

## **Ashfield SA Community Forum - 19th. Feb. 2008.**

**SEVA hosted the first ever Forum for the South Asian community in the Inner West Sydney area at the Ashfield Town Hall on 19th February 2008. The event was organised in partnership with the Ashfield Municipal Council and the Canterbury Bankstown Migrant Resource Centre and was funded by the Ashfield Municipal Council and the Ashfield Leagues Clubs.**

**The event attended by over 40 members of the community, community welfare service providers and services was very well received as evidenced from the evaluation forms filled in by the participants at the end of the 4 part sessions.**

**The program began with an acknowledgement to the traditional owners of the land by the MC for the event- Ashutosh Agarwal, and a welcome address by Councillor Marc Receretnam and presentations by representatives from the 3 host partners in Session One. Sessions Two and Three had presentations from service providers drawn from Health services, training Institutions in the welfare sector, Centrelink, Department of Education, Employment and Work place relations. Session 4 provided an opportunity for the participants to seek answers and clarifications from the panel to issues and concerns affecting them in specific areas and concluded with an evaluation of the event.**

**In welcoming the gathering, Councillor Receretnam referred to his knowledge of the issues affecting the migrant community in the area generally through his involvement in the Council's Ethnic Community Advisory Committee and as President of an Indian & Chinese Community from Malaysia Association in the inner west. He welcomed the initiative by SEVA to acquaint the migrant communities about the range of welfare services available to all migrants in the selected areas of the Forum.**

### **Session One.**

**I) After providing a brief overview of some of the activities of SEVA, Kalyan Ram from the organisation conveyed to the audience how the Forum was formatted specifically to highlight and focus on three specific identified areas - education, employment and health - the three main areas of concern for all migrants. He also sought to impress upon the need for the South Asian community to set up its own support structures and to build up capacities by taking up training in various community welfare services offered through**

courses run by Training Institutions such as TAFE, Access Group Training and others.

ii) Anthia Hart from the Ashfield Municipal Council provided an overview of the range of services available to the local community from the council and appealed to the community to increasingly avail of these services which are essentially for their benefit.

iii) Violet Roumeliotes, Manager Canterbury Bankstown MRC gave a brief history of the MRC and of the impact of various policies of the authorities on the range and nature of services rendered to all migrants through the MRC. She welcomed SEVA's initiative in organising the Forum for the SA community in the inner west region having regard to its increasing presence in the area.

## **SESSION TWO.**

i) Warren Shaw of Centrelink gave an overview of the different services delivered on behalf of DEEWR, FASCIA ( Dept. of Families, Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. The Two main functions highlighted by him were Income Support and Gateway to Job Network and also Support Services.

ii) Mauro Martinoli of DEEWR summarised and also clarified the programs and activities of various government agencies and departments involved in the area of Education, Employment and the range of services available through them. He pointed out that there were over 130,000 jobseekers from CALD Communities as at the end of 2007 on Job Networks Active list of which over 14,639 were Humanitarian Entrants.

Useful websites provided by him ..... [www.workplace.gov.au](http://www.workplace.gov.au) and [www.ajs.gov.au](http://www.ajs.gov.au) and [www.toolboxes.deewr.gov.au](http://www.toolboxes.deewr.gov.au)

iii) Jeanette Holloway and Jo Perks of CNC Women's Health, outlined the aims of the women's outreach clinics in areas such as improvement in sexual and reproductive health of women; improving women's social and emotional health; increasing women's awareness of health services available within the area. The clinics provides access to women of diverse cultural backgrounds to the health services by working in partnership with local organisations that provide access to these diverse communities.

## **SESSION THREE.**

1) Tom O'Brien of DEEWR ( LLN) covered the whole range of Language ,Literacy and Numeracy programs available to all migrants through various programs run by different agencies and providers.

**ii) Angela Mason of Multicultural Health Services referred to some of the issues faced by new migrants particularly with regard to any unexpected financial burden borne for any expensive and lengthy hospital based procedures and also in regard to preconditions and predisposition to specific health related issues in the early stages of settlement. Mention was also made in regard to the incidence of specific health issues such as Diabetes amongst the Indian migrant community. She emphasised the need for adequate health insurance in all cases and also for regular medical check ups with GPs.**

**iii) Karin Rule - Program Manager, TAFE NSW emphasised the Training Programs as a key factor of the Vocational Education and Training ( VET) system in Australia to meet the essential needs of the Industry, the community and individuals. She highlighted the sustained high demand within the country for child care, aged care workers in the community care system and also in the mental health, drug and alcohol abuse related care areas.**

**iv) Cassandra Caisey of Access Group Training explained the program run by their organisation**

#### **SESSION FOUR.**

**The Question and Answer session which followed the presentations had unfortunately to be curtailed due to the length and the time taken by the other sessions. However it was a lively one with a number of interesting queries raised.**

**Amongst some of the important ones that were raised at this session were:-**

**a) inability for students doing community welfare services training programs at TAFE to change mid term from one to another course depending on their interest and or abilities as they progress;**

**be) an apparent lack of coordination and seemingly fragmented nature of training programs offered on community welfare services by various agencies that tend to confuse prospective students;**

**co) difficulties faced by new migrants to navigate their way through multiple service providers/ agencies before they are able to identify the ones specific to their particular need;**

**do) lack of funding arrangements for new migrants in meeting unusual/ unexpected emergency requirements particularly during the early stages of settlement .**

**Synopsis of Evaluation / comments on the event from participants at the end.**

**# over 85% of participants observed the Forum to be well organised, relevant and useful;**

**# comments on the quality of presentations varied depending on the specific perceptions and needs of the individual participant;**

**# comments on the choice of specific topics of interest from the Forum also varied likewise;**

**# amongst other Topics and Issues of interest for future events were: -**

**- affordable housing;**

**- entrepreneurship training programs with mentors for skilled migrants;**

**- more culturally appropriate child care facilities and services suited to the specific migrant group;**

**- problems in adapting to relocation and hardships faced by Men as new migrants - social isolation;**

**- need for TAFE and other skills training institutions to run training courses taking into consideration the skills, needs and aptitudes of the migrant community;**

**- Forum enabled a better understanding of Government, community, private enterprise partnership;**

**- need for a Family related Forum - to look at family / relationship issues;**

**- need for developing community support structures.**

**# Attached to this report are copies of presentations from the speakers at the event - either in Pdf format or Power point format along with a few photographs.**