

Victorian Multicultural Commission

Annual Report
2022-23



Strengthening our community
past, now and future

VICTORIAN
multicultural
commission
strengthening our community





Acknowledgment of Country

The Victorian Multicultural Commission acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as 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 and material connection to land, water, skies and resources.

The Victorian Multicultural Commission supports continued steps towards reconciliation, First Peoples right to participate in decision making that affects them and the implementation of the Uluru Statement of the Heart.

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Message from the Chairperson

I am pleased to present the Victorian Multicultural Commission's 2022–23 annual report. It provides a summary of what has been a remarkable and challenging year.

In the past 12 months, Victoria has shifted from an all-consuming response and recovery approach to COVID-19 to one that seeks to live with the virus and reconnect with each other.

Much effort has been spent on creating opportunities for us to reconnect in COVID-informed and safe ways. I thank the many inspiring people who have sought to rekindle the vibrancy and cultural richness in all our lives.

This time was also a period of transition for the VMC. We pivoted from a crisis-response mode to one that is more aligned with our role as stipulated in the Act. This includes promoting the full participation of Victoria's diverse communities in the social, cultural, economic and political life of Victoria.

As set out in our Statement of Expectations, our work also involves:

- ▶ **promoting and advocacy**
- ▶ **investigating and reporting**
- ▶ **community leadership.**

Some of our reprioritisation activities included the following:

- ▶ We aligned our priorities to reflect the feedback we received from communities. This feedback came via the VMC's engagement channels, including the Regional Advisory Councils, the Multifaith Advisory Group, the Multicultural Youth Network and the Multicultural Business Forum. I extend the VMC's appreciation to all the members of these consultative platforms.

- ▶ We supported whole-of-government systems changes. This included the government's mental health and wellbeing reforms, advising on the development of the antiracism strategy and implementing anti-vilification initiatives.
- ▶ We promoted and celebrated diversity through our strategic communications strategies and recognition programs. These programs capture the contributions and achievements of multicultural and multifaith communities.

It is my third year as Chairperson, and I have not stopped learning. The VMC has an important role as a conduit and an enabler between multicultural communities and the government. This role continues to be elevated in specific portfolio areas such as employment, mental health and family violence.

I look forward to further building on these areas and addressing systemic issues more strategically.

Of course, the VMC's work and achievements are only possible because of the collaboration and support of so many. I am incredibly appreciative of the efforts by the people, organisations and communities who work so hard to protect, promote and enhance social cohesion and community harmony.

To our colleagues at Multicultural Affairs and Fairer Victoria, the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and other departments and agencies, thank you for the ongoing collaboration. Given Victoria's increasing cultural diversity, our work together needs to embed what we have learned within the government's core business.



Chairperson Viv Nguyen and Commissioner Luna Folly with 2022 Victorian Multicultural Awards of Excellence attendees

I am grateful to the previous Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the Hon. Ros Spence MP and Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs, Ms Katie Hall MP for their support in the portfolio. I wish them well with their new responsibilities. I am also appreciative of the support and leadership provided by the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Colin Brooks, MP and the Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs, Nathan Lambert, MP and look forward to working with them.

I acknowledge and express my heartfelt appreciation to each of the VMC's commissioners and staff. We have an incredibly broad brief and we are a comparatively small team, but we certainly punch above our weight. Your individual and collective efforts, passion, intellect and commitment continues to enhance long-term inclusion and equity in Victoria.

2023 is also VMC's 40th anniversary. To mark this occasion, we have commissioned a project to capture our impact on Victoria over the past four decades.

We need to acknowledge and celebrate what we have learned from the past so that we can build upon them. We are eternally grateful to our predecessors for their work and vision. They achieved much, and it is now up to us to build on those past achievements.

I am confident this 40th anniversary project will highlight these achievements and also provide us with some guidance for the future.

Vivienne Nguyen AM
Chairperson, Victorian
Multicultural Commission

About the Victorian Multicultural Commission

The Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) strengthens cultural diversity in Victoria through consultation, advocacy, celebration and promotion.

The VMC is a statutory body established in 1983 and legislated under the *Multicultural Victoria Act 2011*. It is dedicated to:

- ▶ promoting cultural diversity across all areas of society
- ▶ advocating on behalf of multicultural communities to all levels of government
- ▶ full participation by all Victorians, regardless of their cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds.

The VMC is a vital conduit between the state's culturally, religiously and linguistically diverse communities and the Victorian Government. It fosters social cohesion and promotes cultural diversity through a strengths-based approach and empowers community-based solutions.

We create a meaningful and productive connection between multicultural communities and government by engaging directly with people to understand issues. We work together to identify and recommend potential solutions to government, policymakers and community organisations. We also make continual improvements to public services to make them more culturally inclusive and accessible.

We promote multiculturalism's cultural, social and economic benefits. This includes advocating for tangible, systemic change within government departments, such as workforce diversity, data collation and measurable outcomes.

Our primary stakeholders are:

- ▶ multicultural and multifaith communities (organisations, service providers, peak bodies, faith groups, businesses and individuals)
- ▶ the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Victorian government departments, agencies, statutory bodies and other commissions.

The VMC conducts all its work through the lens of intersectionality. We understand how different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. We work strategically to counter this.

Mission statement

We strengthen our community through support, celebrations and advocacy for culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians.

Multicultural Victoria in 2022

Victoria has cultural heritage from across the globe. The 2021 Census showed that the usual number of residents in Victoria was 6.5 million, which is an increase from 5.9 million people in 2016. It also showed that 58.7 per cent of Victorians have at least one parent who was born overseas. This diversity enriches our state.

Victorians' most common ancestry includes:

- ▶ English – 29.2 per cent
- ▶ Australian – 27.2 per cent
- ▶ Irish – 9.4 per cent
- ▶ Scottish – 8.2 per cent
- ▶ Chinese – 6.6 per cent
- ▶ Italian – 4.4 per cent
- ▶ Indian – 3.1 per cent
- ▶ German – 4.0 per cent
- ▶ Greek – 1.7 per cent
- ▶ Vietnamese – 1.3 per cent.

Victorian Government statistics show many refugees in Victoria come from countries affected by conflicts such as:

- ▶ World War II in Europe
- ▶ Indochina
- ▶ the republics of the former Yugoslavia
- ▶ the Horn of Africa
- ▶ the Middle East
- ▶ Afghanistan.

The 2021 Census also showed that 41.1 per cent of people living in Greater Melbourne, and 35 per cent of all Victorians, were born overseas.

Victorians' top countries of birth include:

- ▶ Australia – 65 per cent
- ▶ India – 4 per cent
- ▶ England – 2.7 per cent
- ▶ China – 2.6 per cent
- ▶ New Zealand – 1.5 per cent.

In terms of languages spoken, 67.2 per cent of Victorians speak English at home and 30.2 per cent of households speak a language other than English at home.

Victoria's most common languages other than English include:

- ▶ Mandarin – 3.4 per cent
- ▶ Vietnamese – 1.8 per cent
- ▶ Greek – 1.6 per cent
- ▶ Punjabi – 1.6 per cent.

Victoria also has diverse religions and faith groups, with the top most common faiths being:

- ▶ Christianity – 40.9 per cent
- ▶ Islam – 4.2 per cent
- ▶ Hinduism – 3.3 per cent
- ▶ Buddhism – 3.1 per cent
- ▶ no religion – 39.3 per cent



2023 Victorian Refugee Awards attendees

The VMC in 2022/2023

The VMC commissioners and staff celebrate, support and advocate for cultural diversity in Victoria. We listen to and engage with multicultural and multifaith communities to inform our advocacy to government. We do this via interdepartmental committees and ministerial advisory committees. We also undertake programs to improve community capacity.

A snapshot of VMC activity

Celebrate

- ▶ **2,248** people in total attended **7** flagship events
- ▶ **18** multicultural artists and performers showcased
- ▶ **87** people and organisations formally recognised for their contributions to multicultural Victoria across **3** awards programs
- ▶ **43** key cultural and religious dates celebrated on social media
- ▶ **524** community events attended by commissioners



Support

- ▶ **14** projects funded through Community Support Fund
- ▶ **219** Regional Advisory Council members attended **32** meetings
- ▶ **32** Multifaith Advisory Group members
- ▶ **476** registered Multicultural Communities Leadership in Action Program participants, with **317** completed sessions.
- ▶ **1,300+** members of the online community platform VMConnect
- ▶ **26,000** VMC social media followers
- ▶ **16.6** FTE VMC staff members



Advocate

- ▶ **5** submissions made to state and federal governments
- ▶ **24** interdepartmental committees, taskforces and working groups with VMC representation
- ▶ **10** government agencies regularly engaged
- ▶ **12** active VMC commissioners
- ▶ **6** VMC commissioner meetings



VMC commissioners

The VMC comprises of 12 appointed commissioners. These commissioners engage with community and faith groups at a grassroots level to understand issues facing multicultural communities. They also work to foster greater collaboration and unity.

As community leaders, commissioners attend, speak at and support various community-led events and initiatives. They work together to elevate multicultural voices and advocate on their behalf across government.

Current Commissioners

Vivienne (Viv) Nguyen AM, Chairperson

Current term: 24 August 2019 to 23 August 2023

First appointed: 24 August 2019



Viv came to Australia as a refugee from Vietnam in 1984 as a 12-year-old and has been a passionate advocate for genuine community engagement and cultural diversity since.

Her numerous executive roles in business and finance include AustChoice Financial Services, AMP Asset Management and ANZ Banking Group, where she led their global diversity strategy.

Viv was also active in the Vietnamese and multicultural communities prior to joining the Commission.

In 2002, the Victorian Honour Roll recognised Viv for her women's leadership advocacy and supporting Vietnamese young people.

In 2003, she received the Australian Centenary Medal, and in 2021 Viv received a Member of the Order of Australia medal, in the AM division for advancing multicultural Victoria.

Bwe Thay, Deputy Chairperson

Current term: September 2021 to September 2025

First appointed: September 2019



Bwe is a spirited advocate for a multicultural Australia. His focus is on developing the capacity of multicultural communities through leadership skills, education and employment. His

practical, hands-on approach is well recognised within these communities.

Bwe works with individual communities, representative organisations, service providers, businesses and all levels of government to inform direction and policy.

Among his many leadership roles within Victoria's multicultural sector, Bwe is an Attaché for the Mental Health Foundation of Australia.

Bwe holds board appointments with a number of organisations including GOTAFE and Career Seekers.

Abiola (Abi) Akinbiyi, Community Representative Commissioner

Current term: September 2021 to September 2023

First appointed: September 2021



Abiola Akinbiyi is a passionate community leader and advocate who migrated to Australia from Nigeria. She has more than 20 years' experience working in the health sector with private,

multicultural, and not-for-profit organisations in Australia.

Abiola has an unwavering passion for community development and social justice. She has contributed to educating, training and empowering people from

culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in aged care, nursing, and mental health.

Her advocacy includes working with diverse communities, women, young people and in education. As a diversity, equity and inclusion champion, Abiola continues volunteering to support many academic and community projects that foster and promote social cohesion.

She has experience in leadership roles in both public and private health organizations, including presenting at conferences.

As a member of the board of directors at the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, Abiola chairs the New and Emerging Communities Policy Advocacy Committee. She also sits on the Board of Melbourne Primary Care Network, where she co-chairs the community council.

Abiola is the Africa Day Australia Gala Dinner Coordinator, an interfaith network member, and an award-winning entrepreneur. She was awarded the social justice award in 2022 and won the Spirit of Victoria University Alumni Award in 2021.

Abiola is the founder of Changepreneurs, a not-for-profit organisation through which she mentors African Australian young people and young women from CALD backgrounds to thrive. Abiola is a lifelong learner with postgraduate and undergraduate qualifications in mathematics, information technology, gerontology, nursing and mental health.

Lunorphare (Luna) Folly, Youth Commissioner

Current term: September 2021 to September 2023

First appointed: September 2021



Luna came to Australia from a Togolese-based refugee camp and has lived in regional Ballarat ever since. He has represented the multicultural community in various roles, including Youth Officer for the Ballarat African

Association and the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council. He uses his passion for sport as a platform to advocate for disadvantaged people, drawing on his background and how his community supported him.

Luna focuses on raising issues that affect people aged 25 and under in the areas of unemployment and discrimination in society and workplaces, and on connecting regional and metropolitan multicultural communities.

Luna enjoys running educational and training programs and wants to be a voice for voiceless communities and help make Victoria the best state for diversity and inclusion.

Tarang Chawla

Current term: September 2021 to September 2025

First appointed: September 2021



Tarang Chawla is an Indian-born Australian broadcaster, lawyer, writer and activist.

Tarang is a passionate advocate whose work focuses on antiracism, diversity, equity, inclusion and human rights.

Tarang is the co-founder of Not One More Niki, Inc., a campaign to end violence against women and children, named in memory of his younger sister, Nikita, who was murdered in 2015.

Tarang is a sessional academic and teaching associate at Monash University, a multiple award-winning podcast host and regular media commentator. Tarang also serves as an Advisor to the Greater Melbourne Cemeteries Trust (GMCT) Board, and has been a non-executive Director of the Australian Republic Movement (ARM) since 2020.

Tarang's work has appeared across all Australian media outlets on TV, print, online and internationally on the BBC, *Times of India* and *Hindustan Times*. Tarang has received several accolades for his work. Chief among them, Tarang has been named a Young Australian of the Year Finalist, twice named as one of the Top 25 Most Influential People Working for Social Change and one of Australia's Top 40 Under 40 Most Influential Asian-Australians.

Jennifer Huppert

Current term: September 2021 to September 2025

First appointed: September 2021



Jennifer is a special counsel at Maddocks Lawyers with more than 30 years of experience in government and commercial property. With a history in Victoria's public service, Jennifer was a board member

of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, a member of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Victoria representing the Southern Metropolitan Region from 2009–10 and was a director of the Emergency Services State Superannuation Fund.

Jennifer is a Councillor of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, a past President of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria and was a board member of several non-profit organisations, including the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia Ltd, the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation Commission, The Jewish Taskforce Against Family Violence and Youth Connect. She holds a Bachelor of Laws, Bachelor of Arts and Master of Urban Planning from the University of Melbourne.

Shankar Kasynathan

Current term: September 2019 to September 2023

First appointed: September 2019



Over the past 20 years, Shankar nurtured his advocacy skills tackling challenges in the public health, multicultural and Indigenous affairs sectors across Victoria, Western Australia, the

Northern Territory and the ACT.

In one capacity or another Shankar, worked to remove barriers to inclusion in local governments, Oxfam Australia, the National Heart Foundation, Amnesty International and the Red Cross.

Shankar built political acumen as an adviser to state and territory members of parliament (including members of cabinet).

Shankar is currently an Adjunct Senior Research Fellow at the National Centre for Reconciliation and the Deputy Chair of the Migrant Workers Centre.

Nyangak (Lizzy) Kuoth

Current term: September 2021 to September 2025

First appointed: September 2021



As a child, Lizzy fled war-torn South Sudan with her grandmother and three younger brothers and spent four years in Egypt before arriving in Melbourne in 2005.

Sixteen years later, Lizzy is carving out her niche at the intersection of economics, youth development, diversity and inclusion.

As a commissioner, Lizzy brings an important voice, cross-cultural wisdom and powerful stories to inspire others. Lizzy is either out for a hike or grabbing a coffee with a mate when she isn't at work.

Mohamed Mohideen OAM JP

Current term: September 2021 to September 2025

First appointed: September 2021



In addition to his role as a VMC commissioner, Mohamed is also the Chair of the VMC Regional Advisory Committee for Gippsland and a member of the VMC Multifaith Advisory Group.

He is currently the Senior Multifaith/Multicultural Advisor to the Coroners Court and Co-Chair of the Coroners Court of Victoria Multifaith Advisory Committee.

Mohamed is a microbiologist by profession with more than 30 years' experience in the field. He is a Professional Member of the Australian Society for Microbiology, and he was an academic at Monash University's Department of Microbiology for more than 20 years.

In March 2021, he joined the Department of Health and was Head of Priority Communities and Engagement, COVID-19 Vaccination Response until June 2022. He is also a member of the Victorian Department of Health CALD Advisory Group.

Mohamed is interested in multifaith and multicultural communities and working with communities to address mental health, voice for the elderly, refugee rights, and promoting interaction between CALD and Aboriginal communities and the rights of the Australia's First Nations peoples.

He is a strong advocate against family violence and was appointed a White Ribbon Ambassador in 2016.

Mohamed is the Vice President of the Islamic Council of Victoria and immediate Past President. He is the Deputy Chair of the Faith Communities Council of Victoria, former Chairperson of the Monash Interfaith Gathering and is on Monash City Council's Multicultural Advisory Committee. He is also the Vice President of the Jewish Christian Muslim Association. He is the former President of the United Sri Lankan Muslim Association of Australia. ,

For his services and leadership, in 2013 he was awarded an Order of Australia Medal (OAM). In 2016, he was awarded the Victorian Premier's Volunteer Champion Award for Leadership. Monash City Council awarded Mohamed the 2015 Sir John Monash Multicultural Champion and the 2018 Sir John Monash Volunteer of the Year. Mohamed is also a current Victorian Justice of the Peace.

Bill Papastergiadis OAM

Current term: September 2021 to September 2025

First appointed: September 2021



Bill is a highly accomplished Australian construction lawyer and leads the Melbourne office of the preeminent national law firm Moray and Agnew. He has a long history of involvement in multicultural affairs, gained

through his role as Director of the Hellenic Initiative and his elected position as President of the Greek Community of Melbourne and Victoria, which he has held since 2008. In this role, Bill has devoted much of the last 14 years to the promotion and welfare of Victoria's Greek community.

Being passionate about community work, Bill is involved in many multicultural programs, even as he fulfills roles such as Chairman of South Melbourne Football Club, former Chair and longstanding board member of Alphington Grammar School, and board member of Melbourne University's Humanities Foundation. In 2019, Bill was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for service to the Greek Community.

Silvia Renda

Current term: September 2021 to September 2025

First appointed: September 2021



Silvia passionately advocates for multiculturalism, and she brings communities together through meaningful engagement. A community leader for over 25 years, she draws on professional skills

and lived experience as a migrant to support Portuguese-speaking communities. Silvia founded and served for seven years as President of the Portuguese Speaking Communities of Victoria. In 2018, she founded and currently chairs the Portuguese Australian Women's Association, which builds a network of support for Portuguese-speaking women and advocates for women's leadership.

Silvia is a Portuguese Community Council member, a global body of elected representatives who advise the Portuguese Government on issues facing expatriated communities. She is also a Portuguese Social and Economic Council member, a constitutional body that advises the Portuguese Government on relevant policies. In addition, as Chief Advisor and Head of Government Relations at

the Australian Financial Complaints Authority, Silvia brings her experience in conflict resolution, strategy and policy and her record of work with government, international consulates, boards and senior executives. She holds a Bachelor of Legal Studies and a Masters in Conflict Resolution.

Dr Judy Tang

Current term: September 2019 to September 2023

First appointed: September 2019



Judy advocates for diversity in the areas of multiculturalism, mental health, LGBTIQ+, older adults and disability.

She has built extensive relationships across government and local

communities, having volunteered for more than 20 years to promote and advocate for multiculturalism and equality for migrants.

She is a former VMC Multicultural Champion and past President of the Australian GLBTIQ Multicultural Council, a national body that advocates for the rights of multicultural and multifaith LGBTIQ+ people and communities.

Judy currently is a Board Director at the Victorian Pride Centre, and she is also a practising Clinical Neuropsychologist

In memoriam

Dr Apollo Nsubuga-Kyobe



The VMC honours Dr Apollo Nsubuga-Kyobe, who sadly passed away in 2022.

Dr Apollo was a pioneer in the African Victorian community for more than three decades. He tirelessly supported the

settlement of new and emerging communities across metropolitan and regional Victoria and empowered African Victorians of all cultures, backgrounds, and generations.

Through his advocacy, Dr Apollo strengthened relationships between government and grassroots communities. He was a valued member of the VMC's Regional Advisory Council, contributing his time, efforts and invaluable insights to our Hume and Northwest Metropolitan councils.

Dr Apollo will be remembered as an accomplished and respected leader in the many roles he held to serve his community and Victoria.

He will be dearly missed. We pass on our condolences to his loved ones and to all who knew him.

Image sourced from: www.theconversation.com/profiles/apollo-nsubuga-kyobe-3466

Yasser Soliman



The VMC also extends its sincere condolences to the family and friends of Yasser Soliman who passed away in 2022.

Yasser was a Victorian Multicultural Commissioner

from 2005 to 2013, member of the Parliament of the World's Religions and pioneer of interfaith dialogue, reshaping the Muslim community's engagement with other faith communities.

As President of the Islamic Council of Victoria from 1999 to 2006, Yasser played a vital role in the aftermath of 9/11. His leadership helped ensure that the safety of Muslim communities was prioritised, and their significant contributions recognised.

Yasser was President of the Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth in the 1990s, member of the Council for a Multicultural Australia (2003-06), served on the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria's Executive Committee and was a founder and board member of the Jewish Christian Muslim Association.

Actively working with Victorian Police, local councils and Muslim youth to forge understanding and cooperation, Yasser's activities are remembered by many in the Muslim and wider multicultural and faith communities. He stood up for what he believed in and always acted for the interests of the communities he served with distinction and genuine altruism.

Image sourced from: www.afic.com.au/2022/08/afic-mourns-the-loss-of-its-former-federal-council-member-and-president-of-the-islamic-council-of-victoria-our-dear-br-yasser-soliman/

VMC Strategic Priorities and Focus Areas

The VMC's four strategic priorities in 2022–23 were:

1 promoting Victoria's multicultural diversity

2 strategic leadership and advocacy

3 supporting communities to thrive

4 integrity and innovation.

Within each priority, and based on community and stakeholder feedback, the VMC focused particularly on:

1 mental health and wellbeing

2 employment and economic inclusion

3 prevention of family violence.

Our efforts concentrated on:

- ▶ **building the communities capacity** to engage, participate and be represented in all areas of society and in decisions that affect them, their loved ones and their communities. This included through direct support of multicultural community organisations
- ▶ **advocating on behalf of the community** to state and federal governments and their departmental and ministerial committees, ensuring that the voice of communities is heard and represented. Along the way, we connected community organisations and service providers directly with relevant departments so that systemic and programmatic issues could be addressed and opportunities for codesigning policies and programs are enhanced
- ▶ **amplifying** the contributions made by Victoria's multicultural communities by increasing the visibility and recognition of community members and organisations through, for example, the delivery of the Victorian Refugee Awards and the Multicultural Awards for Excellence
- ▶ **celebrating** Victoria's multicultural diversity through Cultural Diversity Week, creative initiatives and events
- ▶ **supporting** the community through new and ongoing issues, including emergency response efforts such as the pandemic response and recovery and the 2022 floods.



2023 Multicultural Gala Dinner attendee

Collaboration with Government

The VMC supported federal and state government consultations, information sessions, information dissemination, submissions, legislative reform and other matters concerning Victorian multicultural communities. These efforts put community voices at the core of our work.

The VMC believes that government policies, programs and services should reflect the diversity of the communities for whom the programs and services are delivered. This manifests in community engagement frameworks, workforce diversity and representation at leadership levels. It also includes data collection, monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

The VMC collaborates with government departments and agencies to:

- ▶ inform communities on programs and services provided through our communications and engagement channels
- ▶ Share with departments and agencies community feedback to continually improve programs and services design, and delivery through informal and formal advice and submissions
- ▶ advocate and influence systems and structural change so that programs and services are more equitable, accessible and inclusive. We do this through interdepartmental committees, ministerial advisory committees and working groups.

During 2022–23, we collaborated with:

- ▶ Department of Families Fairness and Housing
- ▶ Department of Health
- ▶ Department of Home Affairs (Federal government), particularly with the Multicultural Framework Review
- ▶ Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
- ▶ Department of Justice and Community Safety
- ▶ Family Safety Victoria
- ▶ Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission
- ▶ Victorian Small Business Commission
- ▶ Victoria Police
- ▶ Victorian Public Sector Commission

Representation on interdepartmental committees and taskforces

In 2022–23, the VMC was a member of interdepartmental and ministerial advisory committees, roundtables and taskforces, including:

- ▶ Victorian Government Anti-Racism Taskforce
- ▶ Mental Health Ministerial Advisory Committee
- ▶ Victorian Government Best Start, Best Life Taskforce Ministerial Advisory Group
- ▶ Coroners Court of Victoria's Multifaith/Multicultural Advisory Committee
- ▶ Department of Education's Multicultural Learning Partnership
- ▶ Department of Health's Diverse Communities Working Group
- ▶ Department of Health and Murdoch Children's Research Institute Generation V Strategic Partnerships Advisory Committee
- ▶ Department of Justice and Community Safety's South Sudanese Australian Youth Justice Expert Working Group
- ▶ Family Safety Victoria's Working Together Advisory Group
- ▶ Family Safety Victoria's Multicultural Working Group
- ▶ Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's Council of Victorian Quarterly Meetings
- ▶ Victorian National Disability Insurance Scheme Community Advisory Council of Victorian Commissioners Meeting
- ▶ Victoria Police Chief Commissioner's Human Rights Strategic Advisory Committee



Multicultural Business Network members along with Commissioners from Victorian Multicultural Commission and Small Business Victoria

- ▶ Victorian Trades Hall Council Job Readiness Pathways Steering Committee
- ▶ Department of Health Community Pharmacist Statewide Pilot Advisory Group Department of Home Affairs' Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group
- ▶ Moonee Valley City's Multilingual Reference Group
- ▶ Victorian Electoral Commission's CALD Advisory Group.

Outside of these, the VMC also meets regularly with the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria to support our ongoing collaboration and advocacy efforts.

Grant assessment panels

In 2022–23, the VMC was a member of a number of grant assessment panels, including:

- ▶ Community Infrastructure Grants Program (DFFH)
- ▶ Multicultural Festival and Events Grants Program (DFFH)
- ▶ Paving the Way Forward Grants Program (DFFH)
- ▶ Youth Engagement Grants – Community Crime Prevention Victoria (DJCS)

Key submissions, research and advocacy

The VMC is proud to contribute, provide advice and guidance as well as make submissions to various government and independent reviews and inquiries.

The VMC's input and submissions draw on the feedback and advice received from its various consultative mediums, including through the eight Regional Advisory Councils, the Multicultural Youth Network, the Multicultural Chamber of Commerce Group (now Multicultural Business Forum), the Multifaith Advisory Group and the various community specific, issue-based or place-based consultations the VMC hosted in 2022–23.

The VMC is indebted to the members of these advisory bodies and more broadly to community leaders and representatives for their valuable insights and advice. Their input is driven by altruism and the desire to make a positive difference, often in the lives of those experiencing difficulties, barriers and disadvantage.

In 2022–23, the VMC made submissions to a number of inquiries, including the following:

- ▶ A Migration System for Australia's Future
- ▶ Australian Government Multicultural Framework Review terms of reference
- ▶ Australia's Humanitarian Program discussion paper 2022–23
- ▶ Victorian Disability Inclusion Bill Exposure Draft
- ▶ Whole-of-Victorian-Government submission to Australia's Humanitarian Program 2023–24

The VMC also provided advice or input to whole-of-Victorian-Government submissions. In addition, it provided input to more than 30 taskforces, departmental and interdepartmental committees, roundtables as well as advisory and ministerial advisory committees.

Snapshot of some of the submissions:

A Migration System for Australia's Future

December 2022

The VMC provided a submission to the Australian Government's Department of Home Affairs 2023–24 Migration Program, addressing the size and composition of the permanent program and how the migration planning process can be improved so that Australia remains attractive to prospective migrants against the backdrop of widespread workforce shortages and ageing populations in migrant-receiving countries.

The submission touched on the need for:

- ▶ a streamlined migration system that prioritises employer and state-nominated migration
- ▶ recognising overseas qualifications
- ▶ clearer, simpler and fairer pathways to citizenship
- ▶ needs-based settlement support for all
- ▶ promotion of our multicultural diversity.

Australian Government Multicultural Framework Review Terms of Reference

March 2023

The VMC provided a submission to the Australian Government Multicultural Framework Review's terms of reference. The VMC welcomed the Commonwealth Government's commitment to:

- ▶ review the institutional and policy frameworks that underpin its approach to multicultural affairs
- ▶ consult with stakeholders on the terms of reference of the review, which will guide the breadth and depth of the review
- ▶ establish a panel of eminent people to lead the review, with guidance provided by what will hopefully be a representative and inclusive reference group.

The VMC suggested that the review assess and make recommendations on matters that address barriers to inclusion, as well as those that enhance the social, cultural and economic strengths provided by Australia's multicultural diversity.

Input into the next phase of the review, to take place in the second half of 2023, will be critically important.

Australia's Humanitarian Program discussion paper 2022–23

August 2022

The VMC welcomed the opportunity to make a submission to the Australian Government's Department of Home Affairs 2022–23 discussion paper on the national Humanitarian Program. The VMC's submission supported the Australian Government's commitment to increase the number of places in the Humanitarian Program to 27,000 over time. It also supported efforts to enhance and increase community refugee sponsorship models, advocated for the resolution of the legacy of temporary protection visas and safe haven enterprise visas through a transition to permanent residency. The submission re-affirmed the importance of an adequately resourced settlement support system that included community-led service delivery where appropriate.

Victorian Disability Inclusion Bill Exposure Draft

October 2022

The VMC made a submission to the Victorian Government's review of the Disability Act 2006, which included the creation of a new Disability Inclusion Act. The new Disability Inclusion Act would sit alongside the Disability Act. The exposure draft of the Disability Inclusion Bill sets out ways that government and other entities can drive a contemporary and proactive approach to disability inclusion. This approach will support the vision of a barrier-free Victoria for all people with a disability. More broadly, it is widely acknowledged that people from migrant and refugee backgrounds underuse and are underrepresented within disability services.



Gippsland Regional Advisory Council meeting

Whole-of-Victorian-Government submission to Australia's Humanitarian Program 2023–24

May 2023

The VMC provided input into the Whole-of-Victorian-Government submission to Australia's Humanitarian Program 2023–24. Our submission supports the Australian Government's previous commitment to progressively increase the Humanitarian Program to 27,000 places a year. The 2022–23 ceiling was set at 17,875. The VMC called for the program to be restored as quickly as possible to 20,000 places a year, which it had been reduced from. The VMC supported the Australian Government's commitment to resolve the situation of people on temporary protection visas and safe haven enterprise visas.

Mental health

Mental health in the multicultural community is a key strategic priority for the VMC. The VMC has advised and advocated for:

- ▶ ensuring that the reforms within the mental health and wellbeing system embed multicultural inclusion
- ▶ multicultural community access to mental health services and supports
- ▶ improving skills for mental health professionals and service agencies to better support multicultural communities
- ▶ increasing the diversity of the workforce, so that it is more reflective of the community, to enable inclusive policies and programs
- ▶ improving data collection and enhancing research and evaluation
- ▶ fully engaging multicultural communities in the design and implementation of the new mental health system. This includes in the delivery of services, as well as representation on boards and advisory committees.

Employment

The VMC is committed to influencing policy and programs that maximise employment outcomes for multicultural communities. It focuses on more vulnerable cohorts, including women, young people, new and emerging communities and those in regional Victoria. The VMC has been forging partnerships between government, businesses and community to address barriers to employment through events, information sessions or partnership brokerage. For example, the VMC in partnership with Business Victoria undertook the Engaging Victoria's Multicultural Business Sector event in December 2022, which brought together 15 business expo representatives and more than 50 attendees to engage in a two-way learning opportunity between the Victorian Government and business representatives.

Family violence

The VMC monitored progress of family violence reforms and participated in subcommittees responsible for overseeing multicultural family violence grants and reviews. Since 2021, the VMC has co-chaired the Multicultural Family Violence Working Group with Family Safety Victoria. The group provides a voice for multicultural and faith communities, which was especially critical during the pandemic.



Grampians Regional Advisory Council meeting

Community engagement and support

To proactively support Victoria's multicultural communities and meet their changing needs, the VMC delivered the following three initiatives.

Community Support Fund

In 2022–23, the VMC allocated \$150,000 to fund 14 projects through its Community Support Fund. This fund aims to address pressing needs and promote participation and social cohesion.

Funds of up to \$20,000 were provided to support the community outside the scope of existing Victorian Government grants programs.

VMC funded community initiatives and projects that foster capability within multicultural communities, demonstrate strategic leadership and advocacy, promote diversity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging and encourage collaboration among multicultural communities and organisations. Appendix 3 provides a detailed list of Community Support Fund recipients.

Multicultural Communities Database update

Lessons from the Victorian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2022 floods and other emergencies highlight the importance of partnering with local community leaders and trusted voices to:

- ▶ influence COVIDSafe behaviours in multicultural communities
- ▶ support the dissemination of time-critical messages
- ▶ gain local insights and intelligence in the event of an outbreak or emergency.

To achieve the above, the VMC developed a Multicultural Communities Database of community organisations and leaders. Funded by the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, the database provides a valuable resource that enables the VMC to better reach community organisations and leaders when the need arises.



Loddon Mallee Regional Advisory Council meeting



Barwon South Regional Advisory Council meeting

Work on the database has been progressing, and the VMC has been collating information from multicultural organisations and individuals. While protecting privacy, this database will provide data to facilitate improved engagement by government departments with multicultural communities and organisations.

Multicultural Communities Leadership 'In Action' Program

Supported by the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the VMC established a Multicultural Community Leadership 'In Action' Program, to deliver 30 capability-building sessions focused on improving civic and community engagement, the creation of a network of community leaders, a presentation ceremony and evaluation report. The program was established because of the government's recognition of the critical role played by grassroots multicultural community leaders in reaching people throughout the pandemic.

This innovative program built people's capability to improve engagement with government. It had three different streams that targeted women, young people and community leaders. 317 participants completed the stream sessions, reporting they felt more confident to engage effectively with government and mobilise their own communities. This is especially important in times of crisis and emergency, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

While it was a one-off program, participants had opportunities to continue their leadership journeys, including 95 membership subscriptions with the Australian Institute of Company Directors, Centre for Multicultural Youth and the ASRC's Observership programs.

Participation in community-led engagement channels

Regional Advisory Council

The eight Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) provide advice to the VMC, covering the whole of Victoria and representing a range of cultures and faiths. RACs are chaired by our commissioners and meet four times in the year. They are pivotal to the VMC's ability to identify and prioritise issues facing different metropolitan and regional communities.

In total, there are 220 RAC members who provide us with on-the-ground insights into issues such as migrant and refugee settlement services, employment, education, housing, citizenship and connection to culture. The RACs help the VMC identify potential solutions and strategies for achieving change, influencing and shaping policy and legislation, and improving government and community services. Appendix 1 has further information.

Multifaith Advisory Group

The Multifaith Advisory Group assists the Victorian Government to understand and appropriately respond to faith-related issues in Victoria and to support people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. And it had its fair share of activities this year!

The group meets regularly for robust conversation on contemporary matters affecting faith communities. It provided advice on issues such as family violence policy, forced marriage and human trafficking. Appendix 2 has more information.

In November 2022, the group met in Bendigo to strengthen engagement with regional stakeholders. At this forum, the group was welcomed by Councillor David Fagg from the Bendigo Council and heard from the Rodney Carter, CEO of the Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Corporation on how multicultural and multifaith organisations and leaders can support the First Nations peoples in reconciliation and the Voice.

The participants included representatives from: Dja Dja Wurrung Aboriginal Corporation, Bendigo Council, Bendigo Family and Financial Services, Bendigo Interfaith Council, Great Stupa of Universal Compassion, Diocese of Sandhurst, Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria.

The MAG also held a prayer service for peace at Federation Square on 20 March 2023 following a number of incidents at Hindu places of worship and at Federation Square. The MAG, along with many of its members, issued statements condemning acts of violence and hate and called for calm and unity.

The group also held sessions with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and the Department of Justice and Community Safety in May 2023 to provide feedback on the Victorian Government's antiracism strategy and the proposed engagement plan on the anti-vilification reforms.

Multicultural Youth Network

In December 2022, the VMC relaunched the Multicultural Youth Network (MYN). A total of 20 MYN members were appointed from across Victoria. The MYN members are young people aged between 17 to 25 from multicultural communities. The MYN provides a platform for members to provide advice to government on issues facing multicultural youth in Victoria. Appendix 7 provides more detail.

Short term projects

Pasifika Roundtable

VMC partnered with Village Response Collective (VRC) and Department of Justice and Community Safety to deliver a roundtable discussion on how government and community can work together to address the challenges faced by Pasifika families, prevent Pasifika young people becoming involved in the justice system and keep communities safe from crime.

The roundtable aimed to:

- ▶ introduce key stakeholders who play a role in supporting Pasifika communities
- ▶ provide an opportunity for Pasifika community leaders and young leaders to hear from government agencies and key organisations (such as the Centre for Multicultural Youth and Victoria Police) about the work being done to support Pasifika communities
- ▶ help build relationships, connections and mutual understanding between government agencies and Pasifika communities and organisations
- ▶ Provide an opportunity for VRC to present on the Village Response Plan and Reintegration Pathway, and key issues facing Pasifika communities, and particularly young people in these communities, noting the impacts of the Covid pandemic.

Key themes included:

- ▶ how government and the Pasifika community can work together to address the challenges Pasifika families face
- ▶ best approaches to prevent Pasifika young people becoming involved in the justice system
- ▶ how to keep communities safe from crime.

Engaging Victoria's Multicultural Business Forum

Business Victoria, in partnership with the VMC, delivered the Engaging Victoria's Multicultural Business Forum on 6 December 2022. The event was attended by business expo representatives from five Victorian Government teams. The event aimed to:

- ▶ build relationships or increase connection between VMC, Small Business Victoria and Multicultural Chambers of Commerce and business associations representing multicultural small businesses in Victoria
- ▶ provide Multicultural Chambers of Commerce and business associations with increased awareness of the State Government business support services and initiatives that assist in business recovery
- ▶ gather insights on key issues from stakeholders
- ▶ facilitate networking and capability building.

The expo aimed to promote 20 products and services. The 50 attendees also represented more than 11,500 CALD business members and 117,280 CALD and small businesses.

Key themes included:

- ▶ two-way learning between the State Government and business representatives
- ▶ the need for State Government to improve its engagement with multicultural businesses
- ▶ how to boost connections (events and two-way communication)
- ▶ promoting government accountability and commitment to action
- ▶ general business education and literacy
- ▶ tailored communications and supports for newly arrived migrants, young people and industry types.

Community connections events

Led by the VMC commissioners, VMC hosted two community connection sessions to foster engagement and collaboration between well-established communities and new and emerging communities. The sessions aimed to build connections, exchange integration and settlement experiences, and provide support for specific initiatives.

Interdepartmental engagements

- ▶ VMC provided advice to government departments and agencies on best practice engagement with multicultural communities through the:
 - Casino Royal Commission
 - Business Victoria
 - Department of Families, Fairness and Housing COVID Team
 - Department of Health Cultural Diversity Plan
 - Flood relief with VicSES
 - Parliament Victoria Inquiry yes which one?
 - Swim jobs diversity plan
 - Transport Accident Commission
 - Tenancy Victoria
 - Victorian Electoral Commission
 - WaterSafety Victoria
- ▶ Women Deliver 2023 symposium – support regarding stakeholder mapping, engagement and representation of CALD communities
- ▶ County Court Victoria – consulted on the development of a multifaith prayer room, connected with relevant imams and stakeholders, suggested contacts and community leaders to engage with
- ▶ Department of Justice and Community Safety – Financial Assistance Scheme Outcomes Framework – provided feedback to ensure victims from multicultural backgrounds have a voice in the new framework
- ▶ Presented "Unlucky in the Lucky Country" workshop as part of the antipoverty strategy by the Greater Dandenong Council, and contributed relationship and stakeholder contacts in the area for the implementation of the Food Research Program

CASE STUDY 1

Perspectives from a Regional Advisory Council (RAC) member – Metropolitan RAC

Sunny Duggal, Southern Metropolitan Region RAC, President Community Response Australia, and Human Rights Award 2022.



“Engagement with RAC provides a broader platform for promoting and supporting community development

projects in Victoria. It allows for sharing ideas and improving the work environment, assisting the government in achieving program objectives.

RAC also facilitates connections with leaders, mentors, and professionals, fostering collaboration and supporting the work of the Victorian Multicultural Commission. I take pride to be a RAC member and advocate for our multicultural communities at all levels of government and be the voice for communities who are voiceless. Thank you VMC for providing opportunity to serve on the RAC.”

CASE STUDY 2

Perspectives from a Regional Advisory Council (RAC) member – Regional RAC

Catherine Jonathan Barwon South West RAC; Consultative Working Group Member, Resilient Ready; Recipient- Media Award- Highly-commended, 2022 Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence



“As a member of the Victorian Multicultural Commission’s Regional Advisory Council (RAC), I have had the honour of representing our community at various

regional forums in Barwon. These opportunities have allowed me to engage with key stakeholders and advocate for the social integration of our region’s refugee and migrant communities.

These experiences have not only been personally enriching but have also served as an essential conduit linking organizations within our region to our multicultural communities. I am often invited to speak about the successes and challenges we face, offering insights and sharing stories that bring our multicultural narrative to life.

As member of the Resilient Ready for a disaster preparedness program, my role involves advising from a multicultural perspective, ensuring diverse community voices are integrated into our region’s disaster preparedness strategy. This opportunities for inclusive planning and lends a unique multicultural lens in shaping policies and strategies that are holistic and reflective of our vibrant, multicultural region.

Two years on since joining the Victorian Multicultural Commission’s Regional Advisory Council (VMC-RAC), I couldn’t be prouder of the meaningful work we are collectively undertaking.”

Celebrating and recognising cultural diversity

The VMC promotes diversity as an asset to Victoria and highlights the contributions that diverse communities make to our state. This year, our program included the following events.

2023 Cultural Diversity Week

Cultural Diversity Week (CDW) is an annual celebration of the state's multicultural diversity and an acknowledgment of the profoundly positive effect this diversity has for the Victorian way of life.

CDW is scheduled around the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March. This day reminds us that systemic support and advocacy are still needed at a personal, community and governmental level to address racism and vilification.

In 2023, CDW was held from 11–21 March with the theme *'Our Past, Our Future'*. This theme invited Victorians to explore their intergenerational cultural journeys and to consider the future possibilities that derive from the power of our cultural diversity.

2023 Victorian Multicultural Gala Dinner

The Victorian Multicultural Gala Dinner is the pinnacle event of CDW.

Held at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre on 21 March, this flagship event showed the power and vibrancy of Victoria's multicultural and multifaith communities.





2023 Multicultural Gala Dinner

The Gala brought together around 1,400 guests from community and government for cultural engagement, networking and dazzling musical and dance performances inspired by cultures from every continent.

It was an unforgettable celebration of Victoria's vibrant multicultural community, and we are excited to have already begun plans for 2024.

The Premier, the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Victorian Greens attended the Gala Dinner. This highlights the spirit and importance of bipartisanship commitment to multicultural affairs.

CDW Teacher's Resource Kit

Together with the Department of Education and Training, the VMC distributed a CDW Teacher's Resource Kit to spark conversations between students at primary and secondary schools across Victoria.

The kit contains resources, activities, discussion topics and statistics that inspire learning about cultural diversity in the classroom. It promotes understanding and awareness of cultural diversity in schools and fosters greater cohesion. With further investment and development, it can help to reduce bullying and racism.

Online resources and ways to get involved

Ahead of and during CDW, the VMC hosted and promoted a range of resources on its website.

Community, government and non-profit organisations, businesses and workplaces were encouraged to hold a CDW event, use CDW digital design assets and branding, share pictures on social media using various hashtags, and utilise the Teacher's Resource Kit.

Awards programs

To formally recognise and showcase the achievements of multicultural Victorians, the VMC ran three separate annual awards programs. Appendices 4 to 6 list the recipients for all programs and categories.

2022 Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence

The Multicultural Awards for Excellence formally recognise outstanding people and organisations who make Victoria a more inclusive and welcoming place for multicultural communities.

More than 200 people attended the ceremony in December 2022 at Government House, hosted by the Governor, The Honourable Linda Dessau AC.

Sixty-one Victorians were recognised in 14 categories for strengthening multiculturalism through professional and volunteer service.

In their fields, they foster cross-cultural understanding, build social cohesion and support people from diverse backgrounds to participate in all aspects of life.

The VMC thanks the Department of Education and Training, Emergency Services Victoria and Victoria Police for partnering with us to recognise achievement in their categories.

Victorian Refugee Awards

The Victorian Refugee Awards recognise and promote the professional, communal and personal accomplishments of Victorians who arrived in Australia as refugees or asylum seekers.

Ten recipients of the 2023 awards were honoured at an event attended by 130 people at the Immigration Museum in June 2023, as part of World Refugee Week.

The VMC presented awards in four categories: young leader, achievement, leadership and business. The awards showcase the talent, resilience, aspirational nature and the many essential ways refugees and asylum seekers contribute to our state.

2022 Multicultural Film Festival

In partnership with Swinburne University, the VMC presented its annual Multicultural Film Festival. This initiative explores cultural diversity through short films, allowing emerging and established filmmakers to showcase their creative and technical talents.

This program increases diverse screen representation while facilitating authentic connections between the audience and the filmmaker's perspectives, points of view and lived experiences.

In 2022, we received 145 strong submissions featuring the personal stories of the filmmaker, their friends, family or community members.

The festival's seven award winners and three honorary mentions premiered at a VIP screening at ACMI. They featured at additional screenings at Federation Square, on SBS OnDemand, the VMC's YouTube channel and at an online screening event in September 2022 held by the City of Casey's Bunjil Place.

Appendix 7 lists all recipients and categories.



Online engagement

Informing the community

VMConnect

VMConnect is an online engagement platform used by both community and government representatives as a virtual community noticeboard where they can share updates on their programs, events, grants and services, discuss topics and share insights into local activities, challenges, concerns and opportunities.

Website

The VMC's website continued to be our central and most comprehensive method of sharing online information about the VMC and its longer-term initiatives, consultative groups, programs and events.

Social media

The VMC's social media platforms continued to grow in followers and the frequency and quality of material.

As of June 2023, we had 28,000 followers across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

Our use of these platforms was key to keeping our audience informed and engaged in real time. We shared important information about health matters, events, award programs, consultation sessions, forums and dates of cultural and religious significance.

The VMC evolved its visual and digital identity, with a more consistent method for informing community, resulting in more engagement across all four platforms. For awards and events, social media was a critical way for us to continue to recognise and celebrate the achievements of our communities. Our posts sharing event photos and videos were always among our most popular.

Community updates

The VMC sent fortnightly community update emails to over 5,000 subscribers, mainly community members and organisations. Subscribers were kept up to date on grant programs, opportunities for committees and boards, consultations and the latest news from the VMC and other government agencies. These continue to be valuable, especially for those not using social media.

- ▶ 6 July 2022 – briefing with Prof. Ben Cowie, Acting Chief Health Officer – new COVID-19 strains and challenges they bring **(209 registrations)**
- ▶ 15 August 2022 – invitation to attend community briefing with Prof. Ben Cowie, Acting Chief Health Officer **(159 registrations)**
- ▶ 18 August 2022 COVID-19 CALD media briefing – Department of Health **(41 registrations)**
- ▶ 17 October 2022: Invitation to attend the VMC and Department of Health COVID-19 briefing **(146 registrations)**

Also

- ▶ 7 September 2022 – VMC Sick Pay Guarantee info session **(95 registrations)**
- ▶ 26 October 2022 – VMC/VEC information forum on Victorian State Elections **(117 registrations)**
- ▶ 19 April 2023 – VMC and Home Affairs Dept Information Session about resolution of status (RoS) visa **(58 registrations)**

Our Sponsors

The VMC thanks our sponsors in 2021-2022 for their ongoing support for the VMC and its communities.

The VMC highlights the social, economic and cultural benefits of diversity in our state and recognises the enormous contributions made by Victorians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The VMC cannot achieve this without the incredible support and shared values of our partners and sponsors. Each year, our sponsors provide us with critical funding and support that enables us to better deliver a calendar of activities designed to promote our diversity, bring Victorians closer together as well as recognise the contributions made by individuals, service providers and organisations.

The VMC's partners also benefit from enhancing their engagement with Victoria's multicultural communities and, where appropriate, garner advice from the VMC. Partnership with VMC:

- ▶ builds brand awareness
- ▶ builds networks, meaningful connections and client relationships
- ▶ builds knowledge and understanding of multicultural communities
- ▶ supports promotional campaigns
- ▶ sends a strong message of support to multicultural communities.

The VMC thanks our sponsors in 2022-23 for their support of the VMC and Victoria's multicultural communities.

Major partners

- ▶ Commonwealth Bank

Supporting media partner

- ▶ SBS

Supporting Partners

- ▶ Jobs Victoria (DJSIR)
- ▶ Victorian Electoral Commission
- ▶ LanguageLoop
- ▶ Foot Solutions
- ▶ AFL Victoria
- ▶ Segmento

Event partners

- ▶ Department of Transport
- ▶ Australian Multicultural Foundation
- ▶ Intersect Global Partners



Chairperson Viv Nguyen with 2023 Multicultural Gala Dinner attendees



2023 Multicultural Gala Dinner performer

Appendix 1

Regional Advisory Council members

Barwon South West

Chair

- ▶ Shankar Kasynathan

Members

- ▶ Carly Jordan
- ▶ Casey O'Brien
- ▶ Catherine Jonathan
- ▶ Danielle Parker
- ▶ Fiona Greig
- ▶ Gyanendra Upreti
- ▶ Joy Leggo
- ▶ Lena Talihmanidis
- ▶ Sameera Aduru
- ▶ Matin Ghayour Minaie
- ▶ Niraj Karanjeet
- ▶ Pirooz Jafari
- ▶ Santosh Raj Pandey
- ▶ Usbi Taujale
- ▶ Wei-Lin Mai
- ▶ Yai Marach

Grampians

Chair

- ▶ Silvia Renda

Members

- ▶ Cecilia Lynn Vence
- ▶ Elangovan Shanmugam
- ▶ Frances Salenga
- ▶ Harisankar Parippaayillam
- ▶ Jessica Trijsburg
- ▶ Karissa Cribbes
- ▶ Meeta Narsi
- ▶ Gersen Moreno
- ▶ John Millington (since August 2022)
- ▶ Monsour Obadina
- ▶ Parminder Kaur Gugal
- ▶ Sanjay Sharma
- ▶ Michael Akindeju (until January 2023)
- ▶ Wendy Bywaters (since Sept 2022)

Loddon Mallee

Chair

- ▶ Nyangak (Lizzy) Kuoth

Members

- ▶ Abhishek Awasthi
- ▶ Akesa Kei
- ▶ Andrea Wolf
- ▶ Ernest Antoine
- ▶ Ginny Tan
- ▶ Kate Steenvoorden
- ▶ Luz Restrepo
- ▶ Miriam Casas
- ▶ Posao (Nido) Taveesupmai
- ▶ Shivali Chatley
- ▶ Joelle Brown
- ▶ Sonia Di Mezza

Hume

Chair

- ▶ Dr Judy Tang

Members

- ▶ Ali Al Battaat
- ▶ Emmanuel Katenda
- ▶ Judgebir Singh
- ▶ Lorna Gillespie
- ▶ Neha Samar
- ▶ Sarmed Alasadi
- ▶ Rabia Ali
- ▶ Leigh Johnson (since August 2022)
- ▶ Sam Atukorala
- ▶ Seema Abdullah
- ▶ the late Apollo Nsubuga-Kyobe (until November 2022)
- ▶ Haroun Kafi
- ▶ Richard Ogetii (since October 2022)
- ▶ Ugur Avci
- ▶ Sabine Smyth

Gippsland

Chair

- ▶ Dr Mohamed Mohideen OAM JP

Members

- ▶ Christine Lee
- ▶ Derya Deniz Demirel
- ▶ J Murray Lobley
- ▶ Oluremi Yusuf
- ▶ Syed Tanveer (since August 2022)
- ▶ Sally Gafa (since September 2022)
- ▶ Arfa Khan (since August 2022)
- ▶ Tania Ryan (until August 2022)
- ▶ Yumna Ahmed
- ▶ Julia Roverly

North West Metropolitan

Chair

- ▶ Tarang Chawla

Members

- ▶ Amrita Gurung
- ▶ Ananya Chandel
- ▶ Andy Chan
- ▶ Angelos Kenos
- ▶ Anoushka Jeronimus
- ▶ Aradhna Sharma
- ▶ Ayesha Ali
- ▶ Baker Dawas
- ▶ Beng Hean Loh
- ▶ Bir Bharti
- ▶ Brwa Mohamed
- ▶ Carlisle Richardson
- ▶ Charmaine Hunzwi
- ▶ Dalal Samaan
- ▶ Dalal Sleiman
- ▶ Deng Malith
- ▶ Dhanushan (Dhanu) Giritharan
- ▶ Donny Doughty

- ▶ Emmanuel Kinara
- ▶ Eylul Top
- ▶ Fabiola Campbell
- ▶ Florence Dato
- ▶ Gary Lee
- ▶ Gurdev Singh Rattan
- ▶ Hang Nguyen
- ▶ Iqbal Hossain
- ▶ Ivan Chan
- ▶ James Bae
- ▶ Jasleen Kaur
- ▶ Jenny Katis
- ▶ Karolina Salanoa
- ▶ Liaqat Ahmadi
- ▶ Linda Liwewe
- ▶ Loudeen Fualautoalasi-Lam
- ▶ Mahadi Reshid
- ▶ Margaret Giudice
- ▶ Marleine Raffoul
- ▶ Molina Asthana
- ▶ Monica Raizada
- ▶ Nayana Bhandari
- ▶ Nelson Pervaz
- ▶ Niru Tripathi
- ▶ Nolwazi Dladla
- ▶ Nusrat Islam
- ▶ Paul Seidl
- ▶ Ponniah Anandajayasekeram
- ▶ Puneet Gulati
- ▶ Rishi Bhattarai
- ▶ Robert Gruhn
- ▶ Robiel Abraham
- ▶ Roomanna Abdulrahman
- ▶ Ruhee Meghani
- ▶ Sahana Ramesh
- ▶ Sanjay Sethi
- ▶ Sean Ryan
- ▶ Shanthi Antony
- ▶ Shyama Sasidharan
- ▶ Simon Ho
- ▶ Sivaram Ravi
- ▶ Smiley Sandhu
- ▶ Sumit Kane
- ▶ Sunil Abbott
- ▶ Tahira Sheikh
- ▶ Tara Gaire
- ▶ Tarekegn Chimdi
- ▶ Teresa De Fazio
- ▶ Thu Thuy Thi Nguyen
- ▶ Tila Guragai
- ▶ Tin Nguyen
- ▶ Mukhles Habash
- ▶ Upul Hetti Kankanamge

- ▶ Wael Abuelmagd
- ▶ Ram Parsad Gurung
- ▶ Mohammad Nurul Islam Khan
- ▶ Deepak Pooja Punjabi
- ▶ Varsha Devi Balakrishnan
- ▶ Denis Kinkufi Kayenge
- ▶ Tianyue Sun
- ▶ Geetanjali Gaba

Southern Metropolitan

Chair

- ▶ Jennifer Huppert

Members

- ▶ Adwin Town
- ▶ Alexander (Alex) Kats
- ▶ Andy Tran
- ▶ Angela Di Stella
- ▶ Aruna Sampath Hewagama
- ▶ Bassir Qadiri
- ▶ Brijal Parikh
- ▶ Cecilia Rebecca Mphande
- ▶ Daizy Maan
- ▶ Deborah Wiener
- ▶ Deepa Mani
- ▶ Devendra Singh
- ▶ Erdinc Ozyurek
- ▶ Fahim Farooq
- ▶ George Wan
- ▶ Grissel Walmaggia
- ▶ Hafiz Mayar
- ▶ Huiting (Yuki) Wei
- ▶ Ishita Mammen
- ▶ Jackie Blake
- ▶ Jamel Singh
- ▶ James Seow
- ▶ Jeswynn Yogaratnam
- ▶ John Zeleznikow
- ▶ Khaled Taher
- ▶ Lan Diep
- ▶ Manir Zaman
- ▶ Marina Savron
- ▶ Mata Tuerei Mani
- ▶ Nada El-Masri
- ▶ Ngatuaine Hosking
- ▶ Paul Saluni
- ▶ Rakesh Auplish
- ▶ Solange Ardiles
- ▶ Sylvia Coombe
- ▶ Sukhvinder Duggal
- ▶ Theresa Sengaaga Ssali
- ▶ Virosh Perera

- ▶ Vishwa Kumar
- ▶ Weda Mohseni
- ▶ Workineh Alamo
- ▶ Yakindra Prasad Timilsena
- ▶ Zahra Haydar Big
- ▶ Josephine Khoshaba

Eastern Metropolitan

Chair

- ▶ Bill Papastergiadis OAM

Members

- ▶ Adolph Yang
- ▶ Anuradha Krishnan
- ▶ Christine Teo
- ▶ Deepak Joshi
- ▶ Donna Askew
- ▶ Ebrahim Shayan
- ▶ Ensieh Anjedani
- ▶ Hong Kin (Ken) Pang
- ▶ Imptiaz Mohamed
- ▶ June Anderson
- ▶ Marie Gina Etienne
- ▶ Nadesan Sundarsen
- ▶ Odia Ukoko
- ▶ Oluwatoyin Jummy
- ▶ Philip Tan
- ▶ Qiuqing Pu
- ▶ Raju Adhikari
- ▶ Ramaseshan [Bala] Balachandran
- ▶ Roger Mingjie Li
- ▶ Rufina Chan
- ▶ Saarah Ozeer
- ▶ Sabaratnam Sundaramoorthy
- ▶ Saleha Singh
- ▶ Santi Whiteside
- ▶ Sawm Suante
- ▶ Siva Sivagnanam
- ▶ Stephane Shepherd
- ▶ Stephen Chun Weng Yin
- ▶ Vahideh Eisaei
- ▶ Vikrant Kishore
- ▶ Wilfred Wang
- ▶ Xiaoyi Wang
- ▶ Yuqing Feng

Appendix 2

Multifaith Advisory Group members

1. All Nations Presbyterian Church of Australia Mulgrave
2. AMAFHH Federation (Shi'a Organisation)
3. Anglican Diocese of Melbourne
4. Baha'i Community of Victoria
5. Board of Imam's Victoria
6. Buddhist Council of Victoria
7. Catholic Church of Australia
8. Catholic Social Services Victoria
9. Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Melbourne
10. Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria
11. Faith Communities Council of Victoria
12. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia – Melbourne District
13. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia – Northcote District
14. Hindu Council of Australia (Vic)
15. Hindu Society of Victoria
16. Islamic Council of Victoria
17. Jewish Community Council of Victoria
18. Jumbunna Episcopate Anglican Diocese of Melbourne
19. Lutheran Church of Australia, Victorian District
20. National Council of Churches in Australia
21. Presbyterian Church of Victoria
22. Rabbinical Council of Victoria
23. Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne
24. Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia, Australian and New Zealand Diocese
25. Sikh Interfaith Council of Victoria
26. Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
27. Victorian Council of Churches
28. Australian Intercultural Society
29. The Interfaith Centre of Melbourne
30. Benevolence Australia
31. Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C)
32. Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights
33. UNESCO



Bendigo MAG meeting

Appendix 3

Community Support Fund recipients

Organisation	Program, event or activity	Project summary	Funded Amount (Exc. GST)
Didi Bahaini Samaj Victoria	Strengthening Respectful and Equal Relationships	Film roadshow in seven locations in Victoria with the Nepalese community to create awareness of Respectful and Equal Relationships	20,000
Friends of Refugees	Online Language and IT Training	Online language and IT training for people seeking asylum and refugees with low English proficiency	15,000
Hamro Parampara Foundation	Awareness on Discrimination and Mental Health	Creating awareness about mental illness in the Bhutanese community, where mental health social stigma is prevalent	15,000
MARG Foundation	Cultural event celebration	Event to overcome cultural barriers and build capacity and empowerment across cultures, particularly refugees, migrants and vulnerable people in North Melbourne and Flemington areas.	3,500
Sudanese Mothers Coalition in Victoria (SMCV)	The impact initiative	Engaging young people and parents to discuss intergenerational issues	10,000
The Australian Multicultural Media Centre (AMMC)	The Rising Starts – Multicultural Youth	Empowerment program aiming to expand the knowledge of young people about the media sector and increase their employment prospects in this field	9,000
Tigrian Community Association	Addressing mental health issues among Tigray Community	Providing information on mental health issues among community members	5,500
Village Response Collective Incorporated	Wayfinders – a village approach to inclusiveness and belonging for Pasifika practitioners in Victoria	Forums to encourage and impart self-determination and inclusion by improving the terms of participation for Pasifika in society, starting with Pasifika, educators, youth workers and practitioners in the social and health sectors	20,000
African Women's & Families Network (AWAFN)	Mental Health First Aid and Awareness	Information and awareness for multicultural, Muslim women, youth and families about services and resources on mental illness prevention, identification, and support	10,000

Bukjeh	Hakaya	Hakaya – Bukjeh’s fun day of performances for all families around Eid, celebrating the beauty of our rich cultures around the world	8,000
JET-Australia Foundation	Women Health Care Camps and Sessions	Camps for youth and women from diverse communities, especially those from marginalised sections	9,000
Monash University STEM Network	The Autonomous Vehicle Building Competition	A weekend event that promotes an interest in engineering for around 100 high school students by providing an opportunity to construct a small-scale moving vehicle with some level of autonomy	5,000
Modest fashion runways incorporated	Modest Fashion Runway (MFR) event	The MFR event will feature modest fashion designs, providing a unique platform for emerging talent to participate, network and access the fashion industry	10,000
Chin Community Victoria (CCV)	Youth Leadership and Culture Exchange Program	Capacity-building program targeted at Zomi and Falam Chin youth to nurture the understanding, cooperation, and collaboration between the two communities	10,000
Total			\$150,000



2023 Multicultural Gala Dinner performer

Appendix 4

2023 Victorian Refugee Award Recipients

Achievement Award

Recognises those who personally or professionally excelled through study, work, entrepreneurship, or volunteering.

- ▶ Thuy Vinh Bui – Winner
- ▶ Tigist Kebede – Highly Commended
- ▶ Zahra Ali Abdurahman – Highly Commended
- ▶ Ansam Sadik – Finalist
- ▶ Joanna Szczepanska – Finalist

Leadership Award

Recognises outstanding leadership study, work or volunteering.

- ▶ Jacob Thang – Winner
- ▶ Monica Majak – Highly Commended
- ▶ Manu Kailom – Finalist

Young Leader Award

Recognises outstanding leadership in study, work or volunteering of those aged 25 years old and under.

- ▶ Athraa Yousif – Winner

Business Award

Recognises businesses that support the employment, contribution and/or participation of those who arrived as refugees or asylum seekers.

- ▶ Afghan Women's Organisation Victoria – Winner
- ▶ Chin Myanmar Community Care – Highly Commended



2023 Victorian Refugee Award Recipients

Appendix 5

2022 Multicultural Awards for Excellence Recipients

Arts

- ▶ Samuel Gaskin – Winner
- ▶ Sivarubhini Kanagasabai – Highly Commended
- ▶ Ryan Rezai – Highly Commended

Business

- ▶ Metro Trains Melbourne – Winner
- ▶ John Holland Group – Winner
- ▶ Professional Migrant Women – Highly Commended
- ▶ Multicultural Business Engagement Team, Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions – Highly Commended
- ▶ Multicultural Home Support Services, Spectrum MRC – Highly Commended

Community Innovation

- ▶ Black Diasporas Naarm Project – Winner
- ▶ Asian Australian Volunteers Inc. – Highly Commended

Early Childhood Education

- ▶ Victorian Community Hubs – Winner
- ▶ Monash Vale Early Learning Centre – Highly Commended
- ▶ St Anthony's Primary School Playgroup – Highly Commended

School Education

- ▶ Harmony Champs – Greater Shepparton Lighthouse and Culture & Co – Winner
- ▶ Abbotsford Primary School – Highly Commended
- ▶ Good Samaritan Catholic Primary School – Highly Commended
- ▶ Matthew Majur – Highly Commended

Vocational Education and Training (pre-accredited community-based training)

- ▶ SisterWorks Inc. – Winner
- ▶ Centre for Participation – Highly Commended

Vocational Education and Training (accredited training)

- ▶ Chisholm Institute – Winner
- ▶ Kowanj – Winner
- ▶ Victoria University and Polytechnic – Highly Commended
- ▶ RMIT University – Highly Commended
- ▶ Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE (GOTAFE) – Highly Commended

Emergency Services

- ▶ Norieul Kinross – Winner

Health

- ▶ cohealth's Bicultural Program – Winner
- ▶ The Water Well Project – Highly Commended

Justice

- ▶ Akuch Kuol Anyieth – Winner
- ▶ Women's Legal Service Victoria – Migration Pilot – Winner
- ▶ Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission – Highly Commended
- ▶ Marama Kufi – Highly Commended

Local Government

- ▶ City of Ballarat – Winner
- ▶ City of Melbourne – Highly Commended
- ▶ Maribyrnong City Council – Highly Commended

Media

- ▶ SAARI Collective – Winner
- ▶ STEM Sisters – Winner
- ▶ Catherine Jonathan – Highly Commended
- ▶ Harrison Tippet – Highly Commended

Police Annual Multicultural Award

- ▶ Patti Hiras – Winner
- ▶ Senior Sergeant Ron Klajnblat – Winner
- ▶ Sergeant Amanda Fahey – Winner
- ▶ Detective Senior Constable Edmond Shkemi – Winner

Multicultural Media Award

- ▶ STOPIT (The Public Transport Passenger Notification Project) – Winner

Police Community Exemplary Award

- ▶ Victoria Police Multifaith Chaplaincy – Winner
- ▶ KOMAK (Uniting) – Winner
- ▶ Victoria Police and Jewish Community Day – Winner

Protective Service Officer Multicultural Award

- ▶ PSO Yasac Abdullahi – Winner
- ▶ PSO Aamer Kiani – Winner

Premier's Award for Community Harmony

- ▶ Maria Dimopoulos – Winner

Refugee Advocacy

- ▶ Swan Hill Uniting Church Community Issues Group – Winner
- ▶ Major Road Projects Victoria, Level Crossing Removal Project and Swinburne University of Technology – Winner
- ▶ Helping Hand Refugee Youth Mentoring Project – Highly Commended
- ▶ Bounce Program – Highly Commended

Sport

- ▶ Karen Block – Winner
- ▶ Chandramarakkalage Anton Roshan Sampath Silva Roshan – Winner
- ▶ Hockey Victoria – Highly Commended

Youth Leadership

- ▶ Zainab Abou-Eid – Winner
- ▶ Altaf Hussein – Winner
- ▶ Hashwina Vimalarajan – Highly Commended
- ▶ Ali Al Battaat – Highly Commended



2022 Victorian Refugee Award Recipients

Appendix 6

2022 Multicultural Film Festival Award Recipients

Best Short Fiction Film

Winners

Unsaid

- ▶ Written and directed by Alex Nesic, produced by Zixuan Li and Dimitrios Stoforidis

The Ninth Tower

- ▶ Written, directed and produced by Kauthar Abdulalim

Best Short Non-Fiction Film

Winner

The Fade

- ▶ Written and directed by Thomas Elliott
- ▶ Best Short Non-Fiction Film

Honourable Mention

Baba

- ▶ Written, directed and produced by Firass Dirani

Best Open Category Film

Winner

Kariwa

- ▶ Written, directed and produced by Kiara Rodriguez-Hextall

Honourable Mention

Best Wishes

- ▶ Written and directed by Zhang Xiaolan, produced by Su Yang and Zhang Xiaolan

Best Emerging Filmmaker

Winner

The Hold Up

- ▶ Written and directed by Cassandra Nguyen, produced by Alison Rodrigues and Cassandra Nguyen

Honourable Mention

Ek Din (One Day)

- ▶ Written by Marque La Brooy, directed by Dion Wheeler, produced by Callum Harrod and Marque La Brooy

Best Young Filmmaker (4 to 11 years old)

Winner

To Colombia and Beyond

- ▶ Directed by Obayda Kannouj, produced by Pongky Nataatmaja

Chairperson's Choice

Winner

5km and 8pm

- ▶ Written and directed by Le Luo, produced by Natalia Bornay

2022 Official selection

Akosia Go

- ▶ Written, directed and produced by Dale Edward Crawford

Am I a Man Yet?

- ▶ Written by David Koutsouridis, directed by Chris Kennett, produced by Bec Petraitis

Beyond The Pitch

- ▶ Written by Maggie Garcia Pena and Lucia Larotonda, directed by Maggie Garcia Pena, produced by Melbourne Social Soccer, filmmaker Noopur Powale

Biting the Bullet

- ▶ Written, directed and produced by Lizbeth Calingasan

Celebrating Cultural Diversity at Currawa Primary School

- ▶ Written, directed and produced by Jarod Bacon and students

Her, Grace

- ▶ Written by Gracie Lolicato, directed by Katrina Lolicato, produced by Arc Up Australia

Mediterranean Madness

- ▶ Written and produced by Koraly Dimitriadis, directed by Artemis Evlogimenou

Sunset Stories

- ▶ Written by Jiawen Xue and Todd Manion, directed by Todd Manion, produced by Janwun Xue

Klesha

- ▶ Written, directed and produced by Rukmal Nirosh Fernando

Appendix 7

2023 Multicultural Youth Network members

- ▶ Shirin Gul Amini
- ▶ Arya Banerjee
- ▶ Christina Cushen
- ▶ Nathaniel Diong
- ▶ Farzana Alam Eshita
- ▶ Aleeza Hafeez
- ▶ Hanienah Husna
- ▶ Bradley Imalenowa
- ▶ Varun Joshi
- ▶ Celil Kardaslar
- ▶ Aditi Karna
- ▶ Zara Khan
- ▶ Aakriti Malhotra
- ▶ Albert Mumba
- ▶ Khalid Muse
- ▶ Ahelee Rahman
- ▶ Dinuki Rajapaksha Pathirannehelage
- ▶ Numan Seyit
- ▶ Rosie Thyer
- ▶ Aristidis Tsoulakos



Chairperson Viv Nguyen, Deputy Chair Bwe Thay and Youth Commissioner Luna Folly with Multicultural youth Network members

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Annual report 2022–2023

The 2022–2023 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 of 30 June 2023.

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