



City of Whittlesea

Ten years on, and still going strong!

As one of the most multicultural cities in all of metropolitan Melbourne, The City of Whittlesea has been taking part in A Taste of Harmony for over 10 years. Enthusiasm for the event is as strong today as it was for the very first lunch. Being a long-term participant, the council makes small changes to their event every year to keep it fresh and help ensure a strong attendance from staff.

Event host and Multicultural Officer Fortunata Maria Callipari said, "We do it every year and we were looking for something a little different this year. A group came together for the planning, we determined workplace champions and we had a concept on what we wanted it to be."

The resulting event was a large gathering of employees with a format that included education, reflection, interactive stations, cultural displays, dancing and, of course, lots and lots of food!

The lunch included formal proceedings where a number of staff had the opportunity to speak about their cultural background and what that means to them.

Speakers included:

- Fabiola Campbell who shared her story of being born in Australia before returning to her family home of Venezuela, then moving back in early adulthood to what she described as 'the lucky country' and three reasons she feels so lucky to be living here;
- Barry Firebrace with a colleague developed a friendship over a planned lunch, which ended up taking place in a mosque. This meeting place meant that one colleague was able to

participate in lunchtime prayer and the other was able to join him on his first ever visit to a mosque;

- The council's Team Leader GIS, Kim Quach, provided a map plotting the cultural background of all staff;
- A Muslim employee Mahmoud El Mustapha who shared insight into his religion and what it means to be a Muslim living in Australia today.

The lunch ended with a dance presentation of 'semba' involving an employee Antoinette Camille and her dance partner Lukas Enciso, (from lukascenciso.com) who gave an insight into the Angolan dance phenomenon.

Sonia Zymantas also shared her exhibition Repurposed Dowry that questions and highlights women's traditional crafts and casual sexist language recalled from the artist's Greek cultural experience. Craftivism is reinvented in the form of re-purposed dowry linen. The installation invites women to join Sonia to explore feminist, cultural expectation stitch by stitch.

Staff then had the opportunity to eat from an incredible array of food, get henna tattoos by Sharada Manchukonda and visit cultural displays showcasing the wonderful diversity and histories of their colleagues.

Fortunata Maria encourages everyone to get involved in A Taste of Harmony. "It's accessible, easy and all you need to do is bring some food, sit down and share stories," she said.

To get further insight and inspiration into their fantastic event, [click here](#) to watch a short video.