

Wednesday 24 April 2013

CITY OF RYDE NOW A REFUGEE WELCOME ZONE

The City of Ryde Council last night voted unanimously to make the city a Refugee Welcome Zone.

In proposing the motion City of Ryde Mayor, Cllr Ivan Petch noted the contribution that refugees and immigrants have made to the fabric of our local community and acknowledged the importance of welcoming refugees. Cllr Petch said: "We have the responsibility as good citizens to welcome refugees and make them feel at home. Declaring Ryde a Refugee Welcome Zone is a step in the right direction and reflects the feelings of the people of Ryde".

Prior to the Council meeting a number of Councillors had the opportunity to meet with Paul Power, CEO of the Refugee Council of Australia. Councillors heard about the stories and experiences of refugees who had been resettled in Australia and about the processes for housing asylum seekers in the community whilst their claims were being assessed.

The Refugee Welcome Zone program is facilitated by the Refugee Council of Australia and allows Councils to declare their commitment in spirit; to welcoming refugees into the community, upholding the human rights of refugees, demonstrating compassion for refugees and enhancing cultural and religious diversity in the community.

Paul Power said the City of Ryde's decision to become a Refugee Welcome Zone signalled the City's intention to work with its community to promote understanding and harmony. Mr Power said: "Since Federation, Australia has provided 800,000 refugees with the opportunity for a new life free from the persecution they have previously suffered – and our nation has benefited greatly from former refugees' contributions to our society and economy".

This decision comes as Council prepares to celebrate the opening of the Eastwood Migrant Resource Centre (MRC). The City of Ryde and the MRC have established a twelve month pilot project that will provide community development, group work, information and referral support to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Ryde. The launch of the Eastwood Migrant Resource Centre will be held on Friday, 24 May 2013 at 3.30pm at 159 Shaftsbury Rd, Eastwood.

ENDS