

# ACL sponsors Soccer Tournament

When Mohamed Baaruud organised the African Soccer Tournament he contacted the NSW Police so that their team would play against his team. Many Somali players were very surprised to find policemen playing soccer against their team. "I thought the Police don't play soccer or any other sport games, but they are there just to lock people up," a Somali player said.



The African Soccer Tournament, which was sponsored by the Australian Centre for Languages (ACL), was created to break the social isolation of newly arrived refugee youths, particularly from African backgrounds settling in Western Sydney. It also provided the opportunity for African refugee youths and others to come together in a single event so the competition became a point of common interest for all. "The event helped to restore pride and confidence of African youths in the context of their new homeland, Australia ... it was also an important step in breaking down the often negative stereotypes that police and young people may have of each other," Amera Salah, ACL Community Project Officer says.



"As people from different cultures deal with each other more, where they come from and what they look like starts to fade away and people can then go from personal experience, not from limited stereotypes," says Baaruud... The Tournament provided a positive framework for young people to build solid relationships in the community," Mohamed ads.



He worked with the Auburn Community Development Network and lobbied the Auburn Police Community Liaison Officers, Auburn Council, the Migrant Resource Centre and

STARTTS. "The Tournament didn't come out of just one meeting, but it took 9 months to make it become a reality," he says.

The teams were from Somalia, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Gambia, Ethiopia and the NSW Police Soccer Team. The winner of the tournament was the team from Sierra Leone with the Somalis as runners up.