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16th May 2015

MEDIA RELEASE

Cultural Bridges 2015 - Bridging the Gap

The *Cultural Bridges Event 2015* as part of the Inner West Community A Fair in Marrickville on 6th May organised by Community & Cultural Connections Inc (CCCI) and Addison Road Community Centre Organisation (ARCCO). The event epitomises and serves as a role model for harmony in action reflecting Multicultural NSW's strategy.

Distinguished guests from Multicultural NSW, Marrickville Council, and community leaders joined 64 service providers' representatives and approximately 300 participants from over 20 culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in the Inner West and nearby localities.

Mr Hakan Harman, CEO of Multicultural NSW, described the Cultural Bridges event as an outstanding community initiative:

"It's an absolute honour to be here. Harmony in action that's what we call it. That's what we say is the difference in Australia that we come here from all parts of the world and we take a commitment and make a commitment for our own social cohesion and community harmony. It's how we interact with each other, how we respect each other and that's what stand us apart from the rest of the world."



Photo by Warren Duncan/Multicultural NSW

First Nations Elder Auntie Esther held a Welcome to Country, and opened arms to migrants from Bangladesh, China, Chile, Egypt, former Yugoslavia, Greek, India, Italy, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Nepal, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Syria, Tonga, Uganda, Uruguay and Vietnam, who were among those who were represented. She described many First Nations elders as isolated and suggested they would greatly benefit from participating in the Community and Cultural Connections' Programs.

Marrickville Councillor Sam Iskandar supported a call for First Nations services. He also acknowledged the long history of Community and Cultural Connections from its beginnings through May Murray Neighbourhood Centre as the heart of the local community



Ms Sylvia Hale, the President of Community and Cultural Connections, also spoke of the long, tenacious and committed work of CCCi:

"I'm sure many of you will appreciate there could be nothing worse than growing old in the community where you did not have your immediate family to give you support. And it's into that gap that Community and Cultural Connections has now stepped in. And we do so with assistance from both the Federal and State governments. With the newly selected Board of Management we have absolute determination that what we do is so

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indispensably important to the community. We are optimistic, we know there is a future, we know there is a need and we are determined that we shall continue to flourish.”

Executive Officer of CCCi, Vi Pham, closed the event reinforcing the view that community engagement and participation to promote and strengthen harmony and social cohesion is a core of Community and Cultural Connections’ activities.

“This event is an illustration of the credibility and status of the CCCi and the work we have achieved in building relations with First Nations and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities. CCCi is a founding member of the Inner West Community A Fair, which happens every month. This stands as testimony of the CCCi’s strategy of facilitating and enabling those communities to access services and programs to ensure equitable development.”

As a result of this event First Nations communities have approached CCCi to support and provide for the needs of isolated elders and seniors in their community. CCCi will facilitate and seek extra resources to respond to these expressed needs.

Appropriately the event coincided with National Volunteer’s Week. Mr. Harman said that without community work and volunteering multicultural Australia wouldn’t have been as successful. Ms Pham acknowledged the work of CCCi volunteers, which enables CCCi to respond to the ever increasing needs of the elderly community.



Photo by Warren Duncan/Multicultural NSW



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