



MEDIA RELEASE

From:

**WORKING WITH
VICTORIA'S AFRICAN COMMUNITY**

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African Think Tank Inc.

DATE: 25 September 2009

AFRICAN THINK TANK CELEBRATES YEAR OF GROWTH AND ACHIEVEMENT AT ITS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 23 SEPT 2009

In a well-attended Annual General meeting, The African Think Tank today celebrated an unbroken year of success and achievement on all fronts. Dr Berhan Ahmed returned unopposed as Chairperson. The deputy chairperson, Churchill fellow Mr. Haileluel Gebreselassie stepped down after years' of distinguished services and Ms. Faten Mohammed was elected as his replacement with some new board members joining.

In his Chairperson's report, Dr. Ahmed noted that during the year, ATT had achieved a clear prominence as the main peak body representing Australians of African background. The ATT is now the body of first resort for media, government, business and NGOs seeking for input, comment and analysis on related issues. The ATT is also regularly sought out by overseas government and embassies and media for comment on African-Australian issues.

During the year, the ATT, its board members, associates, workers and volunteers had achieved a strong record of success on four fronts.

- Policy documents, reports and speeches had offered insightful, constructive and innovative leadership on policy issues.
- A dynamic and proactive public relations strategy had resulted in a more prominent, better and fairer image of Australians of African background in the media and substantial progress had been made in overcoming misconceptions.
- Community organisations and migrant organisation had been given substantial assistance in mounting effective programs.
- Volunteers and workers had gained insight by assisting in many individual cases.

Dr Ahmed commented that the most important single factor in these successes was that the ATT had not only used the many brilliant and talented people in the African communities, but welcomed help from the wider communities, not only preaching but practising integration and acceptance. Workers and volunteers from the wider community were working with ATT members at every level.

Dr. Ahmed said under the Rudd government there is much greater openness and substantial progress in many fronts than the previous government, although there are still areas that could be improved. The Immigration Minister, Hon. Chris Evans had overseen some much-needed changes in refugees and asylum seekers policy. However, vigilance is needed to ensure that anti-terror legislation was revised to remove vague areas that invited abuse and to ensure the civil liberties and safety of all Australians continued to be respected under law.

Guest speaker Leigh Purnell spoke on breaking down employment barriers for African-Australians. A number of other speakers contributed, reinforcing the ATTs policy direction of pursuing a strategy of engagement, education and integration.

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