

17 November 2015

Ms Claire Thorn
Director, Office for Youth
Department of Health and Human Services
50 Lonsdale Street
MELBOURNE VICTORIA 3000

Dear Ms Thorn,

What's Important to Youth Discussion Paper and the New Victorian Youth Policy

The Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) is the voice of Victoria's diverse communities and is the main link between them and the government. The VMC welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the development of a new Victorian Youth Policy in light of our own work with young people from multicultural backgrounds.

Between December 2014 and June 2015, the VMC conducted ten forums for young people aged 16-25 years from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds at metropolitan and regional locations of lower socioeconomic status. A report, documenting consultation key findings and recommendations, has been prepared entitled *Engaging Our Youth Our Future 2015*. This report (**Attached**) may assist the Office for Youth (OFY) in formulating the new Youth Policy, especially in relation to including the needs of new arrivals, refugees and multicultural youth.

The VMC found that, while young people all share similar challenges, there is also a range of issues more specific to the multicultural cohort that may place some of these young people at increased risk of personal, social and economic disadvantage.

The comments which follow relate specifically to the *Youth Discussion Paper* and the development of the new Youth Policy.

The VMC notes that the new Youth Policy is intended to be wholly inclusive of all cohorts of young people. While the initial wording of the draft vision relating to maximising opportunities and removing barriers is inclusive, the VMC considers that the language of the second part of the draft vision that refers specifically to the 'disadvantaged' and 'disengaged' young people, could be reworded to be more socially inclusive. To this end, the OFY might find other youth policy vision statements such as the European Union's (EU) Vision for Young People particularly helpful. The language of this vision is inclusive notwithstanding that the overall focus is on young people with fewer opportunities.

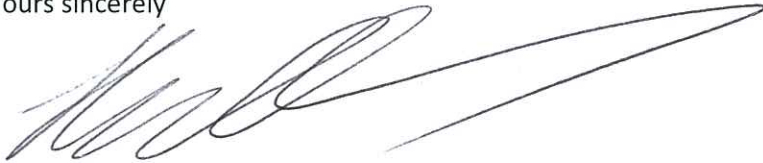
Additionally, the VMC would suggest that the language of the draft objectives which also refers to 'disadvantaged' and 'disengaged' be couched in positive and inclusive terms in line with the *National Strategy for Young Australians*. In order to be inclusive of young Victorians from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) it is further suggested that linguistic background be included in the fifth objective that relates to cultural background,

In addressing the issues in the discussion paper - 'what is important to young people' - the VMC believes it may be helpful for OFY to refer to the *Engaging Our Youth Our Future Report*. This report discusses the concerns that young people from diverse backgrounds have in relation to their educational, training, and employment prospects, their experiences of discrimination and marginalisation, problems with public transport and offers suggestions to improve the lives of young people in Victoria.

In closing I would like to commend the OFY on this initiative and offer our further support as the process proceeds to final report phase and the final draft Youth Policy.

We would welcome any further discussions that might seek to align policy directions for young Victorians from multicultural backgrounds.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Helen Kapalos', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Helen Kapalos

Chairperson

Encl. *Engaging Our Youth Our Future Report 2015*, Victorian Multicultural Commission