



5 August 2010

MEDIA RELEASE

New migrant resource focuses on families

The complexity of family life for new arrivals to Australia is the focus of a new migrant resource launched today at Parliament House, Melbourne.

The Building Strong Families DVD has been produced by Relationships Australia Victoria (RAV) as part of its social inclusion program. It was launched by the Australian Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, the Hon Laurie Ferguson MP.

Building Strong Families offers a candid yet positive perspective on the challenges of settling in Australia in the words of migrants who have already settled here and the agencies that helped them.

RAV's General Manager Operations, Dr Andrew Bickerdike, said RAV was committed to strengthening family relationships as part of its core work.

"We are seeing more clients from other cultures than ever before, many of whom are first generation migrants or refugees.

"They predominantly come to us for help about dealing with the complexities of family life in their new adopted country."

Dr Bickerdike said RAV developed the multilingual DVD to empower new migrants and provide ways for them to acquire information and assistance on a range of family services Australia-wide.

"Migrants from a range of countries – Afghanistan, Vietnam, India, China, Somalia and Ethiopia – speak about both the positive experiences and the challenges of setting in a new country," he said.

"They talk about a range of issues, including their initial reactions to moving here, the different roles that men and women have in Australian society, the challenges of parenting and disciplining children, and the loss of the extended family network."

Building Strong Families also covers an overview of support available for migrants during settlement, advice on coping with changes, services to assist with family conflict and family violence and specialist services for refugees and asylum seekers.

RAV President, Ms Judi Anderson, said as an organisation that celebrated diversity, RAV was committed to providing a high level of support to people from all cultures in collaboration with multicultural community groups and agencies, migrant resource centres and other service providers.

She said these invaluable partnerships had enabled the organisation to develop programs to assist members of established and emerging migrant communities, including:

- the Vietnamese community in Melbourne's western and south eastern suburbs
- the Sudanese communities in Shepparton, Gippsland and Melbourne's south east
- the Afghan community, also in the south east
- the Somalian community in the northern suburbs.

Ms Anderson said Building Strong Families was produced in partnership with Adult Multicultural Education Services, Darebin African Resource Centre, Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, and Springvale Indo-Chinese Mutual Assistance Association.

RAV had also worked closely with the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous affairs; the Department of Immigration and Citizenship; and other service providers in the community sector.

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