



ETHNIC COMMUNITIES' COUNCIL OF VICTORIA

voices of multicultural Victoria

- MEDIA RELEASE -

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ECCV WELCOMES VICTORIAN STATE BUDGET INVESTMENT IN MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES, MENTAL HEALTH AND COVID-19 RESPONSE

ECCV has welcomed the Victorian Government's \$23.7 million investment in new initiatives for multicultural communities in today's State Budget, including support for seniors, young people and migrants and refugees.

ECCV also commended the \$3.8 billion for mental health reform to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, including \$4.6 million investment in a diverse communities' mental health and wellbeing framework and blueprint for action.

"Migrant and refugee communities have been missing out on mental health care for too long. ECCV looks forward to working with the Department of Health as part of the Victorian mental health reform process," said ECCV Chairperson, Eddie Micallef.

Mr Micallef said the State Government needs to ensure that the \$800 million allocated for the public health response to COVID-19 includes dedicated initiatives to protect and support multicultural communities in Victoria.

"Migrant and refugee communities were overlooked and under-served by many of the public policy and public health measures over the past year and the Victorian Government needs to make sure that the ongoing public health response to COVID-19 is effective in sustaining positive outcomes for migrant and refugee communities. Cultural responsiveness in health care is more important than ever," he said.

ECCV was delighted with the \$8 million investment in Victoria's migrant seniors' groups, which was a key recommendation in its Pre-Budget Submission.

"This is the first multi-year commitment to supporting ethno-specific seniors' groups, which provide such a vital support for ageing migrant communities."

While it is positive that the Victorian Government is developing strategies to address the needs of migrant and refugee communities, Mr Micallef said the Victorian Government needed to commit to a clear, dedicated and measurable Multicultural Strategy.

"We need a whole-of-government multicultural strategy that will ensure government agencies and services are culturally responsive and inclusive. Without a strategy we're at risk of repeating the failures of last year, which had consequences for our whole community," he said.

Key budget highlights include:

Mental Health - \$4.6 million for a diverse communities' mental health and wellbeing framework and blueprint for action

Multicultural Seniors - \$8 million over 4 years to support social connection of multicultural seniors

New migrants and refugees - \$7.7 million over 4 years for legal and social support for asylum seekers, newer migrants and refugees, including increased capacity for regional community hubs.

Multicultural infrastructure grants - \$ 4.3 million for multicultural and ethno-specific community organisations to upgrade community facilities

Young People - \$14.3 million over 2 years for community programs for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds

Family Violence - \$49 million in 2021-22 to support victims/survivors, including women on temporary visas

Women - \$3.2 million for gender equality and economic security programs supporting women migrant and refugee backgrounds

"We look forward to working with the State Government to encourage migrant and refugee communities to participate in the vaccine program and work collaboratively with the broader Victorian community to support our recovery from COVID-19" Mr Micallef said.

Media Enquiries: Victoria Kyriakopoulos 0431 091 738 | media@eccv.org.au