



South East Melbourne Manufacturers Alliance Inc (SEMMA) Submission to Inquiry into Multiculturalism in Australia

SEMMA Overview

South East Melbourne Manufacturers Alliance Inc (SEMMA) is an independent body formed in 2003 as a representative organisation of manufacturers located in Melbourne's south east region and today has more than 200 member companies who employ in excess of 9,500 people.

This region is a manufacturing growth area, commonly referred to as "Australia's Manufacturing Heartland", and is a significant contributor to the manufacturing output of the Victorian economy (approx. 44% of total Victorian output).

SEMMA's charter is predominantly focused on the growth and sustainability of manufacturing in the region and is centred around:

- influencing State and Federal Governments on all issues directly relating to manufacturing
- promoting the manufacturing capability of the region
- facilitating collaboration both within and outside the region
- identifying local and international business opportunities for members, both individually and collectively as well as general "day to day" opportunities
- providing operational support for members to sustain and grow their businesses
- working with the local community

SEMMA's office is located in Dandenong's CBD - the municipality is home to 154 different nationalities.

SEMMA's direct involvement in multiculturalism can be broken down into the following basic activities

(1) Integration of Migrants/Refugees into our Community & Workforce

- The lack of suitable skills and labour has been a critical issue for local manufacturers for many years now.
- City of Greater Dandenong is home to 2,200 refugees at any one time
- Challenges of integrating migrants and refugees into our workforce have not been practically addressed



- SEMMA compiled a unique model to address this issue and in partnership with AMES, with funding from DIAC, piloted with three groups throughout 2009 to fine tune and prove the model
- Outcomes far exceeded all parties expectations

(2) Creating Work Placement Opportunities with Members

- SEMMA is frequently called upon by community groups, Adult Migrant Resource Centres, schools etc to assist with the placement of migrants and refugees into meaningful employment
- Utilise the membership network to allow members to avail themselves of the diverse talent
- Members have constantly proven that they are very willing to train these people in a variety of work and life skills provided they have been provided with basic training i.e. basic English and understanding of basic workplace OH&S
- In many cases migrants & refugees have brought a different work culture and ethic to the Australian workplace which many employers find refreshing and stimulating

(3) Hosting International Trade Delegations

- The existing relationships between SEMMA, South East Business Networks (SEBN) and City of Greater Dandenong (CGD) with many and varied alliance partners including Australia India Business Council, Department of Business & Innovation, Monash University etc have created an environment for sharing knowledge and resources
- We believe Australia's multiculturalism has created an environment to fast track global trade opportunities due to a greater awareness of cultural and business requirements, creditability etc and in this regard Australia has become a country of choice for many to investigate trade opportunities.
- These alliance partners utilise the relationship with SEMMA, SEBN and CGD to host trade delegations, facilitate site tours and link delegates to suitable companies in the region to explore potential trade opportunities
- SEMMA has several case studies of local manufacturers that have benefited from this model