Understanding Social Cohesion in Shepparton and Mildura: Final Report

VICTORIAN
multicultural
commission

strengthening our community

Anthony Moran and Mark Mallman,
Department of Social Inquiry,
La Trobe University, Bundoora

November 2015

LA TROBE
UNIVERSITY

Acknowledgements

Governance

The Research Steering Group was made up of VMC Director Rudy Monteleone, and Commissioners Abeselom Nega, and Dr Teresa De Fazio, VMC's Manager, Research and Coordination Tony O'Hea, and the two researchers from La Trobe University, Dr Anthony Moran and Mr Mark Mallman. It met regularly during the six months to advise on and discuss progress of the project.

The project adhered to the ethical processes and procedures established by La Trobe University's Human Ethics Committee, and by Victoria's Department of Education and Training.

Acronyms

AMES   Adult Multicultural Education Service

CALD   Culturally and Linguistically Diverse

CEF   Community Engagement Framework

DHHS   Department of Health and Human Services (Victoria)

DHS   Department of Human Services (Victoria)

ECSD   Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District

LEAD   Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity

MDAS   Mallee District Aboriginal Services

MFC   Mallee Family Care

NAIDOC   National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee

OMAC   Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship, Victoria

RAC   Regional Advisory Council, Victorian Multicultural Commission

RAP   Reconciliation Action Plan

SEIFA   Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas

SMECC   Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council

TAFE   Technical and Further Education

VMC   Victorian Multicultural Commission

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

In March 2015 the Victorian Multicultural Commission contracted and funded researchers from La Trobe University to conduct a six-month study of two Victorian regional cities, Shepparton and Mildura, in terms of their experience as multicultural, socially cohesive communities. The three main aims of the project were:

1. To identify the key success factors in Shepparton's and Mildura's experience of integrating their multicultural populations: What is working in Shepparton and Mildura as diverse communities? What are individuals, community based organisations, local government, policy makers, and businesses doing well in terms of getting along in a multicultural environment?

2. To identify the key points of stress in Shepparton's and Mildura's communities: Where and what are the problems? Are there groups of people in particular difficulty? Are there current, emerging or foreseeable tensions between different people in Shepparton and Mildura? And what might be done about them?

3. To suggest whether some of the successes of Shepparton and Mildura might help governments and other organisations in Victoria to improve their multicultural relations and social cohesion in other places.

Background research, including an extensive literature review (published on VMC's website), was conducted for the project from March to early May 2015, during which time the researchers also began intensive fieldwork in Shepparton and Mildura, involving informal discussions, and recorded interviews with key stakeholders and community members, and observation of cultural and other community events. This Final Report discusses the findings from that fieldwork. These can be summarised in the following main points.

Both Shepparton and Mildura are distinguishably successful as socially cohesive multicultural cities, when considering the key factors of sense of belonging, sense of worth, social justice, participation, and social acceptance. This is the conclusion we draw from the research findings, and notably, it is the opinion of the majority of the people we interviewed. The following is a list of the factors in place in both cities that foster social cohesion in an ongoing manner:

→ Good governance at national, state and local levels is one of the broader overarching factors contributing to the success of social cohesion and multiculturalism in Shepparton and Mildura. Many policies and programs are significant forces in the making and continual development of regional multicultural cities.

→ There is an historical experience of CALD immigration to Shepparton and Mildura and their regions that positively influences community attitudes toward acceptance of newer migrants and refugees.

→ Employment opportunities in the horticultural and agricultural industries have provided and continue to provide opportunities for financial stability.

→ Key government and community organisations often collaborate, pool resources, and combine their efforts toward meeting common goals in fostering a strong community.

→ Victoria Police have taken a proactive approach to promoting social cohesion amongst the cities' diverse populations, including having (in Shepparton) a dedicated Multicultural Liaison Officer, a commissioned police officer whose full-time work involves being a liaison between the police and the community.

→ The Department of Justice and Regulation serves a vital role in the ongoing cultivation of community justice, equity, and belonging. The disadvantaged and those who are new to Australia and to regional cities can be particularly vulnerable in negotiating the legal system. By assisting community groups in learning and adjusting to their rights and responsibilities, Department of Justice and Regulation workers enable diverse peoples to move toward understanding and even belonging in the wider community.

→ Local councillors and council employees who take it upon themselves to encourage an emphasis within council and the broader community on developing social cohesion.

→ Welfare and health agencies are notable for their broad-reaching programs and approaches, and there are numerous links between the agencies because there is crossover in their work.

→ Ethnic councils are recognised throughout the communities as a hub of resources and support for CALD community members, as well as serving an important role in linking them to other parts of the community.

→ Ethnic organisations build bonding social capital between those community members, as well as allowing people with differing cultural backgrounds the opportunity to maintain and celebrate the things that are important to them and their culture. They also help individuals connect with the wider community, thus providing bridging social capital.

→ Local churches, mosques, temples, and other religious institutions play a significant, and possibly under-recognised, role in helping cultural groups maintain a sense of their distinct identity, while incorporating themselves into the life of the greater community. The work of the Interfaith Network in Shepparton is a benchmark for other cities to actively foster positive social relations between those of differing faiths and/or ethnic backgrounds.

→ The local media in both Shepparton and Mildura are notable for their active, positive representation of the diversity of the community, being regular sources of stories, personal profiles, and reports that display the diversity of the cities, and clearly set out to celebrate that diversity.

→ Aboriginal agencies (Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative in Shepparton, and Mallee District Aboriginal Services in Mildura) service varying needs of the Aboriginal communities in these cities, addressing social service issues that may, in some cases be longstanding issues of poverty and social exclusion.

→ Service-based clubs (such as Rotary and Lions) fulfill a notable function for establishing and maintaining bonding and bridging social capital, encourage community building and participation through philanthropy, service projects, and social events.

→ Sport, in particular rugby, soccer, Aussie Rules, netball, and basketball was named as the context in which every day multicultural interactions are a regular part of life in these cities. There are numerous diverse sport teams that represent examples of sincere intercultural bonding and friendships.

→ Some of the primary and secondary schools have high numbers of CALD and Indigenous students, and are cited as places where multicultural interactions take place. English Language Centres within two of these schools provide opportunities for new arrivals to Shepparton and Mildura to meet other community members like themselves as well as expand their social network through the community members who volunteer there.

→ The Universities (La Trobe University in both cities, and also the University of Melbourne in Shepparton) and TAFE campuses in Shepparton and Mildura provide education and training opportunities, developing their workforce to targeted needs, in particular in education, health, social welfare, business and trades. They also engage many people from CALD backgrounds.

→ There is a strong commitment to nurturing local leadership through programs targeted to mentoring leadership, including among young people, disadvantaged people, and representatives of newer immigrant and Indigenous communities.

→ Events celebrating multiculturalism and diversity of cultures are popular occasions for people to share culture, in particular food, and provide opportunities for recent and older immigrant groups, and also local Indigenous communities, to publicly express their presence in Shepparton and Mildura.

→ The fabric of everyday life in Shepparton and Mildura includes community members who actively engage in multicultural contexts, interacting with and assisting people across cultural differences. These are community members who care, and their attitudes and actions go a long way toward countering any racist attitudes community members may otherwise encounter.

→ People from diverse immigrant backgrounds having their own places to worship and to gather together as a group for community activities.

Despite the successes, there are notable factors that can and do diminish social cohesion in Shepparton and Mildura. The interviewees were aware of these issues, some of which are beyond the control of individual community members, such as changes in employment opportunities and broader economic circumstances. Local agencies and individuals are attempting to address a number of these barriers through their work, but they recognise that the needs are ongoing. The following are issues that emerged through our research:

→ Employment issues, linked with a need for economic development, present challenges to social inclusion. Due to rises in farm and land prices and changes in the horticultural, agricultural, and related industries, it is no longer a given that economic stability and/or mobility is available to anyone who pursues it.

→ There are persistent problems of unemployment, especially long-term and intergenerational unemployment, and also underemployment for various groups that result in social exclusion that threatens social cohesion.

→ There are significant employment challenges for the CALD communities, including: employment discrimination; lack of sufficient training including English language; community misconceptions that newer migrants (particularly from African and Middle Eastern countries) were happily receiving welfare payments and not working due to laziness; and the untapped resource of the numerous highly skilled professionals – including doctors, engineers, teachers, and scientists – who are unable to work in their skill area.

→ There are barriers to access to housing for recent immigrants particularly from refugee, asylum seeker and non-English speaking backgrounds, and for Indigenous people. There are efforts of local community workers, including people from ethnic councils and other organisations, to alleviate these difficulties.

→ There are experiences of racism and discrimination in everyday life.

→ Many interviewees said that some Federal Government policy and rhetoric, as well as tabloid media, pose barriers to social cohesion by actively promoting and drawing a link between 'boat people', Muslims and terrorism.

→ Social cohesion has been noted in both Shepparton and Mildura as 'successful' for some groups, but less so for others, including local Indigenous people, people from particular racial, ethnic, immigrant, refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds, and according to people we interviewed, groups of people dependent on welfare.

→ Socio-economic disadvantage diminishes social cohesion in Shepparton and Mildura. There are sections of the population living in poverty that are largely disengaged, and who deal with high levels of the attendant problems of poverty including family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, low school attendance and school completion, unemployment, teenage pregnancies, and trouble with the law.

→ There is a need for more everyday opportunities for intercultural interaction between cultural, religious, and socio-economic groups. Sport, some religious institutions, and cultural festivals are spaces of intercultural social mixing, however, nearly all of the interviewees in both cities suggested there is not a significant amount of meaningful intercultural interaction outside of these contexts.

→ Intercultural challenges, if not addressed, can diminish community belonging and acceptance, a sense of shared values, and inter-personal harmony between differing cultural communities. These include, among other things: the more established communities and the newcomers learning to understand and accommodate each other; newcomers' knowledge and use of public services, legal systems, rights, and responsibilities; and some parents of children from various newer immigrant backgrounds worried that their children are losing their culture. These result not from irreconcilable differences but from lack of knowledge, differing expectations, and cultural misunderstandings.

Recommendations

The following recommendations address the third aim of this project: 'To suggest whether some of the successes of Shepparton and Mildura might help governments and other organisations in Victoria to improve their multicultural relations and social cohesion in other places.' These recommendations arise out of our assessment of what the two case studies of Shepparton and Mildura tell us about what contributes to achieving social cohesion in multicultural environments, and also what are the difficulties and challenges encountered. We return to and expand on these recommendations, and also highlight some of the lessons, in Chapter 4.

- **Recommendation 1:** A whole-of-government, strategically collaborative and proactive approach, working with community organisations to address communities' needs and goals is required to achieve a socially cohesive multicultural society.

- **Recommendation 2:** Consultative approaches between state government agencies and local communities concerning issues of multiculturalism, cultural diversity, social cohesion, and the issues faced by CALD communities should be encouraged and enhanced.

- **Recommendation 3:** Local councillors and council employees have the potential to make a significant impact on social cohesion through their active influence on council priorities. Councils should treat as a high priority the recognition and celebration of diverse peoples in their communities. All councils should employ staff representative of the diversity of the community.

- **Recommendation 4:** In areas with significant CALD and Indigenous communities police should be funded to appoint officers with specific responsibilities for multicultural and Indigenous affairs to act as major links between police and communities, and to build trust between police and communities.

- **Recommendation 5:** That newly arrived refugees and other migrants be provided with structured education about the roles and functions of the key institutions that affect their lives, including but not limited to the following: justice agencies and law enforcement agencies; our democratic institutions; key agencies within the machinery of government, including VMC, OMAC, DHHS, and Centrelink; and local government.

- **Recommendation 6:** Welfare and health agencies carry out important work toward social cohesion, and their funding should be prioritised so they can continue their broad-reaching programs. Their collaboration and pooling of resources can be formalised through processes like Mildura's Northern Mallee Community Partnership. Encouraging intense collaboration between local agencies should be fostered as a key to success.

- **Recommendation 7:** Ethnic councils should be supported by Government or established where they do not yet exist, as they serve a vital role as hubs for addressing the needs of newer migrants, and in linking them with other parts of the community. These councils are essential to multicultural social cohesion at the local level, as they are able to provide locally sensitive settlement and other support services to newer residents, which cannot be easily performed by other agencies.

- **Recommendation 8:** Ethnic organisations should be encouraged and supported for the role they play in fostering belonging and a stronger link to the wider community, particularly for newer arrivals. State and local governments should consider ways to partially fund, and thereby encourage, the establishment and/or use of public spaces (such as community centres) for ethnic organisations. Groups who have a space where they can meet are more likely to feel they have a place in the wider community.

- **Recommendation 9:** Religious institutions should be encouraged and supported as they foster social cohesion amongst their own members, and also across cultural differences. The work of the Interfaith Network in Shepparton is a benchmark for other cities to actively foster positive social relations between those of differing faiths and/or ethnic backgrounds. Communities should consider establishing an interfaith network that can form a bridge between ethnic organisations, local churches, mosques, temples, and other religious institutions.

- **Recommendation 10:** Local newspapers and other local media should be encouraged to emphasise the diversity of the local community and the positive stories of everyday multicultural life, which has potential to counter other rhetoric and images (for example from tabloid media) that promotes more fearful and insular attitudes toward newer arrivals.

- **Recommendation 11:** Service clubs like Rotary and Lions, that play vital roles in local communities, should be encouraged to broaden their membership base to newer, less established members of the community. This should be encouraged as a way to improve upon the good work these clubs already do in building and maintaining bonding and bridging social capital in the community.

- **Recommendation 12:** Sports leagues and individual teams should consider initiatives to recruit and financially support children and youth, especially females, from CALD and Indigenous backgrounds to participate.

- **Recommendation 13:** Regions should consider enforcing zoning policies that encourage a broader mix of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds in all of the local public schools.

- **Recommendation 14:** Public schools with diverse student bodies should be funded by government to employ multicultural and Indigenous education assistants to work with students and to help train staff in cultural competency.

- **Recommendation 15:** Cities like Shepparton and Mildura should consider, in consultation with local government and other key agencies, including business and industry, how to expand study options at Universities and TAFEs to meet the needs of developing local industries.

- **Recommendation 16:** Communities should pursue and develop programs that answer to the different leadership and mentoring needs of their diverse communities, including among young people, Indigenous people, and representatives of newer immigrant communities, through the development and funding of specific, targeted leadership programs.

- **Recommendation 17:** Federal, state and local governments should continue to support and provide funding, including longer term funding, for multicultural and related events and celebrations at the local community level. Federal and state governments should demonstrate a high level of support for multiculturalism through these events. The success stories from these events should be widely communicated.

- **Recommendation 18:** Cities should encourage and acknowledge community members and leaders who actively engage in multicultural contexts, interacting with and assisting people across cultural differences. These types of people can be held up as role models exemplifying the values that the community wants to foster.

- **Recommendation 19:** Employment challenges for CALD and Indigenous communities need to be addressed with high priority. Issues around discrimination, English language training, and misconceptions about newer migrants all need to be addressed in order to assist in the settlement and community reception of newer arrivals. Federal, state and local governments should offer incentives for employers, large and small, who implement proactive strategies for hiring employees from the CALD and Aboriginal communities.

- **Recommendation 20:** Government agencies (for example DHHS, Consumer Affairs Victoria, and Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission) should take a leading role in educating real estate agencies (and their rental property managers) and landlords to improve levels of awareness and understanding about the needs and value of Indigenous people and newer arrivals to the community and the housing market.

- **Recommendation 21:** Local councils, in consultation with their diverse communities, to formulate and implement anti-racism campaigns tailored to encourage local communities to support diversity, social inclusion and multiculturalism (e.g. Standing up to Race Based Discrimination), by promoting respect for others and valuing the range of cultures represented locally. This can include educational campaigns that celebrate diverse communities, describe the positive aspects for all residents, and highlight the damage to the wider community wrought by racist attitudes and actions.

- **Recommendation 22.** Local agencies should seek to organise and run numerous smaller social activities, centred on shared interests, which bring together community members from different cultural backgrounds. These smaller opportunities for social interaction fill some of the gaps in opportunity for meaningful intercultural interaction.

- **Recommendation 23:** Local integration programs should be developed to orient new arrivals to cultural norms and practices in local communities, in order to facilitate settlement and to avoid unnecessary cultural misunderstandings. If conducted by locals, this would also build initial networks of familiarity and trust between people from different cultures and people from mainstream communities. Local councils, agencies, and religious institutions should all consider collaborations for implementing programs for orienting newcomers to the local culture.

1 Introduction: background

Shepparton, a regional centre in North-Eastern Victoria, is a service town for a large, successful irrigation-based fruit growing industry, dairy industry, and other agricultural production. At the 2011 Census, Shepparton had a population of 29,500, with the Greater Shepparton population (i.e. including surrounding small towns) at 61,737. It is ethnically diverse, with a long history of European immigration and more recent immigration from many different Asian, Middle-Eastern and other countries. It also has a comparatively large, disadvantaged Aboriginal population (at least 4% of the Greater Shepparton population, compared with 0.7% for Victoria) the largest Aboriginal population in Victoria outside of Melbourne. At the 2011 Census it was estimated that there were 2,082 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Shepparton, but local estimates are that the figure is much higher. The strong agricultural and horticultural base has promoted a range of food based manufacturing industries in the area, notably fruit canneries, dairies, soup and sauce plants. Shepparton is also part of the Murray Dairy region, which is Australia's largest milk producer, supplying over 2.2 billion litres of milk in 2014. The Goulburn Valley is the largest contributor, supplying over 1.4 billion litres. It is also an important transport hub (Committee for Greater Shepparton 2014). Its health care and social service sector is a large employer, with GV Health employing approximately 2300 people.

Mildura, in Victoria's North-West on the Murray River at the border of New South Wales and close to South Australia, is a similar size to Shepparton. At the 2011 census Mildura had a population of 30,647, with the Mildura Region population (including the Wentworth Shire Council area in NSW) at 58,976 (Mildura Development Corporation 2014). Like Shepparton, Mildura is an ethnically diverse regional area, with a long history of immigration to support irrigation-based agriculture and horticulture. It also has a relatively large, and disadvantaged Indigenous community. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is estimated by the 2011 Census to be approximately 2500 in number (including Mildura and Wentworth), about 3.6% of the population, and also experiences considerable mobility between different towns in the region, and beyond (Mildura Development Corporation 2014). It is widely recognised that these numbers are inaccurate, and may be much higher (Northern Mallee Primary Care Partnership 2011). Mildura's grape producing and other fruit industries, and almond production continue to attract ethnically diverse immigrants, including from Asia and Polynesia. Mildura and Swan Hill regions produce 68% of Australia's almonds, 98% of its dried grapes, 75% of its table grapes, 20% of its wine grape crush, 24% of Australia's citrus, and also has some of Australia's premier wineries (Mildura Development Corporation 2014). Its health care industry attracts significant numbers of skilled professionals, including from Asia. Mildura and its region have well-established Samoan and Tongan communities.

Albanian Harvest Festival, Shepparton, 2015
Photographer: Liz Arcus

Prior to the emergence of the cities of Shepparton and Mildura, the Shepparton and Mildura areas had many Aboriginal tribes and clans who had lived there for more than 40,000 years. The traditional Aboriginal custodians of the Shepparton area are the Bangerang and Yorta Yorta peoples. The Mildura area's enduring Indigenous population includes the traditional custodians the Barkindji, Latje Latje, Paakantji (Barlindji), Ngiyampana, Mutthi Mutthi, Wemba Wemba, Tati Tati and Barapa Barapa peoples (see Mallee District Aboriginal Services [MDAS] Website http://www.mdas.org.au). These traditional owners are an important part of the culturally diverse social fabrics of Shepparton and Mildura, whose experiences and contributions are being gradually acknowledged by those who have migrated to the areas over the last 160 or so years.

As already noted, Shepparton and Mildura also have long histories of multi-ethnic immigration, stimulated by their distinctive irrigation based agricultural and horticultural industries (Allom Lovell and Associates 2004; Michael 1988; Parsons 1990; Missingham et al 2004, 2006). Historically both cities provided semi-skilled and labouring farm work and land for people who sometimes lacked recognisable skills, including English language skills; and this is still true today. Immigrants from Italian, Greek, Turkish, Albanian, Macedonian, Croatian, and Yugoslavian backgrounds, to name a few of the significant immigrant groups to have established themselves in Shepparton and Mildura, experienced hardship but also prospered through hard work, buying farms and orchards and educating their children. In many respects such established immigrant groups now form part of the mainstream of Shepparton and Mildura. There are many examples of immigrant success stories in Shepparton and Mildura, with notable culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) family names strongly associated with farming but also other areas of local business and professional life: accounting and legal firms, hotels, restaurants and entertainment venues, and other businesses (for more detail on this immigration history, see Appendix 1).

In recent years Shepparton in particular has been cited in the mainstream media, and in academic and government literature, as a positive example of a rural multicultural city that welcomes new immigrants from ethnically and racially diverse backgrounds, including refugees (Strong 2010; Bird 2013). Shepparton's welcoming approach to refugees was highlighted in Piper and Associates' (2007) evaluation report on the direct resettlement of Congolese refugee families in the mid to late 2000s. Carrington et al (2007) included Shepparton as one of the case studies in their Department of Immigration and Citizenship commissioned report on *The Social Costs and Benefits of Migration to Australia*. A paper emerging from this report compared Greater Shepparton favourably with Toowoomba (Queensland), highlighting the extensive network of ethnic community organisations as being a key facilitator for the settlement of new arrivals, a network Toowoomba lacked by comparison (Carrington and Marshall 2008). The paper focused on capacity to absorb 'unlinked' migrants (those who had no previous links with Australia, including humanitarian entrants), as part of Federal and State governments' policy initiatives from the late 1990s to settle migrants in regional and rural Australia. Shepparton and Toowoomba had been specifically selected by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship because of their services, employment and housing opportunities, and welcoming environments, but the outcomes were different for migrants:

> The empirical data reveals that the new settlers were easily absorbed into Greater Shepparton, with strongly positive outcomes for both migrants and established residents. By contrast, the integration process in Toowoomba has been more problematic with evident transitional difficulties on the part of both migrants and the host community (Carrington and Marshall 2008, p. 118).

Carrington and Marshall concluded that the greater levels of 'bridging social capital' in Shepparton were crucial to that success and difference of outcomes. They argued that Shepparton had strong bridging social capital (which involved networks of connection between disparate groups contributing to trust and cooperation), while Toowoomba only had strong bonding social capital among the locals, with very little of the bridging social capital

required to integrate newcomers into the community. Immigrant communities in Shepparton, that had in many cases been established there for three or four generations, had set up associations and services that contributed to strong bonding capital among immigrant groups, who were able to provide considerable help in housing, employment and welfare for later immigrants. Such ethnic activity was a common feature of many Australian towns and cities, but what was different about Shepparton, they argued, was that these associations also provided bridging social capital: 'What has been significantly different about the Shepparton experience is that early in the post war years relationships began to form, not only between the diverse ethnic groups within the region, but also between the ethnic groups and Australians of English background' (Carrington and Marshall 2008, p. 122).

Mildura is less well known for the success of its multiculturalism, as evident in our review of Victorian based and national media reporting on the two places. However, like Shepparton it is also a very multicultural regional city that continues to attract and settle immigrants from a very diverse range of backgrounds. In 2002 the Mildura Shire Council in an agreed Council motion declared the municipality to be a 'Refugee Welcome Zone' (account of the events, from Peter Byrne, Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council [SMECC], and former Mayor). Its civic leaders are proud of its multicultural status, and of its cultural diversity. The Alfred Deakin Centre, one of Mildura's tourist attractions, has a prominent display of over sixty national flags representing the nationalities that are currently part of Mildura's population.

1.1 Recent CALD migration to Shepparton and Mildura

Since the 1990s, Shepparton has seen a large inflow of ethnically diverse immigrants, including refugee populations from the Middle East (mainly Iraq and Afghanistan), and from Africa (mainly Congolese and Sudanese) (City of Greater Shepparton 2013). The large Iraqi population is the result of secondary migration from the late 1990s. According to reports from the Brotherhood of St Laurence in the mid 2000s, some of the reasons for this secondary migration of Iraqis included: being attracted to a place with a reputation for multicultural tolerance; it was seen as a cheaper place to live; knowing that there were already Iraqi families established there; availability of Arabic speaking services; the attraction of smaller towns, with clean air and space; and agricultural work (Taylor and Stanovic 2005). It is estimated that by 2015 there were about 500 families (4000-5000 people) from Iraq in the Greater Shepparton area, and another 70 families (about 300-400 people) from Iraq in Cobram, 70 kilometres to the north of Shepparton (Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District Inc. 2015a).

The Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District (ECSD) estimated in its updated community profile from 2015 that there were 135 Afghani families and 450 single Afghanis (most of them men), totalling about 1600 Afghani people living in Shepparton. The migration of Afghanis began around 2005, with men coming first to pick fruit in the district.

Martial Arts Display by Sikh youth, St. Georges Road Food Festival, Shepparton, 2015
Photographer: Liz Arcus

It was estimated that about 50% of Shepparton's Afghanis had arrived by boat in Australia and had experienced detention (Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District Inc. 2015b).

Congolese families first came to Shepparton in the mid 2000s as part of a pilot Humanitarian refugee resettlement program (Nsubuga-Kyobe and Hazelman 2007). They were mainly Christian, and were supported in their resettlement by local council, a committee, the churches and parishioners (Piper and Associates 2007). The population grew gradually, with about 16 families making up about 140 Congolese in Shepparton by 2010. By 2013 there were about 160 people in 23 families, and as of June 2015, there were about 280 Congolese people living in Shepparton, in about 36 families (Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District Inc. 2015c).

Sudanese immigration is also significant, and quite recent. Beginning in mid-2006, most of the people (more than two thirds) come from Southern Sudan, and most came through secondary migration, having first arrived in larger cities, because 'Shepparton offered seasonal work in agriculture, which many took up while others felt that city life was too busy and came to Shepparton in search for a quieter place to live' (Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District Inc. 2015d, p. 9). About 15 families (80 to 90 people) had settled by 2007, and this had grown to 38 families (284 people) by March 2008. By the middle of 2010 it was estimated that there were about 700 Sudanese living in the Shepparton area, and in June 2013 there were 130 families and a total of about 1000 people. Since then there has been little expansion of the population, with ECSD estimating that in June 2015 there were about 1050 Sudanese people living in Shepparton. This community is highly mobile, with people moving backwards and forwards between Melbourne, Sydney and Shepparton (Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District Inc. 2015d).

SMECC Open Day, Mildura, 2015
Photo supplied by SMECC

Of the many national and ethnic backgrounds of recent immigrants to Shepparton, noteworthy also has been the immigration of people from the Punjab, starting in the early 1980s. By the early 2000s there was a significant Punjabi community around Shepparton, with about 54 families in the Goulburn Valley region, and 12 families who owned and worked horticultural farms, mainly around Shepparton East (Missingham et al 2004). It is also estimated that more than 100 Albanian families have settled in Shepparton since 1990 and the fall of the communist regime in Albania, many of them from the same Korce region that had been the source of Shepparton's earlier Albanian migrations (Carswell 2005; key informant interview with Shepparton community member from Albanian background).

Mildura has also had recent inflows of refugees and asylum seekers from places including Afghanistan, Africa, Sri Lanka and Iran, and has become, like Shepparton, one of Victoria's main sites for regional refugee resettlement (AMES 2014). Mildura's Muslim population has grown recently, with new arrivals from Afghanistan and Iraq in the 2000s, though the percentages (Mildura 1.8%, Shepparton 4.9% Muslim background) are not as high as for Shepparton (City of Greater Shepparton 2013; Mildura Rural City Council Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, 2012-2017; Mildura Rural City Council 2008).

In a 2010 paper on CALD settlement and educational opportunities in the Loddon Mallee Region, it was noted that Mildura had recent Sudanese migrants who, according to SMECC feedback, were 'attracted to Mildura's climate, the good English language school for their children and affordable housing' (Newcombe and Achren 2010, p. 1). Afghani refugees had also recently arrived in Mildura, with the first wave mainly from Christmas Island detention centre (Newcombe and Achren 2010, p. 1). New arrivals in the Mildura area between 2005 and 2011 included 1000 overseas arrivals. These included new arrivals from India (14% of arrivals), Afghanistan (11.1%), England (8.1%), New Zealand (5.7%), the Philippines (5.5%), Iraq (3.2%), Sri Lanka (3.2%), South Africa (3.1%) and China (2.5%). Islam was the religion of 20% of new arrivals, associated with the large number of arrivals from Afghanistan and Iraq (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 30).

The Mildura Rural City Council noted in their 'Community Health and Well-Being Plan 2013-2017' that Mildura LGA had a high level of diversity, with 'an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of nearly 4%', which was 'the second highest in the state'. Mildura LGA had 10.8% of its residents born overseas. Mildura had 'over 50 ethnicities', and though immigration to the area was lower than the Victorian average as a whole, 'over half (51.7%) of new settlers arrive on humanitarian visas, the highest in the state' (Mildura Rural City Council 2013, p. 22).

SMECC gathers its own estimates of current numbers of different immigrant community members, and provided us with the following estimates for selected groups: 650 Afghanis, 1,000 Tongans, 100 Cook Islanders, 500 Samoans, 50 Sri Lankans, 400 Indians, 80 Burundians, 30 from the Democratic Republic of Congo, 20 Sudanese, 250 Filipinos, 70 Nepalese, 50 Bangladeshis, 100 Chinese, and 200 Fijians. Peter Byrne, Chair of SMECC, proudly claimed that 'I keep saying, and I hope Chris Hazelman [Manager of ECSD] and others at Shepparton don't disagree, that this is probably the most culturally diverse provincial city in Australia.'

Shepparton and Mildura are thus very multicultural places, and face issues that relate to finding ways for their diverse populations, with a great variety of needs, to feel welcome, respected, and to feel that they are able to fully participate in community life on an equal basis. They face particular challenges related to their high numbers of recent humanitarian migrants, which are not necessarily reflected in available resources to deal with those settlement issues (Chris Hazelman, Manager of ECSD, interviewed in *The Shepparton News*, March 17, 2015).

1.2 What is social cohesion?

Social cohesion in a multicultural society is an ongoing project, and both Shepparton and Mildura have many people who are committed to making this happen. According to the Scanlon Foundation's much discussed Social Cohesion reports, social cohesion has five main dimensions:

• Belonging – shared values, identification with Australia, trust

• Social justice and equity - evaluation of national policies

• Participation - voluntary work, political and co-operative involvement

• Acceptance (and rejection), legitimacy - experience of discrimination, attitudes towards minorities, newcomers

• Worth – life satisfaction and happiness, future expectations (Markus and Dharmalingam 2007, p. 26).

Within the literature, there is a generally shared consensus about what social cohesion means:

• **Shared vision:** Most researchers maintain that social cohesion requires universal values, mutual respect and common aspirations or identity shared by their members.

• **A property of a group or a community:** Social cohesion tends to describe a well-functioning core group or community in which there are shared goals and responsibilities and a readiness to co-operate with the other members.

• **A process:** Social cohesion is generally viewed not simply as an outcome, but as a continuous and seemingly never-ending process of achieving social harmony (Markus and Dharmalingam 2007, p. 25).

Markus and Dharmalingam (2007, p. 25) noted that there were differences of opinion about the main drivers for social cohesion, and the relative weight given to different factors in producing ongoing social harmony, but that the key areas of concern were:

• **Economic:** levels of unemployment and poverty, income distribution, population mobility, health, life satisfaction and sense of security, and government responsiveness to issues of poverty and disadvantage.

• **Political:** levels of political participation and social involvement, including the extent of voluntarism, the development of social capital, understood in terms of networks, norms and social trust that facilitate co-ordination and co-operation for mutual benefit.

• **Socio-cultural:** levels of consensus and divergence.

Dandy and Pe-Pua's (2013) Joint Commonwealth, State and Territory Research Advisory Committee funded study of the key drivers for social cohesion in Australia raised important issues, questions and considerations for our study of Shepparton and Mildura. For their report, they reviewed and analysed literature, government and community programs, and media, and conducted three area-based case studies, in Mirrabooka/Balga (Western Australia), Blacktown (New South Wales) and Murray Bridge (South Australia). Their study examined the factors in contemporary multicultural Australia driving social cohesion, division, and conflict. Their most significant findings are summarised by these key factors (Dandy and Pe-Pua 2013, pp. vii-viii):

1. **Recognition of Indigenous Australian cultures and history is an important driver for social cohesion in Australia. …**

2. **Greater awareness and understanding of diversity and 'difference' in the Australian community is a driver for all social cohesion dimensions. …**

3. **Frequent, positive intercultural contact is a powerful driver for all dimensions of social cohesion.…**

4. **Racism and discrimination disrupt all social cohesion dimensions. …**

5. **Support for culture maintenance among migrants, refugees and other cultural and/or linguistic minorities is a driver for belonging. …**

6. **Community activities and 'social spaces' can enhance the likelihood of positive intercultural interaction and enhance community belonging. …**

7. **Equality of access to resources drives social inclusion. …**

8. **Being able to communicate confidently with other community members is a driver for belonging, inclusion, and participation. …**

9. **Mentoring and leadership development for community capacity-building are drivers for social cohesion, particularly inclusion and participation. …**

10. **The active promotion of the value of diversity and pluralism at national (e.g., government policy, public institutions) and community (e.g., organisational cultures and policies) levels is a driver for legitimacy. …**

Regarding the effectiveness of strategies for fostering and strengthening social cohesion, the researchers had the following advice:

> What our case studies revealed is that the collaboration of government and community, a whole-of-government-and-community approach, make for successful, sustained and realisable pathways to enhancing social cohesion in multicultural Australia. Special emphasis is put on effective and genuinely consultative development of programs and strategies; adequate funding by Government; transparency in communicating these strategies and funding; and on including all groups (migrants/refugees/Humanitarian Entrants, Anglo-Australians and Indigenous Australians) as both target participants and facilitators (Dandy and Pe-Pua 2013, p. viii).

We have used this framework of dimensions of social cohesion, and assessment of the key drivers for social cohesion, to investigate the success factors, and also the issues and problems for social cohesion, including community strains, in Shepparton and Mildura. A discussion of previous research about social cohesion and community strength and well-being in Shepparton and Mildura can be found in Appendix 2.

1.3 Methodology of the study

To address the three main aims of the project we first researched and produced an extensive literature review of historical and social scientific literature, the grey literature of government and policy networks, federal, state and local government policies and programs, and media reporting on issues concerning multiculturalism, migration, and Indigenous issues in the local newspapers *The Shepparton News* and *The Sunraysia Daily* over the last 5 years. The literature review was published on the VMC website in August 2015. Second, we conducted field research in Shepparton and Mildura from April to September 2015. Our research approach was qualitative, involving extensive fieldwork including interviews, focus groups, observation and informal conversations. The researchers made 20 fieldtrips of 2-4 days duration each (9 to Mildura and 11 to Shepparton), conducted 78 formal recorded interviews with people in government and non-government agencies and organisations, local businesses, and in the general community, conducted 6 focus groups, and attended and observed community events such as film screenings and festivals. We also had many informal discussions with people in Shepparton and Mildura in a variety of settings. Data included recordings and transcripts of interviews, and field notes, which were analysed using the computer assisted research analysis software program NVivo. A detailed account of our research approach and strategies, including sampling approach and methods of data collection and analysis, can be found in Appendix 3.

Walking Tour of the River Flats between Mooroopna and Shepparton, led by Aboriginal Elder, NAIDOC Week, 2015
Photographer: Liz Arcus.

2 Key Success Factors for Social Cohesion in Shepparton and Mildura

This chapter addresses our first aim:

> To identify the key success factors in Shepparton's and Mildura's experience of integrating their multicultural populations: What is working in Shepparton and Mildura as diverse communities? What are individuals, community based organisations, local government, policy makers, and businesses doing well in terms of getting along in a multicultural environment?

2.1 The question of success

What makes regional cities like Shepparton and Mildura successful multicultural communities with good levels of social cohesion? We began our research with open minds about what we would find out about these regional cities, including the possibility that we would discover that they were not in fact successful. However, the literature review conducted for the project, including previous research on social capital and social cohesion in Shepparton and Mildura (see Appendix 2 for this research) had already suggested that there was strong evidence of success in these regional cities.

It is assumed in this report that good 'social cohesion', broadly understood in terms of the dimensions of the Scanlon Foundation Reports (i.e. sense of belonging; sense of worth; social justice; participation, and acceptance and rejection), is one element of assessing what is working well in Shepparton and Mildura as diverse communities. Conversely, where groups of people have negative experiences in terms of social cohesion (such as high levels of discrimination, feeling like they do not belong, or are unwelcome, that there are barriers to local participation, feeling unsafe in relation to living with diverse others), this is assessed as a problem area for multiculturalism and social cohesion.

Other criteria to judge success of social cohesion in a multicultural context include the extent to which the key aims of official multicultural policy are addressed, as outlined in the Hawke Government's National Agenda for a

Multicultural Australia (1989), and in variations since then (including Federal government policies such as The People of Australia [2011], Victoria's Multiculturalism Act 2011, Victoria's All of Us: Victoria's Multicultural Policy [2009], and Victoria's Advantage: Unity, Diversity and Opportunity [2014]): the right to preserve, express and share cultural identity; experience of social justice and equality; the most productive use of cultural diversity (economic efficiency/productive diversity); and full participation in economic, social, cultural and political life.

Good social cohesion in multicultural environments requires a balance between a commitment to general shared values, and the acceptance of the existence of a variety of values that may reflect the cultural and other differences of background that make up a community (Jenson 1998). It involves commitment to a place and to a shared community, and willingness to listen to a variety of different views.

In this chapter we outline what emerged from our data as key success factors for social cohesion and multiculturalism in Shepparton and Mildura. It should be noted that when answering questions about the success or otherwise of social cohesion and multiculturalism in Shepparton and Mildura, people who we interviewed or talked to made their subjective assessments based on the relative weight that they gave to a range of issues that they typically produced: absence or presence of conflict and violence across groups; what opportunities people from different backgrounds had; the extent to which they felt that their cities worked together as communities; the extent of mixing between people from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds; acceptance of cultural difference in everyday life; the attitude of local leadership, including local council, towards cultural diversity, and so on. For example, one community member from Shepparton, from a Congolese background, said that Shepparton was not successful as a multicultural community because it had not yet been able to provide a reasonable level of employment opportunities for more recent arrivals. But in other respects he listed the same good things about Shepparton that led others to claim that it was a successful, socially cohesive community. People's subjective views of the success or otherwise of social cohesion and multiculturalism in their communities are important, as they point to the sense of community morale and pride in their communities as successful multicultural places.

2.2 Government policies and frameworks that support social cohesion and multiculturalism in Shepparton and Mildura

Good governance at Federal, State and local levels is one of the broader overarching factors contributing to the success of social cohesion and multiculturalism in Shepparton and Mildura. Thus, we begin by briefly outlining some of the many policies and programs that are significant as shaping forces for Shepparton and Mildura. Some Federal Government policies and approaches have also contributed to some of the issues and problems faced in Shepparton and Mildura, but we will address these specifically in Chapter 3.

There are many Federal, Victorian and Local Government policies, legislative Acts, programs and funding sources, that contribute to enhancing multiculturalism and social cohesion, and which provide the broad governance framework that supports such outcomes in Shepparton and Mildura. We can only indicate some of these here, focused on those that are explicitly aimed at promoting social cohesion and multiculturalism; and of course most government policies and programs have some effect on social cohesion.

Federal Government

Writing in 2013, Dandy and Pe-Pua (2013) listed and discussed a wide range of then current Federal policies and programmes that had as their direct aim the promotion of social cohesion. These included the Labor Government's Social Inclusion Agenda, its multicultural policy The People of Australia (2010), and the many settlement programs and funding sources, including funding for education and training, English language acquisition, interpreting and translating services, trauma counselling for humanitarian entrants, the Living in Harmony community grants, and so on. They also include anti-racism, anti-discrimination and equal opportunity policies and programmes. Dandy and Pe-Pua (2013, pp. 32-33) emphasised the 'whole of government' approach to social cohesion that had been a feature of the Howard government. The 'National Action Plan to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security', created by the Howard government in 2005-06, which was continued under the Rudd and Gillard governments, was also an important social cohesion policy, aimed in particular at Australia's newer Muslim communities and to combat extremism. This provided grants to community organisations for efforts to combat racism, intolerance and discrimination, and to help build resilient, socially cohesive and harmonious communities.

A key framework highlighted by Dandy and Pe-Pua was the Gillard government's Social Inclusion approach, which included the setting up of Australia's Social Inclusion Board. The Social Inclusion Agenda (Australian Social Inclusion Board 2010) was specifically focused on people who were most disadvantaged in Australia, and aimed to make sure that everyone felt valued by and had the opportunity to fully participate in Australian society. It especially focused on older Australians, people who were not engaged in education or work, people living in low socio-economic households, people with disabilities, Indigenous Australians, sole parent families, and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. The Abbott Coalition government dismantled the Social Inclusion Board. Some of the present Coalition Federal government's key multicultural and social cohesion programmes are now run out of the Department of Social Services. For example, the 'Multicultural Affairs Grants' are seen as 'a major component of the Government's approach to cultural diversity', and aim to address the following key objectives:

- the importance of all **Australians respecting one another** regardless of cultural, racial or religious differences

- the **fair treatment of all Australians**, encouraging people to recognise that our interactions should be accepting of, and responsive to, each other's backgrounds, circumstances, needs and preferences

- **opportunities for people to participate** equitably in Australian society and to understand the rights and responsibilities that we share as part of that society

- **a sense of belonging for everyone** by helping communities work towards a spirit of inclusiveness and a shared identity as Australians

- the **benefits** of living in a culturally diverse society

- to build the **capacity of specific communities** who are under significant pressure because of their culture or religion.

Multicultural Affairs grants have two main components. The Diversity and Social Cohesion (DSC) grants are aimed at not for profit organisations to contribute to addressing 'issues of cultural, racial and religious intolerance', and explicitly aim to fund projects for up to $100,000 over three years to contribute to social cohesion, bringing all Australians together and enhancing community connections. The Multicultural Arts and Festivals Grants offer smaller amounts (up to $5000) for 'community groups and organisations...for multicultural arts and festivals projects. These projects provide opportunities for Australians of all backgrounds to come together and experience different cultural heritages and traditions, which in turn encourages social cohesion and mutual understanding' (see https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/settlement-and-multicultural-affairs/programs-policy/settlement-services/multicultural-affairs-grants).

The People of Australia policy's four broad principles involve 1) the right to expression of cultural diversity; 2) the commitment to access and equity, and equality of opportunity for all; 3) a commitment to reaping the benefits of Australia's cultural diversity; and 4) a commitment to promote cultural acceptance, and to tackle discrimination and racism (Australian Government 2011, p. 5). Key initiatives included: a new independent advisory body, the Australian Multicultural Council, with a broad role, tasked with acting as a multicultural champion in the community, including implementing a 'multicultural ambassadors' program 'to articulate the beliefs of and help celebrate our multicultural nation', advising government on multicultural policy, and ensuring that Australian government services responded to the needs of immigrant and refugee communities, through a formal role in the strengthened access and equity strategy; the creation of a new 'National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy', bringing together multiple government departments, the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Race Discrimination Commissioner, and the new advisory body, in consultation with non-government organisations; new grants to community groups for multicultural arts and festivals as part of the Diversity and Social Cohesion Program; further measures to strengthen Access and Equity, and to bring it into line with the government's 'social inclusion' agenda; and a Multicultural Youth Sports Partnership program, 'to create connections and involve youth from new and emerging communities, and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (including refugees and minor refugees), through sport and active recreation activities' (Australian Government 2011: 7-8).

Victorian State Government

Victorian state governments have been active in their promotion of both multiculturalism and social cohesion for decades, and this continuous commitment and leadership from governments from both sides of politics has been an important factor contributing to the success of multiculturalism and social cohesion in regional centres such as Shepparton and Mildura. Previous relevant policies have included the Bracks' Labor Government's *Growing Victoria Together* (2001), which aimed to strengthen Victoria's performance in ten key areas:

Thriving economy

1. More quality jobs and thriving, innovative industries across Victoria
2. Growing and linking all of Victoria

Quality health and education

3. High quality, accessible health and community services
4. High quality education and training for lifelong learning

Healthy environment

5. Protecting the environment for future generations
6. Efficient use of natural resources

Caring communities

7. Building friendly, confident and safe communities
8. A fairer society that reduces disadvantage and respects diversity

Vibrant democracy

9. Greater public participation and more accountable government
10. Sound financial management

The Bracks Labor Government's A Fairer Victoria: Creating Opportunity and Addressing Disadvantage (2006) took a broad approach to addressing the needs of vulnerable Victorians, including children (especially those at risk), older people at risk of losing their independence, Indigenous Victorians, disadvantaged people, people with physical disabilities and those experiencing mental health problems. A Fairer Victoria was focused on better service delivery, but also upon building stronger, more socially cohesive communities. The Brumby Labor Government developed the All of Us: Victoria's Multicultural Policy in 2009. This built on the Multicultural Victoria Act 2004 and emphasised a whole of government approach and a whole of community responsibility for multiculturalism. It also emphasised that Victoria had to make sure that it made full use of its cultural diversity:

Victoria must sustain multiculturalism if we are to continue to capitalise on the economic opportunities that it provides. In an era of major global challenges, including climate change, challenging economic circumstances and security concerns, cohesive societies with a shared sense of identity and purpose will succeed (Victorian Multicultural Commission 2009, p. 8).

The Napthine Coalition Government's main multicultural and citizenship affairs policy was Victoria's Advantage: Unity, Diversity, Opportunity (2014). This policy included a strong commitment to multiculturalism.

Victoria's main legislation that supports multiculturalism is its Multicultural Victoria Act 2011, which also sets out the key roles, functions and reporting requirements of the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC), and also the roles and functions of the Regional Advisory Councils (RAC). The VMC has broad responsibilities for promoting multiculturalism and supporting Victoria's diverse communities, including consultation and advising government. RACs perform an important advisory role from the regions for the VMC, and thus provide a strong communication channel to government about local issues. The relevant RACs for Shepparton and Mildura are, respectively, the Hume RAC and the Loddon-Mallee RAC. Victoria also has the Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001.

Victoria's other main agency advancing multiculturalism is the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship (OMAC) in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. It has a key policy role in government, and manages programs and projects that include the Language Services Strategy (enhancing translating and interpreting services), Cultural Precincts Enhancement, Promoting Harmony and Multifaith Initiatives (including consultative and training initiatives, including youth leadership training), and the Settlement Coordination Unit (to coordinate and improve settlement services for newly arrived migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees). It provides relevant funding towards promoting multiculturalism and inclusiveness under these programs and projects, including the Promoting Harmony and Social Cohesion Grants, and support for infrastructure of cultural significance (see http://www.multicultural.vic. gov.au/about-us/office-of-multicultural-affairs-and-citizenship).

In early May 2015, the Andrews Labor Government announced the 'A Welcoming and Harmonious Victoria' policy, that invests $74 million in funding for multicultural affairs and social cohesion in Victoria, including funding for key organisations that promote these things, such as the Ethnic Communities Councils, and ethnic welfare organisations. Funding is also provided for initiatives to deal with family violence, and for enhancing community capacity and participation for people from CALD backgrounds, with special emphases on recent arrivals, refugees, seniors, women and young people (Scott 2015a). In June 2015 the Andrews Government announced the establishment of a Social Cohesion and Multicultural Research Institute, 'a virtual body of academics, researchers and evaluators working to build the evidence base we need to better inform policy and practice through research and evaluative efforts', with funding of $4 million (Scott 2015b).

Local Government

Local councils also have a range of policies and programs that play a crucial role in the success of multiculturalism and social cohesion in Shepparton and Mildura.

The Greater Shepparton City Council's 'Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2012-2015', was developed in consultation with CALD communities, CALD service providers and stakeholders, and Council staff and aimed to make sure that Shepparton made full use of its cultural diversity, and contributed to the development of a harmonious community 'inclusive of all' (Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 5). It sought to express the Council's 'vision for this region…[as]…a vibrant, cohesive society which celebrates and incorporates aspects of cultural diversity within daily life' (Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 14). It aimed to enhance the sense of belonging of CALD communities, who had expressed in consultations a strong desire for achieving a greater sense of belonging to the Shepparton community. It also aimed to make sure that its services were adapted to meet the needs of Shepparton's culturally diverse communities. The experience of Greater Shepparton City Council as a partner with VicHealth in the Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD) pilot (see VicHealth 2014) had helped to stimulate and develop the strategy and action plan, and Shepparton already had in place a 'Cultural Development Team, with a dedicated Cultural Development Officer' (Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 6). Council advanced six strategic directions:

- **Engagement**; communicate and education ('Develop strong and meaningful relationships with CALD communities to provide opportunities to increase their understanding, engagement and participation in the wider community')

- **Partnership** ('Council will work in partnership with communities, services providers and government bodies to enhance settlement coordination and maximise collaborative efforts towards building inclusive communities')

- **Leadership** (Council is 'committed to building local leadership within the CALD community and supporting other initiatives that develop positive perceptions of diversity', Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 15)

- **Celebration** (Council is committed to celebrating diversity 'in cultural and mainstream events within the region', and 'actively acknowledge[s] the real and positive influence, past and present, migrants have made to our region' [Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 15]. Some examples of supported cultural events include Harmony Day, Cultural Diversity Week, Refugee Week, Congolese Independence Day and South Sudanese Independence Day, Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 8)

- **Advocate** (actively advocating for improvements in settlement services for CALD communities, and also playing an active role in 'promoting positive opinions of CALD communities, including working to combat prejudices and race based discrimination', Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 15)

- **Services** (Council would work to ensure that 'our services are culturally appropriate and continue to address the specific cultural needs of our CALD communities', Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 15)

- Council mapped out a series of actions within the 2012-2015 timeframe to address these strategic directions (Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, pp. 16-22).

Notably, the plan specifically excluded local Aboriginal communities from the strategy, saying that Council would work with them through a different partnership model (Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, p. 6). This may be because of the classic distinction in multicultural policy between immigrant communities and Indigenous peoples. Aboriginal people would be involved in the Aboriginal Partnership Strategy (see http://www.greatershepparton.com.au/aboriginal-partnerships).

At the time we were conducting our fieldwork there was in circulation for comment and consultation a draft for the next Cultural Diversity strategic plan. As noted by key informant, Shepparton City Council Cultural Development Officer at a Regional Advisory Council meeting (25/05/15) that we attended, this new strategy and plan will build substantially on the first Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan, and push in new, advanced directions, given that the Council now has much greater experience in this area.

Other important Council actions to note include that Council is a signatory to the Human Rights Commission's 'Racism. It Stops With Me' campaign.

Mildura Rural City Council has a raft of policies, strategies and programs aimed at providing the governance and partnership relations that contribute to and shape social cohesion and multiculturalism in Mildura. It is apparent from surveying this range of documents that the Council sees community well-being, including social cohesion and acceptance of cultural diversity, as core business. These include: the Community Engagement Framework and the Northern Mallee Primary Care Partnership, that have recently been merged together to form the Northern Mallee Community Partnership; the Community Health and Well-Being Plan 2013-2017; and the Social Inclusion Policy and the Social Inclusion Framework, under which the Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2012-2017 sits, together with a range of other strategies and plans promoting inclusion of young children and youth, the aged, and Indigenous people (through an Aboriginal Action Committee) (see Mildura Rural City Council 2012, p. 9).

Mildura Rural City Council has been innovative in pursuing policy based on evidence of community needs. Since the early 2000s, as Hawson (2013) shows, it has instituted the process of gathering extensive social indicators to measure the state of community health and well-being. Key early figures in establishing this process were Professor Tony Vinson and Vernon Knight (who served as a local councillor). Hawson argues that this approach puts Mildura at the cutting edge of democratically innovative local councils in the Victorian context. Growing out of this social indicators approach, Council highlighted major areas of concern, and set up Operational groups to engage with those areas of concern, as part of a Community Engagement Framework (CEF) created in 2006 as a mechanism to govern through community. The CEF operated through a CEF Governance Group, and four Operational groups, the Mental Health Operational Group, the Education Operational Group, Child Well-Being and Safety Operational Group, and the

Safety Operational Group. The Operational Groups engaged with the local community to address problems, issues and needs, some of which had been directed to them by the CEF Governance Group, and also developed annual action plans in their particular area of concern. Council has explicitly stated that its vision is to make Mildura 'the most liveable, people friendly community in Australia'. It conducts a biannual 'Community Wellbeing Survey' which has been used as an evaluation tool for the CEF. As Hawson (2013, p. 197) argues, a well- functioning community functions well by blending the following attributes:

- The integration of people, groups and community organisations

- Maintaining direction, energy and motivation

- The substance and style of decision making

- Resource generation and effective allocation

The Community Wellbeing survey measures the community's views in relation to these attributes.

As mentioned, the CEF has now been merged with the Northern Mallee Primary Care Partnership, which was concerned with health care and health needs of the community, to form the Northern Mallee Community Partnership:

> This model brings together the primary and acute health sectors, the educational, safety and local government sectors and is supported by more than forty community organisations. Together we are now working in partnership towards the health and wellbeing of our community (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2013, p. 8).

The 'Community Health and Well-Being Plan 2013-2017' has a comprehensive agenda covering seventeen 'health and wellbeing priority areas': community cohesion; community safety; obesity; family violence; mental health; social inclusion and diversity; drugs and alcohol; smoking; life stages; access to services; local food connections; climate change; water; employment; education; pressures of modern living; and food and our community (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2013, p. 5).

The Social Inclusion Policy (Mildura Rural City Council 2014a), that is informed by multicultural ideas, and expresses a strong commitment to pursuing social cohesion, is a major strategic framework guiding City Council policies, programs, community consultation, and development and delivery of services. The policy states that Council will 'identify the social inclusion implications in the decisions we take and the projects and partnerships in which we participate', will be 'community focused', will always 'engage and consult with the community in the development and delivery of services', will 'utilise a community development approach to empower and strengthen communities,

encourage cooperative practices within communities, and promote tolerance of differences', that its 'policies and initiatives will reflect community aspirations', will 'adopt a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approach as a preferred way of working toward achieving community wellbeing', and that decision making will be based on objective data, and in consultation and engagement with 'community groups, including youth, migrants, indigenous and women' (Mildura Rural City Council 2014a, p. 1). In pursuing greater senses of belonging and attachment to, and participation in local community, Council would specifically 'work toward engaging identified communities to encourage participation in community life' (Mildura Rural City Council 2014a, p. 2). The Social Inclusion Policy was implemented in conjunction with the Community Access and Inclusion Plan 2014 to 2018, the Healthy Ageing Strategy 2010-2014, and a range of other plans and frameworks.

Finally, like Shepparton, Mildura Rural City Council has introduced a 'Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, 2012-2017', which it developed through several months of community consultations. The development of this strategy had been a priority area of the 2009-13 Council Plan, and demonstrated Council's 'commitment to diversity and recognises the role that we as a Council have to play in promoting the strength of diversity and also ensuring that our services and core business are inclusive of everyone', in line with Council's Social Inclusion Policy. The strategy aimed to build on work that Council had already done and was doing 'to strengthen the relationships between Mildura Rural City Council and members of our region's CALD communities as well as other stakeholders'. Council's activities in this area included: supporting cultural events and projects through funding and other commitments; the LEAP program – Arts Participation; the creation of a Social Inclusion officer role; partnering in the Skilled Migration program; and engaging in partnerships with SMECC (Mildura Rural City Council 2102, p. 10). The Key Strategic Directions and Action Plan lists 6 key areas: Information and Communication; Services; Recreational and Social; Employment; Economic and Grants; Leadership and Advocacy. These would 'provide the framework for future action for Mildura Rural City Council to develop and support cultural diversity within our community' over the five years of the strategy (Mildura Rural City Council 2012, p. 13).

2.3 Historical experience of CALD immigration

The history of immigration and cultural diversity is a significant part of the 'social imaginary' of Shepparton and Mildura that influences, in a positive way, how ethnic, cultural and racial diversities are understood and approached today. There is strong evidence in both the available literature and our data to suggest that this is an important success factor for multiculturalism and social cohesion in Shepparton and Mildura. In our literature review for this project we drew upon the historical literature to explain this long history of ethnically diverse immigration, that included the successful inclusion of people from CALD communities since at least the 1920s; and we have included some of this history in Appendix 1 of this Final Report. The agricultural basis of the local economies, including

the influence of the history of soldier settlement farms, played a significant role in attracting CALD communities (Missingham et al 2004, 2006) that made places like Mildura and Shepparton somewhat unique in the Victorian rural landscape that is more generally understood as historically Anglo-Celtic and homogenous. The image in people's minds who live in Mildura and Shepparton is of much more diverse social landscapes, and cultural difference is now very obvious whenever you walk down the street. As a worker with refugees and asylum seekers in Shepparton commented about first coming to work in Shepparton:

> I really noticed when I came up here ... I started working here in 2010. I was so surprised at how multi-cultural it was even just walking down the street. It's not because I work in this field that I was observing it. It was apparent when I first came here. I was like, 'Wow, this is pretty diverse. This is all right.' Coming up here with some potential negative stereotypes around country towns. That was something that was very pleasantly surprising for me. Social cohesion, in that regard, it just seems to be pretty good. There's going to be bad elements everywhere, and I don't think it's any worse here than it would be, say in Melbourne....

An Indigenous interviewee in Shepparton, who had lived there for the previous ten years, commented that what had struck him the most, when thinking how Shepparton had changed in that time, was the ethnic diversity that he encountered when he walked around the Shepparton CBD.

Many people who we spoke to from older established communities, including those from Anglo as well as CALD backgrounds, drew upon the success of earlier migrations to Shepparton and Mildura to explain why their cities worked as multicultural communities. The multicultural histories of these cities were for many of these people sources of immense pride – there was a strong sense that they shared in a common project of either celebrating diversity explicitly, or simply adopting a 'live and let live' attitude that meant that cultural differences could be ignored, or accepted as long as people were committed to pitching in and making Shepparton or Mildura a better place for whoever lived there. If social cohesion requires a shared goal, making Shepparton and Mildura work for everyone was a goal shared by everyone we have spoken to. These long, successful immigration histories also gave people of Shepparton and Mildura a story that helped them to understand the importance of migration for economic development and success, and a historical narrative in which they could include newer diverse immigrants. Because of that successful history of migration, it was frequently assumed that initial problems of settlement, including people getting used to each other and their different cultures and habits, would resolve themselves over time.

One interviewee in Shepparton made a direct comparison between the successful migration of Italians and Greeks and what was now happening with the Afghanis who were 'here to stay', - many of them were employed, and they were starting to buy houses. They had not been 'given a cent of money from government' to build their own mosque, but had succeeded in doing so through drawing donations from their own community.

A police officer, when asked why he felt that Mildura was such a cohesive and successful multicultural place, stressed the history of migration, and also the willingness of newer migrants to work hard:

> I think that the community here too as a whole is very receptive of other cultures because it always has been. We have a very high Turkish, Italian, Croatian ... All of those communities have been here for a long time. They're accepted, tolerated. We live in a high tolerance community. They're accepted because they're all very good hard-working people. They're here for the right reasons.

One common theme was that waves of immigrants had mixed and gradually moved into the mainstream of the community over time; and sometimes it took two or three generations, as one key Mildura informant suggested: 'My view is that it takes three generations for a new ethnic group to finally settle in and be settled and accepted as part of this community. You dare not criticise an Italian for being such, or a Turk, or a Croatian or a Greek, it's because you're criticising your own community.' (For the longer quote, and other quotes like this from Mildura and Shepparton, see Appendix 4).

A Shepparton interviewee from an Albanian background with family links in the area since the 1920s commented that when people came to Shepparton from migrant backgrounds they could see that they were among many other migrants, and this helped them to feel like they could find a place in Shepparton, that it was easier for them to settle in: 'I think, just because of the amount of different cultures here, that helps everyone find their own position quietly and comfortably.'

Striking a slightly different note, a worker with refugees and asylum seekers from Shepparton suggested that while the general community adopted a 'live and let live' attitude to cultural differences because of that long history of migration, there was a section of the population that was economically disadvantaged and poorly educated that did not necessarily draw on that history, but might be driven by fear:

> You know I think it does work and I don't have a feeling of underlying festering... I don't get that feeling. No, I get the feeling that it's live and let live. I think, you know, and maybe it works because it's a follow on from the Italians and new arrivals that came here originally so people are kind of used to new people coming in a little bit, but then I have to ask the question, okay, what happens to that other cohort then who don't? Who are fearful and yeah? I guess it comes back to the region having low education levels, high levels of poverty and high unemployment. With that itself comes fear, comes insecurity and, yes, they go hand in hand.

We will address the issues raised here again in Chapter 3.

2.4 Employment opportunities

The horticultural and agricultural industries are at the centre of Shepparton's and Mildura's stories of success as socially cohesive multicultural cities. Employment appears to be paramount in the minds of community members from varying backgrounds as the source of success as well as distress in the community (see also Boese 2014). In this section we focus on the ways employment opportunities factor into social cohesion and the ways in which people in the communities narrate the story of employment in their cities.

Horticultural and agricultural work have historically been the main draw to Shepparton and Mildura, particularly for new arrivals to Australia with lower levels of marketable skills and education. They could make an economic start in places like Shepparton and Mildura, and this is the economic and social story of success for diverse communities of migrants, including those from Albania, Greece, Turkey, Italy, and numerous others (Missingham et al 2006). Through such employment, these communities experienced significant levels of financial security, and socio-economic mobility, both intra-generational and inter-generational. To some extent this is still true today. Recent migrants, for example, can get seasonal work 'picking' on the orchards, or other seasonal farm work, and in related processing industries. In Mildura, key informants from SMECC confirmed that many recent migrants from Afghani backgrounds were working on farms around Mildura. A labour hire firm in Mildura has had considerable success in placing Afghani workers in factories serving the horticulture industry. It started with one Afghani man who walked in off the street:

> In the end we decided to give him a go. He ended up being just fantastic, picked up all the machinery really well. He was obviously just keen as anything to work. From that point we employed a couple more through him.

And from there they linked with SMECC to source other Afghani workers (for full quote and story, see Appendix 4).

Key informants in local agencies who deal with the most recent immigrants, including people from refugee backgrounds, commented that employment is a key to success of settlement, and by implication, social cohesion. If a new arrival to Australia and/or to Shepparton and Mildura has the ability to participate in the community economically, as well as establish basic financial security, this often provides a solid foundation on which they can build their lives in the community (see also Collins 2012; Collins and Krivokapic-Sloko 2009; Kilpatrick et al 2013).

Participation in employment in horticulture and agriculture is a foundation story of Shepparton and Mildura, one which many community members relate to, whether they or their family have at some point participated in such work. This type of work is a part of the shared vision of what these cities rely on and are proud of. To participate in the harvesting of produce seems to be a way of newer migrants (who otherwise may feel like outsiders) finding some degree of acceptance or belonging, given the importance of that type of work to the economic viability of the cities. In this way, newer migrants participate in the shared goals of the community.

The specificity of the industry provides some degree of shared aspirations. This emerged as a particularly prominent theme in Mildura, where it was mentioned in most interviews. The same may be said of Shepparton, though, where it was perhaps more implicit, i.e. in positive references to some migrant groups as especially hard working (as well as others like the more highly skilled Iraqi migrants who were deemed by one community member to have less endurance for physical labour).

Additionally, migrants are perceived to have historically brought with them valuable skills and knowledge in horticultural and agricultural technologies and processes. Dean Wickham (CEO SMECC), among several others, told the story of Greek migrants bringing the technology of dehydrating fruit with olive oil (rather than in the sun) and bringing a significant shift to the entire national production of dried fruits. This is a key historical and well-documented story in Mildura, signalling the close economic links between CALD immigrants and Anglo locals, that was celebrated in the 'Festival of Olives' that was held annually in Mildura in May between 2011-2013 (see http://neoskosmos.com/news/en/the-sultana-man-of-mildura).

There are similar stories for Shepparton about tomato growing, grafting of fruit trees, and other innovations that drew Italian and Anglo farmers together collaboratively (Michael 1988; Missingham et al 2004). One of our Shepparton community interviewees drew the parallel between Italians and Afghanis, based on their skill and contribution to agriculture and horticulture. He retold the story of an Italian labourer on an orchard who showed the orchardist a much more successful method for grafting fruit trees:

> Now, that old Italian fellow became recognised as the specialist in the area. Probably illiterate but a hard working bloke with skills. He was a peasant. He knew how to look after animals, he knew how to look after growing...and look after trees. He was amazingly employable. He was immediately recognised with skills. He became part of Australian society.

He then followed up with a story of Afghani workers who he met just after they had turned up in town looking to pick fruit, and said they were the same: 'They understand rural life. They understand, they have the skills to work in a rural community…the general talk around here is, "your Afghanis are great workers"' (see full story and quote, Appendix 4).

We heard one inspirational story at a local community house in Mildura of a Maori woman with limited schooling ('I was expelled at 15!') who migrated to Mildura and found seasonal work. She went on to run a team of up to 40 seasonal workers, mainly Tongans and other Islanders, who travelled across Australia (including Central Australia and northern Queensland) picking various crops. She was a single mother, and raised a boy and a girl. She put them both through university, and they were now highly successful with professional careers in major Australian cities. Now she was back at 'school' (TAFE), having been encouraged by her children, studying horticulture.

Community members from all backgrounds talked about their cities as places where, if someone is willing to work hard, they have opportunities to make a life. As one key informant from an African refugee background in Shepparton commented: 'If you see now the majority of people who are really doing the abattoirs, milking industry, all those things are immigrants. A lot of immigrants, high number of people in the farm industries, contractors and subcontractors.' Unlike backpackers, these immigrants, including Africans, were here to stay, were buying houses, and would put their money back into the community, he told us (see full quote, Appendix 4).

There is a belief among people in Shepparton and Mildura that their communities are economically egalitarian. Despite slightly higher levels of unemployment (compared with Victoria and Australia as a whole), many of the people we spoke with believe that one has opportunities to become upwardly mobile. Additionally, there were comments in the interviews that suggest newer migrants are willing to do the challenging physical labour that needs to be done, whereas others in the more established communities may be unwilling to do so. This makes newer migrants essential to economic viability, and thereby gives them a place in the social fabric of the city. Community members from all backgrounds are believed to have the opportunity to 'buy in' to the shared value of hard work. In fact, those who are regularly unemployed are subject to stigmatisation because they are perceived to not share in these values. Dean Wickham (CEO SMECC) told us the following in regards to the willingness and determination of migrants to work hard:

> You know, at the end of the day, all the fuzzy feel good elements of social cohesion are great but it's already happening. You see diverse work forces say in the almond factory or processing plant, which we pushed and pushed for them to hire some Afghan workers. I pushed over twelve months to try and get the manager to trial some guys and which she eventually did. She rang me back and said I need six more. I said why? She said because these guys are great. They want to work seven days a week, twelve hours a day but the shifts are only four and four. Four days on, four days off. You know those shifts and she said my problem is now that I don't have enough work for these guys and they're actually on the door and they want more.

Employment opportunities in Shepparton and Mildura are fundamental to the successful social cohesion of these cities, in particular as places where people from differing cultural backgrounds can find a sense of belonging in the shared goals and values of the community. However, there are ongoing issues that need to be addressed, and in some cases the issues are closely related to the employment opportunities. In Chapter 3 we will discuss these further, particularly the challenges for people from non-English speaking, recent immigrant backgrounds, and also for local Indigenous communities.

2.5 The positive role of key agencies

Government and community organisations play a central role in promoting social cohesion in Shepparton and Mildura. As we anticipated, they are a source of significant bonding social capital, but they also foster the development of bridging social capital insofar as there are close connections between various agencies (Putnam 2000; Carrington and Marshall 2008; Hudson 2011). They often collaborate, pool resources, and combine their efforts toward meeting common goals in fostering a strong community. Notably, there are numerous individuals in both cities who we heard about and/or interviewed, who are the point of connection between agencies. These key people would often have involvement in several different organisations, and they were generally known around town as caring, energetic people who helped build bridging capital between the agencies and between individuals within the community. There is evidence in both cities of shared vision and goals between a number of the key agencies, both government and non-government. The following short sections offer an idea of the vision and key projects of the various types of agencies surveyed for the project.

2.5.1 Local council

In *Victoria's Advantage*, the Napthine government's multicultural affairs and citizenship policy from 2014, local government was highlighted as a key agency for the success of multiculturalism and social cohesion in Victoria:

> Local government…contributes to the multicultural success of our State. By working with people in the neighbourhoods and places in which they live and work, local councils across Victoria help new arrivals access local facilities and services, and strengthen social cohesion and understanding by bringing communities together (Victorian Government 2014, p. 7).

Local councils in both cities have taken significant steps, particularly in the last decade or so, to promote social cohesion and the acceptance and celebration of cultural diversity. There are specific councillors and council employees in both Shepparton and Mildura who take it upon themselves to encourage an emphasis within council and in the broader communities on developing social cohesion.

Both councils have a cultural diversity officer with a strong focus on CALD communities – Shepparton has a Cultural Development Officer and Mildura has a Social Inclusion Officer. These roles are dedicated full-time to promoting community activities, awareness and openness to the diversity in the cities. Councils in both places have had involvement in skilled migration schemes, which add to the multicultural diversity of the cities. Councils have actively pursued Aboriginal engagement, including Reconciliation Action Plans (Mildura's is already established, Shepparton's
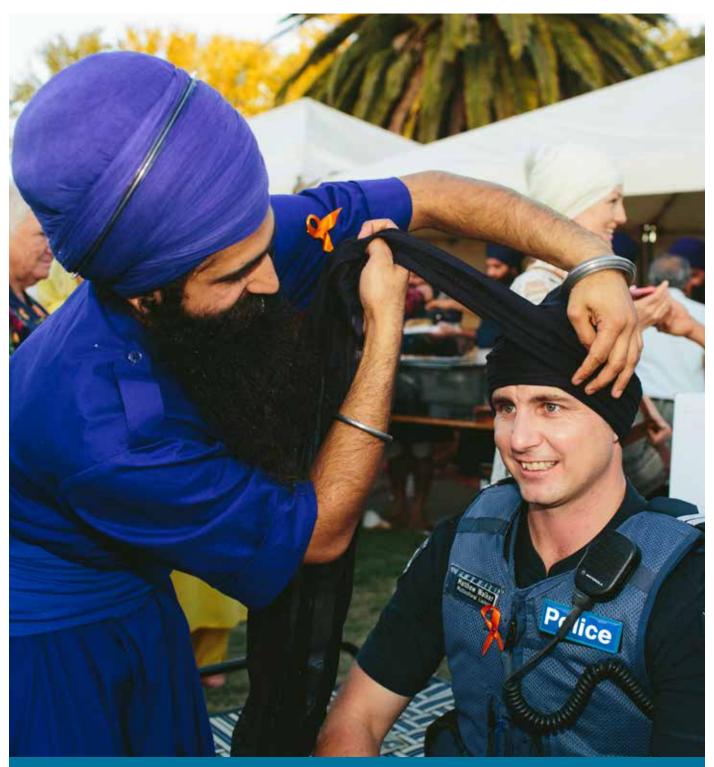
is being currently negotiated). Shepparton has a dedicated Aboriginal Partnerships Officer, while Mildura's Social Inclusion Officer also has responsibility for liaising with Aboriginal communities. In these and other ways the local councils have taken important leadership roles in promoting social cohesion.

The proactive approach by local governments at both Shepparton and Mildura to social inclusion, to accommodating diversity, supporting multiculturalism and multicultural agendas, addressing racism and discrimination, and integrating recent immigrants is a contributing factor to the multicultural success of these places.

There are, however, notable critiques of local council in both cities. Some interviewees from other key agencies have commented that some of council's efforts appear more like symbolic gestures than genuine attempts at strategically making changes or efforts toward social cohesion. A community member from a CALD background in Shepparton commented that while council had a cultural diversity strategy and plan, where was their strategy for immigrant settlement, and what were they doing about jobs for recent immigrants? Another specific criticism heard in both Shepparton and Mildura is that councils in both places have not done enough to make their workplaces more reflective of the ethnic and Indigenous diversity of the communities. In other words, those employed in the councils are primarily from the Anglo and other more established communities. There appears to be a particular barrier to employment in local council for CALD and Indigenous people.

2.5.2 Victoria Police

The Shepparton police have taken a proactive approach to promoting social cohesion amongst the city's diverse population. They have a dedicated Multicultural Liaison Officer, a commissioned police officer whose full-time work involves being a liaison between the police and the community. This officer works directly with ECSD, and spends time at the majority of the social and other significant events held by the different cultural groups within Shepparton. As many people told us, he plays an important role with youth, engaging especially with them through sport. He has a very high presence throughout Shepparton's diverse communities. There is also a dedicated Aboriginal Liaison Officer who, according to other people we spoke with (including police), has played an important role in improving relations between local police and the Aboriginal community. During NAIDOC Week celebrations, we observed the ease with which local police officers mingled with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people at the welcoming breakfast held at the Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative in Mooroopna. Several police officers also went on the walk along 'the Flats' (on the Goulburn River between Shepparton and Mooroopna) led by Uncle Leon Saunders, where participants were shown significant sites and heard stories about the experiences of the local Yorta Yorta people who had lived on the bank of the Goulburn River.

Shepparton Police Officer at Emerge at Twilight Festival, Shepparton, 2015
Photographer: Liz Arcus.

It is notable that during interviews in Shepparton we heard from numerous other people about the positive work that Shepparton police were doing. In particular, workers with refugees and asylum seekers, and also interviewees from refugee backgrounds in Shepparton stressed the important efforts that police had made to familiarise themselves with communities, especially given the fears that refugees and asylum seekers have had based on previous negative experiences with police or other officials in their home countries. Police had found innovative ways to do this, like turning up at barbecues arranged for particular groups, sometimes in uniform, sometimes out of uniform, and gradually working to build trust.

Shepparton police are active members in local networks including the GV Family Violence Prevention Network, and the Hume Region Justice CALD Committee, that also enhances their links with the main agencies that work with CALD communities, especially recent arrivals including refugees and asylum seekers. They collaborated with ECSD in conducting the Shepparton Community Consultation aimed to improve police relationships with CALD communities, discussing things such as confidence in the police, involvements with police, understanding of the law, understanding of the meaning of family violence, and community concerns with policing. The local Superintendent is often seen at local community events, and he is an active member of a local Rotary club – we heard that he had MC'd a recent fund-raising night for local agency Goulburn Valley Pregnancy and Family Support Service. The leadership he has provided was commented upon by many as making a significant contribution to social cohesion in Shepparton, including helping newer arrivals including refugees to settle into Shepparton. This was only one example among many that highlighted the importance of leadership for social cohesion.

Mildura police have been similarly proactive in supporting social cohesion and multiculturalism. It is notable that a senior police officer has served continually on the Board of SMECC (and its earlier versions) for the last thirty years (interview with police). The relationship between Mildura police and SMECC is very close, with regular visits from police to SMECC sponsored events, and strong personal relationships between police and SMECC workers and volunteers. Mildura police have a dedicated Community Liaison officer who described his responsibilities as including CALD/multicultural communities, Aboriginal communities, and youth. He felt that Mildura had changed so much demographically that the time had come when it needed a dedicated Multicultural Liaison Officer. He, and an Aboriginal Community Liaison officer, and Youth Liaison officer worked closely together across mainstream, CALD and Aboriginal communities. They are located in the same 'Proactive' office, which enhances their everyday collaboration. They have strong relationships with many other agencies in Mildura, including primary and secondary schools that they visit regularly to talk to children and youth about issues, with the English language Centre that also puts them in close contact with refugee communities and other recent CALD arrivals, with Mallee Family Care, the Department of Justice and Regulation, DHHS, Mildura Shire Council, MDAS, health agencies, and sporting bodies, to name a few that police mentioned. As the Youth Liaison officer stressed: 'The good working relationship with these agencies, which is part and parcel in this community, in a small isolate community, you've got to have those networks and contacts otherwise you can't offer your clients that support.'

Senior police have also been centrally involved with Mildura's Community Engagement Framework since its beginning in 2006 (as explained above, this has recently merged with Mildura's Northern Mallee Primary Care Partnership to become the Northern Mallee Community Partnership). The Superintendent emphasised the importance of the Community Engagement Framework approach for policing, and he had been one of the original members of the governing committee. The strong relationships of trust and cooperation that had been built between police and Mildura's many government, community, welfare and health agencies and key leaders was, for example, integral to the capacity of Mildura to create and roll out their highly regarded program to deal with the 'ice' drug problem, 'Project Ice':

> I've had superintendents ring me up from all over Victoria and now coming from interstate as well, saying 'we've heard of Project Ice, how can I replicate it?' My answer is, 'Well you start today and you get an impact in about 7 or 8 years' time.' You have to build up that trust. It's just collaboration 101 (see story and full quote in Appendix 4).

Here was yet another example of the high levels of inter-agency cooperation to be found in Mildura.

We were told in interviews with SMECC board members and workers, and others at welfare agencies, that Mildura police had played an important role in reassuring people from CALD backgrounds that police wanted to hear if they are mistreated or fearful, for example in response to terrorist events elsewhere that may lead to targeting of people from Muslim backgrounds in Mildura, or experienced racism. This was also emphasised by police officers: 'We try really hard to work with other agencies to install confidence within the CALD communities because they've got an inherent fear. That's our biggest challenge' (see extended quote, Appendix 4). This officer also spoke of the difficulties faced by Muslim communities in Mildura, especially since the rise of ISIS, and that in this context it was important for police to keep in close contact with Mildura's diverse Muslim communities, to reassure them. He frequently visits the Turkish Mosque and felt that he had become a trusted presence there, even though under heightened terrorism alert he was required to visit the mosque with an armed weapon. People, he said, were understanding once he carefully explained the reasons and the requirements. He also regularly attended places where local Afghanis worshipped, and police would often drop by at their events and celebrations just so that the communities were assured that they were there to protect them if they had any issues.

A Mildura community interviewee told us that 'police are generally pretty good in Mildura' and suggested that when you have good police leadership and direction, as had been the case in recent years in Mildura, then relations with police can be good at a community level. Mildura police were interested, he said, in reducing conflict and crime in different communities. He also stressed that the local police Superintendent who he knew well was really interested in community issues, including issues surrounding social cohesion.

2.5.3 Department of Justice and Regulation, Victoria

Victoria's Department of Justice and Regulation serves a vital role in the ongoing cultivation of community justice, equity, and belonging. The disadvantaged and those who are new to Australia and to regional cities like Shepparton and Mildura can be particularly vulnerable in negotiating the legal system. The Department of Justice and Regulation collaborates with other key Government Departments and community agencies to advise and assist in matters that directly impact social cohesion. This section describes some of the work taking place with the new arrival, refugee and migrant communities, as well as Indigenous communities. Our interviews with Department employees gave us a picture of the significant role the Department plays in building knowledge, trust, and working relationships between the diverse communities and the various arms of the justice system.

The Department has made important attempts at consulting with the communities and various community leaders to learn about the needs, interests, and tension points for refugee and other newly arrived groups. Shepparton and Mildura both have high degrees of collaboration amongst the Government Departments and community agencies, and the Department of Justice and Regulation has relied on this approach to targeted, collaborative efforts at meeting community needs and addressing issues. The approach has been to 'get all the key players' together, which includes among others, ethnic councils, police, courts, welfare agencies, and importantly, representative groups from the different communities. One strategy in Shepparton involves quarterly meetings with the participating agencies. This effort is continually in growth and changing, with additional agencies participating, and with a conscious effort to maximise cross-agency efforts. One Department of Justice and Regulation interviewee described the efforts this way:

> The idea is that we would get together as a range of government departments probably quarterly and go, 'What are you doing?' 'Where are we at?' 'How can we work together to be able to provide a coordinated, partnership-type response rather than treading on everybody's toes?'… It now involves Council. It involves DHHS. It involves the youth support workers. It involves Child Protection. It involves others too (see longer quote, Appendix 4).

The Department interviewees talked about the importance of community consulting. Their work involves proactive efforts to get to know the members and groups in the community and address needs in an ongoing, educational, and relation building effort. One strategy was to hold separate meetings with groups of newly arrived communities:

> What we wanted to do was to go to them rather than get them to come to us, to try and build relationships in a different way…We encouraged them to talk to us about where they've come from, their history and their issues in Australia. What are they experiencing? What are the problems they face?
> (see full quote, Appendix 4).

Another similar initiative, coordinated with the other departments and agencies, involved community roundtable profiles. These consisted of representative groups from each community visiting a series of roundtables in a large auditorium, each table with representatives from a different department or agency. The community representatives asked questions of the agencies/departments, and vice versa, with the community groups rotating to the next table after one hour at each. A Department interviewee told us that this gave a better understanding of needs, and a solid evidence base 'for funding applications and for resourcing and driving our work' (see longer quote, Appendix 4).

Through these and other efforts at community consultation, Department of Justice and Regulation interviewees report successes in building trust, knowledge, and ongoing interactions. They suggest the value in understanding the historical and cultural dispositions of each community in order to understand how best to educate, support, and interact with each community in their new Australian home. An interviewee gave us poignant examples of the differing cultural dynamics that can influence different community's views of and interactions with the justice system:

> In the Afghani communities justice issues are about the community feeling as though people are reading their community as being a failure, and they want the community to be perceived well…. Other communities, like the Congolese, may have gone, 'Well, you know, you went to court in Congo, you didn't come back. We never saw you again.'

We were then told the story of an incident that occurred at a celebration for Congolese Independence Day, where a Congolese woman saw the uniforms of two female Sheriffs and ended up cowering in a corner ; 'the two officers were mortified, because they were just lovely ladies who wouldn't hurt a fly' (for full story, see Appendix 4).

This last story illustrates the dual nature of the community relationships that the Department and other agencies attempt to build: the communities learn about them, and they learn about the communities. The Department of Justice and Regulation and other agencies actively seek to educate their staff and the broader community about newer arrivals and about the Indigenous communities. One such effort involves multicultural bus tours arranged to take agency employees and other community members on a bus to visit different religious institutions (e.g. churches, mosques, temples) as well as important Indigenous places. Other initiatives include community BBQs held regularly in specific neighbourhoods to develop community relations. Another example includes organising 'weaving and yarning' groups with Aboriginal women:

> The idea was that women would be invited along to partake in a particular activity that was completely unrelated to family violence or relationships or financial matters or whatever the case might be. Sitting there with the elders and doing a different activity, through building those relationships the women gradually might open up about, and indeed, from what I understand from the people involved in that program, they might then open up that this is happening or this is going on, and it's a safe place to talk about that and get some support. I think in some way it's really building that, it's not necessarily about the service per se or the person per se, but the regularity of that involvement and building up trust and rapport over time.

The Department seeks to teach community members their rights and responsibilities in relation to the law, and there are some key issues that arise for the CALD communities. One pressing issue relates to housing. We heard from numerous interviewees from different agencies in the project about discrimination for new arrivals and Indigenous Australians in housing. One Department initiative to address this was a program run with the Real Estate Institute of Victoria (REIV):

> We ran this seminar, we actually got the REIV president to come here and talk and hear from our group. We told him our story: 'These are the issues.' We then engaged with the property managers, and have now started a regular seminar group. As the first of that, we brought along the target person, who was a professional who had good history, who couldn't get a house to save himself, despite the fact that he's pulling in 90,000 a year and has a good job and has rented in New South Wales. Couldn't get his application looked at because of his name, in essence.

The interviewee reported that they saw significant positive results from this educational effort, and the work continues to confront issues of such discrimination, which often arises from lack of understanding.

There are also issues around consumer affairs and 'dodgy selling tactics', which a Department interviewee described as a 'combination between scammers and legitimate business', such as 'high selling tactics over the phone', where people end up signed up to multiple electricity or telephone providers (for full quote, see Appendix 4). These tactics particularly affect Shepparton and Mildura's more vulnerable communities, including CALD and Indigenous communities. We were told of internet providers who deliberately targeted an Indigenous community near Mildura, signing them up to expensive internet services that they did not need. The Department plays an important educative role in dealing with such consumer issues, and makes regular efforts to combat this type of exploitation.

Additionally, the Department works to educate CALD community members, in particular recent arrival immigrant groups, about rules and regulations that may be taken for granted by many other community members. An example of this was the use of 'e-TAGs': 'They might not have an e-TAG. They don't understand. You lend your car to somebody. They go into Melbourne, go in on the freeway, come in on the freeway. You pick up two e-TAG fines.' This, and other examples like parking fines due to lack of understanding, might result in negative outcomes like fines 'being converted into warrants for the Sheriff' (see full quote, Appendix 4).

An important focus for the Department of Justice and Regulation is on teaching community members their rights, but there is an equal effort toward education in responsibilities. Family violence is an area where much important collaboration between agencies takes place, and where strategies for building trust and ongoing relationships with the community are particularly important. The Department is able to use police data to target specific groups in the community for issues like family violence, as they arise. One strategy is to organise play groups, which, among their other benefits, may allow women in the community an opportunity to build trust and sometimes broach these difficult issues.

The Department of Justice and Regulation is in a position to serve an important role in mediating between the justice system and the wider community. By assisting community groups in learning and adjusting to their rights and responsibilities, they are enabling a diverse community to move toward understanding and even belonging in the wider community. The proactive approaches taken in Shepparton and Mildura are instrumental in the continuing effort to foster social cohesion.

2.5.4 Welfare and health agencies

The welfare and health agencies in Shepparton and Mildura are notable for their broad-reaching programs. Many of them have a wide range of services that try to meet the needs of their very diverse communities. This capacity to work on varying types of projects in a very complex, culturally diverse environment, partially explains the numerous links between the agencies because there is crossover in their work. The following are examples of key welfare and health agencies and their work in the community.

Major government agencies such as the Federal Government's Centrelink and the Victorian State Government's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) provide extensive housing and other welfare services, as well as the key pensions, allowances and other benefits payments. They are vital in particular for the less advantaged sections of Shepparton's and Mildura's populations, and make a contribution to the social justice and equity dimensions of social cohesion.

Local DHHS and Centrelink workers can have a significant, positive impact on the lives of local people, and through local links and collaboration with other agencies support the disadvantaged in important ways. Their relationships and collaboration with organisations like SMECC and ECSD are crucial to their capacity to understand and respond to the needs of CALD communities.

Not-for-profit welfare agencies such as Mallee Family Care (MFC) in Mildura and Family Care in Shepparton have a range of services to the community with a focus on families, children and youth, disability and mental health, and housing, legal, and financial advice and support. Though they are mainstream agencies rather than specialising in CALD or Indigenous communities,

SMECC Men's Exercise Group with Sunraysia Community Health Services
Photo supplied by SMECC

they nevertheless do a great deal of work with such communities, and increasingly so in the case of CALD communities, in Shepparton and Mildura; and they have needed to innovate in terms of practices and cultural and religious awareness because of living in increasingly diverse environments. These and other key welfare and health agencies carry out work that goes a long way toward addressing issues that arise out of socio-economic inequality.

Kildonan Uniting Care (a community welfare agency), Primary Care Connect (a community health agency) and the Red Cross in Shepparton provide a range of health and welfare services, including new arrival support and settlement, and torture and trauma counselling. They also foster important social bonds within the community through the various forums and groups that they organise for refugee and asylum seeker communities, often in collaboration with other agencies, including GV Health, police, DHHS and Centrelink, GOTAFE, and ECSD. Primary Care Connect has a strong relationship with GV Health, and collaborated with them to gain funding for a refugee nurse, as explained by a senior manager at GV Health. Like the ethnic councils these agencies have also played important employment and mentoring roles by employing diverse workforces including people from the main CALD communities that they service.

Health care services, including major hospitals and their health networks, as well as community based health organisations, are also important agencies contributing to the social justice and equity dimensions of social cohesion. Their accessibility to different communities is of fundamental importance to communities' well-being. Health care agencies in Victoria and Australia have long been committed to providing quality services in culturally appropriate and sensitive ways, and we found many positive examples of this approach in Shepparton and Mildura. Access to good, culturally sensitive health care is crucial; but there are difficulties in operating in such culturally complex environments, difficulties also experienced by welfare agencies.

One manager from a welfare agency in Shepparton spoke of the 'spectacularly unsuccessful' men's anger management program that they had attempted to run with refugee men, during which they encountered seemingly insurmountable cultural differences: 'Engagement was difficult, and as difficult as it was, it was even more difficult to sustain' (see full quote, Appendix 4).

Through some of our interviews and observations, we gained a sense of the flexibility and adaptability of welfare and health agencies and workers in both Shepparton and Mildura. We were particularly interested to hear of innovations related to working with diverse populations. One mainstream welfare agency in Shepparton had engaged in several years' work of finding ways to reach out to and engage with CALD communities, and had a dedicated role to enhance this aspect of their work:

> That part-time role was really about engaging with CALD communities, looking at our organisation and how we can, I guess, enhance the services that we provide to CALD communities, multicultural communities, and to

increase the uptake of services by different populations, about accessing interpretive services, going out and establishing relationships with community leaders, that kind of thing.

The agency had recognised that Shepparton's population had shifted significantly due to new waves of immigration, but that this had not been reflected in the clients coming through their doors. So, they decided to get out and actively engage with different communities about needs and issues, and one of the by-products of that wide consultation was that the agency and services became better known to different communities. But it was a slow process:

> You need to develop relationships with the communities, whether it be the Sudanese community or Afghani community, and you need to establish trust with them. You need to learn about who's in the community, who do they go to for leadership, who are the community elders? (see longer quote in Appendix 4).

This agency also developed a network of relationships with other agencies working with people from CALD, including refugee backgrounds, and also with the teachers and principals at some of the most ethnically and culturally diverse schools in the area.

GV Health in Shepparton, that includes the GV base Hospital, is one of the largest single employers in the area (employing about 2300), including employing a very ethnically diverse staff of medical, nursing and allied health professionals. The hospital has taken big steps to address the needs of the increasingly diverse communities of Shepparton, and has also worked to accommodate Shepparton's large Aboriginal population. We spoke to a former Hospital Board member who stressed the changes that she had seen in terms of making the hospital a safe and welcoming place for Aboriginal people. These included the establishment of a special Aboriginal room, the Minya Barmah Room, where community members could be together and feel safe in the hospital environment – recognising that in the past Aboriginal people had avoided going to the hospital, sometimes until it was too late, because they found it an alienating environment – and the employment of Aboriginal Liaison Officers. GV Health also has a strong relationship with Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative and its Aboriginal health services, including at governance levels. As explained by a senior manager, the 'partnership arrangement' went back many years, and had developed from having 'a task force that met our senior staff, Rumbalara senior staff and elders', to Rumbalara becoming a member of the Primary Care Health Advisory committee, that advises the hospital board, which gives Rumbalara 'a much higher level of interaction, and direct linkage to advise to our board' (see full quote, Appendix 4).

The senior manager also discussed the innovations that had been worked out to manage the inflow of refugees from various backgrounds, who presented with different health profiles and health beliefs. A key turning point had been the Congolese direct resettlement pilot that resulted in the setting up of a range of committees to deal with different envisaged needs – in education, employment, and health. The health committee had been the only one that had survived since then, and had contributed to the gradual building of the local health sector's capacity to deal with the range of refugee health needs:

It had some really substantial work to do initially, because we weren't familiar here. We weren't set up with some of the same resources and systems that have been in Melbourne for a long time… And we kept going, because we had different waves of migrants coming in after that (for longer explanation, see quote in Appendix 4).

Again, strong levels of collaboration between different agencies in many different sectors in and around Shepparton, but also across Victoria, including in rural health networks, and refugee health networks, was the ingredient that helped to build that capacity. Other important innovations or developments included: the growth and development of interpreter services, and the employment of more bi- and multi-lingual staff; more culturally aware staff and better organised systems that recognised and recorded different cultural and religious beliefs of consumers; and also a growing and improving general awareness of the significantly different health beliefs of people who used the services.

Alongside the work of Mildura Base Hospital, that like GV Health also employs a diverse workforce of health professionals, Sunraysia Community Health Services plays an important role servicing the health needs of CALD, including refugee, communities. It has refugee nurses and a torture and trauma counsellor specialising in refugee health. It partners with SMECC on various projects concerning health and well-being. For example, we visited a community garden where allied health workers took cooking classes for refugees and asylum seekers in a collaboration with SMECC workers and volunteers, which performed both a health and well-being function, but also was an important way of integrating isolated people into the Mildura community and improving their English. A community member from a Samoan background who we spoke to said that Sunraysia Community Health did a lot of great work with Mildura's large Polynesian community, and had worked hard to overcome the feelings of shame that many Polynesians felt about health problems such as diabetes. Her Samoan community association formed 'a partnership with SMECC and with Sunraysia Community Health in which they worked with us to prevent and how to help Polynesian people come to them on issues on diabetes. It was such a good project…' (see full quote, Appendix 4). She told us that as a result of the building of trust through such projects, Polynesians felt confident and safe going to Sunraysia Community Health Services. This health agency also partners with MDAS on projects concerning Indigenous health (MDAS key informant interview).

Many people in Mildura mentioned a General Practice clinic that employed doctors, nurses and receptionists from non-Anglo backgrounds, including Muslim backgrounds, and also provides bulk billing services that appeal to all communities in Mildura. Its doctors and other health professionals have taken on an important role servicing the needs of asylum seeker and refugee communities, whose trust they have gained through their innovative and accepting approaches. The clinic employs doctors and nurses who speak the major languages of the CALD and refugee communities that they service – for example Arabic, Persian, Tamil and Turkish.

We spoke to a leading doctor from the clinic who described how he had had to learn about the complexities of refugee health needs and to find ways to manage and adapt to different cultural expectations and language barriers (he spoke several languages). Being a Shia Muslim contributed to his rapport with the mainly Hazara Afghanis who migrated to Mildura, and he also attended many of their events, including worshipping with them. Once he had realised that he would need to learn very quickly about refugee issues, as people from refugee, especially Hazara backgrounds, kept coming through his doors in large numbers, he linked up with refugee health experts in other cities, including a leading medical specialist, and Foundation House, and collaborated with other organisations like SMECC. He soon found himself to be a leading figure in refugee health in Mildura, and a strong advocate for refugees and asylum seekers. He showed us how he used pictures to explain healthy eating and other health practices in sessions that he ran at SMECC for refugees and asylum seekers who were not literate. He also had strong links with the Turkish community, for whom he had done major community health assessments, and had become a health professional that they came to and trusted, who also had the advantage of speaking their language. But there was a lack of fundamental services to refer people on to, for example for mental health, that was related to cultural differences, a lack of general cultural literacy among Mildura's GPs, and lack of sufficient or adequate translating services for some specific migrant health needs. For example, he told us that:

> We don't have a mental health practitioner who has language skills….The psychologist [upstairs] doesn't accept people from other languages because of the difficulty with interpreting system. We have three psychiatrists, we have two psychiatrists all of them the books are closed. Even if you can force a patient through, they don't accept people from other languages, just doesn't work. The interpreter system doesn't work (for longer quote, see Appendix 4).

When running such a clinic, and attending to complex refugee needs, it was unavoidable for doctors, nurses and other staff to perform many tasks that went beyond medical needs, and which were not refunded through Medicare, like helping people to fill out complicated government forms, organising DNA testing for Afghani refugees who were trying to sponsor family members to come to Australia, or helping with citizenship forms. As for many of the agencies we spoke with, there are many needs that are not being met by other services, and people rely upon the goodwill and volunteering of local community members.

2.5.5 Ethnic councils

The ethnic councils in Shepparton and Mildura play central roles in the fostering of social cohesion for these multicultural cities. These organisations focus their work on the culturally and linguistically diverse members of the community, particularly on the groups who are most recently arrived from overseas. These ethnic councils are recognised throughout the community as a hub of resources and support for CALD community members, as

well as serving an important role in linking them to other parts of the community. The CEO of Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council (SMECC) and the Manager of the Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District (ECSD) have explained it this way: imagine what it would be like to arrive in a new country with little to no possessions or resources, knowing few or no people, and not able to speak the language. Everything one would need assistance with in getting established is what the ethnic councils are involved in helping people with. This includes, among other things, having some role in seeking housing, employment, welfare services, translation, and learning local culture, customs and language. Importantly, both SMECC and ECSD employ a very diverse staff including primarily CALD community members. This makes their staff more representative

Energy Use Money Saving Information Session, Mildura, SMECC
Photo supplied by SMECC

of the communities they serve, as well as suiting their purpose in liaising with those communities and providing jobs. The ethnic councils also do work, in conjunction with other agencies, to promote better understanding of the diversity of their community members. This includes multicultural festivals and other related events. A recent example was a film screening in Shepparton about the lost boys of Sudan. This was a public event, where a community member, and staff member of ECSD, spoke at the film screening (co-hosted by the Women's Charter Alliance, ECSD and the Interfaith Network) and told the audience of community members about his experience fleeing conflict in Southern Sudan.

SMECC expanded its role dramatically when it took on a major government contract with the Department of Social Services to provide settlement services in the Mildura area, which partly explains its prominence and large presence in Mildura. 'No one was doing it in Mildura at the time, so SMECC decided to partner with AMES, subtracting for AMES' (Dean Wickham, CEO of SMECC). It also has contracts with the Immigration Department to deliver services to asylum seekers, and also with the Victorian State Government to deliver Refugee Action programs. It has become the first port of call for people from CALD backgrounds, including refugees and asylum seekers, whereas these responsibilities are more divided between agencies in Shepparton, including ECSD, Kildonan, and the Red Cross.

CEO Dean Wickham described SMECC as a 'barometer' organisation, and felt that it should not get too big and bureaucratic, and should also 'remain independent', otherwise it would lose its capacity to move quickly to respond to needs, and 'lose its barometer value to communities'. SMECC could take the local pulse, see what was happening, what was changing on the ground. It was also crucial that it maintained a welcoming 'feel', so that people could feel

comfortable coming there, to just drop in. SMECC had the capacity to be more than an advocacy agency; it could be something that got people onto a pathway into work:

> That's usually the last piece of the puzzle. We can take care of everything else. Our staff looks after accommodation, sets everything up in a system, orientate them to the services. The last piece of the puzzle is now we would like to get a job.

This is something that SMECC has not been strictly funded to do, but which is seen by the CEO as fundamental to helping newcomers find their place in Mildura, especially given the absence of employment agencies in the area that are geared to dealing with complex CALD issues:

> They say 'Dean, you're not an employment agency. Don't focus on that.' Well, you know, we get calls from fruit growers, we get calls from people looking for work. Workers and clients who want work. So we join the dots with making sure everybody is playing the game correctly.

SMECC's activities are extensive, including starting to branch out into training for employment. The building of a large shed was part of an initiative to do something practical for newcomers from CALD backgrounds around employment readiness. SMECC had partnered with Foodbank and Healthy Mildura to make the shed a hive of productive activity that would also train newcomers in various skills, including warehousing. People would feed over from English training in the old primary school portables (SMECC's buildings and grounds previously belonged to a primary school), and continue to learn English while learning marketable skills.

Working on a smaller scale and with less staff, ECSD has a strong public profile and presence in Shepparton, advocating for newcomers including refugees and helping them link up with mainstream communities and services, raising cultural awareness through initiatives including cultural bus tours, partnering with other agencies including the police, local council, the Interfaith Network, GV Health, government and non-government welfare agencies, and The Women's Charter Alliance, and playing an important role in community consultations and events that reflect and celebrate Shepparton's cultural diversity. Its manager and CALD workers are a strong presence in Shepparton and frequently appear in local media discussing important events and issues concerning CALD communities.

2.5.6 Ethnic organisations

There are many ethnic based organisations in both Shepparton and Mildura that serve to build bonding social capital between ethnic community members. It is important that in a multicultural city there is a balance between the whole community sharing some goals, values, and practices, and people with differing cultural backgrounds having the opportunity to maintain and celebrate the things that are important to them and their culture. The

ethnic organisations in town serve this purpose, and they appear to be particularly important to the newly arrived CALD community members who rely on these groups to become at least initially integrated into the community. Some examples of active ethnic organisations we spoke with include the Goulburn Valley Congolese Association (in Shepparton), Albanian Muslim Society (in Shepparton), the Greek Senior Citizens Club (in Mildura), the Turkish Association (Mildura), and the Afghan Board (Mildura). Other people we interviewed commented on the importance of a recently formed youth organisation in Shepparton, Al Kasem:

> I still think the [CALD] youth are trying to find where they belong. I really do. They're in that cusp of, 'Mom and Dad want us to go this way, but we ...' There's a couple of great youth groups that have started up, and especially when a lot of that upheaval from terrorism began, one of the Iraqis, and a couple of the boys there, have sort of stepped up and set up a group, and they want to expand that, to whether that be a Men's Shed, or something similar to that whereas it's a bit of a drop-in centre, so that they can be further expanded where people feel safe. (*Interviewer: Yeah, I've heard mention of that. I think, is it, Al Kasem?)* Yeah. Some time early this year, there's two brothers that are involved in that as well, but they're with the Iraqi community, but it's not just Iraqi, it's just the wider community as well. (Key Informant, DHHS).

These organisations often function without public funding, supported by their own communities and volunteers, and yet they do important work in helping their community members, especially newer arrivals, to orient themselves and find a place in the local community. Sometimes, lacking their own buildings or meeting places, they operate out of people's homes, like the Turkish Association of Mildura. The Goulburn Valley Congolese Association has been operating since 2006, soon after the beginning of the planned resettlement of Congolese families in Shepparton, but it receives no government funding or support, as explained by a local Congolese leader:

> So, we work as volunteers. Again, who is advocating for our people when there is an issue? Like for example, housing has been an issue in Shepparton for immigrant, because sometime when you came from overseas, you don't have this right history. So it become hard for real estate agents to trust you. For me, I'm a member, so we always use for example, other people who we know from mainstream to talk behind the scene to help pass our people to get accommodation. This is some of the work we are doing....We also organising number of event like the Congolese Independence Day. We do that, it's not because that we are more involving in what is happening in the past, but the idea is we use this as a tool of social inclusion.

Such celebrations helped local Congolese residents to remember that they were made up of many ethnic and language groups, but were also part of a larger Congolese community, and part of the Shepparton and Australian communities:

> So we are using this kind of celebration as kind of social inclusion, keeping us together, and again, opportunity to make us mainstream, so we can show them our culture, like dancing, what we eat, what we believe in. So we always hold different event like the Congolese Independence Day...

The Congolese Association could help Shepparton residents to better understand the Congolese community, including the diversity of its ethnic groups and languages. Another member described its main role:

> The main objective of the association is to help its members for a better life in the region, in Australia. It has three main objectives: To help the Congolese to settle in Shepparton, and to promote the Congolese culture, and also to share Congolese culture with the world community but also to understand the Australian culture. Everything, better settlement which include everything. We don't want to forget our culture, we need to share it with other people, and also we need to learn more about Australian culture.

The new Afghan Board in Mildura, established earlier in 2015 replacing the old Board with a new structure, operates as a key organiser of the growing Afghan community, with 10 board members representing the community and coming together to make decisions about the key things that affect the lives of community members, such as marriages, funerals and burials, to help preserve culture by teaching children language (i.e. Hazaragi, Persian, Dari) and traditions, and how to advance as a community in the Mildura area (key informant, Afghan Board). They are hoping to buy their own land and erect their own building where they will be able to freely meet 'without making other people fearful of their large gatherings'. For example, we were told that they had to hire a hall in another town, to honour their 'sad event', and that they were met with hostility from locals, who shouted things like 'Go back to Mildura, go back where you came from!' which upset many of the people, including the young women and children. Having their own space for Afghani community events, and to do Afghani things, would considerably improve their sense of belonging in Mildura.

2.5.7 Religious institutions

Local churches, mosques, temples, and other religious organisations play a significant, and possibly under-recognised, role in social cohesion and supporting multiculturalism in the community. Interviewees from religious and non-religious backgrounds described the importance of religion to different cultural groups in maintaining a sense of their distinct identity, while incorporating themselves into the life of the greater community. This is particularly important to newer arrivals to Shepparton and Mildura, as they look to build bonding social capital and support networks around them. An illustrative case study is the Shepparton Lutheran church. Over the past 10 years, this church's congregation has grown significantly and primarily consists of Shepparton residents from Congolese and Sudanese backgrounds. The church is a hub of social activity, providing the congregants with a sense of belonging in the community. The Pastor applied for a grant to contribute to building African House on the new church grounds, and this building has become an important focal point and community meeting place for African people in Shepparton, as well as an important building used for other community events, including community consultations in collaboration with ECSD and other welfare and settlement agencies in Shepparton.

The story behind the building of African House is one among many examples of the pragmatic and generous efforts of Shepparton locals to respond to the needs of relative newcomers. As the Pastor explained, this building would not have come about if not for a large donation. The story, that can be found in Appendix 4, also exemplifies the network of community activists in Shepparton who draw together to make community projects work. The Pastor was helped and encouraged by his Bishop, a worker from GV Health, a lawyer he had known who now worked for OMAC, and many local people, including his parishioners. African House was a space for African people to do their community business, but it also made them feel that they had a real stake in Shepparton: 'The big part for me was to put them on the map too. Just to say we as a church value you and are prepared to actually invest in your future. Shepparton community does too. That was part of it.'

The Pastor and other congregants who have been in Australia longer provide valuable assistance to the African church members. This assistance often supplements the work that other agencies do to help residents settle in Shepparton. Importantly, this type of settlement assistance covers areas of need that may fall outside of the purview and hours of the larger agencies. Council members, ministers, priests and other community members have all suggested that the value of religious practice and religious institutions cannot be overestimated for strengthening social cohesion.

The Catholic Churches, and their associated schools in Shepparton and Mooroopna, also played a major settlement role from the early 2000s, especially for people from various African backgrounds. We spoke to a priest and other Catholic community members who told us about the extensive activities of church leaders, school principals, teachers, and ordinary community members who reached out to help. Principals and teachers would visit the houses of new immigrant school children to help ease their integration into mainstream society, discussing issues like preparing lunches for school, and doing homework. They encouraged local families to invite newer immigrant children to their houses. A local principal had travelled to an African refugee camp to retrieve a twin who had been separated from her family, and brought her back to Shepparton. Families 'adopted' other families. The church congregations were now very diverse, as one community member told us:

> Up at St. Brendan's, that's the other end of town, that's the bigger church. It's had very strong willingness and community spirit about bringing people in and nurturing them and all of that since, well you spoke to the priest. He started the ball rolling there very beautifully and it's gone on from there. It's still there. You'll go in there and you'll see I'd say sometimes it can be a half of the church population is black African and Indian and all of that. At St. Mel's we have a smaller congregation but there's a mixture there too. Have quite a large Indian component. We have the Samoans. We have, oh Philippines. The Philippine community at both ends but our priest here is a Philippine person too.

This was also a feature of the Christian churches and the Turkish Mosque in Mildura, that were accommodating more diverse communities of believers. A Mildura community member from a Samoan background described the congregation at her church:

> We've got Tongans at our church, we've got Samoans, we have Filipinos, we've got Australians. It's a bit of a mixture so it's very multicultural. We've got a bit of some Fijian, some Indian…They are very well supported as well. Whenever we need assistance we would go to them and they would really help out. In relation to looking for a jobs they are very directive as to how they can help.

We also interviewed people from Muslim, Sikh and Buddhist backgrounds in both Shepparton and Mildura, and also visited Gurdwara Sahib Sikh Temple in Shepparton. Spaces for worship, such as Shepparton's mosques and the temple, the Turkish Mosque in Mildura, and also other spaces where people of Muslim faith worship, pray and get together as communities, play crucial roles in the sense of belonging that people of different faiths experience. One interviewee in Shepparton, who had visited mosques and the temple on a cultural bus tour, stressed the important role these places of worship played in bringing communities together, which went beyond their strictly religious role: 'It really struck me how community and family focused they were. These are really important parts of the community infrastructure for cohesion and keeping people looking after each other in a real community sense and reinforcing the community values and expectations' (for extended quote, see Appendix 4). They also serve crucial roles in the settlement and adjustment of newcomers to these cities. We were told by a woman from a Turkish background in Mildura about a Bangladeshi family who arrived in town, with the parents, who were both doctors, needing to work the next day but with no childcare for their child. They visited the local Turkish Mosque and the Imam and his wife looked after their child for a couple of months: 'Because it is a mosque and a religious leader, you got a bit of faith in that. You can't leave your most precious thing to someone you don't know. It worked for them and hopefully it's working for others'. This story illustrates the crucial role that a bond over religion can play in new arrivals integrating into the community by meeting social and practical needs.

There is a remarkable degree of acceptance in Shepparton and Mildura for mosques, and they play a crucial role in many community members gaining and maintaining a sense of belonging in the community. However, in one of our focus groups that involved people from CALD backgrounds of mixed religions it was stressed that these cities, including local council, need to be more aware of providing for the needs of all religions. One example given was the need to provide a public prayer room at Shepparton's Victoria Park Lake, which has become a major site for families from many different ethnic and religious backgrounds to congregate and relax on hot summer evenings. It was noted that local employers need to provide such opportunities and spaces for Muslim employees to pray during work hours, as part of the normal expectations of their workforce.

Interfaith organisations are practically and symbolically very important to social cohesion in multi-faith communities such as Shepparton and Mildura. The Shepparton Interfaith Network is an example of an organisation with a mission to proactively build understanding, relationships, and collaborations between the different religious institutions and members of all faiths in an effort to build a strong and harmonious community. We spoke with three different members of the Interfaith Network and were struck by the positive strong relationships that the organisation builds between the Priests, Imams, Ministers, Gurus, and others of Shepparton. The Network's mission statement is informed by the same understanding of social cohesion as this research project, and others like it:

> Shepparton Interfaith Network is an incorporated not-for-profit body which seeks to promote harmony, cooperation and understanding among the faith communities of Shepparton and the Goulburn Valley. The Shepparton Interfaith Network promotes social cohesion and community building with the community at large through its meetings, interfaith encounters and dialogues, and partnering with community organisations to promote all the dimensions of social cohesion: participation, belonging, worth, social justice and equity, and active citizenship. http://sheppartoninterfaith.org.au/?page_id=726

The organisation holds bimonthly meetings at the various places of worship in the local area, and membership is open to all who share the same ideals of interfaith harmony. In addition to building relationships between religious leaders and other community members of various faiths, the Network also supports and runs multicultural and multi-faith events and educational programs. Some examples include: cross-cultural school programs; sponsoring cultural festivals; and encouraging research and initiatives to address social issues to do with racism, discrimination, and inequality. They also maintain a website with regular blog posts on relevant stories in the region, information about local places of worship (including virtual tours), and numerous resources about the cultural diversity, history, and contemporary life in the Goulburn Valley. Interfaith organisations play a significant role in the cultivation of understanding and good relations between people of different faiths, and this work extends to the whole community by building bridges of social networks, community trust, and social wellbeing.

The general acceptance of mosques and temples in these regional Victorian cities, as well as the general acceptance of Muslim, Sikh, and other religions communities, is a significant indicator of success in Shepparton's and Mildura's social cohesion. These communities do experience some racism and discrimination, and religious intolerance, however our interviewees report feeling a sense of acceptance from the community overall. It is important to note that many of these community members go out of their way to 'give back' to the community, investing their time, resources, and care. We heard numerous examples of such volunteerism. A local restaurant owner, from a Macedonian Muslim background, sets up at a local park nearly every weekend to donate free warm meals to anyone who wants one. Another local business manager, a Sikh man, provides free breakfasts to community members in need. These are two of many stories we heard about people who are relatively new to the community but who take it upon themselves to proactively meet the needs of the community. These efforts go a long way toward making Shepparton and Mildura socially cohesive places for people of varying cultural and religious backgrounds.

2.5.8 Local media

The local media in both Shepparton and Mildura are notable for their active, positive representation of the diversity of the community. *The Shepparton News* and *Sunraysia Daily* play a positive role in the social cohesion of these cities, as they are a constant source of stories, personal profiles, and reports that display the diversity of the communities, and clearly set out to celebrate that diversity. For example, several informants in Mildura told us about a series of monthly articles that had been published by a journalist, called 'The Newcomers', in 2012; this had been done in collaboration with SMECC (as explained in interview with CEO of SMECC). There was consensus among all interviewees who mentioned local media that these publications are doing positive work toward social cohesion. This was often contrasted with the negative political rhetoric and media coverage in state and national newspapers that is likely to emphasise conflict and suggest divisive differences between people from different cultural backgrounds. Given the power some of this rhetoric has to influence negative feelings toward perceived others, the local media serves a very important role in regularly fostering an inclusive attitude in its readership.

As a community member in Mildura from a Muslim background explained, the local newspaper played an important role in reassuring the public when extremist or terrorist activities occurred elsewhere in Australia or the world, and also presented local CALD communities in a positive light:

> I never come across any article in the paper about for example, extremists in local community…They sometimes interview the local mosque Imam or other people about that. Most of them are quite supportive…. [It's] always 'Okay we talked about this with Imam with the head of the mosque and other people and they say we are fine, we don't have any issues. Kids are under control. Everything's good.'…[Or when] they…publish some news about events they…have a positive perspective of 'Look this Turkish community has this event which was so beautiful, lovely food', and so on. They have this positive view of the things rather than critical view and I think that's a very good point to help general population to develop a positive view toward the smaller communities (for full quote, see Appendix 4).

We observed front page photos of refugees with compelling stories who are now community members, groups of school children from a myriad of cultural backgrounds, stories of local business owners from CALD backgrounds, coverage of multicultural festivals and other events such as NAIDOC Week with a strong inclusive discourse.

2.5.9 Aboriginal agencies

Shepparton and Mildura are serviced by two major Aboriginal agencies, together with a range of smaller Aboriginal agencies, that play important roles in fostering social cohesion. Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative in Shepparton and Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS) in Mildura service varying needs of the Aboriginal communities in these cities, addressing social service issues that may, in some cases be longstanding issues of poverty and social exclusion. These agencies have large staffs, which employ primarily Indigenous community members. The following are examples of the types of work they do: they have multiple family services, run health services, develop social enterprises, work with local councils on Reconciliation Action Plans, address bias and misunderstandings in the wider community about the Aboriginal community, organise community activities such as NAIDOC Week, organise leadership programs, and liaise with other key agencies in the community. The Aboriginal communities in Shepparton and Mildura experience the highest rates of disadvantage in these areas and are most susceptible to barriers to social participation, particularly discrimination. The work of Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative and MDAS goes a long way toward addressing these issues. Notably, many in the community feel that in the past few years MDAS has taken positive strides toward redress in a community with a large Indigenous population and the potential for bringing this population into a more full participation. This is one area very much in need of work, and the work of agencies like Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative and MDAS are moving toward meeting these needs in the community.

2.5.10 Service clubs: Rotary, Lions

There are several established service clubs in Shepparton and Mildura, including the Rotary Club and the Lions Club. These service-based clubs fulfil a notable function for establishing and maintaining bonding and bridging social capital in these towns. They encourage community building and participation through philanthropy, service projects, and social events. Traditionally, these clubs have consisted of more established community members as well as older demographics. But in places like Shepparton and Mildura that have older, well-established CALD communities, the service clubs also draw people from CALD backgrounds – for example, Albanians in the Goulburn Valley, who have been described as the 'most prosperous and well established rural Albanian community in Australia' (Jupp 2001, p. 166, quoted in Missingham et al 2004, p. 50), have a strong presence in Rotary (Rotarian interviewees, Shepparton), as do older established groups including Italians, Greeks and Macedonians.

There are also notable examples of a few club members from newer immigrant cultural backgrounds. For example, we interviewed a member of one of the Lions clubs in Mildura who described the willing participation of a community member from a Sikh background who was keen to participate in the club and make friends and social

connections. We also interviewed this member from a Sikh background, who migrated to Australia in the mid 1990s, worked in the cities for a few years, and then established a successful business in Mildura, with his brothers. He explained that it was important for migrants to be involved in their community, which is a reason why he joined the Lions Club. As a migrant 'it's really hard to come into a totally separate, different country with a different language, different culture', but you had to strive to 'live with the community, and give back something to the community where you're living' (for full quote, see Appendix 4).

There have also been recent efforts to branch out with the clubs, to meet the interests and needs of newer communities. For example, we were told of a newer Rotary Club group in Shepparton with a very mixed membership including newer arrivals from CALD backgrounds. We spoke to an Anglo member who told us about her initial reluctance to join, as Rotary 'doesn't sound like…my thing', but who was enticed by a Sikh friend because of its mixture of new arrivals from diverse backgrounds, but also its attempt to do Rotary in a new way. For example, it met in a public school, rather than at the traditional pub. Meeting at pubs, she told us, excluded a lot of members whose culture or religion made such places uncomfortable or even forbidden. The new Rotary Club group also did away with the traditional rituals, like 'saying grace':

> [Rotary] doesn't actually fit with their cultures…. My friend said to me, 'You know how at the Sikh temple, they were talking about, wanting to do more together as a community. This is how we can do it, through this group.' I said, 'Yes we can.'

They were also aiming to reach out to the rest of Rotary and to the general community of Shepparton:

> My friend always comes up with new ideas. He said to me, 'What we should do is we should have a multi-cultural dinner, where we have whoever is in the club represented with their meals and invite all the Rotary members and the general public' (for longer quote, see Appendix 4).

As this example shows, service clubs such as Rotary and Lions have the potential to broaden their participation to newer cultural groups in the community and continue to expand their work in fostering bonding and bridging capital in cities like Shepparton and Mildura. This might require subtle cultural shifts, like providing alternative meeting places that are more culturally neutral, and engaging in events and activities different to those of the past, in order to adapt to the cultural diversity of new memberships.

2.5.11 Sports organisations

When asked, 'Where do people from different cultural backgrounds mix?', community members in Shepparton and Mildura often cited sport. Sports, in particular rugby, soccer, Aussie Rules, cricket, netball, and basketball were

named as the context in which every day multicultural interactions are a regular part of life in these cities. Numerous sport teams are culturally diverse and there are accounts of sincere intercultural bonding and friendships that result. In regional cities like Shepparton and Mildura, sport can often be a driver for social cohesion.

We heard from interviewees about the way that sport, despite its potential for encouraging multicultural social cohesion, can also involve intercultural conflict. There are opportunities to turn things around, though, if sport is consciously used as a vehicle for social cohesion. The rugby and soccer teams in Mildura have purportedly been divided by cultural group in the past, i.e. there was the Greek soccer team, the Italian team, etc. Community members report that now there is much more diversity within the teams. The Mildura United Soccer Club has a particularly apt story of becoming a team with many Aboriginal and CALD youth. Before this change, the team had consisted of Greek-Australian players. After having some local Aboriginal kids throw rocks at his car, the team manager stopped and spoke to those kids and asked them if they wanted to play soccer. Eventually, they did join the team and the manager picked the kids up and took them to practice. Involvement of Aboriginal youth in the team expanded, as well as the team recruiting youth from CALD communities. The team now consists of Aboriginal, Pacific Islander, Afghani, Iraqi, Anglo, Congolese, and other youth. Sports teams like this are providing opportunities for youth, as well as adults, to mix with members of the community who they otherwise might not have the opportunity to meet.

During NAIDOC Week in Mildura we met a local man, Ben (a pseudonym) who volunteers with the team, despite having no prior interest in soccer. He said that he was impressed with the vision of the team for bringing together children and youth in the community from all backgrounds. It is a 'truly multicultural team', he told us. We had the opportunity to attend a Mildura United Soccer Club mid-week practice with Ben as our host. At the practice, several parents of the children operated a BBQ, grilling sausages for when the kids finished their practice. A middle-aged man in professional business dress arrived shortly after us to the practice and began working drills with the children, running laps with them and encouraging them as they trained. Ben explained that this man, a community member of Turkish background, did not have a child on the team. He got involved with the team because he too heard about Mildura United and appreciated their vision for providing opportunities for kids who otherwise might not have the chance to participate in organised sports. Ben explained that for the older players on the seniors league (those in their early 20s), the team has provided mentoring to them, given some of them confidence in other areas of their life, and now they are finding ways to give back to the teams and the community.

We heard stories about the way sport can be a way for new arrivals to be drawn into interaction and social bonds with more established communities. A Mildura community member told us a long story about a local Afghan boy, Samir (a pseudonym) whose mother brought him to a local footy club. He could not speak English at first, and had never played Aussie Rules before, but was embraced by the club. Some of the club members created a Facebook

page including, 'things Samir wears', 'Samir poses', etc. The community member said that, on the surface, this could be taken as racism, but that in a meaningful sense this was a part of a tradition of 'working class male culture' of 'taking the piss'. Getting this type of attention from his footy team mates meant that he belonged, that they consider Samir one of their mates. By extension of this logic, 'you know that you are really on the outside if people don't bother to talk about you, make jokes about you'. In fact, Samir was reported to serve insults back, made jokes, enjoyed the banter. He was 'clearly one of them, a mate', but just different. This same community member discussed his own involvement in a local cricket club, saying it was interesting to note the men the team brought together from all walks of life, including lawyers, teachers, labourers, and office workers. In this sport he has the opportunity to mix with people from Commonwealth countries, like Indians and Pakistanis – but also with Afghans, all of whom enjoy playing cricket together.

People in Shepparton also told stories about the important role that sport had played in bringing people from different backgrounds together. Many people commented on the very positive role that the local police Multicultural Liaison Officer had played in getting youth involved in various sporting activities, including Aussie Rules, soccer and cricket, and that through such activities he was helping to bring kids from many cultural backgrounds together. Local African kids were mixing with Indigenous kids through these sports events, training sessions, and camps. Several people commented on the development of soccer in the Shepparton area, and how mixed it was, as one community member commented, 'There's all the festivals, and sports is another major one that brings people together. We start to see, there's more soccer clubs than we've ever had before I think. I think they're universal…'. During NAIDOC Week we heard stories from two local Aboriginal men about their childhood and youth, who had gone on to become important leaders in their communities, who had been mentored by non-Aboriginal people through sport, in one case basketball, and in the other golf. When one of the men was a boy, he had been fostered out for a period and then returned to his mother and sisters in Shepparton as a teenager. He was tall, and when walking one day in the housing commission area where he lived, he was approached by a 'white man' who asked him whether he played basketball. The man, it turned out, ran the basketball stadium. For the rest of his youth he was 'shooting hoops' whenever he could, and the stadium manager allowed him and his friends to stay on long after closing. The story told about involvement in golf was indicative also of the way that sport had changed over time, and become more inclusive. As the Aboriginal elder, who was now in his 60s, explained, when he was a kid Aboriginal people were not even allowed on the local golf course, but he used to climb the fence in the evenings to practice, using a tree branch to knock balls around. He was chased off the course several times. He was later given a set of golf clubs by a 'white truck driver' who lived next door, who had seen him on the golf course, and who went on to help nurture his golfing talent. They were still friends. He had enjoyed a long involvement in golf, and was a respected member of the local golf club.

Rumbalara Football and Netball Club in Shepparton has established itself as a well-respected and prominent sports club in the Shepparton area. This is important for the Aboriginal community, but also helps Aboriginal

people connect with the broader community. One of our non-Indigenous interviewees told us that since the club was formed about eighteen years ago, there have been almost no Aboriginal youth suicides in the area. Several people mentioned the Unity Cup as an important event held each year between 'Rumba' and another local Aussie Rules club, Congupna.

The Shepparton English Language Centre has its own soccer club of mixed players, mainly from refugee backgrounds, 'a new arrivals team' as we were told, called SELC United. This club, well known in the area, provides an important avenue for refugee youth to engage with the broader Shepparton community, for example playing against other schools.

2.5.12 Schools, including English Language Centres

When asked, 'Where do people from different cultural backgrounds mix?', schools were another place that community members in Shepparton and Mildura often cited. Some of the primary and secondary schools have high numbers of CALD students, while others have less, depending on the area of town. We interviewed principals from two secondary colleges and two primary schools, one of each in each city, at schools with high representations of students from CALD (including asylum seeker and refugee) and Indigenous backgrounds. These schools also had high proportions of students from low socio-economic families. We also visited and conducted interviews at the English Language Centres in both cities, which are affiliated with local schools and situated on their campuses. The English Language Centres work with refugee and migrant children from numerous cultural backgrounds, e.g. Afghani, Iraqi, and Congolese. The children participate in learning and social activities focused on English language acquisition. Some schools in Shepparton and Mildura are strong drivers for social cohesion in the community. Though they are not without challenges, these educational institutions are one of the most significant places where people from differing cultural backgrounds are able to interact on a daily basis.

These schools appear to be exceptionally socially cohesive environments. The principals at each of the schools spoke about increasingly diverse student bodies, particularly in the last five to ten years with the contemporary waves of migrants and refugees. The principals all suggested an atmosphere of reciprocal acceptance and friendship amongst students from differing backgrounds. One principal suggested the school environment is more cohesive than one would find in the rest of the city:

> It's really interesting because it's very cohesive here. The kids will say, off the bat, like in the student paper, or even speaking to parents, 'We're a big family, and we value each other.' Our values are respect, environment, and learning. That respect thing, we really work hard on that. Our kids do respect each other.

We don't have ... every school has, unfortunately, some form of bullying, but if we have any bullying, it's not about race, which is really interesting.

Typical school interpersonal problems are less likely to centre on cultural difference. There is an apparent widespread sense of belonging and identification within the school, as a multicultural place, that makes the students feel they are a part of a diverse community.

Another principal told a story of a recent student encounter:

We really accept Middle Eastern students, and initially there were some comments about the fact they wear head scarves, but that might be one or two comments. In fact the other day, we had a new boy, he is only in year seven, and he made a really awful comment to one of our other students. He was overheard by a couple of the teachers and the other year seven students around him and the other students said 'We don't talk like that at our school'. Our staff were really happy, so that the students did that rather than the teachers stepping in to do it.

This social cohesiveness is largely due to the efforts and impacts of many of the schools' administration, teachers, programs, and community collaborations. The principals at these schools described proactive measures taken to foster social cohesion through the cultivation of cross-cultural understanding and appreciation. With a high proportion of students from Muslim backgrounds, the schools are conscious, for example, of Ramadan fasting periods and celebrations, and respect and support the religious ceremonial practices, as well as dietary requirements, of the students. Part of the success of supporting the diverse student body are staff appointed as Indigenous and multicultural aids, or multicultural education assistants. These staff come from the diverse communities, such as Indigenous, Afghani, Iraqi, or Burundi. They work with students as well as train and educate other staff in cultural competency as professional development. They are able to train staff in some of the challenges the students may face and in how to best support them.

The schools run regular cultural celebration programs, where student leaders are encouraged and supported in organising displays, dances, or demonstrations, to offer other students a glimpse of their culture. For example, at a Mildura secondary college:

And then we have a music program too which just goes across all that. All the kids learned Polynesian dances, and they choreographed their own and we had a Polynesian fire night.

VMC Visit to Chaffey Secondary College, Mildura, December 2014
Photo supplied by VMC

It was just brilliant. They put on a display about their culture. It was fantastic. And that just built that pride in those kids too. They've got pride in their culture.

There are educational and awareness programs focused on Koori culture, which have had a particularly influential impact on all the students, including the Indigenous students. One principal suggested that fostering stronger student cultural identity builds stronger students:

It's so important, the kids who have their strong cultural identity have fewer issues to deal with across the school, and have far more self-confidence, and so much more resilience. In our school, three of our four school captains this year are Koori. They've got confidence, and they will stand up and talk, which, we've never had that before. It's also I see these students being really good role models for the younger students. For so long they hadn't had those expectations put on them. We had twelve students who graduated from year twelve at our senior campus last year, which is the first time. That was a huge celebration in this town.

One of the main challenges faced by some CALD community members is English as an additional language. The English Language Centres, based out of school campuses in both Shepparton and Mildura, allow new arrivals to attend the centre full-time, instead of the school, or to come there for special lessons. The centres also conduct outreach services at other schools. Students are able to improve their English, and to learn about Australian culture and nature, in anticipation of enrolling at the main school when they are ready. Notably, like other key agencies and organisations, the English Language Centres provide opportunities for new arrivals to Shepparton and Mildura to meet other community members like themselves as well as expand their social network through the community members who volunteer there. There are a myriad of small daily settlement needs that the staff and friends at the English Language Centres end up providing, the type of incidentals of life that require the support of the people around them. These programs are essential to the settlement of new arrivals, and consequently very important to social cohesion because, through mutual participation, the daily activities build trust and belonging for new members of the community.

While these schools have managed to foster social cohesion, they are not without challenges, including issues involving schooling in the wider communities of Shepparton and Mildura. One such issue is what is colloquially referred to by some residents of Shepparton and Mildura as 'white flight'. All four principals, and numerous other community members, explained that there are two aspects to this. The perception is that as the schools have diversified culturally, the Anglo-Celtic communities transfer their children to other schools. A second factor appears to be the fact that the most diverse schools also have significantly higher proportions of low socio-economic students. A principal at Shepparton explained the phenomenon:

Our numbers had really grown, and then it's about that time the Iraqis started to come, and the middle class people stopped enrolling at our school, and they went to another school. Also, it's interesting that a lot of the

teachers actually left and went to another school as well. It was really ... The whole clientele of that school changed. A lot of the middle class kids didn't come, and around that area, a lot of rental areas, so the whole socio-economic dynamic changed, alongside the multicultural changes. With our schools, once the Middle Eastern people moved in here, our school dropped by nearly 200 students, and the other school outside of town grew by about the same number. They have to drive the kids ... There's buses now too, but it's just ridiculous. I used to get really cross about it, because we had fantastic programs that I knew they didn't have in those schools. We had that diversity. We had 65 Koori kids out of 400. We had a really diverse group, and I just thought, 'You're crazy to send your kids away from that. Let them learn how to mix, and what different people are about'.

This issue of 'white flight' appears to be largely enabled by loose school zoning regulations. Parents are not bound by zoning rules in where they send their children to school in either Shepparton or Mildura. Another interviewee at

Afghani boys from Shepparton English Language Centre, dancing at St. Georges Road Food Festival, Shepparton, 2015
Photographer: Liz Arcus

a key community agency suggested this phenomenon is at least as much about socio-economic discrimination as it is cultural, if not more so. He referred to another colloquial term 'economic escapees', suggesting that other schools are selected due to a pattern of having more resources and then attracting higher socio-economic families, which further increases the school's resources. He told us:

> It's been linked to they don't want to go to school with the new arrivals. I think that's rubbish, I think it's still the same old economic reason. But there's an opportunity that they think they can provide a better education for their kids. Also some of the new arrivals are now starting to do the same. I know a number of ... here's one example of a Sudanese woman I know that came on a woman at risk visa with a four year old. The four year old started at a camp in Egypt. She came to Australia, I reckon she's worked five jobs at times. She started her child at -----------, reckoned they spent only ten minutes time on music and dancing there. So she sent her out to the ---------- school where the kid topped the school in grade four. The girl is now in year seven at the ------------- school. Alone there's probably a dozen or fifteen kids out there from refugee backgrounds. It's not cheap, they're probably paying fifteen to twenty grand a year in fees to send their kids to school. She's now, she's gone twelve. This kid's role in life she's going to be a doctor. Mum's decreed at age four this kid's going to be a doctor. The kid's old beyond her years, either way she really hasn't been allowed to be a kid.

The parents choosing to send their children to other schools are presumably thinking their children will get a better education elsewhere. One of the principals admitted that, as much they have been successfully socially cohesive, they want to improve their overall academic record. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds will, on the whole, not perform to the same levels as their more privileged peers who have access to greater social, cultural, and economic capital. The principals suggested that keeping a greater mix of children from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds will benefit all children and families by bringing the cultural diversity as well as resources for improving social cohesion and academic capabilities.

There are schools in Shepparton and Mildura that have fewer resources, and these places have a difficult time attracting middle and higher socio-economic families. This is, of course, a phenomenon recognisable to many if not most cities and towns in Australia. It is remarkable the degree of success the four schools have had in being socially cohesive multicultural institutions, given the socio-economic challenges. These schools do have innovative programs and make much effort toward supporting their lower socio-economic background students with the funding that they do have. One principal estimated that 20 percent of their students' families pay the expected, while the rest simply cannot afford the additional expense. Schools are one of the primary places where significant and positive intercultural interaction is taking place. These diverse schools in Shepparton and Mildura demonstrate the great potential all schools have for being proactive drivers of multicultural social cohesion. However, it is strongly suggested that the most diverse schools, where very positive things are happening for social cohesion, are being abandoned by more established communities and those with the means. Other schools have the opportunity to seek out ways to also more proactively encourage multicultural diversity and cohesion. It is also important to note

that the schools that act as significant drivers of social cohesion are doing so with their limited funding while also managing the consequences of profound socio-economic disadvantage. A greater investment in these schools, and others like them, will likely further encourage social cohesion in cities like Shepparton and Mildura.

2.5.13 University and TAFE

The Universities (La Trobe University in both cities, and also the University of Melbourne in Shepparton) and TAFE campuses in Shepparton (GOTAFE) and Mildura (SuniTAFE) provide education and training opportunities that continue to be very important to the needs of individual students and the greater community. Their efforts are a factor in the success of these cities in developing their workforces to targeted needs, in particular in education, health, social welfare, business and trades fields. We spoke with the heads of campus for La Trobe in Shepparton and Mildura. Both told us of the gradually increasing diversity of their students, including a significant number from newer groups of migrants. The students take advantage of the campuses for study and socialising, including those from non-Anglo backgrounds. The Shepparton La Trobe University campus in particular seeks to celebrate its diversity through hosting multicultural events, as well as Aboriginal events such as NAIDOC Week. The campuses have strong academic and language support for students with English as an additional language. Community members in key agencies in Mildura told us about the success of the university in Mildura for developing teachers and social workers, many of whom now fulfil these roles in the community. However, there was also discussion from some interviewees that more investment needs to be made in these campuses by La Trobe University, to increase study/degree options and improve facilities. The TAFEs also provide an important function to the community, hosting a number of programs for new arrivals, including English language training, social classes, and community events.

The TAFEs and universities are also highly significant for retaining CALD migrants. The heads of La Trobe University campuses, people in key agencies, and also people from CALD backgrounds spoke of the need to further develop and expand these facilities. People from CALD backgrounds who were especially attracted to living in rural areas for the work, the lifestyle and for the size of the community, might nevertheless find that they have to move to the bigger cities as their children finish school and start looking for higher education and tertiary training. People from refugee and other CALD backgrounds do not generally want their children living away from them in the major cities, so if the education is not available locally, then there is a strong chance that the parents will also move to the cities to provide homes for their children. Several interviewees in Shepparton and Mildura stressed the importance of local university campuses and TAFEs for retaining CALD migrants. As one parent from a Sudanese background in Shepparton told us:

> One of the things that really makes us worried is education… Because of the culture we have long period of supervision. In our culture if you don't get married you cannot leave the family. You are still under the supervision of your parents. When kids go to Melbourne for uni they never come back. That's why most of the family moved from here to Melbourne in order to find education for the children.

The local universities and TAFEs have the potential to play a significant role in further economic development of these cities and regions. There is opportunity and need for further expansion of the availability of study options. The availability of more study options will benefit the whole community, including the CALD and Aboriginal communities, some of whom prefer to stay in the local area for higher education. Expanding and targeting study options would build local skills, and could also suit the needs of the horticultural and agricultural based economies of Shepparton and Mildura. Local youth coming out of school may find there are not appropriate study options for them, and/or that they do not know about what options are available. An example from Shepparton and Mildura, cited by several interviewees, is in study of agricultural technologies that keep pace with the changing industry practices in the area. Numerous interviewees at key agencies said that there is a need for further investment and development in their available study programs. Such an effort toward building the higher education capacities in these cities has the potential to spur growth in research, economic development, and individual opportunities for local training and employment.

2.6 The fostering of local community leadership capacity across diverse communities

Local leadership is a crucial element of social cohesion, and both Shepparton and Mildura have shown strong commitment to nurturing leadership, including among young people and representatives of newer immigrant communities. We were especially struck by this phenomenon in Shepparton. The philanthropic organisation the Fairley Foundation has run a very successful leadership program over more than fifteen years, that has thus far produced approximately 500 graduates. We interviewed people who had led or worked as facilitators in the program and several people who had graduated from the program, and a person who was currently completing the program. Prominent leaders and workers at the ECSD had recently graduated from the program. One former graduate who we spoke to had then run another leadership program organised through ECSD that involved mentoring and orienting young people from diverse backgrounds about the possibilities for participating and succeeding in Australian life. A former Chair of the Fairley Leadership program commented on its purpose and role in the community, including the nurturing of Indigenous and CALD leaders:

> It has always had as its goal to try and get more Indigenous and multi-cultural people into the program, but it's been a real challenge to do that particularly in later years with the Indigenous group. Even though it may not have got in a lot of people from those backgrounds, given that it's been going for fifteen or sixteen years, there was someone in every year. That means fifteen or sixteen Indigenous and multi-cultural community people have done it, and they are often the leaders in their communities now. It would be difficult to find a board or organisation in this whole community that didn't have at least one, if not several Fairley Leadership fellows on it. It was very successful in that, and promoting that regional leadership role, and for people to network. And the strength of that networking is immense.

Yet another example is the 'Building a New Generation Youth Leadership' program also in Shepparton, that has run since 2012, led by local Congolese leader and president of the Goulburn Valley Communities Congolese Association, Mr Rashidi Sumaili and Ms Jennifer Hippisley, CEO of Goulburn Murray Local Learning Employment Network. This was an initiative of Shepparton's African communities leaders, but included young people from a variety of diverse backgrounds, including 'Australians' and local Indigenous youth (see Watts 2015). A CEO of one of Shepparton's welfare agencies believed that this had been one of the more impressive local initiatives that he had experienced. It had as one of its aims getting disadvantaged kids, especially from culturally diverse and refugee backgrounds, into employment, but its positive role was much broader:

> … the kids are great, and they're just so enthusiastic. They're still asking those questions, having fun and they're not hard bitten cynics like we are. It's really, it's great to see something like that that just says, go out and have ideas and we'll basically fund you for six months to get together and talk about that sort of stuff….it's just such a lovely thing for them to do and to feed off each other (for longer explanation, see Appendix 4).

Mildura has the Northern Mallee Leadership program (see http://www.nml.org.au/), and organisations like MDAS also have their own Indigenous leadership programs, such as the Koori Youth Emerging Leaders Program, in which they partner with the Department of Justice and Regulation (key informant, MDAS). Several people we interviewed in Mildura mentioned the 'impressive' young Aboriginal leaders that were emerging in Mildura, who were often described as providing a great deal of hope that the experience of Mildura's Indigenous communities is improving and will improve in the future, especially through the confidence and willingness of such leaders to reach out to and engage with mainstream Mildura. In April 2015 MDAS established a Koori Youth Leadership Academy aimed at mentoring Aboriginal secondary school students in personal, social and leadership skills.

We also heard stories of important mentoring roles played by individuals in organisations such as local council, but also individuals who took it upon themselves to positively mentor newcomers to Mildura and Shepparton. We interviewed a young man in Mildura from a Congolese refugee background who had been mentored by someone at Council, and he described several ways that she introduced him into mainstream Mildura circles, including working for local council on youth holiday and other programs, and even running local bingo nights.
The important opening into mainstream Mildura that such mentoring provided him with is apparent in his comments about his friends' surprise at what he was doing:

> When I started working at City Council ... sorry excuse me, all my friends like they were shocked, they were like, 'How did you get that City Council? Not McDonalds, not KFC, not in Woollies packing stuff, but at City Council, how did you do that?'

He had become an important youth leader who had won a state award for volunteering.

2.7 The role of festivals and other community events in fostering a sense of social cohesion

Events celebrating multiculturalism and diversity of cultures are sometimes criticised by researchers and other commentators for the tokenistic display of cultural traditions, or because they are seen as discrete, one off events. Our research suggests a far more positive view of these community events. Such events are popular occasions for people to share culture, in particular food, and provide opportunities for recent and older immigrant groups, and also local Indigenous communities, to publicly express their presence in Shepparton and Mildura. They also provide opportunities for enjoyable, safe engagement with the cultures and traditions of people who may otherwise seem very unfamiliar. People have opportunities to share culture through such communally organised events. Improving people's awareness of and understanding of diversity and difference present in their own local communities is a major driver of all dimensions of social cohesion (Dandy and Pe-Pua 2013, p. vii). Community events, including events that are not specifically organised

St. Georges Road Food Festival, Shepparton, 2015
Photographer: Liz Arcus

as 'multicultural events' but which provide opportunities for everyday social interactions for people from different cultural backgrounds, for example organised around food or music, play an important role in encouraging people to interact with different others.

The local councils have played important roles in helping organise such events, but it is also striking that individuals and communities themselves play important roles in the organising and design of these celebrations. For example, many people who we spoke to in Shepparton spoke of the 'wonderful' St. Georges Road Food Festival that was first held in May 2014 near a strip of shops that mixes Middle Eastern and Sikh supermarkets, a barber, cafes and one of Shepparton's most diverse schools, St. Georges Road Primary. Shepparton's Cultural Development Officer explained how it came about, as a collaboration between Council and locals from the area, and emphasised the extensive local community input:

> St. Georges Road Food Festival was driven by the people down at St. Georges Road. They're proud of their little precinct. They want to celebrate it with the rest of the town…. The ideas that they come up with are quite amazing, to sit down in a community meeting where people are so open with ideas… (see longer description, Appendix 4).

Emerge at Twilight Festival, Shepparton, 2015
Photographer: Liz Arcus

We attended the 2015 St. Georges Road Food Festival and observed as over 2000 people from many cultural backgrounds shared their food, music, and good will. The event featured food stalls from numerous countries and cultures, for example, Indian, Italian, Malaysian, Sudanese, Indigenous Australian, Turkish, and Afghani. The food was the main event and it drew a crowd that represented a cross section of the whole community, including ages, cultural backgrounds, and socio-economic backgrounds. The atmosphere was one of relaxed celebration, with people from all backgrounds having the opportunity to bond with others over hot food made in Shepparton but with global origins. The activities were clearly designed to encourage intercultural bonding. At one stall, men from the Sikh community tied turbans onto the heads of willing festival goers. Throughout the day, the number of turban wearers increased until there were colourful turbans dotted throughout the crowd, including an Anglo family, a man who stood next to his wife and teenage daughter, all three wearing brightly coloured turbans and watching fixedly as a Congolese church choir sang together on the stage. A group of Afghani girls painted henna ink designs on the hands and wrists of girls from all backgrounds. These girls could be seen showing their henna tattoos proudly to their friends and parents. There were musical and dance performances throughout the day that kept a large audience of spectators. The MC for the event was a young leader from one of the CALD communities. Toward the end of the event he presented Australia Day Awards to the local St. Georges Road shop keepers in recognition of their work in helping put the festival together.

Greater Shepparton City Council has produced a Calendar of culturally important events that lists festivals but also significant days of celebration and remembrance for Shepparton's diverse communities.

When we asked an organiser of Mildura's multicultural festival whether he felt that it engaged the broader Mildura community, he felt that it did, but also that this was not the main thing that he was worried about; he also saw these events as opportunities for people from Mildura's CALD communities to celebrate and express who they were:

> This came up in a discussion I had with someone, the importance of these events, it's not about someone coming in and consuming it. I said 'Do you realise how much joy it brings to people who are out of their own country to be doing things that they would do back home? Singing their traditional songs?'

A Shepparton church leader stressed the importance of the sharing of food, citing the example of Shepparton's 'Emerge At Twilight' multicultural festival (with about 5000-7000 attendees in 2015, according to police estimates, Shepparton Police focus group), in which members from his congregation had actively participated:

> Most of the cultural celebrations revolve around food and I think when people come and try their food, I don't think we westerners realise how significant that is…. Just whether you pay or not is irrelevant. The fact that you'll try it, it communicates that you feel comfortable with these people.

He also felt that local council had played a great role in bringing people together at such events: 'It really said "okay you guys are here to stay and you're part of things and we're going to invest in you"' (see full quote, Appendix 4).

We attended the SMECC Open Day at the new buildings and grounds, an old decommissioned primary school on 12th Street. We were struck not only by the number of people from recent immigrant backgrounds attending, but also the large numbers of apparently established locals (from diverse backgrounds) who attended – about half the crowd of several thousand, including many families with children. The sharing of food was a key feature of the day, with long queues snaking away from the many stalls arranged side by side in the new shed, built with funding from OMAC. A worker from SMECC commented that one of the really great things about cooking and serving food in the shed was that it got people from different cultures side by side and interacting with each other as they cooked and served; this would 'build links between communities'. The performances on stage captured some of the diversity of cultures, new and old in Mildura: Greek community dancers, a traditional Irish band, an Afghani instrumentalist performing for the first time, a mixed group of apparently Anglo men and women from a ukulele band, a Calabrian band of two men playing piano accordions, a reggae band from the Solomon Islands, the president of the local Fijian community singing a Fijian farewell song, backed by the Solomon Islands band. The mood of the crowd was buoyant. There was lots of mixing across ethnic and racial lines. At one popular stall we watched young Afghani girls drawing intricate henna tattoos on other girls from various backgrounds, including Anglos and Pacific Islanders. The day ended with a young Congolese dance and drumming group that got the crowd up on their feet and dancing.

More mainstream, community wide events are also very important occasions that can both reflect the cultural diversity of a place, while also celebrating it. The Anzac Day events in Shepparton that we attended in 2015 are a good example. People from many different cultural backgrounds lined the streets to watch the Anzac march along Wyndham Street to Memorial Park. The marchers themselves were diverse, with groups of Greek and Sikh representatives. The Sikh group was about twenty adults, youth and children, marching beneath placards

Afghan Henna Tattooing Stall, SMECC Open Day, Mildura, 2015
Photo supplied by SMECC

with statements like 'Sikhs and Anzacs'. The crowd at Memorial Park was more ethnically mixed than that observed earlier at the Dawn service. There were Afghani men, people from African backgrounds, Muslim women wearing headscarves. During the speeches Greek, Sikh and Indigenous soldiers were singled out for special mention. The wreath laying ceremony involved the calling out of names of groups and individuals as they came forward with their wreaths. Among the armed services groups, schools, service clubs, emergency services and other agencies called out were noticeable examples of representatives of older and newer immigrant groups such as the GV Afghan Association, Shepparton Sikhs, the Australian Greek Ex-Servicemen's Association, the Greek Community, Shepparton English Language

Centre, and Sirius College (originally a Turkish college, now a non-denominational school but with a significant Muslim cohort of students). Local Sikhs donated food for over 400 people at the Anzac Day breakfast.

Significantly, all of these events were organised in public spaces that are easily accessible to the wider community. The topic of cultural festivals came up with a welfare agency employee we interviewed, and she emphasised the value of events that are inviting to the whole community:

> Things that are more public, things like food, when there's events and things on that are more of a public way of educating people rather than an invitation to things or you need to already be in this group to know about it. I think Shepparton does some of those things really well, and to have really good spaces to be able to do that, we have the lake, the area down there where it's not exclusive (see longer quote in Appendix 4).

Festivals that celebrate a diversity of cultures and cultural practices, the diversity representative of the community, are important drivers of social cohesion. They signal to the entire community, 'here is what this community values'. In this way, they hold great symbolic significance in addition to the practical and ongoing need for opportunities for people from different backgrounds to interact and bond over a celebration of difference. Such events are important for informing and involving the wider community, and they are particularly important to the members of different communities who relish the opportunity to practice, affirm, and celebrate their own cultural roots.

2.8 The role of the core of interconnected community members/activists in the towns

The fabric of everyday life in Shepparton and Mildura includes community members who actively engage in multicultural contexts, interacting with and assisting people across cultural differences. These are community members who care, and their attitudes and actions go a long way toward countering any racist attitudes community members may otherwise experience. We tended to see and talk with these people several times in different contexts because they were attending community events, outreaches, fundraisers, etc. This is a notable success factor for two interesting reasons: 1. the unquantifiable but very apparent impact of these peoples' attitudes and everyday actions, and 2. the probably underestimated importance of these people in the continual process of making Shepparton and Mildura socially cohesive communities. As one community member in Shepparton said when we asked her what helps make Shepparton a socially cohesive place: 'It's quite an effective group of people that keep that sense of community going here and I think that's why we are as different and as capable of doing that as we are.' She said that included in the group was 'a driving force of old Australians'. She was herself one of those 'old Australians', now in her mid-70s with a lifetime of community work behind her, a well-known community activist and volunteer still involved in many groups and organisations (see full quote, Appendix 4).

Many of these community members know each other, and some are employed at key agencies while others are not but have become involved in befriending and/or assisting those in the community who may be different to them. It is also notable that these sorts of people often spoke about their involvement in the community with an attitude suggesting this was simply the 'natural' thing to do, that there is nothing extra-ordinary about their actions. This humility downplays the importance of what we see as the vital role these interconnected community members play in shoring up the overall social cohesion of the community. The following are a few abbreviated (of the many) exemplary stories of such everyday, multicultural inclusion:

- An employee of a key agency in Mildura would visit disadvantaged and isolated women at their homes as a part of her job, bringing them food, support, and companionship. When her job description changed and the agency no longer provided this service, she continued to visit the women in their homes, considering them friends, and taking personal responsibility for their care. This same woman noticed that there were Afghani community members spending time at the park near her house, and they appeared to be lonely. She makes a point of introducing herself to such people in her neighbourhood, hoping she can make them feel welcome and included.

- A volunteer at the Shepparton English Language Centre had heard stories that newer arrivals, particularly from countries like Afghanistan, were not able to swim and that there had been a couple of cases of children drowning in the Goulburn Valley. She started making efforts to organise for boys from the Afghan community in Shepparton to have swimming lessons. For the girls it was a bit more of a challenge because some of the parents were reluctant, as well as the fact that Muslim tradition necessitates women be fully clothed in public. They held a long meeting with the parents and conveyed the value of teaching all children to swim in Australia, for safety and for fun. Another volunteer at the Shepparton English Language Centre stepped up and offered his home swimming pool for the swimming instructors and the Muslim girls to use for their swimming lessons, otherwise they would have had to arrange to hire out the entire municipal pool. This volunteer leaves his house for the better part of a week each year now, allowing the girls a week of swimming lesson enjoyment and involvement. In an interview with a reporter, this community volunteer stated, 'It wasn't because I am a bleeding heart do-gooder – I am not that sort of person. I wouldn't do it for everybody, but these people have so much potential and appreciate everything' (theage.com.au, http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/a-cover-story-thats-making-a-splash-among-muslim-girls-20110117-19u1l.html). We have spoken to this community member informally, when he told us this story. He also described the wonderful experiences he had of being invited into the homes of Afghanis when he was following up on children's school welfare and progress.

- This sort of intercultural engagement comes from more established community members, but it also comes from those who are new to the community. A staff member at a key organisation (part of a recently arrived group of migrants) took the initiative to knock on his new next door neighbour's front door and introduce himself. The Anglo neighbour, who otherwise kept to himself and seemed reluctant to acknowledge his new arrival neighbour, was taken by surprise. The staff member spoke with him and said 'It's nice to meet you, and I hope you don't mind, because you're going to be seeing a lot of me'. Over the months and years of living next door, they became very close friends as the staff member invited his neighbour over for dinners with his

family and to other events. They are now so close that, though the staff member wants to move houses to a 'nicer part of town', he will not move because he does not want to lose close, daily contact with his good family friend.

These are only a few of the numerous stories we heard about the everyday interactions that key community members have within their multicultural cities. This success factor is, of course, difficult to quantify and to replicate. Nonetheless, it has become clear through our research that the strength of the social fabric in a multicultural regional city is largely reliant on people who take it upon themselves to foster social cohesion through acts of kindness, generosity with their time and resources, and care for their fellow community members.

3 Current and Emerging Issues that Threaten/Affect Social Cohesion

While we have been painting a portrait of considerable success in achieving social cohesion in the multicultural contexts of Shepparton and Mildura, it would be remiss to ignore the continuing and emerging problems that attend these local communities, some of which, as we explain, the local communities themselves have little control over. Indeed, many of the people we have spoken with, while proud of their communities, have also stressed the existence of these issues and problems. This chapter addresses our second research aim:

> To identify the key points of stress in Shepparton's and Mildura's communities: Where and what are the problems? Are there groups of people in particular difficulty? Are there current, emerging or foreseeable tensions between different people in Shepparton and Mildura? And what might be done about them?

Where we are able to do so, we will address 'what might be done' about the issues and problems that we raise in this chapter. But we will also indicate the kinds of things that Shepparton's and Mildura's agencies and individuals are already doing in their attempts to deal with these problems and issues. And we also return to some of these issues and problems in Chapter 4, where we elaborate on lessons and our recommendations.

3.1 Problems with employment and housing

Employment and housing are key elements for people in integrating successfully into these regional cities; and also key to settlement of recent immigrants, including refugees.

3.1.1 Employment issues

Employment opportunities are central to the multicultural social cohesion of Shepparton and Mildura. As we showed in Chapter 2, they are part of the attraction to Shepparton and Mildura for people from CALD, including refugee and asylum seeker, backgrounds in search of relatively unskilled work in agricultural and horticultural industries.

However, there are key issues in employment that simultaneously pose barriers to social cohesion. In this section we outline some of the main issues that emerged in the interviews, focus groups and informal discussions, and which offer differing perspectives on employment from members of the community in different socio-economic situations.

Employment – economic development

Challenges for these cities include issues of employment linked with a need for economic development. Interviewees discussed changes and decline in the horticultural and agricultural industries, including the well-known fact that the development of new technologies and machinery had meant job losses – though, there was still plenty of hard, unskilled, casual seasonal work, like fruit picking. The sense that one could buy a block of land, farm it, and build financial security for one's family has changed somewhat in the past generation. Due to rises in farm and land prices and other changes in the horticultural, agricultural and related industries, it is no longer a given that this economic trajectory is available to everyone who pursues it. This view was stressed to us by several people, that it is harder now for new arrivals to build a life. A community member, and member of a local service club in Mildura, suggested that when he moved to Mildura some forty years ago, the 'Australian dream' was more available to him than it is to new migrants now. Former Greek immigrants at a Greek Senior Citizens club in Mildura made similar comments. The consensus from interviewees in both cities was that there is need for economic development to address these issues.

Shepparton was cited as having too many empty store fronts downtown:

> It feels like a disadvantaged community. You only have to walk down the main street and see how many shops are closed. If you go back down that same street a month or two later, there will be probably just as many shops closed, but some that were open last time will have closed, and others will have opened. It's cyclical (CEO of welfare agency).

A prominent local café owner, who also ran a soup kitchen for Shepparton's disadvantaged, including the homeless, and who had migrated to Shepparton in the early 90s, felt that the local economy had been flat for years. He felt that the large influx of less than well off immigrants also affected the spending capacity of Shepparton's community, which affected hospitality and retail. He had not been able to raise his prices to keep up with inflation for years. A local councillor felt that the declining employment opportunities at the SPC Ardmona Cannery, and the declining general economic influence of that company, had contributed to the further entrenching of poverty and disadvantage in some pockets of Shepparton.

Loss of skilled labour

Both cities face the issue of losing the highly skilled segments of their workforce because of a lack of suitable jobs. There is a lack of professional opportunities to keep those with skills/credentials in town. We interviewed a woman

in a professional job who said that, despite the fact she loves Mildura, she is moving her family to a capital city because she has progressed through promotions as high as she will be able to in Mildura and she is relatively early in her career. Several others mentioned moving once their children got older, as there were not enough opportunities for them for education and work. An Indigenous educational professional in Shepparton reflected on the lack of suitable jobs for Indigenous people once they got degrees, that might mean moving away from Shepparton and family to the city, which was undesirable for most Aboriginal people. He saw the need for young educated people to move away as a more general structural issue tied to limitations of the local economy:

> The labour market here in Shepp is quite small. If you got a degree here, it probably wouldn't get used as well as what it could in a capital….We lose community fabric in some sense…It's a tender balance. We want higher educated individuals, but what are the opportunities locally in their community for them? No use walking around with degrees if you're only working in mediocre jobs and that sort of thing. There needs to be a market in terms of labour as well to match their skills and their qualifications.

This also affects more highly skilled people from CALD, including refugee backgrounds. We spoke to several people from such backgrounds with professional qualifications, including Masters and other higher degrees, who could not find work in their field. They could find volunteer work, and did important community work, but there was little funding to support these activities, and such work did not translate into jobs.

Unemployment

Another related issue in Shepparton and Mildura are the high levels of long-term and intergenerational unemployment, youth unemployment, and jobless families (Mildura Rural City Council 2014b; Best Start et al 2014; Taylor-Steele 2015). Estimates vary and there is fluctuation, including seasonal fluctuation, but according to July 2015 figures from the Commonwealth's Department of Employment, while Shepparton had an overall unemployment rate of 6% (that compares well with the rest of Victoria and Australia), it had a youth unemployment rate of 17.1% (http://lmip.gov.au). Locals put the youth unemployment figure higher, at about 25% (key informant from Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project, in public presentation to Committee for Greater Shepparton breakfast meeting, 9 September 2015; see also Taylor-Steele 2015). Shepparton also has a high level of disengaged school leavers (youth not involved in work or study, aged 15-19) at 24.6% compared to 15.4% for Victoria (Best Start et al 2014, p. 31). The CEO of Mildura Development Corporation estimated that the unemployment rate for Mildura was about 6.7% in August 2015, and told us that the Chair of Northern Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network estimated Mildura's youth unemployment figure to be about 17.5 % (relayed by key informant, Mildura Development Corporation), though recent official figures put the youth unemployment rate at about 13% (http://lmip.gov.au). Mildura also has a relatively high level of disengaged school leavers, at 24.5% (2011 figures, in Mildura Rural City Council 2014b, p. 52).

Economic participation goes a long way toward buying community members a stake in the community's shared goals and values. As described in Chapter 2, this is especially important for Shepparton and Mildura where a strong work ethic, particularly for 'hard work', is so highly regarded. As one Mildura community member put it:

> I think we have a very working class community and it's very based on people who work….If someone comes to the area and they have no capacity to work then they're really not useful. If you look at, not necessarily culture but value, it's on money. I suppose the ability to be the same as other people.

Unemployment stigma

Long-term and intergenerational unemployment can tarnish the reputation of particular groups in the community. In particular, we heard accounts of Aboriginal Australians and some refugee groups as 'dole bludgers'. These accounts were mostly second hand, coming from our interviewees as things they have heard others in the community say. We interviewed one community member in Mildura who held the view that newer migrants (particularly from African and Middle Eastern countries) were happily receiving welfare payments and not working due to laziness. This person also held the view that there are not enough employment opportunities for everyone, saying 'Why is the government bringing people here when there aren't enough jobs to go around?' Staff at agencies often raised this perception with us, suggesting that such a view is held by many in the community and needs to be dispelled as misinformation – that new arrivals will work when allowed, but many are on visas which do not allow them to work, or language barriers and lack of recognition of their skills prevents them from getting jobs. It was apparent that divisive views about the employment (or lack thereof) of 'others' in the community was a barrier to social cohesion.

Employment for the CALD communities in Shepparton and Mildura is particularly fraught. As one informant from an agency that worked with refugees and asylum seekers in Shepparton told us:

> Well, the key issue is if there were more jobs available then people would have more opportunities to get into the work force and once you're in the work force, it breaks down those barriers. I think there's not enough opportunities for people to get in. They kind of remain on the fringes if you like.

Employment – discrimination

Key agency representatives in both cities told us about employment discrimination. This came through particularly strongly through conversations with CALD community members who had experienced this discrimination themselves. We were told that people are likely to cite low English language skills as a reason for not hiring an otherwise capable and qualified person for a job, but that cultural differences (especially for those who are Muslim) are an additional, or the real, underlying reason. A young Afghani woman in Mildura told us the story of her attempt to apply for a job at a large retail store, but how she experienced discrimination based on the 'scarf' that she wore and her Muslim appearance. She had used an Anglo 'nickname' 'Jasmine' on her CV, along with her real name,

but the employers were surprised when a Muslim woman stood up when they called the name 'Jasmine'. Her job interview involved two trivial questions, and she was never called back about the job (see full quote and story, Appendix 4).

While discrimination is an issue, many suggest that it is also true that CALD communities need to develop their language skills. Of course, one of the best ways for them to do so is to be able to practice English in a work context. So, employers could be more open to CALD communities, and there need to be more opportunities to develop English language skills.

There is an issue with CALD communities being taken advantage of by labour contractors, sometimes by people from their own community. There is also the issue of people on visas who do not have work rights, and are thereby not able to participate in employment, or even volunteer. Some of these, who work illegally, are also easily abused and exploited by unscrupulous labour contractors and employers. Additionally, as referred to above, there are numerous highly skilled professionals – including doctors, engineers, teachers, and scientists from CALD backgrounds – who are unable to work in their skill area. These community members are a very valuable, untapped resource because of the lack of local, adequate processes for assessing their skills and 'topping up' their credentials to be applicable to the Australian workforce. Finally, there were several mentions, from community members and local council staff, that the local councils are not representative enough in their employed staff of the community as a whole. The local councils could do more to hire from both the Aboriginal communities and the newer migrant communities.

Local employment initiatives

There have been local initiatives to address employment inequalities in Shepparton and Mildura. These are a silver lining to the employment issues described above. We offer two examples, among others, as an indication of how local businesses can participate in meeting their own needs while also addressing some of the needs of the community.

We interviewed one of the owners of a successful business in Shepparton and learned about their efforts to employ members of the different CALD communities in Greater Shepparton. He told us the story of when their business took a deliberate strategy of altering the face of their workforce, to include workers from African, Indian, Afghani and other backgrounds:

> Employment levels were very low and are always lower in the summer here because of the natural seasons, and we were really struggling through our conventional methods of employment to get good people. I don't live in a flash area but I live in a nicer part of Shepparton and I ended up with African neighbours over the road. My kids went to school with African kids. It was a big and sudden change in the community that opened

my eyes, and at the same time that was happening I was going to work faced with 10 applicants, none of which were suitable or ready for work. So we literally went through a process of sitting down with our whole staff in a staff meeting and saying, 'We're going to do something different where we've got these new people in our community and we want to give them a chance. We want you to embrace them. We want you to make the effort to extend and help these people settle in our workplace. It's an experiment but everybody here is sick of working alongside of someone that's not pulling their weight and really not work ready. These people want to work. We have to be able to look past the difference and look at the similarities.' There wasn't one discussion. There was a number of discussions about that and really by the time it happened there was this real vibe of 'yeah, we're going to do this.'

He went on to explain that there were some challenges in the beginning but that they learned lessons that made the process of employing new arrivals sustainable over time. He also explained that, while he is happy to be doing something that benefits newer and diverse community members, the business benefits greatly from an able and highly motivated workforce. It makes sense for social cohesion, but it makes good business sense first.

A similar initiative was implemented by Fishers SUPER IGA in Mildura, in an effort to address Indigenous unemployment. A representative of the company told us about their work:

How it all came about originally is Fishers have a RAP–Reconciliation Action Plan. As part of that, because there's a huge Aboriginal population here in Mildura, and there's a lot of unemployment, Alan Fisher himself, who owns the 16 stores, Victoria and New South Wales, decided that it's not good enough. We need to do something. Hence, the RAP was born, and with that, all our staff went - all our managers, I should say, key business managers and general managers - went on a cultural tour. Basically, from then, we just made it our business that we support the Aboriginal community with employment and everything else that we can. We run retail pre-employment programs here from the academy targeting the Indigenous community, but we get all races (for fuller explanation of initiative, see Appendix 4).

The owner of Fishers, we were told, was going to call a meeting of all local businesses to get a commitment from them to employ at least some Aboriginal workers.

These are two examples of the types of initiatives that can mitigate the ongoing challenges faced by members of the community in securing and maintaining employment. Such efforts not only benefit these businesses but have positive outcomes for the participation and belonging of community members who face issues such as socio-economic disadvantage, racism and discrimination, and the challenges of coming from another country to integrate into a new community.

Social cohesion is an ongoing project for cities like Shepparton and Mildura. Lack of economic opportunities, unemployment, and under-employment for the CALD and Indigenous communities are three related areas that can hold the community back from achieving the social cohesion it aspires to. Larger questions of the direction these cities will take in economic development have implications for the social fabric of the community. Unemployment issues impact community members' ability to participate in the core goals and values of hard work and egalitarian aspiration. The Indigenous and CALD communities, including newly arrived migrants and refugees, have been and continue to be an important part of the life of the community in Shepparton and Mildura. But the difficulties they face in negotiating employment issues threaten to weaken their ties to the community, and the community's ability to support them. These employment issues are things that these communities appear very aware of and are keenly interested in finding solutions to.

3.1.2 Housing issues

Access to housing was an important theme in our interviews with agency managers, workers and volunteers in both Shepparton and Mildura who are aware of the difficulties of finding housing for Indigenous people, and recent immigrants particularly from refugee, asylum seeker and non-English speaking backgrounds. We have heard of the efforts of local community workers, including people from ethnic councils and other organisations, to alleviate these difficulties. We have also heard the stories of people from refugee and non-English speaking backgrounds, and Indigenous people, who have had very real difficulties in renting from real estate agents and private landlords. An Indigenous woman in Shepparton told us that it took her six months of applications before she was able to find a rental property, even though she had a well-paying job and good references. She said that someone in real estate circles told her that her well-known local Indigenous name was like a black mark against her with local real estate agents and landlords. This was a typical experience, as explained by an interviewee who worked with Indigenous people:

> I look at this environment, you've got the Shepparton property market that's hopelessly over-inflated, you've got every real estate agent out there saying 'We're looking for rental properties,' so they've got choice, and their choice generally translates to 'We will not rent our properties to blackfellas.'

Access to housing is a serious issue, as secure housing is clearly important for security and well-being for anyone. In terms of settling into and establishing oneself in a new place it is vital. It is also one of the first important experiences that people have in a new community. The seemingly inexplicable rejection of applications for rental housing is demoralising and sometimes humiliating, especially for Indigenous people and recent immigrants who sense that there is a level of distrust and discrimination involved.

One key informant from Shepparton, who was not a refugee but a skilled migrant who had had a successful professional career in Melbourne, described his early difficulties in finding a rental property for his family. One encounter involved the assumption on the part of the rental property agent that he must be on Centrelink because he looked like a refugee. 'Imagine a real refugee being treated like that. I felt bad' he told us. He is now trying 'to help these people to break the barrier and respect people for who they are, not for where they come from, or whether they're refugees or skilled migrant' (see full quote in Appendix 4).

Another Shepparton resident, from a Congolese refugee background, was eventually granted a public housing flat, but had many initial struggles with renting, that made him also suspect that discrimination from real estate agents and landlords played a part in his difficulties, even if he was not sure whether it was discrimination based on his socioeconomic status (he was on Centrelink payments at the time) or based on his racial appearance: 'It is when I found another, I think, hidden discrimination… every day you go to visit house they say your application is not successful, you don't sleep much time' (see longer quote, Appendix 4).

One community worker responsible for government funded resettlement programs for refugees in Shepparton spoke to us about the difficulties of dealing with most real estate agents in Shepparton. 'Frankly', she commented, 'many of them are racists'. With one real estate agent she could 'not even get over the threshold'. She did, however, work closely with one large real estate agency that genuinely wanted to help find properties for her clients. She had found that the best way to operate was to establish good relationships with particular real estate agencies, and with particular rental property managers, some of whom became local champions for CALD, refugee and other families and individuals that other agencies would not consider.

There is recognition on the part of recent immigrants from places including Africa and Afghanistan that there may be cultural misunderstandings and lack of local knowledge contributing to the reluctance of real estate agents, and the landlords who own the rental properties, to rent out their properties to their community members. People from CALD and refugee backgrounds spoke of the different cultural expectations around housing. A young Afghani woman in Mildura noted that real estate agents and landlords had expressed annoyance that Afghani tenants were not keeping their lawns and gardens neat, but Afghanis had been completely unaware of this expectation and cultural norm. They did not have lawns in Afghanistan or Pakistan, and the norm had been to take care of the inside of houses, that Afghans did impeccably!

These difficulties and misunderstandings had also in some cases provided opportunities for friendships to develop with neighbours, as described by a community member of Shepparton from a Congolese background. He did not realise that it was his job to mow the lawns at his rental property, and when he was finally able to purchase a lawn mower, he did not know how to use it: 'Fortunately, I have a friend, a friend my neighbour I talk to you about, who

came to help me how to set the lawn mower and to operate it for the first time.' Since then, this neighbour had become a dear friend (see full story, Appendix 4).

The approach of service and other providers to deal with housing issues is also commendably pragmatic. ECSD had run community consultations at African House and housing for CALD communities had been raised as a significant problem, so they decided to do something about it. The Manager and ECSD workers attended forums for real estate agents to discuss the issues, and also offered to take real estate agents on 'cultural bus tours' in Shepparton, to better familiarise them with people from CALD and Indigenous backgrounds. ECSD workers explained why some community members lacked documents that real estate agents typically ask for, and offered to act as Guarantors for tenants where necessary. They also requested that the rental property managers should come to talk to them if they feel that there were problems with tenants from recent immigrant communities. It was felt that through such proactive actions some progress had been made (key informant at ECSD). Workers from SMECC had also acted as mediators between landlords, real estate agents and CALD tenants when recent immigrants were seeking housing, or when problems and misunderstandings arose.

Other examples included workers from welfare agencies developing strong, ongoing personal relationships with key real estate agents, and encouraging awareness that while there were cultural differences that are relevant to the ways that people occupy houses and flats, these are not necessarily detrimental to rental properties. A religious leader from Shepparton attended mediation sessions with a disgruntled neighbour who had complained about the noise made by her African neighbours. This also revealed to him, however, that there were some people in Shepparton who seemed to be running other agendas when making such complaints: 'A lot of the things that she was raising as issues were just terribly insignificant and childish really. I couldn't help but wonder whether you would raise those same issues if your neighbour had a different colour skin' (see longer story, in Appendix 4).

3.2 Experiences of racism and discrimination in everyday life

In their study of the key drivers for social cohesion in Australia, Dandy and Pe-Pua stressed the importance of tackling racism and discrimination, which they argued 'disrupt all social cohesion dimensions' (Dandy and Pe-Pua 2013, p. vii). The Scanlon Foundation Social Cohesion reports also stress the negative impact of racism and discrimination on social cohesion (see Markus 2014a).

When speaking with people in Shepparton and Mildura, we heard mixed messages about the extent and impact of racism and discrimination, but most people we spoke to admitted that there was an issue. 'Racism and

discrimination occur, but this is a relatively small problem' - we heard expressions like this from many people in both communities, from both long-established Anglo and CALD informants, but also from some people who we would assume would have been the targets of racism and discrimination. Typical comments from people included:

> Racism here? - I've experienced it, for sure. Mainly playing footie. Oh yeah, 'you lousy...', 'Oh give it back, you so and so...,' and that would be it, sort of thing. It was more slightly racist, more than anything else, but that's about it. I didn't notice anything, there was no, not for me... (Shepparton man, Albanian background).

Others believed that racism and discrimination were much bigger issues than local people were prepared to admit. These were having very real, detrimental effects for some members of the community. A church leader in Shepparton told us that the Congolese and other Africans in the community would rarely tell others of racist experiences when you asked them directly, but with people who they had known for a long period of time, and trusted, a different picture would emerge:

> I was at this meeting and someone from the Interfaith Network was saying that Shepparton was racist, in general, over against the Indigenous community, but that there was little racism in regard to, for example, Africans. I said 'well that's just not the case'. I said 'I see it every week'. He was very surprised about that because that hasn't been his experience....Congolese, Burundian, and Sudanese. They're the main groups that I work with. By and large, they've settled well and made a home here and feel a part of the community to a point. But, there are daily struggles that are really culturally or race based. A lot of the pull on my time is to deal with stuff that just wouldn't happen if they were white.

He told us of an African family living in one of Shepparton's most disadvantaged streets who had experienced racist taunts and abuse, and damage to their house from other locals.

A worker from DHHS told of events several years ago when Iraqi men moved into one of Shepparton's most notoriously disadvantaged public housing areas, that had since been torn down:

> That's probably a bit of, can I say it, racism, or probably lack of understanding of the community members at that time. There'd be incidents of verbal abuse, or throwing things... It just felt unsafe in that environment and so they left (for longer quote, see Appendix 4).

The CEO of a welfare organisation in Shepparton also commented on this link between disadvantage and racist abuse of newcomers:

> Not entirely uncommon to hear of a new arrival family that just gets dropped in a place like that and really struggles. You hear of their kids being hassled or stuff being painted on their fences. Now, I like to think that it's not as much as can happen in some other places. It certainly doesn't seem to escalate in the way that it can do in other communities. There's some pretty confronting, hardcore racism in Shepp.

But he also had a 'pet theory' on why this racism did not escalate in a place like Shepparton:

> What interests me is that this hardcore racism doesn't find really obvious outlets in lots of violence. There's something that happens here that seems to keep that at a kind of a moderate or comfortably containable level. I think some of it's about being in a community of a scale where there are enough personal connections for people to be able to relate to the people it's happening to. Say, I know them or I know this family who knows them. You know that kind of thing? 'I don't like Iraqis, but I know those people and they're really good'. Here, I think some of the salvation is in the fact that it is a community of a size where people do have faces. They do have names. They are known. That acts as almost a pressure release so that kind of ugly side of racial division doesn't escalate to a much darker place.

One of our informants in Mildura, who had been a school teacher and now worked with youth, spoke about the difficulties of dealing with more subtle and covert forms of racism that were difficult to call out as such, but which she felt pervaded the community. An Officer at Mildura Rural City Council made similar comments about a pervasive covert racism that was having a big impact on the lives of some groups of people in Mildura. An interviewee in Shepparton, who had recently moved there to take up a CEO position, noted, when we asked him if he thought that there was much racism and discrimination in Shepparton, that there was a hidden, grassroots racism that had a huge impact on Indigenous and other people's lives. He had dark skin, and, even though he was a CEO with a long rental history, he had incredible trouble finding a rental property. His agency worked extensively with Indigenous people, and he felt that racism was a major problem in Shepparton, including among Indigenous people: 'Shepparton is like stepping back in time. It's hidden. It's all very genteel but underneath it there is a very, very strong pattern of racism, and that racism, don't get me wrong, is also prevalent in the Indigenous population.'

A Mildura community member who had been on the Reconciliation Walk had been shocked at comments shouted at Aboriginal marchers by locals standing on the sidelines:

> They've had it tough. I probably used to say yeah, they get bloody everything. It's not fair. But when you see what they're up against and they still cop racism. They still cop people saying things or spitting on them…. That's just my personal thing with the laying of the plaques [plaques recognising Aboriginal custodianship, laid by Fishers at all of their Victorian IGA stores] and the NAIDOC thing [when people complain], it was like, 'Are you people right?' They're quite vocal, these people that sit on the sidelines and yell. One of the girls got a bit upset and yelled back and the police just come around, 'Now, all right, c'mon guys. This is a peaceful march.' This was Reconciliation Walk. I had to tell this guy to be quiet and he goes, 'Well, you know, typical, bloody ...' He was saying ... I'm thinking 'oh' ... You just could smack him, but you're not allowed to. They're the sort of things that they have to front up to constantly.

She, like many others in Mildura and Shepparton, noted the 'hardcore' of racists who would 'never change'.

There has been a strong commitment in both Shepparton and Mildura to battle racism and discrimination. As documented at length in our literature review, Greater Shepparton City Council engaged in the LEAD pilot program. We heard from a council officer who had worked on LEAD, and who informed us of various initiatives that emerged from the several years of council experience, including anti-racism programs for local schools, cultural awareness training for council workers and for other community agencies and local businesses, and media campaigns against racism. The council is a key signatory partner of the Human Rights Commission's national anti-racism campaign 'Racism, It Stops With Me'. Another community member told us of a recent racist incident directed at an Aboriginal sports club in Shepparton where the council acted quickly:

> I couldn't say that I've noticed any huge discrimination, no. Not at all. No huge exhibition of racism. We had one experience just recently though where somebody put a sign up, up near the Rumbalara, netball, football courts, street sign. I didn't see it. I don't know what was on it but it was very inflammatory and Shepparton City Council were told about it. Took it down immediately and put a thing in the paper about it saying that this sort of thing is not on, you know? That was only just recently that happened. It was against the Aboriginal community. From the Council level they quickly put the fire out and said this is not what we expect in Shepparton. That's only that one. I think so. I think there's pretty good respect overall.

It is clear from our research that racism and discrimination are ongoing problems in Shepparton and Mildura. In this respect, however these regional cities do not stand out when compared with other parts of Australia. And we also note the many comments from people from CALD backgrounds, that despite issues and problems, Shepparton and Mildura have been very friendly and welcoming places to them, and that a great deal of good will had been shown towards them by locals.

3.3 Negative role played by Federal Government policy and rhetoric

As noted earlier, both Shepparton and Mildura have absorbed large numbers of asylum seekers and refugees, including many people from Islamic backgrounds, and from detention centres. One problem highlighted in both communities was the fear that had been, many felt, actively promoted by governments and the tabloid media that drew a link between boat people, Muslims and terrorism. As one Shepparton community member commented:

> I think the other thing too, what worries me is the impact of the media and the government in particular. I wanted to say there's a real warring mood in the world, really, and it's already evident, particularly at the Federal government level. I don't know if you've listened very closely to Tony Abbott.

And it was very difficult to combat this fear in daily life. Not only that, but how could you battle against broader Federal government rhetoric and policy that excludes asylum seekers and refugees, that paints them for example as

illegitimate, illegal, as queue jumpers, as economic migrants? Then there was the actual impact of policies that affect people's lives dramatically; in particular, we heard a lot from people working at welfare agencies, from SMECC and ECSD, and also from concerned community members, about people not being allowed to work, not allowed to bring their families to Australia, people having their lives put on hold for five to ten years. These people really struggled to participate in the ordinary community life of Shepparton and Mildura.

There is one particularly telling story in Mildura that highlights these issues. We heard slightly different versions of this story from several different informants, and it was a story produced in our interviews and conversations quite spontaneously, in the context of our broader questions about social cohesion and multiculturalism in Mildura. There was a middle aged Afghani man who had started to stand on prominent, busy street corners in Mildura, close to evening, and sing or yell out. It had frightened a lot of people, especially in the context of heightened terrorism alerts, and some people had thought he must have been yelling out terrorist slogans, or hateful messages. Eventually it was discovered, when someone actually asked him what he was doing, that he was singing prayers for both Mildura as a community, and for his wife and children back in Afghanistan or Pakistan (people telling the story were not really sure) who were not allowed to join him in Mildura, because of his visa status. When people heard this, some locals made greater efforts to help him, and he now worked as a volunteer helping out with an orange fruit stall at the local farmers' market.

Apart from the impact of government policy and rhetoric, what this also reveals is the countervailing force of Mildura locals' willingness to help a person in need, once the fear of strange otherness dissipated through personal contact, and once people were able to get beyond the rhetoric about asylum seekers through understanding the suffering of a fellow human being.

One other negative policy impact that was stressed in both Shepparton and Mildura was the impact of the citizenship test, first introduced by the Howard Government in 2007. This significantly affected the capacity of some recent immigrants to apply for and gain citizenship, because of the level of written English required. ECSD found in their community consultations that this was a major issue for the Afghani community, especially since many 'cannot even read and write in their own language' (Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District 2015b). Workers and volunteers at SMECC in Mildura, and also AMES educators and health professionals, told us that some people in their fifties had given up on taking the citizenship test, and would simply wait until they were over sixty, when the test was no longer compulsory to acquire citizenship.

3.4 Successful for some groups, less so for others

In our discussions in Shepparton and Mildura, when we asked whether social cohesion and belonging, and opportunities for participation were equally shared among groups, people would often distinguish between different categories of people. The societies might work very well for a large middle section of the community, but at the edges other groups struggled. The categories of people mentioned included local Indigenous people, people from particular racial, ethnic, immigrant, refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds, women from some CALD backgrounds, and for some of the people we interviewed, groups of people dependent on welfare. We have already mentioned above experiences of social exclusion for some CALD people in terms of employment, housing and racism and discrimination. Below we focus upon Indigenous people and others from various backgrounds experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

3.4.1 Indigenous disadvantage and exclusion

Often when we asked more general questions about social cohesion in Mildura, and whether there were groups that seemed to be less included within the diverse mix of the community, people mentioned local Aboriginal people, as evident in this comment from a community member, who had lived in Mildura since the 1970s:

> In a funny, ironic sort of a way I suppose it's the Indigenous part of the communities that is the part that, in many areas, are still alienated. My comments in relation to the Indigenous community is probably quite different to the other branches, if you like, of multiculturalism.

This kind of perception was less apparent in the comments from non-Indigenous people in Shepparton, though social exclusion in its many dimensions was central to the local Aboriginal experience. Interviewees from organisations such as Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative, and other local Aboriginal people we spoke to, emphasised the ongoing exclusion of Shepparton's Aboriginal communities. Rates of Aboriginal unemployment are very high in Shepparton (a key informant from Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative estimated that it hovered between 20 and 50 percent), and key informants from Aboriginal backgrounds, but also from non-Aboriginal backgrounds commented on this. It was notable to many people that you 'just don't see Aboriginal people serving in the main retail outlets'.

An Indigenous leader in Mildura gave us a snapshot of the levels of Indigenous disadvantage in the area:

> Our housing, you look at the data, we tick all the wrong boxes for the wrong reasons. Whether it's health, whether it's justice. We had a meeting today. The Koorie community, all the children in out of home care in this region, 40% of them are Koorie. In child protection. 40 plus percent, we make up the community

corrections dispositions here at Mildura. Justice system. Youth justice it's about 60%. When you start looking at the numbers, homelessness, employment rate, you get a picture.

Welfare workers in Mildura referred to the ways that the Aboriginal community came together around suffering, and events such as funerals, rather than for more positive celebrations. Others, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and in both Shepparton and Mildura, spoke of the way that historical and contemporary experiences of racism, mistreatment and rejection, had resulted in different expectations about engaging in education, work and mainstream life. This contributed to cycles of poverty very difficult to break, withdrawal from participation in education and work, and separation from the mainstream of Shepparton and Mildura.

On the other hand, there was also a strong sense that there was renewed commitment in Shepparton and Mildura in recent years, from Indigenous communities and leaders and also mainstream communities and leaders, including local councils, from some local employers (i.e. Fishers in Mildura, Wesfarmers in Shepparton), universities and TAFEs, schools, and health and welfare agencies, to find solutions in the areas of health, well-being, housing, education and employment. There is hard work and hard thinking being done in Mildura and Shepparton to improve the Indigenous situation. Organisations like Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative, Rumbalara Aboriginal Football and Netball Association, Shepparton's Academy of Sport, Health and Education (ASHE), Ganbina Koorie Economic Employment in Shepparton, and Clontarf, the Koorie Girls academies and MDAS in Mildura, were all playing important roles in looking for positive solutions to Indigenous exclusion. As several people emphasised in interviews, Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative and MDAS played very important roles in providing employment opportunities for local Aboriginal people, and in creating pathways for other opportunities. As a key informant from MDAS told us:

> If you poach my staff, I'd love for an Aboriginal person to go and work at the hospital. The same goes for the Council, Department of Human Services, the Department of Justice…We need a lot more Aboriginal people in those roles.

3.4.2 Socio-economic disadvantage in Shepparton and Mildura

Though this is not unique to Mildura and Shepparton, there are problems of persistent, inter-generational disadvantage that threaten social cohesion. Local Indigenous families are represented in such groups, but the group also includes many non-Indigenous people. High levels of inequality threaten social cohesion and arguably contribute to higher levels of health and social problems, as discussed in the Australian and international literature (Habibis and Walter 2009; Wilkinson and Pickett 2010). There are sections of the population living in poverty that are largely disengaged from the activities we have described as part of the success of multicultural Shepparton and Mildura.

This issue was especially highlighted when we spoke with representatives from community based welfare agencies in Mildura and Shepparton, and representatives from DHHS and the Department of Justice and Regulation. One employee of the Department of Justice and Regulation commented that Mildura had not found a way to encourage the participation of the more disadvantaged sections of the population in the multicultural and mainstream cultural and arts events in the city. She spoke of a multicultural event with dance and music performances that she had attended in summer that seemed to attract a mainly middle-class demographic, with some participation from Mildura's diverse communities, but little or no participation from Mildura's poorer communities:

> Yes, it's a community where there's wonderful diversity and celebrations of that diversity, but it got me thinking. Where is the rest of our diverse community, and do they also respect, celebrate, value what we have?...Is it because they don't know about it? Is it because they don't value it, or is it other, more practical things like where certain events are held?...Even transport issues...and some of those communities are more marginalised, not just socially, economically, but also practically through the lack of transport infrastructure (see longer quote in Appendix 4).

She also described the difficulty of getting parents out of their houses to participate in barbecues and picnics that the Department put on in parks in disadvantaged areas of Mildura. Parents would send the kids out to the event, and she would see them behind their closing doors, but they stayed away. The coordinator at a community house in a poor, multi-ethnic area of Mildura also lamented the lack of active involvement of locals in the house's activities. He wondered if they had to think up a completely different approach to engage the most disadvantaged. Hardly anyone was coming through their doors, and he was wondering about the very purpose of the house and its well-established community garden. We heard similar comments from DHHS and other welfare agencies in Shepparton – 'how do you engage people who are disengaged?'

Apart from the economic problems, are the attendant problems of family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, low school attendance and school completion, unemployment, teenage pregnancies, and trouble with the law. We have not formally interviewed people in these situations, though we have had conversations with some people experiencing these issues. In addition other key informants have commented about socio-economic inequality and inter-generational welfare dependency, disadvantage and poverty, and these issues have been well documented in policy papers and other research.

Overall levels of disadvantage and inequality are reflected in some of the statistics that stand out for Shepparton and Mildura:

• Between 2006 and 2011, the proportion of high income families in Mildura RCC increased by 5.6 percent, and long-term residents with medium to high incomes ($1000/week) rose from 10% to 17%. At the same time, 60% of residents earned less than $600/week (the measure for 'low income'), a percentage significantly high in

comparison to the rest of Victoria. Rental stress and low incomes both contribute to a significant proportion of the population in overall financial stress (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 11).

- Hudson (2011) notes that disadvantage has a locational component, and that there is evidence of some severe comparative disadvantage in Greater Shepparton, according to SEIFA scores. Some of these populations in Mooroopna (3,062) and Shepparton (6,926) are part of the most disadvantaged 10% of Australia's population. These areas are very multicultural, and have higher proportions of single parent families. The coordinator at a community house in one of Mildura's disadvantaged areas, that has large Aboriginal and Pacific Islander populations, and a 'smattering' of other groups including Asians and Africans, told us that 'Last large survey we did, 85 percent of the people here are on some form of welfare. I don't know if that's changed much, I doubt it.'

- Partly linked to structural shifts in employment opportunity, there is a higher than average 'welfare dependency' in Shepparton, with 26% of Greater Shepparton receiving Centrelink benefits compared to north-east Victoria 23%, Victoria 17%, and Australia 18% (Alford 2011, citing DEEWR 2009-10). There is wide recognition of these and other indicators of social disadvantage in Greater Shepparton. Shepparton was one of five Australian sites chosen for the Commonwealth's trial of the Place Based Income Management (PBIM) scheme, involving new welfare provisions including quarantining of welfare payments first established in the Northern Territory under the Federal government's NTER, and which began in July 2012 (Refugee Council of Australia 2012). While median rent and housing prices are lower in Shepparton than other regional cities, home ownership rates are declining (Alford 2014, p. III).

- Among the most socio-economically vulnerable groups in Greater Shepparton are the many Indigenous Australians and newer migrants (including over 5,000 Iraqi, Afghani and African) (Alford 2011, p. 5). One of Shepparton's particular issues around recent migration relates to the type and categories of immigrants that it has been receiving. As Alford points out, when writing about the period up to 2011, about 40% of recent migrants to Shepparton over the previous five years were humanitarian migrants, compared to about 9% in Victoria and 8% in Australia. There are special issues and vulnerabilities for these groups of migrants, particularly due to limited English proficiency and lack of vocational skills (Alford 2011, p. 17, citing DEEWR 2009-2010). As noted in Chapter 1, Mildura also has a high proportion of humanitarian entrants among its recent immigrants.

- Domestic/family violence is a major problem. Mildura's rate of reported domestic violence increased by 60% between 2007-08 and 2011-12, these numbers being twice the state average of incident reports (Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, p. 11). Shepparton also has a comparatively large problem of family violence, as is the case for many rural areas in Victoria, and police report rising numbers of reported incidents (focus group with police in Shepparton; see also local media reports, citing police statistics showing a 14.5% increase in incidents between 2013 and 2014, Smith 2014).

- Both Shepparton and Mildura have relatively high rates of youth (aged 15-24) who are seen as 'disengaged', i.e. not engaged in either education or employment (Best Start et al 2014; Mildura Rural City Council 2014b).

The CEO of one of Shepparton's main welfare agencies commented that he had been shocked at the poverty he encountered when he moved to Shepparton after living in a much more privileged city interstate. He had the feeling that Shepparton had once been much more prosperous, and that while people had a lot of resilience, the economic circumstances were now more difficult:

> It's really difficult to see people get a toehold here and make things work. There's lots of endeavour, but probably success is harder to find and to sustain. I'm told, again from things that I've read and people telling me about Shepp's history, it has been a relatively prosperous and well-to-do area, in its history, when farming was easier and manufacturing was more easily sustained. Lots of people came to Shepp and made very good incomes. In fact, some that have sustained many generations of the same family. Now, we've got a broader group of people who not only don't work, but where they're the second generation where there's been no work in the household. We have other bizarre indicators of disadvantage, like the fact that our rates of teenage pregnancy are so much higher than Victoria and the rest of the country. We're one of the few places where the trajectory of that's going in the wrong direction.

A case worker from a welfare agency in Shepparton spoke of cycles of poverty that people from different backgrounds can lapse into in Shepparton:

> I guess some of the main things in Shepparton I think are issues to do with poverty and that cycle of poverty and isolation. Those factors can impact on anyone. They can also impact on the multicultural community. I guess a lot of new arrivals or people who have settled here, there are problems with employment and poverty within those communities. People come to Shepparton, for example, for the fruit-picking season, so they're coming with not a skilled background. Once the fruit season finishes, their employment choices are quite limited. I think employment and poverty have a big role to play in whether someone is able to fit into the community, whether they're able to engage in the community.

Another key informant in Shepparton, from DHHS, suggested that entrenched disadvantage contributed to tensions between disadvantaged Anglo locals and diverse newcomers who lived in the same neighbourhoods:

> Yeah. I still think there's pockets there that…. Look, I don't know whether it's because of the people, but that may be on that lower income, that see these other people coming in that have got higher ... Their kids are going through higher education. Whether there's a bit of jealousy there in amongst that.

As noted in Chapter 2, there is a lot of important work done by welfare and health agencies, both government and non-government, to improve the lives of disadvantaged people and those living in poverty in Shepparton and Mildura. Just one example of a recent initiative is the Fairley Foundation's Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project that is explicitly aimed at trying to improve the lives of children and youth. The project is in its first phase, having

completed a major community consultation called '1000 Conversations' that involved more than 1000 Shepparton and district people sitting around having structured conversations in groups of up to ten people, about community needs for families and children to lead happy, productive lives (see Sexton Consulting 2015). The Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project is one among several initiatives aimed at improving the early years' experiences of Shepparton's children in order to build resilience among youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, and to facilitate and encourage better outcomes in health, well-being, employment and education in later years (key informant interview, Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project).

3.5 Not enough opportunities for intercultural social interaction

Interpersonal interaction between people from differing cultural backgrounds is a crucial element of social cohesion because it fosters opportunities to build trust, identification with the community, social networks, and mutual

Multicultural Sewing Group, Kildonan Uniting Care, Shepparton, 2014
Photographer: Liz Arcus

understanding and respect. Our research findings suggest there is a need for more opportunities for social mixing between cultural, religious, and socio-economic groups. People mentioned spaces where people from different cultural backgrounds, including recent immigrants from CALD backgrounds and Indigenous people, do mix, and these include within the schools, in sport, some religious institutions, cultural festivals, and to a limited extent at work (depending on where one works). However, nearly all of the interviewees in both cities suggested there is not a significant amount of mixing outside of these contexts. School, sport, some religious institutions, cultural festivals, and work offer important opportunities for mixing, but the near consensus was that, for the majority of residents in these cities, there were not opportunities for regular, meaningful intercultural interaction.

As explained earlier in the report, our findings from the schools suggest that there is quite a lot of intercultural interaction and friendship in some of the schools, and the value of this should not be underestimated. However, numerous interviewees said that after school there does not appear to be a continuation of these interactions. One interviewee, a community member in Shepparton, described what she felt was a city of people living parallel lives, an image suggesting people living in the same place but whose lives do not cross paths in meaningful ways. She said that people need to go out of their way to make such meaningful connections, and that, she said, is often more difficult than we realise. Another interviewee with an Italian family background, an employee at a health agency in Mildura, explained that, even though he had numerous friends in his youth from different cultural backgrounds, he has found that as an adult he has not managed to maintain those friendships. This, he said, is a wider phenomenon and has partly to do with a lack of contexts for meaningful intercultural interaction. In response to our question about intercultural mixing, he said:

> Not unless you've got a common thing. You might get that if you're in a soccer club or within a profession, you might get that inter-cultural mixing, but you wouldn't see people just walking down the street talking to someone of a different culture just because they want to learn about them. There has to be a common thing. It's probably with everyone really. If you don't have a common thing, you're not going to mix with them.

One of the challenges for intercultural interaction for the CALD communities is the language barrier. This can be a particularly difficult challenge for the newest arrivals in trying to find a sense of belonging in the community. An interviewee at an agency in Shepparton who works with refugees said the following in response to a question about cultural mixing:

> I think everyone's in their little silos, their little community pockets. There's not a whole lot of mixing really. I think that comes back to language really, you know? Being able to communicate well, and so I think, again, if you look at the parents who arrive, it's then the kids that start to mingle and integrate. … Even for services and information that we deliver, we often have to do it by language group so we don't necessarily have mixed groups. Yeah, so we already have silos from the start for convenience reasons. But our little sewing group, we try to have women from the African and Asian ethnic groups and that's okay.

There are certainly challenges with language barriers, which can compound the difficulties of fostering intercultural interaction. However, we found several examples of activities that brought people together over a 'common thing', and which helped to surmount differences in language and culture. Sewing groups, like the one mentioned above, are an example of an activity that can provide a great opportunity for intercultural mixing. Another health agency employee in Shepparton described a planned event where women from multiple different cultural backgrounds made needlework and sewing crafts and brought them to display and talk about with the other women. Before the organisers even began the event the women were all mingling and excitedly discussing their handiwork with each other. They were able to pick up, and point, and admire the material objects they created, and this allowed them to bond in a way that the interviewee said was inspiring. This story illustrates the value of a proactive facilitation of small-scale opportunities for people to interact over a shared interest. It may be difficult for individuals to initiate interaction with others in the community different to them, but meaningful and dynamic interaction can happen when there are organised encounters over shared interest. It is particularly noteworthy that it is small events like the one described here that have big potential. Agencies, businesses, city councils, and individuals can all be encouraged to continue to plan and support facilitation of these types of small-scale activities. Community and neighbourhood houses, and Men's Sheds, are the kinds of mainstream venues where such interactions might occur more often.

There is definitely the desire on the part of newer immigrants to find opportunities to meet and socialise with mainstream communities, as revealed in a story told to us by a female community member in Shepparton, about her recent encounter with Afghani women. She had been invited by an Afghani youth who she was helping through the 'L to P' program to his house to meet his mother, and was then taken from there to another house for dinner where she met a group of beautifully dressed Afghani women, most of whom could not speak English. She was greatly impressed by their expressed desire to meet other local women like her:

> The women just kept saying 'Thank you.' In their own language. There was two people that spoke English… They could translate for me. 'Thank you so much. We'd really like to meet other Australian women.'

> This kept being repeated so many times…. Some of the older women had tears in their eyes, as they were expressing that they wanted to meet other Australian women.

Inspired by this experience, she was now organising for her friends, who expressed their enthusiasm for meeting women from new immigrant backgrounds, to visit the houses of Afghan women to share food (for the full story, see Appendix 4).

3.6 Intercultural challenges

One of the ongoing challenges for Shepparton and Mildura is negotiating differing cultural expectations, and the resulting misunderstandings or conflicts, in such complex multicultural environments. The challenges are two-fold. The more established communities must learn to understand and adapt to the newcomers, and the newer arrivals must learn to understand and adapt to the broader established community. These reciprocal understandings impact social cohesion insofar as they may enhance or diminish community belonging and acceptance, a sense of shared values, and inter-personal harmony. Section 3.2 detailed issues of racism and discrimination encountered by newer arrivals, but despite these very negative experiences, it appears most new residents of Shepparton and Mildura find these cities welcoming and accommodating on the whole. There is a great deal of willingness on the part of much of the community to try to welcome new residents. There is an equally keen desire amongst most new residents to become active and known members of the community. There are, however, challenges to this type of social integration that arise as a result of misunderstandings and/or conflicts between differing cultural practices and perceptions. These result not from irreconcilable differences but from lack of knowledge, differing expectations, and cultural misunderstandings. Shepparton and Mildura both have programs for cultural orientation of various types, but there is an apparent need for further efforts. This section explores some of the related challenges and suggests solutions for bridging these gaps in understanding. This section does not focus on English as an additional language, but it is an overarching factor that exacerbates the other challenges we discuss here.

We found a high level of willingness and interest from residents of different cultural backgrounds to participate in community life, but there are distinct challenges to doing so. The first challenge is to do with knowledge of local cultural and social norms and expectations. Examples were sometimes told with a sense of comical value upon reflection, but were equally seen as presenting barriers to social connection, and had been experienced with frustration. We heard stories, for example, from newer arrivals about frequently having to 'learn the hard way' regarding conversational conventions. A staff member at one of the ethnic councils recalled phone conversations in which he asked 'How is your day going today?' (something he was accustomed to asking strangers in his country of origin), only to be met with curt replies (once, someone said to him, 'You don't need to know that'). Examples range from this apparently benign interaction, to those that have the potential to become inter-cultural barriers to interaction.

An Anglo community member in Shepparton in her late sixties, who was very community oriented and had volunteered all her life for a range of community organisations, wondered about her newer neighbours from Muslim/Middle-Eastern backgrounds. She had little neighbourly communication with them, though she had tried, as this was what she usually did. She lived in a court, and was annoyed by the many cars parked haphazardly, including on her lawn, that belonged to family and friends of her newer immigrant neighbours, when they had social events. Her sprinkler system kept getting run over. She found that her neighbours were not like neighbours she was used to, and being very community minded, it bothered her that she had not been able to develop any connection with

them. She told a story of going with a community group to pick apricots, and then having so many that she wanted to share these around with her neighbours. When she knocked on the doors of the people in her court, the women who answered would be polite, and thank her, but then rush back inside. It was just completely different to the way that she had experienced her local area in the past. As she told this story she seemed at once puzzled, annoyed and saddened by what she felt was the unfriendliness and disinterest of her Muslim/Middle-Eastern neighbours.

Cultural misunderstandings can result from newcomers not knowing social rules, norms and expectations, the unwritten rules of local social life. All indications are that new arrivals to Shepparton and Mildura want very much to 'fit in', to have a sense of belonging in the community, and to learn these unwritten rules. As stated, overall it is not a lack of interest in being a part of the community, but a need for further cultural orientation. The problem is that more established community members often misinterpret these misunderstandings as a lack of interest in knowing or being known in the community. Some interviewees from key agencies stressed the importance of newer arrivals seeking to actively participate in the community. This perspective is coming from workers who are sympathetic to the difficulties that many refugees and migrants face in making life in a new country. They stressed that, despite these challenges, the new arrivals ought to be encouraged to reach out to their new community.

Another Shepparton community member, an Anglo woman in her seventies, told us a story of waving to her newer neighbours, a Muslim family. She waved to a group of the women in the family but the greeting was not reciprocated. This community member thought that it may be due to shyness, but she nonetheless felt discouraged from trying to make further connection.

One interviewee at a Mildura community welfare agency, from a Greek background, said it appeared the different ethnic communities mostly 'stick together', but she also noted that this is a pattern observable in past migrant communities who are now more established: 'I do see a lot of the newly arrived migrants kind of, they do like us, we stuck to our Greek friends. We had other friends as well, but we did stick mostly to ourselves' (see full quote, Appendix 4).

In addition to the need for work on intercultural interpersonal interactions, there were several community leaders who discussed the need for more thorough orientations in using public services and in understanding legal systems, rights, and responsibilities. One example comes from a local Mildura doctor who, though he is sympathetic to new arrivals and is also a migrant, said the following about his views and his own experience of learning upon arrival:

> I used to use my nurse as my personal assistant. 'Go and get me a coffee,' or whatever. But no, it's not that way…I think refugees especially need citizenship classes, citizenship education. They should know what is culturally accepted, and what is not because they have a totally different idea….I think this type of education

is very important. That should be part of an actual program. Whoever comes, sit them down, and talk to them about their responsibilities and cultural acceptance.

He gave examples like several families crowded into the one house that obviously affected and annoyed neighbours. Patients from refugee backgrounds would come to see him in groups, rather than individually, affecting his capacity to see other patients, and also undermining his capacity to monitor the health of individuals (see full quote in appendix 4).

Another area of inter-cultural challenge takes place in educational settings. There are some parents of children from various newer immigrant backgrounds worried that their children are losing their culture. There is a notable degree of intergenerational conflict that can occur in some families when this happens. The schools make efforts to help keep an open and accepting environment and to work with parents to mitigate these anxieties. One school principal in Mildura told us a story about a young girl from a Muslim family, rebelling against her parents, and the mother came into the school quite upset. Discussions were held and a resolution was achieved, to where the mother no longer believed the school was actively trying to pull the girl away from her family culture. Another principal in Shepparton described challenges the school needs to negotiate regarding music and travel associated with school trips, especially for Muslim children, and for girls from various immigrant backgrounds:

> One of the real issues was about music in the primary schools here. The kids weren't allowed to go to music. It was westernised, and it was sexualised and all that sort of stuff, and so they weren't allowed to go…The parents wouldn't let their kids participate…That caused quite a rift. …. One of our biggest issues is camps and excursions. We have a lot of Muslim students, they won't stay overnight. … We try to accommodate as much as we can, but sometimes you just can't. Like the excursion to Melbourne, they miss out on. The boys go, the girls don't. That's the way it is… What affects the kids' learning as well, we have the students that stay after school until to about 5, because I know once they go home, they've got to do their chores, and the girls are expected to not study, to do female things in homes (see longer quote, Appendix 4).

These comments suggest tensions between educational expectations that require adjustment on the part of the schools, but also suggest a need for further education for new arrivals.

There may be a perceived tension between the two perspectives described in this section: that it is the responsibility of newcomers to learn, adapt, and initiate interaction versus a view that the community needs to organise more cultural and social initiation programs to support newcomers. Based on our findings, we suggest the answer lies somewhere in the middle. It is very challenging, for numerous reasons, for new arrivals in the community to learn the norms, expectations, and unwritten rules of social interaction. This is largely due to the principle that one does not know what one does not know. There is a need for continued development and implementation of social and cultural orientation programs to support new arrivals in becoming a part of the social fabric of the community. These same programs can encourage new arrivals to do what they can to stretch outside of the proverbial comfort

zones, given what we know about the wider community wanting to have interactions with newcomers but finding it frustrating when they are unable to for lack of inter-cultural know-how.

The same can be said for a need for cultural awareness on the part of the wider community, for both understanding of the specific cultural groups settling in the community as well as a general knowledge and patience regarding the difficulties that new arrivals must negotiate as they settle in. There are currently programs run in Shepparton called 'Know My Culture', held at African House, which offer opportunities for the community to learn about a new culture each month. Local employers need further understanding about how to negotiate challenges in hiring a new arrival and supporting them, with both patience and thoughtful on-the-job training. There can be programs to encourage and support employers in this process, including educating them as to the economic benefits to their business. Several interviewees suggested that local councils can make further efforts to identify and cater to the needs of the newer community groups. If both groups are willing to make further efforts, Shepparton and Mildura can build on the successes already experienced.

4   Lessons for Other Places from Shepparton and Mildura

This final chapter addresses our third research aim:

> To suggest whether some of the successes of Shepparton and Mildura might help governments and other organisations in Victoria to improve their multicultural relations and social cohesion in other places.

In the following we highlight what our research showed to be important factors in the continual process of Shepparton and Mildura striving to be, and become, socially cohesive and inclusive multicultural cities. We also highlight again what have been some of the issues and problems faced by these communities. The successes, but also the issues and problems, provide lessons from which other cities, regions and local areas can learn. We have structured our recommendations into this last chapter, following sections where we highlight success factors, issues and problems.

Governance

The first lesson concerns the need for good governance. As Dandy and Pe-Pua (2013) argued in discussing the key drivers of social cohesion, and as we have also reiterated, the broad governance framework is an important, general factor contributing to the successes of multiculturalism and social cohesion in all places, including in Shepparton and Mildura. The broad approaches to facilitating social cohesion and multiculturalism, including specific programs and funding opportunities, and governments working together with communities in myriad ways, are key success factors. The importance of leadership, at all levels of government, on multicultural and social cohesion issues cannot be overstated. Leaders are in a position to prioritise multicultural social cohesion in their political and public circles of influence. Governance largely determines the tone of social discourse as well as the frameworks into which local society and culture grow.

Governance is equally capable of being a barrier to social cohesion. We have stressed the impact of Federal government asylum seeker laws that are having serious consequences for some of the people who have made their homes in Shepparton and Mildura. Their lives remain uncertain as they await visa outcomes and are prevented from working and from bringing their families to join them from overseas. Their experiences also have an impact on the broader social cohesion of Mildura and Shepparton, for example through preventing groups of people from fully participating in local life, particularly in being allowed to work and volunteer. There are many local people attempting

to find ways to enhance their levels of participation, but it is clear that such national policies result in a great burden on the newer community members and on the wider community. The lesson from this and other such policies is that governance needs regular, careful consideration for how it contributes either to social cohesion or social division, and a means of monitoring the effectiveness and relevance of policies and programs. Achieving this requires ongoing education and local community consultation. Effective examples of this, witnessed in this project, were the VMC's Regional Advisory Councils in the Shepparton and Mildura areas.

Whole of government approach

There is a lesson that emerged from Shepparton and Mildura about the importance of a whole of government approach to building social cohesion. A broader collaborative governance approach means that government bodies such as DHHS and the Department of Justice and Regulation can put their ideas, resources, and energy together. This sets the tone for a further collaboration between these departments, local council, and key community organisations, which enables a collective effort in meeting the community's needs with shared vision and goals. This is particularly vital for communities with complexity of issues tied to social inequality, disadvantage, and the presence of newer, less established community members such as refugees. Numerous interviewees in governmental and non-governmental roles spoke of 'wicked problems'; problems such as family violence that, due to their complexity, can only be addressed through the collaborative knowledge and efforts of multiple departments and agencies. Government bodies such as the VMC and OMAC actively encourage multiculturalism and acceptance of diversity. These bodies are able to maintain a connection to the local communities through initiatives like the Regional Advisory Councils, which entail regular visits to the regions by representatives of VMC to consult with local council, police, agencies, local residents, businesses, community service providers and others interested in shaping the proactive pursuit of social cohesion.

Recommendation 1:

A whole-of-government, strategically collaborative and proactive approach, working with community organisations to address community's needs and goals is required to achieve a socially cohesive multicultural society. This is particularly vital for communities with complexity of issues tied to social inequality, disadvantage, and the presence of newer, less established community members such as refugees.

VMC Loddon Mallee Regional Advisory Council, Meeting in Swan Hill, 2015
Photo supplied by VMC

Recommendation 2:

Consultative approaches between state government agencies and local communities concerning issues of multiculturalism, cultural diversity, social cohesion, and the issues faced by CALD communities should be encouraged and enhanced. The VMC's Regional Advisory Councils are one example of channels of communication between local communities and state government, and this and related approaches should be supported by government.

History of migration

Shepparton and Mildura both have long histories of successful CALD immigration, and it is widely accepted in these communities that previous waves of immigrants have long since become a part of the mainstream of these communities. It is also widely accepted that cultural and language differences are not necessarily barriers to social cohesion, and have in fact enriched those communities in significant ways and, importantly, also contributed to the economic success of those communities. The economic success includes the contribution of immigrants to local agricultural and horticultural innovations, and also to the cultural life, hospitality and entertainment industries, and restaurant and food cultures of those cities. There are lessons in that history for people from the communities of Shepparton and Mildura, but also for other places.

One of the big lessons is that local communities are very capable of thriving as culturally, linguistically and racially diverse communities. Local communities can also learn relatively quickly to find ways to support and eventually integrate people from unfamiliar immigrant, cultural and language backgrounds. Small size and isolation or distance from major metropolitan centres can even be an advantage, in the sense that people may be drawn to feeling that they are all part of the one place, and have opportunities to become familiar, in everyday settings, with people from very different backgrounds, thus providing opportunities to break down stereotypes and prejudices. It is also the case that this does not spontaneously happen, but takes leadership, and the good will and openness of community members.

While the ethnically diverse immigrant histories of Shepparton and Mildura cannot, for obvious reasons, be instantly replicated, those histories do suggest that communities that want to encourage socially cohesive multiculturalism can adopt a proactive approach toward embracing the currently existing diversity of their communities, without fear of either threats to social cohesion, or to local community spirit. And it may prove to be in their best interests, including economically, to take a proactive approach to inviting migrants to their city through the skilled migration and humanitarian migration schemes. As Shepparton and Mildura show, there is much to be gained from embracing migration and cultural diversity, and it has brought dynamism and opportunities to these cities (see also Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW 2011). There is no reason why Victoria's regional and rural towns and cities should not benefit from Australia's continuing migration program in each of its main streams. The small Victorian town Nhill's recent experience with resettling Karen refugees shows both that this is possible for a town with relatively little experience with diverse migration, and also that there are real benefits. From being a town that was losing population, Nhill has been revitalised, and the economic benefits have been estimated to be in the order of $41.5 million (AMES and Deloitte Access Economics 2015).

The horticultural and agricultural industries in the Murray-Darling Basin invite, and necessitate, a willing workforce in manual, flexible labour, which has provided employment opportunities to diverse communities. As our examples in earlier chapters have shown, employers in these industries have faced labour shortages, and immigrants including asylum seekers and refugees, when given opportunities, have played vital roles in providing labour in difficult semi-skilled and low skilled jobs, that many locals have been reluctant to pursue. This can be seen as an important opportunity for communities with similar horticultural and agricultural industries to encourage a diverse workforce to settle in their areas. However, for all communities, it is important to develop industry that provides work opportunities for all in the community. Financial stability for all skill levels is key to social cohesion.

Positive influence of agencies

The roles, activities, and innovations of different kinds of groups and agencies were shown to be success factors for ensuring ongoing social cohesion in the multicultural environments of Shepparton and Mildura. As we have shown, these agencies and groups did innovative things, as they have adapted to waves of immigrants, and have gradually also begun to find ways to embrace and honour their Indigenous communities.

Local council

There are lessons for other regional cities in the way local councillors and council employees have the potential to make a significant impact on social cohesion. The placement of cultural development or social inclusion officers, as well as Aboriginal liaison officers allows councils to collaborate in developing community activities, awareness and consultation toward social cohesion. These staff can be bridges between the various diverse communities and council. Councils serve an important role of influencing the values and priorities of the wider community. The proactive approach by local governments at both Shepparton and Mildura toward social inclusion, to accommodating diversity, supporting multiculturalism and multicultural agendas, addressing racism and discrimination, and integrating recent immigrants is a contributing factor to the multicultural success of these places. Other regional cities, peri-urban and metropolitan areas can benefit immensely from local councillors and council employees who prioritise these dynamics in their community. Local councils, as large employers, can lead the way through their employment practices in reflecting the diversity of the communities in their labour forces.

> **Recommendation 3:**
>
> **Local councillors and council employees have the potential to make a significant impact on social cohesion through their active influence on council priorities. Councils should treat as a high priority the recognition and celebration of diverse peoples in their communities. All councils should employ staff representative of the diversity of the community.**

Victoria Police

One of the important lessons from Shepparton and Mildura is that local police in a city have the potential to build positive relations between themselves and diverse members of the community. Through a proactive approach, including having a dedicated Multicultural Liaison Officer, the police can have a significant influence on the attitudes and actions of the community toward each other and toward law enforcement and the legal system. Strong, committed local leadership, and community presence, are crucial. Shepparton's Police Superintendent told us that he had deliberately chosen to live locally rather than commuting in to Shepparton, so that he could be closely involved in community daily life, including in the evening and on weekends. He felt that a 'fly in, fly out' person could really not perform the role properly in Shepparton. He also told us that he had had to fight hard to get funding for his Multicultural Liaison Officer, as these positions were typically only funded at regional level, but that this role was vital for community policing in an area as diverse as Shepparton. Police in Shepparton and Mildura work closely and collaboratively with a range of other agencies, and there are strong, established relationships between individual police and agency employees, as well as with leaders in CALD communities, facilitated in part through the strong police relationships with the ethnic councils, ECSD and SMECC. There are strong lessons here for other communities and policy makers about extensive collaboration.

Department of Justice and Regulation; and other key government agencies

The justice system more generally plays an important role in social cohesion. As we showed, workers from the Department of Justice and Regulation in Shepparton and Mildura link closely with a range of agencies to collaborate on issues especially for groups including new arrivals from CALD backgrounds (including refugees and asylum seekers), Indigenous people, and other people experiencing disadvantage, for example due to socio-economic status. They played a vital educative role that also aided the integration of newcomers into local communities, including orientating people to unfamiliar legal and justice systems, and encouraging people not to be fearful of officers and agencies responsible for ensuring community safety, reducing crime and dealing with offenders in constructive ways.

Other government agencies make important contributions to social cohesion in multicultural environments, and in environments marked by inequalities, including socio-economic inequalities. The focus of such agencies and their programs should be firmly on building the resilience of multicultural communities, especially those that are highly disadvantaged. Recent arrivals from CALD backgrounds in particular should be made aware of the role and functions of these different agencies, such as VMC, OMAC, DHHS, and Centrelink, as well as local government. At the same time, they should be made aware of their responsibilities as citizens, and encouraged to embrace Australia's laws and democratic values.

How to Vote Information Session, Mildura, SMECC
Photo supplied by SMECC

Recommendation 5:

That newly arrived refugees and other migrants be provided with structured education about the roles and functions of the key institutions that affect their lives, including but not limited to the following: justice agencies and law enforcement agencies; our democratic institutions; key agencies within the machinery of government, including VMC, OMAC, DHHS, and Centrelink; and local government.

Welfare and health agencies

The broad-reaching programs of welfare and health agencies provide the support necessary to sustain social cohesion, going a long way toward addressing issues that arise out of socio-economic inequality. Centrelink and DHHS provide extensive housing, other welfare services, as well as the key pensions, allowances and other benefits payments. They are vital in particular for the less advantaged sections of Shepparton's and Mildura's populations, and make a contribution to the social justice and equity dimensions of social cohesion. Local DHHS workers can have a significant positive impact on the lives of local people, and through local links and collaboration with other agencies support the disadvantaged in significant ways. Health agencies and hospitals provide the vital role of health care services, giving access to good, culturally sensitive health care. There are challenges that necessitate innovations of operating in such culturally complex environments, and it is important these organisations have the capacity to learn and adapt. Welfare and health agencies foster important social bonds within the community. These agencies also develop networks of relationships with other agencies working with people from CALD, including refugee backgrounds, and Indigenous people, and also with the teachers and principals at some of the most ethnically and culturally diverse schools in the area.

Recommendation 6:

Welfare and health agencies carry out important work toward social cohesion, and their funding should be prioritised so they can continue their broad-reaching programs. Their collaboration and pooling of resources can be formalised through processes like Mildura's Northern Mallee Community Partnership. Encouraging intense collaboration between local agencies should be fostered as a key to success.

Ethnic councils

Shepparton and Mildura offer a lesson for the central importance of ethnic councils in linking new arrivals into the wider community. They are a hub of resources and support for CALD community members, as well as serving an important role in helping to build bonding and bridging social capital within their new city. Housing, employment, welfare services, translation, and learning local culture, customs and language are some of the main needs of new

arrivals, and ethnic councils can serve as approachable organisations to assist. The ethnic councils act as 'barometer' organisations, staying in tune with the lived experiences, struggles, and triumphs of the people of the community. The diverse staff of SMECC and ECSD offer a lesson about the value of employing people from the community groups being serviced. Their staff represent the communities they serve. Ethnic councils are also well positioned to educate the broader community about the histories, needs, and value added to the community, of new arrivals.

Recommendation 7:

Ethnic councils should be supported by Government or established where they do not yet exist, as they serve a vital role as hubs for addressing the needs of newer migrants, and in linking them with other parts of the community. These councils are essential to multicultural social cohesion at the local level, as they are able to provide locally sensitive settlement and other support services to newer residents, which cannot be easily performed by other agencies.

Ethnic organisations

Shepparton and Mildura host ethnic based organisations that serve to build bonding social capital between those community members. Our findings suggest that opportunities for ethnic groups to build bonding social capital between their own community members actually also gives people a stronger link to the overall community. The experience of these two cities offers a lesson in the importance of maintaining a balance between the whole community sharing some goals, values, and practices, and people with differing cultural backgrounds having the opportunity to maintain and celebrate the things that are important to them and their culture. Ethnic organisations assist with maintaining this balance, helping newly arrived CALD community members who rely on these groups to become at least initially integrated into the community. Being self-funded, sometimes these groups meet in homes, or at the ethnic councils if there is appropriate space available. Those with a place for their organisation to be based out of achieve an even greater degree of a sense of belonging within the community. It allows them to feel a part of the wider community when they have a place to identify with, within the community.

Recommendation 8:

Ethnic organisations should be encouraged and supported for the role they play in fostering belonging and a stronger link to the wider community, particularly for newer arrivals. State and local governments should consider ways to partially fund, and thereby encourage, the establishment and/or use of public spaces (such as community centres) for ethnic organisations. Groups who have a space where they can meet are more likely to feel they have a place in the wider community.

Religious institutions

As with ethnic organisations, local churches, mosques, temples, and other religious institutions play a significant, and possibly under-recognised, role in helping cultural groups maintain a sense of their distinct identity, while also incorporating themselves into the life of the greater community. Religious institutions encourage and support people from all communities, but they are particularly important to the development of social cohesion within and between newly arrived refugees and migrants. Additionally, the work of the Shepparton Interfaith Network in Shepparton is a benchmark for other cities to actively foster positive social relations between those of differing faiths and/or ethnic backgrounds. Interfaith organisations can proactively build understanding, relationships, and collaborations between the different religious institutions and members of all faiths in an effort to maintain a strong and harmonious community.

Recommendation 9:

Religious institutions should be encouraged and supported as they foster social cohesion amongst their own members, and also across cultural differences. The work of the Interfaith Network in Shepparton is a benchmark for other cities to actively foster positive social relations between those of differing faiths and/or ethnic backgrounds. Communities should consider establishing an interfaith network that can form a bridge between ethnic organisations, local churches, mosques, temples, and other religious institutions.

Local media

In our fieldwork in Shepparton and Mildura we heard many comments, and saw evidence of, the detrimental impact of some Federal Government policy and rhetoric in the area of asylum seekers and refugees. This inhibited the opportunities of people from these backgrounds (through direct and/or discreet discrimination), and made some people from such backgrounds more tentative in their engagement with mainstream communities. However, local media have the potential to have a strong positive role in smaller communities by actively promoting and celebrating their diversity. People in Shepparton and Mildura, and the local newspapers (for example, through balanced, factual reporting), do important work countering some of the more negative rhetoric and in so doing contribute to enhancing social cohesion, multiculturalism and the acceptance of different cultures and religions in their local areas.

> **Recommendation 10:**
>
> **Local newspapers and other local media should be encouraged to emphasise the diversity of the local community and the positive stories of everyday multicultural life, which has potential to counter other rhetoric and images (for example from tabloid media) that promotes more fearful and insular attitudes toward newer arrivals. Such an effort may include, among other ideas, a series on the stories of local community members, including their personal history prior to arrival in Australia and their story of settlement and becoming a part of the local community.**

Aboriginal agencies

Shepparton and Mildura offer a lesson in the value of the ongoing work of Aboriginal agencies. Efforts to improve the life chances for Aboriginal communities has a positive impact on the overall social cohesion of the larger community. Aboriginal agencies are an important part of social cohesion in Shepparton and Mildura, as they fulfil the role of servicing and fostering inclusion for a part of the community who have traditionally been excluded and marginalised. These organisations, such as Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative in Shepparton and Mallee District Aboriginal Services in Mildura employ large staffs, many of whom are Indigenous. These organisations are important employers in the areas who play a role in fostering emerging Indigenous talent and leadership. The organisations provide many services, including family services and health services, develop social enterprises, work with local councils on Reconciliation Action Plans, organise sports programs, address bias and misunderstandings in the wider community about the Aboriginal community, organise community activities such as NAIDOC Week, organise leadership programs, and liaise with other key agencies in the community. Areas with high rates of Aboriginal disadvantage and discrimination are particularly encouraged to develop and support Aboriginal agencies, which can work, along with other agencies in the community, to mitigate these issues.

Service clubs

The service clubs in Shepparton and Mildura fulfil a notable role of establishing and maintaining bonding and bridging social capital in these cities, through encouraging community building and participation through philanthropy, service projects, and social events. Places like Shepparton and Mildura have some service club members from older, well-established migrant communities, but the majority of participants are from the Anglo established communities. These clubs have an important role to play in the social cohesion of regional cities, but they may need to expand their participant base to the newer arrivals in these cities, which would maintain the viability of the clubs and involve a cross-section of the whole community.

Recommendation 11:

Service clubs like Rotary and Lions, that play vital roles in local communities, should be encouraged to broaden their membership base to newer, less established members of the community. This should be encouraged as a way to improve upon the good work these clubs already do in building and maintaining bonding and bridging social capital in the community. Additionally, some service clubs may be started that specifically bill themselves as a multicultural club, intentionally recruiting a diverse membership, while also being inclusive of mainstream community.

Sport

One of the most popular ways for people from different cultural backgrounds to interact in smaller cities is through sport participation. Sports were named as the context in which every day multicultural interactions are a regular part of life in these cities. Sport is seen by local residents of Shepparton and Mildura as a vital part of rural life, and as something that always has been. Importantly, sport has the potential to play a large role in social cohesion. If included, newer community members can gain a sense of belonging while getting to know more established community members. Sport leagues, associations and teams with diverse participants help establish friendship bonds between people from different cultural backgrounds. There are opportunities for mentoring, and engaging people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Other communities can tap into this potential by actively building diverse teams, associations and leagues, and supporting people from all parts of the community, particularly youth, in participating in sport.

Recommendation 12:

Sports leagues and individual teams should consider initiatives to recruit and financially support children and youth, especially females, from CALD and Indigenous backgrounds to participate.

Schools

With some primary and secondary schools in Shepparton and Mildura having high numbers of CALD, Indigenous, and low socio-economic students, these are places where every day multicultural interactions take place. Though they are not without challenges, schools with these demographics are one of the most significant places where people from differing cultural backgrounds are able to interact on a daily basis. There are positive lessons about the potential schools have for cultivating social cohesion. The efforts and innovations of the schools' administrations, principals, teachers, programs, and community collaborations are responsible for these schools' successes in Shepparton and Mildura. There have been notable proactive attempts to build cross-cultural understanding and

appreciation. The schools run regular cultural celebration programs, where student leaders are encouraged and supported in organising displays, dances, or demonstrations, to offer other students a glimpse of their culture. There are educational and awareness programs focused on Koori culture, which have had a particularly influential impact on all the students, including the Indigenous students. They also have staff appointed as Indigenous and multicultural aids, or multicultural education assistants who work with students as well as train and educate other staff in cultural competency as professional development.

The English Language Centres based at the schools in Shepparton and Mildura work with refugee and migrant children from numerous cultural backgrounds. Such centres are invaluable in assisting children and youth to learn and prepare for participation in schooling, as well as feel a sense of belonging in the community. There are a myriad of small daily settlement needs that the staff and friends at the English Language Centres provide, in addition to the regular work of teaching English.

There is also a lesson about a trend away from social cohesion in the schools. The 'white flight' phenomenon, described by interviewees, results in some schools with children from non-diverse, more privileged families and other schools with more children from diverse and under-privileged families. This largely results from loose school zoning regulations. This is a barrier to social cohesion, and social equity. It keeps many children from having the opportunity to interact with others from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, and it concentrates many of the city's economic, social, and cultural capital resources in particular schools.

Recommendation 13:

Regions should consider enforcing zoning policies that encourage a broader mix of cultural and socio-economic backgrounds in all of the local public schools. It is widely known that school zoning policies have an impact on the demographics of public schools. In multicultural regional cities like Shepparton and Mildura, open zoning, in which families have practically unrestricted choice about where to send their children for school (depending on availability of places in desired schools), can easily lead to a concentration of the least advantaged and the most diverse at some public schools, with the most advantaged and the most established groups in the community at the other schools. This phenomenon is a barrier to social cohesion insofar as it reinforces cultural boundaries and socio-economic divisions and inequalities.

Recommendation 14:

Public schools with diverse student bodies should be funded by government to employ multicultural and Indigenous education assistants to work with students and to help train staff in cultural competency.
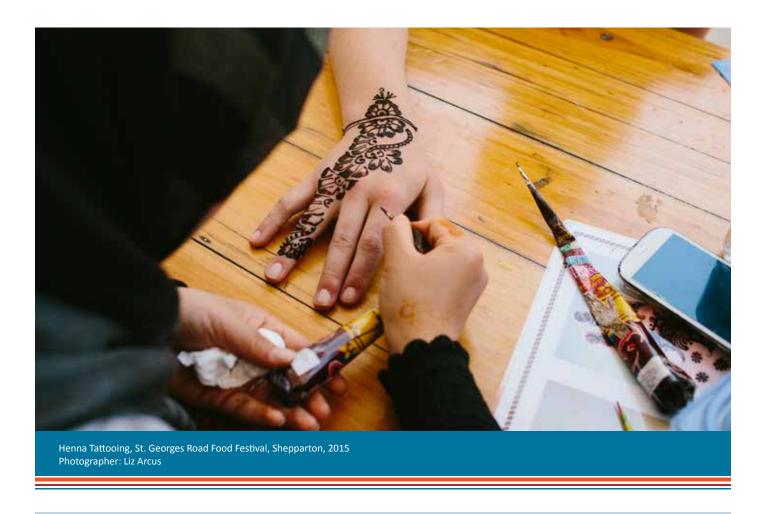
University and TAFE

Communities with university and/or TAFE campuses have valuable resources for social cohesion, in their capacity to provide education and training opportunities, developing their workforce to targeted needs. These regional institutions for higher education have an opportunity to direct their services to meet the needs and interests of growing multicultural communities. They can have a significant role in economic development of the region, which provides opportunities and thereby supports social cohesion. There is need for a general investment and expansion of study options to meet the needs of continually developing local economies, as well as for providing opportunities for locals, particularly those in the CALD and Aboriginal communities, who would prefer to stay in the local area for higher education. Expanding and targeting study options builds skills of locals, and can be targeted to suit needs of horticultural and agricultural based economies. There are lessons for the promotion of social cohesion from these institutions in Shepparton and Mildura. Examples include celebrating communities' diversity through hosting multicultural events, as well as Aboriginal events such as NAIDOC Week. The campuses also have strong academic and language support for students with English as an additional language.

> **Recommendation 15:**
>
> **Cities like Shepparton and Mildura should consider, in consultation with local government and other key agencies, including business and industry, how to expand study options at Universities and TAFEs to meet the needs of developing local industries. Cities without these resources can consider other ways to build training and assessment programs, for instance, training certification programs run through companies and local businesses.**

Local Leadership

One of the crucial factors in social cohesion is good community leadership. Local leadership development programs offer opportunities for people, including youth, CALD, and Aboriginal community members, to have a positive influence within the wider community. Such programs offer the type of bridging and bonding social capital that allows people to build opportunities for themselves and those in their communities. Programs like those run by the Fairley Foundation, by the leader of the Goulburn Valley Communities Congolese Association, the Northern Mallee Leadership program, MDAS' Indigenous leadership programs, and others, all contribute to a growing pool of highly trained and capable leaders. The programs build confidence and engagement with others from different backgrounds. Leadership program graduates take their training into their work, their personal lives, and their involvement with the community.

Henna Tattooing, St. Georges Road Food Festival, Shepparton, 2015
Photographer: Liz Arcus

Recommendation 16:

Communities should pursue and develop programs that answer to the different leadership and mentoring needs of their diverse communities, including among young people, Indigenous people, and representatives of newer immigrant communities, through the development and funding of specific, targeted leadership programs.

Cultural festivals and events

An important element of multicultural social cohesion is the active effort to celebrate multiculturalism and diversity of cultures, through specific locally organised festivals. These events hold an important place in the minds of community members and encourage them to see their community as having a multicultural identity. This helps foster a shared vision of the identity and the values of the community. These events allow people to share their culture with others, which improves understanding and acceptance of multicultural diversity in the community. Such events can be large scale or small scale, planned by local councils and/or by smaller community groups.

In all cases they provide opportunities for inter-cultural interaction, learning, and social bonding. Importantly, these events allow those participating in them to celebrate their culture and cultural practices for themselves. For CALD community members, they are opportunities to remember, practice, and celebrate their culture of origin within their own community. When these events are held in public spaces they are seen as inviting to the wider community.

Recommendation 17:

Federal, state and local governments should continue to support and provide funding, including longer term funding, for multicultural and related events and celebrations at the local community level. Federal and state governments should demonstrate a high level of support for multiculturalism through these events. The success stories from these events should be widely communicated.

Champions of local multiculturalism

The connection between agencies is often facilitated through personal social networks of local activists, and of people who 'wear several hats'. This is a well-established phenomenon of Australia's smaller country towns, for example as explained by Ken Dempsey (1990) in his community study *Smalltown*. People who show talent for leadership, whether it be in local business or the not-for profit sector, are invariably called upon by other organisations. People bump into each other on the street or at social events, providing opportunity to personally approach and encourage others to help out in community affairs. These are community members who, through their various roles and social networks, take it upon themselves to build social cohesion through their attitudes and their efforts. They assist in organising events, befriend neighbours from CALD backgrounds, volunteer, and use their influence to effect positive changes, to name just a few things. At the St. Georges Road Food Festival in Shepparton, we noticed that many of these people we heard about, met, and/or interviewed over the course of our six months of research were in attendance. They were dotted throughout the crowd, volunteering, or simply enjoying the event, like an unseen web of committed and caring individuals, determined to support and enjoy their city's multiculturalism.

Recommendation 18:

Cities should encourage and acknowledge community members and leaders who actively engage in multicultural contexts, interacting with and assisting people across cultural differences. These types of people can be held up as role models exemplifying the values that the community wants to foster.

Employment and unemployment

Shepparton and Mildura both have some employment issues, linked with a need for economic development, that present challenges to social cohesion. Due to changes in the horticulture and agriculture industries, and other economic changes, it is no longer a given that economic stability and/or mobility is available to anyone who pursues it. Financial stability and ability to participate are essential for a successful city, and focus on the economic infrastructure of a community can have a large impact on other elements of social cohesion. If a city or region has high levels of unemployment, this needs to be addressed with high priority (in conjunction with economic development), to improve all community members' capacity to participate economically. Cities like Shepparton and Mildura face issues of unemployment, underemployment, youth unemployment, losing highly skilled community members due to a lack of suitable skilled jobs, and issues for refugees, other migrants, and Indigenous people in securing ongoing employment. These are complex and difficult issues to address, but they are closely linked with the social cohesion of the entire community and require attention from policy makers, federal, state, and local governments.

> **Recommendation 19:**
>
> **Employment challenges for CALD and Indigenous communities need to be addressed with high priority. Issues around discrimination, English language training, and misconceptions about newer migrants all need to be addressed in order to assist in the settlement and community reception of newer arrivals. Federal, state and local governments should offer incentives for employers, large and small, who implement proactive strategies for hiring employees from the CALD and Aboriginal communities. Development of such strategies should emphasise the economic benefits to businesses if they make this effort. There is also scope for larger considerations around skilled migrants and refugees who are unable to work in their field due to challenges with transferring skills, i.e. the establishment of locally-based panels for assessing skills and targeted need for further training.**

Housing

Recent immigrants, refugees, and Indigenous Australians face barriers to accessing housing in regional cities like Shepparton and Mildura. These community members' experience of settlement, reception and acceptance into the community is very important to the social cohesion of the whole community. Efforts can be made to educate community members and real estate agents about the needs and value of newer arrivals, as well as Indigenous people, to the community and the housing market. Such efforts in Shepparton and Mildura (for example, in conjunction with DHHS) have begun to ameliorate some, but not all, of the ongoing discrimination faced by newer community members in securing housing.

Anti-racism/discrimination campaigns

Racism and discrimination are serious barriers to social cohesion. Many regional cities like Shepparton and Mildura have to contend with ongoing prejudicial attitudes and actions. This was seen by some interviewees as a large issue, and some suggested it was a relatively small, though nevertheless damaging, issue. Regardless of the extent, racism and discrimination compromise trust, shared values, social justice and equity, participation, and acceptance and dignity for people in communities. Indigenous and CALD community members are often the main targets of racism. There are lessons from the efforts to combat racism, such as the LEAD program run by Greater Shepparton City Council, anti-racism programs run for local schools, cultural awareness training for local council employees and councillors and for other community agencies and local businesses, and media campaigns against racism. These and other similar efforts help address examples of racism and discrimination found in otherwise welcoming, multicultural cities.

Small-scale intercultural social activities

Socially cohesive multicultural societies are made up of many every day interactions between people from differing cultural backgrounds. These interpersonal interactions build trust, identification with the community, social networks, and mutual understanding and respect. A lesson from Shepparton and Mildura suggests that small-scale activities, organised around shared interests, have a much larger positive impact. School, sport, some religious institutions, cultural festivals, and work offer important opportunities for mixing, but the near consensus was that,

Multicultural Sewing Group, Kildonan Uniting Care, Shepparton, 2014
Photographer: Liz Arcus

for the majority of residents in these cities, there were not enough opportunities for regular, meaningful intercultural interaction. There were several examples of small-scale activities in Shepparton and Mildura that brought people together and, due to the shared interest, helped overcome challenges such as language barriers, nervousness, or discomfort at meeting new people. Community and neighbourhood houses, and Men's Sheds, are the kinds of mainstream venues where such interactions might occur more often.

Recommendation 22:

Local agencies should seek to organise and run numerous smaller social activities, centred on shared interests, which bring together community members from different cultural backgrounds. These smaller opportunities for social interaction fill some of the gaps in opportunity for meaningful intercultural interaction.

Local orientation programs

Our research indicates that most new arrivals to regional cities like Shepparton and Mildura have a keen desire to become active and known members of the community. There are, however, challenges to this type of social integration that arise as a result of misunderstandings and/or conflicts between differing cultural practices

and perceptions. Such challenges often arise from lack of knowledge, differing expectations, and cultural misunderstandings. There are difficulties in getting to know local cultural and social norms and expectations. Established community members can easily misinterpret misunderstandings as a lack of new arrivals' interest in knowing or being known in the community. There is a need for new arrivals to be oriented to using public services and in understanding legal systems, rights, and responsibilities. There are intercultural challenges in educational settings as well. Intergenerational conflict sometimes results from parents' sense that their children are losing their culture, particularly from influences at school. Orientation programs run by agencies, local councils, religious institutions, and others all go toward addressing the need for more directed and explicit education about life in the community for new arrivals. The same can be said for a need for cultural awareness on the part of the wider community, for both understanding of the specific cultural groups settling in the community as well as a general knowledge and patience regarding the difficulties that new arrivals must negotiate as they settle in.

Recommendation 23:

Local integration programs should be developed to orient new arrivals to cultural norms and practices in local communities, in order to facilitate settlement and to avoid unnecessary cultural misunderstandings. If conducted by locals, this would also build initial networks of familiarity and trust between people from different cultures and people from mainstream communities. Local councils, agencies, and religious institutions should all consider collaborations for implementing programs for orienting newcomers to the local culture. These would ideally run as a series over several years, since the settlement process continues to take place well after the initial arrival. Education about Indigenous and CALD cultures should also be a priority. Shepparton's locally organised 'Know My Culture' series is a great example of a local education initiative.

These lessons and recommendations from our study of two multicultural, socially cohesive Victorian regional cities have the potential to encourage social cohesion in communities that are, or aim to become, multicultural. A typical assumption is that large metropolitan cities are best suited to cosmopolitan acceptance and celebration of diversity and multiculturalism. However, the findings from this project demonstrate that smaller, regional cities, even cities relatively isolated from major metropolitan centres (in the case of Mildura) can function as successful multicultural cities that are also socially cohesive. The fact that cities like Mildura and Shepparton are as socially cohesive as the evidence from our qualitative research suggests, in the face of economic problems and experiences of entrenched disadvantage, and have avoided thus far signs of major ethnic or racial conflict, tells us that there is something going right in these places. Our research findings suggest a hopeful story about the potential capacity of smaller communities to settle people from many different cultural backgrounds while fostering social cohesion. There are lessons for other regional communities in particular, because this is about the way that small cities operate, and the potential strengths of small communities and the opportunities for everyday interaction.

Appendices

Appendix 1

History of Shepparton and Mildura as multicultural places

The modern town of Shepparton began as a sheep station in the late 1830s and then as a small settlement associated with a river crossing ('McGuire's Punt') on the Goulburn River in the early 1850s for people travelling to the Bendigo and Ballarat goldfields. The town is named after Sherbourne Sheppard, an early land holder. It was originally known as Sheppardstown, and officially became Shepparton in 1860 (Michael 1988, p. 6). There were fewer than thirty squatters in the area up until the late 1860s (Michael 1988, p. 15). The large sheep runs were a feature of the area up until the 1880s and 1890s when, after a series of new land acts (including selection acts and closer settlement acts, from the 1860s onward), the land that had been opened up and cleared proved useful for wheat, fruit and vines (Allom Lovell and Associates 2004; Michael 1988, Ch.2; Dingle 1984). The early pastoralists and horticulturalists were mainly of British backgrounds. At the end of World War I, small blocks were created under the *Discharged Soldier Settlement Act* of 1917, and this greatly increased the production of canned fruit (Allom Lovell and Associates 2004). Subsequent soldier settlements after World War II added to these small holdings.

Transport developments increased the growth of Shepparton, such as the railways from the 1860s, and Shepparton becoming an important stopover for the Echuca paddlesteamer in the 1870s and 1880s. By that stage Shepparton had become a much more established town (Allom Lovell and Associates 2004). There was important growth and development in the early 1900s, with the establishment of large scale irrigation. Irrigation had developed in the 1880s and 1890s, with important innovations from local farmers; but there was important, and costly expansion of irrigation in the Shepparton district in 1910, with a major financial contribution from the Victorian state government (Michael 1988, p. 25, and Ch. 4); and irrigation remains a vital feature of Shepparton's agricultural system (for example, there was another major State and Federal government improvement initiative for the Goulburn Valley irrigation system in 2008, reflecting how important the Goulburn Valley is to Victorian and Australian food production).

Shepparton and the area continued to grow in the interwar years, a period when many dairy farms and orchards were established, and some of these were bought or established by recent European migrants. There was even more significant growth and development during and after the Second World War, which also included further important migrations.

Multi-ethnic migration was an important feature of Greater Shepparton's earlier history. For example, Chinese migrants attracted by Victoria's 1850s gold rushes also settled near Tatura where they created market gardens (Allom Lovell and Associates 2004, p. 33). From 1913 immigrants arrived from Palestine, and Jews arrived from Russia just prior to the outbreak of the First World War, establishing a farming settlement at Shepparton East; this Jewish 'colony' was probably the 'first significant ethnic transplant' in the Shepparton area (Michael 1988, p. 59). In the 1920s and 1930s Albanians and Greeks arrived in the area, established orchards and contributed greatly to fruit growing and canning. Several of these families went on to be very successful orchardists and business people in Shepparton (Michael 1988). The availability of relatively cheap land, and the opportunity to engage in less capital intensive tomato farming before expanding into fruit growing and dairying, were important factors allowing such successful settlement of migrants, who soon established themselves as families whose sons and daughters proceeded to other successful professional and business careers in Shepparton and beyond (Michael 1988; Missingham et al 2004).

Of note also are the forced migrations of Germans and Italians who were interned near Shepparton during World War II, at internment camps at Tatura and Murchison. These included thousands of German and Italian prisoners of war from North Africa and the Middle East, as well as detained 'enemy aliens' from Australia, representing 23 different nationalities (Allom Lovell and Associates 2004, p. 35; Michael 1988, pp. 61-2). Some prisoners of war who had been repatriated returned to Australia with their families as immigrants, settling in the Goulburn Valley (Michael 1988, p. 63). Oral history interviews with Italians who lived in the Shepparton area between the two world wars indicate that the small number of Italians faced local resentment and prejudice, but were not overly aware of it, because they were often so busy with work and also were isolated on farms and had little everyday contact with non-Italians. The war years however heightened prejudices and discrimination against Italians, though even then isolation on farms or out in the bush timber-cutting meant that there were less opportunities to experience overt forms of prejudice and discrimination (Pagone 1985).

Italians and Yugoslavs arrived in relatively large numbers during and after World War II, along with Greeks, Albanians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians and Macedonians. Some of these families became important, and wealthy, orchardists, and the owners of local small businesses, such as pubs, hotels and nightclubs, clothing stores, restaurants and cafes. Ethnic organisations were created including the Albanian Muslim Society Shepparton, the Shepparton Italian Social Club, and a branch of the Macedonian-Australian People's League. The Albanian Mosque was built in the late 1950s, and a Greek Orthodox Church in the 1970s.

By 1981, statistics reveal that 11.5% of Shepparton's population was born overseas, and a third of these in Italy, who represented a large ethnic minority when their Australian born children were added (Michael 1988, p. 129). The Italian influence has been marked in Shepparton, including through the craft work of Italian builders giving a particular architectural style to Shepparton's buildings and houses (Michael 1988, p. 129). In the late 1980s 40% of Greater Shepparton's population had non Anglo-Celtic names (Michael 1988, p. 153). In the mid 1970s the Shepparton City Council committed to establishing an 'International Village' as a major tourist attraction celebrating Shepparton's multicultural history. After much initial optimism and public commitment from the Victorian state government, Shepparton City Council, and the Shepparton Rotary Club (that assumed leadership of the project), and the initial establishment of several buildings and gardens, the enterprise eventually foundered due to lack of sufficient funding and lack of local commitment, including from local immigrant communities (Michael 1988, pp. 117-20). However, the very attempt at such an ambitious project illustrates how much Shepparton's leaders and residents already recognised, by the early 1970s, the important contribution that multi-ethnic immigration had made to Shepparton. In the words of the Mayor, Cr. Riordan, at the time, 'The Village would create an outstanding tourist attraction and would indicate Shepparton's appreciation of the contribution made to our way of life by new Australians' (quoted in Michael 1988, p. 118). The Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District (ECSD) was established in 1978 as a non-profit organisation with officials elected from local ethnic communities.

Though large pastoral runs such as the Jamieson brothers' Yerre Yerre and Irymple leases traversed the Mildura area from the 1850s (Linn 2009), Mildura emerged as a town later than Shepparton, in the late 1880s when the Canadian Chaffee brothers gained government support to set up an irrigation colony in the area, and attracted settlers through the promotional tract *The Red Book*, distributed in 1889. The aim was to attract British immigrants who were capable of becoming independent farmers in what was promoted as a great experiment. The settlement experience was strongly influenced by Victorian government planning. Mildura was created as a temperance colony, and also inspired by utopian visions, including the promise of turning 'a desert-like, sandy, hot wasteland into a lush garden and fruit bowl' (Linn 2009, p. 14). These visions were severely challenged and tested by isolation, the harsh reality of the land, the Depression of the 1890s, settlers' anger and disillusionment with the Chaffey brothers, and the Royal Commission into the colony in 1896. But the settlement survived, and the arrival of the railway in 1903 further enhanced Mildura's capacity to export its produce (Hamilton-McKenzie 2010; Parsons 1990; Linn 2009).

Like Shepparton, Mildura experienced significant waves of European migration from early in the twentieth century: Greeks after World War I; Italians and Yugoslavs (including Croatians) from the 1920s, and then Turks from the early 1970s. There were early tensions between British settlers and some of those from new European source countries during the 1920s, and one historian reports concerted efforts from the local newspaper the *Sunraysia Daily* and locals to force Greek and Italian immigrants to return to Melbourne (Parsons 1990, p. 245). Some locals were sympathetic, but there were no resources to ease settlement. Tensions and problems were exacerbated by the Great Depression, and this included racist taunting of 'foreign' children at school, resulting in Greek and Yugoslav children refusing to

speak their native language (Parsons 1990, pp. 246-47). But the 1930s also saw the creation of ethnic clubs, such as the branch of the Yugoslav club 'Gubec Matija', later the Yugoslav Community Club, Mildura. Parsons (1990) writes that a turning point in relations occurred in the late 1930s after the Yugoslav community built its own meeting hall, which was also used by other people in Mildura, for local dances, and for the annual hospital benefit function.

Relations gradually improved between Mildura locals and diverse newcomers after World War II, with new waves of immigrants coming in (Parsons 1990). This period also saw the creation of important ethnic clubs and associations, the setting up of a Greek school, the creation of public halls that served ethnic communities, and later explicitly multicultural associations, and greater involvement of people from different migrant backgrounds in local life and affairs. Though there were inter-ethnic tensions, Parsons quotes from a local Greek migrant who noted that significant Greek involvement as 'blockies' meant greater acceptance amongst other 'blockies'. Parsons also cites examples of Greek pickers introducing new skills to their employers, such as methods for cold dipping dried fruits that produced higher quality product. Italians, by contrast, who mixed more as workers, were more likely to be involved in fights with other workers in town (Parsons 1990, pp. 229-32). Italians, Parsons notes, arrived as itinerant workers in the 1920s and 1930s, and had no experience of working collectively on fruit blocks, so were not as involved in small block farming in Mildura as were the Greeks. Some also suffered internment as enemy aliens during World War II. But later, Italian migrants did become important local fruit growers.

Turkish people only started arriving in the early 1970s, mainly attracted by work in the dried fruit industry, and by the mid-1970s some families had managed to buy their own blocks (Parsons 1990, p. 251). Many arrived in Australia without being able to speak English, and language barriers were a major problem, including for finding anything beyond the most menial work. When Turkish families did manage to buy land, some locals suspected that they did this through profit from illegal activities like drug cultivation and trafficking (Parsons 1990, p. 253); this was one of the widespread prejudices that Turkish migrants to the area were commonly confronted with, as recorded in local interview-based memoirs such as *The Struggle*, and in Parsons' own interviews for the book (Parsons 1990, p. 254). The Turkish people had already created their own clubs by the 1980s, and opened their own Mosque in 1984. In 1980 the local radio station 3MA invited local ethnic communities to broadcast in their own languages (Parsons 1990, p. 250), and the first Yugoslav broadcasts occurred that year.

After a severe hailstorm affected migrants, especially of Turkish origin (Parsons 1990, p. 240), whose crops were destroyed, the Mildura Shire Council formed the Sunraysia Ethnic Advisory Council in 1977 which became later the Sunraysia Ethnic Communities Council Incorporated (SECC) in 1988, reflecting the fact that it had moved beyond an advisory role. The SECC took on many roles, including looking after communities' needs, employing welfare workers, running local radio programs, advocating for the establishment of SBS television in Mildura, and organising and running important celebratory events. SECC later became the Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council (SMECC) which is now a major agency in Mildura playing a key role in settlement services.

Appendix 2

What we know about social cohesion in Shepparton and Mildura from previous research

Robert Putnam's (2000) concept of and arguments about social capital have been very influential among researchers writing about social cohesion, including in the Australian context. In this Appendix we provide a brief survey of some of the previous research findings on social capital and community well-being in Shepparton and Mildura.

As discussed in the Introduction, Carrington and Marshall (2007, 2008) argued that Shepparton had good levels of bonding and bridging social capital among ethnic organisations that contributed to successful immigration settlement outcomes. There was extensive volunteering in Shepparton to help with the settlement of new migrants, and the local media played an important role in writing favourably about local ethnic affairs. There were many social events and activities that celebrated Shepparton's social and cultural diversity.

Carrington and Marshall nevertheless stressed the need for greater development of 'institutional social capital', referring in this context to the capacities and actions of local government to provide a facilitating framework of administrative, fiscal, policy processes and actions to complement and interact with the broader 'community frameworks of interaction' (Carrington and Marshall 2008, p. 119), which they argued was necessary for provincial centres 'to evolve into vibrant, sustainable, multicultural communities' (Carrington and Marshall 2008, p. 118). In this respect, they noted that the links between the ethnic communities and local council were not very well established, with at the time of writing no councillors from ethnic backgrounds, and little evidence in council publications of services oriented to the needs of migrant groups, including newer communities (Carrington and Marshall 2008, p. 124). As we have found in our study, this situation has changed since the time of this article, influenced by the Council's partnership with VicHealth in the Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD) pilot, and as evident in Greater Shepparton Council creating the 'Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan, 2012-2015' (discussed in Chapter 2 of this report).

Rob Hudson (2011) from the Brotherhood of St. Laurence has reported on social capital in Shepparton, compiling and discussing findings from government surveys of community well-being and related social indicators, and other sources indicating disadvantage and education performance. He paints a less rosy picture of Shepparton's levels of social capital than that presented by Carrington and Marshall. He framed his paper with a case study of a Shepparton soccer club whose members came from mainly Sudanese, Afghan, Iraqi and Congolese backgrounds.

The disadvantage and social and economic isolation of the club's membership, and the relative absence of important forms of social capital among its members, meant that they have had difficulty remaining afloat, and Hudson points out that the sporting club is one of the only avenues through which people from these backgrounds interact directly with the mainstream community.

Like Carrington and Marshall, Hudson also emphasised the importance of 'institutional social capital' – which he termed 'linking social capital': 'Linking social capital is the relationships people have with those in power. Linking social capital enables individuals and community groups to leverage resources, ideas and information from formal institutions beyond the community such as government' (Hudson 2011, p. 6). He also notes that bridging social capital is especially important for building tolerant, cohesive communities, and there is much research to support his claim about the capacity of racial and ethnic stereotypes to flourish in environments where there is separation between groups (low bridging capital), as there is little experience to undermine such negative views of others.

Reporting on Victorian government social capital surveys (2004, 2006, 2008), and in particular the 2008 survey, Hudson notes that Shepparton scored worse on 13 of the 19 community indicators than the rest of regional Victoria, and on 10 of 19 indicators compared to the rest of Victoria (Hudson 2011, p. 14). One indicator that stood out across the 2004, 2006 and 2008 surveys was that 'More Shepparton residents than in Victoria as a whole felt unsafe on the streets after dark'. Hudson argued that this might relate to higher rates of crime against the person in Shepparton, compared to the rest of Victoria, and also the higher levels than for Victoria as a whole of youths aged 15-19 who were not engaged in work or education, who were very visible on the streets during the day and night, and who were also overrepresented in crime statistics. In the 2008 survey it was also found that more Shepparton residents than for Victoria as a whole 'felt that multiculturalism didn't make life in the area better', and felt less valued by society. These findings about views of multiculturalism are significant for this Report. In 2004 Shepparton residents were far more likely than the rest of Victoria to think that multiculturalism made the place better, but this finding had been reversed in later surveys, including in 2008, and in 2007 Shepparton residents were far less likely to agree with the view that it was good for society to be made up of different cultures. Hudson concluded that this had something to do with the changing mix of immigrants to Shepparton, including fewer Europeans and New Zealanders, and much larger numbers from Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan and Congo, and the sharp rise in people of Muslim faith, which had gone from 1.5% of Shepparton's population in 1996, to 4.8% by the 2006 Census.

On the other hand, Hudson pointed out that there were positive signs of social capital in Shepparton that indicated a strong basis for improvement in social capital and social cohesion. For example, when compared with the rest of Victoria:

• More Shepparton residents thought they lived in an active community, with people getting involved in local issues and activities, than the rest of Victoria.

- More thought there was a wide range of groups to join.

- More thought there were opportunities to volunteer in local groups.

- More (many more), participated in local sport than other Victorians.

- More had been members of organised groups that had taken local action.

- More had been volunteers (Hudson 2011, p. 14).

For their Perceptions of Multiculturalism and Security in Victoria Report to the Department of Premier and Cabinet (Lentini et al 2009), Monash University researchers Pete Lentini, Anna Halafoff and Ela Ogru did two focus groups in each of Shepparton and Mildura with 'mainstream Australians', as part of a larger focus group study of metropolitan and rural Victoria in the late 2000s. Although based on only two focus groups in Shepparton, Lentini et al highlight negative views of Muslims expressed in those focus groups, as well as the view that Muslims were keeping to themselves and not doing enough to integrate into Australian society. They note that some people commented that Muslims were a 'negative presence in their neighbourhoods' (Lentini et al 2009, p. 32). Focus groups in other areas also expressed such views, but the theme was less prominent in the Mildura focus groups. However, it was noted that some participants of one of Mildura's focus groups, when asked about threats to social harmony, said that 'non-Christians were creating problems within the state and Australia' (Lentini et al 2009, p. 22).

Shepparton and Mildura were included with other areas as expressing the view that newer migrants were not doing enough to learn English, or that governments were not doing enough to force them to learn English, and this was considered by them to be the biggest threat to social harmony in Australia. More positively, Mildura was also highlighted as expressing the view, in its two focus groups, that the experience with successful migration and gradual inclusion of ethnic groups into the broader community gave them confidence in social harmony being a continuing achievement in their community (Lentini et al 2009, p. 21). Mildura focus groups also praised highly the diversity of their community (Lentini et al 2009, p. 20).

The Scanlon Foundation's 2013 Mapping Social Cohesion Local Areas Report included Shepparton as one of the five local areas surveyed (two metropolitan, and three regional). All five areas were chosen because they were ranked among the 20% most disadvantaged local areas of Australia. The authors note that the Scanlon Foundation surveys have consistently found that disadvantaged areas score lower on the social cohesion index (Markus 2014b, p. 17).

In this survey, Shepparton performed only marginally lower than the rest of Australia in terms of the composite Scanlon-Monash Index (SMI) of Social Cohesion, at 2.5 points less. When examining the different domains, it was

slightly higher than the national average on political participation, was higher on belonging, equal for sense of worth, a little lower for acceptance (rejection), but performed much worse for 'Social justice and equity', at 16 points less. It is also relevant to look at answers to specific questions, such as those used to tap attitudes to immigration and cultural diversity. Here Shepparton had more negative attitudes than the national average on some questions. For example, while 56% of the national population 'disagree with government funding to ethnic minorities for cultural maintenance', 67% in Shepparton disagreed; while 42% of the national population believed that 'immigration is too high', 52% in Shepparton believed this; 31% of people from Shepparton felt negatively about immigrants from Iraq, while 22% was the national average; 33% of Shepparton residents had a negative personal attitude towards Muslims, which was high in itself and a cause for concern, but we cannot compare this with the rest of the population, as this question was not asked in the 2013 national survey. In this respect, Shepparton's negative attitude was lower than that of three of the other local areas surveyed (Markus 2014b, p. 34). On feeling that most people could be trusted, Shepparton's level of agreement was 35%, well below the national average of 45% (Markus 2014b, p. 26).

One has to bear in mind that disadvantaged areas are expected to score lower for social cohesion. As a worker with refugees and asylum seekers in Shepparton commented:

> One of the things that I think Shepparton has done ... Well, I don't know how it's been done, but something that really surprises me is that Shepparton is actually quite a disadvantaged community socially, socio-economically. Sort of history and experience would tell us probably there's likely to be more conflict or disharmony or such, but it doesn't seem to be as prevalent up here. It's quite amazing. It's quite unique.

The statistics for community strength for Shepparton and Mildura available from the Community Indicators Victoria (partnered by VicHealth) website (http://www.communityindicators.net.au/wellbeing_reports) draw on multiple relevant indicators from different surveys, conducted between 2006 and 2011. On most indicators of community strength, with some important exceptions, both places do just below, as well as, or slightly better than Victoria. An interesting parallel between Shepparton and Mildura is that both places are well below the average for feeling safe walking in the street alone at night – more than 20 points below the average for either their region (Hume for Shepparton, Mallee for Mildura) or for Victoria as a whole. Police interviewed in this project for both Shepparton and Mildura felt that this situation had improved in recent years, and that the perceptions might relate to issues of street violence in the past.

Appendix 3

Methodology of the study (long version)

To address the three main aims of the project we first conducted an extensive review of historical and social scientific literature, the grey literature of government and policy networks, relevant federal, state and local government policies and programs, and, aided by a La Trobe University Hallmark student, we conducted a survey of media reporting on issues concerning multiculturalism, migration, and Indigenous issues in the local newspapers The Shepparton News and The Sunraysia Daily over the last 5 years. This literature review was delivered to VMC in June 2015, and published on the VMC website.

Second, we conducted extensive fieldwork, using qualitative methods and approaches including interviews, focus groups, observation and informal conversations. Our sampling method was purposive rather than random and representative. We drew up a list of key organisations and potential informants and consulted with VMC about the list. As the fieldwork progressed, we found additional informants through the advice of key informants who we interviewed, with the aim being to maximise the diversity of our sample. We included a smaller number of community members who were not sampled from local organisations and agencies; these we found through local contacts, word of word, and sometimes by chance encounters, during our fieldtrips.

The two researchers made a total of twenty fieldtrips (each 2-4 days), eleven to Shepparton and nine to Mildura between April and September 2015. We conducted 78 formal, recorded interviews with people in government and non-government agencies and organisations, local businesses, and in the general community typically with one person, but sometimes with two people, and each between one and two hours duration. We formally interviewed or spoke to people from a wide range of organisations, including Victoria Police, Victorian Government agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Justice and Regulation, local councils (including councillors, and council officers/managers), ethnic councils (CEOs/Managers, workers, volunteers), ethnic associations/societies, an Interfaith Network, Aboriginal organisations, welfare agencies, health agencies and services, universities and TAFEs, English Language Centres, AMES, local secondary and primary schools, local businesses, a sports club, churches, mosques and temples, philanthropic organisations, and service clubs (i.e. Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis). Among these 78 formal interviews were interviews with 15 community members in Shepparton and 19 community members in Mildura who were not interviewed as key informants from agencies, and these included people from Anglo, CALD, refugee, and Aboriginal backgrounds (many of these people were nevertheless involved in an agency, or a voluntary organisation). All our key informants in organisations and agencies were also community members in Shepparton and Mildura, and in

addition to asking them about their work role and the work of their organisation in the community, we also asked them about their experiences as community members.

For formal interviews we used a semi-structured interview guide. We designed two related interview guides, one for key informants in agencies/organisations, and one for community members. Apart from questions about the work of agencies, we asked questions aimed at discussing the key dimensions of social cohesion in multicultural environments. Interviews explored: perceptions and feelings about what it is like to live in Shepparton and Mildura; experiences of social change in Shepparton and Mildura, and how people felt about this (what kinds of change were noticeable? How had recent experiences with inward migration been perceived?); people's interactions with diverse others in formal and informal situations; perceptions of, and feelings about, social and cultural differences; the ways that people handled cultural difference in their local lives; views and opinions about the social and ethnic mix of Shepparton and Mildura; issues of belonging for different groups; experiences of, and views and feelings about, local inequalities and disadvantage, and perceptions of their causes; perceptions and experiences of racism and discrimination; views about the success or otherwise of multiculturalism and social cohesion in Shepparton and Mildura; and views about intercultural and other conflicts and tensions, and about intercultural mixing.

We also conducted focus groups with Shepparton Police (10 officers), welfare workers in Mildura (12 people, including senior managers), two groups of welfare volunteers/workers from CALD backgrounds, one in Mildura (4 people) and the other in Shepparton (3 people), a soccer club in Mildura (3 people), and a community house in Mildura (4 people). For focus groups we made some use of questions developed for our formal interviews, but also encouraged general discussion of issues concerning social cohesion and multiculturalism, including discussions of how well people from different groups related, belonged and mixed in the communities of Shepparton and Mildura. The focus groups at the community house in Mildura, and with Shepparton police, were recorded as fieldnotes, and the other focus groups were audio recorded and later transcribed.

Third, we conducted observational research. We had many informal discussions with local people on the street, in cafes and shops, and at social events where we also observed local social interactions. We attended community meetings and a meeting in Shepparton of the Hume Regional Advisory Council. We attended two community film screenings in Shepparton, one concerning refugee experiences and the other Afghani transnational marriage arrangements, at which we also spoke with community members, including people locally active in volunteering and supporting CALD and refugee communities. One of us attended another community film screening and panel discussion with Mildura speakers and attendees in Melbourne, launching a series of short films on multicultural, Indigenous and youth issues in Mildura, organised by the not for profit organisation Phunktional. One researcher attended NAIDOC Week events in Shepparton while the other attended NAIDOC Week events in Mildura. In Shepparton the researcher attended the Welcoming Breakfast at Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative, an historical/

cultural walking tour of the river flats between Mooroopna and Shepparton, led by a Yorta Yorta elder, an afternoon event at the Department of Justice and Regulation with police and Indigenous Department of Justice and Regulation workers, and a family Day at Bangerang Cultural Centre. In Mildura the researcher attended the NAIDOC Week opening ceremony at Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS), a community walk from MDAS to Mildura Rural City Council for an Aboriginal flag raising, and an all-day event in the mall. During this week the researcher also attended a soccer practice session where he observed young soccer players from diverse backgrounds and spoke with parents from various different cultural backgrounds. We spent a morning with workers, volunteers and students at the English Language Centre in Shepparton. We attended Anzac Day events in Shepparton, including the Dawn Service, the Anzac Day March and service in Memorial Park, and the Anzac Day lunch at the Shepparton RSL club. We attended a SMECC Open Day, and the St Georges Road Food Festival in Shepparton. We visited a Greek Senior Citizen's Club in Mildura and spoke with several members in a kind of informal focus group, and did the same at a community garden in Mildura where we spoke with Afghanis and others from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds, SMECC workers and volunteers, and health workers from a community health organisation. These observations were recorded as fieldnotes.

The analytic approach was qualitative and interpretive. Transcribed data from interviews and focus groups was entered into the computer software program NVivo, where it was coded for emergent themes, and in relation to our key research questions and aims (for example, looking at success factors for multiculturalism and social cohesion, issues and problems etc.). These codes were then analysed in relation to our three main research aims. The fieldnotes recorded by both researchers were also analysed in a similar manner.

Appendix 4

Full versions of quotes referred to in main body of report

2.3 Historical experience of CALD immigration

Mildura resident describing gradual integration of immigrants over time–

> It's early days [for some newer immigrant groups]. It takes three generations in my book. I was born here 77 years ago, so I've seen a bit happening. My view is that it takes three generations for a new ethnic group to finally settle in and be settled and accepted as part of this community. You dare not criticise an Italian for being such, or a Turk, or a Croatian or a Greek, it's because you're criticising your own community. Given three generations of Afghan Hazaras, the same will be obtaining. An Afghan guy's opened a little mini mart just down the street here…Another Iranian bloke has opened a barber's shop just down here. When that sort of thing happens and the kids go to school, or if they don't speak English they go to the English Language Centre ... We're blessed ...

A waiter who had moved to Mildura in the 1970s making a similar point–

> If you take a few generations you're looking at the Greeks and the Italians. All the Greeks and Italians propped together and slowly they want to spread out. They are already. There is no difference.

A local council officer in Shepparton felt that Shepparton's history of immigration contributed to people's general acceptance of newer immigrants –

> More broadly, I think Greater Shepparton is more accepting of that diversity. I think that stems from the long history of migration that we've had for a very long period of time, Greeks, Albanians. I think as a community, we've continued that over a long period of time. Not to mention our Aboriginal community that have been here long before us. They're supporting the heritage of this region.

2.4 Employment opportunities

Shepparton community member describing economic success of Italians and Afghans, in agriculture and horticulture–

> I got this from New England uni researchers. They interviewed fellows around here, farmers and so on, to find out what made things tick, why things go well. They told a story that they picked up from an orchardist here. He said he had an old Italian bloke working on the orchard just doing basic pruning and picking and all the rest of it. He said, this orchard is, was considered, the best, most successful grafter of fruit trees in the area here. He was doing some grafting one day and the old Italian guy was passing by. He came over and he said to him, 'oh', he said, 'what strike rate do you get with that kind of approach?' and the fellow said, 'oh, about 75 percent, something like that'. He said, 'we get 95 percent where I come from.' He asked the old fellow to show him how he did it. Now, that old Italian fellow became recognized as the specialist in the area. Probably illiterate but a hard working bloke with skills. He was a peasant. He knew how to look after animals, he knew how to look after growing...and look after trees. He was amazingly employable. He was immediately recognised with skills. He became part of Australian society.

> One day, I was over at, taking a Japanese student who was down here and she wanted to do some fruit picking, so I took her up to the agency. While I'm waiting to get her enrolled, two Afghanis turn up, young blokes. I said, 'well, oh, you from around here now?' They say, 'no, we fruit pick all over Australia', just move around, these two young blokes.

> I then picked it, the Afghanis are the same as the Italians. They understand rural life. They understand, they have the skills to work in a rural community. It was these things, those fellows and the general talk around here is, 'your Afghanis are great workers'.

Interviewee from an African refugee background in Shepparton, commenting on immigrants' work in agricultural industries–

> If you see now the majority of people who are really doing the abattoirs, milking industry, all those things are immigrants. A lot of immigrants, high number of people in the farm industries, contractors and subcontractors. There is a lot of people who are making money in that area. You contracted me in the farm, I will come and contract my uncle here as a subcontractor. We do your farm as you are. There is a lot of people coming from South Australia wherever to come and work for us to finish the job. Is become like a family food industry where all of us get a share in it. These are the people who are working now really hard. When the backpackers start coming in here, there is people who already working there and they're making money. At the end of harvest you will see five, six, seven people buying houses. We keep money in the area instead of going overseas or wherever it is. If you come during the fruit-farming days you will see a lot of African and Afghani and others who are working in those areas. If you go to every single meat industry here, you will see the cars which are there, they are a lot of Africans who are working in those areas.

Key informant from Mildura Labour hire firm, describing employment of Afghanis–

> In that first season we had a young guy come in, an Afghani guy. His English wasn't great but he came into the office and I had a good chat to him. Our branch manager came in afterwards because I wanted her to have a chat to him as well just to see what she thought about his English and whether that would be a problem or not out on site. In the end we decided to give him a go. He ended up being just fantastic, picked up all the machinery really well. He was obviously just keen as anything to work. From that point we employed a couple more through him. He had a few of his friends. They were like, 'Yeah, they have given me a job. Go and see them.' That's how we got onto SMECC as well, because we knew they'd have a lot of contact with those sort of guys. We spoke to Dean and he gave us a list of names and told the guys to come in and start having a chat to us. From there, I guess it blossomed and we got a few on. They did really well. They moved into better roles, I guess, so they weren't doing the really basic roles. They were moving into more operating machinery. By the second season the first guy was pretty much running a whole department…. He was doing really well.

2.5.2 Victoria Police

Police Superintendent in Mildura describing 'Project Ice'–

> The specific example I'll give you is where we saw an increase in the drug of ice and we'd had it analysed, I mean had the drugs that we were seizing analysed and we realised that we've got a new drug we've never heard of, 'Ice.' We went to the operational group [part of the Community Engagement Framework] and said, 'We think we've got a problem coming.' Now because of the maturity of the operational group it was agreed straight away because I'd done the rating on it that it was high levels of aggression, high levels of paranoia, higher levels of need for the drug. Immediately it was agreed, this is a wicked problem, it's something that the coppers aren't going to be able to fix on their own, health came straight away, education came straight away and so we developed, 'Project Ice,' which is the name of its own, a whole lot of work done by all agencies around education…It wasn't left to the coppers to try to police their way out of it, it was something where all the agencies came together and said 'this has to be a shared problem', but it happened in the click of a finger. As soon as we said, 'We've got a problem coming our way,' it was not having to build up the trust and the understanding. That was already there so we were able to drop straight into a commitment, which then allows you to make plans a lot quicker than what you would be if you were back at square one trying to build up the trust and understanding and too busy trying to prove that it's not something you can do on your own.

> I've given evidence at the parliamentary inquiry into Ice in rural Victoria and also to the nationalised task force and I think I can say that both areas have said in their reports that Project Ice is actually a great way to engage with communities and to engage with other agencies to make a difference. Now I've had superintendents

ring me up from all over Victoria and now coming from interstate as well, saying 'we've heard of Project Ice, how can I replicate it?' My answer is, 'Well you start today and you get an impact in about 7 or 8 years' time.' You have to build up that trust. It's just collaboration 101 ... We use it as a bit of a throwaway line, 'Well we'll collaborate on this.' You don't just click your fingers and say you're going to collaborate on this. It's taken a lot of time and energy, that having said a number of agency heads change, you know what hasn't changed? The concept of the community engagement framework, it's sustainable in the long term.

Mildura police officer discussing trust and community safety for CALD people–

We try really hard to work with other agencies to install confidence within the CALD communities because they've got an inherent fear. That's our biggest challenge. Certainly our biggest challenge is to get that understanding that if you're not feeling safe, or if there's an issue, that they have the confidence to come and report it to the police because most of the times they won't out of fear, so unreported crime is an issue everywhere with our CALD communities. We're working on it very hard here. We get a lot of good results on it. There is still that element that is there. It's something that we really need to work on statewide….If you can instil that sense of safety - that feeling of safety is the biggest thing. That's what we talk about. Last week we were doing inductions with all of the new arrivals as they come up here through SMECC. We sit down and we talk about our role and the importance of feeling safe. It doesn't matter where you are or what you're doing within the community, if you're working, playing sports, shopping, holiday, just whatever, then if you don't feel safe you need to tell somebody and then we can help. That's what we need to really instil then because if a crime occurs, or if there might be racism or might be whatever, they might be silent because they don't have the confidence to, 'who do I go to? If I go to the police are they going to drag me and bash me?'

2.5.3 Department of Justice and Regulation, Victoria

Department of Justice and Regulation employee, discussing consulting with other agencies–

We'll also then look at it from a viewpoint that I'm interested in, and what role we play in it. We deliberately chose not to ask about family violence. We left that to DHHS and the police. We covered our area of expertise and focused on that. The idea is that we would get together as a range of government departments probably quarterly and go, 'What are you doing?' 'Where are we at?' 'How can we work together to be able to provide a coordinated, partnership-type response rather than treading on everybody's toes?' To me, part of the benefit of what we've done when we had our meeting is people found out about our consultations and what we were doing. It grew to other agencies and individuals. It grew to some various, different people who said, 'I'm really interested.' Rather than just becoming a Justice thing … The original concept was Justice Departments just meeting together. It now involves Council. It involves DHHS. It involves the youth support workers. It involves Child Protection. It involves others too.

Department of Justice and Regulation employee, discussing consulting with recent immigrant communities–

> In fact, what we wanted to do was to go to them rather than get them to come to us, to try and build relationships in a different way, and that was part of their consultation. The first thing we did in that was we sat down and meet with each of the four newly arrived communities over a twelve month space, so one every three months. We asked the leaders to come in: Afghani, Iraqi, Congolese, and Sudanese. Those are the four we targeted, basically the new arrivals from, say, 2000 onwards. We encouraged them to talk to us about where they've come from, their history and their issues in Australia. What are they experiencing? What are the problems they face? With that, we tried to look at the underlying issues and challenges, let's look at the things which are causing them the most grief. Out of that, we identified probably three, main focus areas; the first one being intergenerational conflict. The second was housing, and the third was employment.

Department of Justice and Regulation involvement in roundtable discussions with recent immigrant communities–

> That was driven by the ethnic council to do their consultations with the community. When we initially met with the ethnic council, we said, 'Well, your profile's great, but it actually tells us nothing about your interaction with each community, which is what we're really interested in.' It told us about the history and their religion, but I also want to know what the housing issue is. I want to know about family. I want to know about what people are buying. I want to know what's not working so that I can do something about it. I want to know how their lives operate here. I want some depth to it. Then I can use those profiles for funding applications and for resourcing and driving our work.

Department of Justice and Regulation employee discussing different immigrant community relationships with the justice system–

> I think there are different responses from different communities. In the Afghani communities justice issues are about the community feeling as though people are reading their community as being a failure, and they want the community to be perceived well. It's about, 'Clearly, you've done something wrong to be at court and, as a community, we're ashamed of you if you've done something wrong'; a concern for community image. Other communities, like the Congolese, may have gone, 'Well, you know, you went to court in Congo, you didn't come back. We never saw you again.' Part of that, for us, is how do we deal with that sort of innate fear and break that down. To me, what we're trying to do in some ways is to build relationships so that people are able to just simply access services and, and build trust quicker than it might normally occur. The reality is it's not going to happen overnight, though in some communities … Congolese relationship with the police has become excellent, in part because of the work that's been done by the police, which was inspired through what we did, and the connections were made there; but the ongoing work was then done by the police.

> To give you the example, we had a consultation with the Congolese community, and about two weeks later they had their Independence Day. We were invited along. The superintendent of police went along in his

uniform. He went and shook everybody's hands, introduced himself to everybody there and participated in the whole thing. He encouraged people to come and talk to him. He made the time. People came and talked to him. He gave up his time as a superintendent for them to come and talk to him, and I did all the work that needed to be done, and out of that, they had two Congolese people apply to be policemen. The feedback that we get is that they now have a far greater relationship with the police. That was a fairly quick win; but, you know, we had a … another story, from another event, we had a Congolese person bending down to get a cup of tea. Two female sheriffs, one was five-foot-two, another five-foot-three, they came up behind her. She saw the uniform out of the corner of her eye. She dropped everything and ran into the corner and turned up into a foetal position, which was just the innate response because it was out of the corner of the eye and the fear of what she'd been through. That experience for the sheriffs changed their views. They then got to see the distress that people must have been through. And the two officers were mortified, because they were just lovely ladies who wouldn't hurt a fly.

Examples of CALD people not understanding systems and accruing fines–

They might not have an e-TAG. They don't understand. You lend your car to somebody. They go into Melbourne, go in on the freeway, come in on the freeway. You pick up two e-TAG fines. Or, conversely, you'll get a parking fine or a speeding fine going through the cameras. On average, that's what I'm told. Of course, if they then come back and they don't realise what they are, then they'll pay. Sometimes they don't have the money. Sometimes there's no realisation what they are because of language difficulties. We end up with them being converted into warrants for the Sheriff.

Scammers and high-pressure selling to vulnerable, including CALD, communities–

A combination between scammers and legitimate business; but, you know, legitimate business, you have a high-pressure tactic where you ring up and encourage people to change your phone provider, or your electricity provider. High selling tactics over the phone. If you get people who are polite, historically, for example, elderly people, who're a bit lonely or don't understand the English language, as the example we would have here, you often end up having people nodding or saying yes and agreeing to all sorts of things and then suddenly having six different telephone or electricity providers in one year; because they've simply said yes to everybody who's rung them up. It costs them a lot of money; and, two, conversely, you've actually got to find out who they're actually paying their bills to. You get confusion, and you get double bills, and you get all sorts of problems. To give you an example, we were in one in this region, and we had a fellow who came up who had a door-to-door sale, or a phone contact, and he ended up buying something for $1,800, which was delivered to him. Paid the money. Never even opened it. Didn't even know what he'd bought.

2.5.4 Welfare and health agencies

Manager from a welfare agency in Shepparton speaking about 'spectacularly unsuccessful' men's anger management program that they had attempted to run with refugee men–

> Engagement was difficult, and as difficult as it was, it was even more difficult to sustain. Some of that is about the cultural differences in the people who facilitate the groups and the people who are participating in the groups. That sort of skill transfer, where you're trying to bring other people along to actually be representatives within their own community. You've got a sort of 'train the trainer' type approach that's also difficult. It takes a long time for that type of engagement to happen. For an agency like ours that's a generalist one, it's a very slow process to do that. Some other agencies like Primary Care Connect, Kildonan, they've got programs that focus more specifically than ours do.

Welfare agency worker in Shepparton describing building trust with CALD communities–

> Prior to working or alongside working in that role, I was in family support as well, so I did work with CALD clients in a family support role. I guess in the project the experience of going out and identifying how we can support, I think probably the main thing that would come up was that it's something that can't happen overnight. It's something where you need to develop relationships with the communities, whether it be the Sudanese community or Afghani community, and you need to establish trust with them. You need to learn about who's in the community, who do they go to for leadership, who are the community elders? That takes a long time. I guess that's difficult as an agency to be able to continually keep those relationships going with different communities when we're limited in the time and the resources that we have to do that, so some of the ways we tried to do that was engaging in community events. For example, we would go to, say, the Emerge Festival or something like that where we've got an audience. We're trying to increase people's familiarity with what we do, who we are, get to know them.

Senior manager in health, Shepparton, describing GV Health's partnership with Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative–

> We've had a long standing partnership arrangement with Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative. We were probably one of the first organisations in the state. Rumbalara is the Aboriginal controlled community health organisation and asked to develop a formal partnership agreement. Out of that partnership agreement, we agreed to work together, we recognise the activity in health affects people. Out of that, was annually, we'd have a kind of agreed set of priorities that we would work together on to try and improve. That's been strong for a long time.

> What's changing for the moment, for a period of time we had a task force that met our senior staff, Rumbalara senior staff and elders. That's what really drove our relationship for the first ten years or so. But the last

few years it's shifted. We have a Primary Care Health Advisory Committee, which is one of the advisory committees to our board. It's a legislated structure, the Regional Public Health Service. You have to have one of those advisory committees. Rumbalara now is a member of that committee. It gives a much higher level of interaction, and direct linkage to advise to our board.

Senior manager in health, Shepparton, describing Shepparton's refugee health committee–

It had some really substantial work to do initially, because we weren't familiar here. We weren't set up with some of the same resources and systems that have been in Melbourne for a long time. On-arrival health assessments and if there was a health undertaking, say like for an infectious disease like Tuberculosis. In Melbourne they have a whole infectious diseases unit that deals with that. We were fortunate that we had a specialist that was already credentialed to work with TB, so we were able to ... You had to build those links from scratch. We had to train up local GPs around what sort of on-arrival health assessment you would do. We had people coming from where their family had Malaria that we ... As kids with Malaria that was really unusual for us to deal with as a health service, and TB. There was some work we had to do within our systems to kind of strengthen the access to primary care, but then also the linkages with specialist care if it was needed for those families. And we kept going, because we had different waves of migrants coming in after that.

Mildura community interviewee from Samoan community, discussing the relationship with Sunraysia Community Health–

We were members of a community group called the Samoan Community and my husband was the secretary and part of his program was diabetes because it's one of the most hardest factors that a lot of Polynesians die from. At the time a lot of people weren't as educated as to how diabetes work. A lot of the Polynesians don't understand how it works and how education can help with diabetes…. A lot of Polynesians don't like you to know if they're diabetic because they think it's funny, they see it as a joke sort of thing…Then we got on to the project and we became a partnership with SMECC and with Sunraysia Community Health in which they worked with us to prevent and how to help Polynesian people come to them on issues on diabetes. It was such a good project…There was a whole lot of work done, a lot of information was put out to the community. Where you can go to for information, where you can go for confidential information without other people knowing that you're going. That created a lot of partnerships with Sunraysia Community Health, it created a lot of mentoring about diabetes and educations and just simple things like that that we really wanted to put out to the communities.

Mildura doctor from clinic specialising in migrant, including refugee, health needs–

That is one of the big issues, that language barriers cause communities to get isolated from the mainstream

community, especially in the health services. Of course I cannot help them in shopping or other things, but I can help in the health area. I identify that more than the physical health, mental has a bigger issue because with sore throat you can somehow tell your GP 'It's hurting here,' but with your mood, you cannot say 'Look I feel depressed, I don't enjoy my activities, I have this palpitation, shortness of breath when someone rings at the door and I think about killing myself.' Some of these are taboos in those cultures, they don't verbalise those type of things. Some of them they don't relate it to their mental health. They say 'Oh I have palpitations, it's my heart.'

Then when they go to GPs, I understand GPs, it's not that I am saying that they are not doing something right but if I have a Sri Lankan patient who comes with palpitation I do all the investigations for the heart and the palpitation, toilet function, everything but then when I narrow it down to mental health. What should I do with this person now? We don't have a mental health practitioner who has language skills. We have very good mental health team upstairs who is a nurse practitioner, three mental health nurses, and one psychologist. The psychologist doesn't accept people from other languages because of the difficulty with interpreting system. We have three psychiatrists, we have two psychiatrists all of them the books are closed. Even if you can force a patient through, they don't accept people from other languages, just doesn't work. The interpreter system doesn't work.

2.5.7 Religious institutions

Story about the building of African House in Shepparton, as told by Lutheran Pastor–

We had no choice but to look at building a new church because we simply ran out of space. For people who have been displaced and may never have a physical home of their own again, having a spiritual home is really important. We could've rented indefinitely, but that is only going to present them with an ongoing sense of temporariness. Our bishop actually challenged me and said you need to be thinking how this building project can engage and serve the community more than just in traditional ways. I want you to think outside the square. We employed consultants, paid them a bucket load of money, they came back and said 'no, there's nothing else needed in Shepparton. There's nothing obvious for you to do'.

But in that conversation, one of our members had said we're doing all this work with the African communities. She was in work for GV Health. She said all these different agencies are finding it difficult to engage them in a safe place because they don't feel always comfortable fronting up to a hospital. Well hospital's okay, but fronting up to the Department of Justice and the Police Station, whatever, they'd always feel because of cultural baggage, they didn't always feel comfortable. What about some community centre? That clicked with everybody immediately. This is actually what we're doing anyway. Why not explore it? I had a friend who was a refugee lawyer with legal aid and she had left that job and gone on to work for the Office of Multicultural

Affairs and Citizenship. I rang her and got talking to her about it. She said this is exactly what we want to do. I was aware of the place in Footscray the Anglican Church in Footscray. It's got the Australian African Community Centre. It was modelled along similar lines. Her immediate question to me was can you do it in Dandenong as well [laughter].

She encouraged us to put in an application. After a couple of years of talking it through and working out what it might look like, they encouraged us to put in an expression of interest. They had a series of grants going over a number of years. This particular year, there was a major infrastructure one available. They asked us to put in an application. We don't have any staff to do that stuff. Sunday night before it was due, I was still typing it up. I did get some assistance from an outside person. We had overwhelming support from the African communities and from the politicians and everybody locally. I tried to shut it down a few times because it was just way too big. We were trying to fundraise for the church building. This was just another headache. They kept coming back saying 'no don't give up.' We were successful in the expression of interest and I thought damn, because then we had to come up with matched funding, which we didn't have a cent.

We were very incredibly blessed that one couple ... About 500 people contributed to the church building, but, a massive donation came from one couple. The 11th hour before we had to have our full funding application in to the OMAC, they actually rang me and said 'are there any other projects that you've got on the go that need support?' I was very hesitant because they've given over $1 million already. I was very hesitant to say anything. Long story short, they heard about the African House. They said they will have a think and pray about it, and 8 minutes later, they ring me back and said you've got the money. That was $600,000. They ended up giving more than that to the African House. It was successful. We got just short a half million from the government.

I was in Sudan in 2010 in really remote places. In those villages, there would be ... it wasn't a public square type thing but it was just a bit of dirt under a tree. There would be people gathered and a couple of people sitting in the middle. When I asked the local people that I was with what was happening, I can't remember the exact way they described it but they talked about 'they're living life' sort of thing. 'They're going about daily life'. I asked them to explain it more. Basically, whenever they had a challenge or a dispute or needed advice, they would come together, everyone to hear it, and they would lay out their dirty laundry. Then they would seek the elders' decision on it. They'd have to do it in community. When I was talking to the Sudanese men here, I asked about this. He said that's what we don't have. He said, 'We're very grateful to the government that brought us to this country, but we have nowhere to meet. We always live together in community and we have nowhere to meet to talk through life.' That was really the idea behind it, to give space to do that. Also, a space that honoured their place in the Shepparton community, a place where they felt welcome to come and celebrate their culture and share it with the community, and a place where they could also be served in terms of capacity building and this kind of stuff.

Already I would say it's been immensely successful, although how you measure that I don't know. We are under resourced in terms of developing it. We've actually just employed a part time manager who's going to

really take it to the next level. Even so, it's just developed organically so far and the communities just love it. In fact, we had a big celebration on Saturday night I was here for. It was a lot of Sudanese from Melbourne. They're saying 'we don't have this in Melbourne, we've got nothing like this in Melbourne. How fortunate are you in Shepparton? This place is called African House. It's your house. Your place to be.' Within their own communities, they're recognising that, which is quite significant. The big part for me was to put them on the map too. Just to say we as a church value you and are prepared to actually invest in your future. Shepparton community does too. That was part of it.

Shepparton health worker describing the importance of mosques and temples for community bonding and social cohesion–

Our staff participated in cultural tours, the ethnic council organised sort of a bus tour of about 40 something people. It took people to Rumbalara, to the Albanian Mosque, the Turkish Mosque and the Sikh temple. I went on one of those. It was really interesting because the key sort of message I got, and they were brilliant hosts. They really looked after us. Senior people came out and talked to us. It really struck me how community and family focused they were. These are really important parts of the community infrastructure for cohesion and keeping people looking after each other in a real community sense and reinforcing the community values and expectations and I suppose keeping a boundary around that we don't want our community to have a reputation of being radicals or … *(Interviewer: This is like when you go to the mosque or you go ... is that what you did?)* We went to, we visited these sites. (*Interviewer: Did you get a sense that those kinds of organisations were playing a role in cohesion of the community?*) Totally, totally, totally. Strongly family and community based and wanting to be seen as good citizens and being connected and valuing, and wanting to be valued and fitting in. All those kinds of things. They were a good point of connection for people in the community and reinforcing the shared values regardless of whatever religion or whatever. The religion was a part of why they were there but it was kind of like ... that was the sense I got. They were a really important part of the fabric of our community. Not just for individual religious beliefs but to really connect the community into develop that sense of belonging and the shared set of values and what behaviour's expected.

Story of the Bangladeshi doctors arriving in Mildura and seeking help with their child from the Turkish Mosque–

Recently we got a new Imam coming from Turkey. He said the majority of the group is not Turkish anymore and it is more Iraq or Iraqi based or Bangladesh, Indonesians, and some Africans. For Eid, the Iman made a speech in Turkish but then he realised the majority is not Turkish speakers, and someone actually translated what he said into English over there, and then they asked my husband to read it in English what he says. There are a lot of big Muslim groups coming from other nations apart from Turkish.

There is a doctor family. They come from Bangladesh. They are Muslim. They had a little daughter. They didn't know where to go, and on the first day they went to a mosque because I think there aren't enough places in

child care and they had to start the next day working, very strict timing. They went to the mosque and asked to Imam. They said, 'Do you know anyone who can look after our child because we need to work? We are both doctors.' Iman's wife actually looked after the girl for a couple of months until there was a vacancy in the child care. She didn't speak any English, and the little girl doesn't know English either. I asked the Imam's wife, 'how are you communicating with the little girl?' She said, 'I don't know. She plays with my little girl,' because she had a little one of her own. She said, 'They are just playing together and I think she's learning some Turkish from me because she is showing me the water, for example, and she says something, and I said 'no, su, su' for water.' She looked after her for a couple of months until there was a vacancy. Because it is a mosque and a religious leader, you got a bit of faith in that. You can't leave your most precious thing to someone you don't know. It worked for them and hopefully it's working for others.

2.5.8 Local media

Community member in Mildura from a Muslim background explaining the positive role of local media–

I never come across any article in the paper about for example, extremists in local community or anything like that. They sometimes interview the local mosque Imam or other people about that. Most of them are quite supportive. If you read the articles, and I have the articles, they are always talk 'Okay we talked about this with Imam with the head of the mosque and other people and they say we are fine, we don't have any issues. Kids are under control. Everything's good.'

When they, for example publish some news about events they actually have a positive perspective of 'Look this Turkish community has this event which was so beautiful, lovely food', and so on. They have this positive view of the things rather than critical view and I think that's a very good point to help general population to develop a positive view toward the smaller communities. Most of the time when you read the interviews from Mr. Byrne [Peter Byrne, from SMECC] for example, or with councillors or maybe with Vernon Knight [prominent leader] you see that they always emphasise on multiculturalism, emphasise on the contribution of the other cultures to Mildura's community, Mildura's economy, Mildura's culture. Always it's this positive message coming through. That positive message I think that has a big impact on people, individual people rather than telling them 'Okay these are Muslims. Those people who are extremists are from the same religion.' There's no broad casting in a way that people start to think 'Okay these people may be dangerous.' No there always is a positive word casting about minorities here.

2.5.10 Service clubs: Rotary, Lions

Sikh background Mildura community member who had joined local Lions Club–

> As a migrant, it's really hard to come into a totally separate, different country with a different language, different culture, so it's a really upward learning curve. You have to learn to live with the community where you came to. In my opinion, you have to be fitted into the community where you're coming. Yeah, I like to get mixed with the community. I come into Mildura, so that's why I joined the Lions club. Go around and work for the community where you're living in. Don't try to ask the community to follow you, whatever you're doing, but yes, good things you can tell the people that this is the good things. I'm saying that my cultural background is living together, is a good thing for me, but whatever the good things that are in the community, work with the community. Live with the community, and give back something to the community where you're living.

Shepparton Anglo background community member describing a new, diverse Rotary Club group–

> I might have mentioned to you there was a new Rotary group. Which I actually was inducted to last night. My friend told me about it. He said, 'This is a Rotary group.' I said, 'I'm not interested in Rotary. People trying to get me to go for ages.' I said, 'It sounds like it's really full. It doesn't sound like it's my thing'. He said 'You'll like this one' I said, 'Why?' 'It's all mixture of backgrounds.' I said, 'Tell me who. Where from?' He said, 'It's Italian, Iranian, Afghani, Congolese, Indian.' I said, 'All right, I'll come." Apparently originally, they were going to set it up for just new arrivals. Someone from ethnic council was quite concerned about that. I went and spoke to him about it. He said, 'Well, they should be mixing in more.' It is open to anyone to join. I'm going to encourage others to do that too. It's run under the group, they're actually called at the moment, a satellite club, until there's 20 people. The other Rotary club meet generally where they drink. That was actually excluding a lot of those that were practicing their faiths, that didn't allow them to go into establishments, where there were drinks served. I believe the Assistant Principal at the secondary College had an idea to have it at the College, which is exactly where we meet, without alcohol and without the other stuff they do at Rotary meetings, where I believe they'll say grace and there's all these allegiances. It doesn't actually fit with their cultures. Their set up is not a group, but it's a real mixture. My friend said to me, 'You know how at the Sikh temple, they were talking about, wanting to do more together as a community. This is how we can do it, through this group.' I said, 'Yes we can.'

> I think it can be as big as it wants to be. At the moment we only have 10 ... What are they called? Inducted members, but they're looking to grow that and it's a much younger group, than a lot of the other rotary groups.

> Even last night, we're talking about ...My friend always comes up with new ideas. He said to me, 'What we should do is we should have a multi-cultural dinner, where we have ... Whoever is in the club represented with their meals and invite all the Rotary members and the general public.' I said, 'Sounds great.' I think it would've been done before, but it hasn't really. Again bring it together. They're wanting to reach out.

2.5.13 University and TAFE

Shepparton interviewee from Sudanese refugee background discussing the need for more TAFE and university study options, so that CALD families do not have to move away to the cities to help further their children's education –

> One of the things that is really make us worried is education. Three years ago the number of Sudanese community was 300 families, 300 families or more here in Shepparton. By the time the kids grow up and go to the uni they have to go to Melbourne. They move to Melbourne. Yes some move to Melbourne and because they want to be there with the kids. Because of the culture we have long period of supervision. In our culture if you don't get married you cannot leave the family. You are still under the supervision of your parents. When kids go to Melbourne for uni they never come back. That's why most of the family moved from here to Melbourne in order to find education for the children. Even me I have six kids some of them next year they will go to uni. If they don't have some of their subjects here in La Trobe or Melbourne uni then I have to move to Melbourne, which for me I am not happy with that….How are the people in Shepparton going to address this movement? People coming in, go out because of education system. Is there no anybody somewhere can say, 'Let's put this in?' There is people. They're people who can access that education….If it is not fixed now, it is not fixed in another generation coming in then it will become a problem to the area all the time.

2.6 The fostering of local community leadership capacity across diverse communities

CEO of welfare agency in Shepparton describing youth leadership program–

> The banner heading was, Building Australia's Future Workforce. Part of that was, Better Futures, Local Solutions. There was a pot of money that went to each of the 10 selected trial sites, called the local solutions fund. From that, we selected a series of local projects. This was one of them. It involves a group of around about a dozen young people, mostly from culturally diverse backgrounds. Of those, mostly from refugee communities. They take part in this, I think it's around 6 months, leadership course, and they do a number of activities together, including a visit to Canberra. Of all of the things that I've been involved in since I got to Shepp, that's the one that has been the most enjoyable, because the kids are great, and they're just so enthusiastic. They're still asking those questions, having fun and they're not hard bitten cynics like we are. It's really, it's great to see something like that that just says, go out and have ideas and we'll basically fund you for 6 months to get together and talk about that sort of stuff. It was funded out of something that was mostly about employment, and probably, it helps their skills in being confident and articulate, if they're going to a job interview. I couldn't give a bugger about whether they get a job out of it, it's just such a lovely thing for them to do and to feed off each other.

2.7 The role of festivals and other community events in fostering a sense of social cohesion

Shepparton's Cultural Development Officer explaining how the St. Georges Road Food Festival came about–

> I think the biggest thing is to have the community involved. Not that I want to go back to celebrations all the time, but St. Georges Road Food Festival was driven by the people down at St. Georges Road. They're proud of their little precinct. They want to celebrate it with the rest of the town. For those big events like that, we actually have community meetings, where all the community leaders or anybody that wants to be involved comes down and shares their ideas. They feel a part of it and they are a part of it. I think it's about empowering communities to be able to do things for themselves as well, because they want to share their culture. I think that's a great thing.

> I sat on the committee, but we also had our events team. They had a project or events manager for that, and I assisted her probably quite a bit. Council applied for the funding. I'm not sure if we approached the community and they loved the idea and went with it or if they approached us. I would have to check on that... I know as soon as the idea was there, they were full force. The ideas that they come up with are quite amazing, to sit down in a community meeting where people are so open with ideas... Sometimes I think with government, it can be like, 'Oh, we've got to think of this, we've got to think of this, we've got to think of this.' I'll sit down and think of an idea and I'll go, 'Right, I have to make sure of this, this, this and this,' where they're just like, 'Let's do this, and let's do that.' I think it's quite amazing to get people like that in a room and be able to take that from that and then tunnel it into a great event and something that everybody can enjoy. Definitely people from around that area that just were like, 'Oh, thought we'd just wander down. You should do this all the time.' Different comments like that from people that you might not expect it from either. They just had a ball. Everybody had a ball and everybody was just getting in and having a good time. The kids playing soccer and stuff like that…. I've got amazing photos, where there's somebody from the fire brigade, somebody from the police station, kids from this age to this age all jumping in there, just 50 kids on the field... Kicking around the oval.

Shepparton church leader stressing the importance of sharing food, and of cultural festivals that showcase diversity–

> Biblically, eating together communicates a lot about fellowship and connectedness…So one thing I organised early on was eating together. One of the African men said only after about five or six years of this, he said that there's an African saying that when you put your hand in the pot with someone else, you become family.

> We've witnessed that happening with our diverse members that when they do it together, there is a connectedness that you don't see….Most of the cultural celebrations revolve around food and I think when people come and try their food, I don't think we westerners realise how significant that is.

At the Emerge festival it was nice, there was heaps of different cultural groups there which is nice. It was like just a day out. It was like the show day, everyone was there.

Even eating their food incorrectly just adds to their joy I think. I've seen it on micro level in the church. Then when I look at what happens out there in the community, the Emerge festival, they arrange for ... Our kitchens were all being used through the night as Sudanese ladies were cooking for a food store and Filipinos were as well. When white people come and actually will pay to try your food, it's really quite significant. Just whether you pay or not is irrelevant. The fact that you'll try it, it communicates that you feel comfortable with these people. To us, these festivals may look fairly mundane and not terribly significant. To them, it communicates far more than we realise. Those festivals here, the way in which different singing groups or dance groups, whatever, have been embraced. I think that's what Shepparton does well. It hones in on the strengths of an ethnic group and then celebrates it.

In the early days, the council would get behind these festivals and make sure that even to this point of getting Congolese guys to MC it and all their unique flamboyance and all the rest of it. It really said 'okay you guys are here to stay and you're part of things and we're going to invest in you.' From that to the fact that you'll eat my food and you'll watch me dance and you'll celebrate this strange music that we play. It all says something quite significant. That celebration of arts, culture, and food is much more significant for these traditional communities than it is for Anglos.

Welfare agency employee from Shepparton, describing the value of public events sharing culture and food, held in inclusive public spaces–

Things that are more public, things like food, when there's events and things on that are more of a public way of educating people rather than an invitation to things or you need to already be in this group to know about it. I think Shepparton does some of those things really well, and to have really good spaces to be able to do that, we have the lake, the area down there where it's not exclusive. Anyone can be a part of that space. I know just from friends and family, really, that they have engaged with something like that and people I'm thinking about are people who I would never expect to be open to that in the past. It's something like that gets people's interest. They go and have a look. They come back and they tell you how fantastic it was and what they learned and what they saw, but they wouldn't have done that otherwise. Say it was held [at a university campus], they would never have gone out of their way to come here. Community spaces work. I guess the thing about it is, it's not specific to that event. It's a space where there's the skate park, there's tennis down there, there's swimming, so everyone uses those spaces, so everyone feels welcome and comfortable there, whereas if you hold it somewhere, say, the African House, for example. That's great for a lot of things, but I don't think that my friends would be open to going there because they don't know anything about it and it's not familiar to them.

2.8 The role of the core of interconnected community members/activists in the towns

An 'older Australian' community member in Shepparton on what helps make Shepparton a socially cohesive place–

> It's quite an effective group of people that keep that sense of community going here and I think that's why we are as different and as capable of doing that as we are. We seem to be all able to contribute to that sense of community to make us the way we are….Well, there's so many small pockets [of people who make social cohesion happen], these are very hard to define. There are pockets everywhere. As you know from your interviews and research you have met quite a lot of those people, and within them there will be a driving force of old Australians…

3.1.1 Employment issues

Young Afghan woman in Mildura describing discrimination when looking for employment–

> My personal experience was when I finished my Year 12 I was looking for a work and I was really struggling to get work. I was not even having or receiving any interview calls. I've been saying this lately a lot because this is the discrimination I felt. And what my friend told me that you can put nickname for yourself. My name was in there in the resume but I have put Jasmine, a nickname and that was really evident to the people to see that. So they actually called me for the interview and when they said 'Jasmine' I stood up and they said, 'Jasmine.' I said, 'Yes,' and then she double-checked Jasmine.

> When I went to the interview, they asked me a really stupid question, 'Okay, what's your name?' Which is written on my resume, 'Jasmine'. They said, 'Okay why are you passionate to work in the retail industry?' Just those two questions and that's all. I didn't even hear back then, 'Why am I unsuccessful,' or who they got, they didn't reply me back so they actually didn't have that reason as well for me. So I personally think that maybe it was because I was wearing a scarf or maybe I had a different accent… But I had a different accent on the phone when they called me for the interview. They were really surprised that Jasmine is wearing a scarf. That was really surprising for them. This is the tricks now people are applying on their resumes. They're putting a nickname and which is a discrimination that we are actually undoing their original identity and actually adapting a new identity just because to get a job.

Representative for Fishers SUPER IGA in Mildura, explaining employment initiative to address Indigenous unemployment–

> How it all came about originally is Fishers have a RAP–Reconciliation Action Plan. As part of that, because there's a huge Aboriginal population here in Mildura, and there's a lot of unemployment, Alan Fisher himself, who owns the 16 stores, Victoria and New South Wales, decided that it's not good enough. We need to do something. Hence, the RAP was born, and with that, all our staff went - all our managers, I should say, key business managers and general managers - went on a cultural tour. Basically, from then, we just made it our business that we support the Aboriginal community with employment and everything else that we can.

> We run retail pre-employment programs here from the academy targeting the Indigenous community, but we get all races. For ten weeks for three days a week. They complete Certificate II in retail and in that time, they do their classwork in the morning, then we put them into the store, because we're lucky we can just use the store for work experience. They do Certificate II, plus their RSA, plus their food handlers, because they're all three things that you can use for employment later on. We put them for one week out to external people. We have a fantastic partnership with Target and Coles. Coles have two stores and Target has the one out at 15th Street. We've had a really good rate of success with that, either people being employed at Coles or Target. We've employed some. One of the girls that was with us ... I sit them down and say, 'What do you really want to do?' ... One of the girls wanted to work with disabilities, so I went up and saw the lady there, who runs that, and asked her if she'd take her on for work experience. They were so taken with her that they gave her a full-time job and paid for her to do a certificate in disability services. That's an outcome for me, a good one. A couple of people have gone back to school, so to me, that's also an outcome.

3.1.2 Housing issues

Man from CALD background in Shepparton discriminated against when applying for rental property–

> My personal experience when I first came, I hope a lot of people actually won't go through it. Because I went to look for a house - I didn't shave because I had stopped working of course. I went to a real estate agent and he said 'Can I have the Centrelink forms and stuff.' They thought I was a refugee. Imagine a real refugee being treated like that. I felt bad. I said to my wife 'even if they gave me a free house I don't want to get it.' There are some issues not knowing, because when you have the full beard and shave your head I look like Afghani, maybe they thought I'm Afghani. It's really sad. Not because of that but actually that played a little bit in my mind as well like, 'This is a community that I'm going to live in.' Then when I wanted to stay I thought 'what am I going to do about it?' I'm not a person who goes away and goes numb, I go and complain. Because I know that the process if I want to actually take that further I can sue them, but what's the point? Because at the end

of the day it's not the whole organisation it's the person. Maybe that person is not always dealing with these people. Maybe that person had a bad dealing with one of those people. It could be anything so I shouldn't... Then I thought definitely if I do get a chance I'll try to help these people to break the barrier and respect people for who they are, not for where they come from, or whether they're refugees or skilled migrant.

Man in Shepparton from Congolese refugee background, describing his difficulty in renting a property, and wondering whether it was discrimination–

(Interviewer: Before you got the public housing, did you have to go to real estate agents?)

Yes, many times. Again, it is when I found another, I think, hidden discrimination, hidden because officially you cannot prove that this is discrimination because every time you go to visit a house, you want to get in. You can meet the people and you fill the form to say, 'I want to stay in this house.' You'll get a letter to say, 'No, unfortunately your application didn't be successful.' Why? Because at that time I was not working but I was getting the money from Centrelink. I was the new arrival. When I got my money and the rent, it was - I could do it. I could pay every time I could be able to pay, but why they don't get me? I still believe there was some discrimination. I will not say racial discrimination because they were informed to say 'are you working?' I was not working but I was getting money from Centrelink…. Another thing maybe it is if the landlord find that you're a migrant and maybe he is not sure if you will keep his house in good condition. It may be, I don't know, because no one tell you why they don't give the house but when you don't get house, every day you go to visit house they say your application is not successful, you don't sleep much time. You start having a lot of thinking. Yes, maybe some landlord when you're a migrant they think that you're not able to look after the house. Maybe. Because he's the owner of his house and no one can control someone who is managing his own business.

A religious leader from Shepparton describing a mediation session with a disgruntled neighbour who had complained about the noise made by her African neighbours–

It seems to me that when everything is going smooth, that sense of social cohesion is ... Everyone is happy to acknowledge that and to be a part of it, but as soon as there's a hiccup, as soon as there's a challenge, then our natural prejudices rise to the surface and start to get in the way of healthy communication in dealing with difficult issues. I was recently asked to attend a mediation session at the Department of Justice between one of our African members and their neighbour. The Africans asked me to come because they wanted to know if they're doing something wrong. They don't hide anything…They ask me to come to this mediation session. Clearly, there was some issues, public housing property with a shared wall. When they have loud music or loud TV, it disturbs the peace, the lady next door. I could see that she was stressed about that. A lot of the things that she was raising as issues were just terribly insignificant and childish really. I couldn't help but wonder whether you would raise those same issues if your neighbour had a different colour skin. Maybe I'm overly

sensitive to that stuff because I've been working with it for years. Maybe it's more of a feeling than being able to give you empirical data that shows that this is so. I think we get a very positive picture in the media here in the place of the Africans in town. The reality is that it's a lot harder than that and that there are a lot more issues with the Africans being able to freely and happily interact with different agencies and people.

Shepparton community member from Congolese refugee background, describing his early efforts to look after his lawn and the friendship that developed with his neighbour–

When I came DHS gave me vacuum, fridge, things like that. They didn't tell me anything about mowing the lawn. When I got the first visit of the real estate they said, 'No, you should cut the grass.' I didn't own the lawn mower. I didn't even know how to use the lawn mower. I went to borrow a lawn mower of a friend, when I was trying to operate it, it got fire. Then I left again the grass there. Until I could buy my own lawn mower after six month of course. For the first month it is hard to save money to buy lawn mower. They never use lawn mower in Africa. Fortunately, I have a friend, a friend my neighbour I talk to you about, who came to help me how to set the lawn mower and to operate it for the first time. (*Interviewer: That was quite important to have some help from a friend?*) Yeah, friend and neighbour. It was good, because sometime you can try to have friendship with someone, a neighbour. That one was very good.

3.2 Experiences of racism and discrimination in everyday life

DHSS worker in Shepparton describing experiences of racism and intimidation of Iraqi men who had moved into one of Shepparton's disadvantaged public housing areas -

It was temporary accommodation. Another organisation had managed that. They didn't tell the organisation that they had moved, but there was issues about, I guess, clashes or incidents with other community members in that area. They'd fled a war torn area and they just didn't want that.....I guess you're looking back then, it's the darker skin, and I guess it probably wasn't as prominent as it is now. They were males on their own. Their families hadn't come out at that stage, so they were single men living in a maybe 4 or 5 group house... Their different ways of living too, like carpet on the floor, their bed on the floor. I don't know whether that was the main reason, but they felt uncomfortable in the area so they vacated. We found out afterwards that they'd actually vacated. Didn't even tell anyone. That's probably a bit of, can I say it, racism, or probably lack of understanding of the community members at that time. There'd be incidents of verbal abuse, or throwing things, and ... It just felt unsafe in that environment and so they left.

3.4.2 Socio-economic disadvantage in Shepparton and Mildura

Employee from the Department of Justice and Regulation, explaining disengagement of poorer people in Mildura from Mildura's cultural events –

> It was a live event with music and entertainment from some of, not all, but some of the different cultural communities here. I was there with my parents and their friends who are out from Adelaide, and it was a really beautiful event. What struck me, and it was well attended, but it struck me that those who were there sort of experiencing that, celebrating that, they seemed to fit a particular cross section of the Mildura community. We know, and you probably know from your research, but Mildura is a fairly well off, and a diverse place, but we've got some pockets of extreme disadvantage, and it just struck me that, and I think one of my colleagues who was there with you in the mall that day, reflected the same, that it does tend to be sort of an artsy kind of high, middle income kind of cross section who are at those sorts of celebrations. It's not that it's exclusive, but it got me thinking 'why aren't there more people here at this free event on a beautiful summer's night, celebrating this?' I don't have the answers to that question, but I think that's something to throw out there as yes, it's a community where there's wonderful diversity and celebrations of that diversity, but it got me thinking. Where is the rest of our diverse community, and do they also respect, celebrate, value what we have? Is it because, and these are more questions than answers, but I think they're interesting questions anyway. Is it because they don't know about it? Is it because they don't value it, or is it other, more practical things like where certain events are held and we know that even transport issues and if some of those communities are more marginalised, not just socially, economically, but also practically through the lack of transport infrastructure.

3.5 Not enough opportunities for intercultural social interaction

Community member in Shepparton, describing her recent meeting of Afghan women–

> You might have heard of the L to P driving program. I got training. I'm just being pegged ... Lovely young boy I do know who is different. He's saying, 'Miss come over to my house. Come over and meet my mum.' I said, 'I'd love to.' I went over and I've met quite a few of their families. His mum didn't speak English. I said, 'Well while I'm here, don't just translate for me. Teach me a little bit of Persian.' Very limited words. I was really trying to converse. Then I went to leave and of course got asked to stay for dinner. I thought at their house, but no. The mother and the sister. The sister spoke a little bit of English. She said, 'No, no, no, come to our friend's house. They're having a few people over.' I ended up having dinner with fourteen Afghani women. Beautifully dressed up. I wasn't, because I didn't know I was actually going to dinner ... A celebration. They're like, 'No, no, come

in, come in.' What happened there was that the women just kept saying 'Thank you.' In their own language. There was two people that spoke English. That was all right. They could translate for me. 'Thank you so much. We'd really like to meet other Australian women.' This kept being repeated so many times. Too many times, I thought okay. I'm actually working on that happening. I started a group two years ago called the Red Shoe Women. It's pretty Anglo, but I'm getting a few people, others in there too. We just meet for a real casual dinner….I said, 'They want to meet other Australian women. Would you be interested to come?' 'Absolutely.' They said, 'We don't know. Have to step inside their houses, to get to know them.' It's very traditional on the ground. Beautiful Afghani rugs and the men in one room and the women in the other. There's a lot of people that wouldn't have experienced that here. It was interesting and they literally ... Some of the older women had tears in their eyes, as they were expressing that they wanted to meet other Australian women.

3.6 Intercultural challenges

Greek background employee at Mildura community welfare agency, comparing her Greek community with new migrants–

I do see a lot of the newly arrived migrants kind of, they do like us, we stuck to our Greek friends. We had other friends as well, but we did stick mostly to ourselves. Like I said I live across the road from ----------- park, which is a small park and families do gather there in the summer time particularly because their houses are stinking hot. So I used to see particularly quite a few Afghani families gather, initially like I said, it was the men that used to gather in the park, but now their families have arrived and it's not uncommon in the summer time to see them arrive in big groups. Three or four families having a picnic. I think that's no different to me and my family when we used to go down the river and fish kind of thing. I still see them in the groups that they're familiar with.

Mildura doctor, discussing intercultural challenges and the need for education–

I think refugees especially need citizenship classes, citizenship education. They should know what is culturally accepted, and what is not because they have a totally different idea. An example is they come here, they make an appointment for one person but they come with six. I either should say 'No, sorry, I can't see you', or I should say 'Okay I'll see you.' I have to run through them, and I'm running behind by one hour and I may miss something in one patient. It is a bit of a challenge.

We have some issues with neighbours now because there are crowded families. They of course used to live in crowded towns, crowded houses and now suddenly they come here, they are used to the same situation so they probably rent a house and four family goes into it and they have twenty children and they make noise.

Of course neighbours, they get annoyed. I think this type of education is very important. That should be part of an actual program. Whoever comes, sit them down, and talk to them about their responsibilities and cultural acceptance.

We have the same thing with doctors who come from overseas. Even the approach to the receptionist or to the nurse.... I used to use my nurse as my personal assistant. 'Go and get me a coffee,' or whatever. But no, it's not that way. I was lucky because I work in a hospital for three years, two and a half years. I already know what is my role, what is the relationship and I'm quite a bit observant so I can see 'Okay how does doctor behave to other doctor, to other nurse?' I pick up things. Some people may not be that observant.

Principal at Shepparton school, describing cultural accommodations and difficulties–

One of the real issues was about music. The kids weren't allowed to go to music. It was westernized, and it was sexualised and all that sort of stuff, and so they weren't allowed to go. It was a real battle, and finally we had it so that the preps could choose to go to music, because we just said there was none of that sort of stuff. Then it regressed after I left, because they tried to be a bit more draconian about it, and that never works. Anyway, that's ... The music issue is really huge in the primary schools here, and that caused quite a rift. The parents wouldn't let their kids participate.

One of our biggest issues is camps and excursions. We have a lot of Muslim students, they won't stay overnight. They often won't go to things, so often we have an issue in having enough kids to go. For example, Year 8 camp we went to -------, and only 20 students went. The Year 7 camp, not all the kids go. Even though we'll say, 'Okay, we'll let you go for the day,' they still don't take it up, even though we offer that. The Year 12 camp out, the boys stay and the girls were brought out each day. Didn't stay overnight. We try to accommodate as much as we can, but sometimes you just can't. Like the excursion to Melbourne, they miss out on. The boys go, the girls don't. That's the way it is.

What affects the kids' learning as well, we have the students that stay after school until to about 5, because I know once they go home, they've got to do their chores, and the girls are expected to not study, to do female things in homes. In the holidays, to accommodate that, the staff ... They're fantastic. The staff here are fabulous. They give up their time, and they have study from say 9 until about 3:30 every day, so the kids can actually come into school in the September holidays, so that they can prepare themselves for the exams. They know that at home they just don't ... The expectation is that that's the school, and this is home. It's quite difficult.

Reference List

Alford, K 2011, 'Shepparton: The Needs and Issues For Philanthropy', Sir Andrew & Lady Fairley Foundation, Shepparton.

Alford, K 2014, 'Socio-Economic Profile of Shepparton', Sir Andrew & Lady Fairley Foundation, Shepparton.

Allom Lovell and Associates 2004, *The City of Greater Shepparton Heritage Study II Thematic Environmental History, Vol 2,* Allom Lovell and Associates/City of Greater Shepparton, Melbourne.

AMES 2014, *Regional and Rural Settlement*, http://www.ames.net.au/humanitarian-settlement-services/regional-and-rural-settlement.html (accessed 1 August, 2014).

AMES and Deloitte Access Economics 2015, *Small Towns, Big Returns: Economic and Social Impact of the Karen Resettlement in Nhill*, AMES Research and Policy and Deloitte Access Economics.

Australian Government 2011, *The People of Australia: Australia's Multicultural Policy*, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Canberra.

Australian Social Inclusion Board 2010, *Social Inclusion in Australia: How Australia is faring,* Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT.

Best Start et al 2014, *The State of Greater Shepparton's Children Report 2014*. Greater Shepparton City Council, Shepparton.

Bird, D 2013, 'We Have Made a Lot of Friends in the Community', *New Matilda*, 31 July 2013, https://newmatilda.com (accessed 25 May 2015).

Boese, M 2014, 'The roles of employers in the regional settlement of recently arrived migrants and refugees', *Journal of Sociology*, first published on August 19, 2014 doi:10.1177/1440783314544994.

Carrington, K and Marshall, N 2008, 'Building Multicultural Social Capital in Regional Australia', *Rural Society*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 117-30.

Carrington, K, McIntosh, A and Walmsley, J (Eds) 2007, *The Social Costs and Benefits of Migration to Australia*, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Canberra.

Carswell, S 2005, 'From Albania and Turkey to Shepparton: The Experiences of Migrants in Regional Victoria', *Around the Globe*, Winter, pp. 26-31.

City of Greater Shepparton 2013, 'Community Profile' http://www.greatershepparton.com.au/ourregion/profile/greatersheppartonprofileid/ (accessed 1 August 2014).

Collins, J 2012, 'Experiences of New Immigrants Settlers in Rural and Regional Australia', *A Long Way From Home? The Rural and Regional Resettlement Experiences of Visible Migrants and Refugees Conference*, University of Melbourne, February 10, 2010.

Collins, J and Krivokapic-Skoko, B 2009, 'Attraction and Retention of New Immigrants in Regional and Rural Australia, Literature Review and National Survey 2008', RIRDC Publication, Barton ACT.

Committee for Greater Shepparton 2014, *Strategic Directions 2014 to 2016*, www.c4gs.com.au.

Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW 2011, *The Economic Advantages of Cultural Diversity in Australia*, NSW Government, Sydney.

Dandy, J and Pe-Pua, R 2013, *Research into the Current and Emerging Drivers for Social Cohesion, Social Division and Conflict in Multicultural Australia*. Report prepared for: Joint Commonwealth, State and Territory Research Advisory Committee (RAC). March 2013.

Dempsey, K 1990, *Smalltown: A Study of Social Inequality, Cohesion and Belonging*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Dingle, T 1984, *The Victorians: Settling*, Fairfax, Syme and Weldon Associates, McMahons Point, NSW.

Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District Inc. 2015a, *Iraqi Community Profile, April 2010, Updated June 2013, Updated June 2015,* Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District, Shepparton.

Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District Inc. 2015b, *Afghani Community Profile, May 2010, Updated June 2013, Updated June 2015,* Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District, Shepparton.

Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District Inc. 2015c, *Congolese Community Profile, April 2010, Updated June 2013, Update June 2015,* Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District, Shepparton.

Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District Inc. 2015d, *Sudanese Community Profile, May 2010, Updated June 2013, Updated June 2015,* Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District, Shepparton.

FECCA 2010, *FECCA Regional Migration Policy*, FECCA, Canberra.

Greater Shepparton City Council 2012, 'Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2012-2015', Greater Shepparton City Council, Shepparton.

Habibis, D and Walter, M 2009, *Social Inequality in Australia*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne.

Hamilton-McKenzie, J 2010, *California Dreaming: The Establishment of the Mildura Irrigation Colony,* unpublished PhD thesis, School of European and Historical Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, La Trobe University, Vic, Australia.

Hawson, M 2013, 'The Advantage of Social Indicators in Strengthening Rural Communities: Lessons from Mildura, Victoria, in S. Kinnear, K. Charters and P. Vitartas (eds) *Regional Advantage and Innovation*, Physica-Verlag, Heidelberg, Ch. 9.

Hudson, R 2011, 'Social Capital in Shepparton: Some of the Issues', A paper prepared for the Fairley, Pratt and Yulgilbar Foundations, Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Melbourne.

Jenson, J 1998, 'Mapping Social Cohesion: The State of Canadian Research', CPRN Study No. F/03, Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc./Renouf Publishing, Ottawa.

Kilpatrick, S, Johnson, L, King, T J, Jackson, R and Jatrana, S 2013, 'Making connections in a regional city: Social capital and the primary social contract', *Journal of Sociology*, Published online before print June 19, 2013, doi: 10.1177/1440783313487813.

Lentini, P, Halafoff, A and Ogru, E 2009, *Perceptions of Multiculturalism and Security in Victoria: Report to the Department of Premier and Cabinet, State Government of Victoria*, Clayton, Vic.: Global Terrorism Research Centre, Monash University.

Linn, R 2009, *Harder the Ground, Softer the People: A History of Mallee Family Care*, Mallee Family Care, Mildura.

Markus, A 2014a, *Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation Surveys 2014*, ACJC, Faculty of Arts, Monash University, Caulfield East, Vic.

Markus, A 2014b, *Mapping Social Cohesion: The Scanlon Foundation Surveys Local Areas Report 2013*, ACJC, Faculty of Arts, Monash University, Caulfield East, Vic.

Markus, A and Dharmalingam, A 2007, *Mapping Social Cohesion, The 2007 Scanlon Foundation Surveys*, Monash Institute for Global Movements, Clayton, Vic.

Michael, R 1988, *On McGuire's Punt: A profile of Shepparton from Squatting to Solar City 1838-1988,* Waterwheel Press Pty. Ltd., Shepparton.

Mildura Development Corporation 2014, *2014 Regional Overview*, Mildura-Wentworth, Milduraregion.com.au.

Mildura Rural City Council 2008, *Mildura Social Indicators Report 2008 (Community Engagement Framework),* Researchers Dr Haydn Aarons and Brigette Glossop, Principal Consultant Professor Tony Vinson AM, Mildura.

Mildura Rural City Council 2012, *Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2012 to 2017*, Mildura Rural City Council, Mildura.

Mildura Rural City Council 2014a, *Social Inclusion Policy, Policy – CP019*.

Mildura Rural City Council 2014b, *The State of Mildura Rural City's Children & Young People 2014 Report*, Rachel Williams Local Logic Place, Swan Hill.

Mildura Rural City Council/Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2012, *Mildura RCC Social Indicators Report*

2012, prepared by AEC Group Pty Ltd, Sara Hoenig, project manager.

Mildura Rural City Council /Northern Mallee Community Partnership 2013, *Community Health and Wellbeing Plan, 2013-2017.*

Missingham, B, Dibden, J and Cocklin, C 2004, *Immigrant Communities' Project: Enhancing Extension and Sustainable Natural Resource Management in Culturally Diverse Communities in Rural Victoria, Final Report*, Department of Primary Industries, Melbourne.

Missingham, B, Dibden, J, Cocklin, C 2006, 'A multicultural countryside? Ethnic minorities in rural Australia', *Rural Society*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 131-150.

Newcombe, J and Achren L 2010, *CALD Settlement and ACE Possibilities: Loddon Mallee Region*, ACFE/AMES, Mildura.

Nsubuga-Kyobe, A and Hazelman, C 2007, 'Management Strategies: Community Driven Employment: Congolese Experience in Shepparton', Paper prepared for the African Resettlement in Australia 2007 Conference, to be held at the University of Melbourne, School Law from 11–13 April 2007*,* Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District, Shepparton.

Pagone, M 1985, 'Italians in Shepparton Between the Wars', *The Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, No. 7, pp. 56-61.

Parsons, R 1990, *Where the Mallee Meets the Murray: A Centenary History of the Shire of Mildura*, Mildura Shire Council, Irymple, Vic.

Piper, M. and Associates/DIC 2007, *Shepparton Regional Humanitarian Settlement Pilot,* DIC, Canberra.

Putnam, R 2000, *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon and Schuster, New York.

Refugee Council of Australia 2012, 'Income Management: Impacts on Refugee and Humanitarian Entrants', available at http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/r/rpt/2012-NIM.pdf

Scott, R 2015a, 'Victorian Budget 15/16, For Families. A Welcoming and Harmonious Victoria, Media Release', Robin Scott MP, Minister for Finance, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Tuesday, 5 May, 2015.

Scott, R 2015b, 'New Institute to Strengthen Social Cohesion and Multiculturalism, Media Release', Robin Scott MP, Minister for Finance, Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Tuesday, 2 June, 2015.

Sexton Consulting 2015, *Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project One Thousand Conversations Project Report*, Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project, Shepparton.

Smith, R 2014, 'Rise in Family Violence in Shepparton Alarming', *The Shepparton News*, 12 June, 2014.

Strong, G 2010, 'Shepparton shines as a haven with no room for racism', *The Age*, 7 July, 2010.

Taylor, J and Stanovic, D 2005, *Refugees and Regional Settlement: Balancing Priorities*, Brotherhood of St. Laurence, Fitzroy, Vic.

Taylor-Steele, S 2005, 'Shepparton Region, 14 May 2015, Presentation by Director, Labour Market Research and Analysis Branch', Department of Employment, Australian Government, www.employment.gov.au.

VicHealth 2014, *Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD) Program: Summary Report,* Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne, Australia.

Victorian Government 2014, *Victoria's Advantage: Unity, Diversity, Opportunity*, available at VMC Website, http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au/resources/victorias-advantage-unity-diversity-opportunity

Victorian Multicultural Commission 2009, *All of Us: Victoria's Multicultural Policy*, Victorian Multicultural Commission, Melbourne.

Watts, M 2014, *'Building a New Generation of Youth Leadership' Shepparton, Victoria 2012-2014*, Watts & Associates Public Health Consultancy, www.wattsassociatessphc.com.

Wilkinson, R and Pickett, K 2010, *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*, Bloomsbury Press, New York.