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ECCV Response to Victorian Budget 2018/19 – Key Initiatives

The Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) welcomes the Victorian Government's biggest budget announcement of \$45.8m for our culturally diverse (CALD) communities. Many of the announcements specific to the multicultural affairs portfolio recognise and build on ECCV's pre-budget recommendations.

ECCV welcomes the following budget allocations to the Multicultural Affairs portfolio:

- ***\$17.1 million for the Multicultural Community Infrastructure Program to improve existing community infrastructure and to build new facilities for Victoria's culturally diverse community groups***

This key initiative includes funding to improve access to services and much needed upgrades to the infrastructure of Victoria's multicultural community centres. The objectives of the Multicultural Community Infrastructure Fund include promoting a greater use of community facilities by Victoria's culturally diverse communities and increasing their participation in community activities and services.

ECCV congratulates the Department of Premier and Cabinet on this funding commitment which will further strengthen social cohesion and community participation, including in regional Victoria. In its 2018-19 pre-budget submission, ECCV recommended resourcing the establishment of intergenerational community and education hubs, improving connections to the community for isolated culturally diverse seniors and to maintain the viability of regional ethnic community councils and their community engagement and settlement support activities.

- ***\$8.6 million over two years to implement the Government's response to the African Communities Action Plan to empower African communities to address economic and social issues.***

This will build community capacity and assist communities to lead initiatives in areas such as better access to employment, training and education, leadership skills development and improving health and wellbeing. Over the next ten years, the Action Plan aims to build inclusive communities, improve outcomes and create sustainable opportunities for African communities with a focus on business, employment, education and training, health and wellbeing, inclusion and empowerment and leadership, social cohesion and connection.

In its pre-budget submission, ECCV called for more resources for positive parenting programs, training and employment pathways for new and emerging communities and youth leadership programs to enhance social cohesion, harmony and participation.

- **\$1.4 million of additional funds for the Multicultural Festivals and Events Program**

With this announcement the Government is expanding the existing grant program available for multicultural community groups and ethnic clubs. This will support the implementation of programs the Victorian Government announced in its *Multicultural Policy Statement* and the *Victorian Values Statement* and further promote multiculturalism, social inclusion and community participation.

ECCV congratulates the Government on this worthwhile investment and will continue to promote and advocate for the participation of the whole community in multicultural festivals and events to celebrate Victoria's vibrant cultural diversity.

- **\$0.5 million for Translation Services for major government policy and program announcements**

This funding includes the use of communications and materials that is targeted to particular ethnic community groups and acknowledges the need for visual, audio and paper-based translations and other assistance.

ECCV highlights the significance of accessible, culturally appropriate and professional language services. Victoria's multicultural and language services sector has been monitoring previously announced language services funding and look forward to its prompt roll out. ECCV's pre-budget submission recommended funding a consumer awareness-raising campaign to promote using accredited health interpreters and we will closely observe future announcements.

- **\$0.3 million to establish a Multicultural Safety Ambassadors workplace program**

Victoria's first Multicultural Safety Ambassadors Program will recruit culturally diverse workers to promote safe workplace practices within multicultural communities.

ECCV welcomes the following government key initiatives to improve outcomes for diverse communities:

- **Industry and Employment: \$15 million to increase employment opportunities for disadvantaged jobseekers and \$6 million to increase economic inclusion**

The Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources will provide allocations to connect young people, including young migrants and refugees into jobs and. A new specialised employment support program will also be established for young job seekers who face significant employment barriers.

ECCV welcomes this investment which is much needed, particularly for specialised migrant and refugee employment services in areas with high migrant populations. In our pre-budget submission, we also recommended additional resources for training and employment pathways for culturally diverse youth, increased funding for Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN) and culturally responsive support for retrenched migrant workers.

- **Community Safety and Combatting Extremism: \$14.1 million to strengthen prevention programs to counter all forms of violent extremism, to strengthen social cohesion and protect Victoria's community**

In addition, the Government announced \$15 million to target and prevent youth offending and to keep youth at risk in school, training and work. \$1.7 million has been specifically allocated to support young people from culturally diverse backgrounds at risk of offending.

ECCV welcomes budget funding to maintain safe communities and strengthen community cohesion. Our pre-budget submission recommended additional resources for tailored interventions that acknowledge and address the additional challenges faced by youth from migrant and refugee communities. In addition, ECCV proposed resourcing culturally appropriate diversion programs, cultural awareness training for police and protective services officers in regional Victoria and resourcing a pilot for onsite youth educators in schools.

ECCV also commends the following funding announcements that either specifically target culturally diverse communities and/or contribute more generally to improving the lives of many diverse Victorians:

- **Mental Health:** \$232.5 m to meet clinical services demand and \$344.8 m to reform clinical mental health services
- **Training, Higher Education and Workforce Development:** \$303.8 m to extend the state government's investment in TAFE and training sector support student access to training and skills development. This includes the Asylum Seeker VET Program which will continue to fund training opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees.
- **School Education:** \$39.3 m for English as an Additional Language program to assist migrant, refugee and asylum seeker students to become proficient in English.
- **Early Childhood:** \$28 m for language programs for children in kindergartens, including 10 bilingual programs.
- **Gender Equality and Family Violence Prevention:** \$24 m to prevent family violence and \$8.6 m to improve gender equality in Victoria's mainstream and diverse communities.
- **Empowering Individuals and Communities:** \$21.8 m to support Neighbourhood Houses and \$2 m to strengthen youth engagement and enhance pathways to education, training and employment.
- **International Students:** \$5.5 m for public transport concessions for international students' annual tickets.
- **National Disability Insurance Scheme:** \$4.5 m to assist individuals to transition into and enter the Scheme.

For more information on the Victorian Budget 2018/19, visit: <https://www.budget.vic.gov.au/budget-papers>