



Ethnic Communities
Council of Queensland

MEDIA RELEASE – African refugee settlement

5 October 2007

The Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland has called on Immigration Minister Kevin Andrews to withdraw his divisive, racist and inaccurate comments on African and Sudanese refugees.

ECCQ, the peak body for ethnic communities and multicultural organisations in Queensland, says it is “appalled” at the Minister’s comments which it says are damaging and at odds with his own department’s emphasis on harmony.

“As the peak body in Queensland we can say with certainty that the majority of African migrants, including Sudanese, who arrive here under Australia’s humanitarian program, settle well into Australian life and get on with establishing new lives for themselves and their families despite the horrific and traumatic experiences most of them have endured,” says ECCQ chairman, Mr Serge Voloschenko.

ECCQ was responding to reports that Mr Andrews has cited “failings” of Sudanese refugees as justification for the Howard Government’s decision to slash its intake of migrants from the war-torn African nation.

“Mr Andrews has accused Sudanese migrants of fighting each other in bars, forming gangs and congregating in parks to drink alcohol. Some Sudanese do. So do some third-generation Australians. So do some Australians of Vietnamese background. So do some Australians of Greek background. So do some Australians of Irish background,” Mr Voloschenko said.

“His comments smack of those expressed at the turn of century about Irish migrants, then Greeks, then Italians, then Vietnamese, then Lebanese, then Chinese. Can we not move on?”

“We cannot fathom where this comes from. Mr Andrews has no facts or statistics to back this up. Certainly, the facts in Queensland would not support Mr Andrews’ case at all.

“The Minister has relied on anecdotal information about a minority of badly-behaved Sudanese and Ethiopian refugee boys to greatly decrease the intake of African refugees. We would have preferred that he consult the overburdened community leadership who are crying out for help.”

Mr Voloschenko said Australia’s humanitarian program should be based on need and that need should be recognised with the appropriate settlement policies and programs.

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