

Rich Cultures - One Workplace
*Multicultural Development Association Inc. -
a non government organisation that works with and learns from
Australians, arriving as refugees and migrants.*

MDA 's Vision, Mission and Values:

- VISION: "A lead specialist multicultural agency for Queensland, working towards a society which values, promotes and celebrates cultural diversity."

- MISSION: "To deliver quality services to migrants and refugees in Queensland through

- o Service delivery
- o Advocacy; and
- o Sector and Community Development."

- VALUES: "We are committed to respect for human rights and the social justice principles of fairness, equity, opportunity, and dignity for all people."

The story of MDA so far...

Once upon a time 8 Australians, with different accents, dreamed of a fairer multicultural community in Queensland, at a few backyard BBQ's! Their dreams formed into reality in '1998' (in the Gregorian Christian calendar) when MDA was established and by mid '1999', MDA had an office and funded professional staff.

"MDA's establishment has provided a platform for people to challenge monoculturalism. The Management Committee, members and staff are keen to establish an effective and responsive structure to deliver client services and advocacy programs"

*Hurriyet Babacan as MDA outgoing President
MDA Annual Report, 2001.*

December 2001 -MDA initial vision remains resilient. As MDA's first Director offers:-

"Maintaining continued success is always harder than achieving the first success. We are confronted by yet another challenge. 'Where to go from here'. Let's continue with the efforts of pooling government and community resources and put real collaboration feasibly in sight".

Kelly Yip, Director 1998 - 2003

By '2002', MDA was resettling into larger offices, near a popular shopping centre that has one of the few Halal Butchers in Brisbane.

"This move was necessitated by the expansion of MDA services to include the new Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Services (alias IHSS) program and 4 more staff; and the Migrant and Refugee Employment project."

*Narayan Gopalkrishnan
Treasurers Report, 2002*

MDA staff were also working on -

- Systems advocacy particularly in the Health, Employment and Disability service systems,
- extending its settlement services and support for refugees & migrants who had achieved Visas that allowed them to permanently settle in Australia, and
- facilitating connections and community education across cultures based on the Community Development framework.

"Within the MDA family, we have established a staff structure that they have a combination of over 300 years of worldwide experiences in the multicultural and community development services arena. Among the 15 regular staff, the many casual bi-lingual community assistants and the multi-dimensional responsibilities that we have undertaken, we are cultivating a multicultural workplace that demonstrates the significance of inclusiveness as a factor for multicultural development..."

*Jose Zepeda as MDA President
MDA Annual Report, 2002*

Current Staff

Now, 7 years on from the conception of MDA, there are regular staff of about 50 people, who speak languages of; Kurdish, Turkish, Italian, Farsi, French, Arabic, Sudanese Arabic, Fijian, Taiwanese, Mandarin, Samoan, Korean, Japanese, Nuer, Nuba, Anyuak, Kirundi, Kishwahili, Kinyarwanda, German, Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian and other languages through our pool of additional "bi-lingual "community assistants.

MDA staff provide services -

- through our individualized support work , through professional services to people as they undertake the journey of settling into this unique country and new ways of living.
- through the advocacy service , including its significant reports of the issues people face eg in accessing appropriate Interpreting for basic services.
- including an Employment Traineeship program for people from backgrounds as migrants & refugees. Although they have rich life experiences, educational qualifications and work experience, the Trainees have experienced extensive barriers to employment here.

- through Community Development projects across the Brisbane area, which have worked in partnership with:
 - other non government organisations including; Tenants Union of Queensland, South Brisbane Immigration Community legal Centre, Diversity in Childcare, TAFE Language and Literacy services, some Neighborhood centers, the Queensland Program for Survivors of Torture and Trauma, MATCH Housing and Community Rent Scheme services, and other multicultural service agencies.
 - community leaders from groups of backgrounds from Afghanistan, Bosnia, Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Kurdistan, Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Sudan.

"With our commitment to social justice we are pleased to work alongside people to utilize their strengths and celebrate the positive contribution they make to community life. Key achievements for MDA have been largely due to our commitment to partnerships, our investment in our people and our skill in planning."

*Kerrin Benson, Director
MDA Annual Report, 2004 & 2005*

Current Sector Issues

A unique initiative across South East Queensland involved over 100 agencies and individual multicultural workers in the Community and Ethnic Agencies Network (alias CEAN). Through a series of consultations, research and a collaboration forum, CEAN identified the following issues, which continue to be unresolved:-

- "the current trend of Competitive Tendering ...has encouraged increased competition and less cooperation, dissected the service sector, devalued workers professionalism, created unfair employment conditions and encouraged unprofessional approaches that led to unacceptable service quality"
- "short-term funding means insufficient recognition of the process of community development and affects workers commitment in long term program planning and development"
- "biased and negative media coverage on multicultural issues has created impacts for the sector "
- "insufficient funding and resources has added pressure on workers performance and cost for advocacy"

"Building Stronger Voices." page 1 MDA. 2002

References available through MDA

- Annual Reports.
- "*Building Stronger Voices: A project report on the foundation for the Community and Ethnic Agencies Network*". MDA 2002
- "*A Call for Help. Understanding Ethnic Communities needs in relation to Emergency Services*' MDA 2004
- "*Child Safety Issues in Multicultural Communities*" MDA & QCOSS. 2005
- "*Childcare Issues Paper. Fair Play-Fair Go. One Size does not fit all*" By Supporting Families through Partnerships Network, 2004
- "*Job Network Providers.*" Discussion paper. MDA 2002
- "*Learning is for Life: A Project Report on the Needs and experiences of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Seniors* " MDA 2004
- "*Lost in Translation. A discussion paper on Interpreting Issues in Health Care settings in Queensland*" Community Health Action Group, convened by MDA 2004
- "*3 out of 4: Disability Issues within Multicultural Queensland*" MDA 2002
- "*Towards Successful Renting. Tenancy Education*" MDA, in partnership with the Tenants Union of Queensland. 2005
- "*Welfare Reform Response paper*" MDA 2000

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