

# MEDIA RELEASE



24 March 2016

## Canterbury community celebrates its 10th Harmony Day

Hundreds of local families and friends joined dignitaries and special guests at the Orion Centre, Campsie on Wednesday 23 March for a day of cultural diversity to mark this year's Harmony Day, which celebrates inclusiveness in our multicultural communities.

This year was the 10th anniversary of the Canterbury civic event which is organised annually by the Canterbury Harmony Group under the guidance of the president of the group, Canterbury City Council deputy mayor, Karl Saleh. The Canterbury Harmony Group represents 16 diverse community groups, and the Central Sydney South Regional Participation Service.

In addition, a variety of celebratory activities took place within local schools and cultural organisations.

Harmony Day has now become an international event, which coincides with the United Nations Elimination of Racial Discrimination Day.

The Canterbury celebrations got underway with an Acknowledgement of Country by Mr Ivor Rigney and the singing of the National Anthem by all present, led by students from St Joseph's Public School.

Cr Saleh and Mrs Reecha Dhita-Bahini welcomed the special guests, including federal member for Watson, the Hon Tony Burke; Canterbury City Council mayor, Cr Brian Robson; state member for Lakemba, Jihad Dib; member of the Legislative Council, the Hon Sophie Cotsis; and Commander Michael McLean, Campsie Local Area Police.

Canterbury mayor, Cr Robson spoke about the diversity of cultures in the area, saying that 157 countries and cultures are represented across Canterbury and that he personally had the pleasure of signing residency certificates for people from over 130 countries.

The Hon Tony Burke and Cr Saleh presented various awards for community and for promoting tolerance.

Colourful entertainment was provided by various cultural groups, including the recently-formed PAYCE-sponsored Riverwood Community Choir, the Riverwood Chinese Dancing Group and the Vietnamese Dancing Group.

Supporting the day were Canterbury City Council, Riverwood Community Centre, PAYCE, NSW Family and Community Services, Arab Bank Australia, local schools, businesses and volunteers from local community groups.

The local schools presented a number of dance numbers spanning Polynesia, the Middle East and India. The girls from Wiley Park High School performed traditional Islamic dances, while the boys performed a noisy, but spectacular haka.

This year marked the 5th year leading Australian property company PAYCE has participated as a corporate sponsor.

PAYCE Managing Director, Brian Boyd said it was a privilege and a pleasure to be associated with such an important community and cultural event.

“PAYCE believes that all communities need to be connected, integrated and inclusive in order to live in harmony and that is an important objective when planning our urban renewal projects,” he said.

“We also believe in a strong community of interacting people, who show concern for each other’s welfare and health and where they feel free and happy to participate in the social activities of community life.

“A wonderful example of this and widely considered a model for future developments is right here within the city of Canterbury.

“PAYCE is very proud of what has been achieved over the past five years through its partnership with the local Canterbury community and its award-winning Washington Park project at North Riverwood,” he said.

“Throughout the years, PAYCE has supported a range of highly successful social functions and projects that focus on the promotion of community spirit and we are pleased to play a small role in facilitating and supporting what are essentially community-driven initiatives.

“It has been both exciting and rewarding to see how the community spirit has been lifted by empowering them to realise their potential,” Brian Boyd said.

PAYCE General Manager Dominic Sullivan congratulated Cr Karl Saleh and the local cultural groups for their outstanding contributions to the Harmony Day event.

Mr Sullivan said the day had particular significance to PAYCE as his company is committed to creating cohesive communities that are inclusive and respectful of their neighbours.

“To live in harmony, communities must play a leading role and Harmony Day reminds us each year what is achievable when people of different cultures and from all walks of life embrace the concept of a connected, harmonious community,” he said.

**Ends**

**Media contact: Bill Smith 0412 446 058**