

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

**'I'm not racist, but...': Are we effectively tackling  
racism and discrimination in schools?**

**9:30am to 12:30pm, Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2007**

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

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**Overview**

The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues' (CMYI) third State-wide Multicultural Youth Issues Network (SMYIN) Meeting of 2007 explored themes and strategies to address racism and discrimination in Victorian schools.

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

- What is currently happening in Victoria to address racism and discrimination in schools?
- What other responses/interventions/policies are needed?

The meeting was attended by over 120 people. Representatives included those from local and state government, schools, community organisations, youth and multicultural services, Police and higher education institutions (University and TAFE).

**Speakers**

Two key-note speakers presented at the forum:

**Ms Kim Webster**

Senior Program Advisor, Mental Health & Wellbeing Unit, VicHealth

Ms Webster is the project coordinator and author of *More than tolerance: Embracing diversity for health*. This research highlights the strong links between discrimination and negative health outcomes, particularly the impact of discrimination on young people's psycho-social development. *More than tolerance* highlights the need for multiple and site-specific responses to tackling discrimination, arguing that interpersonal and institutional discrimination takes different forms depending on the setting. Schools are important sites for identity negotiations, and for instigating positive interventions.

Ms Webster discussed the difference between overt and covert forms of racism. Covert forms of racism relate to the title of this forum; "*I'm not a racist but...*". The

VicHealth research suggests that acknowledging the existence of racism contributes to people's resilience against it.

Ms Webster's presentation from the SMYIN meeting is available from [www.cmyi.net.au/StatewideNetwork](http://www.cmyi.net.au/StatewideNetwork)

The *More than Tolerance* report is available online at: <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/discrimattitudes/>

### **A/Professor Fethi Mansouri**

Associate Professor and Director of the Research Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University

Dr Mansouri spoke about his research regarding students of Arabic speaking backgrounds and their experiences of racism and discrimination in two Melbourne secondary schools.

Dr Mansouri's powerpoint presentation from the SMYIN meeting is available from [www.cmyi.net.au/StatewideNetwork](http://www.cmyi.net.au/StatewideNetwork)

Findings presented by Dr Mansouri included:

- Students of Arabic speaking background expressed being treated differently by teachers (particularly through language used and being ignored).
- Students of Arabic speaking background expressed higher levels of discomfort in talking to teachers about their problems.
- Students of Arabic speaking background had poorer perceptions of the ethnic relations in their school, compared to other students.

Dr Mansouri asked "Are policies being effected and effective?"

He argued that in the school environment there is a need for

- *Curriculum challenge*
- *Teacher training*
- *Parent-school-community partnerships*

Dr Mansouri's research revealed there is a willingness to embrace change when matched with resources. "Cultural diversity and multicultural education needs to go *beyond recognition* to challenge existing structures. [We need] action to generate counter-discourses and empower... to deal with the disadvantages," he said.

Dr Mansouri's research team has developed resources including a website (which will be freely available at [www.teachingdiversity.org.au](http://www.teachingdiversity.org.au))

Dr Mansouri's paper, *Multicultural education and racism: The case of Arab-Australian students in contemporary Australia*, is available online at:

<http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/education/iej/articles/v6n4/mansouri/paper.pdf>

### **Panel discussion**

Keynote addresses were followed by a panel discussion, focused on the question of:

*What is being done, and should be done, to address discrimination and racism in Victorian schools?*

### **Panelists**

**Lynn Pickles** (*Multicultural Education, Department of Education & Early Childhood Development*)

- The current multicultural education policy in schools will be renewed under guidance from the Ministerial Advisory Committee for Languages Other than English, English as a Second Language and Multicultural Education (MACLEM) in 2008. This will include consultation with stakeholders.
- Ms Pickles said that “the Department provides extensive English support for English as a Second Language students with further additional support provided to refugees”.
- Currently a full-time ESL Program Officer is employed in each of the four metropolitan regions and a half-time co-ordinator in rural regions. From 2008, there will be full time positions in rural regions focussed half time on ESL and half time on multicultural education.  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/programs/esl/default.htm>  
ESL report for 2006:  
<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/teachlearn/student/lem/eslr2006.pdf>
- The Department supports a number of other programs operating in schools including Courage to Care and LaTrobe University’s Centre for Dialogue Project. Currently specific pages for Victoria are being developed to be included on the Making Multicultural Australia website:  
<http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/>
- The Racism No Way website is also the source of materials to support teachers in their work with students in schools:  
<http://www.racismnoway.com.au/>
- The Language and Multicultural Education Resource Centre (LMERC) in Carlton is the Department’s library/information resource centre for teachers, regional consultants and others working in education. It is home to 26,566 resources in the areas of Languages other than English (LOTE), English as a second Language (ESL), multicultural, human rights, studies of Asia, global and values education, cultural diversity and related areas.

**Kavitha Chandra-Shekeran** (*Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission*)

- The Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission administers three pieces of legislation:
  - The Equal Opportunity Act 1995
  - The Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001
  - The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- VEOHRC’s role is to:
  - Help to resolve individual and representative complaints about discrimination, sexual harassment and racial and religious vilification by offering a conciliation process that is confidential, impartial, free, and simple.
  - Provide education about equality of opportunity, racial and religious tolerance and human rights.
  - Undertake projects and activities aimed at eliminating discrimination and racial and religious intolerance.
  - Conduct research and provide legal and policy advice
- VEOHRC’s role in addressing discrimination in schools include:
  - Individuals or representatives can lodge complaints at the VEOHRC if they believe they have been discriminated against in the area of education, which includes all education settings from pre-school and tertiary education to adult education centres.

- Delivery of training and development of resources for schools and teachers on equal opportunity principles and safe schools.
- Strategic engagement and discussions with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.
- Community education sessions for young people about their rights and responsibilities.

**Dayane Stanovic** (*Western Young People's Independent Network*)

- WYPIN has been conducting workshops in communities and schools.
- WYPIN often get asked to go to schools for half-day /ad hoc events, but through workshops they've done with young people, hear often that there is a lack of supportive structures in schools for dealing with racism on regular basis.
- Leadership within schools is important. Ad hoc funding can be problematic.
- Need to consider what mechanisms and supports are there to recognize what young people are experiencing, deal with conflict, and be able to make complaints.
- WYPIN uses creative ways to engage with young people - drama, hip-hop and activities.
- See the index of resources for their report "No Space for Racism", and their website at <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~wypin/aboutwypin.htm>
- The most important components of reducing racism and discrimination in schools as:
  - Culture and leadership of school
  - Youth-led initiatives
  - School curriculum - "needs to feed right through"

**Lesley Hyde** (*Schools as Core Social Centres, Catholic Education Office*)

- The Catholic Education Office has been involved in a project called "Schools as Core Social Centres".
- This project is a joint initiative of the Catholic Education Office, VicHealth and in association with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
- The project is looking at multiple strategies from school policy frameworks down to localised interventions to make schools more welcoming, inclusive places.
- Project evaluations documents will be made available.
- Before-and-after surveys have demonstrated results – for example in reduced detentions and bullying reported. Learning outcomes are showing that students at these schools are performing at state levels or above in both literacy and numeracy.
- There need to be more workshops for educating about these issues and acknowledge racism and discrimination.
- Homework clubs are important on school-sites, especially in housing commission areas, as are computer resources in local areas.
- This is a power-point presentation with information about the Schools as Core Social Centres: <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/seminarSpeakerDocuments/VicHealth%20SACSC%2020%20Maytobin.pdf>

**Mohammed El-leissy** (*Project "R.A.C.E" Religious And Cultural Equity, CMYI*)

- Project R.A.C.E involves young Muslims using stand-up comedy skits as strategy for building leadership and self-esteem.
- Entertainment engages young people in learning.
- The young people are also being trained to talk with school students.

- We “need young people leading” – and young people are likely to have more influence with other young people.
- If you know young Muslims (17 to 25 years) who may be interested in being involved, contact CMYL.

## Discussion

After the panellists presented information about their current work and programs, other attendees asked questions of the panellists and made comments. These are some of the discussions which emerged from this:

- Curriculum suggestions
  - For example, about becoming “aware media consumers” in upper-primary school (not only upper high-school)
- Creating supportive and inclusive “learning environments”
  - Knowing what barriers exist presently for students (language, transport, technology etc) in order to cater education requirements, while improving circumstances.
- Enabling young people to inform about their needs and desires
  - Don’t presume to know, find out. Don’t be afraid, be creative.
- Engaging with parents and the community.
- Whole-of-school strategies for effective inclusion; “harmony day” can be positive but should form part of a broader strategy.

Comments made at the Meeting and feedback subsequently received indicates a strong groundswell for continued positive action. This is what participants identified as necessary enabling steps.

“**We need...**” - Voices from the sector to make it happen:

- Easier **access** to information resources - regarding funding, training, programs, services, research, publications, skills and expertise available.
  - Was suggested there be a resource developed to “cover types of services and organisations available”
  - Suggested there be a “brief analysis of curriculum; how it either works toward or fails to promote cultural diversity within the community and a better understanding of people from newly arrived/ migrant backgrounds”
- Examples of **initiatives**, case studies and best practice models.
  - “Effective strategies, actions, and recommendations for individual schools and teachers”
  - “Want presentations, to hear from schools about what's working well”
- Role **models** and mentoring opportunities for teachers, students, and school executives.
  - “We need visible role models”
- A continued **network**; forums for sharing information and learning.

"More time for sharing initiatives – We have a lot to learn from one another"

"We need another forum which looks more at developing strategies exploring what needs to be done"

"Regular series to develop clarity on policies, ideas to develop programs and experience to carry out research to inform practice"

- To develop **strategies**: *to move from dialogue to action items*.  
"Dialogue is important, action examples are more useful – Diversity in schools in action"
- To hear more from **young** people.  
"What do young people want - Where are the young people?"  
"Lets hear from young people about how their experiences of racism could be remedied"
- To **map** resources and initiatives: *What's going on and what's linked?*  
"Put together a list of resources and map initiatives"  
"Opportunities for greater linkages between initiatives – people all seem to be working independently rather than collaboratively"
- To inform and influence **policy** developments.

## **Outcomes**

CMYI will use the information gathered from this Meeting and current literature (on initiatives to reduce racism and discrimination in schools) to develop a discussion paper and series of recommendations. If you have suggestions you would like to inform this paper, please contact Claire Bramwell, CMYI Sector Development Officer on [cbramwell@cmyi.net.au](mailto:cbramwell@cmyi.net.au) or on (03) 9340 3720.

If you would like to be kept up-to-date on future SMYIN meetings, subscribe to CMYI eNews by going to [www.cmyi.net.au](http://www.cmyi.net.au). The subscribe button is on the left-hand side of the homepage.

## **Further information and resources**

Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth, *Working with Multicultural Youth: Programs, Strategies and Future Directions*:

[http://www.cmyi.net.au/uploads/downloads/cmyi/pdfs/Publications/ARACY/working\\_with\\_multicultural\\_youth\\_programs\\_october\\_2007.pdf](http://www.cmyi.net.au/uploads/downloads/cmyi/pdfs/Publications/ARACY/working_with_multicultural_youth_programs_october_2007.pdf)

Catholic Education Office and VicHealth. *Schools as Core Social Centres* project:

<http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/seminarSpeakerDocuments/VicHealth%20SACSC%2020%20Maytobin.pdf>

Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, *Pathways and Pitfalls: The journey of refugee young people in and around the education system in Greater Dandenong*:

[http://www.cmyi.net.au/uploads/downloads/cmyi/pdfs/Publications/Sellen\\_ESLreport.pdf](http://www.cmyi.net.au/uploads/downloads/cmyi/pdfs/Publications/Sellen_ESLreport.pdf)

Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, *Opening the school gate: Engaging CLD families in schools*:

<http://www.cmyi.net.au/uploads/downloads/cmyi/pdfs/Publications/OpeningtheSchoolGate.pdf>

Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, *A Three-Way Partnership?: Exploring the Experiences of CLD families in Schools*:  
[http://www.cmyi.net.au/uploads/downloads/cmyi/pdfs/Publications/Research/Three\\_Way\\_Partnership.pdf](http://www.cmyi.net.au/uploads/downloads/cmyi/pdfs/Publications/Research/Three_Way_Partnership.pdf)

Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues. *Multicultural Youth Pledge*: [www.cmyi.net.au](http://www.cmyi.net.au)

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, :  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/programs/esl/refugees/default.htm>

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. *Multicultural Programs* links: <http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/lem/multi/index.htm>

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. *Multicultural policy for Victorian Schools*:  
<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/teachlearn/student/lem/Mpolicy.pdf>

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. *Courage to Care* project: <http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/lem/multi/mcourage.htm>

Department of Education and Training, *Racism No Way: Anti-racism education for Australian schools*: <http://www.racismnoway.com.au/>

Department of Education, Science and Training, *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century*:  
[http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school\\_education/policy\\_initiatives\\_reviews/national\\_goals\\_for\\_schooling\\_in\\_the\\_twenty\\_first\\_century.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/policy_initiatives_reviews/national_goals_for_schooling_in_the_twenty_first_century.htm)

Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *Resource Gateway: for teachers working with refugee young people in Victoria: (HAS MANY LINKS)*  
[http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/settle/\\_pdf/resource-gateway.pdf](http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/settle/_pdf/resource-gateway.pdf)

Foundation House (The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture), "*Publications*" (including *School's In for Refugees: Whole-School Guide to Refugee Readiness and Classroom Kaleidoscope: A program to facilitate connectedness and well-being in the culturally diverse classroom*): <http://www.foundationhouse.org.au/schools.php>  
<http://www.survivorsvic.org.au/publications.php>

(This newsletter also has information about Foundation House programs including *Beaut Buddies* program:  
[http://www.foundationhouse.org.au/pdfdocs/Dec2006\\_SchoolsInNewsletter.pdf](http://www.foundationhouse.org.au/pdfdocs/Dec2006_SchoolsInNewsletter.pdf))

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Racial discrimination links* (site includes *Racial Discrimination Act*, and *Unlocking Doors* report):  
[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial\\_discrimination/index.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/racial_discrimination/index.html)

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Youth Challenge: Teaching human rights and responsibilities*:  
<http://www.hreoc.gov.au/education/youthchallenge/index.html>

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Information for Students*:  
[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/info\\_for\\_students/index.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/info_for_students/index.html)

LaTrobe and Melbourne Universities' *Enhancing Relationships in School Communities* project: <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/psy/research/eris/>

Newly Arrived Youth Support Service, *Publications and Resources*:  
<http://www.cmyi.net.au/NAYSS/PublicationsandResources>

Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation - *Schooling for Tomorrow*:

[http://www.oecd.org/document/6/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_34859095\\_31420934\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/6/0,3343,en_2649_34859095_31420934_1_1_1_1,00.html)

Oxfam, *Refugee Realities* "simulation" at GasWorks Feb-Mar 2008:

<http://www2.oxfam.org.au/refugee-realities/refugee-realities-where.html>

School Focused Youth Services, *CALD Resources*:

<http://www.sfys.infoxchange.net.au/resources/public/CALD.shtml>

Western Young Persons' Independent Network, *No Space for Racism*

[http://home.vicnet.net.au/~wypin/nospaceforracism\\_lowres.pdf](http://home.vicnet.net.au/~wypin/nospaceforracism_lowres.pdf)

Western Young Persons' Independent Network, *Beat Racism!*

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~wypin/beatracism.htm>

VicHealth, *Building bridges grants scheme: Together we do better*,

<http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Content.aspx?topicID=282>

VicHealth, *More than tolerance: Embracing diversity for health*:

<http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/discrimattitudes/>