

SOUTH AUSTRALIA MULTICULTURAL
AND ETHNIC AFFAIRS COMMISSION

YOUTH SUMMIT
11 October 2008

REPORT

Prepared by Helen Smith



"Culture adds value and direction to your life"

(Comment workshop session: Youth Summit, October 2008)

Executive Summary:

A Youth Summit, an initiative of the recently formed Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) and the South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission (SAMEAC), was held on Saturday 11 October. The objectives of the Summit were to discuss the lack of engagement of youth in the life of ethnic communities and the future of the clubs and the services currently provided, and to identify strategies and actions to address these issues.

Community leaders have for some time expressed concern about the difficulty in engaging young people in the cultural life of ethnic groups. A gathering of young people through a Summit was considered an important first step by YAC in addressing these concerns.

The Summit was attended by more than 100 representatives from 20 different cultural groups, as well as members of the Youth Advisory Committee, Commission representatives, community leaders, volunteers and staff from Multicultural SA. The nationalities represented at the Summit included Greek, Italian, Sudanese, Liberian, Sierra Leonian, Afghan, Iraqi, Filipino, Chinese, Vietnamese, Serbian, Lebanese, Indonesian, Latvian, Indian, Somali, and Persian.

(A list of attendees is included in Attachment 1 of this report).

Helen Smith, Principal *helensmith consulting*, was asked to facilitate the Summit and provide a report.

The SAMEAC Chairman, Mr. Hieu Van Le, opened the Summit and congratulated the YAC on their initiative in organising this event. This was followed by three key speakers all from very different backgrounds including a Greek migrant who came to Adelaide in 1953, the Italian Consul in SA, and a member of the YAC representing the Vietnamese community. They shared their experiences of migrating, growing up, living, working and integrating into the SA community. The key speakers supported the need to engage young people in cultural organisations and clubs to preserve cultural identity. They also stressed that these clubs needed to be accessible and relevant to the young people of today.

Following the presentations the participants worked in small groups to discuss issues and reasons why young people are moving away from ethnic organisations and clubs and what can be done to engage them.

This report discusses the findings of the Summit and makes recommendations for consideration by YAC and SAMEAC respectively.

In summary the workshop session provided a good opportunity for people to participate in discussion in a structured setting. The level of participation and the discussion generated was enthusiastic and prolific. As recorded by participants on the comment forms provided, the workshop session was considered a great way to allow everyone to 'have a say' and was well facilitated by volunteers, however some participants felt that this session was too short and if longer may have generated more ideas and outcomes.

In discussing **key issues and reasons why young people** were not attending organisations the Summit identified that the existence of these ethnic organisations and the cultural activities they offered was considered a vital component in preserving and retaining cultural differences and providing opportunities for cultural exchange. One of the main reasons young people were not attending groups was that they were time poor, more 'globally aware' and did not see the need to 'attach' themselves to a group in the traditional sense. In addition it was identified that young people felt the activities at these clubs were irrelevant and 'boring' and that the clubs did not embrace change, were often dominated by 'elders' who did not consider that young people had the skills, the need nor the right to 'lead' a group and that some groups were dominated by political agendas and did not offer enough social activities.

Actions and strategies to engage young people in ethnic groups and cultural activities included support for the retention of these groups. However in order for them to survive they needed to have young people involved as leaders who marketed the group to young people and who were involved in the design and delivery of relevant and engaging activities and events. Access to training opportunities was also considered important in order to equip young people with relevant skills to run groups and organise and manage events and activities. It was generally agreed that the groups needed to be accessible to a more 'global' young community. They needed to provide 'relevant' activities to a changing youth ethnic community whilst being flexible enough to embrace change. It was also recognised that financial support was an issue and that in order for events and activities to occur they required not only funds but people with an appropriate skill base to organise and manage these events.

It was also suggested that opportunities to engage with 'other' cultures either through a Multicultural event / Expo and Summit should be explored by clubs or other organisations and that 'everyone could benefit from exchanging ideas and experiencing cultural differences'. The more established clubs and organisations should be encouraged to share their experiences with new and emerging groups. Opportunities for 'new' cultural groups to establish clubs and integrate with existing clubs should be explored with the assistance of other groups.

In the large group feedback session, following the workshop session, participants expressed overall support for the Summit and commented on the well structured format. On the Comment Form provided, participants recorded that they appreciated the presentations considering them to be relevant and interesting. It was suggested that perhaps a younger person, representing a newly arrived cultural group could have been included as a key speaker at the Summit. There was also support to hold another Summit or a similar gathering to build on what had been discussed. It was suggested that two half days sessions could be held to enable more people to attend and to allow for more discussion time.

In conclusion the Summit identified five key recommendations that will assist cultural organisations to improve the level of youth participation in their group activities.

Generally they cover:

- ❖ marketing by youth for youth;
- ❖ empowering youth and skills training;
- ❖ cultural education and sharing and embracing cultural differences;
- ❖ improved tolerance and understanding by 'elders' of the contribution of youth;
- ❖ updating activities and events to make them relevant to a more global youth of today;
- ❖ updating communication techniques and skills to facilitate networking, and
- ❖ the formation of a youth representative group to advocate and provide information, support and advice

The findings of the Summit indicated the high level of support and enthusiasm among young ethnic people for retaining ethnic clubs as a means of preserving and sharing culture. They also recognised that they needed to gain skills to enable them to become leaders within these clubs and that opportunities to involve all young ethnic people in relevant and engaging activities was very important.

The Summit could be seen as the first step towards implementing change within these ethnic groups to embrace the changing needs of the youth of today. Opportunities to capture and maximise the enthusiasm generated at the Summit could be further explored by YAC and SAMEAC.

Recommendations:

The following actions and strategies were identified as a means of addressing the objectives of the Summit and it is recommended that they be further explored and implemented where possible:

1. Investigate the establishment of a 'Federation of Youth Groups' with representation from all ethnic organisations, to share ideas, knowledge and facilities and to assist in sourcing funds and grant applications and the organisation of events

2. That young people be encouraged to become leaders within their cultural organisations and in addition that:
 - ❖ the 'elders' be more tolerant and accepting of the benefits young people can bring to these groups, and
 - ❖ strategies to encourage youth involvement and introduce relevant and appealing activities be promoted by young people to young people
3. That opportunities for young people to undertake training in the management and organisation of clubs and events be investigated, resourced, promoted and made accessible to all ethnic community representatives
4. That ethnic youth activities, events and organisations be communicated through the establishment of a website and other on line options such as Facebook
5. That a Multicultural Festival /Event/ Expo be held involving all communities to experience and strengthen cultural diversity and that it include a Youth Summit format to build on the findings of the 2008 Youth Summit

Introduction:

Mr. Le, SAMEAC Chairman opened the Summit. In his opening address he spoke about the importance of retaining cultural diversity emphasising that it has to start with the youth of today. He acknowledged that although young people have a busy life and are time poor, they should not forget their cultural background. Opportunities for them to become involved in celebrating and sharing their ethnicity should be provided and marketed effectively to encourage them to participate.

Following Mr. Le's address three key speakers addressed the Summit. They included Mr. Theo Maras, President of the Federation of Greek Orthodox Communities of Australia; Dottore Tommaso Coniglio, the Consul of Italy in SA; and Ms Tram Vu, YAC representative and member of the Vietnamese community. The presenters spoke about their experiences growing up, living and working in Adelaide and the importance of retaining culture through language, celebration and participating in ethnic organisations and events. They emphasised the need for ethnic groups to continue to be relevant and appealing to young people and that "youth groups should be run by young people and be for young people". They also acknowledged that the majority of ethnic groups today were representative of the older generation and that unless strategies were employed to address the declining number of youth participating in these organisations they would find it hard to survive.

After the presentations the attendees were invited to participate in a workshop session and were divided into three groups. The participants were randomly allocated to each of these

groups to ensure a mix of cultures. Each group was facilitated by a community representative and a YAC representative recorded the comments. The community leaders were in a separate group.

The purpose of the workshop session was to discuss two questions:

1. Why are youth moving away from ethnic organisations and clubs?
2. What can be done to engage young people in ethnic organisations and cultural activities?

Question 1:

The workshop session generated a lot of discussion with a wide variety of **issues and reasons why young people are moving away**. These included time constraints with young people being too busy balancing work and home life to attend clubs and organisations. Newly arrived ethnic communities were focussed more on 'settling' into a new society rather than attending clubs. Events were often not relevant with some activities considered 'boring' and not social enough tending to be "too politically focussed". For some newly arrived communities the lack of community facilities made it difficult for people to congregate. There was a stigma in some cultural groups which created a 'them and us' barrier and discouraged people from attending. The more 'established' community groups, second and third generation Greek, Italian and Polish communities were also becoming decentralised.

The impact of 'globalisation' was also a contributing factor with young people being more mobile, not having a 'sense of place' and not needing to be a member of an ethnic club to celebrate their ethnic origins. The lack of resources and a skills base amongst the youth in organising events, managing clubs together with the lack of funds and the difficulty and time required in accessing grants, were also contributing factors. The 'ageing' of club members and the organisers who often did not "take youths seriously in their community" was a deterring factor and often difficult to change.

Question 2:

In discussing strategies and actions to **engage young people in ethnic organisations and cultural activities** many ideas were presented. A key action was to empower young people giving them skills, confidence, ownership, responsibility and leadership within the clubs and assisting the 'seniors' in 'marketing' the clubs to young people. It was suggested that training could be provided to equip young people with the necessary skills to organise events and other cultural activities.

Cultural interaction between members of ethnic clubs could also be encouraged through on line communications. The idea of having older members of the community interact with younger members on wider media facility, such as a facebook could also be explored.

Activities in the clubs could be restructured separating youth activities from main community events. The staging of a major multicultural event was an idea discussed in several of the groups which would bring together all cultures. The event could also include a 'summit' to formally discuss issues and challenges facing different cultures and to identify ways to address them. This would also increase cooperation between ethnic community organisations and provide an opportunity to share experiences and ideas.

Another strategy discussed was improved access to information and the establishment of a data base specifically about multicultural events for youth groups so they can 'know what is available, where and when'. Establishing a 'youth network' of contacts for community groups would also increase opportunities for information sharing.

Ideas to assist groups with financial support and appropriate 'up skilling' to organise events as well as training in grant writing and obtaining interest free loans were also discussed.

The formation of a 'Federation of Youth Groups' to advocate on behalf of ethnic youth groups, share information between youth organisations and communicate via a website, was also suggested. This could be explored further by the YAC.

The lack of information about the ethnic clubs in the education system was also discussed. This was seen as a missed opportunity where- by young school students could be informed about the range of ethnic groups and activities they can participate in whilst at schools and when they leave school. The marketing of these groups and clubs to schools could be explored to encourage young people to not only join these clubs, but also gain an understanding of their cultural relevance and the contribution they could make to these groups.

The definition of youth was also discussed it terms of it not being properly explained to migrants. In the Australian context (Census 2006), youth is referred to as young people aged 15-35 years of age. In some African cultures youth is categorised as a younger age bracket. It was therefore suggested that ethnic clubs be made of aware of this and be more accepting of young people who are married and who want to be involved in these organisations. Ways to engage them should be explored by the community leaders.

"Change in culture happens with time and we need to change with it"

(Comment workshop session: Youth Summit, October 2008)

WORKSHOP SESSION SUMMARY

Question 1:

Why are youth moving away from ethnic organisations and clubs?

Blue group	Yellow group	Green group	Orange group (Community leaders)
Time constraints	Difficult to maintain the leadership role and their lifestyle	Lack of skills among youth, and resources to organise events	Older people in the community are representing young people's interests
Youths are not taken seriously in their community	Lack of facilities for newer communities	Decentralisation of community groups	Education focus too much on mainstream interests, not enough attention on the uniqueness of the community culture and interests
Boring and events are not interesting enough to young people	Activities are not social enough to attract young people and too much politics in community events	Globalisation, lack of sense of belonging	Events not relevant to young people
Complexity within the community	Lack of understanding due to cultural diversity	Stigma, creating barrier between "them" and "us"	

Question 2:

What can be done to engage young people in ethnic organisations and cultural activities?

Blue group	Yellow group	Green group	Orange group (Community leaders)
Centralise information about multicultural for youth groups	Provide information and network opportunities for community groups and multicultural events so that different communities can exchange information and culture Encourage cultural exchange between youths rather than between elders and youths	Increase cooperation between ethnic community organisations to exchange ideas and share experiences	Give young people ownership and responsibility
	Give youth more ability and opportunity to become leaders	SAMEAC to organise seminars, training and to equip community organisations with skills and knowledge	Empower young people
Having older members of the community interact with younger members on a wider media facility, such as a Facebook page	Provide more financial support for youth to organise more community events. Interest-free loans	Formation of Federation of Youth Groups	Organise a Multicultural Expo event to bring different communities together
Definition of what culture is and the differences between the cultures. Culture of today vs. the past. Separate youth activities from main community events			Definition of youth needs to be clarified and understood within different community organisations and cultures

ATTACHMENT 1:

List of attendees

Title	FirstName	LastName
Mr	Aaron	Mohtar
Ms	Aden	Mesganaw
Mr	Adesodum Kehinde	Stephen
Ms	Adut	Salva Kiir
Mr	Aker	Aller
Mr	Akoi	Manyieh Guong
Mr	Aleksandar	Sapic
Mr	Aleksands	Smits
Ms	Amelia	Kalogiannis
Mr	Andrew	Hamilton
Ms	Ann-Maree	Andritsakis
Mr	Aref	Ahmadi
Ms	Astari	Kusumawardani
Ms	Carmen	Garcia
Ms	Catriona	Standfield
Ms	Chloe	Kourakis
Mr	Cuong	Banh
Mr	Daniel	Milky
Ms	Fatin	Shabbar
Mr	Friday	Juma
Mr	Ganesh	Ananthakishnan
Ms	Genevieve	Adza
Mr	George M	Petrallas
Ms	Gina	Webling
Mr	Hassan	Haidari
Ms	Helen	Smith
Mr	Hieu Van	Le
Mr	Isaac Aluong	Daniel
Ms	Jamie	Chiu
Ms	Janis	McGovern
Ms	Jennifer	Cantero
Mr	Joseph	Masika
Mr	Kam	Chiu
Ms	Kamila	Dostiza Di
Ms	Karen	Pocock
Mr	Karthikeya	Kuppa
Mr.	Kenneth	Ng
Mr	Kerry	Darzanos
Ms	Khadija	Gbla
Dr	Kylie	O'Connell
Ms	Laila	Ahamid
Mr	Lazar	Karisik
Ms	Loan Thi Hong	Vo
Ms	Louise	Davies
Ms	Mahima	Krishnan
Ms	Maria	De Ionno
Ms	Maria	Barredo
Ms	Marie	Flomo
Mr	Martins	Medenis
Ms	Melissa	Wong

Ms	Michelle	Dieu
Mr	Morteza	Mohammed Zaheri
Mr	Muhammad	Safi
Mr	Mwaka	Ongee
Mr	Navid	Akrami
Ms	Pamela	Tshilanda
Mr	Peter	Guor
Mr	Philip	Ayuen
Mr	Prasanna	Kovalam
Ms	Preethi	Mohan
Ms	Rachael	Momoh
Mr	Raffaele	Piccolo
Mr	Ruhullah	Danish
Mr	Samson	Mulodiang
Ms	Sandy	Pitcher
Mr	Sanjeev	Selvarajah
Ms	Sarah	Costa
Mr	Sidique	Bah
Mr	Silvio	Iadarola
Mr	Siva	Selvakulalingam JP
Ms	Suzanne	Mashtoub
Mr	Talib Hussain	Ibrahimi
Mr	Talis	Evans
Ms	Tanja	Miletic
Mr	Theo	Maras
Mr	Tommaso	Coniglio
Mr	Tony	Le
Ms	Tram	Vu
Mr	Trokon	Diggs
Mr	Uk	Mang
Mr	Vassilis	Elovaris
Ms	Vicki	Brunello
Ms	Victoria	Sotiropolousos
Mr	Viet Quoc	Nguyen
Ms	Vyshnavi	Parimatanathan
Mr	Prince	Masika
Ms	Sarah	Miller
Ms	Roberthe	Banard
Ms	Ayak	Deng
Mr	Jose	Borlagdan
Mr	Tony	Chen
Mr	Maua	Machar
Ms	Cheung	Puilaam
Mr	Yewei	Zhou
Mr	William	Hsieh
Ms	Jariatu	Gbla
Ms	Alexandra	Sofranic
Mr	Apurva	Mishra
Mr	Tony	Cheu
Ms	Ayak	Deng
	Fong	Ung
	Meng Jia	Tang