

Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities – CALD Communities Taking Action Against Family Violence

**10.00am, Wednesday, 5 August 2009
Multicultural Hub, 506 Elizabeth Street**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

<< confirm acknowledgments on the day >>

- The Honourable Rob Hulls – Attorney-General of Victoria
- Mr Simon Overland – Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police
- Community leaders
- Distinguished guests
- Ladies and gentlemen

INTRODUCTION

- My name is Sam Afra, Chairperson of the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria.
- And on behalf of the Council I'd like to thank you all for taking the time to join us here at the Multicultural Hub.
- This morning's forum is on a topic of great importance, timeliness and delicacy – violence within the home.
- And more specifically violence within the homes of families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Why it happens. How it happens. And what we can do as a society to strengthen families and prevent it happening.
- I think the diversity of sectors represented here today clearly demonstrates the broad interest in, and genuine commitment to, addressing this issue, which I regret to say, still remains something of a taboo among some sections of our multicultural society.

- It is precisely the delicate nature of this subject that obliges bodies with a inside knowledge of, and heightened sensitivity to, the distinct social and cultural norms of diverse communities to be involved in programs like these.
- Whether it be devising campaigns to raise awareness or developing and implementing responses.
- As we all know, the household dynamic represents one of the most complex interplays of competing – and sometimes conflicting – influences.
- In many ways, it represents a microcosm of the complexity of the entire planet in all its infinite diversities.
- From the traditional to the adaptable.
- The rigid to the fluid.
- The mainstream to the marginal.
- There are the inherent stresses that simply come from having highly individual personalities interacting in close proximity.
- And then of course there are the additional pressures that come to bear in the form of ever-changing trends and technologies, fluctuating finances, and day-to-day anxieties over employment, education, and other aspects of life.
- All of which affects the way different genders and generations conceive one another.
- And how they interact with one another.
- In families of diverse cultural communities, these factors all come into play.

- But it is not unusual for another layer of influences to also come into play.
- Factors relating to the convergence of ethno-specific linguistic, cultural, and religious customs and practices.
- And the sometimes awkward tension in trying to reconcile the domestic and the foreign.
- Not to mention the very real fact that the pressures of income, employment and education are likely to be even greater on many culturally diverse communities who fall within lower socio-economic groups and particularly vulnerable to disadvantage and disenfranchisement.
- All of which can have their own impacts on the expectations of the roles and responsibilities accorded to different family members.
- Sometimes debilitating.
- Sometimes quite destructive.
- These home truths are nothing new.
- Yet how we approach family units that have become scenes of violence will not be easy.
- Because family violence has multi-dimensional causes and inter-generational impacts.
- Addressing family violence requires a coordinated, cooperative and collective approach.
- It needs all sectors to work together: federal, state and local governments; statutory agencies; community groups; service agencies and non-government organisations; and of course local communities and individuals.
- It requires a whole-of-community commitment.

- As the title of today's forum suggests, taking action against family violence involves a multi-pronged approach.
- Family violence may manifest in the family.
- But alongside approaches that work with family members and the family unit, we also need to target key settings in the local and broader communities.
- While it is vital to continue to provide supports at the tail-end of the problem, we also need to invest in strategies that prevent the problem, that build on existing family and community strengths to prevent violence occurring in the first place.
- And – as I mentioned earlier – we need to be aware of cultural differences and to engage with these differences in ways that are always respectful, constructive and inclusive.
- As the peak body representing ethnic and multicultural communities in Victoria, the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria is committed to being strongly involved in the joint efforts to prevent and reduce family violence in all Victorian communities.
- So I thank you all for participating in today's event.
- I hope that today's forum will provide an opportunity for us all to learn from each other and to converse and explore together.
- So that all Victorian families in all Victorian communities will be stronger, safer and more supportive.
- Thank you.