

**SUBMISSION TO JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON MIGRATION INQUIRY
INTO MULTICULTURALISM IN AUSTRALIA – 8 MARCH 2011**

The Multicultural Communities Council Gold Coast Inc. (MCCGC) endeavours to respond appropriately to the needs of those who experience difficulty because of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds, through the development of specific programs, services and networks. MCCGC is administered by a voluntary Management Committee and employs a number of workers in various programs with funding assistance received from several Federal and State Government Departments. MCCGC is a member of the Alliance of Multicultural Services, a collaborative regional body whose member organisations ensure their services complement one another and avoid duplication in delivery of services to the diverse community of the Gold Coast region.

The role of the Multicultural Communities Council Gold Coast includes:

- Advocacy on behalf of Gold Coast Multicultural Communities;
- Referrals and networking with relevant community services and organisations.;
- Provision of Information Services and printed information in a variety of languages;
- Assistance with completing forms for various Departments / Service Providers;
- Information and referrals to other support organisations;
- Publication of quarterly newsletter;
- Bilingual Staff and Volunteers .

Special Programs

Multicultural Seniors Program

Supporting culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) seniors with social issues, physical and mental wellnes, and, isolation.

Community Aged Care Program

Providing individual ongoing Care Plans to CALD elderly people in their homes.

Home and Community Care Program

Support and assistance for the frail aged and younger people with disabilities and their carers.

Extended Aged Care at Home (Dementia) Program

Flexible packages of coordinated services assist people with complex care needs including dementia to remain living in their own home .

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Multicultural Aged/Disability Day Respite Centre (MARC)

Providing Day Respite for carers of the frail aged and younger disabled by providing breaks away from the pressures experienced as a result of daily routines.

Community Partners Program

Promoting and facilitating increased and sustained access by CALD communities with significant aged care needs to aged care information and support services.

Community Action for a Multicultural Society (CAMS)

Facilitates systemic and group advocacy and community capacity-building activities for the benefit of Queenslanders of culturallly and linguistic diverse backgrounds to strengthen social inclusion and multiculturalism.

Productivity Places Program

Providing opportunity for disadvantaged job seekers to gain a qualification at Certificate III level thereby enhancing skills and employment opportunities.

Aqua English Project

A preventative drowning strategy for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; aims to maximise educational outcomes and reduce the marginalisation andsocial exclusion through identification of barriers to participation.

Multiculturalism, social inclusion and globalisation

1. The role of multiculturalism in the Federal Government's social inclusion agenda;

MCCGC's Mission is to facilitate and promote the well being and social inclusiveness of the culturally and linguistically diverse members of the Gold Coast community.

MCCGC's Vision is: a socially inclusive Gold Coast community.

MCCGC adopts an active role in shaping the future of the Gold Coast community so there is integration between the various culturally and linguistically diverse communities and the mainstream community. This includes but is not limited to the same access to services and information for all communities throughout the Gold Coast region.

MCCGC seeks to adopt an active role in shaping the future of our community. Our focus is on being an effective force in implementing our vision. MCCGC is committed to working cooperatively and observing the principles of social inclusion.

The major focus of our service delivery is the provision of a comprehensive, coordinated and integrated range of basic services to the aged and infirm from the culturally diverse community of the Gold Coast region. MCCGC is a recognised leader in the provision of these services among a highly fragmented population of older people in the region. As well as delivery of services among this target group, MCCGC promotes culturally and linguistically appropriate service delivery strategies by other service providers, government and non-government in our region.

In partnership with the Queensland Government's Community Action for a Multicultural Society (CAMS), MCCGC also undertakes systemic and group advocacy and community capacity building activities for the benefit of our culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

MCCGC accepts the statement on cultural diversity developed by the Australian Multicultural Advisory Council, *The People of Australia*, and supports the recommendations it made to the Government. MCCGC found the Government response to the Recommendations of the AMAC acceptable and welcomed the Government's recently published policy on multiculturalism, *The People of Australia: Australia's Multicultural Policy*.

As AMAC noted in *The People of Australia*:

In an age of accelerating globalisation, a multicultural Australia is the Australia most likely to succeed in the world. The world is multicultural: a multicultural Australia necessarily has more ties to that world. These ties are more than cultural and promote more than cultural knowledge and understanding. They include commercial ties; a successful multicultural Australia is better placed for trade and investment with the countries of our region and beyond and is likely to have more global influence, more respect and more bargaining power.

2. The contribution of diaspora communities to Australia's relationships with Europe, the UK, Middle East, and immediate Asia-Pacific Region.

The people who have settled in Australia from countries all around the world maintain their relationships with family and friends. These connections extend to cultural and business relationships. The social and economic benefits to Australia of these connections are recognised in research papers, policy documents and social commentaries.

Perhaps less attention has been paid to the more unfortunate consequences of some of the misinformation and misconceptions about opportunities in Australia that gives rise to migration from some parts of the world.

In our region we find social disadvantage, including social dislocation, among peoples of Pacific Islander background, many of whom enter Australia as New Zealand citizens. Anecdotal evidence is available that they were unaware of the limitations to their entitlements under the Trans-Tasman Agreement provisions prior to arrival. There is a range of social, family and educational issues that give rise to community disaffection. These issues need more adequate research so once documented, appropriate solutions may be identified and applied in line with Australia's social inclusion policy.

Settlement and participation

3. Innovative ideas for settlement programs for new migrants, including refugees, that support their full participation and integration into the broader Australian society; and,
4. Incentives to promote long term settlement patterns that achieve greater social and economic benefits for Australian society as a whole.

This is an area of expertise of other organisations in our region. MCCGC does not deliver settlement services and would rather leave comment to those with expertise in this area, eg fellow Gold Coast members of the Alliance of Multicultural Services, ACCES Services, Inc. and Multicultural Families Organisation, Inc.

National productive capacity

5. The role migration has played and contributes to building Australia's long-term productive capacity;
6. The profile of skilled migration to Australia and the extent to which Australia is fully utilising the skills of all migrants; and,
7. Potential government initiatives to better assist migrant communities establish business enterprises.

As AMAC noted in *The People of Australia*:

Experience has taught us that immigration brings much more than the satisfaction of Australia's need for skills and labour: it brings energy, ingenuity and enterprise. It brings renewal and prosperity to our communities. Wherever the country has excelled – in science and medicine, business, farming, sport, the arts, the media, academia – immigrants have excelled. In every way, immigration has made our cities, suburbs and towns, richer, livelier places, and our country a better one.

These contributions are reflected in the economic success of Australia.

In our region, Tourism is a vital component of our economy. It is recognised that visits by relatives, friends and associates is a significant element in local tourism. The connections of those who have migrated to Australia are responsible for a marked contribution to the overall visitor numbers and their spending in our region. Also important is the contribution from those here on extended short-term stays, eg students and business people and their connections.

Skilled migrants whose skills and qualifications have been recognised as part of their migration process generally make a contribution in the short term. However, there are a significant number of people with professional skills who arrive in Australia on other visas and who have difficulty obtaining recognition in Australia. This is an area that requires more resourcing so that Australia might take advantage of their skills and the individuals and their families might then enjoy a more satisfactory lifestyle for themselves. They may require more assistance with acquiring English language and perhaps some conversion or enhancement of their professional or trade skills. These are generally highly motivated individuals. Australia would gain significantly from the investment in assisting them with overcoming the barriers to success in their working lives.

Those who arrive in Australia with business skills are usually well-motivated to establish and operate businesses in Australia. They are willing to compete with others in business – that is the nature of such business people. However, some improvements in guidance and familiarisation with Australian business laws, taxation and business sector culture would minimise the risk of early failure.