



Supporting Communities,  
Strengthening Voices

# East Web

## PROJECT FACTS

### **VASS Indoor Soccer Champions League**

Being a teenager is tough enough... being a teenager faced with the challenges of moving to a new country, learning a new language, understanding a new culture and adapting to a new environment is surely even tougher.

Hume City a culturally diverse municipality. The community of Hume City represents many cultural, ethnic and social experiences. The Hume City Council Social Profile 2001, found that new arrivals came mainly from the countries of Iraq, Turkey and Lebanon and that Arabic was one of the four most common languages spoken by new arrivals. The report also found that 25.5% of new arrivals were aged 18 years or less.

The Victorian Arab Social Services (VASS) based in Hume has begun a project that seeks to support "at risk" Arabic youth. By creating an Indoor Soccer Champions League, they seek to engage youth in Hume in leadership activities. In addition, the League will give young people opportunities to build connections with the wider community and service providers through the game of indoor soccer.

There is a clear evidence-base supporting the role of organised sport as an avenue to improved physical and mental health. Team sport allows young people to become a member of a peer group; to develop long-term friendships; to develop problem-solving skills and to develop leadership skills. These skills are invaluable for building resilience in young people. Providing young people from marginalised backgrounds with opportunities to participate in mainstream sporting competitions allows the whole of the community opportunities to mix, and to address issues of racism.

The program will work towards breaking down barriers amongst the mainstream services such as the police and the participating young people. It aims to create a sense of connectedness and belonging by involving mentors from a range of disciplines, such as coaches from a mixture of cultural backgrounds, bilingual youth workers, youth referees, youth resource officers from Victoria Police and local mentors.

The program will ensure that while the young people have a safe place to meet and play soccer, they will also be made aware of existing services and have opportunities to develop leadership skills through soccer coaching workshops and referee training.

For more information on the benefits of supporting young people from newly-arrived communities to be involved in sport, see the websites of the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation <http://www.vichealth.gov.au> and the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues <http://www.cmyi.net.au>

**The EastWeb Fund**  
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