

Local Government urged to do much more – welcome refugees and migrants, stem racism

Tasmanian Local Governments have been urged to do more to attract and retain migrants and refugees to the state at a forum held in Hobart today.

The forum attended by 60 people from local government and community organisations will hear about the best practise policies of local governments around Australia. It will hear that Tasmanian local government needs to increase their efforts and actions in order to improve social cohesion in its communities and build Tasmania's migrant population.

Joe Caputo and Gulnara Abbasova, of the Federation of Ethnic Community Councils of Australia and Robin Banks, Tasmania's Anti-Discrimination Commissioner will be speakers at the forum held at Hobart Town Hall.

"The actions of local government are key to creating happy and harmonious communities and there are many benefits for cities that come from increasing cultural diversity and retaining more migrants," said Mr Joe Caputo who is a former Mayor of Moreland City Council.

"The Multicultural Council of Tasmania research shows us that there is limited action occurring in Tasmanian Councils at this stage and much more could be done, drawing on the ideas and case studies of Councils in other states. We want to inspire and challenge Tasmanian Councils to do much more."

"Currently Tasmania has a much lower percentage of migrants and refugees than all other states of Australia, and this is one important factor why Tasmania has not grown as quickly in recent decades as the others States have," said Mr Caputo.

There are several important steps that Councils can take to ensure they are building cohesion and creating a diverse and tolerant community. We know that migrants and refugees are more likely to settle in communities that are welcoming and provide opportunities for new residents," said Mr Caputo.

The Multicultural Council of Tasmania research shows that only one Tasmanian Council has a multicultural strategy and only three have signed up to the national Racism Stops with Me campaign.

Forum will be briefed on two guidance documents – 'Building social cohesion in our communities' from the Australian Human Rights Commission and '[Local government and best practice in multicultural policy and programs](#)' from the Multicultural Council of Tasmania.

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