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MEDIA RELEASE

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Unique Campaign Defending Migrant & Refugee Young People

Launch of the Multicultural Youth Pledge

The Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (CMYI) is, today, announcing the launch of a unique campaign to defend Australia's migrant and refugee young people.

'This campaign is designed to set the record straight, get some balance into the discussion, counter myths and provide information about the situation of migrant and refugee young people,' says CMYI Director Carmel Guerra.

CMYI run a range of community development and sport and recreation programs with young people from a range of backgrounds, including Sudanese.

Highlighting the grounded experience working in programs and policy, CMYI recently issued a report, *Pathways to Participation* that charts how inclusive sport and recreation programs can be effective tools for engaging newly arrived and refugee young people during the settlement period. **Bachar Houli**, a young Australian rules footballer who plays as a midfielder for the Essendon Football Club helped launch the report. He is the first devout Muslim to play at AFL level.

CMYI's campaign called the **Multicultural Youth Pledge**, will be run off their website (cmyi.net.au) and will include the stories of three young people each who have fled their home country in search of a better life.

CMYI believes the current debate on 'African' refugees and any problems they may experience with integrating into Australian society has been divisive, has fuelled misconceptions and has distorted the facts. The way the debate has been handled at a range of levels in the community has undermined the success of Australia's humanitarian program.

'Anything that undermines our humanitarian program is very sad and quite unproductive because we have some of the best settlement services in the world,' says Ms Guerra. 'This campaign will highlight the positive stories of young people and give people the opportunity to support migrant and refugee young people through signing the pledge and lobbying for greater recognition of their contribution.'

Veronica, a 17-year-old Sudanese refugee is one of the faces of the campaign. 'I used to feel safe, a good environment, a good school...living in harmony, accepted, respected, but now...I'm being disrespected; I'm being treated unfairly. What the Minister said, is rude and it's racist, and it's encouraging other people to act like that.'

'I think people should be more accepting. There's only one difference and that's the colour of our skin, and that doesn't matter,' says Veronica.

See the campaign & sign the **Multicultural Youth Pledge** at www.cmyi.net.au

Media: The young people who are the face of this campaign and CMYI Director Carmel Guerra are available for interview. Contact CMYI Media advisor, Matt Clear on 0403 229 094 or matt@initi8.net.au