

Media Release

The Hon James Merlino MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Education
Minister for Mental Health



Monday, 4 October 2021

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR VICTORIA'S AFGHAN COMMUNITY

To help support Victoria's Afghan community as the crisis in Afghanistan continues, the Victorian Government is boosting resources to ensure they can access culturally safe mental health services.

Minister for Mental Health James Merlino today announced the Government will provide \$1 million to Foundation House – a specialist service that supports individuals and families from refugee backgrounds who have experienced traumatic events.

This funding will provide an immediate increase in counselling services for individuals, families and groups to help reduce emotional distress, build coping skills and foster social connections not only in response to the crisis but for the Victorian multicultural community as a whole.

Community engagement work will further help assess individual needs and connect them to key health, wellbeing and education services.

Funding will also strengthen Foundation House's existing Schools Support Program to provide guidance and assistance to Victorian school staff working with students and families of Afghan background.

To help improve the responsiveness of mainstream services to support the Afghan community, this initiative will also contribute to Foundation House's trauma informed professional training and development programs.

The program will assist members of Victoria's Afghan community living in the South Eastern and Western areas of Melbourne and will further support service provision in regional areas of Victoria – ensuring that individuals and families receive help in their own language as well as an understanding from people with similar past experiences.

In response to the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, work has already begun in building a mental health system that works in partnership with Victoria's diverse communities to ensure the delivery of safe, responsive and inclusive care. For more information, visit foundationhouse.org.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health James Merlino

"We welcome all people arriving from Afghanistan and want to make sure that they, along with Victoria's existing Afghan community, receive the culturally safe mental health support they need and deserve."

"Victoria has a proud record of helping migrants and asylum seekers from around the world and we will support the Afghan community however we can as they deal with the devastating situation unfolding in their country."

Quote attributable to Minister for Multicultural Affairs Ros Spence

"We stand with Afghan Victorians who have shown incredible resilience, but who we know are deeply affected by the events that continue to unfold in Afghanistan."

Quote attributable to Foundation House CEO Paris Aristotle

"The Victorian Afghan community is under immense pressure with many feeling traumatised and fearful for loved ones trapped inside Afghanistan – this initiative will help provide urgently needed services and support."

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