

Wyndham Humanitarian Network

Sudanese Sub-Committee

Presents

*Report of the Wyndham
Sudanese Community Forum*

Issues & Recommendations

April 2008

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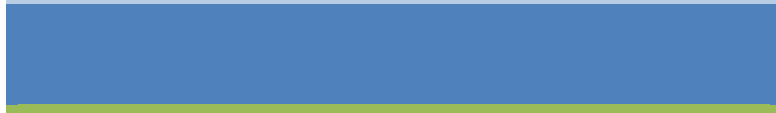
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One hundred and sixty-two South Sudanese men, women and children gathered at the Iramoo Community Centre in Wyndham Vale on the afternoon of the 6th of April 2008 together with a multitude of government and non-government service providers. They came to discuss and examine the complexity of issues confronting and challenging the Sudan-born community of Wyndham. Contributing positively to this event was the knowledge that it was the first time that virtually the entire South Sudanese community of Wyndham had come together in one place and was represented as one entity. The topics discussed at the forum included: Health, Police, Education, Family, Youth, Housing, Legal and Employment. The forum was funded by the Wyndham City Council - Community Access and Inclusion Team.

FOREWORD

1.1. What this report “Is”

This report is a collection of information gathered by facilitators without question or advice from the discussion groups that were held at the Wyndham Sudanese Forum on the 6th April 2008. The discussion groups focused on eight specific topics - **Health, Police, Education, Family, Youth, Housing, Legal and Employment.**

This report represents the feelings, expectations, issues and suggestions for improved service provision that the Wyndham Sudanese Community feel is required to better assist their settlement. This document is designed as a way to empower the Sudanese community of Wyndham by providing them with a means to have their voices heard. This report is also a call to action to government and non-government service providers to create inclusive programs, projects and policies that meet the particular needs of the Sudanese community in Wyndham.

1.2. What this Report “Is not”

This report is not a criticism or method for complaint of the current operating procedures and practices of government and non-government service providers in Wyndham - in fact it is the opposite. The Wyndham Humanitarian Network’s (WHN) membership and methods of practice and operating procedures could reasonably be viewed as a model of “Best Practice” for other local government areas to emulate.

This report is not a complete and comprehensive list of issues facing the Wyndham Sudanese Community but a “without prejudice” snapshot of information gathered from a Sudanese perspective on the afternoon of the 6th of April, 2008.

1.3. What does this Report seek to do?

This report seeks to provide government and non-government service providers, legislators, Federal, State and Local government with a document that addresses the issues related directly to the Wyndham Sudanese community. It is created with a view to improving and/or assisting in better meeting their unique needs, thus leading to re-engagement into the Wyndham community. It could also potentially be viewed as a cross-section of issues facing the wider Australian Sudanese Community.

INTRODUCTION

2.1 .The Forum

One hundred and sixty-two South Sudanese men, women and children gathered at the Iramoo Community Centre in Wyndham Vale on the afternoon of the 6th of April, 2008 together with a multitude of government and non-government service providers.

It was the first time that virtually the entire South Sudanese community of Wyndham had come together in one place and was represented as one entity. Of the community in attendance, 100 were adults and 62 were children, representing a great number of ethnicities and languages of the greater Sudan. Two interpreters (Arabic and Dinka) arranged by the Wyndham City Council and the Sudanese Community of Wyndham respectively were utilised.

The attendees came to discuss and examine the complexity of issues confronting and challenging the Sudan-born community in Wyndham, in particular those relating to Health, Police, Education, Family, Youth, Housing, Legal and Employment¹.

The forum was funded by the Wyndham City Council through the services of the Director of Community Services and the Social Inclusion and Planning Unit.

2.2. Why create a Forum?

In the months leading up to the formation of the WHN Sudanese sub-committee, a number of complaints were received by the Wyndham City Council Legislative Service and Werribee Police Station, pertaining to the behaviour of young Sudanese persons in the Wyndham Vale area. Complaints related to the unlawful distribution of rubbish and general misbehaviour of children in the street such as throwing stones, abuse and a perceived lack of supervision of young people.

The sub-committee subsequently consulted with Sudanese community leaders and discovered a number of families and individuals were facing a wider range of issues including attacks on their houses, racial taunts, abuse, unreported assaults, school bullying, lack of employment opportunities and a feeling of lack of support from government and non-government agencies and service providers. Further investigation of the issues revealed a general disengagement of the Sudanese community with the wider Wyndham community. Anecdotal evidence arising out of information provided to the sub-committee discovered that many were not seeking or were finding it too difficult to seek out educational services (upon completion of their 510 AMEP hours), health services, child care, family services, sporting clubs, and in some circumstances, employment.

This information follows the trend reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics' 2006 census that, "...among Sudan-born people aged 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 40.3 percent and the unemployed rate was 28.5 percent. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 64.6 percent and 5.2 percent

¹ Refer to Appendix B for the Wyndham Sudanese Community Forum Agenda

respectively...the median individual weekly income for the Sudan-born in Australia aged over 15 years and over was \$231, compared with \$431 for all overseas born and \$488 for all Australia-born².”

There are many factors affecting these statistics including the high proportion of Sudan-born persons still participating in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at the time that the 2006 census took place. At present, there are much fewer South Sudanese participating in these classes as most have since completed their 510 AMEP hours and there has been a slowdown of Sudan-born humanitarian entrants into Australia.

The sub-committee agreed that the Sudan-born community’s general disengagement with services and the relationship with the wider community had the potential to lead to more serious social issues and that re-engagement was urgently needed.

The sub-committee decided that the first step towards achieving this was to organise a community consultation forum that would allow the wider community, police, government and non-government services to listen to the voices of the Sudan-born community residing in Wyndham. The forum was structured so that we could best capture the Sudanese community perspective of the issues facing them in Wyndham, with the intention of creating this report to assist in their re-engagement.

2.3. Method of Gathering Information

All participants were required to complete a registration form and received a randomly allocated coloured name tag upon arrival. Children and young people not participating in the forum were supervised by Wyndham City Council’s Youth Services.

After the introduction, speeches and songs, the participants were informed that the colour of their name tag represented the discussion topic they were assigned to. The attendees were then moved to separate rooms where they were met by a group facilitator to openly discuss their topic. The eight discussion groups focused on **Health, Police, Education, Family, Youth, Housing, Legal and Employment**.

The issues raised by each group were gathered on butcher’s paper and later transcribed into a word document which was then forwarded to the group facilitators to extend upon.

2.4. Wyndham Humanitarian Network Sudanese Sub-Committee

The WHN Sudanese sub-committee was created as a result of issues affecting the Sudan-born Wyndham community tabled at the Wyndham Humanitarian Network meeting on the 4th of February, 2008, by the Wyndham City Council and Victoria Police Multicultural Liaison Unit. A call for an expression of interest for members resulted in the formation of the sub-committee.

The sub-committee met regularly over the following months to organise the Wyndham Sudanese Community Forum and ultimately this report. Meetings were chaired by Leading Senior Constable Richard Dove and minutes and administration attended to by Perla Protacio of the Wyndham City Council³.

² Refer to Appendix C, “The Sudan-born Community”, Department of Immigration and Citizenship

³ Refer to Appendix D for a list of WHN Sudanese Sub-Committee members

EDUCATION

Key Issues

- *Impact of age restrictions on completing secondary school*
- *Difficulty of combining study with work*
- *Difficulty for parents and students understanding a complex education system*
- *Children dropping out of school*
- *Lack of computer skills*
- *Lack of confidence and low self esteem*
- *No local access to classes to maintain first language*
- *Lack of assistance for parents to take control and help their children*
- *Difficulty having qualifications recognised and accessing employment in area of choice*

Description of key issues

Discussion of the key issues was lively and passionate and parents and young people who participated raised some very important points. Many issues were simply a lack of information, such as the request for homework clubs while others will require future action, such as lack of educational options for 20-24 year olds.

There is a feeling that there is a lack of educational options for 20 - 24 year olds who are too old to enter secondary school on arrival and too old for programs such as VCAL. Many would like the opportunity to take up schooling rather than go to work, but feel they are excluded from the secondary education system because of their age and excluded from the tertiary education system due to interrupted schooling. For many, adult VCE is not an option and higher level Certificate and/or Diploma courses are too difficult. Many feel forced into the workforce into jobs where they feel dissatisfied.

There is a strong expectation from families that young people will undertake part time or casual work to help support family still overseas. Many young people feel pressure to

contribute financially while studying, making it difficult to keep up with homework and assignments. Sometimes, there is pressure to leave school or study to undertake more work.

No access to a computer at home and lack of technology skills impact on young people's learning. Meeting school outcomes and study requirements is difficult without access to appropriate technology. Parents feel that they lack the technology skills not only to assist their children with school work but also for their own learning and employment purposes.

Parents feel strongly that their children are being placed in classes according to their age when they do not have the language, literacy or numeracy skills to cope with the level. They don't understand the practice of automatic promotion in Australian schools. Many parents held the belief that it would be better to start children in year levels according to their ability rather than their age.

Young people disengaging from mainstream schooling and 'dropping out' is an important issue for Sudanese youth and their families. The reasons for this phenomenon are varied and complex. Many young Sudanese feel pressure to work, for the reasons outlined above. Often though, disengagement by young Sudanese occurs as a result of lack of prior schooling or experiences of interrupted schooling which impact on the ability to cope with the academic demands of mainstream schooling, particularly in the senior levels (Years 10-12). Parents worry about their children losing confidence and self esteem and feel they need to be better supported at the school level than they currently are. Young people studying at tertiary level feel there should be more student support services available to them at TAFE and University, if they are to cope with the academic requirements expected of them.

Sudanese parents regret not being able to help their children with school work and want more opportunities available to them to improve their own skills. They also feel they need more parenting programs and assistance from service providers to help them "regain control" over their young people. Parents also feel it's important for their children to have the opportunity to maintain their first language and would like them to be able to access language classes in their local area.

Another issue which causes anxiety is that many Sudanese are not able to have qualifications or experience gained overseas, recognised at the same level or recognised at all in Australia. This causes feelings of frustration and Sudanese adults believe it makes it hard to move directly into employment. Many need to upgrade qualifications and feel it is a long and difficult process which can also be expensive.

Recommendations

- *Exploration of the education and training options for young Sudanese adults aged 20 to 24 years*
- *Targeted education programs or workshops to empower parents to understand the Australian education system*
- *Access to a language school in the local community for the maintenance of first language*
- *Improved student support services at secondary and tertiary levels*
- *Community development initiatives to improve access to information for Sudanese families around educational options available*

EMPLOYMENT

Key Issues

- *Language barriers*
- *Limit on time to undertake ESL classes*
- *Transport*
- *Insufficient community run language classes in accessible locations*
- *Lack of employment for people with little or no English*
- *Insufficient community enterprises run by Sudanese community groups*
- *Lack of formal qualifications and avenues to prove work skills*
- *Accessibility of childcare*

Description of key issues

Discussion around employment highlighted the considerable frustration that many Sudanese experience and how many have struggled for some time to overcome the barriers that impact on them getting a job.

Language barriers are seen as a significant barrier to employment. Many Sudanese have limited English language skills and lack confidence speaking English which discourages them from researching (telephone or face-to-face), enquiring about, and applying for work. There is a general feeling that the standard 510 hours of AMEP classes is insufficient for many adults who have no initial knowledge of English on arrival. Difficulty learning English to a level suitable for employment is an issue facing the Sudanese and many feel additional classes organised within their local community and held at convenient times would be beneficial.

The different languages and dialects spoken within the Sudanese community, means that the provision of information and services in different languages can be fragmented and inconsistent. There is a general feeling that information about government and employment services, vocational courses, job opportunities and job search techniques can vary. Difficulties understanding and following complex procedures and forms, and lack of understanding of Australian cultural values and expectations in the workplace are further significant barriers for the Sudanese.

There is a strong belief that discrimination against Sudanese job applicants is very common. Many feel there is a lack of work opportunities for people with limited English and limited vocational skills. Many are frustrated at the lack of recognition of an individual's skills and experience gained overseas. Very few Sudanese have any formal qualifications, yet they may have a variety of skills, training, and experience gained overseas. There is a consensus that these are generally not recognised by Australian employers as they are difficult to verify. Several group members feel there should be the opportunity to have these skills assessed by other means.

Community enterprises were discussed with some Sudanese feeling that they are a good employment option. Community enterprises commonly involve jobs such as gardening, catering, home handyman services, and bicycle or appliance repairs. Many feel that supported community enterprises managed by the community and for the community are worth pursuing.

Lack of private transport and the inaccessibility of public transport is a big issue which prevents many from accessing employment. Many employers, vocational courses, government and employment services are not readily accessible and getting to them can be very difficult and time consuming. This is a significant barrier for those Sudanese who reside in Wyndham Vale.

Access to affordable childcare is another major barrier to employment. Many referred to the cycle of poverty whereby poor economic resources make it difficult to access childcare, find reliable transport, and undertake vocational training. This in turn impacts on the ability to find employment, perpetuating the lack of resources. There is concern that this situation leads to poor education and alienation of young Sudanese eventually contributing to ongoing intergenerational poverty.

Recommendations

- *Targeted training of staff in job networks to skill them to work with the Sudanese*
- *Explore community enterprise initiatives as employment options*
- *Lobby government for improved public transport and childcare services*
- *Improve access to information around employment and training services*

FAMILY

Key Issues

- *The family's ability to provide adequate assistance for children's education*
- *Lack of information on culturally appropriate methods of discipline*
- *Breakdown in communication within the family unit as children turn 18 years old and become independent*
- *More support for single parents needed*
- *Desire to feel socially included in the wider community*
- *A need to feel safe at home*

Description of key issues

The discussion on family was focused primarily on external factors that affect the family unit.

Significant concerns were expressed regarding children's education and the child's ability to cope with the class level they are enrolled in. Due to their own lack of English proficiency, parents felt they are unable to assist with the education needs of their children (this issue has been expanded upon under 'Education').

Some Sudanese parents felt there is a lack of information regarding the appropriate methods to discipline children. Culturally the Sudanese employ different methods of discipline. Conflicting messages are being received as some parents feel they are being asked to simultaneously increase and decrease the level and tenacity of their discipline.

In Sudan, the 18 year old is not immediately recognised as an adult. As 18 years in Australia constitutes an adult, this has created a degree of communication breakdown and conflict within the family as cultural norms are confronted.

Single Sudanese parents living in Wyndham face countless challenges. Fulfilling the responsibilities of family can be severely limited due to language barriers. In some cases, children with English language skills are forced to interpret for their parents with service providers. This can leave the parent with a sense of powerlessness, and the child bearing the weight of family responsibilities.

A strong desire was expressed to be recognised and welcomed by the wider community. In Sudan, it is customary to talk with your neighbours and develop a relationship. This does not

often occur in Australia and it is a very isolating experience for many Sudanese settling in to a new country.

Incidents of vandalism, bullying and racial taunts have created a feeling of isolation and fear amongst the Sudanese community. Some parents fear leaving their teenage children alone in the home as a result.

Recommendations

- *Increase English support programs tailored to Sudanese adults*
- *Expand after school hours learning support programs*
- *Ensure professionalism of service providers by using interpreters to communicate with parents*
- *Family relationship campaigns (in conjunction with a relevant legal education campaign) to educate the Sudanese community about culturally appropriate methods of discipline in Australia*
- *Community development initiatives to build relationships between the Sudanese community and the wider Wyndham community*

HEALTH

Key Issues

- *Lack of knowledge and understanding about 'western' diseases*
- *General mistrust of GPs*
- *Desire to learn more about self-management and prevention*

Description of key issues

The concepts of 'western' versus 'African' diseases generated much of the discussion on health. There was a desire to learn more about preventing and screening 'western' diseases such as cancer and diabetes. Furthermore, concerns were raised about culturally conflicting messages for diseases that were seen as 'western' and not traditionally 'African'.

For example, skin cancer is regarded as a 'western' disease and the Sudanese are confused with the conflicting 'slip, slop, slap' messages portrayed in the general community and the advice given to the African community to spend more time in the sunlight to account for Vitamin D deficiencies.

Similarly, there is confusion amongst the community in regards to anaemia, particularly in women. One participant asked, "How did I get this disease in my body?" Some Sudanese groups do not eat a lot of red meat due to religious and/or cultural reasons, but are concerned that they may have anaemia and confused as to how and why they've got it.

There is general scepticism and distrust amongst the Sudanese of the GPs they access in Australia. Some feel that Africans are treated differently and that GPs "just don't understand 'African' diseases". There is a general distrust of doctors due to past experiences of the South Sudanese.

The Sudanese often equate appropriate treatment by GPs as receiving medication. When they are prescribed self-management and prevention advice or referred onto other doctors or specialists, they feel they are not being adequately treated by their GP.

Healthy eating and physical activity were briefly discussed, though not nearly enough.

Recommendations

- *Community development initiatives to improve trust between GPs and the Sudanese community*
 - *Targeted health campaigns aimed at African communities, especially for diseases with conflicting messages (e.g. Vitamin D)*
 - *Health literacy campaign to educate the Sudanese community about 'western diseases' and self-management, prevention and screening (including information on physical and recreation activities)*
 - *Conduct a follow up health consultation with the Sudanese community of Wyndham, to explore the issues in more depth*
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HOUSING

Key Issues

- *Most Sudanese people are living in private rental properties or are home owners (with a mortgage)*
- *Lack of knowledge about accessing housing in Australia*
- *Lack of advocacy regarding the quality of rental properties*
- *Lack of awareness of how to access the support they need*
- *Supply shortage of public and private housing*
- *Home loan rates and repayments are causing financial hardship*
- *Limited understanding of home loans and their implications*

Description of key issues

The discussion on housing revealed a lack of basic knowledge and understanding amongst the Wyndham Sudanese community about how the private rental system operates, how to access it, as well as the rights and responsibilities of the tenant. Difficulty in achieving success when applying for private rentals is a common experience. Value for money is not being realised in many cases, and many Sudanese community members find it difficult to access the help they need. An expression was made for increased advocacy from local government on this matter.

Public housing is seriously limited in the Wyndham area. Many of the Sudanese participants in the group expressed a lack of knowledge on how to apply for public housing and obtain the support they need to find suitable accommodation. Sudanese families are often quite large, making it even more difficult to find suitable accommodation.

The home owners (with mortgage) in the group felt particularly vulnerable in their commitments due to a lack of understanding about mortgage options and responsibilities, rates of interest and fluctuations, the property market, legal rights and ramifications, and a need for greater financial and budgeting skills. This has resulted in financial hardship for many families.

Recommendations

- *Practical and culturally appropriate education campaigns to educate the Wyndham Sudanese community on public and private housing, and home ownership*
 - *Targeted education campaigns to the Sudanese community about the the legal, financial and personal ramifications of home ownership*
 - *Advocacy from service providers and local government to increase public housing in Wyndham to ensure security and sustainability of residents*
 - *Relationship building, campaigns and initiatives between real estate agents and the Wyndham Sudanese community*
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LEGAL

Key Issues

- *Lack of awareness and understanding about basic legal rights and responsibilities, including those relating to racial vilification*
- *Incomprehension of acceptable and unacceptable methods of disciplining children*
- *Misunderstanding of the legal role of Federal, State and Local government bodies*
- *Lack of knowledge on how to access legal assistance, legal aid and family assistance*
- *Misunderstanding of the role of the police in providing legal assistance*
- *More information needed on resolving neighbourhood disputes, including property damage*
- *More information and education needed about the ramifications and responsibilities of entering into contracts*

Description of key issues

The legal discussion group revealed a lack of understanding and comprehension about the legal system in Australia, including how laws are made, enforced and interpreted. The cultural transference of legal concepts and application of the law from Sudan to Australia has created confusion and misunderstanding of what is acceptable behavior according to the law in Australia. There is further miscomprehension about the different roles and responsibilities at the three levels of government and their legislative and enforcement bodies.

A lack of basic knowledge and understanding about Australian law amongst the Wyndham Sudanese community has wider implications on the different issues confronting them. For example, there is great confusion about appropriate methods of disciplining children. Parents have an enhanced fear of disciplining their own children because they feel the discipline methods used in Sudan are not accepted or allowed in Australia. This fear and misunderstanding has led to a general inertia around discipline and the feeling of having lost control of their children.

Generally, the Wyndham Sudanese community possesses insufficient knowledge or expertise required to access legal advice, aid and assistance. In many circumstances they are completely unaware that there is a legal body that can represent them. Some Sudanese stated that it was the police responsibility to inform them and assist them in accessing legal avenues.

Participants in the discussion group expressed a need for more information on neighbourhood dispute resolution and their rights in relation to racial vilification. Other than the police, it was generally viewed that there were no other avenues of representation, complaint or restitution.

Consumer rights, in particular in relation to entering into contracts were another legal facet that created many problems and misunderstanding. Areas that were of particular concern were mortgage, building, housing and car loans and credit contracts, as well as the legal and financial responsibility for signing up to phone and energy services.

Recommendations

- *Programs, projects and studies by the legal fraternity focusing on the Sudanese community which leads to greater education and awareness of law processes and legislation in Australia*
- *Legal pamphlets and documents translated into relevant Sudanese languages*
- *Promotion and distribution of DVDs, pamphlets and other existing information which can assist the Wyndham Sudanese community gain better knowledge, understanding and access to legal advice around relevant issues*
- *Targeted community presentations conducted by legal representative bodies on how to access legal representation in Wyndham*
- *Information and presentations conducted by Consumer Affairs or other relevant bodies to the Wyndham Sudanese community on how to access relevant legal consumer information and make complaints*
- *Relevant government and support agencies to conduct, present and develop programs around issues relating to racial vilification and neighbourhood dispute resolution*
- *Exploration of the concept of a permanent Consumer Affairs outpost and a Legal Aid CALD Communities Officer located in Wyndham*

POLICE

Key Issues

- *Incidents of physical and emotional abuse by local residents and property damage aimed at the Wyndham Sudanese community*
- *Feedback and better communication should result from reporting issues to police. At times, the Wyndham Sudanese community feels their issues and complaints are not being taken seriously*
- *Complaints about the Wyndham Sudanese community are often exaggerated and sometimes false. Sudanese who commit crimes and do the wrong thing do not necessarily represent the wider Sudanese community*
- *General fear of the police by the Wyndham Sudanese community - police could be encouraged to be friendlier*
- *Basic customer service in banks, shops and other services is often denied to the Wyndham Sudanese community*
- *It would be desirable for police to use interpreters when issues are being reported by the Wyndham Sudanese community*
- *Police are not always responsive to complaints*

Description of key issues

The concepts of policing were viewed by the Wyndham Sudanese community as being central to the solution of their issues. Due to a general perceived lack of security and safety within the community, the Sudanese indicated that police were required to do more to ensure they were not targeted for crime and harassment. There is a general lack of confidence, fear and mistrust of police and authority due to previous experiences in Sudan and experiences prior to arrival in Australia.

Experiences of racism generated much of the discussion. Many families are reluctant to leave their homes during the day because of the perception and fear that it is unsafe to do so. In some extreme circumstances families were sleeping together in living spaces within the home to feel safe and secure. Some families reported that they had been subjected to constant abuse and property damage.

The Sudanese felt their starkly different physical appearance made it difficult to blend into the wider community thus leading to a number of issues including racial abuse and discrimination. For example, there is a perceived inequality in accessing and attaining basic customer service in banks, shops and other services as compared to the rest of the community. The Sudanese community believes that it is or should be the police's responsibility to tackle racial abuse and discrimination.

In circumstances when members of the Sudanese community have contacted police about an issue, their English proficiency has created a barrier to explaining the full extent of the problem or incident. As a result, police sometimes do not take the matter seriously or spend extra time and resource investigating what has actually occurred rather than acting on the complaint. It was felt that police should use telephone interpreters in order to improve the communication between police and members of the Sudanese community.

Concerns were raised in relation to circumstances when police have been called and either did not attend or were late to attend to the complaint. In some instances the police also failed to tell the community member of the result of the complaint. It was raised that the police can sometimes present as unfriendly, causing fear within the Sudanese community.

Negative and stereotypical reporting and generalisations about the Sudanese in the mainstream media created concern and frustration amongst the Wyndham Sudanese community. It was expressed that Sudanese people are generally a trustworthy, moral community but they are often represented in the media as being a problem. Sudanese people who commit crimes or do the wrong thing do not represent the wider Sudanese community. In fact, they are more likely to be rejected by the community itself. It was stated that Sudanese who do the wrong thing should not be represented as "Sudanese" by the media because other people who commit criminal acts are not represented by their nationality.

Recommendations

- *Conduct a follow up police forum or consultation(s) with the Sudanese community to explore policing issues in more depth*
- *Police presentations, including two-way communication opportunities, made to the Wyndham Sudanese community (for example at local church gatherings, English classes and through local agencies) to assist in better informing and educating the community about the role of the police in Victoria, their limitations and procedures*
- *Professional development of police members at the local station on issues affecting the Sudanese community with a focus on cross cultural awareness and understanding*
- *Further community development programs involving or including police and Sudanese persons such as camps, concerts, cultural and dance celebrations, presentations and driver education programs*
- *Attendance of police in uniform at Sudanese cultural events and celebrations as a strategy to break down the barriers between the police and the Wyndham Sudanese community*
- *Provision of a communication pathway between the Sudanese community and local police through representatives meeting on a regular basis and exchanging information*
- *Advocacy for police use of Telephone Interpreter Services for CALD victims of crime and persons requiring assistance*

YOUTH

Key Issues

- *Lack of transportation*
- *Education and traineeship opportunities for young people*
- *Information about programs for newly arrived young people*
- *Sponsorship and grant opportunities*
- *Communication to parents*
- *Programming of activities and services for young people*

Description of key issues

There were two discussion groups held at the forum regarding youth issues. The first group consisted only of adults and the second group with young people aged 12 – 19 years.

The key issues that adults felt were most pertinent to youth related to education, sport and recreation activities.

In regards to education, the adults felt that Sudanese youth should be placed in classes according to their knowledge and previous schooling level rather than by age. They felt there should be greater access to traineeships and apprenticeships for youth (these issues are further discussed in 'Education').

The adults felt that Sudanese young people have limited opportunities for sport and recreation due to costs associated with joining clubs. Sudanese parents feel guilty for not being able to provide their youth with the opportunity to participate in sport and recreation. They are often unable to meet the costs associated with participation (for example uniform and subscription fees) and cannot provide transport for their children to and from activities. They feel there are either limited or no public transport options for their young people to access sport and recreation activities and events. They suggested service providers provide transport for young people to events and activities.

The parents would like their young people to be more active and to participate in extra curricular activities. However, this is not always possible due to overlapping programs being delivered by service providers. They also feel that flyers relating to sport and recreation should be translated so that they can understand and be involved in their children's activities (for example, membership forms and parental consent forms) rather than relying on their children to translate the information for them.

Parents didn't understand how programs can only be directed at certain age groups. Age-based activities or programs mean that not all of their children can participate in activities. They wanted more programs that can cater for families with large numbers of children spread across a number of age groups so that all their children can participate together in the one activity or program.

The main issue raised by Sudanese young people themselves, was transportation. They are aware of programs and services provided, however, they are not able to access them due to lack of public and private transport, especially for after hours programs. The young people relied on walking as their main mode of transportation to any activities, services or programs. They often walk in a group with other Sudanese young people for safety reasons to access extra curricular activities and as a result this has inadvertently led to them being subjected to racial abuse and accused of being a 'gang'.

The young people felt frustrated at not being able to access programs they wanted to or could be involved in, such as programs run at the Youth Resource Centre. The older youth felt they were further restricted in participating in activities because of the responsibility of having to take care of their younger siblings. The young people also expressed a desire for service providers and the community to provide opportunities to attend field trips as a group (For example, attending football matches).

Recommendations

- *Improved communication between service providers to better program extra curricular activities targeting Sudanese young people (e.g. homework clubs, sports, music) and to avoid duplication of services and schedules*
- *Provide information to service providers on existing funding and grant opportunities for newly arrived young people to play sport*
- *Create more sponsorship and funding opportunities for newly arrived young people to participate in sport and recreation*
- *Advocacy on the need for public transport in the Wyndham area for youth to access services, structured programs and extra curricular activities*
- *Improve access to information about traineeship and apprenticeship options for young people and their parents*
- *Provide opportunities to take Sudanese young people on field trips*
- *Greater internal communication within service providers (including schools) regarding sport and recreation opportunities and programs for newly arrived young people*

AFTERWORD

Since the forum, several issues raised on the day have already been followed up or are in the process of being followed up.

Spirit West Services successfully applied for a School Focused Youth Services grant to run a leadership project with Sudanese youth at Mackillop Catholic Regional College and Sudanese children at St Andrew's Primary School in partnership with Wyndham Youth Services. This project is due to commence in Term 3, 2008.

Wyndham City Council has funded the membership of 15 Sudanese youth with the Werribee 'Bees' Soccer Club. This included assisting them with membership fees, uniform and equipment.

The Education working group of the Wyndham Humanitarian Network took up the issue of educational options for 20-24 year olds. The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) funded a forum which took place on the 19th of June, 2008 entitled "Towards a Bright Future: Exploring the Education and Training issues facing 20-24 year old Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants in Wyndham." A report has been written up following this forum and is available on request.

The Wyndham Humanitarian Network is in the process of developing an action plan based on recommendations made in the body of this report.

The Wyndham Humanitarian Network Sudanese sub-committee will continue to meet as a means to address the issues facing the Wyndham Sudanese Community.

Appendix A: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
DHS	Department of Human Services
DIAC	Department of Immigration and Citizenship
ESL	English as a Second Language
GP	General Practitioner
Refugee	The United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, to which Australia is a signatory, defines refugees as people who “are outside their country of nationality or their usual country of residence; and are unable or unwilling to return or to seek the protection of that country due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.”
Sudanese	The ‘Sudanese’ referred to in this document are those residing in the City of Wyndham and it is not intended to generalise the Sudanese population in Victoria as a whole. The Sudanese population in Wyndham is itself a diverse group and was represented by various tribes on the day.
VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
WHN	Wyndham Humanitarian Network
Youth	A young person between the ages of 12 – 25 years

Appendix B: Forum Agenda



And the
Wyndham Humanitarian Network

**A JOURNEY OF UNDERSTANDING
(A FORUM to listen to the voices of Sudanese in
Wyndham)**

Date: 6 April 2008
Time: 1:00 - 4:00pm
Venue: Iramoo Community Centre
84 Honour Avenue
Wyndham Vale

PROGRAM

1:00 - 1:30	Arrival and Registration	
1:30 - 1:40	Master of Ceremonies	L/S/C Richard Dove
1:40 - 1:45	Welcome	Wyndham Mayor, Cr Kim McAliney
1:45-1:50	Victorian Multicultural Commission	Andrew Vaugh-Young, Policy Officer, VMC
1:50 - 2:20	Listening to Sudanese Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Mary Reik▪ Ajak Kwai
2:20 - 2:50	Workshop	Community breaking down into groups
2:50- 3:10	Presentation of output from each group	
3:10 - 3:20	Dinka song	Ajak Kwai
3:20 onwards	BBQ and refreshments and service providers engaging with the community members	Everyone

Appendix C: The Sudan-born Community

The Sudan-born Community

Historical Background

The Sudan-born are currently one of the fastest growing groups in Australia. Before 2001 they included a number of skilled migrants. However, since 2001 when the Census recorded 4910 Sudan-born in Australia, more than 98 per cent have arrived under the Humanitarian Programme.

Drought, famine and war have caused large numbers of Sudanese refugees to flee to neighbouring countries. Australia has assisted in resettling some of the worst affected people from the region. The Australian Government has accepted large numbers of migrants from the Sudan and other countries under the Humanitarian Programme in recent years.

In the last 10 years around 20 000 Sudan-born people have made Australia their new home. Most live in Victoria and New South Wales and, to a lesser extent, Queensland.

The 4910 Sudan-born people in Australia at the 2001 Census made up 0.1 per cent of the overseas-born population.

Today

Geographic distribution

The latest Census in 2006 recorded 19 050 Sudan-born people in Australia, an increase of 287.7 per cent from the 2001 Census. The 2006 distribution by state and territory showed Victoria had the largest number with 6210 followed by New South Wales (5980), Queensland (2400) and Western Australia (2020).

Age and sex

The median age of the Sudan-born in 2006 was 24.6 years compared with 46.8 years for all overseas-born and 37.1 years for the total Australian population. The age distribution showed 26.6 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 24.4 per cent were 15-24 years, 36.4 per cent were 25-44 years, 10.2 per cent were 45-64 years and 2.5 per cent were 65 and over.

Of the Sudan-born in Australia, there were 10 320 males (54.2 per cent) and 8730 females (45.8 per cent). The sex ratio was 118.2 males per 100 females.

Ancestry

In the 2006 Census, the top three ancestry responses* that Sudan-born people reported were, Sudanese (12 680), Not Stated (1420) and African, so described (890).

In the 2006 Census, Australians reported more than 250 different Ancestries. From the total ancestry responses*, 0.1 per cent responded as having a Sudanese ancestry.

*At the 2006 Census up to two responses per person were allowed for the Ancestry question; therefore providing the total responses and not persons count.

Language

The main languages spoken at home by Sudan-born people in Australia were Arabic (51.2 per cent), Dinka (23.6 per cent) and African Languages, nec (5.5 per cent).

Of the 18 040 Sudan-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 67.0 per cent spoke English very well or well and 30.3 per cent spoke English not well or not at all.

Religion

At the 2006 Census the major religious affiliations amongst Sudan-born were Catholic (6830 persons), Anglican (3590 persons) and Islam (2480 persons).

Of the Sudan-born, 0.4 per cent stated 'No Religion', this was lower than that of the total Australian population (18.7 per cent). 2.5 per cent of the Sudan-born did not state a religion.

Arrival

Compared to 67.9 per cent of the total overseas-born population, 10.3 per cent of the Sudan-born people in Australia arrived in Australia prior to 1996.

Among the total Sudan-born in Australia at the 2006 Census, 10.8 per cent arrived between 1996 and 2000 and 73.4 per cent arrived during 2001 and 2006.

Citizenship

At the 2006 Census, the estimated rate of Australian Citizenship for the Sudan-born in Australia was 70.9 per cent. The estimated rate for all overseas-born was 75.6 per cent. This rate includes adjustments for people not meeting the residential requirement for citizenship, temporary entrants to Australia and underenumeration at the Census.

Median income

At the time of the 2006 Census, the median individual weekly income for the Sudan-born in Australia aged 15 years and over was \$231, compared with \$431 for all overseas-born and \$488 for all Australia-born. The total Australian population had a median individual weekly income of \$466.

Qualifications

At the 2006 Census, 38.8 per cent of the Sudan-born aged 15 years and over had some form of higher non school qualifications compared to 52.5 per cent of the Australian population. Among the Sudan-born, 15.5 per cent had Diploma level or higher* qualifications and 7.5 per cent had Certificate level qualifications. From the Sudan-born, 8160 had no higher non school qualification, of which 66.4 per cent were still attending an educational institution.

* Diploma level or higher qualification includes Degree level or higher, Advanced Diploma and Diploma level.

Employment

Among Sudan-born people aged 15 years and over, the participation rate in the labour force was 40.3 per cent and the unemployment rate was 28.5 per cent. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 64.6 and 5.2 per cent respectively.

Of the 3850 Sudan-born who were employed, 17.9 per cent were employed in a Skill Level 1 occupation, 6.2 per cent in Skill Level 2 and 7.3 per cent in Skill Level 3. The corresponding rates in the total Australian population were 28.7, 10.7 and 15.1 per cent respectively.

Jointly produced by Multicultural Affairs Branch and the Program Statistics and Monitoring Section of the department.

All data used in this summary is sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing. Sources for the Historical Background available at [Community Information](#)

[Summaries: Bibliography](#)

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Appendix D: Wyndham Humanitarian Network Sub-Committee Members

Richard Dove – Victoria Police Multicultural Liaison Officer and Chairperson of the Wyndham Humanitarian Network Sub-Committee

Jennie Barrera – Werribee Community Centre Manager and Chairperson of the Wyndham Humanitarian Network

Perla Protacio – Wyndham City Council Community Access & Inclusion, Team Leader

Kiemi Lai – Engaged Communities Coordinator, Spirit West Services Western Bulldogs

Sally Ryan – Program Support Worker, New Hope Foundation

Fabiola Campbell-Fraser – Community Safety Officer, Wyndham City Council

Michelle Lalor – Community Access & Inclusion Project Officer, Wyndham City Council

Kate Waters – Health Promotion Officer, ISIS Primary Care,

Chitlu Wyn (Moses) – Case Officer, Foundation House

Craig Murray – Legislative Services Coordinator, Wyndham City Council

William Daw – Community Guide, New Hope Foundation

Elias Tsigaras– Deputy Director, New Hope Foundation

Nyadol Nuol – Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI)

Daniel Musa – Leader/ Chairperson of South Sudanese in Wyndham Group

Aman Mashak – Sudanese Elder, Wyndham

Lisa Quast – Counsellor, ISIS Primary Care

Pauleen Catania – Administration Officer, Wyndham City Council

Michelle McDonald – Wyndham City Council Social Planning Coordinator