



16 January 2018

Multicultural and Multifaith Victoria supports our fellow Australians of African descent

A statement from the Coalition to Advance Multiculturalism

Victoria's diverse faith and multicultural communities are extremely concerned and disappointed by the media reporting, unhelpful statements by politicians and public debate surrounding youth crime in Victoria, which appears to target and make scapegoats out of the Victorian African community, and the South Sudanese community in particular.



Our political leaders must understand that language is important and that we are all Australians. To protect the integrity of our multicultural society, communities must not be targeted for political ends, and politicians should communicate responsibly, to not victimize or alienate whole communities. Our leaders must stand up for the values which define our multicultural society not only when it is politically expedient.

No community should be held accountable for the actions of a few, and no community should become a target for racism, hate speech, intolerance and discrimination.

Criminal behaviour, whether by individuals, gangs or groups of perpetrators must be appropriately addressed, including effective policing, bail laws, sentencing and parole procedures. The safety of our homes and streets should be a top priority for any community, and Victoria is no different.

We acknowledge that there is a youth crime problem and congratulate Victoria Police for their work in crime prevention, securing our streets and in organising youth crime forums to address the breadth of issues which need tackling to prevent and reduce youth crime.

We support the Australian African community and their leaders' work in dealing with this problem. We also call on the State and Commonwealth governments to provide financial assistance for programs to integrate newcomers to Australia with effective education, job training and community support. These programs have assisted new communities in the past and were highly successful, as many of our longer established immigrants and refugees can attest.

Clearly, more needs to be done, but making one community a scapegoat is not acceptable in a free, inclusive and democratic society.

This statement is supported by the following organisations:

- African Australian Communities Leadership Forum
- African-Australian Multicultural Employment and Youth Services (AAMEYS)
- Afro-Australian Student Organisation (AASO)
- AMAFHH Federation

- Bishop Philip Huggins, Vicar - General in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne
- Asian Australian Democracy Caucus
- Australasian Union of Jewish Students (AUJS)
- Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Council Inc (AGMC)
- Australian Intercultural Society (AIS)
- Australian Multicultural Foundation (AMF)
- B'nai B'rith Victoria
- Board of Imams Victoria
- Buddhist Council of Victoria (BCV)
- Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY)
- Council of Christians and Jews Inc Victoria
- Eritrean Jeberty Community in Australia
- Ethnic Communities' Council of the South East (ECCOSE Inc)
- Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV)
- Faith Communities Council of Victoria (FCCV)
- Hindu Council of Australia (Victoria)
- Incubate Foundation
- The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne
- Islamic Council of Victoria (ICV)
- Islamic Shia Council of Victoria
- Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV)
- Jewish Christian Muslim Association (JCMA)
- Melbourne Employment Forum
- National Council of Jewish Women of Australia (Victoria) (NCJWA)
- National Liaison Council of Chinese Australians
- Online Hate Prevention Institute (OHPI)
- Pax Christi
- Polish Community Council of Victoria (PCCV)
- Progressive Judaism Victoria
- Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria (SICV)
- Stand Up
- Team Africa
- Emeritus Prof Gary Bouma AM, UNESCO Chair in Interreligious and Intercultural Relations – Asia Pacific
- Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
- Uniting (Vic/Tas) Limited
- Bishop Peter Danaher (President) and Rev Ian Smith (Executive Officer), Victorian Council of Churches (VCC)
- Vietnamese Community in Australia - VIC Chapter
- Youth Activating Youth (YAY)