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Ahead of the game

By Kirsten Leiminger

A LEADING non-profit group that helps migrant youth get involved in sport is in talks with Greater Dandenong Council to form a partnership and expand its work in the area.

Sports Without Borders is seeking funding for ongoing outdoor education programs.

After the organisation was knocked back for a council grant to help newly arrived migrants and youth from refugee backgrounds take up a sport, the council has agreed to meet with it to explore other options.

Sports Without Borders chairman James Demetriou told *The Journal* the group wanted to work with the council, industry and local schools to deliver sport programs in Greater Dandenong.

"The programs give kids who are socially excluded the opportunity to build self-esteem, participate, have fun, understand what discipline is about and take part in a team structure.

"Our studies show that sport just seems to break down barriers that are out there. Sport is one of those great things that transcends all barriers, backgrounds, religions and languages."

Mr Demetriou said a partnership with the council could help cover the costs of travel, equipment and club membership for young people.

It would also help the group establish a

leadership and mentor program and a youth action community sports program.

"We want to work with local schools to have event days where we bring together local sports clubs and introduce children to pathways in life through sport.

"We've found children get lost if they don't have pathways in school after age 14. Children without pathways tend to feel socially excluded and it can be very difficult for them to come back from that."

The group wants to focus its efforts on Greater Dandenong because of its diversity.

"If the council agrees, we could have this program running by October or November this year."

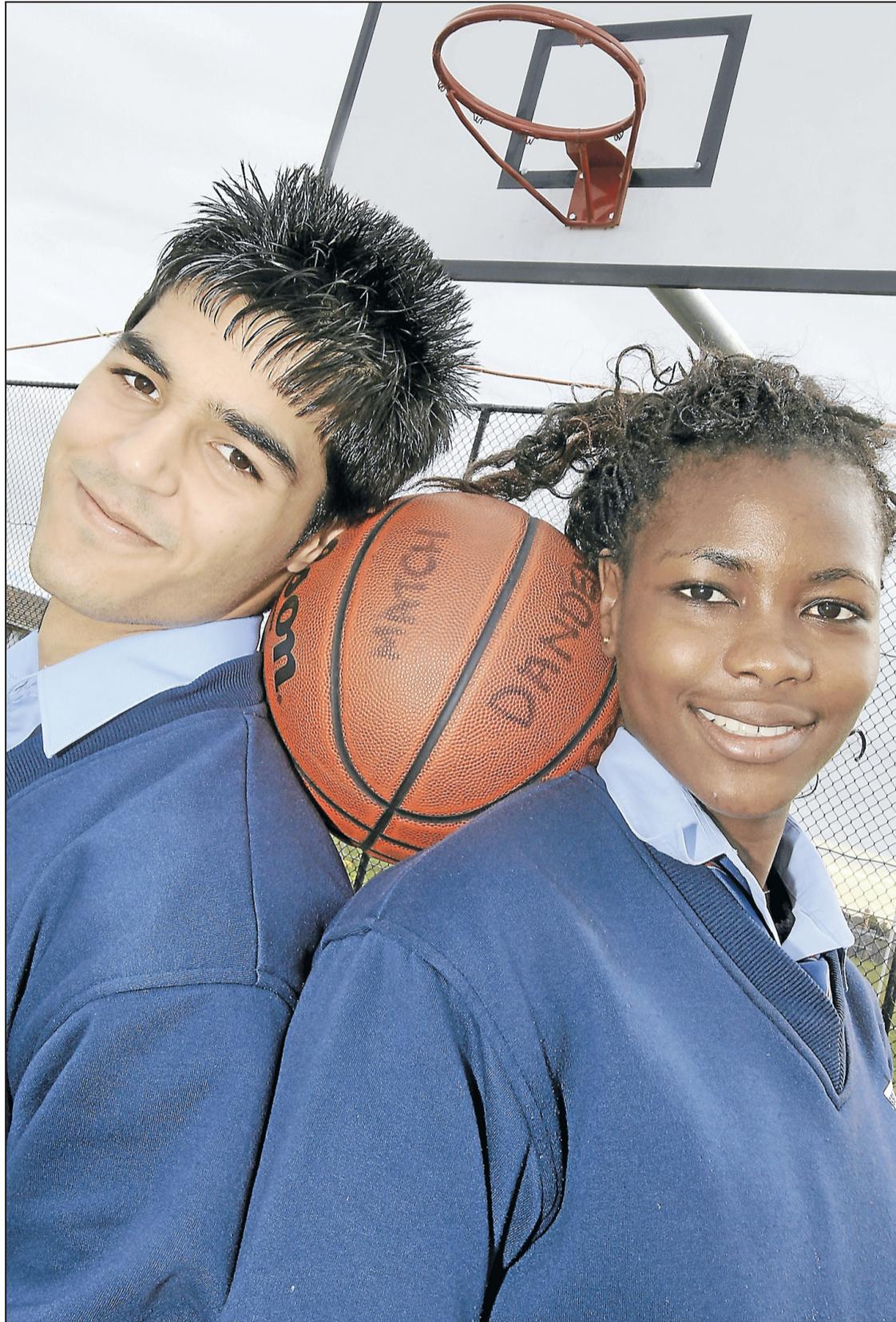
The group had worked with youths in Greater Dandenong for about the past three years, he said.

Greater Dandenong Council's community services director Mark Doubleday confirmed the council was meeting Sports Without Borders to discuss "other activities we can work on together to promote sport in our local community".

He said the council was already working closely with the group to develop opportunities for young people in Greater Dandenong.

Last month, Sports Without Borders gave \$16,000 to more than 150 newly arrived and refugee youth across Melbourne to help get them involved in sport.

A cheque presentation was held at Springvale Neighbourhood House.



On the ball: Dandenong High School students Suleiman Haider, from Afghanistan, and Marion Fofanah, from Liberia, are among many young people who could benefit from a Sports Without Borders partnership. **Picture:** Lucy Di Paolo

TODAY

Job offer

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Car crush

Hoons are reminded about the consequences of speeding with a car being crushed last week: Page 4



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