

# Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia

## Report on the Intergenerational Youth Forum Let's Talk Together About Living Safe

**December 2015**



Australian Government  
Attorney-General's Department



Australian Government  
Department of Social Services



Government  
of South Australia

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## 1. About this Report

This report documents the proceedings and outcomes of the *Let's Talk about Living Safe Together Youth Forum*.

The *Let's Talk about Living Safe Together Youth Forum* was held at the Adelaide Festival Centre on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015 and involved over 150 youth from new and emerging communities, settlement sector workers and representatives from a range of community and government based organisations.

### Background

The Forum was a key activity of an Engaging Youth from the New and Emerging Communities project funded by the federal Attorney General's 'Living Safe Together: Improving capabilities to develop intervention services to counter radicalisation' funding program. This activity was also assisted by the South Australian Attorney General's Department, the Department for Communities and Social Inclusion and the department of Social Services.

## 2. Introduction to the Forum

The forum was opened by Ms Eugenia Tsoulis OAM, CEO of the MRCSA who commended the project participants on their outstanding contributions and consistent participation across the life of the project.

Ms Tsoulis acknowledged the Kaurna people as the traditional owners of the land on which the forum was being held and also thanked the MRCSA project partners including:

- Multicultural Youth Links SA (MYLSA)
- Africa Communities Council of SA (ACCSA)
- Middle Eastern Communities Council of SA (MECCSA)

She also highlighted that over 500 youth across the MRCSA's Youth Leadership and Youth Link Networks delivered through participated in activities delivered throughout the project over the past 6 months.

### *Key note presentations*

Opening presentations were then given by the following keynote speakers:

#### **Houssam Abiad**

Mr Abiad is a young South Australian entrepreneur and the Adelaide City Deputy Mayor / Councillor. As a dedicated and goal-oriented student, Houssam pursued a double degree in Biomedical Engineering and Health Sciences at Flinders University and is in the process of completing a Masters in Business. Houssam has also completed the Australian Institute of Company Directors course and is a Fellow at the Governors Leadership Foundation.

Key points made by Mr Abiad in his presentation included:

- Experiences as a child growing up in Lebanon and the journey to resettlement
- Living in shelters, experiencing civil wars and isolation
- His early life experiences resulted in two key learnings:
  - to never take anything for granted
  - that we create our own opportunities and are responsible for our own future – everything is available for everyone in Australia because all people are equal
- The identity crisis resulting from navigating two cultural contexts

*“We have an insecurity when it comes to safety – we feel comfortable with our own but we need to connect with a much larger world.”*

### **Mohammad Al-Khafaji**

Mr Al-Khafaji was born in Iraq and arrived in Australia via Syria in 2003. Mohammad came as a refugee, with his family through UNHCR, when he was 13. He is passionate about changing the national conversation around asylum seekers to a positive one through education and grass roots movements. He is the new CEO of Welcome to Australia, an organisation dedicated to welcoming Australia's new arrivals. His national involvement includes membership to the board of Multicultural Youth of SA (MYSA) and the Youth Chair of the Federation of Ethnic Communities` Councils of Australia (FECCA).

Key points made by Mr Al-Khafaji in his presentation included:

- That waiting for resettlement requires a lot of resilience
- He spent four years in camps in Syria waiting for call to come about a new home and struggled not to lose hope
- The most important thing when he arrived in Australia was the warm welcome on arrival

*“It feels very safe to be welcomed by someone that speaks your language and understands your culture. These relationships on arrival set you up for success in future.”*

- That teachers are critical in helping youth settle– their encouragement was integral to his taking up opportunities
- That he moved from private sector employment to the community sector because of his commitment to giving others coming to Australia the same dignified welcome he got on arrival

*“This is your Australia too – don’t let media or others tell you otherwise! We all have an important role to play in Australia and all add value. Be proud of your culture and showcase it!”*

*“There are lots of success stories and lots of youth hungry for opportunities. Encourage your peers to get out there and take up all opportunities – extend a helping hand where needed and be proud of who you are!”*

### 3. Youth Presentations

Following introductory presentations by keynote speakers, four participants in the *Let's Talk about Living Safe Together* project gave presentations based on their experiences.

Key highlights from their presentations are set out below.

#### *Ibrahim Mohammed Ali*

##### **About Ibrahim**

Ibrahim was born in Ethiopia and grew up in Kenya. He is currently studying Psychology at Flinders University. He is passionate about Soccer and also takes some interest in music, reading novels, watching movies and especially loves reading personal stories and watching true stories/documentaries.

##### **Key presentation points:**

- Australia is built on diversity
- The two areas that reflect all the values we share and can bring us together are sport and education
- Education brings personal education and growth but also capacity of community strengthening
- Education is the key to uniting a nation – it is how harmony can be achieved
- Education enhances our understand of human rights and promoting peace , equality and understanding
- As a united society we should aim to work to achieve understanding and respect of human values. We should all be involved in this including families, schools and the broader community.
- Sport has a unique power to bring people together – it unites us as a team and working together.
- Sport promotes social integration and citizenship and opportunity for social interaction.
- Sport can do what political arenas can't. In a sport stadium you can find people from all types of diversity come together to support and cheer one team.
- There is no room for hate in education and sport.

*"Let's all live together in peace and harmony"*

#### *Atif Ali*

##### **About Atif**

Atif is 20 originally from Afghanistan and arrived Australia in December 2011 (by boat). He currently attends Underdale High School to complete Year 12. He started his active involvement in the MRCSA Youth Leadership Program through work experience. He loves watching football and playing

cricket. He is also active in activities organised by Jafaria Islamic Society and intends to study law in 2016.

**Key presentation points:**

- Atif intends to study media at Adelaide university
- He is active in community leadership and participated in youth parliament and is a community volunteer
- Things youth need to practice for safe life include learning English, getting an education and respecting different cultures
- Language is critical to building confidence as is understanding of the law
- Education should guide everyone's path in Australia
- Understanding and respecting cultural differences is critical to safety for all
- Media has fuelled racism towards Islam – to maintain multicultural values of Australia need to continue to promote respect for all.

*"Make this country more beautiful with love!"*

### *Ester Nichun*

**About Ester**

Esther was born in Myanmar and arrived in Australia in 2010 with her parents and three younger brothers. She plans to be a nurse because she has a passion for helping and caring for people, especially those new in Australia. She intends to travel to many different places post university.

**Key presentation points:**

- The initial safety issue for Ester was language. Although she understood English she found it difficult to understand the language in Australia.
- English as a second language is very difficult when navigating the education system
- She experienced a lack of understanding by teachers and discriminatory experiences impacted her confidence for learning
- Ester found it challenging to navigate gender relations and powers in two different cultural contexts
- Everyday challenges are as simple as using the transport system
- There are significant pressures on young people being used as interpreters for parents around some really serious areas such as medical and legal appointments
- There is a lack of sense of safety in public for young women.

### *Mang Bawi Cin Zah*

**About Mang**

Mang Bawi is Chin Burmese and arrived Australia in 2009 on a humanitarian visa after journeying for 3 years. Mang Bawi's main priority is education and he dreams of becoming a lawyer, translator and

counsellor. He is Studying Social Work and Social Planning at Flinders University (2nd year) and sings in the Burmese Church Choir. He is also part of the MRC Youth Leadership Program and he has participated in Youth Parliament and at the annual MRCSA Youth Camps.

**Key presentation points:**

- Mang is a church youth leader of about 100 strong youth group
- Issues faced in his community include an increased rate of youth dropping out of school before completing secondary education – youth are struggling with language so are forced to drop out if they get no additional help.
- The lack of education results in high unemployment which results in less safety for all.
- Living safe is about safe environments and practice and it is important to get an education to minimise risks around safety
- Homework clubs help youth to stay in school
- Homework clubs need to be run by communities so there are no language barriers in understanding information
- There are difficulties that result from a lack of parental understanding

*“They don’t have any idea of Australian education systems or how to help.”*

- Parents need education to understand and be able to support their children and to understand the demands of the Australian education system

## 4. Open Forum

Following presentations an open forum engaged all attendees in furthering dialogue around living safely. The open forum was facilitated by Maria Dimopoulos from Myriad Consultants who put the following key questions to the audience:

- **What does safety mean to me?**
- **What are issues that de-stabilise safety?**
- **What are factors that enable safety?**

Attendees then reflected on questions in small groups which reported back to through the open forum.

Feedback from participants is set out below.

### **QUESTION 1: What does the word safety mean to me?**

Safety was experienced at a very personal level by individuals. Feedback included:

- Mastering skills to prevent accidents
- Safe environments that involve human relationships
- Emotional wellbeing

- Security at a time of unknown residency status
- Being able to be yourself without being scared of judgement by your family, peers or people on street (whatever the source of risk to safety is)
- Safety has different definitions in various parts of world – in Australia we practice safety a lot. In our country women cannot go out after sunset.

*“Women choose to come to Australia for safety – it is very important to us.”*

*“We feel safe here because we are confident about the country’s practice. It empowers us to be vocal about women’s safety. Men don’t need to think about it. Safety for women is very important as there is a culture of rape in our society. It’s a huge opportunity to speak up when you are safe.”*

- Women’s safety
- How can we work to ensure safety as a human right?
- The opportunity to feel safe frees you to take up all opportunities Australia has to offer
- We ignore circumstances where men are not safe – we should not generalise that men are safe
- Men, women and children experience safety differently – how people feel safe should be heard and honoured across individual experienced and gender lines
- Safety is sometimes taken for granted – it is walking home at night without fear after work
- Safety is when you are in a comfort zone and no one can harass you
- Worldwide safety
- Safety of family
- When you come here with parents and make friends at school that your family will not understand your family will not feel safe when you are with that friend
- Friends can affect safety if they drink or fight with you
- It does not feel safe if you have family and friends living in countries where there are bombings and war
- A sense of unsafety is not about discomfort, it is about threat and fear and the exploration of that for each of us is different

*“In Australia you feel safe about the government and speaking up but in our countries the government don’t make you feel safe – you are too scared to speak up.”*

## **QUESTION 2: What are issues / factors that de-stabilise safety?**

Feedback around issues / factors that prevent safety included:

- Ignorance and racist comments
- A lack of trust
- Social media as a platform for spreading ignorance
- The media
- Fear of government / police
- Being fearful of the community if they are racist



- Lack of knowledge
- Peer pressure (limitations placed by parents)
- Expectation to be the leader of family
- Lack of responsibility and being accountable for our safety
- Lack of cultural respect
- Gender inequality
- Fear
- Language / communication limitations
- Not following rules
- Lack of understanding between people
- Not feeling personal safety
- Ignorance of people
- Lack of trust – not allowing someone to help
- Stereotype
- gender inequality – people feeling unsafe admitting and expressing their sexuality
- Racism
- Unemployment / poverty
- Public safety – strangers
- Global safety – wars conflict
- Disability
- Bullying at school
- Lack of values
- Illiteracy
- Alcohol abuse
- Drug abuse
- Angry people
- Miscommunication
- Doing things for us without us
- Not having rights respected

***QUESTION 3: What are factors that enable safety?***

Feedback around factors that enable safety included:

- Education
- Tolerance and acceptance
- Not putting yourself in a situation where you feel vulnerable
- The law
- Media (positive)
- Human rights
- Community connectedness
- Government

- Sport
- Understanding responsibility
- More leadership in young people
- Education security
- Being non-judgemental
- Sharing knowledge
- Working together (uniting on common issues)
- Education – enlightenment is opposite of ignorance
- Speaking out
- Youth leadership
- Being responsible
- Tolerance, empathy and acceptance of culture religion and behaviours
- Security – don't put yourself in a situation where you can be vulnerable
- Communication
- Following guidelines
- Education and understanding of culture / race / religion enable us to be safe
- Health
- Safety networks
- Good policies and laws

*“The right to be safe is a fundamental human right. We can all play a role in establishing our safety.”*

## 5. Closing Comments from Project Partners

### Mr Mabok Marial (Chair, ACCSA)

Mr Mabok highlighted that:

- we cannot change where we come from but we can change where we are going
- we come from places where a young person is looked after by the entire community – this created a sense of safety that was lost when communities came to Australia
- as a refugee the responsibility of parents is to make sure the young ones are safe – they want a brighter future for young ones to achieve their dreams
- education opportunities create a sense of safety for future of youth
- there are opportunities for youth to achieve all they want in Australia
- police are there to help our safety in Australia – it's a new experience and opportunity for safety

*“If you achieve educational success you will be respected – there is no reason why youth cannot achieve all this here in a land of opportunities.”*

### Mr Hussain Razaiat (chairperson MECCSA)

Mr Razaiat highlighted that:

- Youth are very vulnerable and targeted by criminal minded people for different purposes
- Youth need to show leadership to resolve issues
- Youth need to engage in activities in their communities
- On arrival in Australia youth are confronted by so many unfamiliar contexts
- Intergenerational issues include that there are no resources for young people to learn the language of their parents and we end up with communication difficulties between generations and an inability to communicate.
- There is lots of intoxicating materials in media today producing hatred around Islam – we cannot ignore this issue – it is a reality.
- Communities are struggling with daily issues and are out of resources to work with youth.
- Youth are targeted widely and we need to work to challenge this – projects such as this do that.
- We need to continue to develop strategies that will build youth leadership.

## 6. Forum Close

The Forum was closed by Ms Tsoulis who highlighted that key outcomes / findings included:

- safety is a pressing issue and we should not take it for granted
- there is a misunderstanding that parents are over protective when the issues are deeper – they are also impacted by language challenges
- there are considerable differences in ways young people are feeling safe or unsafe
- most young people feel Adelaide is a safe place to live in
- we should never belittle the need for young people to feel their families, cultures and communities are respected and valued
- to feel part of your community is a very effective pathway for communication and belonging in the broader Australian community.
- safety involves a sense of belonging – it is something we will feel according to how others see new arrival communities – leadership by our authorities, politicians and media are critical.
- The police are doing a great job in engaging in dialogue with the community to build confidence, belonging and safety.

*“Australia is a safe country but it is the people that make it safe and I have faith the next generation will make it even safer.”*

**2015 Youth Intergenerational Forum Registration List:**

Abiyat, Hadieh  
Aicawn, Zai Tin  
Ahmadizadeh, Aghda  
Al-Jamal, Raith Salman J.  
Almansoury, Fatima  
Ali, Atif  
Ali, Ibrahim  
Ali, Razia  
Alizadeh, Narges  
Al Rawi, Zaineb  
Almasmom, Ammas  
Al Shahoud, Ahmed  
Ashrafzada, Masooma  
Ashrafzada, Zahra  
Bahati, Perpetue  
Barakat, Pmar  
Barakat, Rami  
Barbour, Georgie  
Bhattarai, Khina Maya  
Bista, Tulasha  
Bucaguzi, Ashel  
Cin Zah, Mang Bawi  
Cin Zah, Rachel  
Daniel, Isaac  
Deng, Elizabeth  
Doe, Mark  
Duffy, LinLin  
Fomba , Edna  
Fanbawi, Van  
Hassani, Daniel Hasnen  
Hassanyar, Yasin  
Jafari, Mohammad Javid  
Jafari, Navidullah  
Kalizeti, Josephine  
Kalizete, Peirre Mahmoud  
Karimi, Uzra  
Karki, Bidya  
Kuruhije, David  
Kuruhur, Robert  
Khadka, Mon Bahadur  
Khanum, Bilris  
Mandavi, Anvar  
Mandavi, Armin

Manirakiza, Edward  
Marsay, Friday  
Marsay, Princess  
Marsay, Omassah  
Mohan Kumar Samson, Matty  
Nichun, Esther  
Nishui, Serna  
Okoy, Amito  
Posalles, Jam  
Rasoli, Mahdi  
Razavi, Ryan  
Rehema, Beacam  
Rezai, Arash  
Ridha, Dawood  
Salamo, Ahmed  
Salman, Nidhal  
Sarwari, Sayed  
Satar, Buonno  
Senajun, Mumina  
Shabibi, Taha  
Shariati, Shaboo  
Sogee, Jennifer  
Tamang, Nishal  
Thiang, Bikte  
Tsige, Ramuana  
Yaghoubi, Harges  
Zoleh, Maylee

**Community Leaders**

Abiad, Houssam	Deputy Lord Mayor of the City of Adelaide
Akhy, Reyhana	Afghan Women
Beden, Tarik	Iraqi Community
Bledee, Reagan	Liberian Community
Fomba George	Liberian Community
Hajbaker, Ayhem	Iraqi Community
Juma Abuyi	Sudanese Community
Mabok, Mabok Marial	African Communities Council of SA
Mohammad Alkhafaji	Welcome to Australia
Munawar, Ahmed	Ahmadiyya Muslim Association
Mutsiri, Antoine	Burundian Community
Naulak, Pau	Burmese Community
Razaiat, Hussain	Middle Eastern Communities Council
Tinhlwang, Van Bawi	Burmese Community

**Service Providers**

Geraghty, Susan	Australian Electoral Commission
De, Tully	Australian Electoral Commission
Hume-Phillips, Nick	DSS
Riviere, Vince	HeadSpace
Dimopolous, Maria	Myriad Consultants
Dunn, Louise	Nexus Arts
Lamb, Megan	Multicultural Communities Council
Castle, Vicki	Multicultural Education Committee
Bemmer, Judith	Multicultural Education Committee
Hampton, Rachel	Office for Sport and Recreation
Francis, Anne	Office for Women
Burley, Rick	SAPOL
De Ross, Claire	SAPOL
Gurr, Phil	SAPOL
O’Dea, Rick	SAPOL
Rouse, Kerry	SAPOL
Priadko, Anita	TAFE ELS
Halliday Wynes, Sian	Relationships Australia
Stubberfield, Catherine	UNHCR Regional Office
Abbot, John	Woodville Hockey Club
Nesci,Angela	
Wong, Sean	
Tsoulis, Eugenia	Migrant Resource Centre of SA
Bannon, Victoria	Migrant Resource Centre of SA
Caird, Cynthia	Youth Leadership Program
Dieu, Michelle	Migrant Resource Centre of SA
Preston, Keith	Migrant Resource Centre Arts
Ramcilovic, Amela	Migrant Resource Centre of SA
Kosovac, Dijana	Migrant Resource Centre of SA
Bannon, Victoria	Migrant Resource Centre of SA
Karki, Jyotshna	Buthanese Youth Group
Senevirante, Nishani	Sri Lanka Community
Grosser, Tracy	Bordertown Migrant Resource Centre
Deng, Paul Deng	Youth Leadership Program