

**REPORT FROM CMYI's STATEWIDE MULTICULTURAL YOUTH ISSUES  
NETWORK (SMYIN) MEETING**

**'Being in-between': Projects engaging second  
generation young people**

**9:30am to 12:30pm, Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

**CO.AS.IT Conference Room, Faraday Street, Carlton**

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**Overview**

The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues' (CMYI) first State-wide Multicultural Youth Issues Network (SMYIN) meeting of 2008 was on the topic of good projects engaging second generation young people.

The SMYIN meeting provided an opportunity to hear expert speakers and explore questions such as:

- What are the circumstances and needs of second generation young people?
- What can we learn from programs currently assisting these young people?

About 70 people attended the forum from a diverse range of agencies and services, including: community health, arts organisations, universities, police, and social-welfare services.

**Speakers**

**Dr Steve Francis**

*Policy Manager, Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues*

Steve identified a gap in relevant literature relating specifically to second-generation young people. Steve highlighted the associated lack of social policy and advocacy around their issues. This provided context for why CMYI is showcasing some good practice examples of strategies and activities working with second generation young people. CMYI is interested in advocating for better resourcing for these programs as well as development of relevant social policy.

**Dr Liza Hopkins**

*Australian Research Council post-doctoral fellow, Swinburne University of Technology*

Liza's research investigates the intersections between new media, social inclusion, community formation and ethnic diversity. Liza introduced the social-political context about why identity matters, and discussed points of influence in the construction of young people's identities.

"Typically, youth is a time in which identities are forming, changing and adapting to situations and individual preferences. This process is always complex, often contradictory and characteristically entails the development of a deep seated understanding of the nature of ourselves, others and the world around us. ...Globalisation further compounds this diversity and complexity in one way, by opening up myriad further options for personal choice, while at the same time enhancing the spread of global youth cultures."

"Research findings suggest that Australian youth, as they come to grips with an increasingly globalised and media saturated world, experience identity in a more fluid, contextual and negotiated way."

"For young people today, identity is not really about being neither 'here nor there' or belonging to some kind of an 'imagined community' but instead... establishing and maintaining a place for oneself within a diverse personal network, using technology in a variety of ways, far more so than being about belonging to any particular, ascribed nameable identity group."

### **Ms Dakhylina Madkhul**

*Health and Wellbeing Officer, Noble Park English Language School*

Dakhylina spoke about some of her personal experiences as a second generation young person, including the multitude of potential labels one could use or be ascribed. In addition to her work with the Noble Park English Language School, Dakhylina is now Vice-President of Islamic Social Services Agency based in Dandenong, member of the TV program Salam Cafe, and volunteers for a Malay community radio program and the current affairs show 'National Security Files' on 3CR.

Dakhylina outlined a list of wishes for second generation young people, to positively experience and express their identities:

- Create opportunities for young people to be proud of who they are and what they are made of.
- Give them opportunities to educate others about their culture.
- Work with communities because they have something to teach the rest of Australia.
- Remind young people they are important to the wider community - they link yesterday's Australia with tomorrow's.
- Help them meet and talk with other young Australians.
- And finally, give them something to do! Sport, music, comedy, art or just a plain old park or community centre to expend energy, to create positive energy.

### **Project presentations**

#### **Victorian Arabic Social Services' Anti Racism Action Band (A.R.A.B.)**

*Kate Gillick, Artistic Co-director, and Maysa Abouzeid, young performer/comedian*

Initiated in 2004, with a Federal Government grant to help raise the self-esteem of marginalised Arab and Muslim young people in Broadmeadows, A.R.A.B has expanded to involve over 150 young people from over 30 cultural backgrounds, aged 12 to 24 in Melbourne's Northern region. The A.R.A.B group has made over 250 public and community performances.

The purpose of A.R.A.B. is:

- To tap into the vast energy, talent and hunger for artistic self expression that exists amongst youth in the region who would otherwise have limited outlets.
- To challenge and tackle the reality of low self-esteem and limited notions of "self" that can lead to narrow and destructive social behaviours and relationships.
- To provide a solid, accessible vehicle for the broadening and strengthening of ideas, collaborative artistic practices and social relationships, around notions and themes of race, culture, difference and identity.

Kate said that the thinking behind the performance-based program is to use the conflicts, complexities and challenges these young people face to turn into a powerfully expressed performance which can confront the audience with issues that perhaps need to be thought of differently or more creatively. In expanding the positive effects in people's lives through projects such as A.R.A.B, Kate noted as a constraint the importance and difficulty in maintaining a consistency and adequacy of funding sources.

### **Australian Vietnamese Women's Welfare Association's (AVWWA) Young Women's Soccer Competition**

*Hoai Anh Nguyen, Drug & Alcohol Counsellor/ Youth Worker*

Hoai Anh coordinated a women's soccer competition and discussed how the young women involved have been able to create a space away from parental expectations and demands in terms of academia, formal music and cultural tuition.

This sports program began in 2007 and aims to empower young women with a different form of expression. Local businesses have been very supportive with donations and fundraising activities. Parents are supportive of the competition now that it has been running well and regularly attend matches. There is to be a "Cultural Diversity Cup" and the teams consist mainly of Vietnamese young people.

### **Brown Roots Pacific Arts Collective's fuSIAN Pacific Hip Hop Dance Alliance, and Urban Aftershock project**

*Grace Vanilau, Coordinator, with five young performers*

The Brown Roots Pacific Arts Collective was established in 2002 in response to the need for culture-specific projects which target and support the needs of Pacific Islander young people in the Hobsons Bay area. The Collective have initiated and developed many arts projects over the past five years in collaboration with local youth from diverse Pacific backgrounds.

*fuSIAN* has been operating for the past four years with high numbers of participants and a waiting list of others who would like to join in, focusing on long-term projects which engage young people - often with older mentors among their extended family networks. The format involves weekly workshops in music and hip-hop dance. Other local cultural groups are also interested in working with Brown Roots to use similar strategies to engage young people.

Brown Roots created a joint performance project with young Africans called *Urban Aftershock*. Participants and coordinators have found that for Pacific Islander young people, integration through music and dance is a very successful way to build strong identity, self esteem and respect.

## **Australian Lebanese Welfare's (ALW) Leadership and Life Skills Project**

*Michael Mawal, Youth Services Coordinator, Australian Lebanese Welfare Inc.*

Michael spoke about his experience as a youth worker, working with the local Arabic-speaking community in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. Michael developed a program in local schools consisting of weekly sessions to discuss a range of issues of concern to the young people. This provides a space for young people to explore and challenge what stereotypes exist, where information is lacking, and assists young people to find expression and ask questions about what concerns they have.

In terms of challenges, limited funding and other resources restrict the types and length of programs for second generation young people. Michael spoke of the demanding work and lack of adequate support for bi-cultural workers, and the need for more case management services in the Northern metro region.

Michael highlighted the value of appropriate role models from the Lebanese community providing a respectful safe environment to discuss issues. Michael also stressed the importance of hearing and shaping programs around what the young people want, rather than expecting they will fit into what programs otherwise exist.

## **Evaluation and feedback**

**The final activity of the forum was to gather feedback from participants. Popular responses were:**

### **Second generation young people need...**

- Recognition of their contribution to the community
- Promotion of ways to be involved with community events and groups
- Opportunities to express their identity and share this with the broader community
- Positive role models and mentors
- Opportunities to share their needs and be listened to.

### **The priority needs in terms of support networks and services for second generation young people are...**

- To bring positive migrant youth initiatives to rural areas
- More cultural-specific workers and cultural-specific programs/ services
- More training for youth workers about second-generation young people and associated issues.

## **For more information**

For more information please contact:

Claire Bramwell  
Project Officer  
*Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues*

Ph: (03) 9349 3700

Fax: (03) 9349 3766

Email: [cbramwell@cmyi.net.au](mailto:cbramwell@cmyi.net.au)