



Monthly Update July 2010

Hon. John Hatzistergos MLC
Minister for Citizenship

Message from the Minister

Friends,

This is the first short monthly update of what has been happening in the citizenship portfolio.

As the NSW Parliament is in its winter break, I have taken the opportunity to meet with various ethnic communities including Sudanese refugees in Lismore and Chinese newspaper editors in the Haymarket.

In the last month, the Kennally Government has also announced grants to the Somali community in Auburn, the Bhutanese community in Albury and other migrant groups in Bega, Griffith and Orange.

Before the break, the Government proudly passed amendments to strengthen the role of the Community Relations Commission and reaffirming the Government's commitment to promoting social cohesion.

I hope you find this short summary of July's highlights informative.

New Laws on Multiculturalism

Amendments were made to the Community Relations Commission and Principles of Multiculturalism Act 2000 in the last session of Parliament.

The amendments strengthen our commitment to shared values within our democratic society and underline the importance of a unified commitment to Australia by all citizens in NSW.

Moreover, the amendments enshrined the following principles of multiculturalism in statute:

- The people of NSW are of different linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds are free to profess and practice their own linguistic, religious, racial and ethnic heritage.
- All individuals should demonstrate a unified commitment to Australia, its interests and future and should recognise the importance of shared values governed by the rule of law within a demo-

cratic framework.

- All individuals should have the greatest possible opportunity to contribute to, and participate in, all aspects of public life.
- All individuals and institutions should respect and make provi-



TOP: Speaking with the Chinese community on Chinatown's famous Dixon Street Mall.

RIGHT: Shaking hands with guests at Le Sands restaurant where I worked as a waiter to help promote small business.



sion for the culture, language and religion of others within an Australian legal and institutional framework where English is the common language.

- All individuals should have the greatest possible opportunity to make use of and participate in activities and programs run by the NSW Government.
- All institutions of NSW should recognise the linguistic and cultural assets in the population of NSW as a resource and promote this resource to maximise the development of the State.

Other amendments include the creation of a clearer leadership role for the Commission in co-ordinating whole-of-government responses to emerging community issues and referral powers to the Anti-Discrimination Board of NSW.

Community Events

Serbian Day: I recently had great pleasure in joining the Serbian community at Bonnyrigg for an annual folkloric festival.

In my speech I told the community that the harmonious relations we enjoy in NSW allow us to live happily and freely together, celebrating our heritage alongside those of other backgrounds.

Other guests at Bonnyrigg Sports Club included my fellow NSW Parliamentarian and Fairfield Mayor, Nick Lalich, whose parents are from Serbia. Together we enjoyed a folkloric performance by children.

Greeting Sudanese refugees: In recent weeks I also met newly arrived Sudanese refugees in Lismore who were funded to join local sporting teams. The grant funding paid for registration fees and uniforms for young refugees who were experiencing severe financial hardship.

I believe participation in sport is a great way to promote community cohesion as it brings young people together and teaches them to work as a team. In particular, soccer is a good vehicle for involving new arrivals in their communities as many refugees played the game in their home countries.

The year the Lismore Workers Football Club received \$2,485 for registration fees and uniforms for 15 young refugee players. The Lismore Thistles Soccer Club received \$1,045

from Somalia, as well as other newcomers to Australia, as they put down roots, educate their children and make the most of what our State has to offer.

In particular, the funds for the Somali community will go towards a capacity building project which will include the recruitment of a part-time Somali-speaking development officer over three years. The development officer will work hand-in-glove with the local Somali community and provide advice on emerging issues to the Community Relations Commission."

The funding for migrants and refugees in general will go toward the Auburn Small Community Organisation Network, an organisation which promotes community cohesion, and the Community Hub, a shared office and meeting space.

Other recent grants:

- Bega Valley Shire Council has received \$66,000 from the Government for small and emerging communities.
- Griffith City Council has received more than \$64,000 from the Government to offer improved services to the newly-arrived migrants.
- Orange City Council has received \$60,000 from the Government for the fast-growing Sudanese community.
- Albury City Council has also received \$20,000 from the Government to provide services to the Bhutanese community in the region.

Helping Small Business

On a lighter note, I recently traded my office for a dining room when I stepped into the shoes of a restaurant waiter to help promote small business.

On the day I was joined many of my State and Federal colleagues who each give up a little of their time to take part in the NSW Business Chamber's annual Pollies for Small Business program in different Business locations across the State.

In my case, I worked as a waiter and cook at Le Sands Restaurant.

The restaurant on Grand Parade, Brighton Le Sands, is owned by the Antonopoulos family. The Pollies for Small Business program is also a great way to highlight the positive contribution made to the wider economy by small business.

Small businesses are the bedrock of local communities and I was pleased to have the opportunity to better get to know the day-to-day challenges businesses face. Small business suffered greatly during the global financial crisis and it was important to get behind the program and help as the economy recovered.

Yours faithfully,

to cover costs of eligible players. The Community Relations Commission has made similar grants available to 14 regional soccer clubs this year across NSW totalling almost \$30,000.

New Funding for Migrant Groups

Somali grant: The Member for Auburn Barbara Perry and I have proudly announced that Auburn City Council will receive almost \$150,000 to assist local migrant communities. Some \$129,000 will go toward a capacity building project for the Somali community and \$20,000 will go toward a "community network" which assists new migrants and refugees in general.

We announced the grant at Auburn Council alongside Mayor Hicham Zraika. The grants will assist people