

# Multicultural Youth Network

2016-17 Annual Report

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## 1. This report

This report provides a snapshot of the work of the ninth term of Victoria's Multicultural Youth Network. This term was from April 2016 – April 2017.

This report acknowledges the hard work and commitment of all members of the Multicultural Youth Network, and of the Victorian Multicultural Commission's Youth Commissioner, during this most recent term.

All members of the Multicultural Youth Network gave time and effort to advance the inclusion of young people from diverse backgrounds in Victoria, and did so with energy, commitment and a strong focus on engagement with young people.

## 2. The Victorian Multicultural Commission

The Multicultural Youth Network has a close and important connection to the Victorian Multicultural Commission.

The Victorian Multicultural Commission (or VMC) is the voice of Victoria's culturally and linguistically diverse communities and is the main link between them and the government.

Established in 1983, the VMC provides independent advice to the Victorian Government to inform the development of legislative and policy frameworks, as well as the delivery of services to our culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse society.

The VMC operates under the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*. The VMC consists of 12 commissioners: a Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, a Youth Commissioner, a representative of a community organisation and eight other members.

The Multicultural Youth Network is chaired by the VMC Youth Commissioner, and the network forms part of the VMC's approach to advising the Victorian Government on issues that matter to culturally diverse young people.

## 3. The Multicultural Youth Network

The MYN has been advising the Victorian Government on key issues affecting culturally and religiously diverse young people since 2007. The MYN completed its ninth term in April 2017.

MYN provides young Victorians with the opportunity to become more involved with government and the decision making process. Each year members join the network bringing with them fresh ideas, enthusiasm and a genuine desire to effect change.

The MYN has been engaged in a range of activities, consultations and initiatives that have allowed members to foster understanding and respect within the Network's membership, as well as with the wider community.

The MYN also helps in bridging the gap between the Victorian Government and Victoria's multicultural and multifaith young people. The work of the MYN is increasingly recognised and valued across communities as a positive channel for the active participation of young people.

MYN is chaired by the VMC Youth Commissioner, and is supported by the Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Division, in the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet.

#### 4. The Multicultural Youth Network Members

Members of the MYN represent a diverse range of communities including: Iranian, Indian, Ethiopian and Pakistani, and faiths, such as: Baha'i, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity.

The following MYN members were reappointed for their second term in April 2016 and concluded this term in April 2017 as part of the MYN:

Mary Nega  
Matin Ayubi  
Naima Hassen  
Philip Liberatore  
Priya Olivia Serrao  
Rida Aleem Khan  
Sagar Gandhi  
Vincent Giuliani

## 5. MYN achievements in 2016-17

Over 2016-17, the MYN participated and led a range of community engagement activities to promote harmony and foster understanding of cultural diversity, and to engage in discussions about issues that matter to young people. Below is a snapshot of these activities:

### Youth Leadership and Community Engagement

**Hosting Youth Mental Health Matters:  
A Forum for National Youth Week 2017**





As part of the National Youth Week, the MYN hosted a forum on youth mental health. Over 50 people were in attendance at the Immigration Museum, to discuss mental health and why it matters for culturally diverse young people.

To help facilitate an engaging discussion, the MYN hosted a diverse and interesting panel, including:

- Santilla Chingaipe, who facilitated the discussion. Santilla is an award winning journalist and documentary filmmaker.
- Aref Ramazari, a young Hazara man who sought asylum in Australia in 2009. As a passionate photographer and video storyteller, Aref uses his skills to share his story and contribute to the community.
- Claire Campbell, who is the Transcultural Capacity Building Team Leader at Action on Disability within Ethnic Communities
- Christine Bakopanos, who is a counsellor and advocate at Foundation House: The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture Inc.

The event was very well received by everyone who attended, and the MYN gained insights and information on mental health and wellbeing, in particular:

- what mental health and wellbeing might mean or how it might be interpreted for different cultures and ethnicities
- how a person's experience of settlement and of discrimination can impact a person's mental health and wellbeing
- the importance of building trust in opening conversations about mental health amongst young people
- strategies through education, shared activities like sport and cultural awareness training that can support improved mental health outcomes for young people.

To prepare for this event, MYN met with community-based organisations that support young people with their mental health, such as Foundation House and Orygen Youth Health. MYN members learnt about key issues for young people, service system responses, and best practice engagement with young people on this important issue.



## Participating in the Victorian Government's inaugural Youth Summit



During National Youth Week, a number of MYN members and the VMC Youth Commissioner, Tina Hosseini, attended the Victorian Government's first Youth Summit, held at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on 31 March 2017.



The Youth Summit is one of the Victorian Government's flagship projects to engage with young people under its Youth Policy: Building Stronger Youth Engagement in Victoria.

MYN members actively participated in a range of activities and discussions with other young people from across Victoria, talking about issues that matter to them with a focus on mental health, employment, education and training, and homelessness.

## **Presenting on cultural diversity and interfaith understanding**

In 2016, the MYN presented at Victoria University to assist students to understand the nuances of work with young people from diverse backgrounds, the barriers and challenges faced by young people from migrant or refugee backgrounds.

For four years, the MYN has been delivering intercultural workshops to students at the university. The presentations looked at Victoria's religious diversity and discusses issues relevant to young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. This year, MYN presenters chose to share their stories with the students.

MYN members also went on the road to Bendigo Catholic Church, to talk to school students about their faith stories and to share high school experiences.

## **Presenting at the Buddha Day and Multicultural Festival 2016**

The MYN had a very active role in supporting celebrations as part of the Buddha Day and Multicultural Festival, which was held at Federation Square.

MYN hosted a stall at this Festival to promote an awareness of Victoria's cultural diversity. MYN members provided snacks from various countries and played different types of music from around the world to promote cultural diversity.

As part of this Festival, a number of MYN members also presented at the Deakin's Edge to share information, stories and experiences that relate to their own faiths. MYN members talked and answered audience questions about their journeys as young people from diverse backgrounds and growing up in Australia.



### **AHEPA Youth event**

MYN members participated in NUGAS Victoria and AHEPA Youth's inaugural business breakfast.

University students, graduates, professionals and businesspeople had the opportunity to network and mingle and also join in a short Q&A led by our community's best and brightest professionals.

MYN members engaged with the Greek community and other professionals to understand the issues around youth unemployment.

### **Centre for Multicultural Youth End of Year Event**

MYN members attended an end-of-year event that facilitated a discussion on the current debate around crime and young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

The main address was delivered by Rob Hulls, Director at the Centre for Innovative Justice at RMIT University (former Attorney-General and Deputy Premier of Victoria).

## Cultural Diversity Week

### Premier's Gala Dinner

The Premier's Gala Dinner is a huge celebration that showcases the different stories, art and traditions which are now part of Victoria's social fabric.

The annual celebration brought together representatives from across government, the private sector and community members from diverse faith and cultural backgrounds to support Victoria's multicultural and multifaith focus.

This year five MYN members attended the Premier's Gala Dinner during Cultural Diversity Week festivities.



## MYN Celebration

### End of Term Celebration with Minister Scott and VMC Chair, Helen Kapalos

In April 2017, the MYN members shared an afternoon tea with the Minister of Multicultural Affairs, the Hon Robin Scott MP, and the Chair of the Victorian Multicultural Commission, Helen Kapalos. This event brought the MYN members together to celebrate and acknowledge the Network's achievements over the previous two years.

The Minister for Multicultural Affairs, shared reflections on why the MYN is an important network for promoting diversity and inclusion of young people. The VMC Youth Commissioner and Mary Nega, MYN member also reflected on their experiences of the MYN and the opportunities it provided.



## 6. Multicultural Youth Network in 2017

The MYN members in this report concluded their terms as part of the Network in April 2017.

The MYN will continue in 2017, with up to 20 new members commencing an 18 month term from mid-2017.

In this new term, the MYN will continue to seek opportunities to engage with communities on issues that matter to young people. The MYN will continue to advocate on issues identified by its members and other young Victorians, and work to increase understanding between Victorians from different faiths and cultures.

Enquiries related to the MYN can be sent to: [myn@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:myn@dpc.vic.gov.au)