



ethnic  
communities'  
council of  
victoria

## ECCV Submission to the Australian Press Council

September 2011

Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) is the statewide peak advocacy body that lobbies all levels of government on behalf of Victoria's multicultural communities. For over 30 years ECCV has remained the principal liaison point between ethnic communities, government and the wider community and has been a key player in building Victoria as a harmonious and multicultural society.

ECCV has had a long history of advocacy work for fair representation of ethnic communities in mainstream and community media. ECCV welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Australian Press Council.

Yours sincerely

Sam Afra JP  
Chairperson

### Community Engagement

ECCV has a broad-based multicultural network and provides advice on multicultural representation. ECCV believes that the Australian Press Council's community engagement with ethnic and multicultural organisations strengthens the reporting on and cooperation between multicultural communities and the Australian media.

#### 1. Key Recommendations

- 1.1 ECCV recommends that the Australian Press Council establishes a reference group with broad-based cultural diversity community engagement.
- 1.2 ECCV recommends that the Australian Press Council looks to introduce a guideline framework for reporting on social media. Social media remains unregulated, but its coverage in the media has a profound and lasting impact on the communities it references.

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- 1.3 ECCV recommends that the Australian Press Council establish a Social Action Group on race, religion and ethnicity with ECCV representation.

### **Contemporary issues for ethnic communities**

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria fosters the development of positive relations between communities across a wide variety of ethnicities.

#### 2. Race, ethnicity and religion

- 2.1 Major issues in media reporting that are of concern to ECCV are the reporting of race, ethnicity and religion. There have been many positive improvements by media outlets reporting in accordance with the Australian Press Council's *Guideline No. 248 'Reporting on Race'* and *Guideline No. 261 'Religious Terms'*. ECCV reports a minority of incidents where these guidelines are breached, however, in such incidences, the impacts on the affected communities are substantial.
- 2.2 ECCV remains concerned about the continued over-emphasis of race and ethnicity as physical descriptors in reporting. ECCV reports particular community groups are described by race, religion or ethnicity, where the news piece's core subject focus does not naturally warrant these associations. This type of reporting re-enforces discriminatory perceptions that a person's race, religion or ethnicity is a primary factor of importance related to their conduct, beliefs or personal attributes.
- 2.3 ECCV is concerned about news reports detailing incidents of crime which emphasize race, religion or ethnicity. ECCV highlights these reports, in particular, unfairly associate actions of an individual or select individuals with those of a community group. Moreover, this type of reporting across a sustained period increases community perception that criminal activity is directly linked to particular races, religions or ethnicities.

#### 3. Social media

- 3.1 ECCV supports the growth of online social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook as tools to connect communities across Australia and overseas.
- 3.2 Social media is currently an organic platform outside the purview of the Australian Press Council's guideline framework. Social media is, however, commented on, interacted with, reprinted and used by the mainstream media as sources for articles. ECCV recommends, therefore, a close examination of its impact on communities who are portrayed in news stories or media organisation's social media accounts.

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3.3 ECCV is concerned by mainstream print media reporting on social media commentary or campaigns which reference inflammatory or racist material. ECCV highlights this reporting can create the inaccurate impression there is wide support for racist or inflammatory views in the community.

### **CALD Community impacts**

ECCV uses a proactive framework of action to promote positive media relationships. ECCV works closely with SBS, 3ZZZ, NEMBC and regularly places articles and letters in mainstream Australian press to present positive and constructive views of ethnic communities.

#### 4. ECCV media and community initiatives

4.1 ECCV is currently working with SBS to produce an extensive professional mentoring program for refugee community members.

4.2 ECCV works in close consultation with Victoria Police to improve direct relationships between Sudanese communities and police.

4.3 ECCV ran the 2010 Spotlight on Stereotypes Media Forum which drew together high profile media personalities and community members

4.4 ECCV runs media training workshops covering social media, media presence and media communications

4.5 ECCV consultations reveal some CALD communities have a deep mistrust of the media, especially amongst new and emerging communities.

#### 5. Community impacts

5.1 Media misrepresentation of certain community groups has led to deep mistrust of mainstream media.

5.2 ECCV notes many community groups experience heightened incidents of negative community perception, harassment and racism after sustained negative media coverage.

5.3 ECCV also notes media reporting has encouraged wider community misperceptions on a number of issues related to ethnic communities such as:

- Asylum seekers processing
- Refugee settlement processes (housing, welfare support)
- Crime

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### **Australian Press Council guidelines relating to CALD communities**

<http://www.presscouncil.org.au/document-search/guideline-no-261-religious-terms-april-2004>

<http://www.presscouncil.org.au/document-search/guideline-no-288-descr-asylum-seekers-october-2009/>

<http://www.presscouncil.org.au/document-search/guideline-no-248-reporting-of-race-september-2001/>

### **Further Information**

For further information please contact Sarah Hunt, Media Advisor

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