

FAO: COS, News, Crime, Social Affairs, Health, Community

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Key Players on Youth Issue Word of Warning

In response to the on-going violent race-based attacks in Sydney this week two of Victoria's key players on youth issues have issued a word of warning. Carmel Guerra, Director of the Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) and Georgie Ferrari, Executive Officer of the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) say that the media need to be careful not to apportion blame for the weekend's violence on young people.

"Many of the apparent ring leaders look to be well over the age of 25" said Ms Ferrari.

Young people from a wide range of cultural backgrounds live harmoniously together all over Australia, and they are the majority. In Victoria, we have demonstrated that many diverse culturally and religiously diverse communities can live harmoniously in our society.

"In Victoria, we must invest further in promoting the good work of our police and community organisations. The strong partnerships which exist between police, the youth sector and the multicultural communities must continue" said Ms Guerra.

CMYI and YACVic have also stated that:

- the so called Patriotic Youth League is the minority, they do not represent the views of the 100s of young people we and our members work with on a daily basis;
- community leaders need to come together to demonstrate alternative ways of resolving conflict and there needs to be high level political support for such events;
- the extent to which formalised racist groups (neo nazis) have become active is of most serious concern, and requires the immediate attention of both government and police.

The Sydney events demonstrate that social harmony is fragile and that it needs to be nurtured. Responding to racially based violence can only be tackled by a multifaceted response that engages people in the discussions and validates their concerns and views. It also requires our leaders to show leadership and denounce racism.

The media play an important role and taking a simplistic view that young people are perpetrating the violence is not accurate. Media that use "racial descriptors" add to the problem.

More information on The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues here: www.cmyi.net.au and the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria here: www.yacvic.org.au

Carmel Guerra and Georgie Ferrari are available for comment and interviews.

Media: For interviews & more information contact CMYI Media Advisor Matt Clear on 0403 229 094