



*Living in Between:
Diversity Education
through Storytelling*



Project report 2011

Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning

October 2011



Journeys

Nene Manasseh

Nene was born in Torit, Sudan, 3 months before war broke out and spent the next 10 years in refugee camps in Sudan then Kenya. She came to Australia as a refugee with her mother and 2 brothers to join her sister in 2005. Her father was killed by rebels during the war in Sudan and she has an older sister and brother that she has not seen since she left her home. Nene is now studying Community Services at the Polytechnic and aims to work where she can help other people to settle in Australia.



Homeland

Nene Manasseh

20

Born in Sudan.

When I was 3 months war came to my town.

My father was killed by the soldiers.

My mum took three of her kids and me and escaped.

My older brother and sister were taken by my uncle.

I have only seen them in photos.

I wanted to know what it would look like and what would happen.

It was a long trip and I didn't know what to expect.

What would my new life be like?

We arrived in Hobart; our friends were at the airport.

We hadn't seen them for six years.

We had a party for two days.

Then we had to settle.

Journey

I grew up in a refugee camp.

In the camp, people were not treated well and life was very hard.

There was a lot of violence, criminals and people were killed for their money and possessions.

We heard that the United Nations was helping the refugees go to Australia.

We waited to see if we could be accepted.

Arriving in Australia

We waited for four years. Finally we were accepted.

It was a great day for my family.

On the plane we were excited but nervous.

Living In Between

Settling in was a bit strange.

Everything was different.

I miss my friends and I didn't know how the system worked.

I started school, I made friends and I knew my life here would be okay.

I am getting used to Australian culture.

I am taking the good things from this culture and putting them with the good things from African culture.

It is great.

I know about 2 ways of living. I love it.

Now

I love the freedom here. The education system here is very good.

The teachers turn up. In Africa they didn't get paid sometimes so they didn't turn up.

We have a new chance here.

We have food and a house and I can go to school.

I can have a future here. I want to change the world.

I want people to know about what's happening in other countries in Africa.

I can do this here. Everyone is friendly, my family is safe, I feel a part of Australia and I have a place to call HOME.

Amony Elder

Amony was born in Sudan but grew up in Uganda. Both of Amony's parents died when she was very young and she came to Australia in 2008 with her younger brother and cousin as humanitarian entrants. Education is very important to Amony and her future plans include studying Community Services so she can help people and perhaps later to study at university.



Homeland

Amony. 18.
Born in Sudan,
But I grew up in Uganda.
I was only a baby
I know my family had to leave because of the war.
It was safe in Uganda, well safer than in Sudan.
My brother and I were alone.
My mum and dad had died.
It was sad to live without my parents. I had to learn to
do things by myself and look after my little brother.
We lived with my grandmother.
Uganda is a busy country.
Lots of people outside.
Kids playing everywhere. You didn't have to organise
you just went outside and played.
It was easy to fit in.
I had an aunt in Australia.
She sponsored us to come here.
Life was about to change for me again.

Journey

Saying goodbye was hard
So I didn't really do it.
Getting on the plane was really exciting.
It was my first time on a plane.
I had seen them in the sky and now I was in one.
Kids alone on a plane,
Going to the other side of the world
I found the courage to help my brother.
It was good. I felt free in the air.
Uganda was behind me.
Australia was in front of me.
But in the air I was free.

Arriving in Australia

My aunt was in the airport. I didn't know her...
Next thing she was hugging me.
Everything looked, tasted, smelt, and felt different.
Feelings all mixed up.
I didn't know how I would fit in.
School was hard. I was lonely. I was quiet.
People just passed me by.
I probably looked like I didn't want to talk
But I did.

Living in between

You know sometimes I do feel different.
Sometimes that is okay
But sometimes it makes me feel sad.
I think everyone likes to fit in,
To belong,
To be part of something.
Well me too.
I am African
I have a story, a language, a culture
This makes me who I am.
Now I am also Australian and every day
I Live in Between.

Now

I feel different now. I feel strong. I feel happy.
I feel I have a future.
So many things have happened to me.
Lots of hard things,
But they have made me stronger.
Now, I know, I can deal with hard things.
I am here. I am African. I am Australian.
I am brave. I am strong. I belong.
And I am me.

Dejen Gebreselassie

Dejen was born in a refugee camp in Sudan although his family are from Ethiopia. He came to Australia as a humanitarian entrant in 2004 when he was 11. He understands how hard it is to learn English and settle in a new country and would like to help others who are trying to settle in Hobart. He is a great long distance runner and in the future hopes to study fitness or aged care.



Homeland

*Dejen. Everyone calls me DJ
18
Born in Sudan
But my family is from Ethiopia.
Ethiopia is my homeland
but I have never been there.
I grew up in a big refugee camp.
I lived there for 10 years.
My Mum and Dad lived there for 30 years.
Everyone in the camp was waiting.
Waiting to get out.
Waiting for a country to say "we will accept you".
Waiting for their life to begin.
Of course we lived from day to day but
we couldn't dream about a good future.
I was 11 when we heard Australia had accepted
us.
It was incredible.
I was really happy
But then sad about leaving people behind.*

Journey

*We came on an aeroplane.
It took about 4 days of travelling.
Sudan to Cairo.
Cairo to Singapore.
Singapore to Melbourne and
then finally Melbourne to Hobart.
I remember my brother got out of the plane and he
said,
"We are here, we are in Australia"
I said "No, we are in Heaven".
This was my chance.
I had always wanted to see a kangaroo.
Now I could do this and all the other things I
wanted to do.*

Arriving in Australia

*When we got to Hobart it was winter and soooo cold.
My Mum started to wear 4 jackets.
I got used to it quickly. I only wore 2.
Our life was so different.
The language sounded scary.
It made me feel nervous because I didn't understand what
people said.
I had never been to school before.
It took longer to get used to this.
Writing, reading, rules, uniforms, teachers, students, books,
computers.
It was all new to me.*

Living In Between

*To live in between is very special.
Sometimes it is hard but now I can see that it can be good.
I want to respect both cultures, both my past and my future.
I want to remember my old language and learn my new one.
I want to understand Australia but also learn about Africa,
Sudan, where I lived and Ethiopia, my homeland.
This can all be confusing. It can make you tired.
It can make you frustrated but
As I said this is also exciting. I love sharing what I know with
others and I want to learn how other people live.*

Now

*I am studying at Hobart College now.
I have been in Australia for 6 years now.
Things are making more sense and I know how things work.
I have seen many kangaroos.
It takes a long time to learn the language and to adapt to a
new life.
At the beginning I just wanted to fit in.
I didn't want to be different all the time but I have learnt that
you have to be yourself.
I am from Africa; I do speak Amharic and Arabic and English.
I do have a past and I do have a story and
I want to share it with you so you understand.*

Vahideh Hosseini

Vahideh was born in Iran where her parents were forced to flee their home in Afghanistan. As a refugee in Iran she had no citizenship or rights which made accessing further education and jobs very difficult. Vahideh's father and older brother died in Iran and she was finally accepted as a refugee entrant to Australia in 2008. Her goal is to work in health or helping women in Australia or Afghanistan.



Homeland

Born in Iran

I lived in Tehran.

It was a busy, big and crowded city.

My ancestors are from Afghanistan.

Everyone has heard of Afghanistan

The war, the Taliban, the fighting, the danger.

That is why my family had to leave

To find a new place to live.

People in Iran were not friendly to Afghani refugees.

They would call out "Go back to your country".

This made me sad.

We couldn't go back but we couldn't find any human rights in Iran.

Journey

My journey was long.

It has taken 20 years to find a safe place.

First we tried to escape to Turkey two times.

We were caught.

Put in prison.

It was full of refugees,

Sad people trying to find safety.

I saw some terrible things.

I was 14.

I was so scared.

2 years ago I left Iran and came to Australia.

Finally I had the chance for freedom, safety and hope.

Arriving In Australia

The first thing I noticed was how clear the sky was.

It was beautiful, blue and endless.

The sky in Iran was grey from pollution.

I looked around at the trees, the houses, the water.

Everything was clean.

I felt like I could breathe.

I was full of happiness but I also felt sad.

It is hard to leave the place where you were born.

Living In Between

Language was the biggest problem for me.

I could say

"Hello. My name Vahideh"

And that was it.

I couldn't talk about the things I wanted to talk about.

Also I am Muslim and I wear a head scarf.

Sometimes I feel different.

I think people are looking at me like I am different.

You know this scarf is important to me.

I can't explain it but it is part of who I am.

It is not scary. It is just a scarf.

It's like a watch. If you don't wear it,

you feel like something is wrong.

Living in Between means questions.

I still don't feel Australian but am I Afghani or from Iran?

When will I be Australian? When can I call this my home?

Now

I'm here.

I am a student.

I am learning English.

I feel that Australia will be my home.

The people are good and friendly.

This makes me feel strong.

I look back at my life,

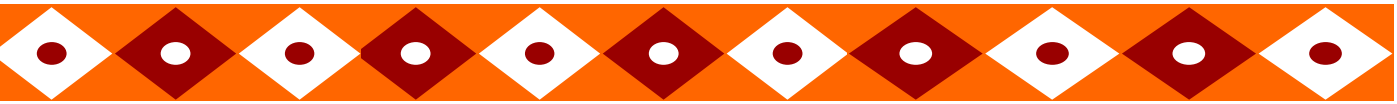
I am so happy that I am here.

I am so happy to be alive.

I have human rights here.

I really want to help others to feel this too.

Thank you for listening to me.



A report on the

***Living in Between:
Diversity Education
through Storytelling Project***

The project is a collaboration between the Hobart College Students Against Racism, the Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning and the Alcorso Foundation.

The project has been funded in 2011 by the Tasmanian Community Fund and the Sidney Myer Fund. A documentary DVD of the project has been funded by Amnesty International Australia.

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The Hobart College Students Against Racism can be contacted on Facebook.



Acknowledgements

Our first acknowledgement is to the young people in the **Students Against Racism** group for having the courage and passion to share their stories so that others might better understand, grow in compassion and break down the barriers built by ignorance. Some of their stories you have already read on the preceding pages.

The project participants are extremely appreciative of the funding provided by the following organisations for the 2011 project.



The **Tasmanian Community Fund** make grants to community organisations that *make a difference* by enhancing well-being and improving social, environmental and economic outcomes for the Tasmanian Community.



The **Sidney Myer Fund** is one of Australia's largest private philanthropic organisations. It aims to build a fair, just, creative, sustainable and caring society through initiatives that promote positive change in Australia, and in relation to Australia's regional setting.



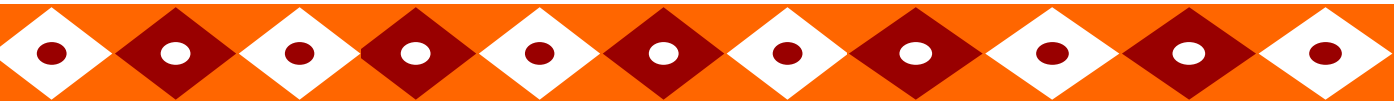
Amnesty International is a worldwide movement of people campaigning to protect human rights. Amnesty International Australia funded the making of a documentary DVD about the project through its Human Rights Innovation Fund.

The project managers also wish to acknowledge the contribution of the following people.

The teachers who facilitated the program at their schools: **Darryl Williams**, Cygnet Primary School; **Pam Lane** and **Nicola Smith**, Huonville High School; **Sally Schofield** and **Mark Bowden**, Cosgrove High School; **Janet Potter** and **Kate O'Reilly**, Kingston High School; and **Leanne Prichard**, St Aloysius Catholic College.

For providing information about the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community and racism in Tasmania and available cross-cultural programs: **Matthew Hingston**, **Laura Della-Pasqua** and **Danielle Campbell** from the University of Tasmania Support and Equity Unit; **Deiter Kohlmeyer**, Migrant Resource Centre; **Renee Valentino**, Pheonix Centre; **Al Hines**, Australian Red Cross; **James Norman**, Centacare Tasmania; **Emily Churches**, Colony 47; **Barnaby Smith** and **Richard Potts**, Department of Immigration and Citizenship; **Angela Pate**, **Jenny McQuilkin** and **Jill Slieters**, Glenorchy City Council; **Yabbo Thompson**, Carers Tasmania; **Annalisa Rigby**, Amnesty International Australia; **Flomo Bannah**, *Culture to Culture* group, Launceston.

John O'Shaughnessy, Victorian Department of Education & Early Childhood Development, for sending multiple advance copies of *Cultural Comprehension: Program Manual & Supplementary Information* which informed the section of this report on The Need for Diversity Education.



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A note on terminology

In this report we understand that it is important to identify the participants as being from a refugee or migrant background or as Australian born to show the mix of students in the project and to understand their comments. This has been a dilemma for our group. In our workshops we explore the labels refugee, asylum seeker and migrant and we ask audience members to reflect on these words and how they are used to label people. The program is all about building a shared understanding of what the words mean, even reclaiming the words so they are not seen as negative, but we also want to show that people who have come to Australia from different countries are so much more than a label that tells you how they entered Australia. *“When does someone stop being a refugee?”* is a question our group talks about a lot. We don’t know the answer. For this report we will identify people by their name and whether they are a humanitarian entrant (refugee background), migrant or Australian born. We will also include their country of origin or the country and culture they identify as their own, as many students were born or grew up in refugee camps outside of their own country.





Executive Summary

A love of food, music and stories is common to young people in most cultures. Students from five southern Tasmanian schools have this year had the opportunity to learn first-hand about the differences and similarities during a short course in diversity education.

The project is a collaboration between the Hobart College Students Against Racism (SAR), the Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning and the Alcorso Foundation.

The Hobart College group currently has thirty-five members most of whom have come to Tasmania as humanitarian entrants – from countries as diverse as Sudan, Afghanistan, and Bhutan. As well as music and food, they share their stories about settling in Australia and the pain and pleasure of working out how to live between two cultures.

The Students Against Racism group was first formed in 2008 at the instigation of their teacher, Gini Ennals, at Hobart College. Gini worked with the group to develop a dramatic presentation that explains why they left their homelands, the journey that brought them to Australia and their lives now.

Their aim in developing the presentation was to be proactive in the face of the racism they encountered, which they felt came from a lack of understanding about why asylum seekers, refugees and migrants were settling in Tasmania.

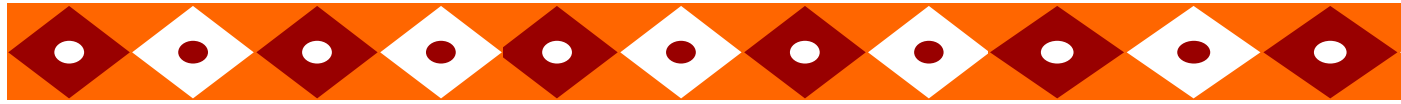
In 2009, the group won the Tasmanian Human Rights School Award "for reaching out to build understanding of people from different cultures". This was the beginning of their partnership with the Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning which created the award and works with schools to improve human rights and social justice education.

Australian born students have subsequently joined the Students Against Racism group. They have done this after witnessing incidents of discrimination that have shocked and ashamed them, motivating them to do something about it.

"By ignoring racism you're supporting it. You might not be saying or making racist actions but you are making the problem worse by not stopping it. We all have to stand up and stop it because racism is destructive." **Australian born member of SAR**

In 2011, funding was received from the Tasmanian Community Fund and the Sidney Myer Fund (through the Alcorso Foundation) to further develop the *Living in Between* presentation into a fuller diversity education program and to trial this program in southern Tasmanian schools. The program that was subsequently developed, *Living in Between: Diversity Education through Storytelling*, comprises workshops and activities that get students out of their chairs and engaging with issues around culture, diversity, discrimination and why people settle in Australia. Run over three school visits of ninety minutes the program gives primary and high school students the opportunity to get to know young humanitarian entrants in a safe, facilitated environment.

The funding also allowed one of the founding members of the SAR group, Nene Mannaseh, who has completed College and is now studying Community Studies at the Tasmanian Polytechnic, to be



employed as a trainee Project Officer. This position has provided Nene with an opportunity to gain valuable work experience in her chosen career.

Student, teacher and SAR group responses to the program have been overwhelmingly positive. This is evidenced in the moving work produced by the students (posters, poetry, essays and videos) and their comments in the program surveys. Samples of their work and comments are reproduced later in this report. Students also demonstrated significant improvements in their understanding of race and migration issues and in their attitudes to foreign people and cultures.

"I learned so much because it was young people teaching us. They made a real connection and they talked in a way we could understand. I had heard a lot about asylum seekers and refugees but actually meeting people who had been through that experience made me realise that this affects real people who all have their own story to tell. It was a great way to learn." **Isaac, Student, Huonville High**

A rewarding feature of the program has been that Australian born students, who themselves have experienced discrimination or the feeling of being an "outsider" (for example as the result of a disability or moving to a new school), find that they can empathise with the stories of the College students and are moved to tell their own stories.

"Our students developed greater empathy and understanding for people who arrive in Australia due to war, natural disaster etc. They now have knowledge as to why certain people have come to Australia and they have significantly improved their knowledge of other countries for example, geography, language, culture etc. Some of my students developed greater confidence in sharing their own personal experiences." **Kate O'Reilly, Teacher, Kingston High School**

SAR group members also benefited from being a part of the program:

"It's also a great learning experience for the Hobart College students as they are able to build their language and public speaking skills. It's a great boost to their confidence when they see that the school students are really interested in their stories and cultures." **Project Officer, Nene Manasseh**

The *Living in Between: Diversity Education through Storytelling* project has shown the power of education opportunities in schools to challenge myths, build knowledge and change the attitudes that contribute to racism and discrimination. There are currently no similar programs operating in Tasmania, but there is clearly a need and demand for them.

If funding can be found to continue the program in 2012 the group will be able to: work with more schools; create a SAR alumni group to continue the one-off workshops; mentor other CALD groups to undertake similar projects; and further develop teacher resources and skills to extend the value of the program.

"The Hobart College Students Against Racism group is one of Southern Tasmania's key change agents to support better educating our young people and the broader community on their backgrounds, stories, and the challenges they face. This group is one of the most powerful groups I have witnessed share their stories and journey, so that mainstream students can have an opportunity to meet with, discuss and relate to these young people, as people." **Georgi Marshall, Youth Worker, Migrant Resource Centre (Southern Tasmania Inc)**



Project Aims

The *Living in Between* presentation and the *Diversity Education through Storytelling* program that has grown from it were created to explicitly address the racism, prejudice and intolerance shown towards the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community in Tasmania, specifically to people who have come to Tasmania as refugees.

It seems evident that there are two primary causes of discrimination and racism in Tasmania.

1. A lack of understanding about why refugees, asylum seekers and migrants leave their homelands and settle in Tasmania. Without adequate knowledge, misinformation spreads and breeds a climate of fear towards these people.
2. A lack of opportunity for Tasmanians to get to know people who have arrived as refugees and openly explore the issues of racism so that the reasons for, and consequences of, racism are understood.

By combining the personal experiences of the Hobart College Students Against Racism and the education resources of the Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning the project aimed to:

1. **Recruit new members to the Students Against Racism group** and provide them with the opportunity to:
 - ♦ develop the *Living in Between* performance with the assistance of a drama teacher;
 - ♦ improve their self-confidence, communication and leadership skills;
 - ♦ organise, co-ordinate and deliver activities for other students; and
 - ♦ be proactive in the community and find their “voice”.
2. Provide other young people from diverse cultures with **positive role models** that will enhance their self-esteem and public image.
3. Build on the existing performance to **create a series of three workshops** that would provide Tasmanian students with:
 - ♦ an opportunity to meet and hear the personal stories of young people from diverse cultures and backgrounds;
 - ♦ real knowledge of why people are forced to leave their homelands, of the enormous numbers of displaced people around the world, and of Australia’s responsibility to help displaced people and those who seek asylum; and
 - ♦ a structured and safe environment to jointly explore the wider issues of discrimination and diversity in our community.
4. **Provide teachers with resources** to support further work within the school curriculum on issues of discrimination and diversity.



Project Steering Group

The 2011 *Living in Between* project has been guided and supported by the following organisations which brought to the project a variety of perspectives and expectations revealed in their comments quoted below.



Hobart College is a senior secondary school and part of the Tasmanian Academy run by the Tasmanian Department of Education. The College offers courses for Year 11 and 12 students studying for their Tasmanian Certificate of Education and Certificates for a wide range of careers. The **Students Against Racism** group was started at the College by English as an Additional Language (EAL) teacher, Gini Ennals, in 2008. She continues to mentor and develop the group which now has thirty-five members (28 humanitarian entrants and 7 Australian born). Gini has given her time to developing the SAR group because, *“the benefits for all involved are so great and so powerful. When I see young people teaching each other, building connections and challenging themselves, it is education at its best.”*

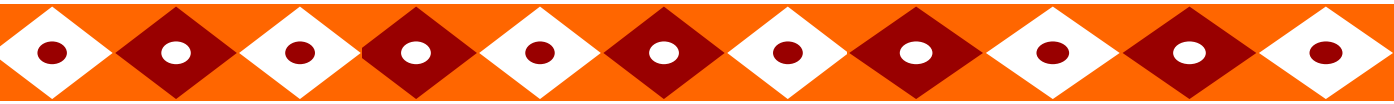


a fairer world
The Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning

The **Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning** is an independent not-for-profit organisation dedicated to educating for a fairer world. The Centre empowers schools and the Tasmanian community to take action for social justice, peace and a sustainable world future. We do this by providing access to education programs, training, resources and networks. Coordinator, Helen Hortle, wanted to work on this project because: *“We work across many schools and have seen the need for more programs that expose young Tasmanians to the growing diversity in our community. While the circumstances of the schools differ – from those in regional areas where students have little exposure to people from different cultures to areas such as Glenorchy and Kingston where refugees are being settled - their needs are similar; the opportunity to explore difference and discrimination in a safe environment where facts and myths can be openly discussed.”*



The **Alcorso Foundation's** mission is to identify individuals and organisations that demonstrate vision, courage and a determination to make a positive difference in their community, and assisting them in that endeavour. Its programs span across the arts, environment and social justice, providing opportunity through awards, residencies, fellowships, and resources. Executive Officer, Denise Robinson, fully endorses *Living in*



Between believing it to be extremely important on several levels. “Most importantly it is a project that aims to circumvent the potential of racism. Taking humanitarian entrant students to regional and suburban schools allows resident students that have not had exposure to refugees to meet them on their ‘home turf’. It also allows refugee students to see what it is like for students living in a regional or remote area of Tasmania resulting in a sharing of personal stories and experience. Resident students get to understand what it’s like for a young person to have to settle in to a new culture, new language, new education system, new social system. Living in *Between* provides students an opportunity for social networking to build on friendships and establish relationships before entering college. Ideally a mutual level of understanding and acceptance will result.”



The **Community Development Division** provides policy advice to the Premier on multicultural issues, and to increase awareness and promote the benefits of cultural diversity to the broader community. Principal Liaison Officer, Sharron Middleton, joined the Project Steering Group because: “I think this project is very important as it helps the students to tell their stories and through that process accept where they’ve come from and embrace where they’re going to. It’s also important for the mainstream society to hear these stories and understand the journeys of humanitarian entrants and that they just need a break and a bit of help to understand western culture. The project humanises the stories from the newspapers. I have big hopes for this project, it’s great to see the youth committed to this project and I know that they’re going to gain a lot of confidence and strength to embrace their future in Tasmania. These youth are going to be the State’s next leaders.”



The **Migrant Resource Centre (Southern Tasmania Inc)** provides leadership in the community to embrace cultural diversity by delivering responsive services for migrants, particularly those who are socially and financially disadvantaged. Georgi Marshall, Youth Worker at MRC joined the Project Steering Group because: “The Living In Between project is a leading model for Tasmania because it provides an opportunity for young new Tasmanians to meet with Tasmanian born Tasmanians and share their experiences. I think it’s a great way of busting myths created through media. Living In Between is an incredibly powerful project which can help people better understand our cultural diversity, people’s histories and backgrounds and the future we’ll share together.”

The Need for Diversity Education

There are a number of factors to advance in support of the need for more diversity education programs in Tasmania, particularly in schools. These include recent changes in Tasmania's demographics that challenge values in our traditionally homogenous society, the detrimental effects of racist attitudes on the whole community, and the lack of opportunity for young Tasmanians to build relationships with members of the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community or challenge damaging stereotypes about other cultures.

Racism in Tasmania

Tasmania has a relatively low level of people born overseas - 10.6% as compared to 22.2% nationally - and many of those born overseas are from Europe and the United Kingdom.¹ However, the number of humanitarian entrants in Tasmania represents a significantly higher portion of settlers than the national average - 23.6% in Tasmania compared to 7.9% for the whole of Australia.²

“From 2003 to 2008 there were 6,689 new ‘permanent additions’ to the state. While the majority of these immigrants were from countries where English is the main language, a significant proportion came from non-English speaking countries, including Bhutan and Sudan.”³

This relatively low level of diversity indicates a community that is less experienced in dealing with diversity than is the case in other states. Without the awareness that comes from personal contact there is a low level of understanding of these unfamiliar cultures which can lead to intolerance and racism.


Racism is a term used to describe: a belief that some races are inherently superior to others; a belief that some groups of people are different and do not ‘fit’ into the ‘Australian way of life’; or aggressive, abusive or offensive behaviour towards members of other races based on those beliefs.⁴

Issues around refugees, asylum seekers and migration are in the media, on talkback radio, talked about in playgrounds, classrooms and on the street. However, there is little real understanding of why people are forced to leave their homelands, of the enormous numbers of displaced people around the world, or of Australia's responsibility to help displaced people and those who seek asylum. Without sources of real information, misinformation inevitably circulates in the community.



Myths and stereotypes are a key component of racism. They reduce a range of differences in people to simplistic categorisations, transform assumptions about particular groups of people into 'realities', are used to justify the status quo or persisting injustices, and reinforce social prejudice and inequality.⁵

Racist attitudes and incidents are evident in schools and public places in Tasmania and are of concern to both educators and members of the CALD community. Within the Students Against



Racism group, those who experience the most prejudice and racism are the Muslim women and people from Africa because they are so visible, but all members of the group have reported incidents of prejudice or racism. Many of the Australian born young people who have joined the group have done so after witnessing incidents of discrimination that have shocked and ashamed them, motivating them to do something about it.

At a state-wide forum in March 2011, Tasmanian young people of a CALD background identified racism, bullying and safety as the fourth most pressing issue of concern after learning English, making friends, and coping with a different culture.⁶

The report, *Racial Vilification and Racially Motivated Offences*, released by the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute this year looked at evidence on the extent of racism and racist behaviour in Tasmania and Australia.⁷ The report found that “there is currently a lack of hard data on the extent of racism and racially motivated offences in Tasmania and Australia. However, the numerous reports of racial abuse and apparent racially motivated attacks that were detailed in some of the submissions received by the Institute indicate that racism is experienced by racial minorities in Tasmania and that they are likely to be specifically targeted in some attacks.”⁸

The Report recommended that laws be introduced to address criminal racial vilification and racially motivated offences. The significant conclusion here was that an important function of such laws would be symbolic, sending an important message to the community on what is and is not acceptable behaviour. “This function is particularly important when social and demographic changes in a population mean that new problems or hostilities emerge that need to be addressed.” However, the symbolic function could only be realised if accompanied by “a highly visible awareness and education campaign”.⁹

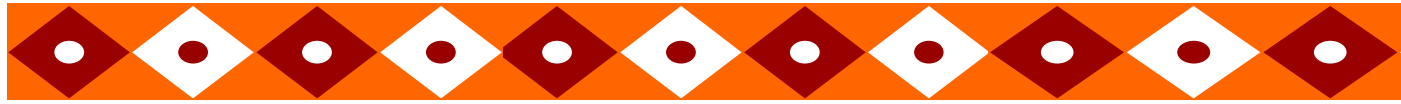
Effects of racism in the community

“These young people face many challenges in establishing a sense of place and belonging within our small Tasmanian community. One of the constant struggles voiced by many young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds is how to be accepted as a human being rather than judged by the way they communicate, look or act. Moreover many young people from CALD backgrounds are victims of bullying and discrimination that can arise from negative media projections, and a lack of correct information and direct contact with a former refugee about the circumstances they and their families have been through to resettle in Tasmania”. Georgi Marshall, Youth Worker, Migrant Resource Centre (Southern Tasmania Inc)

Young people in primary and high schools take on the general fear and misunderstandings that circulate in the wider community. This manifests as prejudice and racist acts towards people from different cultural backgrounds which in turn leads to isolation, frustration, anger, and depression for the young people settling in Tasmania.

The Students Against Racism have experienced the issues first hand and know that racism and





discrimination are generally the result of misinformation. Members of Students Against Racism argue that the whole community is impacted by acts of prejudice and racism. They divide our community and make it less safe for everyone. The following comments extracted from the reflective journals of members of the Students Against Racism group demonstrate how these young people are impacted by racism:

"Racism can make you feel sad and bad about yourself. It hurts and if we keep ignoring it, they will think we are okay with it and that it doesn't matter. We are not okay with it. Words can hurt, they can cause depression and violence. Racist words can kill because they can make you feel so bad and so isolated."

"The consequences of racism are often hidden but it affects you emotionally and physically. It is demoralising and depressing and you feel disconnected from other people."

"People can't just ignore racism because sometimes you carry it with you and it makes you angry. It affects my insides and my brain and I can't ignore it on the inside even though I try to on the outside."

"Racism is like a spear wounding you. One racist remark can cancel out 100 friendly things people do. I am told to ignore it, walk away but that does not stop the feeling that I will never fit in, never belong here."

"People point at my headscarf and I know they see it as something to be scared of. I wish people could look beyond my scarf or my religion to see who I really am. It makes me feel so separate."

Incidents reported by the students range from name-calling and egg-throwing to being physically harrassed or attacked. The students' comments indicate that verbal abuse can be as harmful as physical attacks, leading to feelings of anger and isolation that can in turn lead to mental, and sometimes physical, illness.

Further, the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute notes that there is a distinction between racially motivated and other forms of violence: "It is well documented that hate-related attacks are, in general, more violent, brutal and vicious and have a deeper psychological effect on the victim and the community to which the victim is a member when compared with other assaults not motivated by prejudice. An American study by the National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence found that victims of criminal and noncriminal racist attacks experienced 21% more adverse physiological and psychological symptoms than those who had suffered similar attacks that were not race related. Other studies indicated that hospitalisation rates for victims of hate crimes are considerably higher."¹⁰



Amplifying the effects of racism for the victims, "[r]espondents who work with migrant communities noted that many migrants, especially those who have entered the country as refugees, have often been through severe trauma and have lasting mental health issues as a result. Therefore,

these kinds of attacks can have a greater impact on new arrivals than on locals.”¹¹

It is clear that racially motivated conflict has a negative impact on the victims and that this may be greater than that of other forms of abuse. However, it is also likely to negatively impact on perpetrators, witnesses and others in the community. A program manual recently released in Victoria, *Cultural Comprehension*, notes that: “Surveys, interviews and forums held with young people identified that many have experienced or witnessed culturally related conflict and are concerned about their personal safety, violence, racism and discrimination. Evidence suggests that young people exposed to conflict commonly experience stunted personal, social and academic development, often resulting in further negative outcomes.”¹²

Racism has serious health, social and economic consequences for individuals, communities and societies. It has been associated with depression, anxiety, high blood pressure, heart disease, smoking, alcohol and substance abuse as well as poor employment and educational outcomes.¹³

These reports lead to the conclusion that racially-motivated conflict, and CALD youth who are angry and alienated by it, inevitably contribute to a community that is less safe and less healthy.

Availability of diversity education programs

If racist incidents are increasing in Tasmania as a result of the growth in unfamiliar cultures and this has negative impacts on the community then clearly programs are required that address the contributing factors. Based on the discussion above, these programs need to bring the two groups together to build understanding, to challenge the myths in common circulation, and to send a clear message that racist behaviour is not acceptable.

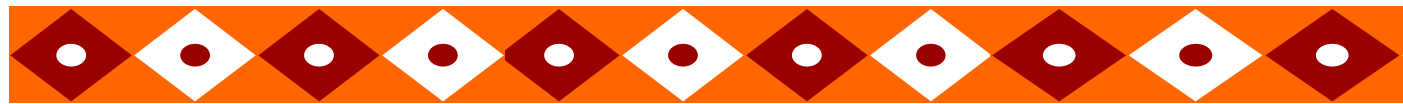
In preparing this report, we have contacted all Tasmanian organisations that might be expected to be running such programs and found that there is no structured approach in schools or the wider community to address racism. This dearth is not the result of a lack of motivation but a lack of resources to develop and deliver such programs.

Some of the organisations run cross-cultural training for staff and volunteers (University of Tasmania, Australian Red Cross, Centacare Tasmania, Carers Tasmania); others run cross-cultural workshops for teachers, the community sector and business (Migrant Resource Centre, Pheonix Centre). A few run leadership programs for young CALD people (Glenorchy City Council, Colony 47, Migrant Resource Centre). However, none are running anything like *Living in Between* and every one of the organisations was enthusiastically supportive of the program.

Programs of note in the current context include:

1. Amnesty International Australia’s *Changing the Conversation: Rethink Refugees*, a campaign to give people the tools to bust the myths around asylum seekers and refugees who arrive by boat. The campaign is not specifically designed for schools but one-off workshops have been successfully delivered at a number of Tasmanian primary and high schools.





2. The *Storytellers Program* run by the University of Tasmania's Support and Equity Unit. The program enables international students from the University to build relationships with grade 6 students at Waimea Heights Primary School. Through regular visits, stories and activities are shared informally.
3. *Courageous Conversations: Beyond Cross-Cultural Awareness*, a cultural competence program for staff and students which the University of Western Australia is adapting from an American model and which the University of Tasmania is committed to implementing internally. The program encourages participants to engage with race both intellectually and emotionally.
4. *Culture to Culture*, a group recently formed in Launceston with young CALD people which is working on the development of a presentation. The group has expressed strong interest in working with the Students Against Racism to motivate and train its members.

There are also a number of festivals and events that celebrate diversity or specific cultures (for example the *Peace Festival* and the *African Cultural Festival*). However, these provide limited opportunities for contact with newly arrived communities and tend to attract people who are already open to learning more about other cultures.

We firmly believe that the foundations for mutual respect, empathy and understanding are fostered in the young and that schools are the best place to begin this education. There are currently no formal programs offered by the Tasmanian Department of Education.

The need for school-based diversity education programs is further demonstrated by the number of schools that have enquired about *Living in Between* in 2011 (but that this project has been unable to accommodate). These include Elizabeth College, Guilford Young College, Woodbridge High, Montrose Bay High, Ogilvie High, Rose Bay High, Bowen Road Primary, Huonville Primary, Margate Primary, Sacred Heart Primary (Geeveston), and Brighton Primary. In addition, all five of the pilot schools requested an expansion of the program to more classes.

In our experience, young people want to learn about these issues as they understand these are important for Australia's future. However, a structured and safe environment is required where they can talk freely with people who have been through the migration or refugee experience and hear their stories. At every session this year we have seen participants attitudes transformed when they realise that wearing a head scarf, having black skin, coming to Australia as a refugee, or being born in a different country does not make that person bad. Some of the most powerful moments have been when Australian born students have related their own experiences of discrimination or bullying as a result of perceived difference such as a disability, unusual looks, or poor background.





Structure of the Program

There are currently thirty-five members of the Hobart College Students Against Racism group. The number participating at each school varied according to their availability. However, as far as possible, the same students always visited the same schools. The majority of the SAR group (28) arrived in Australia as humanitarian entrants (refugees); the other seven are Australian born.

The College students made three 90 minute visits to each school with the exception of St Catholic College¹⁴. A key aspect of the visits was the creation of small groups comprising a humanitarian entrant College student (as the group leader) with two or three school students. These groups worked together over the course of the visits to provide the opportunity to build closer relationships. Teacher and SAR coordinator, Gini Ennals, facilitated all sessions.

Activities and discussions undertaken by the groups over the three visits covered all aspects of the refugee experience. These activities were refined over the course of the year on the basis of our experience with each school. In summary, the following areas were covered.

Culture

- ◆ What is culture and what are its components?
- ◆ Where did my ancestors come from and why?
- ◆ Where did other people's ancestors come from and why?
- ◆ Sharing aspects of our cultures: language, customs, songs and dance, religion, music etcetera.

The refugee experience

- ◆ Presentation of the stories of the College students using the *Living in Between* presentation which moves through the phases of Homeland, Journey, Arriving, Living in Between and Now (see examples at the beginning of this report).
- ◆ Getting to know a refugee in small groups.
- ◆ The value of possessions and the experience of dispossession.

Facts and myths

- ◆ International migration, the reasons for people being forced to leave their homelands.
- ◆ The difference between refugees and migrants and the refugee process.
- ◆ Defining asylum seekers and a discussion of "boat people".
- ◆ Australia's international responsibilities under United Nations Conventions.

Racism and discrimination

- ◆ The needs and challenges of new arrivals.
- ◆ What is racism?
- ◆ Relating racism to other forms of discrimination: sharing stories, feelings and consequences.
- ◆ Individual and collective responsibility for confronting racism.



Program Effectiveness

Development and delivery of the Diversity Program at four schools clearly achieved the major aims of the project.

Developing the Students Against Racism group

Fourteen new members of the SAR group were recruited in 2011. All members participated in a group drama training session as well as individual mentoring to write and develop the performance of their stories. They also participated in the organisation, co-ordination and delivery of the school programs which provided them with an opportunity to be proactive and find their “voice”.

Substantial improvements in their self-confidence, communication and leadership skills are reflected in their journals, quotes from which are included later in this report.

Providing role-models for other young CALD people

Through the number of public performances of *Living in Between* and the publicity they have attracted, the SAR group members have unquestionably stood out as positive role models for other young CALD people in Tasmania. An example of this was their participation in MY Voices 2011, a state-wide multicultural youth forum attended by over 110 young people representing 16 cultural backgrounds from 13 Colleges and High Schools around Tasmania. The SAR group presentation and participation was sought specifically to contribute to the “Creating Positive Images” discussion, one of the focal points of the forum.

The inaugural *Fairer World Festival* in June also provided an opportunity for the SAR group to connect with many young CALD people from southern Tasmanian schools.

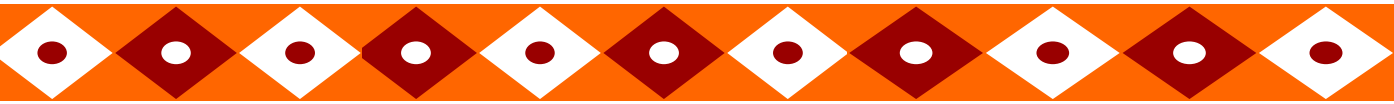
Resourcing teachers

Each school was provided with a DVD of recommended teaching resources to support further work within the school curriculum on issues of discrimination and diversity. The resources included lesson plans, videos and a detailed list of items available from the library at the Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning.

Educating primary and secondary students

Over 155 students at five southern Tasmanian schools participated in the diversity education program developed from the *Living in Between* presentation.¹⁴ The program provided the students with:

- ◆ an opportunity to meet and hear the personal stories of young people from diverse cultures and backgrounds;
- ◆ real knowledge of why people are forced to leave their homelands, of the enormous numbers of displaced people around the world, and of Australia’s responsibility to help displaced people and those who seek asylum; and
- ◆ a structured and safe environment to jointly explore the wider issues of discrimination and diversity in our community.



The overwhelmingly positive response of both the students and their teachers to the program was demonstrated in the surveys they completed as part of the project. 93.9% of the students thought that it was valuable having the Students Against Racism visit their school. A sample of students' comments and all teacher comments from the open-ended questions on the surveys are reproduced in the following sections. Tables 1 and 2 below provide a snapshot of the improvements in both knowledge and attitudes captured by the surveys.¹⁴

Table 1: Survey answers reflecting improvements in knowledge

	Pre program	Post program	Change in responses
I know a lot or a fair bit about cultures, countries and religions other than my own.	21.3%	45.5%	+24.2%
Can list 4 or more different languages that are spoken by people in Tasmania.	66.7%	77.4%	+10.7%
Can list 4 different religions that are practised by people in Tasmania.	14.3%	57.1%	+42.9%
Has a fair to good understanding of the concepts of racism, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers	30.3%	51.8%	+21.4%

Table 2: Survey answers reflecting changes in attitude

	YES Pre program	YES Post program	Change in responses
Should all races and cultures of people be considered equal?	85.2%	90.9%	+5.7%
Do you think Australia has a responsibility to accept refugees?	50.0%	77.8%	+27.8%
Would you like your school to be a racism free area?	78.7%	84.8%	+6.1%
I would be happy to have this family live next door to me...	YES Pre program	YES Post program	Change in responses
Photo 1	76.8%	83.8%	+7.0%
Photo 2	92.6%	92.9%	+0.3%
Photo 3	67.6%	81.8%	+14.2%
Photo 4	77.8%	82.8%	+5.1%
Photo 5	76.8%	82.8%	+6.0%
Photo 6	70.4%	79.8%	+9.4%

Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6



In their words: Students Against Racism

Amony Elder

(Humanitarian entrant from Sudan via Uganda)

About the program

"We are doing this to help them understand what we have been through, how our life was and to make them understand that they are lucky."

"I felt amazed and proud that they were not lazy and on top of that they went home and talked about it to their families. They learnt so much and were inspired to write poems, stories and songs to present to us."

"When I heard their poems and songs I knew they got our message and they got it."

"The feedback from the students was amazing and surprising. Some of the poems they wrote were beautiful."

"One boy made a PowerPoint that looked professional. This showed me that we succeeded because he listened carefully to what we said. It was remarkable."

"I really liked the project because we got to be the teachers. We achieved our aim because we got to teach what we wanted to get them to understand and it worked."

"I think we have made a difference to the schools and the students. To make a difference you don't have to be rich but by making one step and changing one person that makes a difference. I felt really good when I saw my name in the middle of a poster my group had made about me. They had listened to me and my story and I had changed their ideas."

About me

"I have changed a lot. I am more confident and I had lots of fun working with the younger kids. I have had to be mature and behave well as an example for the younger children and learn to be patient. It has made me think about childcare or teaching as a job for my future."

"I was more than a leader. It felt like it was my professional job that I got a degree from. I had to have many skills like communication, confidence, good organisation and being prepared to do extra work."



"I have changed from outside to inside doing this project. It has made me a better person who can help and is ready to try new opportunities. I used to think negatively about myself but now I have confidence to stand in front of people and talk. I have made friends in this class and I can socialise with them."

Roda Kenyi

(Humanitarian entrant from Sudan via Uganda)

About the program

"I was very amazed when the students went home and wrote poems, stories and songs about the whole living in between experience. It means that the students really took it serious and they listened to what we are trying to teach them."

"Working with the different students was interesting. Sometimes I wasn't sure if they were listening but then as we taught them they began to take a deep breath and focus on what we were doing and I could see that it was working."

"Some kids were harder to teach because they had thoughts that somebody had told them about refugees and they were negative at the start but what I came to understand was that some people had never actually talked to a refugee and or thought about why they had left their country and what life was like. They had got their ideas from the media or other people who had the wrong information. I think in the end by sharing our stories and becoming friends with them we showed them that refugees are nothing to be scared of. They got our message and by the end they had changed their ideas. We worked in small groups and everyone had a chance to get to know someone who had come from another country."

About me

"Racism is like a spear wounding you. One racist remark can cancel out 100 friendly things people do. I am told to ignore it, walk away but that does not stop the feeling that I will never fit in, never belong here."

Ashley Latham

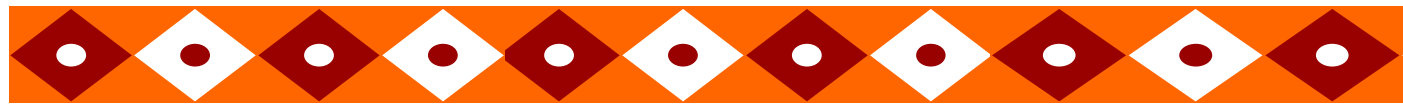
(Australian born)

About the program

"Straight away we became a single unit and easily worked as one."

"This type of education is important because you get a full on connection with people who have experienced the issues we are talking about. It is hard to understand refugees, asylum seekers, racism and all the things that go with these words but the activities we do make it easier to think about and helps me to sort out what I think. This inspires me to understand more about the problems in the world because I feel like we can make a difference and start to find solutions. It is easy to just not get involved and let other people





tell you what to think but even though this is challenging, I feel like I understand.”

“We are doing this to make a better world for everyone where we all connect and children won’t be scared to talk to someone with a head scarf because they think they are a terrorist or because someone has black skin and is therefore dangerous. I hope to eliminate these stereotypes.”

About me

“I have learnt not to judge a book by its cover, well your assumptions. The first time we went to one particular school we were all so scared and we judged them on their reputation. We thought they would not listen and would be horrible to us but they were great, even one of the best groups we have worked with. So I learnt that we all do it but I will try to give everyone a chance to prove themselves before I judge them.”

“I have made so many new friends. I have realised that I can achieve so much more than what I realised. I can achieve anything if I put my mind to it. I also have a better perspective on life. I have learnt to appreciate what I have more and understand other people’s situations easily, like the saying goes I have learnt to ‘walk in other people’s shoes’ and that has changed the person I am.”

Yigezu Desalegn

(Humanitarian entrant from Ethiopia via Eritrea)

About the program

“I enjoyed working with the boys on the dance. They really loved it.”

“The students picked up our message quickly and connected with us. They were very passionate to work with us every time we came.”

“The students learn[ed] from us and loved us. It was a good feeling, they changed and we changed too.”

“The students in every school we went to have changed. They were all different and they learnt in different ways but I think they all learnt something about what we told them and they understand more about the way racism affects people.”

About me

“I love this project because it encourages me to get involved more and help others.”

“I thought I couldn’t do these things but I realised that connecting with people is a fascinating job and this pushes me to be involved with it.”

“The more I understand about these issues the more I am interested in learning more. This has been an excellent way for me to learn.” “I learnt a lot from the students and I feel I have a responsibility to teach them and share my history to help them understand. I want to make a difference by teaching. I hope to change the world step by step because I am responsible to my children to make a difference.”

Emily Bailey

(Australian born)

"This project has helped me see the world differently. I have increased my confidence by talking in front of people. I have made so many new friends and I was really surprised at the reactions from the students."

"After I get a job as a social worker I really think I will use this experience to help me with teaching people about acceptance and understanding."

Teletha Phillips

(Australian born)

"I am so committed to changing the world. I know that is a big statement but I believe if you work and want something you will achieve it. I suppose from this experience I have found that you can change people's opinions and in the end it is all worth it. I have learned that I have a strong voice and I can get children back on track easily. It was an amazing experience with such lovely people. I have never met such understanding, kind, considerate and loving people and our group work is always interesting and enjoyable."

Ellie Blyth

(Australian born)

"I never thought I'd feel comfortable doing this project and going out to the schools but it was so much fun and I really enjoyed it. I have learnt that I want to make a difference and help people in other countries. I have also learnt that high school kids aren't as bad as I thought they were and they actually listen and want to learn something."

I think we succeeded because so many students seemed to change over the time we worked with them. They made things like poems and posters and they showed us how much they had listened and how deep it had got them."





In their words: School Students

These quotes, taken from the post-program surveys, are representative of what students from the pilot schools said they **enjoyed** about the program.

Kingston High (grade 8)

"I enjoyed hearing their stories and what they had to go through to get a better life. It was interesting listening to their stories."

"I enjoyed meeting new people, learning about their lives and how they speak and dance. The whole time with them was really fun."

"Learning about different cultures and languages, working in groups, seeing other people talk instead of teachers."

Huonville High (grades 8-10)

"Meeting really cool people whose stories inspired me and gave me more understand[ing]. I loved it all."

"The stories they told us about their journey and life. I also enjoyed the dancing."

"That they related to us to help us understand."

Cosgrove High (grade 8)

"People being brave and talking to a whole group of people and sharing their stories. In the groups talking about their past."

"Hearing their stories and what they had to do to travel to Australia."

"That they all have a story and no one listens to them so this way helps."

"Listening [to] different cultures and sharing different stories from different countries."

Cygnets Primary (grade 6)

"When we did the dance with the girls. The food, the posters, everything pretty much."



"The song. It was really fun and funny hanging out with the Hobart College [students]."

St Aloysius (grade 6)

"That it just didn't come from teachers, it came from people that had lived in the situation."

"Well in my opinion nothing was fun, it was dead serious but it did open my eyes to countries other than my own."

"Talking to one of the people about how they came here and what they brought with them."

These quotes, taken from the post-program surveys, are representative of what students say they **learned** from the program.

St Aloysius (grade 6)

"I learnt a lot from the visit. I knew that racism was a bad thing but I didn't know really why but now I know a lot more."

"That not all Muslims are bad people, just a few are but that's the same as any religion."

"I learnt about how racism affects people's lives."

"A LOT, like how long they would have to wait at a refugee camp, why they needed to escape, how they lived and their culture."

"I learnt a lot from the visit that refugees are not what they seem because some people think of them as scruffy people but they are gentle and loving."

Cygnets Primary (grade 6)

"Not to be racist."

"That it does not matter what you look like, it's what's on the inside that counts."

Cosgrove High (grade 8)

"I got a better understanding of racism and how awful it is."

"To respect everyone and treat them equally."

"I learnt that people from other countries are more like me than what I thought they were."

Kingston High (grade 8)

"That we really take a lot of stuff for granted, and the way that people all around the world are living bad lives."

"That asylum seeker means safety seeker."

"That reasons for leaving your home country are traumatic but people get through it and try to put their life back together."

Huonville High (grades 8-10)

"How hard their lives have been and that we should appreciate what we have."

"I got so much valuable information about other religions and countries that I can pass on to others."

"I learnt mostly that racism is not okay, and how people bullying others from different countries is wrong."



In their words: Teachers

Mark Bowden, Teacher, Cosgrove High School

“My students have learnt an extremely important life lesson. Before our sessions they had absolutely no idea what a refugee was and just how hard it was to come to a country like Australia. I think they have learnt why it is vital for us to be tolerant of everybody no matter who they are. After our session, my students have gained a greater level of tolerance to all types of difference. Hearing the stories told by their leaders and just seeing how it had affected their lives helped them understand how lucky they are. Conversations around our sessions in the classroom showed me that my students understood the bigger picture.”

Kathryn Morgan, Principal, Cygnet Primary School

“When I first heard about the “Living in Between Project” at the end of 2010 I was keen for Cygnet Primary School to be involved. However I could never have predicted how extensive the benefits would be for our whole school community. This project has had a significantly positive impact on our year 6 students and also on their families and our wider school community. The project links directly to our school value of Respect and I am keen for the Cygnet Primary School to be involved in the future. Congratulations to all those involved!”


Darryl Williams, Teacher, Cygnet Primary School

“Through this project our students came to realise that everyone shares the same feelings, no matter where they have lived, what their culture might be and no matter the colour of their skin. We learned what it means to be a refugee or an asylum seeker. We shared our cultures through language, music, dance and food. We embraced each other. And through new understandings, our students’ attitudes shifted in a significant way. They came to realise that while people may look different on the outside and have different customs, inside we all share the same feelings and have the same needs - we are, in fact, the same. And we can and should join together in our communities to lead happy and fruitful lives with each other.”



Nicola Smith, Pathway Planning Officer, Huonville High School

“Without doubt our students made some extraordinary progress towards becoming far more knowledgeable, tolerant, understanding and compassionate as a result of their participation in the “Living In Between” project.



“The Huon Valley is not known for its cultural diversity - the population is fairly homogenous and generally our young people have only a limited understanding of other cultures. This project offered our school an amazing opportunity to connect our students with an incredible group of young people, each of whom had a remarkable story to tell.

“For our students to meet the SAR group, hear about their individual journeys, work with them in developing ideas around home, life, need, want, future and family was a real eye opener for most of them. Their existing ideas about refugees and asylum seekers were challenged and they have undoubtedly come away with a more balanced view of why it is necessary for Australia to offer refuge to people from other countries. This only occurred as a result of the courage and bravery of the SAR students in telling their incredibly moving stories.

“For many of our students the highlight of the program was the opportunity to join with the group and share experiences through dancing and drumming workshops. So much energy was generated in the room it was palpable!

“So, for the 50 or so Huonville High School students who participated in the program it was definitely a worthwhile experience. A big thank-you must go to Gini for her amazing work in facilitating our sessions and keeping nearly 70 people on track at all times! Also, thanks of course to Nene and the SAR students who led our students through much of their learning and finally to the TCGL who gave us the opportunity to host the program. We look forward to watching the program go from strength to strength, spreading the message of understanding and tolerance!”

Kate O'Reilly, Teacher, Kingston High School

“... I think the program is a huge success. The format works well and I know many of the students found their views had changed in some way after the sessions. I don't think any areas need to be improved and having the students tell their personal stories at the beginning creates respect and understanding from the outset. Our students developed greater empathy and understanding for people who arrive in Australia due to war, natural disaster etc. They now have knowledge as to why certain people have come to Australia and they have significantly improved their knowledge of other countries for example, geography, language, culture etc. Some of my students developed greater confidence in sharing their own personal experiences. I believe some of them felt that if others can tell their difficult and traumatising stories to a group of strangers then it's okay for them to stand up and share a piece of work or opinion on this topic.”

Sally Schofield, EAL Teacher, Cosgrove High School

“We felt very fortunate to be part of this program. There are a large number of humanitarian entrant (HE) students at Cosgrove High School who found the sessions particularly interesting and relevant to them. Some of our HE students commented afterwards that they felt that their interactions



with their peers had improved and were more positive as a result of the program. They also enjoyed greeting each other in different languages and commented that they would like their teachers to provide more opportunities to bring their languages and other aspects of their culture into the classroom. The workshops were engaging and inclusive, and provided great starting points for discussion. Overall the program was a great success and we would love to be part of the program again next year so that a different year group and their teachers can take part!"

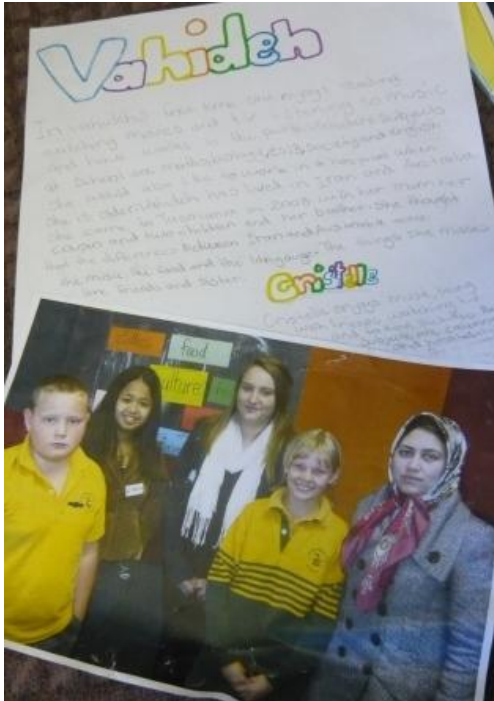
Janet Potter, Advanced Skills Teacher, Kingston High School

"It was a privilege to work with the young people in the group. They were all so generous with their deeply personal information. It was heartening to see our young students treat the group members with respect and interest. The SAR young adults are making successes of their lives despite (or even, because of?) their experiences. They had a powerful message for our students about perseverance, acceptance and generosity."



Student work

As part of the program students prepared a history of one of the College students.



In response to the program students wrote poems and essays, created posters and videos, and some even made a “We Can Make A Difference” map of the world cake.

Refugees are sad
 Refugee camps are not glad
 As I lie there with my stomach grumbling
 I am thinking about what's going to happen
 I want to get out and live a happy life
 But I am scared that will never happen
 As I walk past people lining up to gather food
 and water for their families
 And see people just lying there miserably.

Samara, grade 8



I see people dying with broken hearts
 They have lost a portion of their family
 They have lost their homes
 They are scared
 They fear they won't be able to regain their lives again
 Even if they survive long enough to get to a different country
 A war free country
 A free country

Rhiannon, Grade 8



Refugee
 Everything is lost
 Freedom to live
 Understand my sadness
 Generations of family members forgotten in time
 Escape from hunger and hopelessness
 Earn a new life in a new country
 Sadness becomes happiness with a new beginning

Student, grade 8



I've just arrived in a refugee camp, and I've lost everything. I have nothing. Everyone is sad and upset, they've lost everything too. I feel their pain, I'm devastated. I've never been so confused. I miss my home, I miss my friends and I miss my possessions. Everything is different, there's no power, we only get a plate of food for the day and everyone is suffering. We have no homes, just tin sheds and no doctors or anything. I feel so lost, like I could breakdown. I feel alone and miserable. It hurts, I'm in pain. All I have is hope, hope that I will get out!

Student, grade 8



Future of the Program

The *Living in Between: Diversity Education through Storytelling* program is unique in Tasmania. It has demonstrated the possibilities for fostering empathy between young Tasmanians of different cultural backgrounds by bringing those young people together in a safe, open environment where facilitated activities and discussions engage their hearts and minds.

Further, the program is conducted within the school curriculum where teachers can be professionally resourced with learning activities so that they can continue to build knowledge and understanding once the students' interest is engaged through the joint sessions.

If further funding is found to continue the program in 2012 our plans include:

- ◆ Delivering the program to four more schools in southern Tasmania. (The SAR group have realised that, given their own study commitments, four schools is the maximum number to which they can deliver the full program in a year.) There is already a waiting list, as many more schools expressed interest in the program this year than could be accommodated.
- ◆ Creating an alumni of the Students Against Racism group with members, such as Nene, who have moved on from Hobart College. This group can continue to mentor the College based group, as well as satisfying the demand for one-off presentations for schools, businesses and other organisations.
- ◆ Mentoring other young Tasmanians to set-up and run groups similar to Students Against Racism. A training date has already been set with the newly formed *Culture to Culture* group in Launceston. Possibilities exist in Hobart with other CALD youth groups operating through the Migrant Resource Centre, Colony 47 and the Glenorchy City Council.
- ◆ Building optional learning units onto the program. The recently released, *Cultural Comprehension Program Manual*, has provided an excellent resource of learning activities around conflict resolution, which they have shown to be a valuable extension to diversity education. Teachers could be trained in the delivery of these units or they could be delivered by the Tasmanian Centre for Global Learning.

It is clear that there is a need in Tasmania for structured diversity education programs in schools and the wider community. The *Living in Between: Diversity Education through Storytelling* project has demonstrated many of the factors that make such a program effective. The passion, drive and energy exist; all that is needed are the resources to allow the program to continue.

Endnotes

- ¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006 Census QuickStats: Tasmania <http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/>
- ² Settlers by Country of Birth (Settlement) by Migration Stream 1/7/2006 to 30/6/2011, DIAC Settlement Reporting Facility <http://www.immi.gov.au>
- ³ *Racial Vilification and Racially Motivated Offences: Final Report No 14*, April 2011, Tasmanian Law Reform Institute.
- ⁴ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Cyber racism Factsheet*, www.hreoc.gov.au/racial_discrimination/publications/cyber_racism_factsheet.html, viewed 7/10/2011.
- ⁵ ANTaR (Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation), *Racism in Australia facts*, www.antar.org.au/node/221, viewed 7/10/2011.
- ⁶ MYAN|TAS "A State wide Multicultural Youth (MY) Forum: MY VOICES 2011" by Georgi Marshall, Youth Support Worker, Migrant Resource Centre (Southern Tasmania) Inc.
- ⁷ *Racial Vilification and Racially Motivated Offences: Final Report No 14*, April 2011, Tasmanian Law Reform Institute.
- ⁸ *Racial Vilification and Racially Motivated Offences: Final Report No 14*, April 2011, Tasmanian Law Reform Institute, paragraph 4.3.16.
- ⁹ *Racial Vilification and Racially Motivated Offences: Final Report No 14*, April 2011, Tasmanian Law Reform Institute, paragraph 4.5.10.
- ¹⁰ *Racial Vilification and Racially Motivated Offences: Final Report No 14*, April 2011, Tasmanian Law Reform Institute, paragraph 4.4.2.
- ¹¹ *Racial Vilification and Racially Motivated Offences: Final Report No 14*, April 2011, Tasmanian Law Reform Institute, paragraph 4.4.5.
- ¹² *Cultural Comprehension: Program Manual & Supplementary Information*, October 2011, John O'Shaughnessy, Department of Education & Early Childhood Development (Victoria).
- ¹³ A Larson, M Gilles, P Howard and J Coffin, *It's enough to make you sick: The impact of racism on the health of Aboriginal Australians*, (2007) 31 *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 322.
- ¹⁴ Due to time pressures (SAR group members undertook the school visits during class-time for the Tasmanian Certificate of Education) only one session was done at St Aloysius Catholic College. For this reason their responses have not been included in the results shown in the tables above. The tables include the responses of 108 students from four schools in the pre-program surveys and 99 students from the same four schools in the post-program surveys.

