



17th Annual Report      2003 -2004

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**connecting  
cultures.**

**building**

**community.**

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# chairperson's report



**Paul Sekhon**  
**CHAIRPERSON**

Blacktown MRC has now been working for nearly 20 years to provide service to a culturally diverse community. Our purpose is to provide the opportunities that all Australians should have. Our vision is to develop a stronger and more inclusive society.

Blacktown MRC has continued to experience strong growth. We have seen real progress made during the last financial year towards achieving our organisational goals. The MRC is successfully running a number of programs that were mentioned in our last annual report. Through the granting of new funds, our services now cover the whole-of-life continuum, from ante-natal to old age.

Projects which were reported on in our last annual report are successfully underway. Our Small & Emerging Communities Project funded by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs has expanded and made a real difference through work with humanitarian youth and the Sierra Leonean, Sudanese, Tamil and Ghanaian communities across Sydney. The MRC has also received a new grant from the Department to work with the Muslim community in the Blacktown and Penrith local government areas.

The *Walk in My Shoes* Project funded by the Commonwealth Government's Living in Harmony Strategy has taken fresh, creative approaches to working with young people in the Blacktown area to explore issues of racism and community harmony. We look forward to this project being launched later in 2004.

I would like to acknowledge all of our funding bodies, without whom the MRC could not undertake our important work: the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, the NSW Department of Education and Training, the NSW Department of Community Services, the NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources and the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. The support of all these organisations enables us to work effectively with our community.

**“Our purpose is to provide the opportunities that all Australians should have. Our vision is to develop a stronger and more inclusive society.”**

I would also like to thank our local supporters in the community. Blacktown RSL and Rooty Hill RSL have provided us with much needed project funds (through the Community Development Support and Expenditure Scheme) to develop new programs such as *Keys To Success* and *Mums and Bubs*. Thanks to them the MRC is providing training, and educational and social opportunities for the community in the Blacktown area.

Our sessional workers provide ethno-specific services to key communities in the Blacktown area. I would like to thank the ongoing support of their organisations in providing these services in Blacktown: Australian Lebanese Welfare Group, Australian Chinese Community Association, Auburn MRC, Australian Turkish & Kurdish Childcare Co, Australian Kurdish Association, Baulkham Hills, Holroyd, Parramatta MRC, Bosnian Resources and Advisory Centre, Blacktown Community Health Centre and Serbian Orthodox Welfare Association.

I would like to make special mention of the growing number of people who are volunteering their time to work with our organisation and helping to serve the community. The MRC has been able to provide a wide range of services such as Tax Help for people on low incomes, free immigration and legal advice, homework support for young refugees as well as English conversation classes to name just a few.

My term, as a Member of the Management Committee for the last four years and Chairperson for the last two, is now at an end and I can truly say that it has been a greatly rewarding and educational experience. I am indebted to my colleagues on the Management Committee as well as the MRC Manager Irene Ross and her dedicated staff members for their support and patience. I would also like to express my appreciation to the office holders and members of the Australian Sikh Association for giving me the opportunity to serve on the Blacktown MRC Management Committee.

Finally I would like to acknowledge the contribution made by our Management Committee team, which has overseen the growth and strengthening of the organisation over the last year. On behalf of the Management Committee I would like to recognise the dedication of all those who are associated with the Blacktown MRC – our members, volunteers and staff. The continued commitment and support of all of these people make me proud and confident that the Blacktown MRC will continue to be proactive in working with our community and making a difference to people's lives well into the future.

# manager's report



**Irene Ross**  
**MANAGER**

At Blacktown MRC we are passionately committed to enhancing opportunities for the people we work with and building a cohesive community. Over the last year we have continued to build the foundations for a stronger more responsive service.

One of the major challenges facing our centre as well as the sector is the changes brought in by the DIMIA Review of Settlement Services. As of next financial year, MRC funding will be incorporated into the general Community Settlement Services Scheme funding, decreasing the security of our funding base. We have worked hard over the past year to diversify our funding base through successfully applying for funding from a range of government agencies as well as building partnerships with businesses to develop our fundraising arm.

A number of operational issues have taken precedence this year. Due to an increase in funding we have greater staff numbers and further demand on our office space. We have redesigned our office moving to a more open plan use of space to accommodate increasing staff numbers. Our computer network has had major improvements and staff trained in the use of various programs and network management. We now have in place an Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Committee and worked with TAFE on the development of a comprehensive OH&S policy for the MRC, taking into account the amount of off-site work undertaken through the CACP and outreach locations across Sydney. The Immigration Pilot has been extended and we are now assisting the public in e-lodgement of citizenship applications.

Changes at a state government level have regrettably led to the cessation of the Skilled Migrant Placement Program across NSW and the loss of a high demand service at our Centre. We are currently exploring ways and alternate funding sources to continue this much needed service.

Over the past year we have embarked on some innovative and exciting new programs. The African Drum Library is up and running and in high demand with young people and musicians from emerging communities.

**“At Blacktown MRC we are passionately committed to enhancing opportunities for the people we work with and building a cohesive community.”**

Our work with refugee youth has grown through the new Humanitarian Youth position and the *Walk in My Shoes* Project funded by the Commonwealth Government under the Living in Harmony strategy. This project has worked with local schools, police, Council and youth services in creative ways to engage young people of all backgrounds to address community harmony in a positive way. The project has produced a kit for use in schools including a CD of music by young people and a video.

The last year has seen the expansion of a number of areas of work. As a service specialising in working with culturally diverse communities we are regularly called upon to provide training and cultural consultancy. The *Pathways to Communities* Training program funded by WSAAS, has commenced and has successfully delivered training workshops across Western Sydney, and trained bilingual cultural trainers from a variety of emerging communities. The next year will see this project develop further to provide more specialised cultural training. We have also secured funding to undertake community cultural development work in the new housing release areas of Blacktown and Baulkham Hills through WSAAS and commenced this work in August 2003.

Our work with families has grown and we now have three funded programs working with families from pre-natal to families with children aged 8. Our Early Intervention Program has now been established and working closely with the Southern Sudanese, Afghani, Indian and Pakistani communities. In 2004 funding has been provided for a Perinatal Project and Family Violence Project targeting emerging and refugee communities.

To create a cohesive and integrated society, Blacktown MRC is committed to forming partnerships with government, business and community groups and we have continued to work closely on a number of initiatives. One project that we have worked on is the Policy and Planning Group bringing together three levels of government, community and business to meet the needs of newly arrived African communities, particularly youth in the Blacktown area.

A new initiative this year has been the establishment of a marketing and promotions arm for the organisation. I would like to thank our supporters in this endeavour, Jim Taggart from Jim Taggart Industries, Jay Singh from Walia, James McHarg Lawyer and Peter Legzdins. We are looking at a number of initiatives over the next year including further developing business-community partnerships and launching a new magazine *Main Street* linking the community and business sectors.

I am also pleased to have been ministerially appointed to the Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council starting in July 2004. The Council provides advice directly to the Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs and will provide me with an important opportunity in highlighting our community issues to the government.

Finally, I would like to thank management, staff and volunteers at Blacktown MRC, who through their commitment, energy and enthusiasm we have been able to produce the amount and quality of work for the community. The next year promises to be an exciting time with challenges and opportunities for further growth to enhance our work with the community.

**Blacktown MRC has broadened our work with families through an increase in funding from the NSW Government's Families First Initiative, enabling us to more effectively target families from refugee and emerging communities.**

Our new Families First Early Intervention Project commenced in 2003 targeting refugee, emerging and TPV communities in the Blacktown local government area. Families First is an initiative of the NSW State Government that aims to support families in the process of raising their children through a focus on increasing the effectiveness of prevention and early intervention.

Our project helps to improve children's health and well-being by:

- Helping parents to build skills and confidence in their parenting
- Supporting parent so they can respond to problems early
- Building communities that support families.

The project has established close links with local health and family services and works closely with community health, early childhood centres, STARTTS and Blacktown Hospital in accessing women with babies and young children.

Outreach services have been established at the WASH house in Mt DrUITT, Afghan Association and Children's First in Blacktown. Support groups have been established for Southern Sudanese, Afghani, Indian & Pakistani women.

Programs initiated by the project include:

- Reading, story time and craft groups have been established targeting Afghani, Indian and Sudanese families. The aim of the program is to teach parents how to play with their children and the feedback from both parents and children has been resoundingly positive.
- Transport orientation and Walking Service Tours were initiated to help Afghani and Indian parents to get to know services & use public transport.
- Language support & activities groups have been established to help women who are illiterate or have low levels of English language skills. Craft activities have been provided to attract women and encourage their attendance while at the same time introducing them to local services
- A self-support group for Afghani women has been established for women living in the Mount DrUITT area. Blacktown MRC supports the group through the provision of guest speakers and resources like translated materials and videos.

- A six-session parenting program was run for Southern Sudanese women. The aim of the program was to help women with parenting and introduce them to services available in the Blacktown LGA for women and children.

- Information sessions about DV and child protection issues have been held for women in Blacktown and Mt DrUITT.

- In conjunction with St Patrick's Primary School in Blacktown, Blacktown MRC facilitated a consultation and information session with Southern Sudanese parents. 150 parents and children from three different Catholic schools in the region attended the meeting. The program helped parents with their school children by providing information and support about the school and expectations.

# for families

## **New Funding for 2004**

Two new projects under the Families First Strategy have been funded in 2004 due to start in the second half of 2004. A Perinatal Information and Education Project will work with pregnant women and parents with children up to the age of 2 years. The project will provide information, support and improve the access of communities to existing services. The project will work both in the Blacktown and Baulkham Hills local government areas.

A Family Violence Project has been funded to develop DVD resources in conjunction with three to four targeted communities addressing family violence and child protection issues. The DVD resource will be available for communities to use during and after this 18-month project finishes.

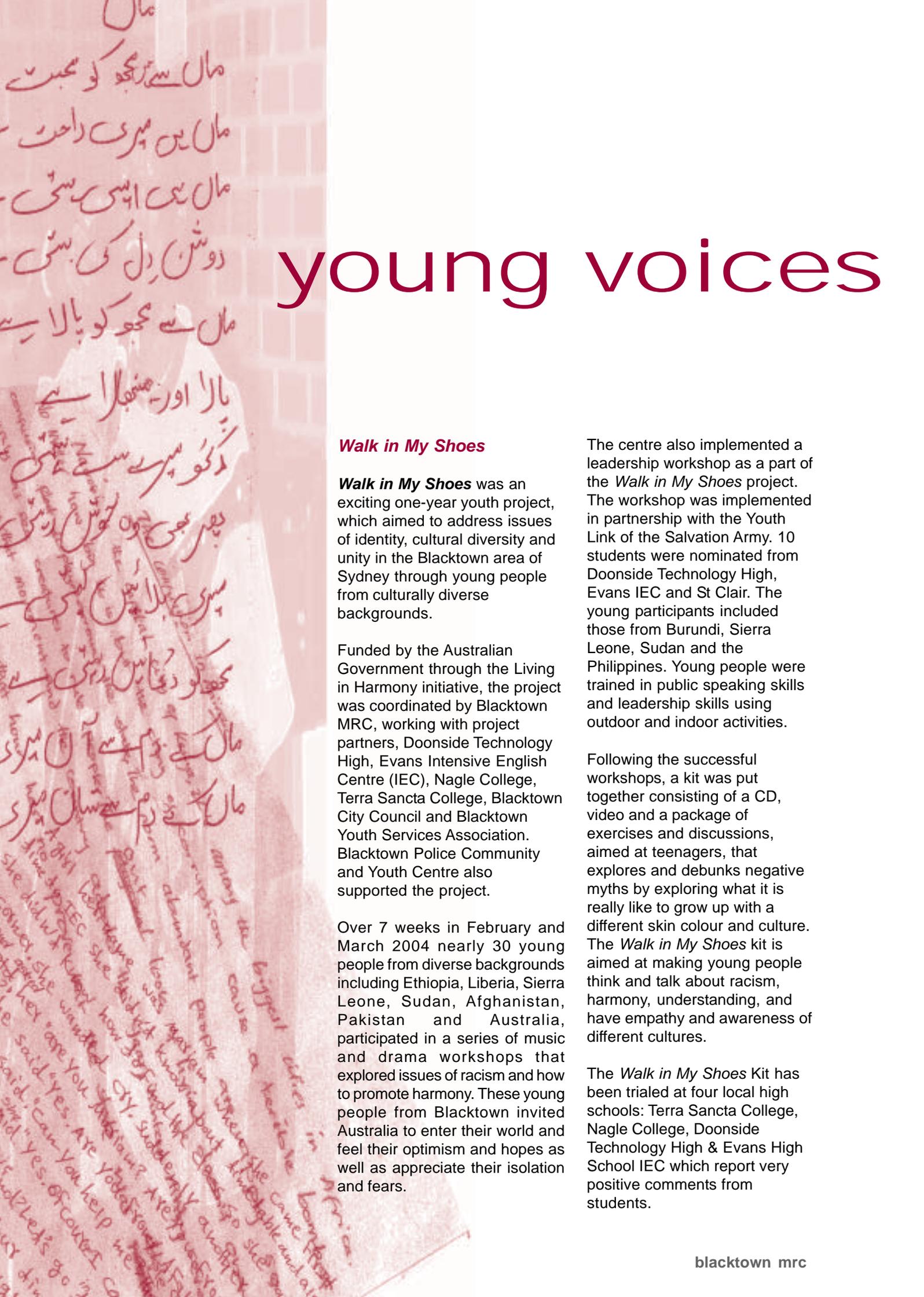
## **Family Harmony Training of volunteers**

Over the past three years Blacktown MRC has worked closely with families from emerging communities on issues around intergenerational conflict. In late 2003 this program grew to encompass training for community volunteers in running the NESB Family Harmony Program.

Over 20 community volunteers were trained with representatives from the Tamil, Ghanaian, Sierra Leone, Northern, Southern and Coptic Sudanese communities and feedback was overwhelmingly positive. These representatives are now using the kit to work with their own communities on issues of family harmony and intergenerational conflict.

In addition, Blacktown MRC continued to run the NESB Family Harmony Program in the Sudanese community in the Blacktown, Mt DrUITT and Liverpool areas. The Tamil Family Harmony Committee has continued to meet with parents and children from Tamil Schools around Western Sydney and has also run segments about family harmony through Tamil radio.





# young voices

## **Walk in My Shoes**

**Walk in My Shoes** was an exciting one-year youth project, which aimed to address issues of identity, cultural diversity and unity in the Blacktown area of Sydney through young people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Funded by the Australian Government through the Living in Harmony initiative, the project was coordinated by Blacktown MRC, working with project partners, Doonside Technology High, Evans Intensive English Centre (IEC), Nagle College, Terra Sancta College, Blacktown City Council and Blacktown Youth Services Association. Blacktown Police Community and Youth Centre also supported the project.

Over 7 weeks in February and March 2004 nearly 30 young people from diverse backgrounds including Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Australia, participated in a series of music and drama workshops that explored issues of racism and how to promote harmony. These young people from Blacktown invited Australia to enter their world and feel their optimism and hopes as well as appreciate their isolation and fears.

The centre also implemented a leadership workshop as a part of the *Walk in My Shoes* project. The workshop was implemented in partnership with the Youth Link of the Salvation Army. 10 students were nominated from Doonside Technology High, Evans IEC and St Clair. The young participants included those from Burundi, Sierra Leone, Sudan and the Philippines. Young people were trained in public speaking skills and leadership skills using outdoor and indoor activities.

Following the successful workshops, a kit was put together consisting of a CD, video and a package of exercises and discussions, aimed at teenagers, that explores and debunks negative myths by exploring what it is really like to grow up with a different skin colour and culture. The *Walk in My Shoes* kit is aimed at making young people think and talk about racism, harmony, understanding, and have empathy and awareness of different cultures.

The *Walk in My Shoes* Kit has been trialed at four local high schools: Terra Sancta College, Nagle College, Doonside Technology High & Evans High School IEC which report very positive comments from students.

## Homework Support Group

The Homework Support Group is an initiative of Blacktown MRC to provide homework support to disadvantaged young people, primarily from refugee backgrounds. The MRC has linked with local schools so students who need support can be referred to the Homework Support Classes. The classes are run by volunteers who assist children with school curriculum and help with subjects such as English, Maths, History and Science.

The centre provides tutorial support for more than 20 young people with disrupted educational experiences. The support group also helps students with their assignments, and developing reading and writing skills in English.

## Drum Workshops

Blacktown MRC in conjunction with the Blacktown Police Citizens' Youth Club ran two drum workshops to teach young refugees the rhythm of Kuku that hails from the region of Kuku Beyla from West Africa. This rhythm is played when the fishermen return home with their harvested fish at the end of a hard day's work.

Funded by the Community Relations Commission, the workshops officially launched the Drum Library in the Centre that makes percussion instruments accessible to emerging communities in Blacktown. The main aim of establishing a Drum Library was to facilitate the cultural development of these communities in Blacktown. Now the library at Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre has a range of percussion instruments numbering over forty that can be borrowed by the community.

## Young Women's Drama Group

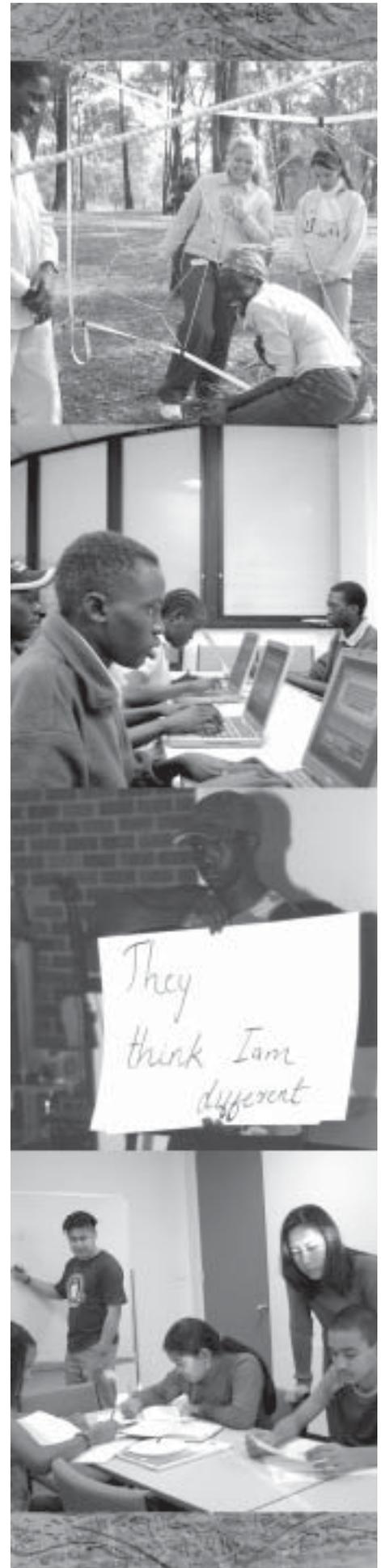
As part of the New Estates Project, the Rouse Hill Young Women's Drama Group and youth activities have been developed at the Rouse Hill Community Centre in partnership with Baulkham Hills Shire Council. The youth activities program which runs fortnightly provides opportunities for isolated young people in new release areas to participate in cultural and recreational programs and activities.

The Young Women's Drama Group has been a success with 11 young women participating in the development of their own theatre performance which explores their identity and the issues faced by young women to be performed at the end of the year to family, friends and the community.

## Mentoring Program

Consultations have been held with Ghanaian young people regarding the mentoring program. Issues raised also included intergenerational conflict, bullying at school and finding part-time work. Contact has been made with a number of professionals in the Ghanaian community to act as mentors to young people. Planning has been undertaken for a Ghanaian community forum in late 2004 for the mentoring program where mentors will be matched with young people.

The Ghanaian project has also set up a musician mentoring scheme to help young people develop their career in the music industry. Renowned Ghanaian musician Eddie Quansah has volunteered his time to meet with young musicians and take part in the mentoring scheme.



# options for

## Community Aged Care Packages (CACP) Program

Our CACP has continued to develop, offering an innovative service that works outside the square to improve conditions and services for staff, clients and other service providers. Due to our good management, we normally maintain 53 clients in their homes while we are funded for 48, representing value for money for the government. We have extended our services to the Parramatta and Baulkham Hills areas and now have five clients in these areas and are carrying five packages as extras within the Western Sydney area.

The establishment of an Occupational Health And Safety Policy for the organisation has brought major changes in the operation of the Community Aged Care Packages Program. In order to reduce manual handling risks, and decrease risks to care workers and clients in using chemicals in cleaning clients homes, we have started using fibre-based cleaning cloths. This change came about after investigating university trials on the effectiveness of infection control and a testing period with our program. Cleaning is faster, more efficient and the client no longer has to provide cleaning chemicals.

Well-trained workers are a vital part of our service. To support and improve the effectiveness of our bilingual workers we successfully applied for a Workplace English Language and Literacy (WEL) program through TAFE. Care workers for culturally diverse clients need to be confident and proficient in English as well as their first language. The WEL program assists care workers in developing all English language skills, that is, documentation, comprehension and listening skills. The more confident the workers are in English, the more effective they are in assisting the client to participate in the community.

We are now using the language skills of our care workers to support agencies who specifically provide respite care to carers of family members with dementia. The client with dementia usually reverts to their original language so our assistance is a great help in providing appropriate care. We are currently providing appropriate bilingual staff to Care Connect & Hills Community Care.

A partnership with Worktrain is providing people over 40 with qualifications in Certificate III in Home and Community Care. It is being offered to our care workers, those who have lodged an application for employment and to communities where we source workers. The program will provide a pool of appropriately trained care workers for the emerging communities we are targeting.

2004 has seen the establishment of a new social group for our CACP clients. These "Get Togethers" every six weeks are designed to embrace Healthy Ageing principles and break clients social isolation and assist them to maintain their English skills as long as possible. So far the program has included morning tea followed by a gentle exercise program and group activities such as board, card games and bingo. Clients have expressed that they have enjoyed the get-togethers very much and will continue to come and meet new people. The client get togethers have been a success with about 20 clients in regular attendance.

As many culturally diverse clients are intimidated by Day Therapy Centres we have plans to bring a representative from the Day Centres to talk about the clustering and other strategies they have to encourage our clients to use these services.

# seniors

As well as providing translated material and using interpreters to go over the agreement, we are in the process of having our agreement recorded on audio tapes. This has been initiated as we have quite a number of clients who are illiterate in their own language. The tape allows them time to digest the full meaning of the agreement and not feel rushed into making a decision about their care.

## **Hills Seniors – Connecting Cultures Day Trip**

In partnership with Hills Community Aid, Blacktown MRC's New Estates Project is engaging Tamil Seniors in the Baulkham Hills Shire to break down social isolation and provide information sharing, recreational and cultural activities. The partnership project targets isolated seniors who are home bound as well as those in the new estate areas. A Connecting Cultures Day Trip was organised in June as one of the first activities planned for the year with 19 community members participating. The day consisted of visits to three Hindu temples culminating in an African performance at the Blacktown Arts Centre as part of the World West: Global Music Festival with Tamil Seniors participating in traditional African dance! The festival provided the opportunity to connect and learn about other cultures.

## **Seniors Week 2004 – The best time for ages!**

Blacktown MRC received funding from the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and participated in celebrations by conducting community service tours and organising for clients to attend one of the Premiers Gala Concerts.

The theme of Seniors Week "the best time for ages" was embraced by the community service tours which included visits to local services that promote physical and social activity.

Four tours over the week were organised to local services such as Blacktown Aquatic Centre, Blacktown City Council, Centrelink and Blacktown RSL to try out lawn bowls. One of the highlights was the belly dancing class at Blacktown Women's and Girl's Health Centre where the groups joined in and had a great time.

The tours provide participants with the opportunity to learn about different services for seniors in the Blacktown area.





# working with community

Over the past year we have broadened our services to the community through establishing new projects. We have assisted the community through direct casework at our centre and in outreach locations, information provision and capacity building projects.

## **New Project – New Estates**

Our work with communities was expanded in July 2003 with new funding for a New Estates Project. The project works with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) in the new estate areas of Blacktown and Baulkham Hills local government areas and is funded by the Department of Planning Infrastructure and Natural Resources through the Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme.

The aim of the project is to meet the cultural development, recreational and training needs of the culturally diverse community.

The project assists CALD communities in being active members of their communities through a range of programs that benefit those who are geographically, socially and culturally isolated.

Projects that are currently being developed in partnership with other services within the community include the Young Women's Cultural Drama Group at the Rouse Hill Community Centre, and providing links for isolated Tamil Seniors to the Hills Tamils Group in Baulkham Hills. The project has also assisted in the coordination of cultural community entertainment for the Cultural Festival as part of the Baulkham Hills Orange Blossom Festival.

## Volunteer Mentoring Project

Blacktown MRC, Friends of STARTTS and the Tamil Volunteer Service have joined together to provide help for Tamil refugees, migrants and asylum seekers settling in Australia.

The project assists people to access government and non-government agencies. Volunteers have been trained and provide practical support, such as taking clients to government agencies and if necessary advocate on behalf of clients.

Blacktown MRC works specifically with refugees and migrants, while Friends of STARTTS assists asylum seekers.

## Generalist Project

The Generalist Project has continued to make inroads into assisting refugee, humanitarian entrants and other migrants with settlement in the Blacktown and Penrith LGAs.

Some of the highlights of the year were:

- Four series of Sewing classes were held for women over the last year. This has given them skills to repair clothes for the family, prepare them for the TAFE Fashion course and assist them to start small businesses. This was made possible by funding received from CDSE and the generosity of Blacktown RSL.
- Funding has been awarded by the Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme to provide capacity building workshops with a focus on Moslem and CALD women in the Penrith LGA. These workshops will help women develop self esteem, communication and life skills.

## Outreach

The Generalist Project has started outreach settlement services at Mission Australia in Mt Druitt to make access to services easier for clients.

The Project continues to provide outreach services in St Clair and St Marys and group development in Kingswood.

Our Small & Emerging Communities Project provides outreach services from a number of locations across Western Sydney accessible to emerging communities including Auburn, Bankstown, Campsie and Liverpool and Blacktown Centrelink. The New Estates Project has set-up an outreach location in the Baulkham Hills area through Hills Community Aid and Information Centre.

## Drum Library

The Drum Library is becoming more and more popular among the general community and community organisations.

The drums have been used during the week and weekend, ensuring the instruments are well used. The drums have been used for drum workshops, entertainment, women's groups, Penrith Photography Exhibition, recording Sierra Leone traditional songs and the African Drum Workshop at Baulkham Hills Shire Council. The drums are available for community use.

## Platform for Action Beijing + 10 Conference

Blacktown MRC organised and facilitated an Open Day for Sudanese women in conjunction with WSAHS and UNSW Refugee Research Centre on the *Platform for action Beijing + 10 Conference* on women's issues with over 60 women attending.



## Snapshot of services

In 2003 - 2004 we serviced 52015 people, providing critical information and group services. This represents a 50% increase from last year.

We delivered 1181 community development, training and information services.

Sessions and programs were delivered at our office in Blacktown and in outreach locations convenient to communities in key areas such as Mt Druitt, Kingswood, Auburn, Liverpool, Bankstown and Campsie.

The main enquiries were :

- Settlement information - 31%
- Immigration & citizenship – 23%
- Language services – 7%

## Information Workshops

Information workshops have been held for communities in Blacktown and across Sydney to inform communities about important services and issues. Sessions included:

- Settlement information for students at Macquarie Community College.
- Vocational Educational Seminar on educational pathways for women to empower them about opportunities for self-improvement and better job opportunities through education.
- Immigration sessions have been held for Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants.
- Finance and Budgeting sessions for refugees.
- A six week information session program for Tamil women on keeping children safe was organised in conjunction with Auburn MRC and Burnside.
- Organised two information sessions on women's health for Ghanaian women at the Cyprus Community Centre in Stanmore.
- Employment and Complaints Mechanism for Ghanaian hairdressers was held in Mt Druitt.
- Proposer support held in January for the Sudanese Community at Blacktown MRC.
- Health information including Diabetes presented by Liverpool Hospital, Osteoporosis, Menopause and respite services and incontinence for Sudanese community in Liverpool.
- Information was provided to African communities on the role of community settlement services and MRC's at Fairfield MRC in March.

## New funding to work with the Sierra Leone Community

As a result of a funding increase to our Small & Emerging Communities Project in 2003, we were able to establish a dedicated part-time Sierra Leone Community Worker position, enhancing our capacity to serve this community. A Sierra Leone Community Advisory Committee was established in November with wide representation from Sierra Leone organisations as well as representatives from geographical areas in Sydney where the community resides. Meetings have been held regularly on a bi-monthly basis with wide representation from the community, including the two main associations, women's group and youth group.

The project has initiated a number of new projects with the community including:

- A Healthy Women's Health Program for Sierra Leonean women was successfully organised with WSAHS at Bankstown Women's Health Centre.
- Organised for 15 Sierra Leone women to attend the International Women's Court in June at the UNSW organized by the Australia National Committee for Refugee Women. The workshop gave women the chance to discuss what needs to be done to improve the lives of women in Australia.
- Linked Sierra Leonean women to a pilot Train the Trainer program on Domestic Violence organized by the Centre for Refugee Research at Blacktown MRC and pre-selection information session on Female Genital Mutilation at Toongabbie.
- A meeting was held with journalists in the community to discuss establishment of a community newsletter.

- Blacktown MRC with the NSW Female Genital Mutilation Project assisted the Sierra Leone Radio program through securing sponsorship of the program from a.c.l. Blacktown MRC is auspicing funding until the group becomes independent.

### Tamil Trips

A number of activities were organised to reach isolated Tamil women. In December a day trip to the Hindu Temple and Thai Buddhist Monastery outside Wollongong was organised with STARTTS. In conjunction with the Attorney General's Office and STARTTS a trip for Tamil women and children to Centennial Park was organised in July with over 45 women and children attending. The trip, while giving an opportunity for isolated Tamil women to have a fun day out, also importantly informed them about local settlement and health services.

### Support Groups

A Ghanaian community women's group was established and walking groups organised on an area basis. The walking groups have been used as an avenue of consultation regarding community issues and dissemination of relevant settlement information.

Two support groups were run for Sudanese women. A group in Liverpool featured a calendar of activities including critical information to assist in their settlement. A Women's Health Group was established in Blacktown with wide involvement from women from different Sudanese backgrounds.

## A conversation with one of our young clients

Meet an exceptional young man, William Orule.

He is a tall, courageous 19 year old who arrived in Australia 10 months ago, originally from Sudan. He was the finalist in the Australian African Young Achievers Award, was nominated by his school for work experience with the Refugee Review Tribunal and is his school's prefect. His teachers say he is a born leader.

Life has no doubt been a challenge for this softly-spoken, courteous young man who lives alone. "My teachers in Evans IEC have been a great support". He heard about the Blacktown MRC from his teachers who told him the centre could help him with his settlement needs.

### So what does he think of the centre?

"The staff here are very kind, patient and very efficient. They have really helped me with all my needs", he says with great gratitude.

William is looking to form a youth organisation called Australian African Youth organisation with the help of the centre. He says the objectives of the organisation will be to bring all young Africans together under one umbrella and offer them a platform to express themselves, their unique needs and offer a perspective on their struggles to the Australian community. The organisation will also help young people in need, all over Africa, in the area of education and health.

### And what next?

"First I would like to finish high school and then one day work for the United Nations, so I can help people who are suffering in the refugee camps"

High ambitions for an industrious young man!



**Blacktown MRC runs a wide range of training services for both communities and agencies.**

## ***Pathways to Communities***

Blacktown MRC is committed to providing training to organisations working with culturally diverse communities. In 2003 our *Pathways to Communities* Training Project funded under the Western Area Assistance Scheme commenced, providing us the ability to provide a systematic program of training to organisations across Western Sydney to work with emerging communities. *Pathways to Communities* is a program designed to enhance the capacity of organisations working with the growing diverse communities in Western Sydney.

The project trained 13 people from emerging communities to provide training about their cultures. With our team of trained cultural consultants we delivered customised training specific to the needs of local government areas.

A session on "Keys to Success in working with CALD communities" was delivered at the NSW Family Worker Training & Development Conference in Rooty Hill in March with a focus on working with emerging communities in the presentation.

A session on issues and strategies to assist and support service providers was facilitated at the African Communities Settling in NSW Forum in March. Information was presented on the Sudanese, Iraqi and Afghani communities to community nurses at the Mt DrUITT Community Health Centre in June.

In addition, from May to August 2004 we provided training about newly emerging communities in seven locations in Western Sydney from Bankstown to the Blue Mountains. These sessions were specifically tailored to the needs of organisations at a local level and featured cultural profiles from key communities in each area.

## **Cultural Training**

During the year, we continued to build on our successes in providing training for organisations on working with culturally diverse communities. This training focussed on our work with emerging communities and the year saw an increase in demand from organisations wanting information about how to work with the growing Sudanese community.

In addition to our new training project, we delivered training in Western Sydney and beyond including Dee Why and Wollongong to a wide range of government and non-government services including schools, AMEP providers, Centrelink, STARTTS, Lotus Women's Refuge in Fairfield, community and mental health staff, senior citizens centres, youth services, Blacktown Police, Western Sydney Institute of TAFE and General Practitioners.

## **Touch-typing Classes**

Based on consultations conducted with refugee youth through the NESB Youth Exposed Project in 2002-3, Blacktown MRC commenced free touch-typing training sessions to improve and enhance typing skills to assist youth from refugee and emerging communities. The touch-typing classes also assisted with literacy development and information on Australian history and culture. The class has trained young people from the communities of Sudan, Ethiopia and Afghanistan.

# opportunities

## English Writing Workshops

The English Writing workshops coordinated by Blacktown MRC aimed at improving writing skills in English language among young people from refugee and migrant communities. During the course, each student produced a short piece of prose or poetry that they edited and polished over the course of the classes.

Ten students attended the workshops and hailed from communities of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sudan. The young people worked on a range of writing skills, from basics in spelling, grammar and punctuation to more complex story-telling devices. The workshops also enabled team building and helped the young people to express the uniqueness of their cultural identity.

## Computer Courses

A series of courses were run to develop fundamental computer skills in young people particularly those from refugee backgrounds funded by a CDSE grant that was generously awarded by the Blacktown RSL Club. The Computer Course helped young people acquire skills in computers that will aid them in their transition from Intensive English Centres to high schools.

A number of Introduction to Computing and Internet courses for underemployed people were negotiated with Nirimba TAFE Outreach targeting emerging communities with participation from the Ghanaian, Sudanese and Tamil communities. These courses have always been the most popular courses among men from the emerging communities with waiting lists for each course.

## Child Care Course

An Introduction to Child Care Course was organised in conjunction with Nirimba TAFE Outreach and held at Blacktown MRC. Childcare was provided giving mothers the chance to study while their children were in care.

## English Classes

We continued to provide English Conversation classes through the generous support of our volunteer tutors. This program has been running for many years and provides a much-needed service for people who are not eligible for other English courses.

Four terms of Tamil Women's Group English Classes were organised with Strathfield Community College with an average of 16 participants held in Auburn. English classes for Tamil women at Nepean Migrant Access were also organised with the help of volunteer teachers. Due to low numbers the class was replaced with a Women's Health Program with the assistance of Wentworth Area Health Service.



## Road to success

Over the years the Skilled Migrant Placement Program has helped hundreds of overseas trained professionals with finding employment. We profile one client who was successfully helped this year.

Manoj Motwani is a telecommunications professional from India. After migrating to Australia, the IT and telecommunications industries crashed causing extensive job losses.

“With no new specialised jobs advertised, it was a horrible time for me as I ran the risk of losing expertise in my field of specialisation. One of my friends suggested that I make an appointment to see the Skilled Migrant Placement Officer (SMPO) at the Blacktown MRC. I had my qualifications assessed and I joined the Skillmax class. It was also suggested by the Officer that I do some local work experience in my field of expertise to enable me to find employment.”

Soon after starting Skillmax, a three-month work experience placement was organised for Manoj in his area of expertise. Our SMPO kept in constant contact, monitoring progress and discussing potential employment opportunities after the work experience period.

“The company was very happy with my performance and after extensive rounds of interviews, I was offered a full-time position. I admire the assistance and guidance provided to skilled migrants by the Blacktown MRC.”

## Skilled Migrant Placement Program

The Skilled Migrant Placement Program (SMPP) has provided valuable support to newly arrived professionals seeking a new start in Australia. Over the past year we serviced 115 clients with 50% gaining employment and almost 50% receiving work experience.

The Project successfully organised a range of activities to assist job seekers including:

- Public sector job application seminar
- A one-day job seeking seminar
- Five 8-week Skillmax courses delivered by AMES
- Work experience for the majority of clients.

Following the NSW Government's decision to cease funding for this program in June 2004 across the state, clients of our program expressed disappointment and regret that such a valuable service is ending. Many were concerned that there are no other programs offering the same comprehensive assistance that the SMPP offers. Over the next year we will explore options for alternative funding for aspects of the program.

# connections



## Working in Partnership

At a local level we have worked closely with services to coordinate service provision for refugee and migrant communities. Meetings organised with different service providers in the Blacktown Local Government Area has considerably improved the relationship between our service and other organisations. The resulting cooperation and good relationships between other organisations and the Blacktown MRC has helped to provide better services to our clients.

Stronger relationships and partnerships were formed this year with organisations such as Centrelink, Blacktown Women and Girls Community Health Centre, Mt DrUITT Community Health, Blacktown Police, Western Sydney Community Forum and Blacktown City Council.

We have participated on a number of important local committees such as the Blacktown City Council Community Services Subcommittee, Blacktown City Council Sister Cities Committee, Blacktown Police Accountability to Community Team and Blacktown Local Community Development and Support Expenditure Scheme.

Many of our projects work beyond Blacktown and across metropolitan Sydney with a focus on the growing emerging communities in Western Sydney. We have participated on a number of committees that assist us in representing community issues such as:

- Cumberland/Prospect Families First Implementation Group
- Western Sydney Community Forum Management Committee
- Board of Western Sydney Institute of TAFE
- Western Sydney Area Health Service (WSAHS) Ethnic Consumer Council and Area Migrant Access Committee
- WSAHS Community Participation Council
- Greater Western Sydney SCAN Regional Steering Committee
- NSW Transcultural Aged Care Service Advisory Committee
- Nepean Parents Information Packs Project
- Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care Seniors Week Committee 2004
- Department of Community Services Multicultural Advisory Committee
- Villawood Detention Centre Community Reference Committee
- Ethnic Communities Council of NSW.

## Immigration E-access Project

Our existing Immigration Pilot Project was extended in 2004 to include e-lodgement of citizenship applications. This aspect of the pilot will start in July 2004 and four staff have been trained by DIMIA in preparation. The Project continues to provide local access to the community to immigration and citizenship information.

## Blacktown-Mt Druitt Migrant Interagency

Blacktown MRC continues to convene the Blacktown-Mt Druitt Migrant Interagency and facilitated a planning day at the beginning of 2004. As a result, the group has become more active and resourceful and the number of organisations regularly participating has increased. A number of groups were established to work on specific issues for new arrivals.

Mentoring was added as a new area of work for the Interagency this year. Mentoring is about supporting workers who work with CALD communities and may be having difficulty addressing some situations in their every day work. This area has been very popular and welcomed by those who work without support.

## Post IHSS Forum

We convene the Blacktown Post-IHSS Forum to address issues affecting newly arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants and ensure coordination between Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Service providers and other agencies. Partners in the Forum include NSW Refugee Health, Anglicare, International Settlement Services, Centrelink, Hillsong Emerge, Autumnleaf Neighbourhood Centre and STARTTS.

Membership of the forum has expanded to include representatives from key government and non-government service providers in Blacktown and Penrith to facilitate prompt resolution of issues.

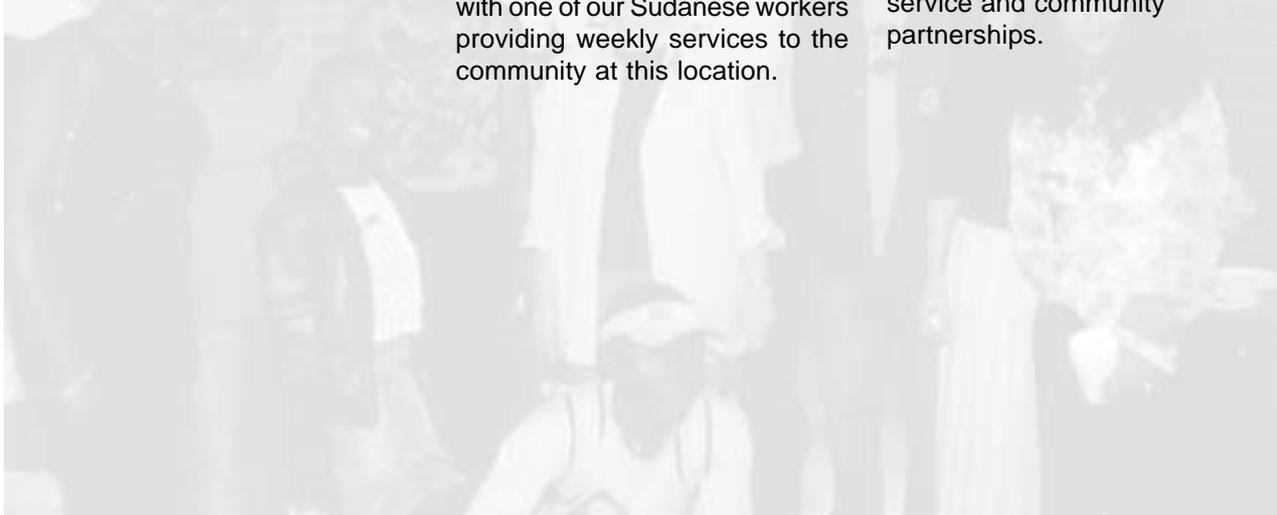
## Centrelink Outreach at MRC

We have embarked on a new partnership with Centrelink through the establishment of a new Centrelink outreach service at the Blacktown MRC starting from May. The Personal Advisor Service was promoted by flyers and through talks at Macquarie Community College. Centrelink provides a one-day a week service with an average of six people using this service each day. We have also established outreach services at Blacktown Centrelink, with one of our Sudanese workers providing weekly services to the community at this location.

## Creating safer communities

A partnership between Blacktown MRC, Blacktown Police and Southern Sudanese community leaders has been established to develop preventative strategies to work with youth and the police. Since February, Blacktown MRC has met regularly with Police and Community leaders to develop community-based strategies to deal with these issues. Training has been organised for police on Sudanese culture and working with Southern Sudanese youth. In addition a community forum with relevant service providers was held in February at Blacktown MRC to brainstorm ideas and map support to deal with youth issues in the community. In June, a Policy and Planning Group was established bringing together three tiers of government and community to set policy directions for the emerging African communities.

Blacktown MRC played a vital role in establishing, co-convening, consulting and supporting Blacktown Police's Ethnic Community Liaison Officer (ECLO) in the preparation of joint Police and Community Partnership submission for Innovative Models of Police and Community Training (IMPACT). The IMPACT process required the development of intensive service and community partnerships.



## Assistance to Smaller NGOs Cultural Development

Blacktown MRC provides assistance to smaller non-government organisations in a variety of ways such as submission writing, advice on service provision and planning. Examples of our work over the last year include:

- Facilitating a planning day for Mt Druitt Ethnic Communities Agency
- Assisting in submission writing for the Afghan, Southern Sudanese and Serbian communities
- Assisting Afghan Association in addressing community issue
- Assisting two Southern Sudanese groups, one Northern Sudanese group and a Tamil group, covering a range of youth, cultural and women's activities in the incorporation process so that they became non profit incorporated associations registered with the Department of Fair Trading.

The awareness of the contributions made by emerging communities to Blacktown and Sydney's cultural life was enhanced by Blacktown MRC's commitment to cultural development with new and emerging communities. The Blacktown MRC was active in linking community cultural groups with the available cultural development infrastructure, training and submission writing. Blacktown MRC was also active in linking performance groups from emerging communities to festivals and performance opportunities across the Western Sydney area including Sydney Olympic Park - Newington Armoury, Café Carnivale, Blacktown LINKS Festival, Blacktown Expo, Auburn Festival, Granville Multicultural Festival and Holroyd Festival.

The Blacktown MRC also undertook to develop a project partnership with Blacktown City Council's Art Centre and Café Carnivale with the purpose of Café Carnivale developing a series of concerts promoting emerging communities performance groups in the Blacktown LGA as well as having these groups perform in the Sydney based performance program of Carnivale. Though funding changes meant that Café Carnivale was unable to meet its commitments to Western Sydney the Blacktown MRC and Blacktown Arts Centre were able to host a series of successful concerts featuring local talent from CALD and emerging communities.

Other cultural development included helping write the grant for the Kurdish Film Project with a Kurdish documentary maker and the Fairfield Community Resource Centre project partners. The Kurdish Film Project was successfully funded by the Australia Council.





# celebrating

Over the past year we have celebrated regular annual events as well as hosted a number of delegations from overseas.

## **UNHCR High Commissioner for Refugees visits Blacktown MRC**

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Mr Ruud Lubbers made a short visit to Australia and New Zealand in late March meeting with key ministers, officials and NGOs on both sides of the Tasman. One of his official visits was to Blacktown MRC to view the range of services provided by Australia to resettle refugees. Mr Lubbers met with local residents from refugee backgrounds and listened to stories about their experiences in resettlement.

Mr Lubbers was accompanied on his visit by Erika Feller, UNHCR's Director of International Protection and Jean-Marie Fakhouri, Director of the Asia Pacific Bureau. Mr Lubbers and UN representatives were welcomed at Blacktown MRC with a traditional Sierra Leonean drum song.

The party then met with refugees living in the area. Mr Lubbers spoke to refugees about their experiences in coming to Australia and how they settled in the local community. The visit gave Mr Lubbers the opportunity to witness settlement services first hand. He was also interested in how the Blacktown MRC provides assistance to the community and what the UNHCR could do to make the resettlement of refugees more straightforward.

The previous night, our Families First Coordinator, herself a refugee from Afghanistan, attended a dinner in Canberra in honour of Mr Lubber's visit to Australia. Other guests included Immigration Minister Senator Amanda Vanstone, Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Mr Gary Hardgrave, UNHCR and peak community body representatives.

## Launch of Cumberland/ Prospect Families First Funding

The Cumberland/Prospect Families First Funding was launched by the Hon Carmel Tebbutt MLC, Minister for Community Services in November 2003. Nearly 80 people from a wide range of regional services attended the launch. The Blacktown MRC Families First Early Intervention Project was one of the first projects that commenced in the region and was highlighted at the launch.

## Overseas delegations

As a leader in the provision of services for refugees and migrants, Blacktown MRC hosted a number of educational delegations from Asia. In November, Blacktown MRC was one of the organisations selected to deliver training as part of the Philippines Multiculturalism and the Peace Agenda Conference organised by the Australian Embassy, Aus Aid and the Philippines Government. The training provided participants with the opportunity to see Australian multiculturalism in practice. Delegates included senior government, political officials and community organisations from the Philippines.

In May 2004, a delegation of government officials from China visited the MRC to see how we work with communities and learn about the training and educational opportunities available for new settlers.

## EXPO and Links Festival

The annual Services EXPO and the Blacktown Links Festival was combined in October 2003 with extremely high attendance. The EXPO continues to play an important role in providing information to new residents and accessing new clients. The aim of the Festival is to link old and new refugee communities in a celebration.

## Children's Week 2003

In October 2003 Blacktown MRC partnered with Westpoint Shopping Centre, Blacktown and Blacktown City Council to celebrate Children's Week. An art competition and performances by students from Marayong South Public School was organised to entertain shoppers at the centre.

## Refugee Week 2003

In October 2003, Blacktown MRC held a special Refugee Week celebration with Afghani refugees in Blacktown and Penrith. Transport was provided to convey Afghanis living in the Blacktown area to join their friends in the Penrith area for a feast and seminars relevant to their settlement in the local area. Service providers in the Penrith area were given the opportunity to tell Afghani refugees about their services.



## Volunteer rewards

Blacktown MRC owes a lot to the effort and support of our team of dedicated volunteers who help us in our work for the community.

We profile two of our hard-working volunteers in our Homework Support Centre.

Delvene Soon is our longest serving volunteer in our Homework Support Centre. As well as teaching young students she coordinates the work of our ten volunteers.

So why did she decide to volunteer at Blacktown MRC?

"I was studying education and wanted experience working with young people, particularly high school students. I found volunteering rewarding personally to help people and it has also given me experience, especially with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds."

The majority of the students are mainly from refugee backgrounds from Sudan, and also from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Lebanon.

"The kids are fun, with different personalities and backgrounds," said Delvene. "The MRC has been supportive – they have helped me all along to coordinate and help run the group."

Delvene started off on her own and for a while there were only small numbers of students. Since Elwyn came along there have been more students. Elwyn joined the group as a volunteer because a friend asked him. He has found volunteering at the MRC really rewarding, far exceeding his expectations.

He has found working with the students the most rewarding aspect of his experience. "It's good to be able to help them in a significant way."

## International Women's Day

International Women's Day on 8 March is an occasion marked by women around the world. The Blacktown MRC celebrated with two events. Our Families First Project in collaboration with the Afghan Association celebrated the day with Afghani women living in Sydney. Over 150 women attended the day, which included presentations on women's rights in Afghanistan today, poetry readings about women's experiences and a play performed by young people. The second event brought together Afghani and Indian women with lunch and music with over 70 women and children participating.

## Welcome to My World Youth Resource Kit Launch

The *Welcome to My World Youth Resource Kit* was launched in October 2003 at Bowman Hall, forming a part of the Blacktown Links Festival 2003 held in conjunction with Blacktown City Council.

The event featured cultural performances by Afghani, Kurdish, Sierra Leone and Tamil young people and with 100 people attending the event was a resounding success. All the performances and the CD ROM received much appreciation from guests and dignitaries. The CD ROM is being marketed to various organisations, health agencies and schools.



## Harmony Day Event

Harmony Day is celebrated nationally on 21<sup>st</sup> March and is an event proudly supported by the Australian Government's *Living In Harmony* Initiative. Blacktown MRC under its *Walk In My Shoes* project banner previewed its workshops in video, drama and music and showcased talents of its young participants from communities of Afghanistan, Sudan, Ethiopia, India, Pakistan and Sierra Leone.

## Express Yourself- Youth Week Event

In March 2004 Blacktown MRC hosted a unique event for Youth Week at Seven Hills Community Centre called *Express Yourself*. It aimed at celebrating the diversity of cultures that exist among young people and offered a platform to express their individuality through a plethora of performances through music and dance. The highlight of the event was the contribution made by a young girl from Sudan who delivered a moving speech that reflected the issues of young refugee youth and inspired the audience with her courage and her confidence.

## World West – Global Music Festival

Blacktown MRC coordinated the World West Global Music Festival in partnership with the Blacktown Arts Centre & Blacktown City Council promoting the cultural diversity of the area through a series of cultural performances representing Sudanese, Pacific Islander and Indian communities. The afternoon of performances was held in June 2004 at the Blacktown Arts Centre with overwhelming responses from community groups who attended.

# volunteers

Blacktown MRC has a dedicated team of volunteers who provide much needed services that assist the centre in our day-to-day operations.

## Marketing and Promotions

Peter Legzdins  
Jay Singh – Walia

## English Conversation Classes

Mary Buck  
Joy Hughes  
Levy Cortez  
Phyllis Allan  
Roland Lupisan  
Lorraine Tucker  
David & Monica Rose  
Edith Leyritana  
Mohammad Shrzai  
Manja Jay

## Homework Support Group

Delvene Soon  
Elwyn Gabutero  
Mandy McIntosh  
Vanessa Cooke  
Jemima  
Zoya Syed  
Sahar Syed  
Robyn Rangi  
Teigan Coulton  
Arlene Pulido

## Tax Help

Murad Khan  
Augusto Reyef  
Jasmin Bontcas

## Fundamental Computer Course

Simerdeep Singh  
Bronya Cheeseman

## Migration & Legal Advice

James McHarg

## Migration Agent

Camilla Janny-Reynolds

## CPO Volunteer

Marta Taumalolo

## Child Care/Afghani Support

Halima Alkozai

## Tamil Volunteer Mentoring Project

S. Peranandasivam  
V. Premini  
M. Nagula  
S. Jayahandan  
J. Gayathiri  
N. Azeena  
T. Shantha  
I. Abiramy  
L. Thirumagal  
N. Karunakaran  
Mr Alagaratnam  
Mrs Alagaratnam  
N. Manomohan  
Mohankumar  
A.L. Nelson  
Bala Mugunthan  
M. Thanabalasingam  
Paskarajothy

## Tamil Family Harmony Project

S. Peranandasivam  
S. Skandakumar  
Rev. Jegajothy  
M. Thurka  
M. Nagula  
Parimalanathan  
J. Gayathiri  
Devangren  
V. Premini  
Azeena

## English Teachers for Tamil Community

Judy Curry  
Cheryl Butler  
Manga Raja

## Knitting Teacher

N. Monique

## Student placements

The students on placement at Blacktown MRC have been vital in contributing to the development of research and a range of other activities. The MRC is committed to creating opportunities for students to apply their skills in a community development setting as well as utilising their prior skills, knowledge and expertise.

Rachael Quigley  
Renee Paxton  
Alexandra Blaise Balmer  
Miriam James  
James Gatluak Puk  
Debora Louise O Donnell



# management



**Paul Sekhon**  
Chairperson

Paul Sekhon has been a member of the Management Committee for the past four years, serving as Treasurer in 2001–2 and Chairperson for 2002–4.

As an active member of the local Sikh community and Australian Sikh Association, Paul has assisted in various projects such as the Sikh Centre Library, multimedia centre, Punjabi school and community counsellor training.



**Clarissa Mulas**  
Vice-Chairperson

Clarissa Mulas has served on the Management Committee as Secretary and Vice Chairperson over the last 3 years. She is currently a member of Executive and Management Committee of the Ethnic Communities Council (ECC) of NSW and has been Convenor of the ECC Health Sub-Committee since 2001. She represents ethnic communities on the ministerially appointed NSW Health Participation Council.

Clarissa is the Coordinator of Multicultural Health Services for Western Sydney Area Health Service and has worked in health and social welfare over the past 25 years.



**Marinella Belmonte-Byrne**  
Secretary

Marinella is a long-term resident and worker in Blacktown currently employed by the Western Sydney Institute of TAFE as an Institute Multicultural Education Consultant.

As a member of the Blacktown MRC Management Committee over the last 3 years, Marinella has been a link between the community and education providers. She is a member of several committees in Blacktown including the Blacktown City Council Access Advisory Committee and the M7 Community Liaison Group.



**Stephen Bali**  
Treasurer

Stephen Bali has an accounting and finance background with a Bachelor of Business and Master of Commerce from the University of Western Sydney and currently lecturing at university.

He represents the Hungarian Seniors Association and is also involved as a Board member of the Business Advisory Services, UWS Alumni Association Board and National Treasurer of the Australian University Alumni Council. Stephen was elected as a Councillor on Blacktown City Council in 2003.

# committee



**James McHarg**

James is a graduate of Arts and Law at the University of New South Wales and is a Solicitor of the Supreme Court of New South Wales and the High Court of Australia of fourteen years standing. For several years he has conducted his own legal practice in the areas of migration law, business law and commercial and general litigation.

James has served on the management committee of Blacktown MRC for two years and for the last four years has been providing a regular pro bono advice service to clients of Blacktown MRC.



**Satish Kumar**

Satish Kumar is a practising accountant with a BA in Accounting and is originally from Fiji. He is actively involved in his community and holds a number of positions on cultural and religious organisations, Secretary of The Fiji Indian Community of Australia, Secretary of Sachitanand Sat Sangh R M, Secretary of Satan Dharm Pratinidhi of NSW. Satish is a Justice of the Peace and has been on the Management Committee since 2003.



**Balraj Sangha**

Balraj Sangha represents the NSW Cabbie Welfare Association and has been an active member of the association which assists drivers from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds. Balraj has worked in various professions such as farming, mortgage lending and journalism. He is currently working as a cabbie and freelance journalist.



**Adib Elgamal**

Adib Elgamal represents the Egyptian Senior Citizens Organisation. He is an active community member and is also a management committee member of Mt Druitt Ethnic Communities Agency and the Mt Druitt Legal Centre.

Adib has been a long-standing member of Blacktown MRC and involved with us since the beginning. Adib is retired and has been a JP for the past 28 years.



**Cr Barbara Gapps**

Cr Barbara Gapps was elected to Blacktown City Council in 1998 and again in 2003 and served as Deputy Mayor from 2002 – 2004. She has served on all three Standing Committees of Council – Works and Finance, Community Services and the Planning and Development Committee which she currently chairs.

Her qualifications include a Teaching Certificate, Diploma of Teaching and a Graduate Diploma in Administration. She has a background in early childhood teaching, community services management and social planning and has a long commitment to the development of Western Sydney.

Other Management Committee members: Olga Baranowsky, Tom Baena