

### Casey Multicultural Women's Support Group

*In many refugee source countries, greater communal responsibility is taken for domestic tasks and the care of children, the elderly and those with disabilities. This is in stark contrast to women's experience in many receiving societies where they are likely to have limited access to family and community support; where the nuclear family is the dominant family form and where far greater emphasis is placed on individual responsibility. For these reasons, social and community support will be particularly important to refugee women in the early resettlement period (UNHCR Guidebook on Refugee Resettlement).*

The South Eastern Region Migrant Resource Centre provides services to the growing number of refugees that are settling in Melbourne's South Eastern suburbs. Through the casework of SERMRC, a need has been identified for a women's support group that will enable women from diverse backgrounds to come together and engage in activities outside the home, become more involved in their local communities, be more active and receive information about services and systems in Australia.

For many women who arrive in Australia as refugees there is limited opportunity to engage in these kinds of activities due to lack of access to childcare, responsibilities in the home, domestic budget constraints and limited opportunities to become confident in the English language. As most families settling as refugees have limited resources, they prioritise outside activities and language skills for the children and breadwinners of the family. Though understandable, this often creates barriers for women's full participation in their new community.

The group's activities will include supporting women to access light exercise for themselves and a swimming program for their children at a local Leisure Centre. It will provide excursions for women and their families during school holidays. It will assist and train women to self run a support group at the conclusion of the project and will provide access to information around other services available to families as they begin life in their new country.

The women will be from a diverse range of countries and cultures. This will encourage and support them to practise their English skills. The SEMRC has several multicultural groups and their experience of women connecting across cultures has been one of warmth, curiosity and support. The Centre also has bilingual staff to assist with facilitating the project.

This project will provide women with the self-confidence and know-how to participate more fully in their communities and support one another through the process of resettlement.

**To find out more about the Casey Multicultural Women's Support Group contact Kat Monson at EastWeb [eastweb@infoxchange.net.au](mailto:eastweb@infoxchange.net.au).**