



**blacktown mrc**  
connecting cultures. building community.

# ANNUAL REPORT 2006/07



# CONTENTS

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT .....	2
MANAGER'S REPORT .....	3
FAMILIES .....	4
AGED CARE .....	7
PARTNERSHIPS.....	9
EDUCATION AND TRAINING .....	11
COMMUNITY .....	12
YOUTH.....	14
TEAM.....	16

Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) is an independent, community based organisation dedicated to empowering people from cultural diverse backgrounds and promoting a culturally rich and diverse Australia operating from a base in Blacktown. We serve people at our centre, through people's homes and from a number of strategic bases around Sydney.



# CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT



It is with much pleasure that I present to you the Annual Report for Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre's 22nd year of service – 2006-2007.

It has been a year of ongoing growth of staff, development of programs, positive feedback of projects undertaken and meeting challenges underwritten by good sound management.

I am pleased to advise that Blacktown MRC has a large and growing Cultural Linguistics Diverse Aged Care Service (CALDACS). Its expertise in the field of aged care provision to culturally and linguistically diverse communities has not gone unnoticed within the industry. It is regarded as a model of "Best Practice" in aged care to diverse communities.

Our CALDACS team has been granted a further 20 packages of care to be delivered within the aged migrant community.

Our work with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) [previously known as DIMA Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs] is ongoing. One such project is Australian United Refugee Youth Association (AURYA). It continues to enhance

the voice of refugee youth in Western Sydney.

The launch of last year's DVD and Discussion Guide "Journey Towards Family Harmony" is acknowledged as a great success. It is now widely used throughout the community sector who considers it a valuable tool in addressing and educating on Domestic Violence and Child Protection in many communities. I would also like to acknowledge the work that was put into the 'Liberians in NSW Report' which has been enthusiastically accepted by the community service providers.

We have continued our involvement in major programs to ensure that children and young adults are fully supported and that issues of inter generational communication are adequately addressed.

I would like to thank and acknowledge the Centre's funding bodies for their continued support for the important work undertaken

The Commonwealth Department of Immigration and citizenship, Attorney General's Department, Department of Community Services, Department of Health and Ageing, Families NSW and Family and Community Services Indigenous Affairs and the NSW Ministry of Arts.

Management is mindful of the ongoing local support of Blacktown City, Baulkham Hills Shire and Penrith Councils, Rooty Hill RSL, Blacktown RSL and Baulkham Hills RSL. Further, our relationship with Blacktown Police is highly valued. Collectively and individually these relationships are of major importance in the

performance of our work.

Change for its own sake is not good but change that is planned and thought through is life giving to an organization such as ours. This forethought is evidenced in the preparation that previous manager Irene Ross put into place for a smooth transition to the next phase. The incoming manager Susan Vogels is equal to the task and has demonstrated her resourcefulness, skills and commitment to a healthy future for Blacktown MRC.

On that thought this will be my last year of service as a member of the Management Committee as Chairperson. My four year term is finishing at this Annual General Meeting and I would like to thank all my fellow members of this management committee for the investment of their time and experience in governance, the meetings attended and the discussion with Government officers and their involvement in official visits. For me the experience has made me more aware of community needs, the work that goes into it to meet these needs, and the commitment, determination and skills required to maintain quality of care.

In conclusion on behalf of my Management colleagues I would like to thank the staff and the volunteers of Blacktown MRC for outstanding dedication and commitment they demonstrate in their work

*Balraj Sangha*

**Chairperson**



# MANAGER'S REPORT



The changeover time from one manager to the next is always a crucial time for any organisation. I am grateful for the time spent with Irene Ross over the past five years, She has been for me always generous with her time and imparting knowledge and wisdom. Never the less this 22nd year of service of the Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre has for me been a time of reflection, evaluation, learning and growth.

Consolidation of where we have been and exploration of new ventures has been a strong feature of this past year. We have continued with our strong history of sharing knowledge and expertise with visiting delegations. Mr Cochatel from the UNHCR met with refugees, their

families and staff of Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre. We have hosted two delegations from mainland China and shared with the delegates our expertise in engaging people from many cultures.

The Chinese seniors group also met with the delegates and spent time sharing and reminiscing on their experiences.

Employment has continued to be a strong focus with many connections being made between Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Department of Education and Training, service providers such as job networks and most importantly the job seekers themselves. TAFE courses both from Blacktown and Nirimba have been strong features in the service provision and many clients have started on new careers and businesses of their own. The strong partnership developed with Blacktown City Council is a personally gratifying feature and we hope to develop a similar partnership with the local clubs and businesses.

Our expertise in providing

culturally appropriate care to the Community Aged Care recipients has been recognised and we have expanded into the provision of Home and Community Care for aged and disabled on a state funded level. The smooth transition of managers has been made possible by the enthusiasm of the multi talented team who have worked tirelessly to ensure a quality service has continued to be delivered during my settling in time. There will be changes to Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre during the coming year which is natural and healthy. We look forward to launching the development in our service provision and identity.

I would like especially to thank all who have welcomed and supported me in my new role as Centre Manager.

*Susan Vogels*

**Manager**



# FAMILIES

During 2006 - 2007 the Families First Project funded by the Department of Community Services (DOCS) continued to provide culturally appropriate support for families from Sudan, Afghanistan, Liberia, Pakistan and the Indian sub-continent communities. The client groups assisted in these projects are newly arrived refugees, humanitarian entrants and temporary protection visa holders. The main aim of the projects is to assist parents to raise healthy and happy children.

## Linking – working with services

Blacktown Community Health Centre and Blacktown Hospital offered a range of services including Antenatal clinics, Community Health Parent and Children Programs. As well as liaising with community nurses, early childhood nurses and home visiting.

All the participating women from the targeted communities benefited from being referred directly to Blacktown Community Health Centre and Blacktown Hospital for a range of services. The women are now aware of the health services and are confident in using them without referrals as well as increasing their knowledge on immunisation.

## Homework Support, Reading and Craft Activities for Children

The reading and craft group encouraged interaction between parents and their children in a fun environment while promoting literacy and gaining literacy skills. They also practiced developing their social skills by meeting and making friends in a creative environment. The children learn to share toys with other children from Afghanistan, India, Pakistan and Sudan.

## Direct Access Service Tours

Service tours have been conducted for women to visit Hospitals, Community Health Centres, Early Childhood Centres, local libraries, Children Services, RTA and RSL Clubs. Women have gained confidence from direct access by learning about the services available in the local area. As the majority of women don't drive or have access to a car, the group either walk or use train/bus to get to the services. Through this, women also learn how to use public transport. Furthermore, many of the clients who had not been able to find relevant services due to being new arrivals with limited language skills have benefited by these tours.

## Information sessions

These information sessions were designed to meet the needs of the client's. The following topics were presented: parenting, child behavior, child protection issues, reading with children, homework support, transition to school, and bullying at school.

Also, information was provided on women's health and general wellbeing, family planning, men's health, mental health, dealing with gambling, drug addiction, body image, safety in the home and healthy food and nutrition.

Women who had torture and trauma related issues were referred to STARTTS and continue to benefit from accessing their services.

## Education Programs

Cumberland Women's Health Centre applied for funds from Holroyd City Council to run discussion groups using the Journey to Family Harmony DVD

The Journey Towards Family Harmony DVD and the Step By Step Guide to Discussion booklet has been distributed to trained volunteers from :

- Afghani, Sudanese and Tamil communities
- non- government family support services





- community organisations,
- bilingual workers
- settlement service workers,
- community associations, consortiums,
- government departments working with families,
- counselling services for families,
- community resource centres
- local libraries and local TAFE colleges

### Families First Men's Support group

A significant initiative of the Families First Project is the assistance provided to men attending support groups which has allowed them to meet in a friendly social environment to share experiences, discuss issues and gain information. This program was enlarged with the addition of the Sudanese and Liberian Men's Groups. As part of the Perinatal Program the existing Afghan Men's Support Group runs in conjunction with the Early Intervention Program.

### Perinatal Playgroups

A Multicultural Playgroup is being successfully run. This project was initially part of the Children First Mobile Playgroup Pilot Program. The group is open to all women who wish to participate. Women and children from many countries like Sudan, Liberia, Sri Lanka, India, Philipinnes, New Zealand, Fiji and others attend.

### Antenatal classes

Antenatal classes have also been provided for women from the Sudanese community. These classes are run for six weeks, providing three sessions a year. At the end of every term, the women visit the Birthing Centre at the hospital.

### Resource Development

A lullaby CD for the African community is being developed with a few commonly used African languages so that mothers are able to sing lullaby's to the babies. This will enable them to recapture the tradition of singing lullaby's to their babies which has been lost during the time spent in refugee camps. This CD can also help the child develop their native language. This project is being done in partnership with Children's First.

### Home Security and Personal Safety

The Blacktown Police, the Ethnic Communities Liaison Officer and Blacktown MRC Families NSW held a information session on home security and personal safety for indian subcontinent communities. The Aim of the session was to inform the community on safty inside and outside the home. The second part of the session was about domestic violence and child protection.

Police provided the presentations and and information on safety,while Blacktown MRC workers were on hand to assist the police and interact with the community.

MRC workers organised childcare,flyers, distribution of flyers and morning tea.

### Outings

A number of outings where organised giving an excellent opportunity for women to meet other womens groups.

- Reptile show – All the groups were taken by train to a show at the Seven Hills Shopping Center. The show was designed to create awareness of all the common type of snakes in Australia. An



excursion to the Temple of The Bahai Faith and lunch at Dee Why Beach – A visit to the temple was organised to gain information of other faiths. This was a partnership project done with the New Estates Project in the Hills area.

- Women and Children visited the Art Gallery in Blacktown to view the Indian Art show. This was a new experience for the mothers.

- Some of the groups were able to visit the Sydney Aquarium. A comment from one of the women on the excursion “thank you so much because it’s the first time in one and a half years in Australia that I can say that I am happy.”

**Groups**

The reading and craft groups are designed to encourage interaction between parents and their children in a fun environment while promoting and gaining literacy skills. There were also specific craft groups for nursery decoration designed for Afghan, Pakistani and Sudanese women to express their creativity. During these activities, children are encouraged to share toys and craft tasks with other children. These groups also help to break isolation for the new settlers whilst making friends in a creative environment.

**Fun Runs, Painting, Library Reading, Story Telling**

Activities were designed in a fun way for getting the children to exercise, learning to express their creativeness, to recognise different colours and the way colours relate, also to benefitting from reading and listening. These activities helped to develop their communications skills. Afghan, Pakistani, Liberian and Sudanese children participated in these activities.

**Birthday Celebrations**

Birthday celebrations are a simple yet effective way of letting children feel special and increase their self esteem. Within the Afghan and Pakistani groups a planned program of celebrating each mother and child’s birthday was maintained.

**International Womens Day**

International Womens Day Celebration was a great success where all the women and the children enjoyed a day full of activities which included traditional dancing, delicious food and lots of laughter.

**Workshops**

“The Family Talk” workshop was organised for the Afghan families to share information and ideas regarding children’s studies and the health of the children.

A “Children’s Workshop” was organised for Liberian children to learn safety skills at home, on the streets and at schools for their own safety.

**Families Week**

The theme of the event was “Time Together”.

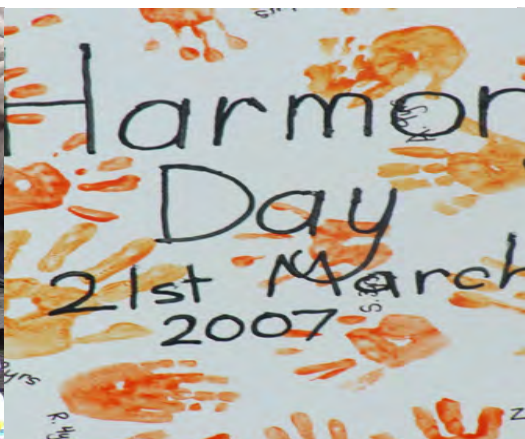
A combined celebration was run by both the Early Intervention and the Perinatal Project in both Blacktown and Mt Druitt areas. This gathering was an opportunity for people from different cultural backgrounds to come together and celebrate.

Some of the activities were sari dressing by the Indian group, and

henna painting demonstration by the Sudanese group. The wonderful food was prepared by the Afghani women.

**Little Foot Prints**

A consultation was held with the Indian community who reside in Blacktown and Baulkham Hills LGAs. The aim of this session was to discuss issues faced by migrant parents. Dinner and entertainment was enjoyed by all.





# AGED CARE

Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre has an important role in providing assistance to older migrants from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse background living in five Local Government Areas: Blacktown, Baulkham Hills, Auburn, Holroyd and Parramatta.

The CALDACS staff are committed to providing “Best Practise” aged care services throughout all its operations. The 2006 report from the Department of Health and Ageing stated that our service is comprehensively covering all aspects of quality service that the Department was assessing and that CALDACS was meeting and exceeding the requirements of the Aged Care Standards. In 2007 Aged Care Approval Round, Blacktown MRC was awarded funding for 20 more Community Aged Care Packages bringing the total to 120 packages.

The major success in 2007 for CALDACS has been the approval for Home and Community Care (HACC) Personal Care Assistance Program targeting CALD communities. This service will assist CALD communities even more by meeting an ever increasing need for holistic support of clients within a community frame work. Anyone can make a referral to the HACC Personal Care Service, however to be eligible to receive the HACC Personal Care Service clients

should be living in the Blacktown LGA, from a culturally and linguistically diverse background, and either frail aged, or over 18 years with a disability. Services provided through the HACC Personal Care Service include; showering, sponging or bathing, monitoring self medication, shaving, hair care and grooming, dressing and undressing, toileting, basic nail care including referral to podiatry services, mobility, prescribed exercises, and therapy programs. Services are provided by BMRCs trained bilingual care workers and are delivered in a flexible way with respect for the individual’s cultural and care needs.

Another success of the program was the establishment of partnership with the local Pharmacy and the donation of the digital camera which was something that we really value and appreciate.

Another success of the program was the establishment of partnership The program Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Community All Care Services (CALDACS) has an established expertise which makes it generally recognised as one of the foremost aged care service providers in Western Sydney.

Throughout the year we observed significant interest expressed by CALDACS staff in

our mentoring and supervision programs. With CALDACS care workers covering over 20 community languages, the scope of the project has enabled Blacktown MRC to provide employment to a number of people who have been having difficulty in obtaining positions otherwise.

In 2006/2007 a number of new projects were secured by the CALDACS Program, including expanding our External Service where now we offer service to 8 other service providers. This meets a significant need in Western Sydney as few service providers have both well trained and bilingual care workers. Within this project we currently have 25 clients. This is turning into being a great service for people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities and benefit to other service providers as the comfort of having care workers speaking the same language is greatly appreciated.

Internally the Aged Care Service has welcomed new staff from various backgrounds, speaking: Spanish, Croatian, Arabic and Hindi to satisfy needs in those communities. Throughout the year CALDACS has assisted a number of clients in a smooth transition into the residential care facilities. The project also made considerable use of the Care





Service Agreement translated into other languages and recorded on tapes so the clients who are seeking that service were able to understand and to give informed consent.

Within Blacktown MRC the CALDACS internal office procedures are continually reviewed as it is quite an achievement to coordinate rosters, care workers and services. There is an ongoing review of policies and procedures to ensure that they reflect the particular needs of CALDACS clients and staff. Considerable work is done in terms of developing new and enlarging current resources by purchasing DVD's, videos, books and other materials. Continuous improvement of the Library is also in process of being organised and updated and all forms are being made as user friendly as possible.

To achieve the high standards expected in the CALDACS, training and ongoing support is provided to all workers throughout the year. The majority of our care workers either have obtained or are in the process of obtaining their Certificate III in Home and Community Care. We constantly encourage staff to acquire new skills and give them opportunities to use them. The Training Program for staff at Blacktown MRC has included guest speakers from Vision Australia, Enjo, Continence Foundation Unit and Diabetes Centre. The Webster Pack Company Australian founder Mr Gerade Stevens has run training on medication management.

The CALDACS staff visited White Lady Funeral site for an information session and training. The staff assisted and encouraged clients and families to attend events during the "Dementia Awareness" week. The office



staff from CALDACS program attended some information sessions and courses assisting with establishment of HACC Personal Care program.

Different events were organised by CALDACS project this year. The clients participated in a luncheon at Meals on Wheels for "Seniors Week" and staff organised regular clients "Get together" groups at the office where clients can meet, play games, talk and enjoy good food.

The end of the year 2006 staff and clients celebrated on the "Nepean Belle" cruise.

These events are not only greatly enjoyed by the clients but provide a team building events for case workers.

# PARTNERSHIPS

## Information Sessions & Activities

A series of workshops and information sessions were organised throughout the year including career pathways workshops, a legal rights and responsibilities information session and a beach safety session attended with Blacktown Youth Services Association (BYSA) through the “On the Same Wave” Program funded by DIAC.

The Humanitarian Youth Project also participated in several partnership projects with the Living Skills Project Worker at BMRC in delivering information and activities for young people in Blacktown including several Budgeting and Financial Planning workshops, Youth Health workshops held in partnership with Western Area Adolescent Team (WAAT), two Introduction to Local Services in Blacktown LGA and a youth excursion where almost sixty young people attended a Sydney Harbor Cruise funded by STARTTS, and a youth picnic.

The Youth Project was also pleased to participate in a variety of youth events in Blacktown organised by youth services including International Women’s Day Event, International Youth Day Celebrations and Youth Week ‘The Burbs’ Festival.

## Football in the Park Soccer Program

The Saturday Football in the Park project is a partnership project between Football United, University of NSW, Blacktown PCYC, and BMRC’s Humanitarian Youth and African Communities Harmony Projects. The program relies on volunteer coaches from



UNSW and Sydney University to deliver soccer training sessions at Campbell Park in Blacktown. The program is attended by approximately thirty-five young people per week, and we all look forward to new expansions to the program in 2007/2008.

## Film Projects

A partnership with Owen Elliott Media saw several film projects undertaken including a short documentary for Refugee Week and a film clip for local Hip Hop performance group SCRIM. The film clip was shown on ABC’s *rage* and also is featured on YouTube receiving over 1000 hits to date.

## Community Cultural Music Program

A women’s writing group was formed through the Maronite Catholic Church in Mt Druitt. The group underwent ten weeks of training in writing their life stories. The workshops were supported by TAFE

The Outreach project focussed on computer skills, adding to the women’s ability to sustain their new found interest after the course concluded. Most of the women

involved had never written before but expressed a strong desire to continue to write at the conclusion of the course.

Two individuals Cola Biem Bulkuie and Mohammed Hussein Hasabrabo also received one on one training and support with writing and film development. As a result Cola Bilkuie received a publication deal with Pan MacMillan to write his life story. Cola has no experience in writing and was assisted by Phillip Ross who ghost wrote on his behalf.

As a result Cola is learning the skills involved in story telling along the way. He is also gaining invaluable experience in dealing with the publishing industry.

Mohammed Hasabrabo gained entry into a supported documentary and multi media training opportunity with Curious Works – an arts organization based in Ultimo. He will produce his own documentary of his experience in Western Sydney. This will focus specifically on his experience of the local environment from a refugee perspective.

The documentary will be released by the end of the year.



Both Cola and Mohammed originate from Sudan and these opportunities have provided them with a platform to tell not only their own stories but give Australians a unique glimpse into the cultural landscape of Sudan

### Forum on Education and Employment

A forum was held at Blacktown MRC on Education and Employment for unemployed African men.

The aim of the forum was to provide information to men of all ages from diverse African backgrounds who were considering undertaking further vocational studies or were looking for work and need additional knowledge about the Australian workforce. More than 50 African people attended.

Services that provided information were :

- Blacktown Police
- Salvation Army Employment plus.
- Boystown Employment
- Blacktown TAFE (WSI)
- Macquarie College (AMEP)
- Blacktown MRC.

### Job Day for African Communities November 2006 Alpha Hall

A successful Job Day seminar was held at Alpha Park Hall, Blacktown. The Job Day was specifically designed to match job seekers from African backgrounds with appropriate and available positions. More than seven Job

Network providers attended with current jobs vacancies. 522 jobseekers from African backgrounds attended and 27 positive referrals occurred.

The Service Providers who participated were: Salvation Army Employment Plus, Boystown Employment, Global Skills Employment, Blacktown Work Directions, ICP Employment, Blacktown Work Thru Solutions, Department of Education & Working Relations (DEWR), Blacktown & Mt Druitt Centrelink, Blacktown TAFE, Macquarie College and Western Sydney Area Health.

### Kids Gym

Kids Gym began for children in Mt Druitt in partnership with the Mt Druitt Community Health Centre. Afghan, Indian and Pakistani children will be attending the gym, every week for two hours.

### Blacktown & Mt Druitt Migrant Interagency

The Migrant Interagency is a dynamic and effective network composed of over one hundred government, non-government organisations and community groups in the Blacktown area.

The Migrant Interagency's aim is to identify gaps, avoid duplication and enhance service delivery. This network is an effective tool to promote and advocate for the CALD communities, newly arrived and refugees. The number of

interagency memberships have increased from 130 to 150.

The supportive environment at the Migrant Interagency meetings gives an opportunity to generate stronger partnerships and networks

### Family Harmony Project

The project has been of great value to the community, educating families about issues that are of concern, while improving their knowledge of local services and laws. Many of these workshops changed the lives of the people that took part.

It is clear through this projects achievements the multitude of benefits to the community. Initial ground work was very thorough, consulting with Ethiopian, Somalia, Assyrian, Sudanese, Tamil, Sierra Leonean, Liberian and Iraqi communities took part in establishing the issues concerning their communities. This part of the project had a significant effect on the CALD community, as it enabled them to feel valued and be involved in the Australian way of life. Furthermore, it empowered them to help themselves and their children in the process of settlement. Through this process, issues were addressed that were of great concern for all parents.

The Project has established many beneficial and valuable partnerships:

- United Care Burnside
- S.T.A.R.T.T.S
- Blacktown Women and Girls Services
- Auburn and Parramatta MRC
- TAFE
- Cultural Equity Unit Penrith
- Sydney Area Health
- Multicultural Health
- Families N.S.W



# Education and Training

## Education

As anyone who visits the Blacktown MRC will know it is an incredibly busy place. With clients and children in the foyer, classes happening in rooms and visitors, teachers and service providers – a real hive of activity.

Education, information share, goal orientation and support are key functions that have been organized at and through Blacktown MRC over the past year:-

## Basic Everyday Living

“Living Skills” program targets refugee young people at risk mainly from Southern Sudan and assists them in acquiring key life skills aimed at enhancing self-sufficiency for independent living.

Topics covered :-

- Introduction to local services with young people from Evans High. many local services of interest to youth were visited.
- Cooking and Nutrition classes at Mitchell and Evans High.
- Budgetting and Saving at Blacktown MRC.
- Orientation trips.
- Health

This program has been so successful that it is in high demand at many schools in the Blacktown LGA

## Information and support delivered:

- English classes with volunteer teachers
- Health Program at Toongabbie
- Trip to Blue Mountains
- Computer classes through Blacktown Nirimba and Kingwood TAFEs
- Information on positive thinking
- Harmony among Diverse Cultures
- Safety and First Aid course which covered OH&S and First Aid.

## Capacity Building

Two Tamil clients have benefited so much from the programs they have now joined the Volunteer Mentoring Program. We partnered with African Womens Advocacy Unit whereby graduates of the training received valuable skills and experience in representation, an increase in their knowledge of human rights, an understanding of the Australian system, and an opportunity to access this system.

## International Womens Day

Focused on career pathways and employment for women. The careers advisers from Blacktown TAFE presented study pathways to the women and discussion and question time was very fruitful. This day was followed by a demonstration of cultural dress partnership with Women's health at Work through WSAHS. Many of the people attending these sessions followed on to the Enrolled Nursing preparation Course. We recently witnessed the utter excitement when one of these women were given an interview for a position at the



local hospital.

- Clients were assisted in their Literacy and Numeracy skills so that were able to meet the standards required by TAFE.
- Regular sewing classes are held and it is uplifting to see the pride the women have in wearing the clothes that they have made themselves.

## Community Radio Training Programs

Volunteers are now presenting program information for Liberian and Sierra Leone communities after attending training sessions organised by Blacktown MRC.



# COMMUNITY

## **African Communities Harmony Project**

The Project has entered its second year since it started in March 2006. The program is funded by the Federal Department of Attorney General under the National Crime Prevention Program. Through this project we have been able to support local organizations to engage and work effectively with young African people by providing cultural, cross-cultural sporting and recreational activities to promote behavioral, attitudinal and lifestyle changes in youth. Parallel to these activities we have been able to establish and develop programs where gaps have been identified. Particularly focusing on young men whose behavior indicates they are vulnerable and at risk

One of the most important objectives of the project is the promotion of harmony by building a reciprocal awareness and appreciation of the African culture that African migrants bring with them and that of the mainstream Australian culture. The African communities have embraced the activities of this project and there has been good attendance at meetings and consultations.

Partnership with UNSW, Blacktown City Council, PCYC has established a soccer program for young people aged between 6 and 15 in Blacktown. Ongoing promotional materials have been also disseminated through radios, community meetings and youth gatherings.

## **Employment**

The project focused on providing and disseminating information on education and employment to men and youth from African backgrounds, especially those who are not getting access to appropriate information on courses or do not have the knowledge and skills required to apply for a permanent job in Australia.

## **Cultural Festivals**

Blacktown City Council had previously run the World West Music Festival and the Links Festival as separate events. This year it was held as one event under the Links banner.

Performers included singers, drummers, dancers etc with the highlight being the Liberian Men's Choir known as Gospel Favor. Over 200 people attended the event which was complimented by the showing of a short documentary produced by the Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre celebrating Refugee Week. The choir also featured in the documentary.

## **Liberians in NSW**

An in-depth research was held into the demographics of the Liberian Community. Many interviews and surveys resulted in the production of the snapshot. It is an effective tool for those working with the Liberian Community as it gives a basic history of Liberia as well as information on the community throughout NSW. The report is available through Blacktown MRC...

## **Information Sessions for newly arrived students**

Information sessions have been, organised for new migrants and refugees at the beginning of each school term at Macquarie community College (AMEP). The information is given to students in: Arabic, Dinka, Chinese, Farsi and Dari. Students who do not speak these languages are provided with information sessions in advanced and low English levels.

## **New Estates Project**

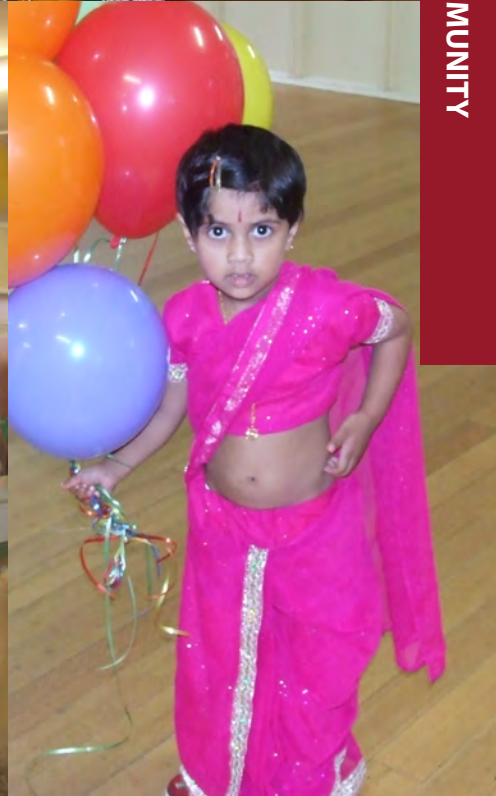
The New Estates project involved the areas of Stanhope Gardens, Parklea, Glenwood, and Kellyville Ridge in the Blacktown Local Government Area. The aims of this project were to break isolation among the elderly people by encouraging CALD communities to participate in the broader community.

Four outings and two events were developed to encourage and develop participation, a sense of belonging, motivation and friendship among the elderly people.

The first event was so successful that more than 100 people arrived and a social group started at Glenwood Neighborhood Centre.

The second event was called Festival of Colours where people were encouraged to wear their traditional clothes and seven local performers were invited. On that day 150 attended, the whole event was a great success.





COMMUNITY



# YOUTH

## Education Programs

Blacktown MRC was able to offer a diverse range of educational programs for refugee young people including the continuation of past programs such as Homework Support in Blacktown and St Mary's and Beginners Computer Workshops. New programs were also established including intermediate computer courses in the school holidays and the introduction of Writing Workshops covering topics such as Poetry Writing and Analysis, Understanding Media, Essay Writing Skills and Speech Writing. There were over one hundred and thirty students who enrolled in these education programs and workshops. The purpose of these programs is to equip refugee young people as they make the transition from Intensive English Centers to mainstream high schools.

## Information Sessions

There were many information sessions held over the last year that empowered the youth to make informed decisions. Self-esteem and Value

This was a session for young women. It included exercises on goal formation and attainment and an open discussion about self-esteem and self value.

## Road Safety

The purpose of the meeting was to educate the youth on road safety, responsibility of drivers and the process in becoming a driver. This forum was also used to introduce the upcoming plans for the police to the public.

## Self-esteem and Value

This was a session for young women. It included exercises on goal formation and attainment and an open discussion about self-esteem and self value.

## Budgetting Sessions at Evans IEC

Facilitated budgetting sessions based on MoneyMinded training. Topics such as credit, spending leaks and key terms and concepts were covered in the two part workshop.

## Meet and Greet Program

As part of the outreach program in Penrith the youth worker visits local schools and TAFE to talk to students about the services offered by BMRC in Penrith and Blacktown LGAs. Education institutions include Kingswood High School, Emmasus College, Penrith TAFE, Nagle College, Evans IEC, Blacktown Girls High School and Doonside Technology High School.

## Sexual Health

This was delivered in partnership with Western Area Adolescent Team WAAT and BMRC workers. A culturally appropriate information flyer is to be produced for health services.

## Australian Law

Information was provided to youths by

- Blacktown Police on their rights under Australian law, road safety and procedures for contacting police.
- Mt Druitt Community Legal Centre

## Consultations and Youth Forums

This year the Humanitarian Youth Project provided opportunities for young people to not only give the project valuable feedback in order to set the direction of the youth project for the year through consultations but also gave young people a platform in which to advocate on their behalf through youth forums. There were three consultations held this year including a Liberian Youth Consultation, an Afghan Young Women's Consultation and an African Young People's Consultation - the results of which were published in a Report on African Young Peoples Access and Key Issues in Blacktown LGA. Special thanks goes to all the staff





from the Small and Emerging Communities Project who assisted in the development and facilitation of these consultations.

The Youth Project also celebrated Harmony Day through a Youth Forum between police and young people in Blacktown in partnership with BYSA. The forum was held at BYSA's drop-in program at PCYC and began with an informal basketball game with both police and young people playing in mixed teams, followed by a BBQ and then an open forum between police and young people. This was a great chance for participants to openly and frankly discuss youth issues.

In the spirit of the Refugee Week theme 'Voices of Young People', a digital presentation was developed. This was based on the thoughts and opinions of the participants in both the BMRC Refugee Week Celebrations held at Bowman Hall in partnership with Blacktown City Council and a youth celebration held at BMRC in partnerships with BYSA

### Outreach Service

The Humanitarian Youth Worker currently provides outreach services in Penrith LGA at Nepean Migrant Access (NMA) and St Mary's and Family Planning The Warehouse in Penrith. The Youth Worker provides casework services and capacity building projects including a Homework Support Program at St Mary's Community Centre, an Introduction to Local Services



Tour in Penrith and school holiday programs including a drumming workshop, Aboriginal Art and cultural exchange workshop and Bollywood Dancing Session. In October 2006 there was also training to over fifty community, government and education workers on the needs of the Sudanese community. Projects are delivered in partnership with services in the area including NMA, Family Planning – The Warehouse, Sydney West Area Health Service (SWAHS), Penrith Women's Health and

Special thanks go to all who assisted in these projects, particularly all the volunteers who kindly gave up their time, the teachers from Evans IEC who supported the programs, and Blacktown RSL who kindly funded the various computer and literacy programs through the Community Development Support and Expenditure Scheme. Special thanks also goes to Charlotte Clutterbuck who not only taught the writing workshops but also provided separate HSC English Preparation Tuition for the Year 12 students in the homework program.





# TEAM

## Management Committee

### Chairperson

Balraj Sangha

### Vice Chairperson

Adib Yousif Elgamal

### Treasurer

Lalli Sethuram

### Secretary

Sajana Nand

### Board Members

Bernard Suwa

Lalli Sethuram

Ola Sunmola

Luz Tiqui

Lucky Singh

Hemant Kumar

Rauf Joyan

## Staff Centre Management

### & Marketing Team

#### Centre Manager

Irene Ross(p/t),E.Gerencer(p/t)  
P.Legzdins(p/t),Susan Vogels

#### Admin & Access Manager

Maria Popal -Locum  
Nikolayka Bentcheva

#### Customer Service Officer

Margaret Ibrahim -Locum  
Maria Popal

#### Financial Manager

Donna Robertson

#### Accountant

Marilena Rubbo

## Local Service Team

### Team Leader & Generalist Caseworker

Bernadette Agyepong



### Community Development Officer/African Community Safety Project Officer

Janette Sauterel

### Cultural Arts Officer

Phillip Ross

### Family Harmony Project Coordinator

Alex Farkas/Maree Fayne

### African Community Safety Project Officer

Paul Ochieng

### New Estate Worker

Rahile Cakir

### Family Harmony Project Officer Generalist Caseworker

Bintu Kamara

## Emerging Communities Services Team

### Team Leader & Coordinator

Bernadette Agyepong

### Living Skills Project Officer Sudanese Community Worker

Jane Aboka

### Sudanese Community Workers

Edward Massimino  
Basim Angollo

### Sierra Leone Community Worker:

George Mansaray

### Tamil Community Worker

Shanthi Sithamparanathan

### Liberian Community Workers

Yatta Foly Layweh  
Varmah Dulleh

### **Humanitarian Youth Worker**

Catherine Johnson

### **Aged Care Services Team**

#### **Team Leader**

Ania Uszynski

#### **Project Officers**

Farah Haq

Janet Hunter

Rahile Cakir

#### **Admin Assistant:**

Hasangie De

#### **Care Workers:**

Amira Simon

Anita Grbac

Angela Pena

Aurora Leano

Cecile Nicola

Desy Abad

Elisabeth Gayst

Halina Malikowski

Hamidan Bibi Ali

Irma Berbis

Iwona Minda

Khalid Elobiad Ahmed

Krystyna Kochanski

Lilian Amuron

Lorna Camilleri

Mahbubeh Mahmoudi

Margaret Raphael

Margaret Siotor

Maria Arrastia

Marjan Fakhar

Maryanne Aquilina

Mary Barsoum

Mimma Mazzullo

Rogia Obiah Ali

Rosalinda Ojeda

Salwa Israel

Susan Amin

Stephanie Tesoriero

Suraj Govind

Suzi Sais

Tania Clease

Yvonne Moawad

### **Children & Families Services Team**

#### **Team Leader**

Margarita Videla

#### **Families First Early Intervention Project Coordinator**

Mushtari Wakili

#### **Perinatal Project Coordinator & Indian Family Worker:**

Geodhini Sivaraj

### **Sudanese Family Workers**

Jokbobot Samuel

Zina Gabir Iocum

Salwa Boulos

Jihan Boulos

#### **Liberian Family Worker:**

Yatta Foly Layweh

#### **Afghani Worker**

Mohammad Paikar

#### **Iranian Community Organisation**

Behrooz Gouniaei

#### **Bosnian Resource & Advisory Centre**

Damir Bosnjak

#### **Blacktown Community Health Centre - Croatian Worker**

Tadija Popovic

#### **Serbian Orthodox Welfare Association**

Svjetlana Maric

#### **Australian Italian Welfare Inc**

Pina Vittoria Di Rita

Fiorella

A special thanks to all the casual workers and volunteers who have contributed so much to the success of this organisation.

Without their dedication and contribution of time and expertise our quality of service would not be possible.



Blacktown MRC Level2,  
125 Main Street Blacktown  
Post Office Box 869 Blacktown NSW 2148

Phone: 02 9621 6633

Fax: 02 9831 5625

Email: [bmrc@blacktown.org.au](mailto:bmrc@blacktown.org.au)

Web: [www.blacktownmrc.org.au](http://www.blacktownmrc.org.au)