

NEWS

Campbelltown's cultural embrace

CULTURE

BY BEN CHENOWETH

ONE look at that variety of restaurants in Queen Street tells you all you need to know about the collection of cultures that call Campbelltown home.

Now there are statistics to confirm just how culturally diverse the area really is.

Census data released recently showed - for the first time - there were more Campbelltonians whose parents were both born overseas (44.6 per cent), than Campbelltonians whose parents were both born in Australia (38 per cent).

Sana al-Ahmar is one of those 44.6 per cent.

The Macarthur Diversity Services Initiative settlement worker left Iraq - the country she was born in - 38 years ago and spent the next 12 years living in the United Arab Emirates and Spain, before migrating to Australia.

Ms al-Ahmar said she



CAMPBELLTONIAN: Mother of two Sana al-Ahmar migrated to Australia 26 years ago with her husband.

Picture: Simon Bennett

believed Campbelltown residents in particular had become more embracing of people from different cultural backgrounds in recent years.

"Campbelltown (now) is one of those places - maybe because it's not very big - but

when you walk on the streets you can hear all the different languages and see all different colours," she said.

"I think the diversity in Campbelltown makes it a very special place and slowly other areas of Macarthur are following."

Campbelltown mayor George Brticevic was another member of that 44.6 per cent.

Both his parents were born in Croatia and he recalled when the area was less culturally accepting.

"I got in trouble in class as a kid for speaking to a classmate even though everyone else was speaking," he said.

"I wasn't in trouble for talking but for speaking in a different language other than English.

"I have never forgotten that - it was 1979."

But Cr Brticevic said attitudes had changed and now cultural diversity was one of Campbelltown's strengths.

He said all Campbelltonians were members of "the lucky country".

"At citizenship ceremonies I talk about how people come here to give their children a better future," he said.

"People don't have opportunities like that all over the world so we are very blessed."