



THE HON BRENDAN O'CONNOR MP
Minister for Employment Participation

SHARON GRIERSON MP
Member for Newcastle

MEDIA RELEASE

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Ethnic communities council has a new place to call home

The old Waratah Bowling Club has been transformed into a new community centre for the Ethnic Communities Council of Newcastle and Hunter Region as part of an Australian Government Work for the Dole project.

The Minister for Employment Participation, Brendan O'Connor, and the Federal Member for Newcastle, Sharon Grierson, today joined participants at a Work for the Dole graduation ceremony.

During the six-month project participants repaired and painted the building and worked on the installation of a commercial kitchen and function centre.

"The project has given participants first-hand experience in a range of industry trades including commercial building renovations, painting and general maintenance," Mr O'Connor said.

"Participants have gained valuable skills and experience in building and landscaping as well as experience of working in a team which will help them to secure future employment. In fact, four have already found full-time or part-time work."

The project was co-ordinated by Wesley Uniting Employment and sponsor organisation, NovaSkill. The Australian Government has provided \$34,447 for the first stage of the project and a further \$50,985 for the second stage which is due to be completed in July.

Ms Grierson said the Ethnic Communities Council had relocated its offices from Maitland to the new Waratah building.

"The council provide various services, projects and cultural activities to the multicultural community in the area," Ms Grierson said.

"They have already held a number of community events at the new centre and is currently holding a community art exhibition there."

Mr O'Connor said that in line with its election commitment, the Australian Government had reviewed the current employment services and will retain and significantly improve the Work for the Dole program.

"As part of Job Services Australia which begins on July 1 there will be greater focus on job seekers obtaining work experience and Work for the Dole activities will be a key work experience option."

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