

Media Release
12 August 2021

Call for Multicultural Taskforce to help with Covid crisis

Western and South Western Sydney Multicultural community leaders have today called for a special Taskforce to be established to help resolve the Covid lockdown crisis.

The Taskforce would have representatives from multicultural organisations assisting in the decision-making process alongside NSW Health, the police, and local, state and federal MPs from the impacted areas.

'Calling for a greater police presence and crack down is not the answer,' said SydWest Multicultural CEO Elfa Moraitakis, whose organisation represents the multicultural communities in Western Sydney.

'You have to remember that many of our residents come from countries at war where police and the military are feared and mistrusted. There is a better way.'

'We have consistently said that the best way to communicate with people from a broad array of language groups is through community leaders who are known and trusted, such as doctors, priests or sheiks.'

'These community leaders are doing what they can to help get the word out about the Covid-19 lockdown rules and the importance of vaccinations and stand ready and willing to do more.'

'I know the Premier has addressed the multicultural leaders and I applaud that; however, we need a regular seat at the table, using our expert knowledge of multicultural communities and our deep community connections.'

'After all, this is what the state and federal governments fund us to do.'

Ms Moraitakis also congratulated NSW Health for increasing the availability of translated materials, which community leaders are using to push out to their communities. *'This is a great start but together we can do more,'* she said.

'I acknowledge that in every area there are people who will knowingly do the wrong thing, but I'm confident that most people in our multicultural communities want to do the right thing, but they need to know what the right thing is.'

'As a proficient English speaker, it is hard enough to understand the changing landscape and stay across all of the different rules, imagine how hard it is if English is not your first language.'

'We need a seat at the table and we need to be regularly consulted if we are ever going to get out of lockdown.'

We do not profess to have all the answers, surely though, we understand multicultural communities both in the West and Southwest as we have been working with them for the past 35 years. '

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This authoritarian approach only widens the division between the east and the west of our city and that goes against all of our hard work in building a cohesive Australian society'.

STATEMENT ENDS /

Media Enquiries: For further information or to arrange interviews, contact Vikki Hine, Public Affairs & Communications, SydWest Multicultural Services on vikki.hine@sydneywestms.org.au or 0428-109-215.

SydWest Multicultural Services is a leading organisation for all cultural diversity issues responding to community needs and opportunities. Established more than 35 years ago, SydWest provides a range of services to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) individuals and communities services to assist with settling and living productive and independent lives in the community. We offer flexible and integrated service models across the life course of refugees and migrants, supporting the self-determination and empowerment of our diverse communities. SydWest is an innovative employer of choice, with passionate, qualified and experienced bilingual and bicultural staff who are sensitive to the languages and cultures of the communities we represent. With locations in Blacktown, Mt Druitt, Penrith and Rouse Hill, we cover all matters of cultural diversity in the region.

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