

Monday 23 May 2011

LOCAL FACES, LOCAL STORIES TO GENERATE LOCAL ACCEPTANCE

Local people and local stories will feature in a new community awareness campaign to increase acceptance of cultural diversity and reduce race-based discrimination.

Launched today (23 May), the *See Beyond Race* campaign will appear between now and September on television, radio, billboards and newspapers in the Shepparton area, as well as other places such as sports grounds.

The campaign, a partnership between VicHealth, the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and Greater Shepparton City Council, is part of a broader *Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity* (LEAD) Project, which has been running in Shepparton since 2009.

Greater Shepparton Mayor Cr Geoff Dobson commends the many members of the community who are involved in the campaign and the broader LEAD program.

“By involving local people and their real life interests, we have a powerful tool to challenge people’s perceptions and to showcase the vibrant and diverse community that helps make Greater Shepparton such a great place,” Cr Dobson said.

“By looking beyond race we can gain a much better understanding of the people who live and work in Greater Shepparton and who help to make our community a better place.”

VicHealth’s Acting CEO Associate Professor John Fitzgerald said the campaign was the first in regional Australia to be delivered as part of a program across Greater Shepparton to reduce race-based discrimination.

“While this campaign has been carefully designed to get the message of acceptance out to the community, the LEAD Project also involves intensive training and education for retailers, schools and employers including Greater Shepparton City Council,” Associate Professor Fitzgerald said.

“We’ve worked closely with a range of people in the area – including representatives from some of the key cultural groups in Greater Shepparton – to develop this campaign, and we’re delighted with the result.

“The campaign highlights the true face of diversity in this local community and is a strong reminder of the importance of looking beyond stereotypes and seeing beyond race.”

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner, Dr Helen Szoke said she hopes that the campaign will inspire other communities about the value of challenging stereotypes and tackling racism head on.

“Racism and race-based discrimination can be very damaging to physical and mental health and also the health of the community in general, and I’m very impressed with the willingness of the City of Greater Shepparton, not to mention the community, to take active steps to combat it.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

The *See Beyond Race* ad campaign will be launched at 4pm on Monday 23 May 2011 at Maude Street Mall, Shepparton. The local people featured in the campaign will be available for photo/interview.

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