

# VICTORIAN MULTICULTURAL COMMISSION

Annual Report  
2019-20

---





### **Acknowledgment of Country**

The Victorian Multicultural Commission acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land now known as Victoria and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their ongoing spiritual, cultural, material and economic connection to land, water and resources.

Images on cover and p. 2: Guests and performers at the Multicultural Awards for Excellence ceremony in November 2019, and the Cultural Diversity Week 2019 Sponsor Event in October 2019.

# CONTENTS

Chairperson's message	4
Victoria's diversity	6
About the VMC	7
In memoriam	11
Leadership and advocacy	12
Promoting diversity	18
Supporting communities	24
Coronavirus (COVID-19) response	30
Appendix I. Community Support Fund Recipients 2019/20	35
Appendix II. Regional Advisory Councils Members 2019/20	36
Appendix III. Multifaith Advisory Group Members 2019/20	38
Appendix IV. Multicultural Chambers of Commerce Members	39
Appendix V. Multicultural Awards for Excellence Recipients 2019	40

# CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE



**I am pleased to present our 2019-20 Annual Report which outlines how the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) engaged and supported culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities through a particularly challenging year.**

I am immensely proud of the way we worked with diverse communities through the highs and lows of 2019-20. And despite the unprecedented circumstances Victorians faced, it was our collective and enduring community spirit that resonated deeply with me and gave me hope for the future.

Our success as a multicultural society hasn't been attained by chance, and nor can we take it for granted. Maintaining unity and social harmony takes work, and it needs champions across all areas of society.

On behalf of the VMC, I thank everyone who has championed diversity in Victoria this year. Your efforts do not go unnoticed, and our whole community is stronger because of you.

Promoting diversity has continued to be a central theme of our work. In my first year as Chairperson, it was a great honour to formally recognise the outstanding achievements of so many Victorians who strengthened multiculturalism through paid or voluntary work at the Multicultural Awards for Excellence.

We also enjoyed some highly successful events including the inaugural International Women's Day Breakfast where we celebrated women of all backgrounds, and a wonderful Cultural Diversity Week sponsor event in late 2019 where we launched our exciting plans for 2020.

Of course, we were extremely disappointed to postpone our much-loved Cultural Diversity Week events in March. I acknowledge the hard work by everyone involved and thank our sponsors, suppliers and communities for their continued commitment and support.

With so many events, celebrations and faith observances not possible in 2020 due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, many Victorians have found it a particularly difficult year. It was therefore inspiring to see community and faith groups embrace technology and find innovative ways to stay connected and mark dates of significance online.

The VMC also held numerous online events including a memorable virtual iftar for women and well attended forums for Reconciliation Week and Refugee Week.

Our role as a conduit between multicultural communities and government has truly come into its own this year. With a strong focus on meaningful engagement with communities, we have elevated their voices and drawn on their insights and ideas to inform our ongoing advice to government on a range of matters.

We forged and strengthened our own relationships across government and brought department and agency representatives directly together with communities to deepen their understanding of current and emerging challenges.

By enhancing our Regional Advisory Councils across the state, we not only gained vital intelligence on local issues, we also fostered new connections and collaborations that helped improve social cohesion at a local and state level. This network has also proven critical during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic by assisting the VMC with the timely dissemination of important information and maintaining two-way communication.

Throughout the year, we investigated issues that affected Victoria's multicultural communities and provided recommendations to government. This included three significant submissions regarding early education engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, anti-vilification legislation in Victoria, and the Australian Government's response to coronavirus (COVID-19).

I am particularly proud of the way the Multifaith Advisory Group demonstrated leadership and unity in times of crisis. When our state experienced the tragic bushfires of early 2020, we brought political and faith leaders together on the steps of Parliament House where we paid our respects to the people who lost their lives, and acknowledged the devastation caused to homes, property, flora and fauna.



VMC Chairperson Vivienne Nguyen with guests at the VMC inaugural International Women's Day Breakfast in March 2020.

I would like to recognise the extraordinary efforts of firefighters and emergency services and thank those community members who selflessly volunteered and supported those in need. Your acts of kindness and compassion continue to inspire us, and we thank you for demonstrating the strength of our state's multicultural, multifaith community.

Our priorities since March 2020 have been firmly centred around the health and welfare of multicultural communities. We held a series of consultations with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, provided ongoing advice on the provision of in-language information, and disseminated regular, timely and accurate information and resources through our communication channels and networks.

We also assisted with response efforts on the ground, including mobilising community leaders and representatives to volunteer alongside Department of Health and Human Services with doorknocking and other localised activities aimed at keeping Victorians safe.

None of our work would be possible without the support and assistance provided by our advisory groups and extensive networks. My heartfelt thanks to all the members of our Regional Advisory Councils, the Multifaith Advisory Group and our Multicultural Chambers of Commerce Group.

I also wish to thank every single person who joined us for a meeting or roundtable discussion to voice their views and concerns, and everyone who called or sent us an email to share their perspectives and feedback.

Your participation made all the difference in highlighting critical needs for communities this year.

My sincere thanks to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the Hon. Ros Spence MP, for her continued support, and to former Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the Hon. Richard Wynne MP. I would also like to thank our colleagues at the Department of Premier and Cabinet for their ongoing collaboration in serving Victoria's multicultural communities.

I am honoured to lead an inspiring group of Commissioners, each with their own lived experience, passion and community connections. My thanks to each of the Commissioners for their continued commitment and vision for Victoria. It is a privilege to work alongside you.

I would especially like to express my gratitude to the Deputy Chairperson, Maria Dimopoulos AM for her expertise and strategic lens across everything we undertook. And last, but certainly not least, I thank the VMC staff for their unwavering dedication and extraordinary work.

I look forward to continuing our endeavours in the coming year. I have no doubt that the hard work undertaken in 2019-20 will support Victoria through its recovery phase and beyond.

**Vivienne Nguyen**  
Chairperson

# VICTORIA'S DIVERSITY

With approximately one in two Victorians either born overseas or with at least one parent born overseas, Victoria is home to one of the most culturally diverse societies in the world.

## Acknowledging Victoria's true diversity

Our state's diversity can only be acknowledged within the context of recognising First Nations People, their cultures, customs and rights.

As an organisation with legislative objectives to support and promote diversity in Victoria, our work is centred around equality and respect for all peoples and cultures.

We therefore recognise more than 60,000 years of diverse cultures and customs in this country and acknowledge Aboriginal Victorians as an integral and valued part of Victoria's past, present and future.

## Our diverse population

While coronavirus (COVID-19) has impacted on travel and our population, it is important to note that for the reporting period, Victoria has been Australia's fastest growing state with an annual increase of 2.1 per cent (compared with Australia's population growth of 1.6 per cent) and had a population of 6,566,200 as at 31 March 2019.

Migration to Victoria has resulted in increasing diversity and was the major contributor to the state's population change, and net interstate migration gains for Victoria were the second highest recorded in the year ending 31 March 2019.

The 2016 Census showed that:

- ▶ 26 per cent of Victoria's population spoke a language other than English (LOTE) at home, a rise from 20.4 per cent in 2006. The proportion who spoke a LOTE at home was 32.6 per cent in Greater Melbourne.
- ▶ The proportion of Victoria's population who was either born overseas or had at least one parent born overseas was 49.1 per cent (57.1 per cent in Greater Melbourne).

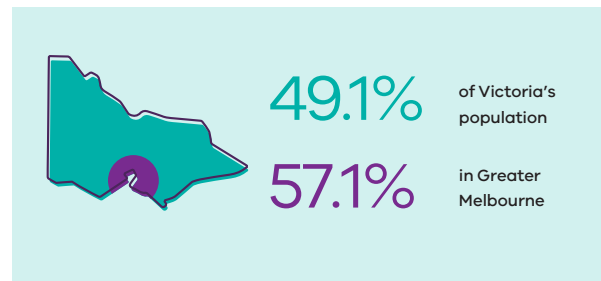
Our success as a cohesive, multicultural society has been achieved through collaborative government and community leadership, dedicated legislation, and policies and programs designed to facilitate genuine access and equity.

Victoria's multicultural community infrastructure comprises of more than 4,000 ethno-specific, faith-specific and multicultural community organisations, some of whom are peak bodies and subject matter experts.

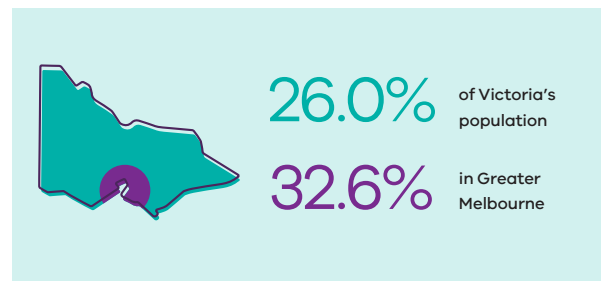
### Population of Victoria



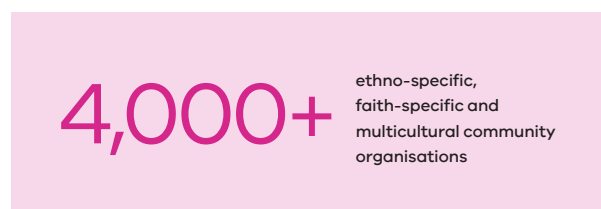
### Proportion of population who was either born overseas or had at least one parent born overseas



### Proportion who speak a language other than English at home



### Victoria's multicultural community infrastructure



# ABOUT THE VMC

**The Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) plays a critical role in strengthening cultural diversity in Victoria through consultation, advocacy, celebration and promotion.**

Established in 1983 and now constituted under the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*, the VMC is an independent statutory body dedicated to promoting diversity across all areas of society and advocating on behalf of multicultural communities to all levels of government.

We undertake regular consultations with multicultural communities, including through a network of Regional Advisory Councils across the state, to inform our priorities and program of work. We provide advice to government that helps shape public policy and supports the delivery of government services for diverse communities.

The VMC is led by 12 Commissioners of diverse cultural, faith and professional backgrounds who have a clear focus on supporting Victorians of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to participate in all aspects of life.

As community leaders themselves, our Commissioners work at a grassroots level to gain a thorough understanding of the issues facing multicultural communities, and work alongside community and faith groups to foster collaboration and unity.

Our Commissioners meet monthly, attend and support community led initiatives and events, and most importantly, work collaboratively to elevate the voices of multicultural and multifaith communities and advocate on their behalf to the Minister for Multicultural Affairs and across the Victorian Government.

The VMC is supported by a dynamic team of specialist staff who support community engagement activities, communications and events.



VMC Commissioners (L-R): Khayshie Tilak Ramesh, David Vincent, Mohammed Yassin, Shankar Kasynathan, Vivienne Nguyen, Sisay Dinku, Maria Dimopoulos AM, Bwe Thay, Tina Hosseini, Dr Judy Tang, Walter Rapoport in September 2019.

## Commissioners



### VIV NGUYEN, CHAIRPERSON

**CURRENT TERM:** 24 August 2019  
to 23 August 2023

**FIRST APPOINTED:** 24 August 2019

Viv Nguyen is a passionate advocate for diversity and multiculturalism. She is an established business executive and community leader, having previously held roles as Group Head of Diversity at the ANZ Banking Group, President of the Vietnamese Community in Australia's Victorian Chapter and non-executive director at City West Water.

At the Department of Health and Human Services and Melbourne City Mission, she supported the disability sector's transition to the NDIS. Prior to her work in the public and community sectors, she held roles at the AustChoice Financial Services, AMP Asset Management and ANZ Banking Group where she led the global organisation's diversity strategy. Viv was awarded the Australian Centenary Medal in 2003 and was recorded on the Victorian Honour Roll (2002) for her services to community, advocating for women in leadership and Vietnamese young people.



### MARIA DIMOPOULOS AM, DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON

**CURRENT TERM:** September 2019 to  
September 2023

**FIRST APPOINTED:** September 2019

Maria Dimopoulos AM is a nationally and internationally recognised executive leader and expert on multicultural affairs. Maria has over 25 years of experience in cultural diversity, gender equity justice and human rights. She has worked with government and community as a policy adviser and strategist, community advocate, speaker and mentor.

Trained as a lawyer, she has operated a successful consultancy business for many years, consulting predominately in diversity, gender equality and intersectionality. In 2017 she was recognised for her contribution to supporting multiculturalism and women from diverse backgrounds with the Australian Migration and Settlement Lifetime Achievement Award.

In 2020, Maria was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for her service to cultural diversity and the prevention of domestic violence.



### MOHAMMED YASSIN, COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE COMMISSIONER

**CURRENT TERM:** September 2019 to  
September 2021

**FIRST APPOINTED:** September 2019

Mohammed Yassin is an emerging leader and a former refugee, arriving in Australia in 2003 and settling in Shepparton for two years before moving to Melbourne. An entrepreneur and advocate with a passion for supporting multicultural communities and young people, Mohammed is the founder and CEO of Culture and Co, a cultural training and consulting organisation that is working with the government and the non-for-profit sector to create programs that meet the needs of people from refugee and migrant backgrounds.

He has completed a Bachelor of Biomedical Science with Honours from the University of Melbourne and worked as a cancer research scientist with the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. Currently, he serves as board of directors member with the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria and a project lead – 'Strategic partnerships and community engagement' with Spectrum MRC.



### KHAYSHIE TILAK RAMESH, YOUTH COMMISSIONER

**CURRENT TERM:** September 2019 to  
September 2021

**FIRST APPOINTED:** February 2019

Khayshie is a passionate advocate for youth, multiculturalism and diverse representation at influential decision-making tables. She is an experienced board director and legal advisor with an honours degree in law and accreditation in mediation.

Khayshie has served on a number of boards and committees including Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Services, ARCJustice, Ambulance Victoria Community Advisory Committee, LEAD Loddon Murray, National Rural Law and Justice Alliance, Young People for Refugees and City of Greater Bendigo Economic Strategy Steering Committee.

Khayshie served as the Inaugural City of Greater Bendigo Youth Mayor and was instrumental in forming the first Youth Council in 2019. Khayshie has been named in the top 100 future leaders of Australia, Young Citizen of the Year 2017, Premier's Volunteer Leadership Champion 2019, Law Student of the Year 2019 and has represented Australia at the Young Humanitarian United Nations Conference in Thailand in 2018.





### SISAY DINKU

**CURRENT TERM:** September 2019 to September 2021

**FIRST APPOINTED:** May 2017

Sisay Dinku has been widely engaged in community development in the African Australian diaspora and the broader multicultural community in Victoria. He is a founding member of the Celebrate African Australians awards program, an AFL Multicultural Community Ambassador and Chairperson of the African Union Delegates Liaison. He is also a Director at Multicultural Consulting Services and serves on the board of the charity Australian Books for Children of Africa.

Sisay has managed and worked on a number of programs to assist new migrants to compete in the local labour market – especially in industries experiencing skills shortages – through job search plans, Australian work culture orientations and employability skills training.



### TINA HOSSEINI

**CURRENT TERM:** October 2017 to August 2021

**FIRST APPOINTED:** October 2015 (former Youth Commissioner)

Tina is a passionate campaigner for multiculturalism, human rights, social justice and adolescent health and well-being. She is currently a Research Fellow at Swinburne University, focused on the evaluation of school-based training programs in the area of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). Her previous experiences as a Deakin University Research Fellow have included adolescent prevention-based projects focused on reducing problem behaviours.

She is an active member of the Iranian Women’s Association, Deputy Chair of the Victorian Red Cross Board, a Board member of the City Local Learning and Employment Network and a Member of the Victorian Children’s Council.

Tina holds a Master of Science (Distinction) and a Bachelor of Science from the University of Melbourne, and has completed the Foundations of Directorship course at the Australian Institute of Company Directors. She has also held leadership roles with the Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia, Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre and was the previous chair of the Multicultural Youth Network.



### SHANKAR KASYNATHAN

**CURRENT TERM:** September 2019 to September 2023

**FIRST APPOINTED:** September 2019

Shankar Kasynathan came to Australia with his family as refugees. Over the past 15 years he has worked closely with refugee and migrant communities in Victoria, the Northern Territory and the ACT.

A skilled communications and public policy specialist, he has degrees in Economics and Public Policy. He is an active supporter of community organisations that help to build partnerships and social cohesion in regional areas.

Since December 2017, Shankar has been a national campaign manager with Amnesty International Australia. He is also an ambassador for the Migrant Workers Centre.



### DAVID NYUOL VINCENT

**CURRENT TERM:** September 2019 to September 2023

**FIRST APPOINTED:** September 2019

David Nyuol Vincent is a dedicated refugee and multicultural community advocate with a passion for social inclusion, justice and equality. David has worked in the community sector for over 10 years, including at the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the Centre for Multicultural Youth.

He is a former Youth Ambassador for the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and currently leads community engagement for Initiatives of Change Australia.

David is a refugee and has published the book *The Boy Who Wouldn’t Die*, a memoir about his life as a child soldier and his journey to rebuild his life in Australia as a community advocate and humanitarian.



### WALTER RAPOPORT

**CURRENT TERM:** November 2017 – August 2021

**FIRST APPOINTED:** November 2017

Walter Rapoport is a former Chairperson of the Council of Christians and Jews (Victoria) and edited the Council’s annual journal, Geshar, from 2013 to 2016. Walter has had a long and abiding interest in interfaith and intercultural engagement and served as the inaugural Chairman of the interfaith relations committee of the B’nai B’rith Anti-Defamation Commission, an Australian organisation dedicated to combating anti-Semitism and all other forms of racism and hatred.

He also chaired the steering committees of two projects delivered under the Commonwealth Government’s Living in Harmony grants program, ‘Building Bridges’ and ‘Embracing Youth’. He is cofounder and joint-CEO of a finance company.



### DR JUDY TANG

**CURRENT TERM:** September 2019 to September 2023

**FIRST APPOINTED:** September 2019

Judy Tang is a strong advocate for multicultural and LGBTIQ+ communities with expertise in psychology, ageing, research and mental health. With extensive relationships across government and community groups, Judy has volunteered for more than 10 years to promote and advocate for multiculturalism and equality for migrants.

She is a former VMC Multicultural Champion and President of the Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Council, a national body that advocates for the rights of multicultural and multifaith LGBTIQ+ people and communities. Judy has a doctorate in neuropsychology and is a practicing Clinical Neuropsychologist.



### BWE THAY

**CURRENT TERM:** September 2019 to September 2023

**FIRST APPOINTED:** September 2019

Bwe Thay is a passionate advocate for a multicultural Australia. He has held many leadership roles within Victoria’s multicultural sector with a focus on education and employment for new and emerging communities. He has received a range of community and academic awards for his contributions, including the VMC’s 2018 Emerging Leadership in Multiculturalism Award.

Bwe has also been a member of the VMC Eastern Metropolitan Regional Advisory Council since 2017, providing information about issues and challenges impacting multicultural communities in the region. He is a graduate from the Australian Catholic University, and currently leads migrant student support at Swinburne University of Technology.



### ROSARIA ZARRO

**CURRENT TERM:** November 2017 to August 2021

**FIRST APPOINTED:** November 2017

Rosaria Zarro has been an educator for the past 17 years, with experience teaching Italian, science and history in government schools and cultural organisations. She has worked for Museum Victoria, Museo Italiano and the State Library of Victoria to produce and deliver education programs based around their exhibitions and collections. Rosaria has delivered many innovative programs in the Italian language at the Melbourne Museum, Immigration Museum and Scienceworks and more recently has worked on the development of programs and resources in French, Spanish and Japanese. She continues to teach in a school as well as coordinating a student exchange for students in Italy.

## Outgoing Commissioners

**ROSS ALATSAS**, Deputy Chairperson  
September 2011 – August 2019;  
Acting Chairperson May – August 2019.

**SONIA VIGNJEVIC** concluded her term  
in August 2019.

**DR MIMMIE CLAUDINE NGUM CHI WATTS**  
concluded her term in August 2019.

**DR SUNDRAM SIVAMALAI** concluded  
his term in August 2019.

# IN MEMORIAM

With heavy hearts we farewelled three inspiring Victorian champions of multiculturalism in late 2019.

## TSEBIN 'BIN' TCHEN

10 MARCH 1941 – 25 NOVEMBER 2019



Tsebin 'Bin' Tchen, will always be remembered as a strong and respected advocate for multiculturalism. In 1998 he made history as the first Chinese-Australian elected to the Australian Senate. As we reflect on Bin's role as a Commissioner at the Victorian Multicultural Commission from 2015-19, we will remember him as a voice of reason who demonstrated respect for all. We feel blessed to have known him and honoured to have worked alongside him. A man of integrity and compassion, Bin's humility and shyness for recognition was balanced by his quick wit and willingness to always stand up for others. Alongside our colleagues and friends in Victoria's multicultural communities, we offer our deepest sympathies to his wife Pauline, daughter Jacinta and son Adrian, and to his extended family and community.

## VICTOR GEORGE BORG AM

27 SEPTEMBER 1941 – 18 NOVEMBER 2019



Victor Borg AM played a vital role in representing and advocating for multicultural Victorians. He was a founding member of the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, the Maltese Community Council of Victoria and 3ZZZ. We are eternally grateful for his lifelong commitment to diversity and offer our heartfelt condolences to Victor's family, friends and colleagues.

## JOHN CAIN

26 APRIL 1931 – 23 DECEMBER 2019



As the 34th Premier of Victoria, John Cain dedicated his life to public service, and played an instrumental role in building modern Victoria. Under his leadership, Victoria was the first Australian state to pass freedom of information legislation. He also created public sports and entertainment venues including our prominent Melbourne Park precinct. Perhaps less well known was his advocacy for Victoria's culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and the establishment of the Victorian Multicultural Commission in 1983. We join all Victorians in remembering this great leader and offer our condolences to his wife Nancye, daughter Joanne Crothers and sons John and James.

# LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY

Priority issues, advice  
and influence





**Under new leadership, the Victorian Multicultural Commission found renewed energy and focus in 2019 to fulfil its legislative responsibility to promote the social, economic and cultural benefits of diversity and to support and advocate for culturally and linguistically diverse communities.**

With Victoria's future front of mind, we forged new paths and partnerships to improve social cohesion and support communities to thrive. In 2019-20, we reaffirmed our commitment to:

- ▶ Promote a better understanding of Victoria's diverse communities;
- ▶ Promote the rights and responsibilities of citizenship as a unifying force that strengthens our diverse multicultural community; and
- ▶ Promote co-operation between bodies concerned with multicultural affairs and diversity.

### Strategic focus

To inform our strategic focus, the VMC undertook a series of consultations with key stakeholders, community organisations and peak bodies in the multicultural sector to understand its strengths, opportunities and areas for growth.

Consultations with these groups revealed broad support for the VMC and our role as an advocate for multicultural communities and as the main conduit to government. There was also strong support for the VMC to provide leadership on multicultural related issues, including during crises. Feedback and ideas from the consultations have informed the VMC's work this year and contributed to the development of new strategic priorities.

We created and strengthened relationships across government and with communities and laid the groundwork for effective advocacy and community engagement. But, like every organisation, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic changed our focus and the way we work.

In response to the pandemic, we adjusted our immediate priorities to be as agile as possible to support communities at every opportunity. The VMC anticipates finalising its strategic priorities in the latter half of 2020 which will form the basis of a Strategic Plan for the coming three years.

## We're listening

As a conduit between multicultural communities and the Victorian Government, the VMC actively seeks insights from multicultural communities through our Regional Advisory Councils and various consultations with individuals, communities and key stakeholders.

We aim to elevate the voices of communities and provide advice to government that informs policy, legislation and the delivery of government and community services. We contribute to government inquiries on matters affecting multicultural and multifaith communities that align with our legislative role and objectives and raise issues directly with the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, government departments and agencies as needed.

## Addressing priority issues

Given our increasing diversity, Victoria must continue to be at the forefront of protecting human rights and inclusion. While our diversity delivers substantive social, cultural and economic benefits for all Victorians, there remain ongoing challenges.

In 2019-20, the VMC continued to advocate to government on behalf of Victoria's multicultural communities and provide leadership on key issues.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic amplified many existing areas of concern for multicultural communities including employment, youth disengagement, mental health, racism and vilification, family violence and access to culturally appropriate services.

## Inquiry into the Australian Government's coronavirus (COVID-19) response

In June 2020, the VMC made a submission to the Inquiry into the Australian Government's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that drew on our extensive consultations with multicultural and faith communities.

As the pandemic unfolded, our discussions with communities focused on:

- ▶ the timeliness, availability and accessibility to information;
- ▶ positive experiences that have come from the crisis; and
- ▶ suggestions to help support the recovery phase.

Common issues raised included unemployment, mental health, social isolation, family violence, access to in-language information, supporting temporary visa holders and international students, and the increase of racism, particularly towards Australian-Asian communities.

The VMC recommended that:

- ▶ governments and agencies fully embrace multicultural diversity when designing policies, programs and services;
- ▶ timely, accurate and accessible in-language resources and information must be provided;
- ▶ multicultural communities receive inclusive and equitable support in crisis situations; including temporary visa holders, international students, asylum seekers and refugees as contributors to the Australian economy and our diverse society; and
- ▶ multicultural/multifaith organisations form part of the systems response to crisis and recovery.

---

Read our full submission on the VMC website:

[multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/submissions-to-government](https://multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/submissions-to-government)

For further information about how the VMC has supported multicultural communities through the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, please refer to pages 30-34.

## Racism and vilification

The VMC unequivocally condemns racism and has continued to take an active leadership role in advocating for greater awareness about racism and its impacts on communities in 2019-20.

Racism and vilification contribute to isolation, poorer health including mental health, feelings of vulnerability, and undermines peoples' sense of belonging and ability to participate in the wider community.

Throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we heard first-hand about Victorians being targeted, particularly those from Australian-Chinese and Asian backgrounds, which compromised their sense of safety and sense of belonging and led to isolation, distress and fear.

And while racism hasn't been caused by the pandemic, it is clear that those who experience it need greater protections and support. We also know that people are reluctant to report it for a range of reasons.

Noting a recent rise in racism towards Asian, African, Jewish and Muslim communities, the VMC has undertaken numerous media interviews to raise awareness of the issues and encourage those who experience it to report it.

As a conduit between multicultural communities and the government, the VMC has committed to taking a leadership role in addressing racism going forward.

## BLACK LIVES MATTER

The Black Lives Matter protests in Australia highlighted the entrenched racism associated with the shocking number of First Nations People who have died in custody since 1991. Importantly, this movement demonstrated that Victorians not only care, they want social change.

We issued a statement to outline our position and emphasised that meaningful change will not happen if action is only taken by First Nations People and people of colour. Addressing systemic racism will only happen when all of us come together in solidarity and move from being passive or neutral to becoming actively anti-racist.

Recognising that this nation's future is bound in true reconciliation, we committed to listening to the truth about our history and addressing the manifestation of these deep injustices.

## Inquiry into anti-vilification protections

Concerned about the prevalence and rise of vilification, we responded to the Victorian Parliament Legal and Social Issues Committee's Inquiry into Anti-Vilification Protections, and the possible expansion and the extension of protections under the existing Act.

Informed by extensive discussions and consultations with community representatives, leaders and expert stakeholders, our submission highlighted among other findings that while there was awareness of the existence of legislation there was limited knowledge of the protections and redress available. We also note that there is profound under-reporting of hate conduct and vilification due to a number of factors.

We therefore supported recommendations to:

- ▶ expand protected attributes to support more people and communities, in particular, people living with disability and the LGBTIQ+ community;
- ▶ address and respond to online hate;
- ▶ improve data collection on incidents of vilification and hatred;
- ▶ improve support for victims of vilification/hatred;
- ▶ provide ongoing community education and awareness program is essential as legislation; and alone cannot solve this issue.

---

Read our full submission on the VMC website:  
[multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/submissions-to-government](https://multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/submissions-to-government)

## Inquiry into early childhood engagement

Early and effective engagement in a child's life delivers significant social, cultural and economic benefits – not only for the child, but also the family and community more broadly.

Understanding that the main barriers to early childhood engagement are systemic, we made a range of recommendations to prioritise support systems and mechanisms for families in our submission to the Victorian Parliament inquiry into early childhood

engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities in December 2019.

To inform our submission, we consulted with a range of stakeholders and Victorians of diverse backgrounds. We recommended that:

- ▶ service providers engage with representative organisation support to develop culturally appropriate information;
- ▶ early childhood services staff undertake cultural competency training;
- ▶ service providers employ people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and
- ▶ programs and services be delivered in languages other than English.

In our submission, we highlighted existing programs and service models that address barriers, recommending culturally-specific playgroups and community hubs as an effective model of support to improve early childhood engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

---

Read our full submission on the VMC website:  
[multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/submissions-to-government](https://multiculturalcommission.vic.gov.au/submissions-to-government)

## Multicultural Chambers of Commerce Group

Bringing together more than 40 Victorian chambers, the VMC Multicultural Chambers of Commerce Group promotes economic and employment opportunities for diverse Victorians, including new and emerging communities. By fostering an exchange of ideas and information between members, the group represents unity across cultures and businesses.

The group informs the VMC's advice to the Minister of Multicultural Affairs on challenges facing diverse business owners, and the VMC facilitates engagement between members and the Victorian Government.

In 2020, a roundtable discussion provided critical insights into the impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19) on businesses owned by Victoria's multicultural communities. The group also discussed how the Victorian Government can better support businesses with the Victorian Small Business Commissioner and representatives from the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions.

Throughout the pandemic, the VMC has sent timely and important information to members relating to business support for multicultural communities and advocated for more translated and in-language resources for Victorian businesses.

---

For the full list of member organisations, please refer to **Appendix IV**.



## Multifaith Advisory Group

Since it was first established in 2008, the Multifaith Advisory Group (MAG) has brought Victoria's faith leaders together in ongoing dialogue with the Victorian Government and to respond to issues of the day.

Convened by the VMC and chaired by the VMC Chairperson, the group comprises 25 senior representatives from Victoria's diverse faith communities, including various Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist and Baha'i communities.

### UNITY IN TIMES OF CRISIS

In 2019-20, the MAG provided leadership and unity through times of crisis and continued to deepen understanding between faiths. In the state's darkest hours, the group has supported vulnerable communities and ensured their voices were heard.

In response to the bushfire crisis and the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the MAG led and supported the provision of mental health services, distribution of food and essential items, and live streaming of faith services with the aim of minimising isolation and loneliness especially amongst the elderly and most vulnerable.

### MULTIFAITH GATHERING ON THE STEPS OF PARLIAMENT

In February 2020, the VMC coordinated a multifaith gathering with the MAG, political and community leaders to remember the Victorians who lost their lives and acknowledge the devastation of land, and unprecedented loss of flora and fauna.

Held on the steps of the Parliament House of Victoria, these leaders stood united as they paid their respects to those who lost their lives and thanked firefighters, emergency services and volunteers for their dedication, bravery and service.

### STRENGTH OF FAITH DURING THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC

Faith leaders provided leadership and unwavering support for their communities throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. And through their bonds of friendship and trust built up over many years, their unity was a great source of comfort, as it has been at other times of crisis.

The MAG met with Victoria's Chief Health Officer, Dr Brett Sutton, to discuss the challenges faced by faith communities and provide insight and guidance into Victorian government policy. The group also engaged with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Incident Management Team to advise on practical issues and concerns felt by faith communities during the pandemic.

The group published various statements including a MAG statement of unity and letter of gratitude and compassion to the Premier and the previous Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police.

Their prayers and meditations, and community work for the common good continued, including the safe provision of food and counselling.





Political, community and faith leaders came together on the steps of Parliament House in February 2020 to acknowledge the devastation caused by the bushfires of 2020, and to pay their respects to those who lost their lives and thank emergency services and volunteers.

## INTERFAITH COMMUNITY FUND

Established in 2019, the Interfaith Community Fund is a partnership between the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the VMC and the MAG.

The program provided funding of up to \$50,000 over two years to 10 faith and interfaith organisations to deliver activities and initiatives build understanding, acceptance and positive relationships between faiths that strengthen social cohesion.

A list of recipients is available at: <https://www.vic.gov.au/interfaith-community-fund>

## RESPONDING TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

In 2018, the MAG established a family violence working group to respond to Recommendations 163 and 165 of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, which involved the development of training packages for faith leaders and communities, and for faith leaders and communities to examine how they respond to family violence.

The group commissioned a research project with the University of Melbourne and the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health. The project gathered evidence relating to building capacity of faith-based leaders and organisations to effectively prevent and respond to family violence and identified best practice principles.

After completing phase one of the project in December 2018, Phase two of the project is currently underway and is focused on supporting faith organisations and communities to implement learnings from the research findings. Five pilot projects will also generate valuable

evidence about what works best to prevent violence against women and family violence against faith communities. The implementation phase is due to be completed in March 2021.

## Coronial Council of Victoria Partnership

In 2019-20 the VMC was pleased to partner with the Coronial Council of Victoria to establish a Project Reference Group to support the identification and understanding of the needs of multicultural and multifait community that may need to be considered within the coronial system.

Under the leadership and guidance of VMC Deputy Chairperson and Coronial Council of Victoria Member, Maria Dimopoulos AM, the group's members include leaders of diverse cultural and faith backgrounds and Court leadership.

With the provision of funding and resourcing support from the VMC, the Project Reference Group undertook individual and group consultations with diverse community representatives and leaders, including the MAG.

Insights from these consultations will inform recommendations made by the Project Reference Group to the Coronial Council of Victoria, which will in turn inform an upcoming Coronial Council of Victoria report to the Attorney General.


This project was funded through the VMC Community Support Fund.

# PROMOTING DIVERSITY

Expression, celebration  
and connection



Performer at the Cultural Diversity Week 2019  
Sponsor Event in October 2019.



## We proudly foster social harmony and promote our state's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity through an engaging program of events and communications.

19

Encouraging Victorians to embrace diversity and its benefits lies at the heart of our work.

In 2019-2020 the VMC used its wide-reaching communication network to:

- ▶ Promote unity, understanding and harmony among Victoria's diverse communities
- ▶ Promote the social, cultural and economic benefits of diversity
- ▶ Promote interaction between individuals and communities from diverse backgrounds
- ▶ Encourage all of Victoria's diverse communities to retain and express their social identity and cultural inheritance and to promote mutual respect

### Multicultural Awards for Excellence

Victoria's Multicultural Awards for Excellence honour individuals and organisations for outstanding initiatives that foster cross-cultural understanding and strengthen our state's diverse

communities. Since they were first held in 2002, the awards have been held in high regard by government officials and communities alike.

In November 2019, 61 Victorians were recognised across 10 categories at a formal ceremony at Government House, highlighting the passionate work of Victorians who championed diversity through paid or volunteer work.

Winners included Christian Bashimbe, who received the Emerging Leadership in Multiculturalism Award for his inspiring leadership and advocacy for young refugees and recently arrived migrants in regional Victoria.

The Premier's Award for Community Harmony went to lawyer and community advocate, Nyadol Nyuon, while SBS Somali and SBS Italian received the Media Award for their sensitive reporting in the aftermath of Melbourne's tragic Bourke Street attack.

---

For the full list of award recipients, see **Appendix V**.



Recipients of the Multicultural Awards for Excellence 2019 were honoured at Government House in November 2019.

## Cultural Diversity Week 2019 Sponsor Event

In October 2019, the VMC welcomed Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs, Josh Bull, members of the Consular Corps, Cultural Diversity Week 2019 sponsors, supporters and many friends to help celebrate a successful year and to thank sponsors for their generous contributions.

Held at the Immigration Museum, the night was the first official event for the largely new cohort of Commissioners and there was a buzz of excitement in the air as the new Chairperson, Vivienne Nguyen shared the VMC's vision for leading public discourse about multiculturalism and diversity.

The VMC launched its plans for Cultural Diversity Week 2020 with the new theme 'Curiosity. Conversation. Community.' which invited Victorians to be curious

about culture and each other, to start conversations and help build and nurture a strong community where our differences are embraced.

## Cultural Diversity Week 2020

Unfortunately, with the rapidly changing situation around the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and a ban on mass gatherings, the VMC made the difficult but necessary decision to postpone Cultural Diversity Week 2020.

Held annually in March, Cultural Diversity Week brings Victorians together to recognise and celebrate the many cultures that make our state such a wonderful place to live.

Given the popularity and significance of the annual Premier's Gala Dinner and Victoria's Multicultural Festival, this was a disappointing decision to make, but one that was necessary to ensure the safety of the community, performers and staff.



VMC Commissioners join in the celebrations with sponsors and supporters at the Cultural Diversity Week 2019 Sponsor Event in October 2019.



## Midsumma Pride March

In February 2020, VMC Commissioners and staff showed solidarity with multicultural LGBTIQ+ communities by marching in the Midsumma Pride March in St Kilda, the first in a planned series of activities celebrating and exploring intersectionality.

## International Women’s Day

The VMC celebrated the achievements of women from all cultural backgrounds and their contribution to the community at the inaugural International Women’s Day Breakfast. Held at the State Library of Victoria, attendees at the sell-out event were treated to an inspiring group of speakers: The Hon. Gabrielle Williams MP, Nova Peris OAM, Tuanh Nguyen and Monica Forson.

Proceeds from the event were donated to Djirra, an Aboriginal community organisation that provides culturally safe, holistic support and specialist family violence legal assistance and representation to Aboriginal women and their children in Victoria.

## Community Events

Every year, the VMC is proud to support many community events and 2019-20 was no different. Our Commissioners proudly represented the VMC at multiple community-led events to mark important occasions and celebrate the rich cultures and communities of multicultural Victoria.

From March 2020, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic had a sudden and substantial impact on community and cultural events across the state, with in-person festivals, performances and events cancelled or postponed.

However, while large gatherings were not possible many community organisations and festival organisers rose to the challenge of engaging audiences remotely.



L-R: Tuanh Nguyen, Monica Forson, Nova Peris, VMC Deputy Chairperson Maria Dimopoulos AM and Antoinette Braybrook at the inaugural VMC International Women’s Day breakfast in March 2020.

There has been no shortage of online cultural and religious celebrations, music and art performances events across Victoria, as community organisations have explored innovative new event formats to highlight our diversity, foster a sense of belonging and keep communities connected.

## Online cultural workshops

Keen to still offer our audiences some cultural experiences during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the VMC engaged culturally diverse artists and performers to hold a series of live online workshops, including turban tying, Bollywood dance, macramé and butoh.

As these new events proved to be popular, the VMC will explore the provision of similar workshops in the future.

## Reconciliation Week

In recognition of Reconciliation Week, the VMC issued a statement committing to building relationships and communities that recognise, respect and value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures and facilitating and supporting meaningful connections between Aboriginal Victorians and multicultural communities.

Beginning the journey of listening and learning, the VMC held an online forum in Reconciliation Week and Commissioners and staff shared a cultural learning experience with the teachers and families of Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre in Thomastown, Victoria.

## Supporting and celebrating with Muslim women

In the lead up to Ramadan, various communities raised concerns with the VMC about the particular challenges faced by Muslim women during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The VMC delivered a Women's Virtual Iftar to reflect on the experience of observing Ramadan at home and explore how women of all backgrounds can connect, unite and uplift each other.

Following the success of the iftar and in recognising the need for further discussion, the VMC also held an online forum for Muslim women where participants shared their experiences, insights and recommendations for addressing issues affecting their communities during the pandemic.

## Refugee Week

In June 2020, the VMC held an online forum to mark the significance of Refugee Week. Chairperson Vivienne

Nguyen led an open and honest conversation with a panel of former refugees and human rights advocates, who shared their stories and explored the themes of resilience and belonging.

## Summer Film Program with Swinburne University

The Summer Film Program is an innovative collaboration between the VMC and Swinburne University of Technology that aims to generate new understanding and representations of contemporary multiculturalism.

Each year, Swinburne University researchers Dr Vincent Giarusso and Dr Glenda Ballantyne recruit current and past film and animation students to produce short films that explore perspectives of a generation born into 'multicultural Australia'. Launched in 2017, initial research findings highlight this generation's willingness to embrace Australia's multicultural identity as they seek to redefine it. The final research report is anticipated for release in 2020.

## Year-round calendar of events

When 2020 commenced, the VMC had planned a calendar of events to engage Victorians throughout the year. However, due to coronavirus (COVID-19) many of our events were cancelled including Culture Waves, a music event for young people, and our ever-popular Multicultural Film Festival. We look forward to presenting these events in the future, alongside Cultural Diversity Week and a myriad of new events and initiatives that promote diversity and provide opportunities for Victorians to participate and celebrate.



The children of VMC Commissioners and staff learnt about Indigenous communities and cultures at Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre in Thomastown in February 2020.



VMC staff Brad Bowden and Therese Geasley at the Midsumma Pride Festival in February 2020.

# SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

Engagement,  
participation and  
collaboration



Eastern Regional Advisory Council Member,  
June Anderson, in March 2020.





**Engaging with multicultural communities is a central part of what we do every day. We work directly with communities to understand the issues they face and foster collaboration with government and other key stakeholders to find solutions and pathways forward.**

In 2019-20, the VMC has continued to fulfil its legislative objectives to:

- ▶ Promote full participation by Victoria's diverse communities in the social, cultural, economic and political life of Victoria;
- ▶ Promote access by Victoria's diverse communities to services made available by governments and other bodies;
- ▶ Promote community service as a principle that builds a stronger society.

### **Regional Advisory Councils**

Our eight Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) are our eyes and ears on the ground across Victoria, providing us with critical information and intelligence to inform the advice we provide to government.

With more than 250 members across eight regions, the RACs provide a local platform for communities to directly provide information to

the VMC on matters relating to health, education, employment, personal wellbeing, relationships, and community harmony.

Each RAC is chaired by a VMC Commissioner, who works closely with up to 50 members representing diverse cultural backgrounds, faiths, sectors and ages. Members include local community leaders and representatives, local government representatives, businesspeople and service providers from ethno-specific, faith-based and mainstream non-government organisations.

Appointed through a public expression-of-interest process, RAC members are volunteers who serve for three years. The current members were appointed in October 2019. The VMC thanks its past and present RAC members for their commitment and contributions.

---

For a full list of current Regional Advisory Council members, please see **Appendix II**.

## NEW ENGAGEMENT MODEL

In late 2019, the VMC introduced a new engagement model to strengthen the effectiveness of the RACs. Building on a longstanding history as a key source of information and perspectives specific to culturally diverse communities at a local level, the focus of the RACs was sharpened through the introduction of a feedback cycle that encourages continuous improvement.

With more opportunities for meaningful engagement, the new model fosters greater collaboration between communities, service providers and government departments and agencies. This has been further supported through the introduction of VMConnect, an online engagement platform where RAC members can connect with the VMC and each other, share information and resources, seek advice and find new ways to work together.

Through the new model, the VMC has begun to transform dialogue, community capacity and engagement at local and regional levels. Over time, this is expected to improve public services, programs and policies in a way that captures the current needs of communities within the respective region.

The VMC is pleased to report that RAC members who have served for a second or third year have also said that they have never before felt so empowered and connected with the VMC and the Victorian Government.

## VICTORIAN VOICES

In 2019–20, the VMC held 29 RAC meetings across the state, building strong relationships with members that have proven invaluable throughout the challenges of 2020.

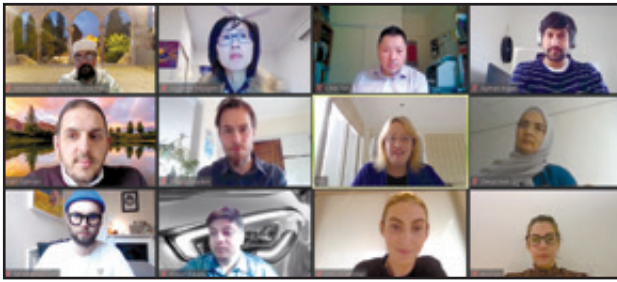
Members of each RAC placed issues of concern in their local area under the spotlight and determined up to three priority issues. This approach provided a clear focus for each RAC and helped drive the identification of possible solutions and actions to respond to the issues.

Consistent issues raised among RAC members included employment, family violence, mental health, housing, education and the impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19).

The VMC then facilitated dialogue about each priority issue with RAC members, communities, government and relevant stakeholders to document a collective action plan that described how to improve responsiveness and enhance access to services and programs in their region.



VMC Chairperson, Vivienne Nguyen, with Imptiaz Mohamed from the Eastern Regional Advisory Council (RAC) in March 2020.



Community and faith leaders met with Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the Hon. Ros Spence MP, and VMC Chairperson, Vivienne Nguyen, to discuss community concerns during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in June 2020.

## FEEDBACK THROUGHOUT THE PANDEMIC

As a vital point of contact for the VMC, RAC members provided continuous feedback and recommendations around the needs of communities throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. RAC members participated in numerous meetings, roundtables, conversations and surveys, where they:

- ▶ raised concerns and highlighted issues faced by communities;
- ▶ provided feedback on the Victorian Government's response to coronavirus (COVID-19);
- ▶ made recommendations to assist government agencies in meeting the needs of diverse communities; and
- ▶ identified language needs and gaps in communication and information.

RAC members also played an important role in the timely dissemination of health information and resources through their communities and networks. Many volunteered to assist with a variety of coronavirus (COVID-19) related activities including ambassador videos, checking translations and supporting the Department of Health and Human Services with doorknocking activities to share information and encourage testing.

Importantly, by staying closely connected with the VMC and each other, our network of RACs demonstrated unity and promoted harmony between communities. Some members also spoke with media to elevate community voices regarding the increase in coronavirus (COVID-19) fuelled racism.

## Community Support Fund

In 2019-20 the VMC's Community Support Fund provided more than \$200,000 towards the delivery of events and initiatives that promote and support diversity, unity and belonging. Designed to respond to urgent needs within Victoria's culturally diverse communities, the fund supports important activities which were either outside of the scope or the timelines of the Victorian Government's portfolio Community Grants Program.

This year, the VMC funded community initiatives and projects that:

- ▶ supported inclusion and full participation of emerging and growing communities;
- ▶ responded to the Royal Commission into Family Violence;
- ▶ established leadership and employment pathways for young people;
- ▶ addressed emerging issues or community concerns where a swift, localised response was most appropriate.

Funded projects included:

- ▶ North Sunshine Football Club's NAIDOC Week celebration game
- ▶ United Through Football Cultural Festival in Kensington
- ▶ Youth Activating Youth's summer camp for participants of their youth justice programs, and
- ▶ Latrobe Valley Maltese Museum for its showcase of Maltese memorabilia brought to Australia by Maltese migrants.

## CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUND RESPONSE

As a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, the VMC was unable to deliver some of its events and projects originally planned for 2020.

With community needs front of mind, the VMC repurposed some funding to support projects that enhanced social cohesion and connection during the pandemic.

The 2019-20 Community Support Fund Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response Round supported projects that aimed to:

- ▶ bring communities together via innovative means;
- ▶ utilise technology to strengthen and harness connection amongst communities;
- ▶ highlight the positive contribution of individuals from multicultural backgrounds to Victoria; and
- ▶ highlight social cohesion or social connectedness.

Funded projects included:

- ▶ professional development for early career refugees and people seeking asylum in regional Victoria;
- ▶ an online mental health hub for multicultural and multifaith Victorians;
- ▶ refugee and asylum seeker emergency food relief;
- ▶ training for multicultural frontline workers to respond to family violence; and
- ▶ a skills and support program for women impacted by abuse, trauma and isolation.

For the full list of 2019-20 Community Support Fund recipients, please see **Appendix I**.

## Community Grants Program

Our commitment to promoting and enhancing the social, cultural and economic benefits of diversity includes supporting and promoting the Victorian Government's Community Grants Program.

We are proud to promote a range of grants for individuals and community that:

- ▶ assist Victoria's multicultural communities to celebrate and share their traditions;
- ▶ foster cross-cultural awareness, understanding and respect;
- ▶ showcase the vibrancy and contribution of Victoria's multiculturalism;
- ▶ build the skills and knowledge of smaller or emerging community groups; and
- ▶ improve community infrastructure for cultural organisations.

As members of the assessment panels, our Commissioners play an important role in selecting grant recipients. In 2019-20, the VMC supported the grant programs outlined below.

- ▶ **THE MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FUND** offers grants to multicultural communities across Victoria to support upgrades to community facilities. The program supports communities to feel connected with their traditional culture and identity by increasing the safety, accessibility and condition of existing community facilities.
- ▶ **THE INDIAN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE FUND** offers grants to improve and enhance facilities that Victoria's Indian communities use to gather, celebrate and share their traditions. Our state is proudly home to nearly 170,000 people of Indian heritage, making it the largest Indian community in Australia.
- ▶ **THE COMMUNITY INNOVATION GRANT PROGRAM** provides funding to African community organisations and groups to deliver innovative community projects that support the inclusion and participation of Victoria's African communities. The program supports African communities to have a strong sense of belonging, connection and inclusion.
- ▶ **THE MULTICULTURAL FESTIVALS AND EVENTS PROGRAM** supports the whole Victorian community to celebrate of our cultural diversity. Funding is provided to festivals and events that foster cross-cultural awareness, unity and intercultural relationships, build capacity and partnerships between community organisations, and encourage participation of all Victorians.

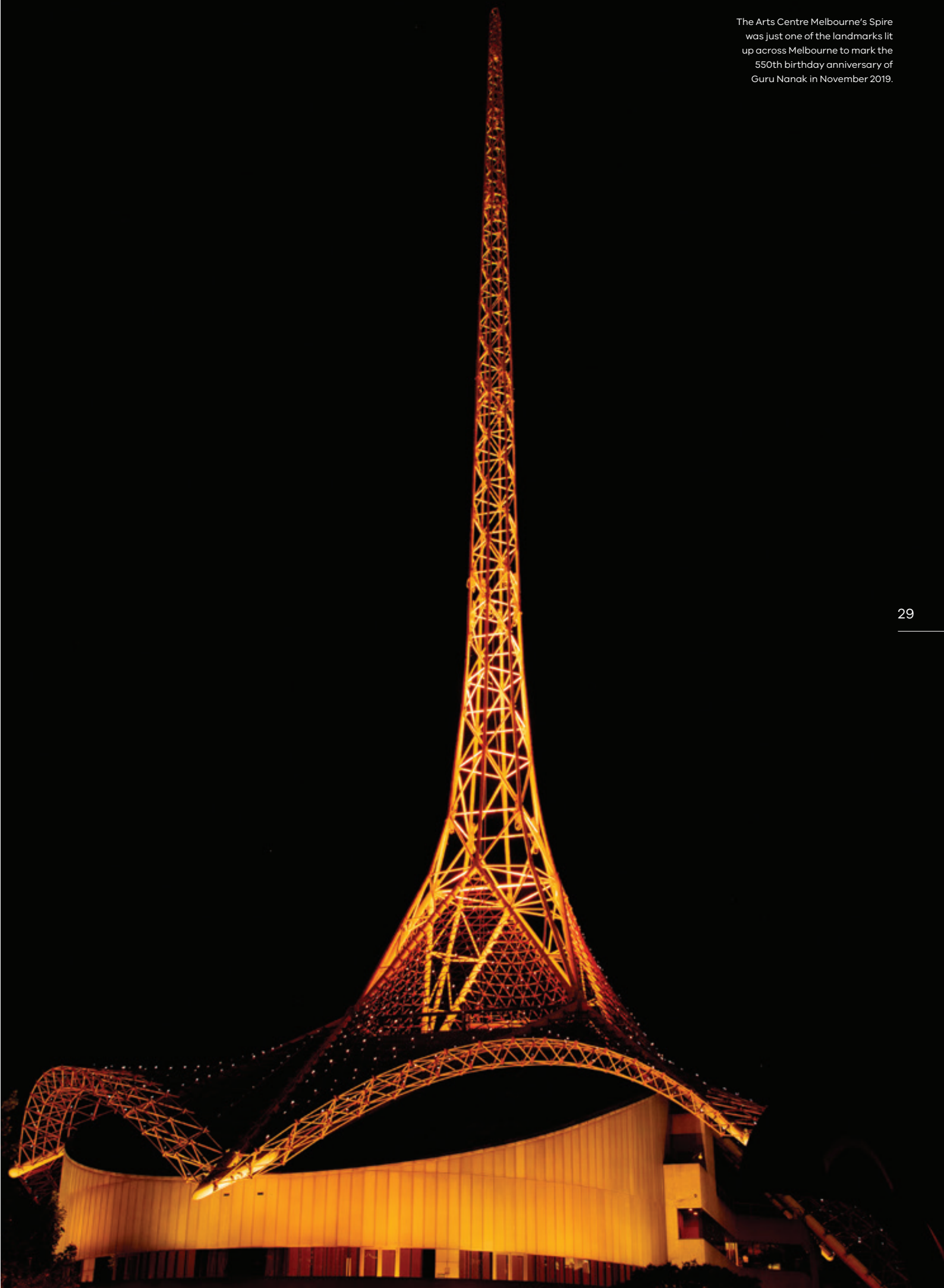
- ▶ **THE HINDU FESTIVALS AND EVENTS PROGRAM** offers grants to support and highlight Hinduism within Victoria through celebrations, festivals and events across the state.
- ▶ **THE SIKH CELEBRATIONS AND EVENTS FUND** was a one-off grant that supported local community celebrations and state-wide events in celebration of the 550th birthday anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, founder of the Sikh faith, during October and November 2019.
- ▶ **THE CAPACITY BUILDING AND PARTICIPATION PROGRAM** fosters the participation, inclusion and contribution of multicultural and multifaith communities to everyday life in Victoria. The program funds projects and activities that build knowledge and skills, the program supports priority groups including regional communities, refugees and asylum seekers, multicultural young people, women and seniors.
- ▶ **THE SECURITY INFRASTRUCTURE FUND FOR MULTICULTURAL AND MULTIFAITH COMMUNITIES** provides support for upgrade and installation of security infrastructure to multicultural and multifaith community facilities. The fund seeks to ensure that every Victorian can thrive in a peaceful and prosperous society with a shared sense of safety, belonging and respect.
- ▶ **THE MULTICULTURAL SPORTS FUND PROGRAM** increases access and participation in sport for culturally diverse communities, by supporting partnerships between sporting organisations, local communities and clubs, that build connections between multicultural communities and the wider Victorian community.

The VMC also provided advice to the Department of Premier and Cabinet regarding the impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19) on communities in relation to grants and the changing needs of organisations.

## Food Next Door Community Demonstration Farm

The VMC continued its support of the Food Next Door Community Demonstration Farm in Mildura for a second year. Funded by Regional Development Victoria, the three-year project matches newly arrived migrant and refugee farmers with under-utilised farmland, supporting regenerative farming through traditional foods and cultivation methods, and building local community cohesion.

The Arts Centre Melbourne's Spire was just one of the landmarks lit up across Melbourne to mark the 550th birthday anniversary of Guru Nanak in November 2019.



# CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) RESPONSE

Engagement, advocacy  
and communications





**Our priority throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has been the health and welfare of Victoria’s multicultural communities. We have advocated strongly on their behalf and provided support wherever possible.**

Coronavirus (COVID-19) has had an enormous impact on all Victorians, affecting our health, livelihoods, job and financial security, as well as mental health and wellbeing.

Recognising the unique challenges for Victorians of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, the VMC has focused its efforts throughout the pandemic on:

- ▶ engaging with communities to understand their needs;
- ▶ advocating to government on behalf of communities;
- ▶ providing leadership and support to communities; and
- ▶ communicating government messages to communities.

Working closely with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC), the VMC played an important role in elevating the voices of multicultural communities to inform the government’s response to coronavirus (COVID-19).

We held a series of consultations with diverse communities, provided ongoing advice on the provision of in-language information, and disseminated regular, timely and accurate information throughout our extensive communication channels and networks.

We also assisted with response efforts on the ground, including mobilising community leaders and representatives to volunteer alongside DHHS with doorknocking efforts and other localised efforts aimed at keeping Victorians safe.

# CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) RESPONSE AND SUPPORT

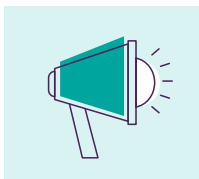
## MARCH - JUNE 2020

### We're listening



#### ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITIES

We've so far facilitated 20 online roundtables and consultations with 631 leaders representing 96 communities and faiths.



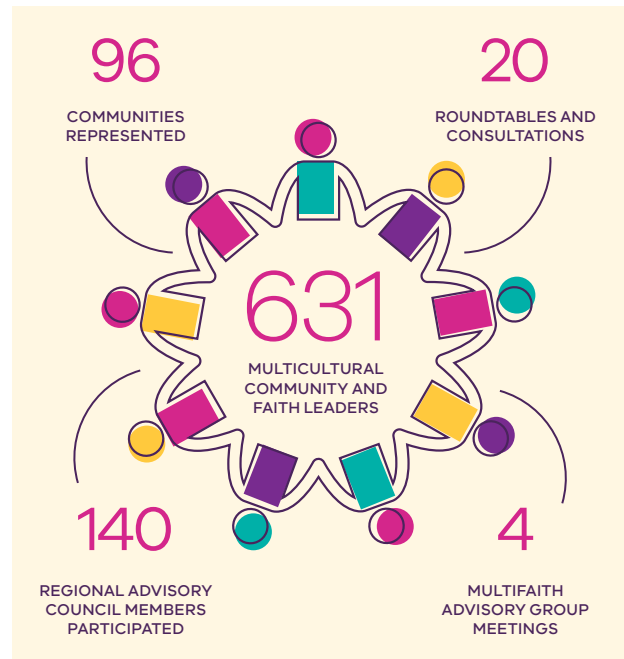
#### VOICES ACROSS VICTORIA

We've convened 8 Regional Advisory Council meetings across Victoria with 140 members attending.



#### DEMONSTRATING UNITY

Our Multifaith Advisory Group has met 4 times to elevate interfaith dialogue and demonstrate unity.



### Keeping communities informed



#### EMAILS TO MAILING LIST > 121,092

Weekly emails with new translated resources and key messaging sent to mailing list of 5,600.



#### EMAILS TO ADVISORY COUNCILS > 41,600

Emails and countless phone conversations with Regional Advisory Council members.



#### SOCIAL MEDIA REACH > 71,604

222 social media posts across 3 channels reaching 14,900 community members.



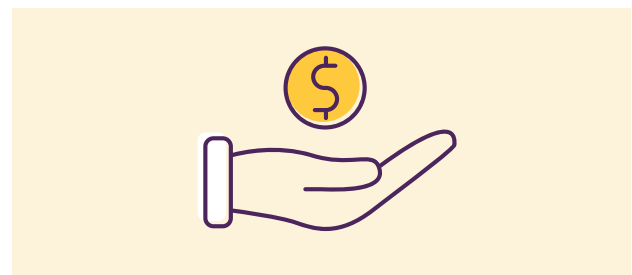
#### ONLINE TARGETED STAKEHOLDER REACH

87 posts and 2 newsletters to internal online engagement platform community

### Mobilising community-led responses



Partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services to mobilise volunteers for door knocking in 'hotspot' coronavirus outbreak suburbs.



More than \$180,000 in Community Support Fund grants for 11 projects focused on coronavirus (COVID-19) support for multicultural communities.



## Key community issues identified

**Racism**

**Intersectionality**

**Family violence**

Employment

**Disability**

Higher education

**In-language health advice**

**Mental health**

**Social cohesion**

Temporary visas

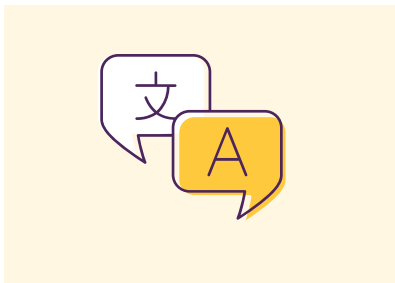
**Youth employment**

International students

**Small business**

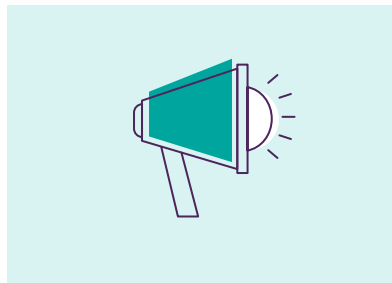
**Isolation**

## Advocacy & influence



### TRANSLATIONS

Ongoing advocacy and weekly dialogue with the Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services to provide community feedback on in-language materials and community engagement strategies for diverse audiences.



### MEDIA

Regular meetings with senior SBS staff to provide community feedback. Commissioners have reinforced key health messages and offered their perspectives on issues facing multicultural communities through radio, online and TV interviews.



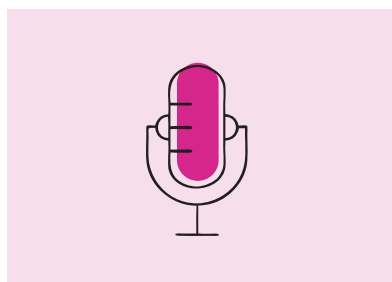
### LEADERSHIP

Increased frequency of Commission meetings to allow VMC Commissioners to share their insights and leadership in key areas of concern during the pandemic, including employment, mental health, family violence and access to services and information.



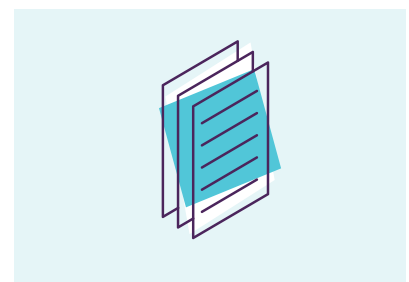
### ADVOCACY

Ongoing engagement with Victorian Government departments, advocating for policy responses that reflect the needs of multicultural communities, on issues such as youth disengagement, family violence and workforce participation.



### EVENTS

Weekly meetings with senior SBS staff to provide community feedback. Commissioners have reinforced key health messages and offered their perspectives on issues facing multicultural communities through radio, online and TV interviews.

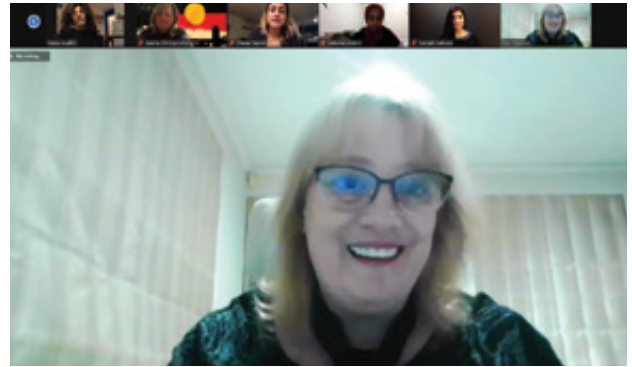


### SUBMISSIONS

Increased frequency of Commission meetings to allow VMC Commissioners to share their insights and leadership in key areas of concern during the pandemic, including employment, mental health, family violence and access to services and information.



Representatives of Pasifika communities participated in a VMC hosted community roundtable with the Department of Health and Human Services to discuss health information and community needs relating to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in June 2020.



Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the Hon. Ros Spence MP, speaking with Muslim women during a VMC community discussion in June 2020.

## Community consultations

To learn about the critical issues impacting multicultural communities during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the VMC conducted a series of consultations with key stakeholders, multicultural and multifaith community groups, young people, people with disabilities, multicultural business community and service providers. This included ethno-specific roundtables that provided a focused discussion where community members could raise their concerns in a safe environment.

The insights and feedback provided through these consultations has informed the Victorian Government's response to better support communities in areas that were hardest hit by coronavirus (COVID-19). And where possible, representatives from government departments and stakeholders including Department of Human Services and the Deputy Chief Health Officer, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and Victoria Police attended these consultations to consolidate response efforts and support.

Additional consultations were held regarding Victoria's coronavirus (COVID-19) testing programs and Stage 3 restrictions to ensure that multicultural communities are well informed about the importance of testing and how to keep themselves and their household safe.

## Elevating community voices

Overwhelming evidence points to the disproportionate and exceptional challenges faced by multicultural communities as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Communities have shared their concerns with us, particularly regarding accessing in-language information and resources, employment and job security, accessing government benefits, temporary visa issues. They also raised issues around mental health, social isolation, family violence, racism, misleading media reporting and the treatment of temporary visa holders and international students.

## In-language information and communication

In one of the most successful, multicultural societies in the world, it is vital that all members of the community are kept appropriately informed to protect the lives of all Victorians.

The VMC advocated for in-language information and resources from the outset, covering both the initial phase of warnings and restrictions as well as subsequent phases.

This pandemic has highlighted the need for timely, accurate and accessible in-language information and resources to support multicultural communities in navigating future crisis situations – not only key safety and health messages but also on specific initiatives and programs to ensure access to services related to employment, small business, employment, family violence, mental health etc.

As a conduit between communities and government, the VMC played a key role in the timely dissemination of coronavirus (COVID-19) information and resources throughout Victoria's diverse communities. This was achieved through the VMC's weekly email Coronavirus (COVID-19) Community Update, the VMC website, social media, community consultations, direct emails throughout our networks and advisory groups. This proved to be a very effective way of sharing information far and wide across the state.

Through our extensive discussions and consultations with communities we recognised that the messenger is just as important as the message, and therefore advocated for the engagement of community leaders and representatives as trusted messengers within their communities. This also proved to be a valuable channel for the Victorian Government and will continue to be adopted going forward.

## Victoria's recovery

Our commitment to providing ongoing assistance to multicultural communities and advocating for their needs to Victorian Government departments and agencies will continue into the recovery phase and beyond.

# APPENDIX I.

## Community Support Fund Recipients 2019-20

Opportunity	Recipient	Grant
Coronial Council Project Reference Group	Coronial Council of Victoria	10,000
Cultural Festival	United Through Football	5,000
Latrobe Valley Maltese Museum	Maltese Community Centre	3,500
NAIDOC Week Celebration Game	North Sunshine Football Club	3,000
Summer Camp	Youth Activating Youth	10,000
Who We Really Are	Coldstream Primary School	1,500

### Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response Round

Opportunity	Recipient	Grant
The Care and Food Exchange	Loddon Campaspe Multicultural Ser-vices	20,000
emPOWER: online support for women impacted by abuse/trauma/isolation	Activating Artemis	20,000
Enhance Services to CALD Men Who Are Using Family Violence	Global Echo Consultants	20,000
Keeping CALD women safe through the COVID-19 cri-sis	Wellsprings for Women	15,000
Online Mental Health Hub	Jurmaine Health	20,000
Open Futures	Welcoming Australia	20,000
Refugee and Asylum Seeker Emergency Food Relief	Refugee Communities Association of Australia	15,000
Support Horne of African Refugee Women subjected to family and domestic violence	Centre of Advancing Women	20,000
Supporting multicultural youth employment	Adam Clarke Consultancy	20,000
Training for multicultural frontline workers to support family violence	Brotherhood of St Laurence	10,000
Vietnamese Community's 45th Anniversary concert	Vietnamese Community in Australia/ Vic Chapter Inc	7,000

# APPENDIX II.

## Regional Advisory Councils Members 2019-20



### Barwon South West

- ▶ Emmanuel Akinpelu
- ▶ Moo Thay Wyar Blue
- ▶ Bakulikira Byakweli
- ▶ Matin Ghayour Minaife
- ▶ Mukhles Habash
- ▶ Prehashini Jeevaretnam
- ▶ Patricia Kimtia
- ▶ Michael Martinez
- ▶ Nelson Nelson
- ▶ Danielle Parker
- ▶ Mutheinchri Ra
- ▶ Habiba Zafari
- ▶ Helen Nicholls-Stary
- ▶ Gyanendra Upreti
- ▶ Moshtagh Heidari



### Gippsland

- ▶ Yumna Ahmed
- ▶ Nurul Bhuiyan
- ▶ Farhat Firdous
- ▶ Jenny Horner
- ▶ Soula Kanellopoulos
- ▶ Amina Khatun
- ▶ Christine Lee
- ▶ Jason Lee
- ▶ J Murray Lobley
- ▶ Remi Nurudeen Ogunsina
- ▶ Ami Pathak
- ▶ Tania Ryan
- ▶ Mohammed Shareef



### Grampians

- ▶ Michael Akindeju
- ▶ Angela Bijimba
- ▶ Karissa Cribbes
- ▶ Mona Hatwal
- ▶ Irene Hughes
- ▶ Manzoor Mian
- ▶ John Millington
- ▶ Meeta Narsi
- ▶ Monsour Obadina
- ▶ Frances Salenga
- ▶ Sid Tegally
- ▶ Jessica Trijsburg



### Hume

- ▶ Liaqat Ahmadi
- ▶ Fayyaz Akhtar
- ▶ Sam Atukorala
- ▶ Rhonda Chrisanthou
- ▶ Lorna Gillespie
- ▶ Tony Hardham
- ▶ Paul Irungu
- ▶ Rupinder Kaur
- ▶ Omeni Ndlovu
- ▶ Sara Noori
- ▶ Apollo Nsubuga-Kyobe
- ▶ Charles Oguntade
- ▶ Penelope Vine
- ▶ Sarmed Yassin



### Loddon Mallee

- ▶ Steven Abbott
- ▶ Moustafa Al-Rawi
- ▶ Ernest Antoine
- ▶ Nay Chee Aung
- ▶ Abhishek Awasthi
- ▶ Zahir Azimi
- ▶ Joelle Brown
- ▶ Miriam Casas
- ▶ Kaye Graves
- ▶ Jennifer Lay
- ▶ Jemima Lotika
- ▶ Kate McInnes
- ▶ Pacifique Ndayisaba
- ▶ Aisha Neelam
- ▶ Joby Sebastian
- ▶ Rose Vincent
- ▶ Dean Wickham



### Eastern Metropolitan

- ▶ Raju Adhikari
- ▶ June Anderson
- ▶ Donna Askew
- ▶ Gergis Ayoub
- ▶ Bala Balachandran
- ▶ Suresh Bendone Ramachandaiah
- ▶ Michelle Brewty
- ▶ Rufina Chan
- ▶ Rana Ebrahimi
- ▶ Marie Gina Etienne
- ▶ Helen Forbes-Mewett

- ▶ Cherie Fung
- ▶ Bernadette Goulding
- ▶ Mohit Gupta
- ▶ Cindy He
- ▶ Roger Li
- ▶ Imptiaz Mohamed
- ▶ Mithun Nambiar
- ▶ Barry Nguyen
- ▶ Danny Ong
- ▶ Saarah Ozeer
- ▶ Vicky Paradisis
- ▶ Eunjin Park
- ▶ Simon Sang Hre
- ▶ Kiran Shah
- ▶ Stephane Shepherd
- ▶ Eva Simo
- ▶ Siva Sivagnanam
- ▶ Tina Stathopoulos
- ▶ Sabaratnam Sundaramoorthy
- ▶ Philip Tan
- ▶ Viji Tangirala
- ▶ James Thangman
- ▶ Adwin Town
- ▶ Pritida Vinod
- ▶ Wilfred Wang
- ▶ Stephen Chun Weng Yin
- ▶ Jane Wonu Ogbah



### Southern Metropolitan

- ▶ Rakesh Auplish
- ▶ Komi Bana
- ▶ Manisha Beniwal
- ▶ Georgia Benjamin
- ▶ Eunhee Bernstein
- ▶ Roshan Bhandary
- ▶ Edith Maria Campbell

- ▶ Alba Chliakhtine
- ▶ Rumi Commons
- ▶ Cristina De Souza Taylor
- ▶ Puja Dhawan
- ▶ Angela Di Stella
- ▶ Lan Diep
- ▶ Fahim Farooq
- ▶ Dabessa Gemelal
- ▶ Selba Gondoza Luka
- ▶ Nizar Hajj
- ▶ Simon Ho
- ▶ Rashi Kapoor
- ▶ Alexander Kats
- ▶ Shashi Kochhar
- ▶ Deng Kor
- ▶ Marek Krol
- ▶ Vishwa Kumar
- ▶ Susan Levkovski
- ▶ Nancy Loomba
- ▶ Girish Madhavan Pillai
- ▶ Mata Tuerei Mani
- ▶ Sugu Maran
- ▶ Nabila Marzouk
- ▶ Urvi Mehta
- ▶ Ana Lucia Mello
- ▶ Kasuni Mendis
- ▶ Aanchal Meshram
- ▶ Weda Mohseni
- ▶ Rebecca Mphande
- ▶ Phoebe Mwanza
- ▶ Suriakumarie Naidoo
- ▶ Marlo Newton
- ▶ Holger Nord
- ▶ Brian Oates
- ▶ Erdinc Ozyurek
- ▶ Yogi Patel
- ▶ Qiuqing Pu
- ▶ Angela Ristuccia-Cafarella
- ▶ Gangotri Roy
- ▶ Reasmey Sab
- ▶ Paul Saluni
- ▶ Swathi Shanmukhasundaram
- ▶ Devendra Singh
- ▶ Jamel Kaur Singh
- ▶ Anthony Siliato Sofe

- ▶ Nika, Suwarsih
- ▶ Shaji Varghese
- ▶ Grissel Walmaggia
- ▶ George Wan
- ▶ Huiting Wei
- ▶ Debbie Wiener
- ▶ Jeswynn Yogaratnam
- ▶ Helen Alexis
- ▶ Harriet Xavier
- ▶ Jasbir Singh Suropada
- ▶ John Zeleznikow



## North West Metropolitan

- ▶ Mohammad Abdullah
- ▶ Roomanna Abdulrahman
- ▶ Robert Aduer
- ▶ Muhammad Nabeel Akhlaq
- ▶ Doaah Albatat
- ▶ Faten Alhelow
- ▶ Ponniah Anandajayasekeram
- ▶ Shanthy Antony
- ▶ Michael Apout
- ▶ Loretta Asquini
- ▶ Ajmal Awan
- ▶ Pullareddy Baddam
- ▶ Aroshi Bandarawatte
- ▶ Ross Barnett
- ▶ Bethel Belay
- ▶ Miguel Belmar
- ▶ Biong Biong
- ▶ Andy Chan
- ▶ Ivan Chan
- ▶ Upul Chandana
- ▶ Ritesh Chugh
- ▶ Sherrine Clark

- ▶ Preeti Daga
- ▶ Baker Dawas
- ▶ Teresa De Fazio
- ▶ Hamza Dhedhy
- ▶ Laura Di Pasquale
- ▶ Jack Djoric
- ▶ Nikki Efremidis
- ▶ Vinea Fuimaono
- ▶ Tara Gaire
- ▶ Orlando Gibson
- ▶ Batul Fatima Gulani
- ▶ Puneet Gulati
- ▶ Amrita Gurung
- ▶ Amer Hagos
- ▶ Hanad Hersi
- ▶ Iqbal Hossain
- ▶ Zeeshan Humayun
- ▶ Nusrat Islam
- ▶ Louie Josef
- ▶ Salim Kazi
- ▶ Angelos Kenos
- ▶ Virendra Khatana
- ▶ Raj Khillan
- ▶ Neha Kolape
- ▶ Rohit Kumar
- ▶ Sylvie Lebe
- ▶ Gary Lee
- ▶ Abdul Liban
- ▶ Bol Machar Maduot
- ▶ Yasir Mahmud
- ▶ Dona Malaish
- ▶ Deng Malith
- ▶ Afshan Mantoo
- ▶ Ring Mayar
- ▶ Abdullahi Mohamud Ali
- ▶ Peter Mousaferiadis
- ▶ Shiva Nehrir
- ▶ Frank Newah-Jarfoi
- ▶ Anh (Ann) Nguyen
- ▶ Mai Nguyen
- ▶ Jazeer Nijamudeen

- ▶ Diana Noor
- ▶ Deng Lual Nuun
- ▶ Kirsten O'Connor-Smith
- ▶ Abimbola Odetayo
- ▶ Osman Osman
- ▶ Omar Pervaiz
- ▶ Nelson Pervaz
- ▶ David Prasad
- ▶ Fred Psaropoulos
- ▶ Marleine Raffoul
- ▶ Seide Raffoul
- ▶ Monica Sharma Raizada
- ▶ Gurdev Rattan
- ▶ Silvia Renda
- ▶ Sean Ryan
- ▶ Yadata Saba
- ▶ Najmo Said
- ▶ Karolina Salanoo
- ▶ Dawood Sammour
- ▶ Paul Seidl
- ▶ Charles Sesay
- ▶ Sanjay Sethi
- ▶ Tahira Sheikh
- ▶ Seyed Sherifdeen
- ▶ Muhammad Shuakat
- ▶ Amit Singh
- ▶ Gurninder Singh
- ▶ Dalal Sleiman
- ▶ Olga Stojic
- ▶ Vonivate Tawase
- ▶ Tenenet Taye
- ▶ Kapil Thakkar
- ▶ Thu-Trang Maria Tran
- ▶ Gurpreet Verma
- ▶ Deepak Vinayak OAM
- ▶ Andrew Wang
- ▶ Janetta Ziino
- ▶ Valeska Zuniga-Chondo

# APPENDIX III.

## Multifaith Advisory Group Members 2019-20

- ▶ All Nations Presbyterian Church of Australia Mulgrave
- ▶ AMAFHH Federation - Shi'a Organisation
- ▶ Australian Intercultural Society
- ▶ Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights
- ▶ Anglican Diocese of Melbourne
- ▶ Baha'i Community of Victoria
- ▶ Benevolence Australia
- ▶ Board of Imams Victoria
- ▶ Rabbinical Council of Victoria
- ▶ Buddhist Council of Victoria
- ▶ Catholic Social Services Victoria
- ▶ Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne
- ▶ Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria
- ▶ Faith Communities Council of Victoria
- ▶ Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia
- ▶ Hindu Council of Australia (Vic)
- ▶ Hindu Society of Victoria
- ▶ Islamic Council of Victoria
- ▶ Jewish Community Council of Victoria
- ▶ Lutheran Church of Australia
- ▶ Presbyterian Church of Victoria
- ▶ Rabbinical Council of Victoria
- ▶ Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne
- ▶ Russian Orthodox Church
- ▶ Salvation Army
- ▶ Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria
- ▶ The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne
- ▶ Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
- ▶ Victorian Council of Churches
- ▶ Victorian Multicultural Commission
- ▶ UNESCO



The VMC organised a multifaith gathering on the steps of Parliament House in February 2020 to acknowledge the devastation caused by the bushfires of 2020. The event was attended by political, community and faith leaders.

# APPENDIX IV.

## Multicultural Chambers of Commerce Members 2019-20

- ▶ American Chamber of Commerce in Australia (AmCham)
- ▶ Argentina Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Aus-Lanka Business Council
- ▶ Australia Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Australia Africa Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Australia Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- ▶ Australia British Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Australia China Business Council-Victoria
- ▶ Australia India Business Council
- ▶ Australia Indonesia Business Council
- ▶ Australia Israel Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Australia Japan Society of Victoria
- ▶ Australia Korea Business Council
- ▶ Australia Latin America Business Council
- ▶ Australia Lebanon Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- ▶ Australia Malaysia Business Council
- ▶ Australia Philippines Business Council
- ▶ Australia Sri Lanka Council Inc.
- ▶ Australia Thailand Business Council
- ▶ Australia Ukraine Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Australia Zimbabwe Business Council
- ▶ Australian American Association (Victoria)
- ▶ Australian Lithuania Business Council
- ▶ Australian Macedonian Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Australian Maltese Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Australia Peru Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Australian Turkish Business Council
- ▶ Australian Turkish Businessmen and Industry
- ▶ Brazil Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Victoria
- ▶ French Australia Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ German Australian Chamber of Industry and Commerce
- ▶ Hellenic Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- ▶ Irish Australian Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- ▶ Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- ▶ Multicultural Business Ministerial Council
- ▶ Netherlands Chamber of Commerce Australia
- ▶ Polish Chamber of Commerce Australia
- ▶ Victoria Croatian Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

# APPENDIX V.

## Multicultural Awards for Excellence Recipients 2019

### Premier's Award for Community Harmony

#### Nyadol Nyuon

Outside her work as a commercial litigator, Nyadol is an advocate for human rights, multiculturalism, the settlement of refugees and people seeking asylum and has volunteered extensively in these areas for more than 10 years.

In 2019, Nyadol was also recognised as one of the Australian Financial Review's 100 Women of Influence for her contribution to diversity and inclusion, and has twice been nominated as one of the hundred most influential African Australians.

### Emerging Leadership in Multiculturalism Award

#### Christian Bashimbe

Since arriving in Australia in 2017, Christian has supported young refugees and migrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo to build their capabilities and

showcase their skills, culture and traditions to broader Victoria. Christian led a committee to organise the 2019 Afro Beat Festival, and has been pivotal in raising awareness of major issues facing young refugees and migrants as a member of the Multicultural Youth Network and when attending the 2019 FUSE Youth Summit National Conference.

**HIGHLY COMMENDED:**  
Eh Su

### Community Innovation Award

#### Cooking: The Art of Belonging by Wellsprings for Women

Cooking: The Art of Belonging, aimed to use the medium of cooking and sharing food as an avenue for reducing social isolation and generating intercultural connection in women of diverse cultural backgrounds. A series of community events hosted by women in the group, showcased

dishes from their cultures, as well as supporting participants to complete food handling accreditation. Some of the women in the program have gone on to start their own catering businesses, and the events have become a safe and joyous space for these women to share their voices and actively bring their diverse communities together.

**HIGHLY COMMENDED:**  
Kulturbrille

### Youth Award

#### Selin-Deniz Arpacı

Selin's love of football motivated her to become a Community Champion for Hume's Centre for Multicultural Youth. In 2018, Selin assisted with 12 in-school football sessions for primary and secondary students, the Welcome Football Cup in Hume and a school holiday program. Selin was actively involved in developing strategies to engage young girls who were unaccustomed to participating in sport. Her commitment to encouraging these girls and share her own experiences was reflected in participants and their families sharing that Selin made them feel more confident and connected to community.

**HIGHLY COMMENDED:**  
Yasac Abdullahi

### Media Award

#### SBS Somali and SBS Italian

After the tragic events of Melbourne's Bourke Street attack in 2017, SBS Somali and SBS Italian



Emerging Leadership in Multiculturalism Award recipient Christian Bashime with Vivienne Nguyen, VMC Chairperson at the Multicultural Awards for Excellence at Government House in November 2019.



coverage helped to defy negative stereotypes of Victoria's Somali and Muslim communities, and reinforced compassion and mutual understanding. By covering the story in both mainstream and in-language media, communities were able to hear about the events in their own language. SBS's coverage conveyed that the tragic events that occurred were inflicted by one man and do not reflect the values and beliefs of Victoria's Somali and Muslim communities. SBS reached out to beloved representatives of the Italian, Somali and Muslim communities and enabled each community to share their messages of healing, unity and condolences to Sisto Malaspina's family and the wider Victoria community.

**HIGHLY COMMENDED:**  
Yin Wu

## Multicultural Business Award

### Preston Chassis Industries

Founded in the late 1970s by two Italian migrants, the company has grown to be a leader in their industry and an employer of choice. With a strong belief in the benefits of diversity and a commitment to maximising opportunities for people from multicultural backgrounds, the company employs staff from more than 20 cultures and faiths. A long-time employer of skilled migrants under the Australian Government's 457 skilled visa program, the company has supported several staff to apply for permanent residency. Their dedication to this program has made for a rich and dynamic workplace, with a welcoming and generous culture.

**HIGHLY COMMENDED:**  
Thrive Refugee Enterprise

## Government and Civic Leadership Award

### City of Greater Bendigo

The City of Greater Bendigo has shown leadership and a commitment to developing a community that fosters culturally inclusive attitudes and practice and welcomes increased diversity. The Greater Bendigo Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2016-2019 was an ambitious, community-wide, strategic program of 146 initiatives to advance cultural inclusion. The City of Greater Bendigo worked proactively with local schools, Victoria Police and community organisations to deliver the initiatives, which have assisted the effective settlement of new migrants and refugees, raised community awareness about human rights issues, celebrated different cultures, promoted religious and cultural awareness and supported community participation.

**HIGHLY COMMENDED:**  
Greater Shepparton City Council

## Education and Early Childhood Award

### SCHOOL EDUCATION Melton Secondary College

Melton Secondary College responded to the steady increase in enrolment of students of South Sudanese heritage with a range of programs focused on mentoring and community engagement, to build a culturally rich and supportive college community. The approach has been highly effective in improving outcomes for students of African heritage, including reducing the number and severity of adverse incidents,

increasing participation of African families at student progress and careers sessions, increasing student participation and improving overall students' perceptions of diversity. The college has earned praise for the quality and impact of its programs and continues to share their work with other schools through forums and programs, working to ensure that all schools are not just culturally safe and inclusive places for learning, but embedded in communities enriched by cultural diversity.

**HIGHLY COMMENDED:**  
Merrilyn Gaulke, Crusoe College and White Hills Primary School

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION VICSEG New Futures

VICSEG New Future's Learning Together program addresses barriers to learning English for over 300 parents and 500 young Victorian children each year. Delivered with support from local primary schools and settlement services, the program provides a supported learning environment, combining a pre-accredited English literacy course for parents, on-site child care and playgroup activities for parents and children to enjoy together. Parents are encouraged to connect with their child's home culture and 'mother tongue', while learning more English language words and concepts alongside their child. Learning Together has been found to have overwhelming positive outcomes for both parents and children, and the program has successfully engaged parents from a range of cultural and language backgrounds and has proved equally valuable across participating communities.

## Police Awards

### POLICE MULTICULTURAL AWARD

- ▶ Leading Senior Constable Dean Lloyd
- ▶ Ela Tankir
- ▶ Leading Senior Constable Gordon Exner
- ▶ Senior Constable Paul Guy
- ▶ Inspector Jackie Poida
- ▶ Senior Constable Shanice Vilone
- ▶ Leading Senior Constable Elizabeth Sidiropoulos

### POLICE MULTICULTURAL MEDIA AWARD

- ▶ Cathy Le

### POLICE COMMUNITY EXEMPLARY AWARD

- ▶ Victoria Police Applicant Attraction Team
- ▶ Greater Dandenong Youth and Emerging Community Leaders Program
- ▶ Victorian Fisheries Authority
- ▶ Dr Hussein Haraco
- ▶ Williamstown Police Station Diversity & Inclusion Room
- ▶ Wyndham Citizens' Academy

## Award for Meritorious Service to the Community

### INDIVIDUALS – VOLUNTARY WORK

- ▶ Aanchal Meshram
- ▶ Abdu Hamid Abdullahi Mohamed
- ▶ Abhishek Awasthi
- ▶ Adem Osman Malekin
- ▶ Barry Berih
- ▶ Bhakta Bhattarai
- ▶ Fathi Abdulkadir
- ▶ Gurpreet (Gary) Verma
- ▶ Gulghotai Bezhan
- ▶ Kapil Thakkar
- ▶ Kaushal Srivastava
- ▶ Maria Ibrahim
- ▶ Mohammed Shabbir Alam
- ▶ Dr Raju Adhikari
- ▶ Robert Aduer Ring
- ▶ Satya Ramadugu
- ▶ Selba Gondoza Luka
- ▶ Shoheli Sunjida
- ▶ Sohail Yamin
- ▶ Tania de Jong AM
- ▶ Vahid Goga
- ▶ Xiao Yue Wang

## INDIVIDUALS – PAID WORK

- ▶ David Rothstadt
- ▶ Major Karen Elkington
- ▶ Xavier Moloney

## ORGANISATIONS

- ▶ Australian Integrated Fijian Association of Victoria
- ▶ Bachar Houli Foundation
- ▶ St Paul's Catholic Social Club's Mirboo North Italian Festa Committee
- ▶ Tesselaar Tulip Festival
- ▶ The Boite
- ▶ Victorian Cultural Association



VMC Director Hakan Akyol with a guest at the Multicultural Awards for Excellence at Government House in November 2019.



VMC Commissioners David Vincent and Shankar Kasynathan at the VMC's Cultural Diversity Week Sponsor Event in October 2019.

#### Photo credits

Pages 4, 16-17, 24, 26 and 38 courtesy of Paul Jeffers. Page 23 courtesy of Ruth Hyland. Page 29 courtesy of SmugMug. All other photographs courtesy of Artificial Studios.

Graphic design by Franky Demaria Design.

#### Annual report 2019-20

The 2019-20 Annual Report covers the core work of the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) and its achievements within the context of its objectives and functions, as outlined in the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*.

The information provided in this report was accurate as at 30 June 2020.

#### Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, please contact the Victorian Multicultural Commission on [contact@vmc.vic.gov.au](mailto:contact@vmc.vic.gov.au). This publication is available in PDF format on the internet at [www.multicultural.vic.gov.au](http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au).

#### Disclaimer

This publication is provided for information purposes only. No claim is

made as to the accuracy or authenticity of the information contained herein. Information is provided on the basis that all persons accessing the information undertake responsibility for assessing its relevance and accuracy. The Victorian Multicultural Commission makes no representations, either expressed or implied, as to the suitability of the said information any particular purpose and disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

#### Privacy

Your personal information will be dealt with in accordance with the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic) and the Public Records Act 1973 (Vic). VMC is committed to protecting the privacy of personal information. At the time VMC collects personal information about an individual from the individual, VMC will advise you about how you can contact VMC, the fact that you are able to gain access to the information, the purposes for which the information is collected and to whom VMC usually discloses information of that kind. Enquiries about access to personal information held by VMC should be directed to [contact@vmc.vic.gov.au](mailto:contact@vmc.vic.gov.au).

#### Copyright

© Victorian Multicultural Commission 2020



You are free to re-use this work under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence provided you credit Victorian Multicultural Commission as author, indicate if changes were made and comply with the other licence terms. The licence does not apply to any images, photographs or branding, including the Victorian Multicultural Commission logo and government logo.

#### Contact

Victorian Multicultural Commission  
Level 3, 1 Macarthur Street  
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Postal Address:  
GPO Box 4698  
Melbourne VIC 3001

Telephone: 03 9651 5901  
Email: [contact@vmc.vic.gov.au](mailto:contact@vmc.vic.gov.au)



20 October 2020

The Hon. Ros Spence MP  
Minister for Multicultural Affairs  
Level 1, 2 Treasury Place  
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Dear Minister

In accordance with Section 21 of the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*, I have great pleasure in reporting on the Victorian Multicultural Commission's operations for the period 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

Yours sincerely



**Vivienne Nguyen**  
Chairperson