPRESENTING AUSTRALIANS FROM CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE (CALD) BACKGROUNDS. FECCA'S ROLE IS TO ADVOCATE FOR, AND PROMOTE ISSUES ON BEHALF OF, ITS CONSTITUENCY TO GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS AND THE BROADER COMMUNITY.

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A SHARED
LANGUAGE

SBS





ADDRESS BY FECCA CHAIRPERSON Mary Patetsos

I am delighted to introduce issue number 52 of *Australian Mosaic*—the flagship magazine of the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA). This issue focuses on the value of a shared language. The subject of language is an interesting one. To be able to speak your own language is important for your sense of self, identity and connection to your culture and land. To speak the language of the place where you live helps you connect with the place, with people living in the area, helps in accessing education, employment, emergency and other services.

When speaking of the value of a shared language, my immediate thought is the value of sharing the English language in Australia. Research has demonstrated that the English language is incredibly important for a successful settlement process and life in Australia. The policy of FECCA has always been to ensure access to appropriate English language learning for all new migrants and refugees to Australia. This must happen with adequate resources so that people can learn English in an environment suitable to their needs, skills, and abilities. It is important to remember that providing appropriate access to English learning is an investment for Australia as a country as this creates opportunities for migrants and refugees to fully participate in work, education, training and all aspects of community life.

It is, however, essential to remember that there will always be members of our many CALD communities who will never become fluent in English—either due to pre-migration experiences, life situations once in Australia, or being of older age. FECCA strongly believe that all Australians regardless of their chosen language, should be able to access information on government policies programs services and have access to language services. This shows the importance of the continuation of free interpreting and translation services, through TIS, for all non-English speakers.

Coincidentally, at the same time as this issue of *Australian Mosaic* is published, FECCA is launching a report into community driven English language programs. This report recognises the many challenges new arrivals and more established migrants and refugees may have in learning English and encourages English programs to respond to the diverse needs and challenges. I encourage you to read this report for a greater understanding of these challenges and at the same time see the willingness among Australia's migrants and refugees to learn English.

While acknowledging the importance of English language skills and access to interpreting services when living in Australia, it is equally important to allow people to maintain and practise their own language and culture. Language is linked to the history, culture and identity of people and plays a significant role in people searching for connection. Language connects people across generations, language provides an avenue to learn about one's past, and language can also be a way of teaching others about your own land and culture.

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A shared language among new arrivals to Australia helps reduce isolation and supports people in those early stages of a settlement process when they need additional support. It is essential that all Australians should be able to maintain and practise their language and culture.

2019 is the International Year of Indigenous Languages. FECCA recognises the importance of the continuation of the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages as part of people's culture and as a way of sharing this culture with the rest of Australia. Australia needs to protect, keep learning and support the continuation of the many Aboriginal languages across Australia. This will not only help Indigenous youth connect with their culture but will also encourage the broader community to learn about the many languages and cultures among Australia's First peoples.

Language is important and a shared language—both shared with the general population but also language shared within your own community—is essential to connect people across generations and to learn about each other. Language is about who you are, your identity, where you are from and part of your culture. To quote the brilliant Noam Chomsky: 'Language is not just words. It's a culture, a tradition, a unification of a community, a whole history that creates what a community is. It's all embodied in a language.'

I hope you enjoy reading all these articles. I find them all interesting, insightful and moving. It is clear from reading these contributions that language is important for all of us and in many different ways. I want to take this opportunity to thank all the contributors for sharing their stories and experiences.





ADDRESS BY FECCA CEO Mohammad Al-Khafaji

Welcome to issue number 52 of the *Australian Mosaic: The Value of a Shared Language*. In this issue we look at how important language is to one's identity and sense of self. We also explore aspects of language preservation and continuation and how this is experienced by all Australians. The ability to master English is addressed throughout the magazine while reflecting on the fact that this is not the only language that is important for people, even in Australia.

We should celebrate language and encourage young people to retain their cultural language or even learn a new language. This will make us stronger as a nation and give us the edge over other countries. Looking at European countries, most young people speak at least two or three languages as standard, increasing their employment opportunities. We need to encourage language learning and celebrate those who speak more than one language. I want to commend SBS for running a national language competition, for recognising the importance of language and celebrating the diversity in our community.

For me, I was a 13-year-old teenager when I arrived in Australia from Iraq. While I knew some very basic English words, I still struggled with overall English knowledge and I took comfort in the fact that my parents spoke enough English to get us out of 'sticky' situations. My first English word used in Australia was 'perhaps!'. I used this word frequently and remember clearly one day

we were going by taxi to our accommodation. The driver asked if this was the house and I didn't know, so I said 'perhaps'. I also struggled with the words 'science' and 'scissors'. My parents valued education and wanted to give us the best start to being successful in Australia. They did this by enrolling us in English classes at young age and ensuring we continued with extra-curricular activities. As a teenager, it was comforting to be at Adelaide Secondary School of English where everyone was a new arrival, and everyone had only the very basic English skills, or none at all.

I loved learning a new language and English was my way of belonging to my new home and a way of fitting in. I was determined to learn English properly and use Aussie slang. I spent three terms in English school before going into high school. I knew learning English would allow me to give back to the community that welcomed me and my family to Australia. I knew that English was key to becoming successful in this country. I always wanted to share my story of coming to Australia as a refugee and instil compassion in people who have never met a refugee. Language helped me bridge that gap and break stereotypes about who refugees might be.

Today, Australia is my adopted country and I am proud to be a citizen. However, I have not forgotten where I have come from. I am from Iraq and I strongly and passionately identify as an Iraqi, even though I have not lived there much. Being able to speak Arabic and retaining that skill allows me to have a strong connection to my homeland, my culture, my faith and my childhood memories.





I speak Arabic with my parents. Arabic is my mother tongue and it is very important to me as it is a core piece of my identity and who I am. I am so grateful to my father who put strict rules in place when we were growing up in Iran. His rule was that we only spoke Arabic at home. If it wasn't for him insisting and enforcing that rule, we would not have learnt Arabic. I am proud of my heritage and ethnicity and I celebrate it with passion.

Learning another language is a life-long process and while I feel confident today, I still find myself in funny and confusing situations—as I am sure everyone who has been learning a second language does. Things are still better than in those very early days in Australia. On our second day in Australia I was going to get a loaf of bread from the supermarket. I went to the register and handed over a \$5 note. On my way out, the checkout lady said, 'excuse me, here's your \$2 change'. Out of embarrassment for forgetting to get my change or maybe not knowing the value of goods at that time, I turned around and

used a phrase I heard often in movies: 'keep the change!' as I walked out in my PJ's so proud of myself for getting myself out of that situation. We watched many American movies as kids and some of the practices in the US didn't quite work out in Australia.

Language is important in so many aspects of our lives and a shared language means easy communication between generations, easier access to and understanding of services in a new country and a greater sense of belonging in the place where people find themselves. I am excited to explore the role of language more and excited to introduce the contributors to this issue of *Australian Mosaic*.

The importance of the continuation of the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages was something we wanted to highlight in this issue of *Australian Mosaic*. With a focus on a shared language, it is important to remember the many languages that Australia's First peoples speak and share and recognise the valuable role these play in connecting them with the past, the future, their land and culture. Further, sharing their language with the rest of Australia will lead to increased understanding and appreciation of the importance of understanding Australia's true history. The first four articles in this issue of *Australian Mosaic* explore this in different ways.

We start by an article based on an interview with Phoebe Grainer, a young Kuku Djungan and Muluridji woman from Far North Queensland. As a writer, we wanted to learn more about Ms Grainer's relationship to her own language and that of her people. Based on an interview the *Australian Mosaic* conducted with Phoebe Grainer we learned how she, as a young woman, struggled

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knowing she was not fluent in her own language. However, after learning more about her own culture, her language and her people from family members she developed pride and empathy with her history and an acknowledgement of her people as strong and resilience.

Rosetta Thomas from The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) also recognizes the strength and resilience that we can find with Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Ms Thomas describes the example of lutruwita/Tasmania where we today can find the development and strengthening of the *palawa kani* language. This language combines words and grammar from a range of different original Aboriginal languages that were lost after the English invasion.

Speaking about the importance of sharing and learning the language of the land on which we are living, Ms Erin Lambshead, a Wiradjuri woman from Koorawatha NSW, writes about Young High school in NSW and the positive experience they have had with introducing the Wiradjuri language to their curriculum. By studying the Wiradjuri language and culture, the students at the school demonstrate a great appreciation of learning about each other and learning about the language and culture of the land on which they live.

Associate Professor Andrea Rizzi had the same experience when he started to learn an Aboriginal language as part of his search for the history of Australia. Being an Italian-Australian, he was keen to learn as much as possible about the traditional owners of the land we now call Australia but struggled to find any material when he lived in Italy. Rizzi later found that the best way to interact with the Indigenous history of Australia was to learn a Yolŋu language. Mr Rizzi speaks about the experience of truly feeling included once he started the journey of learning an Aboriginal language as well as the sense of connection to place.

Mr Buol Juuk explores the role of language in people's lives, in particular children of diverse backgrounds. He emphasises how important it is for children to have a connection to their original language and how this impacts positively on their cultural and personal identity. Mr Juuk describes the value of children keeping their own language while learning English in Australia, both to be able to communicate across generations and for own personal and social development. Mr Juuk highlights the importance of Dinka (Jieng) language for children from South Sudanese background.

Feeling lost or different as a child due to a lack of someone 'looking like me' or speaking the same language is explored by Elan Yang in his beautiful story of misunderstandings and assumptions. Writing of the importance of having a sense of connection through language, Mr Yang's story is a reminder of how the search for someone 'like me' is fundamentally human.

Learning the English language in Australia is a process that can take time, commitment and often skills that many new arrivals to Australia don't have. Community Hubs Australia have recognised this and organise English learning for women who may otherwise not have access to or face barriers in learning in the mainstream classes. Responding to the specific needs of many of the women arriving in Australia, Community Hubs have had great success in connecting refugee and migrant women to their community. In their article, Community Hubs speak of the importance of informal conversation classes and a safe and supportive space to learn English.

Also writing about the need to provide opportunities to learn English through a range of different channels, is Ms Luz Restrepo. Having experienced herself the difficulties arriving in a new country with limited English language skills, limited networks and local employment experience, she started SisterWorks—a not-for-profit organisation aiming to empower women through becoming financially independent.

It has been noted many times by most new arrivals that while understanding English might be achievable, it is often a different story with Australian. 'Aussie slang' and Australian version of many English words can sometimes be difficult to understand and 'get the hang of'. Yet, Dr Ksenia Gnevsheva's interesting research at the Australian National University has demonstrated that often non-native speakers of English adapt more readily to a range of English varieties of certain words than native English speakers. Dr Gnevsheva explores reasons for this in her article.

Helping new arrivals understand the typical 'Aussie slang' however is something St. Pauls African House in Shepparton has taken on. Dr Steve Little explains how they have started conversational classes for new arrivals to learn not only about Aussie slang and expressions but also about Aussie culture, food and to socialise with other Australians from across the world. Dr Little explains in his article about the success of 'Aussie Street Talk' and how positively these classes were welcomed by both new and established communities.

Ms Madi Cooper from the Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA) writes about the importance of English language learning for successful settlement. Ms Cooper further explores the availability of English learning for new and established migrants looking briefly at the Government funded Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) while highlighting the need for community driven English programs.

Two examples of community driven English programs are English at the Welcoming Centre in Adelaide, South Australia and English classes delivered by Multilink Community Services in Logan, Queensland. Both of these examples have their particular strengths which form part of the



WE SHOULD CELEBRATE LANGUAGE AND ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE TO RETAIN THEIR CULTURAL LANGUAGE OR EVEN LEARN A NEW LANGUAGE.

success community driven English language programs have—responding to the needs of their clients. Ms Carole Strong from the Welcoming Centre writes about the women’s only class they deliver to a small group of Afghani women with transport to the class included. Michael Zgryza and Kaveh Navaei write about their experiences of delivering English classes for migrants and refugees and emphasise one of the main barriers their clients are facing—the inability to communicate in English at all. For this reason, Multilink has developed bi-lingual English classes to enhance the acquisition of English for their clients. The program has proven incredible successful in particular for newly arrived refugees.

Celebrating the many different languages we can find in Australia today, Russel Anderson from the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters’ Council (NEMBC) writes about the importance of community broadcasting. He elaborates on the inclusive effect community broadcasting have on people and communities. This happens through experiences of belonging and connections not only with their own community but also with the wider Australian community through hearing important information about services in their new country.

Finally, SBS speaks of Australis as a country with many diverse languages but with a common voice. SBS celebrates all the different languages in Australia through their National Languages Competition. In their article, SBS talks about the importance of language and language schools in Australia and give brief examples of a range of different schools across the country where students have the opportunity to learn a second language or connect with their original language.

I am very excited to present the articles in this issue of *Australian Mosaic*. I am very grateful to each and every one of the contributors. They have all generously shared their story and their experiences with learning a new language, what their language means to them and how they recognise that English is important in this country but that there are different ways in which a language can be learned and appreciated.

I encourage you to read all the articles in this magazine and think of your own experience with language. What does your language mean to you? If you haven’t already, maybe this magazine can inspire you to learn a new language. I hope that this issue of *Australian Mosaic* encourages you to appreciate that with language comes a history, an identity and a culture—all equally important to a person. We should, as a true multicultural country, ensure that all people in Australia have access to appropriate English learning while at the same time have the opportunity to celebrate and practise their original language.

I sincerely thank all the contributors and my staff for this edition of the *Australian Mosaic*.

Enjoy!



BY PHOEBE GRAINER, WRITER

2019 is the International Year of Indigenous languages. This is an important year where the aim is to raise awareness of the crucial role languages play in people's daily life. According to the Department of Communications and Art, 'of the estimated original 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages [in Australia], only around 120 are still spoken. Of these approximately 90 per cent are endangered.' The importance of continuing the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders languages in Australia cannot be underestimated. Any efforts to bridge the gap between Australia's First Peoples and the rest of Australia, including Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds depends on the sharing of knowledge and an understanding between the many different cultures in Australia today, including a sharing of language. While speaking of the importance of learning the language of the land on which you live, for all Australians, Ms Grainer also reflected on the challenges she faces as a female Aboriginal writer. Asked about this, her simple answer was: 'I don't even know where to start on this answer....'

The *Australian Mosaic* wanted to explore the role language play for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Peoples and how the preservation of languages interacts with the preservation of culture and facilitates interaction between generations. We wanted to highlight the importance of the continuation of Aboriginal languages in Australia to connect people to their culture, identity and land.

In conversation with Phoebe Grainer, a Kuku Djungan and Muluridji woman from Far North Queensland, we learned how she started writing to tell her people's story and how important it is for her own sense of self and identity to master the language of her people.

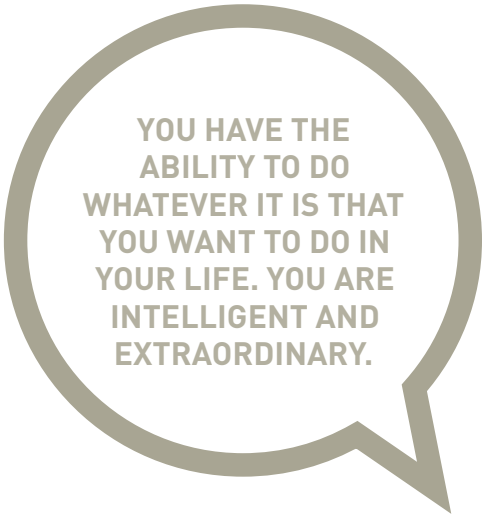
DJUNGAN LANGUAGE IS MY UMBILICAL CORD TO MY DJUNGAN LAND

Everything I know about my culture I have learned from my parents, my grandparents, my aunties and uncles, cousins, brothers and sisters—my family. I grew up all over Australia, in remote communities and towns and therefore I had exposure to many different aboriginal cultures in Australia as well as non-Indigenous cultures.

I have always spoken Djungan and Muluridji language. I guess my first languages as a child learning how to speak were Djungan, Muluridji and English. I don't speak Djungan and Muluridji fluently or know all the words, but these are languages that I have been expanding on and will continue learning throughout my entire life.

At times I have been quite sad and have experienced some anxiety knowing that don't know how to 'fully speak' my language. Once, in one of many discussions I have had with my father about Aboriginal language and culture and about cultural sustainability, I spoke to him about this sadness and how it made me feel, as an Aboriginal woman. His answer was the most important thing I have ever heard: 'languages are not lost, they are sleeping on our tongues, they're just waiting to be awakened'.

'LANGUAGES ARE NOT LOST, THEY ARE SLEEPING ON OUR TONGUES, THEY'RE JUST WAITING TO BE AWAKENED'.



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ABILITY TO DO
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Hearing this from my father, I felt that my perspective changed. I wasn't feeling this loss of culture anymore but instead an enjoyment and excitement to learn and expand my knowledge of myself. Djungan language is my umbilical cord to my Djungan land.

One afternoon, maybe back in 2017, I must have been twelve or thirteen, my father gave me these old papers. They were some old papers about Aboriginality and the language from Kuku Djungan. I started a mission to learn as much as I could, especially new Djungan words that I didn't know. I would then speak to my parents and see if I was saying it and using the words correctly. It was a learning experience for all of us.

One of the papers my father showed me was a diagram with family member's names and the amount of Aboriginal blood that they had, who they were married to, what race the partners were—it must have been an old report. I remember as that child, even then at that young age, I was so shocked and disgusted, and I felt this overwhelming heaviness of sadness. Even though I felt that pain, I learned the truth that day—the truth about my family and what they experienced and the true history of Australia.

As a child, and in this process of learning about my language and the different difficulties placed on my family and my mob, I started to understand the complexities of the history in this country. I developed a much greater empathy and felt proud of my family and of myself that even through all the pain and suffering, here we were alive, strong and powerful.

Writing about my culture

Listening to my family, my cousins and I, as kids, would always tell each other the biggest stories. The experiences I had with my family, old stories that I was told and continue to be told, these stories inspire me daily and remind me of where I am from and why I do what I do.

The first time I read something that I had written to my Mum and Dad and few other family members I read a writing about our family, about our country and our language. I think we were at home in Mareeba, it was night-time, and everyone was having 'cuppa tea' and cake. I read my piece of writing and my parents had this look in their eyes and my Aunty was crying a bit. I felt all the stories of the old people that night. I got a real sense of how important it is to continue to share cultural, land and family stories, how important this is for the young and the old. Everyone needs to hear stories about their mob, about themselves. It lights an old fire. That night was the most rewarding experience.

I now know that sharing and writing my stories is cultural sustainability. The stories that I share are out there forever but in a way they have always been there.

Learning Indigenous languages in Australian schools

All students in Australia should learn an Indigenous language. This can be done by making the language important, by making it a critical learning. Learning the language of the land on which you live, learning about the Aboriginal people and the language groups, empowers and uplifts the many Aboriginal languages and community—it brings everyone, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, together.

I have a little section in my exercise book that I carry around with quotes from Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu*. On page 124 he writes 'All of us must be alert to that greatest of all limitations to wisdom: the assumption'. To change perspective, to create appreciation and respect, you must learn and grow. Education and sharing knowledge about Aboriginal language and culture is crucial for change within Australia and the world. Learning and sharing language is a start for this change.

To all the young Indigenous children who are passionate about writing and want to follow the path of a writer, I have three important things to say: You have the ability to do whatever it is that you want to do in your life. You are intelligent and extraordinary.

RESTORING THE *PALAWA KANI* LANGUAGE



BY ROSETTA THOMAS, *PALAWA KANI*
LANGUAGE /YOUTH WORKER
TASMANIAN ABORIGINAL CENTRE

Rosetta Thomas is a Youth and palawa kani Language worker at the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre. Rosetta learnt palawa kani in high school, and for the last 7 years has taught it in TAC's youth programs. She also mentors Aboriginal children within the juvenile justice system, and facilitates workshops for children in public speaking in palawa kani and Aboriginal dance. One highlight was working with a national television company on a palawa kani episode for an animation series broadcast across Australia (Little J and Big Cuz). Rosetta aspires to be a strong community leader, believing it is essential to have Aboriginal women who can mentor, lead and empower the younger generations and provide them with a future they can believe in.

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) is the statewide Aboriginal community-controlled organisation operating since the early 1970s to advocate for the rights of and provide services to Aboriginal people. The Tasmanian Aboriginal community is one community which comprises different areas of the state.



**WE ALL KNOW
OUR LANGUAGES
CONNECT US TO OUR
HISTORIES, FAMILIES
AND COUNTRIES.**



We all know our languages connect us to our histories, families and countries. This United Nations Year of Indigenous Languages highlights the significance of indigenous languages, to both the people who speak them and the world. lutruwita/Tasmania is one of very few places in the world reclaiming a nearly-lost ancient language.

Between 8 to 16 Aboriginal languages were the first languages spoken in lutruwita. Now *palawa kani* is the only Aboriginal language spoken here. English invasion and attempted genocide decimated all the original tribes and all but destroyed our ancestors' society. Tragically, not enough remained of any one single original language for one language to be revived, so *palawa kani* combines words and grammar from most of those original languages.

Government assimilation policies following colonisation meant only English was taught and our languages were repressed in our parents and grandparent's lives. Yet, after decades of being removed from our lands and traditional ways, the strength and resilience of our people ensured we did not lose our cultural connections, including language. Over two hundred ancient words, phrases and song fragments were still remembered in Aboriginal families into the twentieth century—such as *nina tunapri mina kani?* (Do you understand what I'm saying?), and *tapilti ningina mumara prupari patrula* (Go get wood and put it on the fire).

Our Aboriginal language lay sleeping for nearly two hundred years and in the 1990s the TAC began actively restoring it to spoken life. I'm one of 20 Aborigines who, since then, have worked in different ways on this project.

Now *palawa kani* is used through Aboriginal community life, taught to children from infancy and to adults in family-based learning activities and workshops, and spoken in cultural camps, community festivals, sports and family days, at concerts and balls, political rallies and protests, heritage reclamation and protection projects, returns of land celebrations, at cremation and burial ceremonies for our ancestors' repatriated human remains.

On-country expeditions connecting Aborigines with *palawa kani* names for our lands are especially popular, as people describe: 'Speaking *palawa kani*...while we are walking the country links us, our community and our culture... A very strong link between *palawa kani*, country, culture and heritage was apparent through this camp. *palawa kani* is culture, *palawa kani* is us.'

In one expedition, sixty Aborigines from infants to Elders visited *pilri* (Cape Grim), a dreadful massacre site, to speak once again the names of nine places there.

Community people made three trips down the west coast to identify seven small rivers, lagoons and camping places for which we knew the original names but not their exact locations. One place was found 186 years to the day that its name was told to the recorder by our ancestors there: 'The exhilaration in being probably the first Aborigines in over 150 years to speak those names again in those places, knowing our ancestors were at that same place and saying that same word 186 years ago—their legacy to us—was an indescribable connection to those old people, the names and those places.'

Aborigines of all ages across the state shared months of discussions and site visits to choose *palawa kani* names for two unnamed waterfalls, on *kunanyi*/Mt Wellington (*turikina truwala*) and in Punchbowl Reserve, Launceston (*luyni mungalina*). *luyni mungalina* was suggested by several youth and endorsed by the Aboriginal Elders Council of Tasmania.

Children and youth wrote songs to accompany dances and took Runner Up award in the 2016 national ABC Splash Australia Indigenous Language Song Competition. Logie award winning NITV cartoon series *Little J and Big Cuz* has a *palawa kani* language episode, with the character's parts spoken by six adult and three youth Tasmanian Aborigines. *palawa kani* is part of the script of the award-winning new film *The Nightingale*, and it has named the new Antarctic Icebreaker, a new Virgin Australia plane, and several newly discovered Tasmanian species.



As part of sharing *palawa kani* outside the Aboriginal community, we have participated in nipaluna/ Hobart Language Day for the last 5 years, offering a workshop—*rri karati-ti* (hands in friendship)—with the non-English speaking communities whom we welcome to lutruwita. We understand the pain of being forced from your own lands, and your own culture and language having to always struggle against the dominant Anglo-European culture and English language.

As a reminder of the black history and ownership of lutruwita, we share its original names of places with all Tasmanians. Thirteen gazetted Aboriginal and dual names are on maps and signs; Aborigines use and share dozens of others. The original name of Hobart—*nipaluna*—was gifted to the then Mayor in Reconciliation Week 2018.

When he was seventy, my great-great uncle William Mansell still knew a song he'd learnt as an infant from his grandmother Judy in the 1860s. Versions of that song are still sung in five families today. Judy was the mother of Philip and Nancy Thomas, my great-great grandfather and aunt; both of them still remembered language in 1910. Although, like so many Tasmanian Aborigines, my mother and grandmother didn't grow up speaking their language, my grandmother Hilda was one of several older people who always said *lakri* (man fern). *lakri* was first written down by a European listening to my ancestors in the 1830s.

With these pieces of knowledge retrieved by the *palawa kani* Language Program, people connect through their families to something that seemed lost and very long ago, and realise, as did I, that it was not so long ago nor lost after all. These connections with our families and places make our language come alive again.

I am honoured to speak the words my old people once did, at work, in community life and at home with family. The youth I teach our language to are my pride and joy—seeing our next generations of leaders addressing the public in *palawa kani* about matters they are passionate about within their community.

Although only fourteen, Skye Cox already sees herself as a link between past and future Tasmanian Aboriginal generations. As an infant in an Aboriginal childcare centre, Skye learnt simple words and phrases and grew up to present welcomes to country and perform dances and songs at big Aboriginal community events.



ALTHOUGH ONLY FOURTEEN, SKYE COX ALREADY SEES HERSELF AS A LINK BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE TASMANIAN ABORIGINAL GENERATIONS.

She says: 'palawa kani wangata-mana, mina tukamuna rrala, warr (Tasmanian Aboriginal language is in my blood, I stand strong, warr). Discovering my language has made me who I am today. I am the second youngest of five. We've all learnt Aboriginal culture, dance and language. At home we sit together, remembering the things we were taught and speaking palawa kani. This also makes me feel closer to my nan who passed away. I would like to teach the next generation the language and knowledge passed down to me, because I am the next person in line.'

As our youth encourage each other like this, they also inspire their families, and so *palawa kani* strengthens in Aboriginal families, with adults striving to keep up with their children. We need this to reach our long-term goal of building a strong language base in families, with language passed from generation to generation, so we never lose it again.

WIRADJURI LANGUAGE IN SCHOOL



BY ERIN LAMBSHEAD, ABORIGINAL
EDUCATION OFFICER/SLSO

Erin Lamshead is a proud Wiradjuri woman from Koorawatha NSW. From the time she was a small girl, up until her mid 20's, she had only had a limited number of Wiradjuri words and their meanings in her vocabulary like many other people from the Wiradjuri Nation. This was due to the Government policies that forbade parents from speaking and teaching their Wiradjuri language to their children. However, the Wiradjuri language has been revived. Since 2014 Erin has completed Cert I and Cert II in Wiradjuri Language. She graduated from Charles Sturt University with Cert III in Wiradjuri Language Culture and Heritage in 2018. Currently she works at Young High School where they teach all of their students Wiradjuri Language for 100 hours in year 7 and as an elective subject in year 8.

Wiradjuri Language has been in the reclamation process now for over 20 years. During this time, the Wiradjuri Nation have been forming together again, to strengthen our Identities as proud Wiradjuri people. Our Ancestors and Elders have always been our guide.

Young High School is on Wiradjuri country in Regional NSW. In 2014 Young High School introduced Wiradjuri Language and in 2015 Wiradjuri language became part of the curriculum. This was all through the dedicated and hard work of Aunty Rita Karaminas-Gilbert, Head Teacher, who together with Andrew Turvey, the principal at the time, ensured that the language would be taught as part of the Curriculum.

This initiative involved much consultation with community (AECG, Young Aboriginal Lands Council, Wiradjuri teachers and mentors Uncle Stan Grant, Aunty Enid Clarke, Audrey Ward, Aaron Ellis, Letitia Harris and Harry Lamshead-Wiradjuri community teachers). The implementation of language was strongly supported by current principal Keith Duran, DET Aboriginal Education Officers Thelmerie Rudd, Jenni Tillet, and Ben Ballard. Not to mention the teachers and senior executive staff at Young High School. Building partnerships and trust was vital in the implementation of Wiradjuri across the school and community.

The introduction of Wiradjuri language changed the attitude of our school community. Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal student now engage in conversation and there is more acknowledgement in our community of Wiradjuri language. Having Wiradjuri as our Languages Other Than English (LOTE) has enabled the students to take pride in their culture and enabled non-Aboriginal students to learn about and understand our ancient culture.

Now, in 2019 I am actively involved in the Wiradjuri Language classes and my experience has been nothing but positive. The year 7 students, from all backgrounds and cultures here at Young High School have a great interest in learning Wiradjuri language, the language of the traditional custodians of the land upon which they live. They all show great respect in class and take pride in all the work they produce.

**NOW, IN 2019
I AM ACTIVELY
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POSITIVE.**

It is wonderful to walk through the playground and have students of all ages, greet us and ask, 'are you well?' in Wiradjuri every day. In our community, we are asked to be part of their celebrations by coming and sharing what the students have learned including art, dance, stories and language.

'Wiradjuri has definitely helped me with my English language skills as well, I find Wiradjuri very interesting' says a student in year 7 when asked how learning an Aboriginal language has impacted her life.

'It's been really great to learn another language other than my own, which is Arabic. I am able to communicate with Wiradjuri people from the area, understand who they are, and how they feel,' says another student in year 7 when asked how learning an Aboriginal language has impacted her life.

'We were learning how to say things in my language (Egyptian), then in Wiradjuri comparison that were funny. It was an interesting lesson,' says a student when asked to tell me a fun story about what he had learnt in Wiradjuri.

'I enjoyed it, learning Wiradjuri culture, and how the people lived before the settlers came,' says a student in year 8 when asked what it was about learning Wiradjuri that was important to him.

Learning Wiradjuri language and culture connects students to which land they stand on and also helps them understand the importance for the continuation of Aboriginal languages in Education.

As noted by Wiradjuri Elder, Aunty Enid Clarke, 'my vision is that Wiradjuri language is to be passed on and spoken by many. Let's share Wiradjuri language with all people, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people together across our Nation.'

Having Wiradjuri language at Young High School is a great step towards the ongoing reconciliation and healing of our Wiradjuri Nation.



FROM MILAN TO ARNHEM LAND



BY ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ANDREA RIZZI

Andrea Rizzi is a Cassamarca Associate Professor of Italian at the University of Melbourne. A former Australian Research Council Future Fellow (2014-2018), Harvard I Tatti Center Fellow (2010-2011), and Associate Investigator for the Australian Centre of Excellence for the Study of the History of Emotions (2015-2018), Andrea has lived and worked in Italy and UK before moving to Western Australia, South Australia, and most recently Victoria. His most recent books are: *What is Translation History? A trust-based approach* (Palgrave, 2019), co-authored with Anthony Pym and Birgit Lang, and *Trust and Proof: Translators in Early Modern Europe* (edited volume published by Brill, 2018).

In the early 1980s, I was a teenager living in Milan, Italy, with my Italian father and Irish-Australian mother, and I felt compelled to learn as much as I could about the history of Australia. It seemed natural, even obvious, to embark on a school project about the traditional custodians of the land we now call Australia. In the pre-internet world, the only sources of information were hard copies of books (or other printed matter), and interviewees. Because Italian libraries close to my Milanese home offered no accessible resource on the topic, I headed straight to the Australian Consulate in Milan, where I hoped to find at least some relevant materials—or guidance, at least, on where to source them. After what could only be described as a stunned silence, a Consulate employee kindly presented me with a Northern Territory tourist brochure that promised wonderful travel exploration of the culture of Indigenous Australians. That's it. The disappointment I experienced on that occasion sank deeply into my mind. The failure to find any significant information about the more than 40,000-year history of Australia's Indigenous peoples, cultures, and knowledges pushed me to travel around Australia, from the Kimberley to Tasmania, in search of a meaningful connection with a country I had visited several times already to see family and friends.

Finally, after a 'return' to Australia as an Australian resident citizen, and an academic career that took me to Perth, Adelaide, and Melbourne, I realised that my identity as both Australian and Italian has been strongly shaped by my daily use of English and Italian. Since the 1980s I had discovered the strong presence of Italian communities in Australia, while also experiencing the Irish and English heritage through my mother's family and friends. Bilingualism had facilitated my ability to experience, understand, and explain my

European heritage. The histories of migratory movements from Europe to Australia made more sense to me when I began to appreciate the ways in which Italian and English are interlaced by Italian-Australian, and constantly influenced by Australian speakers who share the same community, suburb, or city. Languages allow communication, exchange, and mediation between cultures. They also enable a deep understanding of ideas, concepts, and views that are inevitably different from culture to culture. But the relationship between two languages is never equal. One dominates the other: that is why English often encroaches upon the Italian dialects spoken by Italian-Australians from Melbourne, Adelaide, or Perth. Understanding that relationships between spoken languages are fraught yet extremely fluid and hybrid delineates histories of assimilation, integration, and struggle—but also acceptance and understanding.

Back to my school project from the 1980s. I realised that the disconnect between the history of white Australia and the pre-colonisation history of Australia can be described as linguistic. I had no access to any of the languages of Australia's First Nations peoples. The only materials I could eventually obtain and read were in English or Italian. As a consequence, I realised how I would have felt had I sought to study the history of Italy in French or Japanese. Of course, there is nothing inherently wrong with reading an 'outsider's' perspective on Italy (some of the most incisive histories of modern Italy have been written in English, incidentally). Yet English is the colonising language of Australia; it has weakened or indeed eliminated Indigenous languages. There is a power relationship at play that cannot be ignored or brushed away, even when First Nations authors and historians are writing their own histories. Using English to write histories of Australia means translating the story into ideas, concepts, and views that are inevitably foreign to

Indigenous Australian cultures. Translation and interpreting scholars are very clear that there is never straightforward equivalence between languages. Instead, constant mediation is required, and mediation means approximation, expansion, reduction, and so on.

The disappointment from the early 1980s lingered, as did the realisation that English could never satisfy my wish to engage more closely with the culture and history of at least one Indigenous community. At last in 2015, I decided to enrol to learn a Yolŋu language, Gupapuyŋu, to be precise. The program is offered by Charles Darwin University. I was in for several discoveries. The first one was about inclusivity. It took less than a week for me to be formally accepted as a member of one of the two moieties, or halves, of Yolŋu culture. I was told I belonged to the Dhuwa *mälk*, and that my kin name was therefore *Balaŋ*. Understanding the Yolŋu kinship system (*gurrutu*) can feel complicated, but its complexity allows for inclusion and connection between otherwise disparate communities—inclusion and diversity. In Yolŋu culture, all members, past and present, play an essential role in the broader community. The clan structure ensures that every member connects diachronically with members of other clans. This ‘taking care’ is performed by everyone.

The second discovery was about place. Once a week I was able to log into the teaching and learning web platform and watch a live lecture delivered by a Yolŋu professor speaking from a remote community in Arnhem Land. On every occasion I saw and felt that, yes, he was in Australia, surrounded by a dramatically beautiful landscape while I, seated at home in Melbourne, was in a foreign country.

As a third discovery, I experienced a non-equivalence between languages in a way that was new to me. The western European languages I speak, read, write, and listen to include different registers that depend on the audience or readership. Of course, in any language it is possible to add elements of spoken communication (orality markers) to a written text, but the result can have a strongly artificial quality. I learnt that Yolŋu language and culture are especially rich in oral registers, and that, as far as practicable, Yolŋu is written down so as to render the verbal markers, references, and visual cues that characterise the spoken world. This is because, when written, the language feels incomplete without the context in which the text is produced, including its visual aspects. So, by comparison with the European languages I am most familiar with, Yolŋu is more sophisticated and complex; in Yolŋu, orality markers require constant interpretation and conjecture. Only by visualising actions described in a story is it possible to understand who or what (*ŋayi*) was doing what—to work out subjects and objects. And visualising the living language means visualising the cultural, historical, and geographical landscapes of Yolŋu.

I managed to study Yolŋu language and culture for just one semester, but plan to continue, and fulfil a desire to become a fluent speaker of Gupapuyŋu. I know for certain that I now feel a closer connection with at least one corner of Australia, its culture, history, and language. The Northern Territory brochure I was given in Milan almost forty years ago is now replaced by a grammar book and a short history of Yolŋu culture and language. Some progress has been made.



LANGUAGE IS THE KEY CULTURAL AND PERSONAL IDENTITY

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING DINKA (JIENG) LANGUAGE TO DINKA (JIENG) CHILDREN AT ETHNIC SCHOOL IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA




BY BUOL GARANG ANYIETH JUUK

Buol Juuk is an experienced and driven senior family dispute resolution practitioner (FDRP) and educator, and the co-founder and chairperson of the Dinka Ethnic School in South Australia. Buol is currently completing his PhD at Flinders University, focusing on Family Dispute Resolution among the CALD communities. His qualification includes: PhD candidate-completing (Flinders), Master of Laws - LLM (Flinders), Bachelor of Justice and Society-BJS (Flinders), Graduate Diploma of Family Dispute Resolution, Dip of International Business (TAFESA), Dip of community Education, Dip of Community Service (Financial counselling), Cert IV in Training & Assessment and Cert IV Community Service. Buol's publications include: a peer review journal article on South Sudanese Dinka Customary Law and his own autobiography—account of refugee experience: *From Tyranny to Triumph*.

Australia has one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) populations in the world. It is estimated that about 40% of the Australian population is made up of immigrants and their children, and that about 20% speak a language other than English at home. Almost 400 different languages, including indigenous languages, are spoken collectively by Australia's almost 25 million population. This percentage include the most recent arrival from South Sudan. There are over 30,000¹ people of South Sudanese heritage in Australia, and this number continues to grow. South Sudanese comprise 64 ethnicities and they speak over 64 ethnic languages at home. The Dinka (Jieng) language is one of these ethnic languages spoken by about 43% of South Sudanese in Australia.

The Role of a Language in Cultural Identity

What is the role of language in the development of people's identity and cultural values? The foundation of individual person and their worldview is rooted in the language. Language is essential to the expression of culture which is a fundamental aspect of cultural identity and values. It is the means by which we convey our innermost self from generation to generation. Through language, we transmit and express our culture and its values. Language, both code and content, is a complicated tool between internal and external interpretations of our identity. Words in each language have the power to define and shape the human experience. All individuals must feel free to explore the uniqueness of their culture and identity while developing understandings of the cultural



**THROUGH
LANGUAGE, WE
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diversity that exists in the world around them. Denying cultural expression means limiting the expression of unique perspectives on life and the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation. Children will learn English more effectively if they continue to develop their first language at the same time so that they become truly bilingual.

As stated by the Article of UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, all persons should therefore 'be able to express themselves, create and disseminate their work in the language of their choice, and particularly in their mother tongue; all persons should be entitled to quality education and training that fully respect their cultural identity'². What does this mean to the South Sudanese and Dinka children who are caught between their adopted country Australia and their ancestral country South Sudan? There are fundamental complexities in answering those questions. First of all, the majority of South Sudanese who came to Australia as adults still identify as South Sudanese Australians and are well connected with their cultural values. Those cultural values play a significant role in building and maintaining relationships with others either at their workplace or in public places or institution. However, the young South Sudanese are caught between the two cultures as quoted from Yar Buol Garang (SBS, 2019) when she said that 'when I come home, I feel fully South Sudanese, but then when I go to school I feel full Aussie.'

This dual identity doesn't help the young people in shaping their future career. You can learn a language at school but that does not necessarily mean that you assimilate well into any culture by living with the people or speaking their language. However, when an individual speaks his/her mother tongue, it is likely that they will have self-esteem and confidence in themselves knowing where they came from and develop

strategies on how to live with other people, in contrast our young people are still struggling with self-identity due to lack of connection with their language and culture.

When South Sudanese arrived in Australia about 20 years ago, they were not noted by the Australian larger population as the majority were young families comprising mostly of young children. Since 2007 there has been much coverage by the Australian media, after the then Minister for Immigration Kevin Andrews claimed that Sudanese were not integrating in Australian society, blaming South Sudanese refugees for problems such as gangs and lawlessness. Consequently, there has been ongoing media attention especially in the State of Victoria on what the commercial media refer to as Sudanese/African gangs. This coverage developed stereotypes of the Sudanese and particularly the South Sudanese. The South Sudanese became the face of Africa in Australia. Consequently, the majority of young South Sudanese are currently confused by the dual identities and most of the time show resentment of police and other cultural groups. An important way South Sudanese parents can help to restore sense of trust and identity is to teach those children their mother tongue. Research in USA has indicated that, children who speak a language other than English enter USA schools with abilities and talents similar to those of ethnic English-speaking children. Additionally, those children can speak another language that, if properly nurtured, will benefit them throughout their lives. In school, children who speak other languages will learn to speak, read and write English. However, unless parents and teachers actively encourage maintenance of the ethnic language, the child is in danger of losing it and with that loss, the benefits of bilingualism. Maintaining the parents' language is significant to the children for the following reasons:



**EARLY
UNDERSTANDING
AND VALUING CULTURAL
DIVERSITY ARE THE KEYS
IN MAINTAINING
SELF-AWARENESS,
RESPECT AND
BELONGING.**

Personal and Social Development

It is noteworthy that the child's first language is critical to his or her identity. Maintaining the ethnic language helps the child value his or her culture and heritage, which contributes to a positive self-concept. Culture, identity and language may be different from each other, but all create identity, or, at least, important aspects of identity. Language not only creates the definitions of identity, it also may set up the conditions for other kinds of inclusion and exclusion, belonging and not belonging, success and failure. Language gives meaning to social structures, identity-creating and oppressive ones.

Intellectual and Educational Development

When the ethnic language is not maintained, important links to family and other community members may be lost. By encouraging ethnic language use, parents can prepare the child to interact with the ethnic language community, both in Australia and overseas.

Research has revealed that students need uninterrupted intellectual development. When they are not yet fluent in English but switch to using only English, they are functioning at an intellectual level below their age. Interrupting intellectual development in this manner is likely to result in academic failure. However, when parents and children speak with each other in the



language they know best, they are both working at their actual level of intellectual maturity. Students who learn English and continue to develop their ethnic language have higher academic achievement in later years than do students who learn English at the expense of their first language. Research has revealed that bilingual learners' brains are more flexible as they are able to store and access information in two languages using both sides of their brain simultaneously. Bilingual learning particularly develops memory, concentration, multitasking, creativity and problem solving. These skills can be very useful for the development of language and mathematical skills. Evidence now shows that bilingual learners are overall better in academic performance than monolingual learners.

Recognising how critical a child's first language is to his or her identity and how maintaining the language helps the child value his or her culture and heritage, which contributes to a positive self-concept, South Sudanese Dinka children and young people are now taught the Dinka (Jieng) language at a Dinka school in Adelaide. The school was set up in 2004 when parents realised that their children were growing up too immersed in their new English-speaking culture and this led to an increasing communication gap between generations. Today, second-generation Australians head to class every Saturday to learn their language that will help them connect with their parents. Early understanding and valuing cultural diversity are the keys in maintaining self-awareness, respect and belonging.

¹ Julie Robinson, 'Sudanese heritage and living in Australia: Implications of demography for individual and community resilience' (2011) 32(2) *Australasian Review of African Studies*, The 25

² http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13179&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html



BY ELAN YANG

Elan is a Director at Allygroup, a specialist legal management consultancy and recruitment firm based in Canberra which specialises in high-quality bespoke resourcing solutions for government departments and agencies. Elan is passionate about helping Allygroup's government clients find innovative solutions to meet new challenges and working on CSR initiatives to close the gender pay gap, and increasing diversity in the workplace by implementing bias-free talent acquisition and recruitment practices.

NOT-SO-SHARED LANGUAGE - A LOOK BACK

My early childhood was unconventional, but only somewhat. My parents immigrated to Australia in the late 1980's from Shanghai and had me not long after. So, it came to pass that my first, and most familiar language as a child was the local dialect most commonly spoken in Shanghai - known as 'Shanghainese'. Whilst many of my peers spoke English in school and at home, I came to speak English at school, and Shanghainese at home. While I was lucky to be introduced to two languages at an early age, (research indicates that learning more than one language at an early age improves lifelong ability to communicate and contributes to cultural awareness), it did create something of a disjunct in my day to day life, and brought up questions of identity on more than one occasion.

By way of background, English was a 'learn-on-the-job' situation for me. When once asked by a kindergarten teacher what my favourite colour was, I gleefully replied with 'orange!'. Not because I particularly loved orange, but because it was the only word I knew at the time that I could say with any certainty was in fact a colour. Slowly but surely over kindy and prep I was able to have a workable enough grasp of the English language

to communicate with my peers and teachers. My prep teacher, who I will call Mrs R for the purposes of this story, was particularly patient with me, and was instrumental in helping me navigate the perilous road to English proficiency.

One day, Mrs R approaches me, and tells me that there is a boy from China who is soon to be arriving at the school, and that she would like me to buddy up with him. Whilst it would be a gross exaggeration to say that my schooling experience up to that point was arduous by any stretch of the imagination, there was a large, unarticulated and probably unacknowledged hole in my heart. At the time, none of the other kids looked like me. Whilst I understood (as children intuitively do) that myself and my peers were all human, and I was no better or worse than any of the other kids, I yearned to connect with another child who looked like me and spoke my language. I can say that with some measure of certainty, because I do recall very vividly feeling a profound sense of connection when I saw my newly minted buddy walking towards me. I can also recall his face lighting up with glee. Presumably because he was in a foreign country where nobody could understand him, and he assumed that he had found a life raft in this strange sea of light-skinned children. For the next part of this story, I will call my new buddy Peter.

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Mrs R led Peter in by the hand, leaned down and gently cooed 'Peter, this is Elan—he'll be your buddy and he'll show you around the school', knowing perfectly well that he could not comprehend a single word, but presumably hoping that he would intuit her meaning, or that I would take this as a cue to begin translating what she had just said. Before Peter can say anything, I excitedly rattle off something along the lines of 'Hi, I'll show you around the school, it's nice to meet you!' in Shanghainese.

What I expected was an equally excited response in our shared language. What I got was a series of confused blinks, and a furrowed brow. I even distinctly remember Peter pulling his hand away from Mrs R, as if to say, 'what is this awful prank you've decided to play on me?!'. Peter leaned forward and uttered a response in his own language—presumably Mandarin. A few more confused back and forth followed suit.

I have since learned as an adult that Mandarin and Shanghainese have a mutually unintelligible relationship. That is, speakers of both varieties cannot understand each other without any prior familiarity. The Shanghainese tonal system is in fact vastly different from other Chinese varieties (Mandarin included), and this disparity was very, very much on display that day.

While the above explanation seems simple enough to comprehend as an adult, it led to a very formative moment for me as a child. It was the first time I had been fundamentally, profoundly confused. My adolescent brain was broken—trying desperately to reconcile what my expectations of the situation were with the dire reality. Even though I had found someone who I should have connected with over our shared language, I could understand Peter no better than Mrs R. So, I did what any five-year-old would do. I cried. My crying in turn made Peter cry, and before too long, we were both bawling on the floor, and the only thing that we shared that day was mutual confusion

and sadness. So, what should have ended up in a beautiful childhood friendship built on the basis of shared language ended up with two very confused crying children.

Twenty years on, English is now my stronger language by leaps and bounds, and thankfully, I have not had to endure a situation like that again. Reflecting back upon how happy I was to see a peer who had a linguistic connection with me, and how devastating it was to have that torn away, it's easy to see why migrant communities in Australia are so many and tight knit. My own grandmother, who is a proud member of the Chinese diaspora in Melbourne, often laughs about how little English she has had to learn since her arrival. Communities who choose to engage and live in their own language (contrary to the beliefs of some) are not 'disrespecting' our way of life. Nor are they deliberately declining to assimilate. They are connecting with their linguistic and cultural roots, because that is just a fundamentally human thing that we all share. Whilst my experience is very far from universal, there is maybe a small lesson to be extracted. Next time you find yourself next to an Australian who doesn't speak English, stop and say 'G'day'. You might end up crying, but at least crying is a shared language too.



COMMUNITY, CONNECTION AND FLEXIBILITY PROVE KEY TO LEARNING ENGLISH





Community Hubs Australia is increasing participation rates in conversational English classes by using a different model. Read more about what makes them different.

A range of conversational English language classes are delivered to migrant and refugee women across Australia through the national community hubs program, managed through Community Hubs Australia (CHA). The CHA approach is designed to overcome the barriers that exist for many women when it comes to attending the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) or other formal English language classes. Success of the program hinges on the flexibility of hubs, and the hub leaders' ability to tailor learning opportunities to suit their local community.

The AMEP has been an excellent intervention for around 2 million Australian migrants and refugees.¹ The hubs program aims to complement AMEP. Delivery of English language programs across individual community hubs is informed by the common barriers that women face when attending English classes. Our individual hubs also respond to the specific barriers of their local hub users. This approach often results in women eventually undertaking their allocated AMEP hours.

Community Hubs Australia (CHA) is a not-for-profit organisation delivering grass-roots social interventions that support migrant and refugee women to connect with their local community. Community hubs are attached to primary schools and offer a variety of formal and informal opportunities for learning and engaging with their local community. These



COMMUNITY HUBS ARE A GATEWAY TO COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION. HUBS ALSO PROVIDE A NEEDS-BASED MODEL THAT ALLOWS FOR COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS TO BE MADE.

include playgroups and other school readiness programs, English language classes, vocational programs, and connecting to local services. All the programs offered by hubs are underpinned by English language development. There are 74 hubs within 17 local government areas, across four states. Nationally, the network of community hubs is growing, with plans to open another 32 hubs across the country.

Barriers to attending English classes are well known. Often migrant women cannot drive or have limited access to a car or to public transport. Many are the primary carer for pre-school aged children and cannot access child-minding. Other social issues, such as a lack of confidence navigating a system that is unfamiliar, also contribute to lower participation in formal English classes.

Research by the Australian National University has shown that the ability to speak English is a key aspect to successful settlement in Australia. With this in mind, it is essential for women to be able to access English language classes and for classes and support to be delivered in a way that works for this cohort.

In 2018, Community Hubs Australia received funding from the Australian Department of Social Services to run a pilot program delivering English conversation classes. On site childminding was paid for through a grant from the Office for Women. The focus of the pilot was to deliver conversational English, to incorporate English language support across all hub activities (e.g. sewing, cooking, gardening).

Approaches across the hubs' network included informal learning through activities for women with their children (such as playgroups) and informal learning through activities in areas of personal interest (such as the kitchen garden scheme and sewing classes). Some hubs used

formal non-accredited classes delivered in the hub, and some used formal accredited classes also delivered in the hub.

Critically, the CHA models recognise that the starting point for many new migrants learning English is not limited by a set schedule of class hours and class times. The use of the English language develops informally and incidentally by attending the local hubs and using the services within it. This provides an ideal starting point for practicing conversational English in a safe supportive environment.

It's a model that works. Dr Sonja Hood, CEO of Community Hubs Australia explains: 'The pilot we ran in 2018 proves that this model is effective in increasing participation. More women are accessing English language classes through our hubs since we introduced flexible ways to learn, and a mandate to incorporate English language skills across all hub activities. One hub that introduced childminding to support an existing English program had an increased participation rate of 35%. Proof that removing the barriers to learning English increases participation.'

While many of the hubs offer structured English language classes, these are more likely to be accessed once a community member has been using other hub services that provide opportunities for informal practice of conversational English. The absence of assessment and attendance pressure means that women attending the hub can build their confidence around speaking English. This lays the foundation for accessing more structured learning in the future.

Many hub users have developed English language skills to a level that has enabled them to enrol in vocational learning through the hub, which in turn has increased their employment prospects. Mamona, a Melbourne-based hub



user, spoke only one sentence of English when she first accessed her local hub. Within three years of first attending the hub playgroup, Mamona had completed Certificate III in Children's Services and now works six hours a week in her hub doing childminding while other women attend English and sewing classes.

Another key difference in the CHA model is the imperative to create a safe and supportive environment for people accessing the hubs. Hub leaders reported that building trust through personal interactions was important to the overarching program. Services such as playgroups provide another learning platform, but one that can only be accessed when the parent feels confident enough to attend. This unstructured informal environment is where fundamental learnings take place.

Linh, a migrant from Vietnam, arrived in Australia with no English skills. She only knew her husband and felt very isolated at home with

her baby son. Connecting with her local hub's English program has enabled Linh to build her confidence, improve her conversational English, build a community of friends, connect with other mothers and learn about Australian culture and traditions. Linh, who was a qualified accountant in Vietnam, hopes to improve her English to a point where she can start her own book keeping business. Beyond this, she would like to qualify as an accountant in Australia and resume her career in finance.

Community hubs are a gateway to community and connection. Hubs also provide a needs-based model that allows for community connections to be made. The development of English language skills flows on from this safe environment. The CHA model is providing an environment that is ripe for learning, with support and resources in place to ensure that women can access opportunities to learn English in a way that works for them.



Dr Sonja Hood is passionate about enabling women through building community connection. Dr Hood leads national partnerships with schools, government, corporates and philanthropy to provide assistance to improve social cohesion and build stronger communities across Australia. Dr Sonja Hood has been CEO of Community Hubs Australia since 2015, building a funding coalition of national, state and local governments as well as garnering philanthropy and business to continually grow the network across Australia. Dr Hood has over 20 years of social policy and program experience in the US, UK and Australia, a PhD from the University of Melbourne, and a Master's degree from Penn State University.

¹ Scanlon Institute, Narrative 3, Australia's English Problem: How to renew our once celebrated Adult Migrant English Program, June 2019

NOT EVERYONE LEARNS BY WRITING AND READING

Nine years ago, when I first came to Australia, I couldn't speak English and couldn't afford to pay for an English course at a TAFE or University. I learnt English in outer suburb community centres where there was a high concentration of new migrants like myself. Although I couldn't articulate properly, I received all the support needed to progress quickly. It was a safe environment where I slowly felt confident to ask questions of my teachers and develop my language. I quickly became obsessed with wanting to be fluent in English, meet new people and immerse myself in the Australia culture. I so desperately wanted to have a job and engage in the new country that allowed me to start again. As it worked out, local libraries with free Wi-Fi, books and technology were the perfect way for me to learn.

My story is only one of many around us. Unlike me, many of the women in my classroom had difficulties adopting the English language so organically, despite having lived in Australia for many years. This made me question my processes around learning. Why was it that I was able to grasp the language quicker than most? Simply, our social backgrounds and present challenges are different, including:

- many of the women are illiterate with little or no formal education in their OWN language
- often, mothers are identified as the primary caregiver in their family
- many women have little-to-no work experience outside the home
- many of the women are from rural and remote locations (unfamiliar with western culture)

Irrespective of their immigration status, often these women are trapped in poverty and can be found struggling in disadvantaged situations like experiencing domestic violence, homelessness, discrimination, modern slavery or social isolation. This, in combination with limited understanding of how to access support for themselves, the development of pathways into economic participation in their new country can be overwhelming and daunting. It is no wonder they struggle to pick up the English language



BY LUZ RESTREPO, FOUNDER,
CEO AND COMPANY SECRETARY
WITH SISTERWORKS INC.

At the age of 45, as a medical doctor and a communication expert, Luz Restrepo arrived in Australia in 2010 seeking political asylum. Her life was in tatters and she spoke no English. She felt like a nobody: frightened, isolated and disempowered. Luz soon discovered that she was not alone. In 2011, along with a group of 25 women experiencing similar challenges, Luz began to make and sell crafts around Melbourne. She understood that to support each other is also to strengthen each other. SisterWorks Inc. was born in May 2013. Today, SisterWorks is a not-for-profit social enterprise, based in Melbourne and Bendigo. Its mission is to support women who are refugees, asylum seekers or migrants to improve their confidence, mental wellbeing and sense of belonging, through work and entrepreneurship.

when so many are dealing with other significant issues impacting on their lives.

I realised that we were all in transitory vulnerable circumstances. In my country I had the privilege to have a formal education and work experience and these tools allowed me to understand how to navigate my new country and move forward. This was the trigger moment for me. I stopped feeling like a victim and decided to stand up and become a leader. I was seeking political asylum, with little English, few money and connections, and I understood there were many women here in Australia in similar circumstances. The simple question became very clear: why not work together to support each other? This was how our journey started together. We began to develop a growing and supportive network that made possible what is SisterWorks today.

Our Motto has always been: Work Empowers Women. Over the past six years at SisterWorks, we have worked with nearly 500 migrant and refugee women from more than 50 countries. We recognise that newly arrived and women already settled in Australia are often long-term unemployed. They do, however, have an exceptional ability to 'learn by doing'. What does this mean? By watching others before you work,

THIS WAS THE TRIGGER MOMENT FOR ME. I STOPPED FEELING LIKE A VICTIM AND DECIDED TO STAND UP AND BECOME A LEADER.



then attempting to replicate their method, you can 'learn by doing'. We have created a supportive environment with a strong collective that supports women in a child-friendly surrounding.

SisterWorks Empowerment Hub does not pretend that everyone becomes entrepreneurs, but simply provides a place where women learn, share, support and grow together, enabling them to learn from each other. Some of us just need this space to rebuild our confidence and believe in our capabilities for then to move into meaningful employment or identify educational pathways. Others need this safe space to leave home and to explore solutions to their present challenging environments. Starting this journey, many women begin to enjoy the process of making a product and learning to sell it. This is only the beginning of empowerment, enabling women to connect and think about their own ways to develop a business that suits to them and their environment.



As a refugee woman myself, I understand that people facing long-term unemployment need support tailored to their individual requirements. Ultimately, our goal is to progress these women through a journey that involves:

- become a role model for 2nd generation family members and reverse the poverty cycle and the intergenerational transfer of disadvantage that often exist
- earn discretionary income, empowerment and autonomy
- decrease dependence on the welfare system
- develop overall financial literacy and increase economic participation.

Supporting the economic empowerment of migrant and refugee women is key. However, as a society, we need to collectively bridge the gap and find alternatives to traditional education and employment pathways to support these women. Building their confidence and English language skills is one step closer to providing individual empowerment and allowing women to explore opportunities to improve their environment.

If you want to know more about SisterWorks, buy our products and donate <https://sisterworks.org.au>

To contact me: luz@sisterworks.org.au





BY DR KSENIA GNEVSHEVA

Dr Ksenia Gnevsheva is a Lecturer in Linguistics at the Australian National University. She received a Bachelor's degree from Saratov State University in Russia, a Master's degree from the University of Arizona in the USA, and a PhD from the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. She researches bilingualism, second language acquisition, and foreign accentness, and is interested in how people use different languages and dialects in their speech and how they are perceived by other people. This study was supported by an Australian Linguistic Society, ANU CASS Research Development, and Macquarie grants.

IS IT A 'COOLER' OR IS IT AN 'ESKY'?

I was born and raised in Russia, and English is my second language. But Australia is not my first English-speaking country. In fact, before moving here, I lived in the USA and New Zealand. The same language, English, is spoken in all three of these countries, but the way people speak is quite different: the pronunciation, the words, even the grammars differ. For example, the box where you keep ice to keep your drinks cold is called a 'cooler' in the USA, a 'chilly bin' in New Zealand, and an 'esky' in Australia.

When I first moved from the USA to New Zealand and then Australia, I had a strong American accent and people often asked me about it, but with time the way I spoke English changed, and I started using New Zealand and Australian words and sounds in my speech. My accent has changed so much that nobody thinks I am from the USA anymore. At the same time, I have a couple of American friends who have lived in New Zealand and Australia for a long time, and their accent does not seem to have changed at all. Does this mean that some people are better at adapting to new language varieties than others?

Do native speakers of English change the way they speak more because they may be better at hearing differences between dialects in their native language? Or are non-native speakers more flexible because they can speak another language? Being a lecturer in linguistics at the Australian National University, I decided to run a research study to test this with my colleagues Anita Szakay from Macquarie University and Sandra Jansen from the University of Paderborn.

In our experiment, we showed pictures of everyday items to different people and asked them to name the object that they saw. Some of the pictures had different names in American and Australian English: for example, esky vs cooler, capsicum vs bell pepper, lollies vs candy, and torch vs flashlight. We compared four groups of people: Australians, Americans living in Australia, Russians living in Australia who have not lived in other English-speaking countries, and Russians who had lived in America and were now living in Australia. This way we had two groups of native speakers and two groups of non-native speakers. We wanted to see which groups prefer American words and which groups prefer Australian words.

Not surprisingly, Australians mostly said Australian words in the experiment (esky, capsicum, lollies, torch). Americans living in Australia mostly continued using American words (cooler, bell pepper, candy, flashlight), only saying Australian words about 20% of the time. Similarly to Australians, Russians who had only lived in Australia used Australian words the most, and Russians who had lived in America and were now living in Australia were in the middle, using Australian words about half of the time. So, Russians living in Australia used Australian words more than the American group, and even the Russians who were more similar to the American group in that they first lived in the USA and then moved to Australia used Australian words more than the American group. This means that non-native speakers of English were more flexible in adapting to a new English variety than native speakers of English.

There may be several reasons for this. One explanation is cognitive. It is possible that for Americans, who learned American English as children, this language variety is stored very deep in the brain and is difficult to change. For the Russians, however, English is a second language, so the information is not stored in the brain as deep and the change from American English to Australian English is not as difficult. The second explanation is social. Because language is so closely linked to who we are, perhaps, starting to speak like an Australian would be unnatural for Americans; it would feel like they are betraying their American identity. In a way it is similar to the way second language speakers of English keep a foreign accent if they come to Australia as adults. For the Russians, however, switching from American to Australian English is not so closely connected to their identity.

This is an important finding because it shows that migrants who are second language speakers of English can be quite flexible linguistically and they make attempts to fit in in their new country.

**WE WANTED TO
SEE WHICH GROUPS
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AUSSIE STREET TALK



BY DR. STEVE LITTLE

Steve is the voluntary Executive Officer of St. Paul's African House, Shepparton, Victoria, an initiative of the Council for Lutheran Coountry Care, Multicultural Affairs Victoria, St. Paul's Lutheran Church and the African community of Shepparton established five years ago. African House is a safe, welcoming place where people of African heritage (refugees and migrants) come to celebrate and preserve their culture and where all refugees and migrants can participate in capacity building programs which help them integrate into and become thriving members of the Goulburn Valley community. Steve is a rural veterinarian with extensive experience developing and delivering capacity building programs for farmers and their advisers, which he is now applying with other volunteers in capacity building programs for refugees and migrants at St. Paul's African House.

'How ya goin?' 'No dramas' 'Bring a plate'
'Mates' rates' 'Spit the dummy' 'Hang a u-ey'
'I'm outta here' 'Mad as a cut snake'

These are just a few Aussie-English slang expressions fit to print which refugees and migrants arriving from Africa and many other parts of the world have to come to grips with as soon as they encounter their first 'native speakers' of Aussie English on the street. There are so many wonderful and clever ways in which Australians contract, mis-pronounce and otherwise mangle the English language, and









'native speakers' of Aussie-English don't even realise they are doing it! For new arrivals from other English-speaking countries, deciphering Aussie-English is challenging enough, but for those from non-English speaking countries it is really hard yakka!

Understanding Aussie-English language is critical for new arrivals in connecting with local people, integrating and fully participating in life in Australia, as is a good understanding of Aussie food, culture and traditions. So, in addition to providing opportunities for refugees and migrants to learn English, at St. Paul's African House in Shepparton we decided we needed to develop and deliver a special program called 'Aussie Street Talk'.

Made possible thanks to funds provided through the Commonwealth Government's Fostering Integration Grant program, we ran 'Aussie Street Talk' for the first time in May-July this year. Seventy people from countries all over the world participated. The program comprised four very interactive, friendly, informal sessions, held every second Friday evening at African House, followed by a 'field trip' (more about that later!).

Our aims with 'Aussie Street Talk' were to enable participants to:

- learn in a welcoming, friendly atmosphere
- practise using common Aussie-English greetings, goodbyes, and contractions, and making small talk with strangers
- experience Aussie 'cuisine'
- learn about Aussie culture (including humour) and traditions (including love of sport)
- have new Aussie experiences
- have fun and make new friends.

**UNDERSTANDING
AUSSIE-ENGLISH
LANGUAGE IS CRITICAL
FOR NEW ARRIVALS IN
CONNECTING WITH LOCAL
PEOPLE, INTEGRATING AND
FULLY PARTICIPATING IN
LIFE IN AUSTRALIA.**



Our first challenge was to communicate what the program was about to refugees and migrants in Shepparton. To help with this, we printed an Aussie slang quiz (10 questions with multiple choice answers) on the back of our promotional flyer challenging people with the message: 'If you don't get all 10 answers correct, you need to come along to "Aussie Street Talk!"'

The first two sessions focused on language and were facilitated by an English teacher. We started with practising many different 'how' and 'what' greetings such as 'G'day, how's it going?' and 'What's news?' and responding with 'And you?'. We then practised how to use informal, spoken 'contractions' such as 'I gotta go' and 'Gimme the book!' and formal contractions such as 'hadn't' and 'won't'. We then ventured into how to make small talk with someone you don't know, such as a fellow traveller on a bus, using appropriate topics (weather, sport etc.). Participants seated at each round table enjoyed practising with others, assisted by a volunteer native Aussie-English speaker. It was very interesting for us to observe that many former refugees and migrants who had been settled in our community for several years were still struggling with many of the conventions of Aussie-English grammar.

We talked about how Aussie humour differs from that in many other cultures, with the aid of some carefully selected video clips. (Russell Coight was very popular). We emphasised how Aussies actually enjoy laughing at themselves. We also discussed (with some trepidation) the use of swear words in Australian culture and how swear words vary in intensity.

The third and fourth sessions featured presentations by:

- A senior member of the local Aboriginal tribal group who is a teacher and very talented artist and musician, who played his didgeridoo and told stories about his people's culture and the impact of European settlement.
- A dog trainer, who demonstrated how to read dogs' body language, approach a dog safely and what to do if an unknown dog approaches you on the street.
- A blind person and his Labrador guide dog, who spoke with participants about how his dog enables him to lead a full life, and how in Australian culture dogs are not to be feared but in fact help people in many ways.
- A representative from the AFL, who explained how to play Aussie Rules football, answered questions and then held a 'hands-on' kicking and hand-passing clinic.

Highlights of the program were:

- Our Aboriginal presenter, who held everyone's complete attention. (You could have literally heard a pin drop as he spoke). When participants were invited to ask questions, he was overwhelmed with raised hands. It was clear that many of our participants, particularly those of African heritage, really related strongly to Aboriginal history, culture and values.
- Providing participants with the opportunity to pat a dog for the first time ever.
- The squeals and laughter as everyone held a small Aussie Rules football in their hands and practised kicking and hand-passing to each other.
- Our 'Aussie Slang' quizzes which we finished each session with. Each participant was given a small card with a slang term on it. We then went around the room and each person was asked to stand, read their card and explain what it means. Examples were: "Ankle biters", "Ropeable", "Ear bash", "Go troppo" This was huge fun for all.
- The meal break in each session which exposed participants to classic Aussie 'cuisine' of dubious nutritional value such as meat pies, hot dogs, fish and chips and a fair-dinkum Aussie barbeque, which they enjoyed with the mandatory quantity of tomato sauce. On fish and chip night, those participants who were brave enough, tasted a Chiko Roll and a 'battered sav'. For dessert, participants tucked into pavlova, lamingtons and drumstick ice creams.
- Seeing how participants and volunteers came together as one group and shared the fun.

Mosaic

Following the four sessions, 'Aussie Street Talk' culminated in a Friday evening 'field trip' to Melbourne (2 hour bus trip), to a place which would give our participants the opportunity to experience many aspects of Aussie language, food, culture and traditions all at once. Where? Yes, of course. The hallowed MCG to witness an AFL game (between Hawthorn and Collingwood). While only 2-3 participants had ever been to an AFL game, learnings from session 4 kicked in and everyone was able to follow what was going on. Hawthorn football club kindly provided our group with scarves and flags, so we instantly became mad Hawks supporters for the night. Being part of a crowd of over 65,000 watching a very close and exciting contest at such a huge stadium was an experience that participants will never forget.

Feedback from participants in 'Aussie Street Talk' has been very positive. It has provided participants with added skills and confidence in connecting with people through language and integrating into our local community. We will certainly run the program again at St. Paul's African House. It has also encouraged us to consider other ways in which we might connect refugees and migrants with Australia's First Peoples and the potential benefits that may come from their interaction.

IT HAS PROVIDED PARTICIPANTS WITH ADDED SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE IN CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE THROUGH LANGUAGE AND INTEGRATING INTO OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY.



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ENGLISH LEARNING FOR NEW ARRIVALS IN AUSTRALIA





PHOTO CREDIT: SCoA MEMBER, COMMUNITY MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE (CMRC)

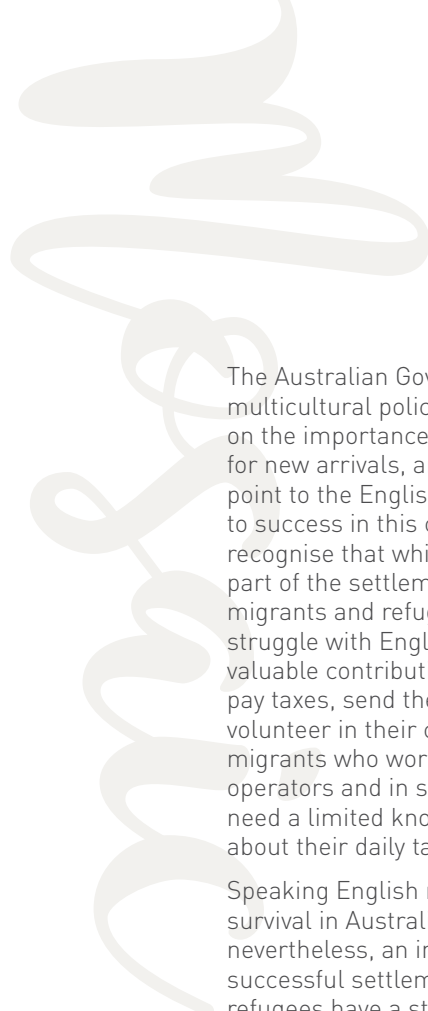


BY MADI COOPER, POLICY AND PROJECTS OFFICER AT THE SETTLEMENT COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA (SCoA)

Madi Cooper is the Policy & Projects Officer at the Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA). She has a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Government & International Relations and Socio-Legal Studies, and a Master of Development Studies with a focus on Peace and Conflict Studies from the University of Sydney. Madi first joined SCoA in early 2018 as an intern, where she conducted research on English programs for refugee and migrant children in the Australian school system. She re-joined SCoA as the Policy & Projects Officer in November 2018. Before working at SCoA, Madi was a competitive gymnastics coach, judge and program coordinator while she studied. She was also an academic tutor and residential advisor at the University of Sydney and volunteered as a Mentor with the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME).

Australia is a proud and successful multicultural country. People from a multitude of cultures, ethnicities, religions and languages make up our diverse social fabric. This diversity is a strength of our nation.

The 2016 Australian Census identified over 300 different languages that are spoken in homes around Australia every day. English, as Australia's common language, brings us together, but the process of learning a new language can also be a barrier to successful settlement for some of the newest members of our multicultural society.



The Australian Government's settlement and multicultural policies have increasingly focused on the importance of English language skills for new arrivals, and political statements often point to the English language as the passport to success in this country. It is important to recognise that while English is an important part of the settlement journey for many new migrants and refugees, many migrants who struggle with English still make important and valuable contributions to Australia—they work, pay taxes, send their children to school and volunteer in their communities. For example, migrants who work as labourers, machinery operators and in similar professions, may only need a limited knowledge of the language to go about their daily tasks.

Speaking English may not be a condition for survival in Australia for everyone, but it is, nevertheless, an important ingredient for a successful settlement. Many migrants and refugees have a strong desire to learn English so they can connect with others, reduce isolation and develop a sense of home in their new community. English is also necessary to understand and navigate many aspects of life in Australia, including transport, housing, employment, and the education, health and justice systems. In particular, a lack of English language skills is a significant barrier to employment.

For this reason, English language classes are a critical part of a new migrant or refugee's settlement journey. There are several ways people can learn English when they arrive in Australia, depending on their age, time of arrival, visa class, whether they are looking for work or not, as well as other factors. The Australian Government provides programs such as the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program for adult migrants. The AMEP delivers 510 hours of free English to eligible migrants, with an option of an additional 490 hours for some who have not yet reached their proficiency goals. The SEE program focuses on literacy and numeracy training for eligible job seekers aged 15 to 64 years old.

These government-funded classes are often the starting point for adult refugees and migrants' English language learning. However, several barriers may prevent someone from accessing

or fully utilising these classes. Some people may have had to prioritise finding employment or have family or caring commitments. Others face issues associated with the settlement journey, such as potential experiences of trauma and housing insecurity.

The prescribed times to register, enrol and complete AMEP can prevent new migrants from participating in or finishing their classes. Further, the limited number of hours available under AMEP does not consider the diverse circumstances of new refugees and other migrants. Many organisations have questioned the effectiveness of the 510 allocated hours, especially when teaching people who may not be literate in any language, are older, or are experiencing other settlement challenges. Other factors, such as the set times of the classes can also limit the accessibility of these classes. These structural barriers could be overcome by introducing a needs-based scheme. Government English programs need to be properly funded, flexible, and well designed to meet the needs of new migrants and refugees.

Many migrants and refugees who want to improve their English also utilise a variety of available community-based English classes. Migrants and refugees go to these classes alongside, after, or instead of government classes. They may do this because they want to continuously improve their English, to better connect with their community, participate and contribute to society.

Community-based English classes are run by settlement service providers, migrant resource centres, community groups, libraries and churches all over Australia. They generally do not restrict who and for how long someone can attend and are free or low-cost. Teachers and volunteers are often from a migrant or refugee background themselves. Sometimes, they may have a shared language that is not English. This shared language can be valuable to create connections and help participants' English learning. For many migrants and refugees, community English classes are a safe place where they can practise their English, learn to navigate Australian society and make new friends. Many community English classes rely on passionate volunteers, so it is important to support, train and develop resources for volunteers.

English is a shared language that is used in many parts of Australian life, but it is just one of the many shared languages that are spoken every day across the country. Learning English is an important part of many new migrants and refugees' settlement journey, and many people have a strong desire to improve their English so they can participate in Australian life. For this reason, it is important that Government English programs are funded, flexible and responsive to the needs of their clients. It is also important that the community-based English classes, run by Australia's world-class settlement services, and other organisations including libraries, churches and community groups, are properly resourced and supported so they can continue to provide their innovative and essential programs.

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ENGLISH AT THE WELCOMING CENTRE



BY CAROLE STRONG, WELCOMING CENTRE MANAGER.

Carole Strong has demonstrated a passion for social justice and worked in the Community Services Sector for more than 30 years. Her work life started as an Adolescent Support Worker in Adelaide while studying and caring for two children. She then moved on to project work as a Youth Project Officer in both Adelaide and Sydney and as a co-coordinator of 'Channel Free', the Youth Media Access Unit at Metro Screen. In 1997 Carole took over the role of Director at Marrickville Youth Resource Centre for nine years. She was awarded an Australian Centenary Medal 'for many years' service to young people from Non-English Speaking Background and low socio-economic families to enhance futures' in 2002. After a role with the Unity Housing as Regional Manager (South) she was employed as Manager at the Welcome Centre Adelaide in 2016 which has now been re-branded to Welcoming Centre. For Carole, this role has been by far the most challenging and rewarding role in her entire career: 'I have learnt so much from those that I work with and made some very deep connections with wonderful people which will stay with me forever'

Good English is essential for all migrants and refugees if they are to participate meaningfully in the social and economic life of their adopted community.

English language programs and support have been offered by the Welcoming Centre in Adelaide since it was established in 2013. They are central in creating a safe and inviting space that supports migrants and refugees, through a range of services, to successfully settle in Adelaide. The programs include formal weekly English classes in 2 levels, weekly 'Chai and Chat' English conversation afternoons in two different locations, and a women's only English language group.

The women's only English class has been running for 6 years! Each week, a small group of Afghani women who rarely get to leave the house, are transported to the Centre by a volunteer driver.

For these women, coming to the Centre is more than just about learning English. For them it's an important social occasion where they come together, learn English and discuss family and other interests in a safe and supportive environment.

The Chai and Conversation afternoons are informal gatherings where people can come and meet new people and practise their English.

People from all corners of the earth have come to practise their English and, in the process, have made friends, shared food, shared recipes, developed networks, received help with employment, written resumes, learned about workers' rights, played games, had fun and laughed a lot. People communicate one on one and sometimes in a larger group—it's very organic and the people who come love it.

WE ARE VERY PROUD OF OUR ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAMS AS WE ARE OF ALL THE THINGS WE ARE DOING WITH REFUGEES AND OTHER MIGRANTS.

The formal English classes are held once a week and are designed to supplement what the participants are doing at TAFE and elsewhere. There are classes at two levels—beginners and intermediate.

The volunteer tutors are all experienced teachers of English as a second language. The classes go for about two hours and are highly structured to cover specific aspects of the English language such as grammar, vocabulary and slang with students able to drive some of the content by asking about topics of their own. Students with a very limited grasp of the language, or who maybe are not literate in their own language, are provided intensive, one on one tutoring.

The change in the participants who have come regularly to the classes has been remarkable. They have developed confidence, can communicate clearer, feel comfortable expressing themselves in a group and ask questions. We know that their grasp of English is improving now because they also tell jokes in English and laugh very proudly when they give the punchline.

We are very proud of our English language programs as we are of all the things we are doing with refugees and other migrants; and of our amazing team of skilled and dedicated volunteers without whom none of this would be possible.

As well as the English language programs, the Welcoming Centre assists with family and individual referral to case support, advises on employment pathways, hosts monthly community dinners, has a food donation program with emergency assistance, provides a thriving community garden project, and gives access to sporting events and summer picnics.



BI-LINGUAL ENGLISH CLASSES

ENHANCING THE IMPACT OF LEARNING ENGLISH PATHWAYS FOR NEWLY ARRIVED REFUGEES



Michael Zgryza has worked across the community sector for over 30 years, specifically in the youth and refugee/multicultural space, having previously worked for the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland as multicultural policy officer. He is currently the Community Services Manager with MultiLink Community Services Inc. With close to 15 years involvement at MultiLink leading various service teams, Michael currently has oversight of the Youth, Community Development, Financial Wellbeing, Employment & Training, Settlement, Aged and Disability service areas which combined assist over 8,000 individuals per annum across seven local Government areas in South East Queensland from over 150 diverse cultural backgrounds.



Kaveh Navaei is MultiLink's Settlement and Employment and Training Support worker. Joining MultiLink in 2014 to complete his Cert III Community Services placement, Kaveh began teaching English (as a volunteer) to newly arrived Iranian clients and providing language assistance and support to MultiLink staff. In 2016 Kaveh was employed as a casual Bi-lingual Community Assistant and in 2017 commenced in his current positions. In December 2018 he completed his Diploma of Community Services. Kaveh has developed and supervises MultiLink's weekly Bi-lingual English Class program for Karenni, Oromo, Arabic and Farsi clients, as well teaching the Farsi class himself.

The enhancement of English language ability of migrants and refugees has been a focus of MultiLink Community Services' support to diverse communities since its inception in 1989, when a group of overseas born residents of Logan City realised a need for language services to assist refugees and migrants. Provision of English classes was one of the first activities conducted by MultiLink, and today, as MultiLink celebrates its 30th year delivering services to the community, community based English classes continue to provide additional needed opportunities for language acquisition for new arrivals to Logan City, as they did 30 years ago.

MultiLink has always recognised that an inability to communicate in English is a significant barrier to social and economic participation in the life of the community. Limited English language skills to enable interaction outside the home or across community environment impacts new arrivals ability to integrate, enhances levels of social isolation and compounds the ability to secure employment among other impacts.

MultiLink strongly believes that learning English takes time and that not all new arrivals are able to acquire English fluency in a short formal period of time and that ongoing English classes, language support and multiple language acquisition methods are required longer term to ensure the development of a functional English language skill.



Salam,





MultiLink has for 30 years had an ongoing pool of English language volunteer teachers who assist new and recently arrived refugees and migrants to develop English language skills to assist them in the process of settlement and support the development of a firm foundation for the future. These traditional community based English classes are still delivered by motivated volunteers who enjoy teaching members of the community and researching and developing topics to use in the classes that are relevant and conversationally based.

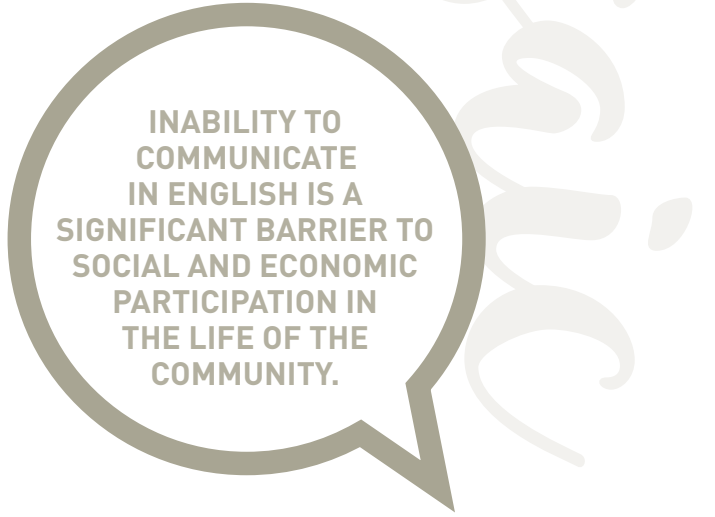
In early 2018, MultiLink's Refugee Settlement team agreed to develop and deliver Bi-lingual English classes to enhance the English language acquisition capacity of newly arrived refugees under the Settlement Grants Program (SGP) as a preparatory strategy to move the service towards the new Settlement Engagement & Transition Services (SETS) 3E's model (English, Education & Employment) to be in place from January 2019.

These classes were developed to provide an additional layer of English language support following completion of AMEP or as a preparation class before entering community based English classes.

A scan of existing research demonstrated that through the use of student's home language in a bi-lingual English class setting, meaning is conveyed efficiently, and the teacher can ensure that concepts have been understood. Research also highlighted that students make strong connections between words, meanings and usage which enhances their English language proficiency at a faster and more effective level.

MultiLink's Bi-Lingual English classes were to be delivered initially in Farsi, Arabic and Oromo for a 10 week period (1 Term) and then evaluated to determine the impact for individuals and enable review and consideration of the effectiveness and future delivery of the bi-lingual class model. Following this review, classes were run in Farsi, Oromo and Karenni across the second semester 2018 (July to December) and again evaluated at the end of the semester to measure outcomes and effectiveness.

The Refugee Settlement Team agreed on implementing a One-way Developmental Bi-lingual Teaching model where students were invited to join classes based on their respective native languages (Farsi, Arabic, Karenni and Oromo), with the teacher delivering both in the



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native language and in English, slowly phasing out the students' native language and eventually teaching only in English (depending on the progress and ability of the student cohort). After this, students could progress to the traditional conversational English class program at MultiLink or elsewhere.

4 staff (core staff and casual Bi-lingual Community Assistants) from the relevant language cohorts were engaged as class teachers, and they implemented a variety of flexible and adaptable teaching methods to support development across 4 language ability domains (Reading, Writing, Speaking, & Understanding), including:

- Whole of class question / task / response / repetition
- Basic word recognition
- One-on-one support
- Audio Visual presentations
- Practice examples – e.g. filling in of simple forms
- Using pictures
- Word puzzles / Games / Fun Activities
- Story Sharing

84 participants attended classes across the March to December period (14 Arabic, 37 Farsi, 17 Oromo and 16 Karenni speakers).

The two snapshot evaluations of the bi-lingual English class program across the two cohorts (first term and second semester) showed that overall:


- 45% previously studied English at TAFE (AMEP)
- 16% have been participants in MultiLink's conversational English Class program
- 14% had studied English elsewhere (Overseas, interstate or not stated)
- 18% had studied English at the PCYC (Karenni cohort).

Overall at commencement of the two evaluation cohorts:

- 63% rated their reading basic or limited
- 65% rated their writing basic or limited
- 64% rated their speaking basic or limited
- 64% rated their understanding basic or limited.

As part of the 2nd Semester Cohort evaluation, a Post Semester Self-Assessment (Subjective) evaluation question was also introduced across the four language ability domains (Reading, Writing, Speaking, & Understanding), which enabled comparison against the pre-class English Level Self-Assessment at the commencement of the semester. 81.5% of 2nd Semester Cohort Bi-lingual English class participants reported improvement in their English Language ability at the end of the semester compared against their subjective rating at the start of the semester across the Farsi, Oromo and Karenni classes.

Simple evaluation of MultiLink's bi-lingual English class initiative shows that it has definitely assisted in improving English language acquisition for participants through the use of a bi-lingual teaching model and it is certainly a model which MultiLink would continue to use as ability and resources allow to assist newly arrived refugee clients to enhance their English language acquisition.



**THE
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Additionally, on an anecdotal and observational level, teachers identified improved confidence, increased self-esteem, development of supportive social networks, and growing participation in the social life of the community. This was particularly evident for the 50+ age group, which composed 30% of class participants, and reflects the reality of younger family members active in education or employment, leaving elderly family members isolated at home. The bi-lingual English classes provided an opportunity not only to enhance their language skills but also an avenue to address their social isolation in the community.

Currently, additional classes for specific language cohorts are being considered based on new arrival refugee demographics (Swahili, Chin or Zomi for example) and the program has recently been expanded to deliver bi-lingual English classes for our Karen and Karenni speaking clients in MultiLink's Aged Care Respite program through the monthly 'Burmese' cultural respite day.

As MultiLink enters its 31st year, supporting new arrivals to enhance their English language ability will continue to remain as important in the future as it did all those years ago back in 1989. The successful bi-lingual English class model will certainly be a strong part of that future.

Love learning in a bi-lingual way because [I] understand better when explained in Oromo.
– Oromo participant

Thank you for give the time for us to learn English.
– Karenni participant





BY RUSSELL ANDERSON,
EXECUTIVE OFFICER NEMBC

Russell is a communications specialist with extensive experience from 28 years in various media roles: as a journalist, in media production and management, as a trainer and as Senior Media Advisor for East Timor's national radio and television station. He has worked for international organisations including the United Nations, UNICEF, UNDP, AusAID and for national and international NGOs and local government. Russell has significant experience in the community broadcasting sector and has worked in Ethnic community media for 9 years as the Executive Officer of the National Ethnic and Multicultural Broadcasters Council (NEMBC).



LANGUAGE ENABLES MEDIA CONNECTIONS

Shared language and cross-cultural connection are central to the largest language media laboratory in Australia; ethnic and multicultural community broadcasting.

More than 110 languages are broadcast on community radio, serving the needs of hundreds of thousands of Australians of all ages in urban and regional areas across Australia. Some 4000 volunteers from 125 distinct cultural groups contribute their time and skills to create 2,070 hours of content every week across almost 100 radio stations. It's a very impressive individual and community contribution.



MATOC ACHOL AND ARGUER ATHIAN AT THE MCG WITH A WORLD FIRST CALL IN DINKA OF AN AFL GAME.

Community broadcasting is a key pillar in the Australian media landscape and is recognised internationally as one of the most successful examples of localised, participatory and diverse media.

Ethnic and multicultural community broadcasting serves to strengthen social cohesion and citizenship within our diverse Australian community. This is mainly because of its connection to language and identity, in making people from various ethnic communities feel at home and able to connect across generations and cultures.

Ethnic community radio is pivotal to Australian migrant communities' economic, social and cultural development. Hearing your own language broadcast on-air is highly valued by established migrant communities. It demonstrates the value of maintaining language and culture, where crucial information about services and commentary on issues is provided in their native languages. Ethnic radio supports intergenerational linguistic and cultural connections between the first and second generations in migrant communities. Ethnic community broadcasting helps newly arrived migrants and refugees build networks within their own community and assist them in learning about their new country.

Language connects people to Australia when they first arrive

Social support is one of the most important factors for promoting sustainable resettlement. It is particularly important in the early stages of the resettlement process when new arrivals face the practical and emotional challenges of settling in a new country. When new arrivals hear their own language on radio, it provides a strong sense of identity and assists integration.

A Sudanese focus group participant said that his language on the radio:

*'preserves the culture and the national origins and it keeps people, makes it easier for people, to settle knowing that they are not really total strangers'*¹

A Tongan community participant, an emerging community, highlighted the importance of hearing their language:

*'There is a sense of pride there too, hearing your own language go over the radio'*²

Several participants in a Turkish group found the radio had a unifying effect:

*'The radio station is not separating us, it's integrating us to Australia, it's very important. Our children are growing up Australians anyway, maybe they're having difficulty adapting culturally, but through the radio, they will be able to get some help and adapt...'*³

Social networks and language connections can instil a sense of belonging among new arrivals, provide them with resources and assist them to better access services such as housing and employment.

The existence of strong ethnic communities, in terms of both formal and informal associations within communities, is critical to the individual refugee's adjustment in an unfamiliar environment.

A multilingual community radio station acts as a community hub that connects and links people through different languages. The connections made with an individual's ethnic community assist in the maintenance of ethnic identity, which has been found to influence mental health. Ethnic communities that are strong buffer the effects of adversity, especially ethnic and race-based discrimination that an individual may experience. Furthermore, the radio station promotes harmonious relations between new arrivals and the wider community by serving as an active link between them.



[L-R] JAGJIT, DALJIT SINGH, JAGJIT SINGH KHOSA



[L-R] BITTO DHILLO (RADIO 4EB), AJAYPAL SINGH (RADIO 4EB), SATPAL SINGH KOONER (BUSINESS PARTNER), RASHPAL HAYER, RANJIT SINGH KHAIRA (SPORTS COMMENTATOR), DALJIT SINGH (RADIO 4EB), HARMEET SINGH (RADIO 4EB), GURSEVAK SINGH (RADIO 4EB)



Language is creating new connections and leading the way in specialised media.

While some commercial media struggle to maintain audiences, the ethnic community broadcasting sector is in a stage of expansion and growth because of its language programs. In addition to radio broadcasting, we now have the Internet that has enabled us to 'stream' programs online, podcast and use Social media to distribute radio programs. This has meant an expansion in the ethnic community audience by reaching to 'home' countries and even more importantly, to the global diaspora.

In this respect, the strength of languages other than English radio programs is that they venture where other media cannot go: local news and information in an ethno-specific language goes beyond its boundaries to connect with national and global audiences by utilising technological innovation and cultural connectivity.

An example of this is the coverage of the Sikh Games. The Sikh Games in Australia was broadcasted 'live' by 4EB, Brisbane's Ethnic Radio Stations, over two days that streamed to an international audience.

With the increase of digital platforms and social media, the ability to distribute language programs is made much easier. The NEMBC has recently moved into media production and in 2019 will produce 210 hours of audio podcasts, including

in 7 different languages and 14 hours of vidcasts screened across 4 television stations over a 28-week period of the Australian Football League (AFL) and A-League (soccer) seasons.

The NEMBC is connecting people through the language of sport. There are now regular live-call commentaries of AFL games in seven different languages, including a 'world first' live call in Dinka (South Sudanese language). See the picture of Matoc Achol and Arguer Athian at the MCG with a world first call in Dinka of an AFL game.

Regional Australia is witnessing a growth of new and emerging communities, and this will only continue to expand, especially with plans to settle new migrants in regional areas for 5 years.

Ethnic community broadcasting will be there to give these communities a voice, create a sense of belonging and strengthen the social fabric and democracy in Australia. Language for these communities is a connection that includes them into Australian society, creating their own identity and connecting them globally.

Languages other than English have not only connected people but were the primary reason why ethnic and multicultural community broadcasting was established in Australia. Languages will continue to play an important role in local cross-cultural connection, are moving into mainstream areas such as sport and are showing there is real potential for global connection and growth.

¹ Community Media Matters: An Audience study of the Australian community broadcasting sector, Meadows, Forde, Eart and Foxwell, March 2007 pg 77.

² Ibid

³ Ibid

A SHARED LANGUAGE

THE ROLE OF SBS IN SERVING SETTLED AND NEW MIGRANTS



Over four decades, SBS has cemented itself as a vital part of our media landscape with offerings that enrich, inform and entertain all Australians. SBS celebrates our diversity, showcasing that while we may speak many languages, as Australians, we have a common voice.

Our language is your language

While providing a valuable service to migrant communities, SBS supports a number of community and national initiatives, such as NAIDOC Week, Refugee Week and the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

For the past four years, SBS Radio has run the National Languages Competition to encourage and celebrate a love of language learning. The 2019 competition called out to Australians from four years of age to adulthood who are learning a language, including English and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

Mandi Wicks, SBS Director of Audio and Language Content, said: 'SBS Radio was proud to organise this competition to celebrate and encourage language diversity and cross-cultural understanding in Australia.

'Language retention is linked to cultural identity and increases a sense of belonging in Australia. We received thousands of beautiful stories of language learning, reflecting our cultural and linguistic diversity.'

In promoting this important initiative, producers from a number of SBS language programs visited schools and institutions that teach languages other than English.



LANGUAGE: VIETNAMESE
NAME OF SCHOOL: HOA NGHIEM VIETNAMESE
LANGUAGE SCHOOL, SPRINGVALE SOUTH, VIC
PHOTO CREDIT: TRINH LE



LANGUAGE: HINDI
NAME OF SCHOOL: DARCY ROAD PUBLIC SCHOOL,
WENTWORTHVILLE, NSW
PHOTO CREDIT: GAURAV VAISHNAVA

Sydney school's Korean language program prepares students for the Asian Century

One such visit was to Campsie Public School in Sydney's south-west, which is celebrating the tenth year of its Korean Bilingual Program.

Run for students from Kindergarten to Year 6, the program sees pupils learn regular curriculum content, such as history, maths and science, in-language for five hours per week.

'I think one of the biggest advantages for students is the skills that they are learning for their future, the skills of teamwork, cooperation, intercultural understanding not only academically but also socially and emotionally because they are really feeling good about their learning,' school principal Berlinda Cook says.

Facilitator Eun Yeong Yoo says the program teaches students skills they will have for life.

'If these students continue to speak and learn Korean in high school, they can improve their Korean communication skills. If they can go to Korea as exchange students at university for about a year, they will have the ability to speak Korean fluently in a much shorter period of time.'

Unique Japanese-Australian school celebrates 50 years of bilingual learning

SBS Japanese commemorated the 50th birthday of the Sydney Japanese International School (SJIS), a community stalwart.

Set up in a church, the school began with just one classroom and 33 students and was the first overseas Japanese school in a developed

country. Fifty years on, SJIS now has about 230 students in total.

Of the world's English-speaking countries, SJIS is the only Japanese school which has both the Japanese curriculum and the local English curriculum within one school.

'We can have mixed lessons such as music, physical education, arts and crafts without missing requirements in both curriculums,' says Shinya Ikawa, the principal of SJIS, of the school's bilingual approach to education.

'Also, the two divisions do events together like sports days, school concerts and school excursions and such.'

Learning Swahili in the NSW Hunter Region

SBS Swahili visited the Kiswahili School in Jesmond, NSW, which currently has 12 students aged between four years and 12 taking part.

The school was started by Wananchi Newcastle, a community organisation which represents communities from east and central Africa, to ensure their children get to learn the language of their parents, as well as connecting them with their cultural heritage.

A parent of one of the students said: 'The Swahili school has helped my child to get confidence and be proud of his heritage; it has also helped him start learning more about his heritage.'

Another parent said: 'Not only are the children starting to know the language and where they are from, but parents are also getting an opportunity to network, support each other and share information on the best way to raise their children in Australia.'

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ABOUT FECCA

FECCA is the national peak body representing Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. We provide advocacy, develop policy and promote issues on behalf of our constituency to government and the broader community. FECCA supports multiculturalism, community harmony, social justice and the rejection of all forms of discrimination and racism. FECCA's membership comprises state, territory and regional multicultural and ethnic councils. FECCA has an elected executive committee and a professional national secretariat implementing policies and work programs on behalf of its membership and stakeholders. For more information and to read more about FECCA's policies and program, please visit our website: www.fecca.org.au. Alternatively, please contact the FECCA office on (02) 6282 5755, or email: admin@fecca.org.au.

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