



VICTORIA'S MULTICULTURAL POLICY



*All of Us re-affirms the Victorian Government's commitment to multiculturalism and sets out how we can make the most of the opportunities it brings to advance our society as a whole.*

Victoria is a multicultural success story – a grand success story that defines all of us!

With people from more than 200 nations, speaking more than 200 languages and dialects and following more than 120 faiths, we are one of the world's great multicultural societies.

We acknowledge Indigenous Victorians as the first Australians and their unique and irreplaceable contribution to the identity and wellbeing of our state. We also acknowledge that successive waves of immigrants and refugees have enriched us.

As a government, we have worked to build on our proud history as a successful multicultural state.

- We have passed legislation and implemented policies that engender community respect and cohesion as well as offering protection from discrimination and vilification.
- We have made supporting our successful multiculturalism a priority, committing resources to ensure that each and every one of us has the opportunity to attain our full potential as well as constructively contributing to our community.

The Victorian Government's landmark *Multicultural Victoria Act 2004* describes Victoria as a '*united community with shared laws, values, aspirations and responsibilities*' in which people have the freedom to '*preserve and express their cultural heritage*'.

All of Us demonstrates the ways in which we can achieve a socially progressive society that reaps the real social, cultural and economic benefits that are inherent within our multicultural Victoria.

On behalf of the Victorian Government, we commend this policy to all Victorians and re-iterate our commitment to support cultural, linguistic and religious diversity in this great state of ours.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Brumby'.

Hon John Brumby MP  
Premier of Victoria  
Minister for Multicultural Affairs



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Merlino'.

James Merlino MP  
Minister Assisting the Premier  
on Multicultural Affairs

# A Snapshot of Victoria's Cultural Diversity

Victoria is the most culturally diverse of all Australian states. At the 2006 Census, the total population of Victoria was 4,932,234, of which:

- 23.8 per cent (1,173,204) were born overseas in more than 230 countries;
- 43.6 per cent (2,152,279) were either born overseas or had at least one parent born overseas;
- 72.8 per cent (853,966) of those born overseas came from non-main English speaking countries (NMESC);
- 20.4 per cent (1,007,435) spoke more than 200 languages other than English (LOTE) at home; and
- 68.7 per cent (3,390,804) followed more than 120 religions, collectively.

In March 2008, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimated Victoria's resident population to be 5.27 million, with overseas migration contributing largely to the increase. Overseas migration will continue to be a large component of population growth as Victoria reaches its projected figure of 6 million people by 2025.

## KEY POPULATION OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Victoria's increasing diversity presents a number of issues for the Government and the community to consider. We need to:

- understand the changing geographic distribution of our diverse population, so we can plan for equitable and accessible services targeted at specific population groups in specific localities;
- consider the special needs of our new and emerging migrant groups, particularly refugee communities; and
- assist the ageing population across Victoria, particularly with culturally sensitive services for those born in NMESC.

### Further information

The full version of All of Us, Victoria's Multicultural Policy is available at [www.multicultural.vic.gov.au](http://www.multicultural.vic.gov.au) or to order a copy email: [info@vmc.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@vmc.vic.gov.au)

# *Multiculturalism supports, fosters and celebrates cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.*

It is generally accepted that multiculturalism supports, fosters and celebrates cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.

*The Multicultural Victoria Act 2004* enshrines the following principles that underpin multiculturalism:

- an entitlement to mutual respect and understanding regardless of background;
- a duty on all Victorians to promote and preserve diversity within the context of shared laws, values, aspirations and responsibilities;
- a demonstrated ability of all Victorians to work together to build a positive and progressive future; and
- a responsibility for all Victorians to abide by the state's laws and respect democratic processes.

All of Us builds on these principles, and affirms that multiculturalism in Victoria:

- **Advances equality** by supporting the human rights of all Victorians, irrespective of their cultural, linguistic or religious background, and by ensuring equitable access to better and more responsive services throughout the state.

- **Supports our cultural, linguistic and religious diversity** by recognising the value of our cultural heritage and protecting and supporting the diversity of our people and their communities.
- **Fosters unity and promotes community harmony** by promoting the benefits of diversity to all Victorians, and sustaining Victoria as a united, cohesive community with shared laws, values, aspirations and responsibilities, within which people from a diversity of backgrounds have the freedom and opportunity to preserve, express, celebrate and practise their cultural heritage, as well as sharing their cultural heritage with the broader community.
- **Boosts our economic advantage** by providing the state with a competitive edge through our diverse, innovative, highly skilled and internationally connected workforce, in areas such as tourism, small business and industry, research and development, employment and education.





## Multiculturalism advances equality and human rights

The protection of human rights has always been a fundamental objective of multicultural policy in Victoria. The enactment of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (the Charter) has strengthened multiculturalism by providing a broader human rights agenda. The Charter protects important rights that go to the heart of multiculturalism, such as freedom of expression, the right to participate in public life, freedom of religion and cultural rights.

The Charter focuses on ensuring that fundamental human rights are considered at the earliest stages of policy development. It now sits as a primary policy

making tool within government, so that all legislation, regulation and policy is assessed through a human rights lens.

The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring that all Victorians, regardless of their cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds, have equitable access to government services.

To advance equality and human rights the government is committed to:

- Reducing racial and religious discrimination; and
- ensuring equitable access to all its services.

## Multiculturalism supports our cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity

Multiculturalism is part of the daily experience of Victorians, living as they do in a state where multiculturalism is embraced in business, arts, education, culture and sport and recreation.

The Victorian Government is committed to:

- maintaining and supporting our highly diverse cultural, linguistic and religious heritage;
- encouraging Victoria's CALD communities to retain and express their social and cultural identity and heritage; and

- emphasising to all Victorians the importance of shared rights and responsibilities.

The Government believes this approach is conducive to social cohesion because it builds attitudes of respect, belonging and commitment.

## Multiculturalism fosters unity and promotes harmony

Victoria's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity is something that we all share. The Victorian Government supports this diversity and promotes unity by supporting cultural difference within a shared framework of human rights and the rule of law.

A society that supports the expression of all cultural backgrounds and that allows everyone to feel that their culture, language and religion is equally valued and respected is more likely to deliver unity and harmony.

By proactively working together and encouraging communication, cross-cultural and interfaith understanding grows and fears caused by ignorance are diminished; this is what the framework of multiculturalism encourages.

In this context, multiculturalism respects difference while promoting unity. In other words, cultural differences are something we all have in common, yet we are all Victorians. By respecting our shared diversity and the rule of law, we can realise our shared aspiration to build a cohesive and welcoming society.

We aim to promote harmony by:

- promoting the benefits of multiculturalism to the whole Victorian community;
- facilitating understanding between different cultural and faith communities; and
- emphasising the fundamental rights that we all possess but which also impose responsibilities to abide by the state's laws and respect its democratic processes.

## Multiculturalism boosts our economic advantage

One of the critical factors in determining successful settlement and participation outcomes for migrants and refugees is to assist in delivering economic security, namely positive employment that is reflective of the person's skills, experience and qualifications. Jobs, particularly during economic downturns, are crucial to successful settlement outcomes.

A key Victorian Government objective is to continue to work with business, industry, unions and community to strengthen Victoria's economic advantage to maintain the state's long term prosperity. One of the many ways in which this will be achieved is by harnessing our multicultural advantage.

This requires government and business to:

- effectively utilise CALD Victorians' linguistic diversity;
- capitalise on migrants' entrepreneurship and global social networks;
- develop the opportunities that Victoria's cultural diversity offers our tourist market;
- recognise migrants' skills and qualifications;
- train migrants for job readiness and maximise pathways to sustainable employment;
- increase cultural competency within organisations; and
- value international students' contribution.

