

## **Southern Ethnic Advocacy and Advisory Council (SEAC) – A History**

SEAC was formed in 1991 with the aim of giving ethnic communities a voice and a say in issues concerning them on a local, state and federal level. SEAC soon developed into an advocacy body, putting pressure on government and addressing access and equity issues.

In 1999, SEAC was not refunded under the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, leaving a large gap in providing a voice to ethnic groups in the southern region. After much lobbying and hard work however, it was refunded under the CSSS program in 2000, with a direct service delivery focus on multicultural youth issues.

In 2002, additional funding was successfully obtained from the City of Monash for a position to work with CALD young people who have links to the City of Monash. The position's focus was on individual and family support, providing information and advocacy, as well as intervening at a broader level and facilitating recreational activities. Later on in 2003, further funding was obtained from Office for Youth to work with young people again, with a stronger focus on recreational activities aimed at building connections between young people.

By 2004, SEAC had grown from a one person to a three person organisation, with a focus on direct service delivery with young people from multicultural backgrounds. Although SEAC was very vocal in the past in raising awareness on issues facing the multicultural community, a different direction in funding meant that SEAC was unable to continue the former primary advocacy role.

This direct service model of supporting and empowering newly arrived migrant and refugee young people through both casework and community development services continued and saw SEAC experience another expansion in 2011 bringing the team to a total of 9 staff members, 3 of which are full-time and 6 part-time staff. Although SEAC head office was based in Oakleigh, our out-post locations enabled staff to support young people in the municipalities of Kingston, Monash, City of Greater Dandenong and Casey. We received funding through various local, state and federal government programs as well as other benevolent institutions. We strove to make a real difference to the lives of young migrant and refugee persons and had a wonderfully committed team, representative of those diverse communities we work with. This team transferred to SECL following our merge.