

YANQ Multicultural Youth Issues Update

Sudanese young people and Public Space

This is a brief update on the progress made by YANQ's Multicultural Development Officer in advocating for the public space needs of Sudanese young people in Queensland.

Background

During 2003-2004, members of the Multicultural Youth Network Queensland (MYNQ) repeatedly reported complaints by their Sudanese youth clients and friends of being harassed by police and other groups and individuals when hanging out in public spaces. In response, YANQ engaged a Sudanese consultant and organised meetings and regional visits to further investigate and document the issues.

The outcome of the investigation resulted in YANQ publishing a research paper titled *New Kids On the Block: Making space for Sudanese young people in Queensland* in October 2005. More recently, several factors or events have led to state and local governments to respond to the issue of public space and Sudanese young people:

- State Government's initiative to develop African and Pacific Islander Community Engagement Strategies;
- Issues raised at the Sudanese Community/Queensland Police Consultative Group meetings on young people and public space;
- Brisbane City Council's proposal for a basketball court for Sudanese young people in Yeronga;
- Conflict between Sudanese young people and young people from other cultural groups reported in public spaces such as Brisbane's South Bank.

Copies of YANQ's publication were distributed to selected state members of parliament in Townsville, Toowoomba and Brisbane, and all Brisbane City Councillors. Additionally, copies of the publication were sent to director generals of the following state government departments:

- Education Queensland
- Department of Employment and Training
- Department of Sports and Recreation
- Department of Police
- Department of Child Safety
- Department of Health
- Office for Youth
- Department of Communities and
- Multicultural Affairs Queensland

Follow-up Activities

In March 2006, YANQ's MDO received written responses on the research paper from a majority of organisations and individuals identified above. These responses also led to further meetings to progress the recommendations outlined in the paper. Specifically, key actions and outcomes achieved by YANQ's MDO during the period of February 2006 to April 2006 have included:

- YANQ was formally invited by the Minister of Multicultural Affairs to present on the issue of Sudanese young people and public space at Queensland Government's Interdepartmental Committee Meeting on the African and Pacific Islander Community Engagement Strategy in March 2006. The findings and recommendations made by YANQ will be incorporated into the development of the African Community Engagement Strategy.
- YANQ's MDO organised a meeting with Education Queensland to discuss opportunities for the use of public school facilities by the Sudanese community outside of school hours. YANQ's MDO also arranged for the African bicultural worker at Milpera State School and the president of the Sudanese Youth Association of Queensland to attend the meeting and discuss directly with the Director of Student Services Directorate to raise issues and concerns about Sudanese young people and public space. The Director agreed to publish an article on YANQ's research in the next issue of the Student Services Directorate's newsletter. YANQ's MDO was advised by the Director that negotiations to use school facilities will have to be done at an individual level with school principals. Subsequently, YANQ's MDO will continue to assist Sudanese communities through the Sudanese Youth Association and the bicultural worker at Milpera to develop agreements with selected schools.
- YANQ's MDO met with cross cultural liaison officers from Queensland Police and has been invited to attend upcoming Sudanese Community/Queensland Police Consultative Group meetings. Particularly, YANQ's research on young people and public space was perceived as being useful for informing the development of the basketball courts at Yeronga.
- YANQ's MDO met with Brisbane City Council's senior program officer for cultural & linguistic diversity to identify partnership opportunities in planning further programs or projects for African young people in Brisbane.

Where to from here?

YANQ's MDO will continue to undertake follow up actions in the next few months to ensure that relevant stakeholders commit to implementing the identified recommendations. YANQ's MDO also intends to communicate the outcomes of the negotiations with Education Queensland to Sudanese youth groups in Toowoomba and Townsville.

For further information, please contact Kate Morioka on 07 3844 7713 or at cald@yanq.org.au

A copy of YANQ's *New Kids On the Block: Making space for Sudanese young people in Queensland* research paper can be accessed from <http://www.yanq.org.au/index.pl?page=extra3>