



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Andrew Robb AO MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration
and Multicultural Affairs

006/03

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Harmony project for Australian beaches

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Andrew Robb, today launched a \$600 000 partnership with Surf Life Saving Australia to encourage young people from diverse backgrounds to join the surf life saving community and promote community cohesion.

Mr Robb said the Living Harmony partnership was a response to December's Cronulla riots in New South Wales.

"The project will invite young Australians of diverse backgrounds to complete surf life saving qualifications and get involved with Australia's surf life saving movement," he said.

"It will use Sydney's surf life saving clubs as a catalyst to draw together different communities. The pilot programs will be based in Sydney but could be rolled out nationally beyond 2006.

"Surf Life Saving Australia has worked with the Australian Government since 2001 on community harmony initiatives," Mr Robb said.

The project would focus mainly on young people aged 15 -25 – but also involve primary and secondary school students initially from southern and western Sydney.

The President of Surf Life Saving Australia, Ron Rankin, said today the Living in Harmony partnership would involve bronze medallion and surf club membership programs, surf safety and survival courses and cardiopulmonary resuscitation training for adults.

It would also enlist help from other community groups to show young people the volunteer and career opportunities available through sporting and other networks.

"The program will begin by consulting representatives from community groups to gain input and support. This will include community meetings, surveys in specified areas and focus groups," Mr Rankin said.

The schools' element of the project would feature half hour, half day and multi-week education programs to be delivered in the classroom and on the beach.

Member for Cook, Mr Bruce Baird MP, will represent the Australian Government at the launch.

Today's announcement comes in the lead-up to Harmony Day on March 21. Harmony Day brings Australians together to show their commitment to community harmony and say "no" to discrimination and racism. For more information on Harmony Day go to www.harmony.gov.au

Surf Life Saving Australia has been a Harmony Day partner for the past six years. Previous projects have included working with young people from indigenous and newly arrived communities and producing multilingual publications on beach safety.

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