

# CONFERENCE WELCOME

Demos Krousos

Chair of National Advisory Group, Diversity in Health 2010

Uncle Bill Nicholson

Honorable Daniel Andrews, Minister for Health

David Davis, Shadow Minister for Health

Professor Abd Malak

Mr Stephen Kerr, Chair of North Richmond Community Health

Distinguished guests and delegates.

On behalf of the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity & Health, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to **Diversity in Health 2010**.

I extend a special welcome to our international speakers and delegates, who have joined us from the United Kingdom, the US, Canada, India, Malaysia and several other countries. I also welcome the community, consumer and carer representatives who have joined us today.

I would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, the traditional owners of the land on which we meet. I pay my respect to their Elders, both past and present.

It's a very opportune time to be talking about multicultural health. This conference is being held against the backdrop of the most significant health reforms in our country since the introduction of Medicare. With the changes being made to our hospital system and the introduction of new technologies that rely on English and IT proficient consumers, it is vital to ensure that health care remains accessible, inclusive and relevant to the needs of all Australians. It is imperative that culture, language, migration and settlement are not barriers to good health in our country.

This conference brings together some of the best thinkers in the health sector: from the doctors to the researchers; the allied health specialists to the mental health clinicians; the administrators to the health promoters. Equally importantly, it draws in the experience and ideas of those not traditionally linked to the health sector – the social and community workers, the justice sector, the migrant resource centres and multicultural services – to ensure that we don't only address the clinical aspects of health but consider how to maintain and improve the wellbeing of our communities.

The changes we're about to experience are driven by economic and social imperatives as well as ethical ones. One of the major challenges for governments and policy-makers – from Australia to the United States to Thailand to China – is how to provide high quality care and cope with increasingly higher demand and rising healthcare costs. These challenges are framed by the need to make health systems accessible and equitable, and ensure better health outcomes for the entire population.

This is a challenge that all of us share. Read the abstracts in your conference program. You'll realise – if you don't already – that issues of accessibility, health literacy and preventative health are not just an add-on or an extra expense. They are fundamental to the success of health sector reform. You'll also see that practitioners in the health and community sector are on the ball with these issues. They are driven by the desire to do better – to prove that language services in hospitals reduce length of stay and readmission rates; that culturally targeted health promotion campaigns lead to better health for all Australians; that addressing the social determinants of health will reduce the burden on our hospitals.

This conference is our opportunity to shape an inclusive and equitable health care system. So use the next three days to voice your views, share your knowledge, build your skills and broaden your networks.

So welcome once again to all of you, and thank you for being here. Like all of you I'm eager to get on with the program.

Lastly I would like to thank the Diversity Health Institute for the opportunity to host this conference in Melbourne – the multicultural heart of this multicultural nation.