

WHITEHORSE

Reducing stress of public transport

Lanyard to help autistic become more independent

Paddy Naughtin

A MOTHER is urging other parents of children with autism to join a growing movement aimed at making negotiating public transport easier for young people who have special needs.

Emily Ma, chairperson of the Chinese Parents Special Support Network, has three children, one with autism.

During the past two years, Ms Ma and her two other children have been working with Victoria Police and Metro staff in developing a lanyard and other products which could be used to identify people with autism to authorities.

It's hoped that children who have autism will wear the lanyard while using public transport, and will be rec-

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-EMILY MA

ognised by people such as station staff or police officers as a person who may not react as they would expect if approached, or may need additional assistance should anything go wrong.

Ms Ma said the puzzle design for the lanyards and backpacks was chosen for two reasons — the jigsaw symbol is widely associated with autism and it represents different community organisations coming together to create an inclusive and warm environment for those with autism.

“Taking public transport can be stressful for people with autism, they might not know the route they're going, they might not understand the myki, so this just lets people know they may need a bit of extra help,” Ms Ma said.

A special forum on the autism lanyards will be held on Wednesday, November 15, at the Monash Council Civic Centre in Glen Waverley.

Ms Ma will speak, as will Whitehorse crime prevention officer Leading Senior Constable Rebecca Millin, Metro community education officer David Hogarty, and representatives from Travelers Aid Australia.

The forum runs from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

For more information, go to cpsn.org.au



Ben Lam, Leading Senior Constable Bec Millin, Emily Ma and Eva Lam. Picture: ANDREW TAUBER