

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

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Setting the Record Straight on Young Refugees

## *Misconceptions Fuelled, Facts Distorted*

The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) has today voiced concern about the way the issue of immigration, migration and refugees is playing out.

CMYI believes the current debate on 'African' refugees and any problems they may experience with integrating into Australian society has been divisive, has fuelled misconceptions and has distorted the facts.

The way the debate has been handled at a range of levels in the community has undermined the success of Australia's humanitarian program.

'Anything that undermines our humanitarian program is very sad and quite unproductive because we have some of the best settlement services in the world,' says CMYI Director, Carmel Guerra.

CMYI believes that the Australian Government has the right to adjust its humanitarian program to meet the needs of refugees world wide, however a consequence of a cut in the intake from Africa will have the greatest impact on those individuals wanting to reunite with family members overseas.

'In our work with refugee youth we see first hand the importance of family reunification and the important role it plays in the integration process,' says Ms Guerra.

The tragic death of a young Sudanese man has most unfortunately resulted in the demonising of Sudanese youth. Sudanese young people settling in Australia have endured horrific experiences and seek friendships and safety in their new home.

'We work with many Sudanese young people that are aspiring leaders and role models,' states Ms Guerra. 'But these young people also tell us they experience racism in the school, the shopping centre and the workplace.'

Leaving aside the range of misconceptions, pure speculation and complete inaccuracies surrounding the tragic incident in Noble Park, CMYI acknowledges that greater levels of resourcing is required to assist newly arrived young people as they face complex and enormous challenges in resettlement.

The CMYI experience suggests that we need to provide more specialised support to young refugees to assist them understand and navigate their way through the Australian social/economic system.

**Watch This Space - CMYI will be launching a web-based public education campaign on these issues. In the week starting 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2007 go to [www.cmyi.net.au](http://www.cmyi.net.au)**

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