

Attention: COS, news, social affairs, youth, health & community

MEDIA RELEASE

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Victorian Government Budget Supports Refugee Students

The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) has welcomed the Victorian Government's announcements in the 2008-09 State Budget for increased funding to support refugee students.

"We are very happy to see a range of initiatives funded to help those refugee students struggling in the school system. Funding to support the co-ordination of over 80 volunteer-run homework clubs in schools and community centres around Melbourne will be of great benefit to those young people requiring additional support to remain in school," says CMYI Director Carmel Guerra.

The funding builds on three years of extensive work undertaken with funding provided by a private philanthropic trust which was due to end in June 2008.

"We're also pleased to see an injection of funding into interpreter services, nursing care for newly arrived refugees, and for justice related initiatives," says Ms Guerra.

CMYI has argued for some time that building a strong Victorian community requires initiatives that support newly arrived young people to fully participate in our education, employment and social systems.

The package of announcements have been made by the Premier and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, John Brumby, The Minister Assisting the Premier on Multicultural Affairs, James Merlino and the Deputy Premier and Attorney-General, Rob Hulls.

As part of the package Mr Hulls said, "\$17.7 million would go towards a Refugee Support Strategy targeting health, justice and education in refugee communities."

Specifically, the 2008-09 State Budget funding for the Refugee Support Strategy includes:

- \$8.2 million over four years for early intervention programs, information campaigns and Multicultural Liaison Officers to improve access to justice services;
- \$6.5 million over four years to schools and communities to meet refugee students' needs, with programs such as specialised support and an After School Homework Program to help refugee students succeed at school; and
- \$3 million over four years to expand the Refugee Health Nurse Program. The program focuses on early health assessment, referrals and health promotion.

"CMYI is particularly pleased to see a real effective increase of funding into multicultural affairs and we welcome the government's focus in this area," says Ms Guerra.

Media: For interviews and comment contact CMYI media advisor Matt Clear of initi8 communications on 0403 229 094 or clear.matthew@gmail.com