

MEDIA ALERT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

24 August 2022

Culturally diverse leaders trained to challenge racism and amplify community voices within the community

Supporting Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) community leaders to become Anti-racism Ambassadors is the focus of an initiative being led by Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC) in partnership with IndianCare, the Centre for Holistic Health(CHH) and the Communities' Council on Ethnic Issues (CCOEI).

The Amplifying Community Voices in the East (ACVE) project has supported community leaders to participate in workshops which focus on challenging racism and sharing their voices and experiences of racial discrimination.

Capacity building sessions were provided by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) and Democracy in Colour, and were developed in consultation with the leaders, providing them with knowledge on Australia's Human Rights Framework, advocacy techniques and using their knowledge and lived experiences to speak out against racism.

ECLC also supported the community leaders to develop a video, 'Voices of Change – Action against Racism' to educate community members on how to identify and report incidents of racial or religious discrimination or vilification.

The final stage of the project has involved the community leaders speaking to the media, at local council, at workplaces etc with the aim of sharing and elevating the voices and experiences of people who have faced racial discrimination, to ultimately create systemic change.

Project participant, Dr Chris Mallika Bhadra believes the project presents an important opportunity to raise the issue of racism for those who may not otherwise have a voice.

"I want to create a platform for people who can't speak for themselves and racism is a big issue. If I can just help amplify the voice of just one person, I feel something is accomplished."

ECLC CEO Michael Smith believes the project presents a great opportunity for leaders within the community to be equipped and empower others to challenge racism and amplify diverse voices across Melbourne's eastern suburbs.

"These leaders are experts on their community and their experiences of racism. Rather than speaking for them, we're working together to amplify their own voices and influence positive change."

"The project builds on the close connections and trust that ECLC has built with diverse cultural and faith communities over many years," he added.

This project was funded by a grant from the Victorian Government “to increase cross-cultural understanding and fight racist attitudes and behaviours.”

Paul Hamer, Local Member for Box Hill said, “Combatting racism requires strong advocates.”

“It has been great to see how the ECLC’s Amplifying Community Voices in the East program has been able to build the capacity of community leaders from our culturally diverse communities to become Anti-racism Ambassadors,” he added.

Event Update:

An event to celebrate ACVE and the Anti-racism Advocates was held in the Matsudo Room at Box Hill Town Hall on the 24th August. The event featured an opening address by CCOEI’s Dilnaz Billimoria, Welcome to Country by Aunty Zeta Thomson, Introductory speech by Victorian Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Commissioner, Ro Allen, and a general address by local member for Box Hill, Paul Hamer.

A panel discussion with the five ACVE Anti-racism Advocates, Dr Chris Mallika Bhadra, Eva Lam, Dr. Neha Gogia – via Zoom from India, Ritu Dahiya and Houng Yu Ngee, facilitated by Saarah Ozeer from CCOEI also provided the perfect platform for the community leaders to share their thoughts and personal experiences with the project.

The event also launched ‘[Voices of Change – Action Against Racism](#)’ - a codesigned animation resource to educate others on how they can stand up against racism and vilification.

The event was attended by over 70 registered guests including ACVE’s partner organisations represented by Anand Shome (IndianCare), Ada Poon (Centre of Holistic Health) and Dilnaz Billimoria and Saarah Ozeer (CCOEI), and other invited guests.

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For further media information and interviews, please contact: Deborah Jane Goon, deborahg@eclc.org.au or ring 0478 140 177