

# Media Release

## NEW ARRIVALS LAUNCH

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### **Racism, Isolation And Bullying Fuel Mental Health Problems For New Arrival Groups**

Many New Arrival groups to Australia experience social isolation, discrimination and poverty. Research shows that these factors negatively impact upon people's mental health and a VicHealth report has found that giving these people a 'fair go' will have significant health benefits.

At today's launch of a publication which reviews a number of VicHealth-funded pilot projects promoting the mental health and wellbeing of new arrival communities, Professor Sir Gustav Nossal said new arrivals themselves must be involved as intelligent contributors to their own resettlement and not just subjects of paternalistic concern.

New Arrivals to Australia were one of five population groups identified as having potentially higher rates of mental health problems by VicHealth in its Mental Health Promotion Plan and, since 1999, VicHealth has funded 11 projects aimed at improving the mental health and wellbeing of these people.

"The health and wellbeing of new arrival communities can impact on their ability to contribute socially and economically," explained the Chief Executive Officer of VicHealth, Rob Moodie. "If we welcome and support them, that benefits these people directly and the broader Australian community."

Dr Moodie added that without strong social networks, economic support and skill development, the long term health and wellbeing of these people can be jeopardised and this has a high cost on both the individual and the community as a whole.

"There is no doubt that the best way to incubate mental illness in any population is to discriminate, isolate and marginalise people," he said. "On the other hand, there is growing evidence that well connected communities with strong social networks are more likely to have lower crime figures, better health, higher educational achievement and better economic growth."

Promoting the Mental Health and Wellbeing of New Arrival Communities found that a number of factors are critical in facilitating the successful settlement and positive health and wellbeing of new arrivals and these include family reunion, support to learn English, skills development, access to work and the integration of children into a welcoming educational environment.

"Australians can support each other and we can do it well", Dr Moodie concluded.

### **For more information, please contact:**

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