



Tuesday, 24 November 2020

## **Victoria's social and economic recovery needs to be built on multicultural communities**

*"If there's one thing the pandemic has taught us, it's that government needs to commit to inclusion of migrants & refugees through its health responses to the pandemic and other health services and programs."*

"The State Budget's focus on economic recovery from COVID-19 and the bushfires has required an aligned strategy for social recovery," said Eddie Micallef, Chairperson of the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV).

"ECCV commends the record investment by the Victorian Government into social housing, mental health and employment, that will go a long way to make sure people who have been hardest hit by the social and economic impacts of the pandemic get their lives back on track".

"Many migrant and refugee communities have missed out on accessing a fair share of the social safety net during the pandemic. **Government departments need to work with multicultural and ethno-specific organisations to make sure health initiatives such as the \$152 million to provide mental health services in direct response to COVID-19 reach migrant and refugee communities.**"

"ECCV is really pleased to see the Jobs Plan as part of this Budget. Multicultural and ethno-specific agencies have had good outcomes from the Working for Victoria initiative, and we're looking forward to this continuing. The specific support for jobseekers through the Jobs Victoria Employment Network program is going to benefit a lot of people who face barriers to finding work," said Eddie.

"Supporting multicultural media outlets and broadcasters is a proven strategy to reach migrant and refugee communities with public health messages. ECCV recommends that government build on this approach through sustained investment in multicultural and ethno-specific community organisations to deliver community health education directly to migrant and refugee communities."

"But to fully recover and deliver the benefits of recovery to the people who need it most, we need government to invest in inclusion and anti-racism," said Eddie.

"We congratulate the Victorian Government for again leading in this area by setting up a taskforce as part of the development of an anti-racism strategy. We're looking forward to working closely with the government to progress an anti-racism agenda across Victoria. This is a strategy that needs to be backed up by a sustained and long-term commitment."

**For interview opportunities, please contact:**

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“COVID has had a corrosive impact on social cohesion and inclusion. It has intensified pre-existing exclusion and racism. This has been targeted particularly towards people of migrant and refugee backgrounds.”

“Unless all parts of the community, especially government, work together to address this, we’ll continue to see gaps in our social fabric, and our whole community will remain vulnerable to crisis,” said Eddie.

-EOM-

*The [Ethnic Communities’ Council of Victoria Inc.](http://www.eccv.org.au) (ECCV) is the peak advocacy body for eight regional ethnic communities’ councils and over 220 member organisations, including ethnic and multicultural organisations across Victoria. For over 45 years, we have been the link between multicultural communities, government and the wider community. [www.eccv.org.au](http://www.eccv.org.au)*

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