

4 May 2022

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Our Initial Budget Response: Mixed Bag for Multicultural Communities**

ECCV welcomes the strong emphasis placed on investment in health infrastructure, mental health, employment and education in yesterday's Victorian Budget, but is concerned that a more targeted approach will be needed to ensure funding reaches migrant and refugee communities, which have been harder hit across the board by the COVID-19 pandemic.

While we are pleased to see \$3.7 million allocated to continuing the work of the CALD Communities Taskforce, the overall reduction in targeted COVID-19 funding does not address the ongoing need for our state's diverse communities to be supported on the path to COVID-19 recovery.

"It would be a shame if many of the gains made during the pandemic were only temporary, one-off initiatives. This would be a missed opportunity to embed sustainable and long-term programs to support multicultural communities," said ECCV Chairperson, Eddie Micallef.

As part of the Budget's sweeping investment in healthcare, it is critical to ensure sufficient funding is allocated to culturally appropriate and sensitive services, consultations with CALD communities and increased access to language services.

At a glance, the Budget includes \$23 million in new funding for regional settlement support, upgrades to multicultural community facilities, and the delivery of multicultural festivals and events.

We are pleased to see renewed funding for the Strategic Partnership Program, which addresses gaps in settlement services for newly arrived refugees and plays a crucial social role in connecting people from new and emerging communities. Other positive initiatives supporting migrant and refugee communities include:

- increased capacity to provide safe and responsive mental health care
- investment in early childhood education
- health programs targeting migrant and refugee women
- programs to divert children from the youth justice system
- improved health services for refugee and asylum seekers.

The Budget does not include any additional funding for anti-racism initiatives, which we hope will be addressed in the lead-up to the state election.

"ECCV has a long history of empowering Victoria's multicultural communities. We look forward to using our expertise and trusted relationships in the sector to work with the state government to secure equitable outcomes for our communities," Mr Micallef said.

ECCV will be releasing a detailed budget analysis in the coming weeks.

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