

# ethnicvoice

newsletter of the albury-wodonga ethnic communities council inc.



Read about the board members inside!

## Welcome!

Welcome to the first ever edition of 'ethnic voice', the quarterly newsletter of the Albury-Wodonga Ethnic Communities Council (AWECC). *Ethnic voice* brings you all the latest multicultural news, events, and programs happening across the Albury-Wodonga region. 2015 is set to be a busy, yet exciting year, with strategic planning, policy development, fund raising, community advocacy, events and programs all on the coming agenda.

Inside this edition we take a closer look at the newly elected AWECC board, the chairman

shares a personal message, and we check in on what happened at the AWECC's 1st Annual General Meeting held in December. We also take a look at some of the upcoming events and programs to look forward to in 2015.

## Your Voice

The AWECC is the new voice for Albury-Wodonga's ethnic and multicultural communities. It is a member-driven, community organisation dedicated to empowering people of all ethnic backgrounds, to help them realise their greatest potential through equal opportunities for participation in all aspects of life.

The AWECC is focused on advocating passionately for the needs and interests of the communities and wants to know your views, your challenges and your successes. If you have something to say, then please contact the AWECC; we would love to hear from you!

How about becoming an AWECC member? As an AWECC member you have a unique opportunity to help the communities achieve improvements in areas such as education, employment, settlement and social cohesion. See page 7 for details on how to become a member.

Enjoy reading your first edition of *ethnic voice*!

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# Introducing the AWECC

## Message from the chair

By Teju Chouhan

Welcome to the summer 2015 edition of the Albury-Wodonga Ethnic Communities Council (AWECC)'s newsletter 'ethnic voice'. This will be our quarterly bulletin providing you with valuable information about what's happening in the little multicultural world of our own Albury-Wodonga region.

I am very excited to announce the election of a very strong inaugural board of AWECC which represents a wide spectrum of ethnic and cultural communities underpinning the fabric of Albury-Wodonga. As a team, we are very proud to represent the region which is often referred to as the 'birthplace of Australian multiculturalism' with its rich migrant history and heritage, alive at Bonegilla Migrant Centre. Congratulations all!

It is our firm belief that AWECC will provide a focus and a strong voice to the diverse communities of the Albury-Wodonga region, with their concerns and interests expressed at different levels of government. It has nearly been four years in the making. The ethnic voice of Albury-Wodonga has now been revitalised and this would not have been possible without



consistent support from the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria and the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia, so thank you! We also appreciate the widespread local support including that from both Albury City and City of Wodonga.

The AWECC is a member-driven, not-for-profit advocacy organisation. We represent ethnic and cultural communities, groups and organisations working closely with these communities promoting multicultural issues. Therefore I urge community members of Albury-Wodonga from diverse cultural and ethnic heritage to join forces with our organisation that advocates on their behalf, ensures newly arrived migrants and refugees have a smooth transition as they settle into their new lives, while assisting established migrant groups to influence policies that affect them.

I wish you all well as we step into the new year and hope this year brings renewed hope, optimism and a focus that will make a difference to the lives of diverse communities in the border. I invite you to join us. With you, we will continue to grow and thrive.

Happy reading!

## AGM 2014

In December AWECC members convened for the first Annual General Meeting (AGM). A number of special guests attended the event, including Mr Bill Tilley MP, Cr Michael Fraser of Wodonga Council, Cr Ross Jackson of Albury City and Mr Rod Klein from the Hon. Cathy McGowan Member for Indi's office. Cr Fraser and Cr Jackson gave inspiring speeches to wish the AWECC a productive and positive journey in 2015 and confirmed support from their respective councils.

The AGM also saw the first board of directors elected, with a diverse and talented group of individuals elected to the board. Mr Teju Chouhan of Bhutanese heritage, was elected to the role of chairman.



The new board at the AGM, from left to right: (top row) Aung Syn, Vijay Kuttappan, Brett Sanderson (project coordinator), Hasitha Fernando, Carol McQuade, Moses Ceraman, Sachin Sachdeva; (bottom row) Teju Chouhan (Chairman), Emery Mutela, Harka Bista, Sue Portors, and Mayssa Powell (Deputy Chair).

Ethnic Communities Council can be protected and their concerns expressed to government." The 11 Board members will serve a two year term. We wish them success for the year ahead!

of Victoria's former CEO Mr Ross Barnett, lent his support to the Board —"we have long believed that it's time that Albury-Wodonga's diverse communities again had a voice so their interests

Did you know, that 1 in 10 Albury-Wodonga residents were born overseas;

Half of these residents came from non-English speaking countries.



## Meet the AWECC Board

### The Albury-Wodonga Ethnic Communities Council Board of Directors 2015



Left to right: Sachin Sachdeva, Aung Syn, Sue Portors, Hasitha Fernando, Vijay Kuttappan, Brett Sanderson (project coordinator), Mayssa Powell (deputy chair), Teju Chouhan (chairman), Carol McQuade, Moses Ceraman, Harka Bista, and Emery Mutela



### Teju Chouhan (Chairman)

Teju was born in Bhutan and is of Nepalese origin. He has lived in Albury-Wodonga since 2008 and is an active member of the community. Teju is the current president of the Bhutanese Association in Albury and is a transition support teacher at Wodonga Senior Secondary College. He is also studying a social work degree at La Trobe University and is a professional Nepali interpreter. Teju has been involved in various boards and committees; including, the Federation of Ethnic Communi-

ties Councils of Australia (FECCA), Department of Justice CALD Advisory Committee, Board Member of the Thurgoona Community Centre, and Bhutanese Association Leadership Team. He was also a participant in the Leading the Way leadership program and completed Certificate IV in Governance.

A respected leader in the community, Teju has strong skills in networking, media relations, community development and advocacy; In his spare time he volunteers for various organizations such as St Vincent de Paul Society and Murray Valley Sanctuary Refugee Group. An excellent choice for chairman, Teju is considered to be collaborative, hard-working, and dedicated to the community, with a can-do approach to problem solving. Teju lives in Wodonga with his wife and they are awaiting the birth of their first child in February!



# Meet the AWECC Board

## Mayssa Powell (deputy chair)

Mayssa regards herself kind of like a 'liquorice allsorts'; Turkish by descent, Lebanese by birth, Arab by race, Syrian by decree, British by marriage and Aussie by choice! Mayssa has lived in Wodonga for 15 years with her English husband and her daughter. She was educated in Syria, England and Australia and has a BA in French Literature.

Mayssa has lived in, and has extensive experience working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities in England, Syria, Lebanon, Papua New Guinea and Australia, where she worked in International Centres, tertiary institutes and local government. She has worked in administration roles within community development at Wodonga Council and Wodonga TAFE over several years. Mayssa is trilingual, and can speak English, Arabic and French. She taught Arabic in England and currently still works as a professional Arabic interpreter, for various government agencies and a range of migrant clients, including those living in the community and within detention centres. Mayssa has previous experience as a board member, when she was the secretary for the Albury Wodonga Multicultural Resources Centre and was the deputy for the municipal

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recovery manager on the Wodonga Emergency Management Committee.

A recent participant in the *Leading the Way II* leadership program, Mayssa was a key member of the organising committee for Harmony Day celebration's in Wodonga last year. She has completed a Certificate IV in Governance.

Mayssa has travelled extensively worldwide and has considerable empathy for people of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. She brings exceptional organisational skills and a wealth of experience to the AWECC Board.

## Sachin Sachdeva (treasurer)



Sachin was born in India to Hindu parents and was raised in a culture that believes in equality of women and men, and all life forms. He says he is a "very liberal person at heart." Sachin has lived in the Albury-Wodonga region for three years and currently works at Aldi supermarket's. He has previously managed his own small business, is a qualified accountant (masters in accounting) and has a certificate IV in governance, which he received after completing the *Leading the Way II* leadership program.

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Sachin enjoys working with people from different cultural backgrounds; a highlight of his time living on the border was his involvement as a member of the organising committee for the Cultural Diversity Week and Harmony Day events in 2014. Sachin has a great interest in information technology and reading. He lives in East Albury with his wife and their young son.



# Meet the AWECC Board

## Moses Ceraman

Moses is a Sri Lankan born Australian and has been a resident of Albury-Wodonga for almost



nine years. Moses is a financial professional working for Mars Petcare Australia in Wodonga as the Design to Value Leader for Asia-Pacific. He is currently studying for a MBA in Marketing. Moses' previous experiences include Ernst & Young and Dilmah Teas, and has considerable experience in business management and management consulting. He has held several management and board positions in Australia, Poland and Sri Lanka.

Moses' community experience includes over ten years as a volunteer for Youth for

"A BUSINESS LEADER AT MARS PETCARE, MOSES HAS CONSIDERABLE BUSINESS AND CONSULTING EXPERIENCE"

Christ in Sri Lanka, former management committee member for LEAD in Wodonga, former President and Vice President of the Parents & Friends Network at Victory Lutheran College. He is also an active member of the Baptist Church in Wodonga.

Moses lives in Leneva with his wife and three children.

## Sue Portors

Sue is an American-Australian, of German and English descent. Having lived in Australia with her family for almost 20 years, Sue currently works as a Development Supervisor (land subdivision) at North East Water, where she has worked since 2005. Sue has many strengths to bring to the AWECC including project management and organisational skills, developing relationships, and negotiation. She also has a degree in psychology (minor in social work).

Sue has a strong connection with the Albury-Wodonga community through her involvement as a long-standing committee member of a local soccer club (secretary and registrar), a volunteer coach with the *Midnight Basketball Program* and assisting and coaching a local refugee soccer team. Sue has also volunteered at an orphanage in Nepal, and aspires to return to Nepal and Uganda as a volunteer this year. With a diverse family (some family members are Korean), and many friends of various ethnic backgrounds, Sue has an insight into the needs of people from diverse backgrounds. Sue lives in Albury.



## Carol McQuade (secretary)

Carol is a Latin-American born in Colombia, South America. She has been living in Albury-Wodonga for 7 years and in that time has built a strong connection with the ethnic communities, particularly the refugee community in her role as a case manager in the Humanitarian Settlement Services with the Multicultural Council of Wagga Wagga. With great enthusiasm, administration skills and her experience settling on the border, Carol brings practical insights to the AWECC board. Carol lives in Wodonga.

Did you know the most spoken languages in Albury-Wodonga other than English are:

German, Italian, Croatian, Nepali and Serbian.



## Emery Mutela

Emery was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). He has lived on the border for four years. Emery works in a family day care centre in Albury as an administration coordinator and is also studying for a diploma of youth services at Wodonga TAFE. As a current member of the Albury Wodonga African Union, Emery has had the opportunity to work with different communities, learning about other cultures, and sharing what he has learnt about Australian culture with other members of the African community.

Emery is interested in improving services for migrants and for providing events for the people to enjoy, particularly the youth and families. Emery is a volunteer with St Vincent de Paul Society, helping settle refugee families in the area.

Emery lives in North Albury and is married with five children.

## Vijayakumar Kuttappan

Vijay was born in India. After completing a bachelors degree in forestry, Vijay was one of thirty students selected from around the world by the European Commission to pursue a master's in environmental sciences, policy and management. This course offered Vijay an opportunity to study at four European institutions located in Hungary, Greece, Sweden and England. After successful completion of the course, Vijay was selected as a visiting research scholar at the Environmental Law Institute in Washington DC to research about deforestation issues.

Travelling is one of Vijay's hobbies; Having trav-

elled to many countries, Vijay developed an interest in issues faced by migrants in their adopted home countries. This interest led him to pursue research on migration at Charles Sturt University. Vijay's research examined the extent, drivers and implications of migration by taking Indian migration as a case study example. This theoretical knowledge of migrant and asylum seeker issues, along with his empirical knowledge and experience working with migrants is something which will help the AWECC better understand and serve the community.

Vijay has a special interest in project development, policy formulation, issues faced by migrants/refugees settling into regional areas, and community



engagement between the CALD communities and the local population. Vijay brings a perspective of life as an international migrant student living on the Border.

He currently lives in Lavington.



## Aung Syn

Aung is a proud Australian having lived in the country for five years. Aung was born in Myanmar (Burma) and has also lived in England and Thailand, before making Wodonga the home he says he has no intentions of leaving! Aung is a freelance civil engineer and has a degree in engineering from University of Nottingham in England. He lists his strongest skills as project management, book-keeping, and technology/computers. Aung is an active community member having taught martial arts, coached a local refugee soccer team, and has volunteered in Burma. Aung embraces the diversity of cultures and likes to travel to different places. He likes to help newly settled migrants

when they arrive. Aung's father is a well respected GP on the border, particularly with the migrant communities due to his experience with refugee health. Aung makes a great addition to the AWECC board.



## Harka Bista

Harka was born in Bhutan and spent 19 years living in a refugee camp in Jhapa District, Nepal. Harka was resettled in Albury-Wodonga in 2010.

Since arriving in Australia, Harka has completed a certificate III in spoken and written English and is currently studying a qualification in disability services. Harka now works at a nursing home and has been a board member of the Bhutanese Association in Albury since 2011. He has also received a certificate IV in governance, after successfully completing the *Leading the Way II* leadership program.

Determined and committed, Harka says he will work hard to cooperate with board members to achieve the AWECC's goals and to encourage a more diverse participation within the community. Harka believes in trust and hard work and likes to participate in community activities, including supporting and assisting members of the broader community through volunteerism. Harka enjoys travelling, reading the newspaper and writing articles. He has a wife and two children.



## Hasitha Fernando

Hasitha was born in Sri Lanka, moved to Australia more than ten years ago and has lived on the border for over five years. An active leader in the Sri Lankan community, Hasitha founded the Albury/Wodonga Sri Lankans Association in 2010 and has been the president since. He commenced his career as a trainee with Ernst & Young Chartered Accountants and graduated with a bachelor of business administration (accounting major). Having worked for financial companies in Melbourne and Albury,

he now operates his own business offering financial consulting and accounting services. Hasitha is a member of the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT), a committee member of the Albury/Wodonga Sri Lankans Buddhist Association Incorporated and was a co-founder of Alumni of the University of Sri Jayewardenepura (VIC, ACT and NSW).

Hasitha enjoys sport shooting and playing golf. He is married with three daughters aged 12, 10 and 9. His wife Sarjee is a GP in Albury.

## Want to make a difference this year? ...join the AWECC!

As a member of the AWECC you are in good company!  
As a member you will be helping with our goals to make our cities an even better place for our ethnic communities to learn, work and play!

- ⇒ **Individual memberships only \$10 per year!**
- ⇒ **(Corporate memberships only \$50 per year!)**

Will you help in 2015!

Join now by calling the AWECC project coordinator on (02) 6022 9325  
or email the secretary at: [awecc@wodonga.vic.gov.au](mailto:awecc@wodonga.vic.gov.au)



Coming up...



Harmony Day celebrates Australia's cultural diversity. It's about inclusiveness, respect and a sense of belonging for everyone.

**Saturday March 21**

# HARMONY DAY



## cultural diversity week

Proudly presented by the  
Victorian Multicultural Commission

**14 to 22 March**

**Cultural diversity week is a popular event on the multicultural calendar.**

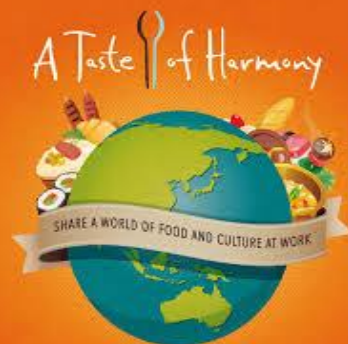
**With events and programs happening across Albury & Wodonga, there is sure to be something for you to see and do!**

**Look out for the calendar of events coming soon!!**

**Celebrate your workplace's cultural diversity. Register your workplace, choose a day and time, and ask your workmates to bring a dish to share! It's that easy!**

**Visit: [tasteofharmony.org.au](http://tasteofharmony.org.au)**

**16 to 22 March**



### **What does diversity and racism mean to you?**

During the month of March, the Talking Difference Portable Studio will be visiting Wodonga Library; the project will create opportunities for the general public to discuss how race based discrimination has affected their lives, their sense of identity, and their community.

**Wodonga Library — March 12 to April 6**



### **Contact us**

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**Follow us: [facebook.com/alburywodongaec](https://www.facebook.com/alburywodongaec)**

**Website coming soon!**

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Supported by:

