

8.4 CULTURAL DIVERSITY WEEK - 'A TASTE OF HARMONY' (ETH6)

Submitting Councillor: Cr Lo

NOTICE OF MOTION

1. *That Council notes the events organised for Cultural Diversity Week and Harmony Day 15 – 22 March 2009.*
2. *That Council approves Council's participation in the new initiative 'A Taste of Harmony'.*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of events organised for Cultural Diversity Week and Harmony Day between 15 – 22 March 2009 and about Council embracing the new initiative 'A Taste of Harmony'.

BACKGROUND

Cultural Diversity Week, (a State Government initiative), is celebrated annually in the month of March. It also encompasses the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racism on 21 March.

Harmony Day, (a Commonwealth Government initiative), is celebrated annually on 21 March) and provides an opportunity for all Australians to:

- think about our community's success as a multicultural society and
- re-commit to continuing respect, good will and understanding between all Australians of all backgrounds and say no to racism

A 'Taste of Harmony' is a new initiative introduced by the Scanlon Foundation, a philanthropic organisation, which supports a number of social cohesion research projects.

DISCUSSION

Monash City Council is committed to Cultural Diversity and to the promotion of inclusion, respect, equality, equity and understanding. The City of Monash is a culturally and linguistically diverse community and is ranked as the 5th highest Local Government Area in Victoria in terms of its cultural diversity.

- 39.7% of the Monash population is born overseas
- 33.9 % is born in a Non Main-English speaking country
- 38.6% speak a language other than English at home and
- 71.3% are affiliated with a religious faith (24.7% Catholic, 10.3% Anglican, 9.3% Orthodox, 5.2% Uniting Church, 5.3% Buddhism, 3% Hinduism and 1.6% Islam) (source: Victorian Multicultural

Commission, 2007, Population Diversity in Local Councils in Victoria: 2006 Census)

Key countries of birth of Monash residents include Greece, Italy, England, China, Malaysian, India, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Germany, Indonesia, Poland, South Africa, Egypt, Croatia, Hungary, Korea and Sudan.

Monash City Council supports, values and promotes this diversity through its Multicultural Framework and Action Plan, which is currently being reviewed and updated. This is a key Council policy document that is pivotal in driving Council's response to cultural diversity including the support and promotion of good community relations.

The Multicultural Framework and Action Plan outlines key initiatives and actions that specifically support and celebrate the cultural, religious and linguistic diversity in Monash. These actions include but are not limited to the annual festivals and events and other significant days of cultural celebrations.

During Cultural Diversity Week 2009, Council will hold the following events:

1. Oakleigh Festival – Sunday 15 March

The Oakleigh Festival is a celebration of Monash's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. This is reflected in the active engagement and participation of many ethnic and multicultural groups and organisations of Monash.

2. Flavours of Monash – Sunday 15 March

The 'Flavours of Monash', which will be presented at the Oakleigh Festival, bring together people from diverse cultural backgrounds through 'story telling' of their settlement in Australia and sharing of traditional recipes. The 'Flavours of Monash' event also promotes and celebrates Monash's diversity and raises awareness of the value and contribution migrants and refugees have made and continue to make to the Monash community.

3. Presentation by author Arnold Zable – Wednesday 18 March

This presentation will be held at the Oakleigh Library and will focus on 'Writing ones own cultural history and the migrant experience'.

4. Launch of the Monash Interfaith Gathering – Thursday 19 March

This event will be held at the Monash Civic Centre.

5. Presentation by Mark Wang, Chinese Museum – Thursday 19 March

This bi-lingual presentation will be held at the Glen Waverley Library and will focus on the Chinese history in Melbourne.

6. New initiative – ‘A Taste of Harmony’

Whilst Cultural Diversity Week and Harmony Day are celebrated in the wider community, ‘A Taste of Harmony’ specifically targets workplaces and recognises and celebrates the rich cultural diversity within Australian workplaces.

Food is one of many ways to experience another culture, as it brings people together and provides the opportunity for engagement with and learning from one another. In addition it boosts staff morale, strengthens relationships, contributes to a more engaged and spirited workforce and builds a culture of respect and inclusion.

By participating in a ‘A Taste of Harmony’, Council recognises and embraces the benefits of a culturally diverse workforce both for Council business and the Monash community at large.

It is being proposed that Council organise a lunch at Council premises where members of staff will be invited to ‘bring a plate’ with food that reflects their cultural and ethnic background. The ‘A Taste of Harmony’ event will also be used as an educational opportunity to promote to staff Council’s commitment to cultural, linguistic and religious diversity through the display and dissemination of information of relevant policies, projects and other initiatives including profiles of key ethnic communities represented in the City of Monash.

Through the ‘A Taste of Harmony’ initiative, Council will further engage with local businesses and organisations and encourage them to embrace and celebrate the cultural diversity within their workforce. This will provide further opportunities to build and improve relationships with Council. A Taste of Harmony will be officially launched at the Oakleigh Festival.”

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This report is consistent with Council’s Multicultural Framework and Action Plan 2006-2008 and the Monash Council Plan 2006-2010.

FINANCIAL

The proposed events in this report will be met within existing resources.

CONCLUSION

It is recommended that Council note the events organised by Council to be held during Cultural Diversity Week and endorse participation in the new initiative ‘A Taste of Harmony’.