

media alert

YOUNG REFUGEES KICKING GOALS

Hundreds of young refugees will take to the football field **this weekend** for events that promise to be more than a bit of fun and exercise.

The *Refugee Youth Soccer Development Program*, which is aimed at promoting social cohesion and building racial harmony, will be officially launched on **Sunday** (20 August).

Football personalities Craig Foster and Andy Harper, who are co-patrons and are actively involved in the program's development, will be at the event.

The events on the day include a mini World Cup for children between six and 12 years of age, men's and women's games for those over 17, as well as dribbling and other competitions.

The program is designed for young people between the ages of 10 and 25 who have arrived as refugees. It will begin in the Liverpool, Parramatta, Auburn, Fairfield and Blacktown areas.

Organisers anticipate the range of activities will include skills training, referee and coaching clinics, after school and holiday camps and workshops on fundraising, club, team and sports management.

"Sport is increasingly being looked to as an effective way of bringing people together, to promote not only health, but social cohesion and even peace-building. But many initiatives tend to be one-off events," said Anne Bunde-Birouste, from the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), who initiated this program.

"This program is different because it will be ongoing, will link with existing social networks and build new ones," she said. "That's important because young refugees are particularly vulnerable due to the difficulties of transition to a new country, potentially traumatic experiences before they left their home country and 'normal' challenges young people encounter in development."

What: Launch of Refugee Youth Soccer Development Program

When: Sunday, August 20, 11am to 5pm

Where: Granville Park, near Merrylands Station

For more information go to the website: <http://soccer.sphcm.med.unsw.edu.au/>

CONTACT DETAILS: Anne Bunde-Birouste, 0407 957 039, Susi Hamilton, UNSW Media unit, tel. 9385 1583 or 0422 934 024, email susi.hamilton@unsw.edu.au

Date Issued: 18 August 2006