

MEDIA RELEASE – 7 MAY 2012

**INAUGURAL MEETING OF GRAMPIANS
REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

The first meeting of the Victorian Multicultural Commission's (VMC) Grampians Regional Advisory Council (RAC) will take place in Ballarat on Wednesday 9 May.

The Hon. Nicholas Kotsiras MLA, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship and Mr Chin Tan, Chairperson of the VMC will speak at the launch. Speeches commence at **12.00pm sharp**.

The Minister and Mr Tan will be available for interviews and photo opportunities from **12.15pm onwards**.

The RAC will advise the VMC on local multicultural, settlement and citizenship issues. It will also advocate on behalf of diverse communities, assist the VMC to promote the benefits of diversity and boost direct links with local multicultural communities.

The Chair of the Grampians RAC is VMC Commissioner Mr Yasser Soliman, who has worked in active partnership with Victorian Police, local councils and Islamic youth to forge understanding and cooperation.

Mr Soliman said he was delighted to be part of the new RAC. He said: "It is a privilege and a pleasure to be a part of the Grampians RAC and I am looking forward to working closely with the other members. The new RAC provides an important opportunity to discuss the issues in our region and strengthen our culturally and linguistically diverse communities."

Highlighting the significance of the RACs, the Chairperson of the VMC, Mr Chin Tan, said "The inaugural Grampians RAC meeting is an important milestone for the region. The members who have generously volunteered their time can now proceed with the important work of advising the VMC on local multicultural issues."

Dr Sundram Sivamalai who has broad-ranging experience in multicultural affairs said he was looking forward to working closely with the RAC members. He said: "I feel privileged to be part of the Grampians RAC and to be given the opportunity to contribute on behalf of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. This new platform for discussion provides a consultative and inclusive approach to multiculturalism which is critical to understanding the issues in our region at a grassroots level."

The Grampians RAC members are: Gaynor Atkin, Dimitri Dollard, Mona Hatwal, Sundram Sivamalai, Joshua Morris, Sujatha Umakanthan, Vivian Bradbury, Frank Williams, Maria Calandro and Peter Appleton.

RAC members are volunteers and have been selected for their understanding of multicultural issues, in addition to their experience and commitment to their local multicultural communities.

The Grampians region includes 11 municipalities and approximately 247,000 people, with the population concentrated in the east of the region, with more than half living in Ballarat and Bacchus Marsh.

For further information on the Regional Advisory Councils:

Visit <http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/regional-advisory-councils>

Local media are invited to attend the meeting for photos and interviews.

Media enquires: Call Kathleen Manson at the VMC on **9651 0621**.

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