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ECCV welcomes investment in multicultural communities in Victorian Budget

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria welcomes the strong investment in migrant and refugee communities in today's State Budget.

The budget delivers a range of funding initiatives for multicultural businesses, community infrastructure, education and language programs and anti-vilification initiatives.

However, targeted culturally responsive support will be essential to ensure that vulnerable members in our diverse communities can access the support they need, and are not disproportionately impacted by cost-of-living pressures and the public service cuts announced today.

Given that our state's economic recovery will be driven by business, \$17 million over four years has been allocated to support multicultural traders, and the revitalisation and upgrade of key multicultural business precincts.

We welcome continued funding for Jobs Victoria Mentors but are concerned about the loss of Jobs Victoria Advocates and Career Counsellors, which provide responsive and flexible support for vulnerable jobseekers.

We are pleased to see the government will deliver \$40 million for the Multicultural Infrastructure Fund to support community organisations to build, upgrade and renovate facilities. This is complemented by \$2.5 million in new funding for multicultural museums as well as ongoing funding for multicultural festivals and events.

We also applaud the government for taking a strong stand against vilification by pledging \$6 million to combat Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, and establish a Multifaith and Multicultural Law Reform Consultative Committee. However, we are disappointed to see a lack of additional funding for anti-racism measures ahead of the release of the Anti-Racism Strategy.

We welcome \$1.5 million funding for capacity building grants for multicultural media organisations, and the tripling of government advertising spending in multicultural media. Improving communications is critical to supporting multicultural communities and ECCV urges the Government to continue supporting programs that improve the health literacy of migrant and refugee communities.

While we are pleased the government is delivering on its commitment to increase investment in women's health and wellbeing, we must ensure that the new health hubs are accessible, culturally safe, and responsive to the needs of Victoria's migrant and refugee women.

Likewise, continued funding for alcohol and other drug treatment and rehabilitation should include targeted outreach and resources for multicultural community organisations.

ECCV also welcomes the increase to our core funding, which will allow us to continue advocating for migrants and refugees, informing industry practice and advising governments on issues affecting our communities.

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

Quotes attributable to Eddie Micallef, ECCV Chairperson:

“ECCV welcomes the positive investment for multicultural communities in this budget but we are concerned about how across-the-board cuts to the public service will impact on programs that support vulnerable communities.

“We reiterate our call for a whole-of-government Multicultural Strategy to provide a robust policy framework that recognises the important role of multicultural and ethno-specific organisations and embeds multicultural voices in the coordination, design and delivery of services.

“The pandemic has shown us that tailored approaches that centre the unique needs of multicultural communities are key to ensuring all Victorians can access the support they need.

“We encourage the state government to continue working with the multicultural sector to ensure nobody is left behind.”

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