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ECCV welcomes targeted initiatives to support multicultural communities

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) welcomes the Victorian government's investment in cost-of-living relief for families with school-aged children in the 2024-25 State Budget. The \$400 School Saving Bonus will help ease the financial burden for families across Victoria.

We welcome the government's overall investment in targeted programs for multicultural communities. This includes \$13.6 million in the Multicultural Affairs portfolio and more than \$86 million in education initiatives over the next four years. Key investments include:

- \$4 million in targeted support for newly arrived migrant and refugee communities, including asylum seekers and temporary visa holders.
- More than \$17 million to expand the delivery of the Victorian African Communities Action Plan.
- More than \$10 million for community language schools to help people maintain their cultural identity through language.
- More than \$44 million for the English as an Additional Language program for students requiring support.

Investing in social cohesion measures is more important than ever. ECCV welcomes the \$4 million funding over two years for anti-discrimination initiatives and looks forward to working with the government to implement the Anti-Racism Strategy due to be released this year.

We are disappointed and concerned that the program for Strategic Partnerships and Engagement Coordinators in both metro and regional Victoria is lapsing, as they provide vital support for migrant and refugee communities through a strengths-based community engagement approach.

ECCV will continue to strongly advocate for sustainable funding for regional ethnic communities' councils, recognising their critical role in supporting multicultural communities across Victoria.

While acknowledging the necessity to make tough decisions in this year's budget, more needs to be done to support our culturally diverse communities.

Quotes attributable to ECCV Chairperson, Eddie Micallef:

"We welcome the investment from the Victorian government in targeted support to multicultural communities in this budget. This budget demonstrates the government's commitment to addressing the unique needs of our diverse communities, particularly through investments in education and language initiatives and the African Communities Action Plan.

"However, we are disappointed that funding is lapsing for strategic partnerships and engagement coordinators that provide critical support for our regional multicultural communities. We will continue advocating for sustainable funding for regional ethnic councils to ensure they can support their local communities."

Quotes attributable to ECCV CEO, Mo Elrafihi:

"The Victorian government's investment in cost-of-living relief for families with school-aged children will alleviate financial pressures for families across Victoria. With over 50 percent of Victorians born overseas or with a parent born overseas, this will go some way to supporting multicultural communities."

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