

VICTORIA'S MULTICULTURAL AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE 2017



ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS

Guests welcomed with music from
Highvale Secondary College Chamber Strings

Official proceedings commence at 6pm

Speech by Her Excellency the Hon Linda Dessau AC,
Governor of Victoria

Speech by the Hon James Merlino MP,
Deputy Premier of Victoria

Recognition of past Victorian
Multicultural Commissioners

Launch of Multicultural Champions program

Performance by St Paul's Lutheran Choir

Award recipients are presented

Official photographs

Canapes and drinks are served

Performance by Highvale Secondary
College Chamber Strings

Reception concludes at 8pm

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR

The presentation of the Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence is an important opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate those in our community who contribute so much to a diverse and inclusive Victoria.

With nearly 30 per cent of Victorians born overseas, and almost half of us either born overseas or with at least one parent born overseas, multiculturalism is an integral part of who we are as Victorians.

These Awards enable us to recognise individuals and organisations who go above and beyond to ensure that everyone feels included and a part of our great State, regardless of background, language or religion.

On behalf of all Victorians, it's my pleasure to congratulate and warmly welcome all 2017 Award recipients, nominees and their friends and family to Government House.

Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AC

Governor of Victoria

MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

Victoria is one of the most culturally diverse places in the world, with almost half our community either born overseas or with at least one parent born overseas.

This diversity is a major part of what makes our state such a great place to live. No matter who you are, where you were born, or what language you first spoke – here in Victoria you can belong and be proud to belong.

The success of our multiculturalism has not happened by chance. It is the result of generations of passionate people who have championed cultural diversity.

Victoria's Multicultural Awards for Excellence honour those people who support our culturally diverse communities to fully participate in Victorian life and to express their cultures and traditions with pride. These often, unsung heroes, deserve our heartfelt thanks.

It is my great pleasure to congratulate this year's award recipients, and to thank all nominees and nominators for their support of these important awards and for their continued contributions to our multicultural Victoria.

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP

Premier

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

It is with great pride that I congratulate the recipients of Victoria's 2017 Multicultural Awards for Excellence.

The awards are now in their 16th year, and just like recipients before them, this year's winners provide us all with inspirational examples of what can be achieved through dedication to our communities.

The exemplary values they have demonstrated – whether at work or while volunteering – have helped break down barriers, increased inter-cultural understanding, and supported culturally diverse Victorians to participate in our society.

Their work has included initiatives which support new migrants and refugees, overcome barriers to education and employment, celebrate and preserve diverse cultural traditions, and help Victorians from diverse backgrounds to understand one another more deeply.

These awards are a wonderful opportunity for the Victorian Government and the Victorian Multicultural Commission to formally recognise and thank these remarkable people and organisations.

Their stories and achievements are proof that the strength of our community lies in its citizens, and their contributions give us further reason to take pride in being Victorian.

I congratulate each recipient on the role they have played in helping Victoria to be the multicultural success story that it is, and wish them continued success in the future.

Robin Scott MP

Minister for Multicultural Affairs

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

It has been another amazing year for Victoria's Multicultural Awards for Excellence, with the quality of nominations proving just how many people and organisations are doing outstanding work in our culturally diverse communities.

Now in their 16th year, the awards shine a light on the often unsung heroes who bring people of all cultures together and embody the true spirit of community service.

Community service is highly valued by the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) as a key to the success of a generous and connected society.

The work of the Commission to promote multiculturalism, to connect diverse communities and to celebrate our cultural richness could not be achieved alone. Throughout Victoria we find individuals and organisations who share these values and demonstrate genuine commitment to a diverse and harmonious community.

This year, a total of 61 individuals and organisations have received awards, high commendations or commendations, and I am delighted to congratulate each and every one of them on their outstanding achievements.

This year's ceremony also provides an opportunity to launch the new Multicultural Champions program, and to thank former VMC Commissioners for their notable contributions and for helping to give culturally diverse Victorians a voice.

The commitment and dedication of our award recipients, Champions and former Commissioners is truly inspirational, and I thank them for their unwavering dedication to our wonderfully diverse community.

Helen Kapalos

Chairperson

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SERVICE

The Victorian Multicultural Commission is the conduit between Victoria's culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities and government. Its Commissioners work closely with communities to listen to their challenges and aspirations, to advocate for their needs and to celebrate their cultures.

The Commission wishes to pay tribute to the following people who have served as Commissioners, and to recognise the invaluable contributions they made during their tenure.

Former Victorian Multicultural Commissioners

Safa Almarhoun

Phillip Bain

Maryum Chaudry

Teresa De Fazio

Elizabeth Drozd

Yasmin Hassen

Peter Khalil

Marion Lau

Grahame Leonard

Jenny Matic

Huss Mustafa

Abeselom Nega

Chidambaram (Srini) Srinivasan

Chin Tan

INTRODUCING VICTORIA'S MULTICULTURAL CHAMPIONS

Victoria's new Multicultural Champions program acknowledges Victorians who have been instrumental in breaking down barriers and misunderstanding between culturally diverse communities. Through the program, the Victorian Multicultural Commission will provide ongoing promotion of the Champions' work and support them to further expand their networks.

The first three Multicultural Champions are:

Sarah Sabbagh

Parsuram Sharma-Luitai

Deepak Vinayak



2017 AWARD RECIPIENTS

AWARD FOR MERITORIOUS SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

Recognises the outstanding achievements of individuals and organisations which enhance multiculturalism in Victoria through either paid or voluntary work.

ORGANISATIONS

Highly Commended

AGAPI Care

For its commitment to supporting individuals with disabilities from the Greek community – and later all migrant communities – since 1987.

Chinese Women's Association of Victoria

For its work to promote the physical, mental and social wellbeing of its members and other women in the wider community, specifically female migrants of Chinese ethnicity.

Council of Christians and Jews

For its regularly engagement with Christians, Jews and Muslims, as well as members of other faiths, to discuss topical issues such as marriage equality and family violence.

Greek Australian Recreational and Instructive League of Victoria

For its partnership with the Babylon Cultural Centre, which connects Greek community members with newly-arrived Iraqi refugees to develop English skills, target isolation and share food and experiences.

INDIVIDUALS – PAID WORK

Highly Commended

Ross Barnett

For his outstanding work of almost 40 years in various government and community sector organisations supporting the successful settlement of migrants and refugees.

Ajit Singh Chauhan

For his work with disadvantaged youth from diverse cultural backgrounds, particularly in his role at the Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre and through the creation of the Hume Interfaith Network youth program.

Ann Foley

For her work as Executive Officer of the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council, where she has promoted intercultural and interfaith harmony throughout the region's diverse community.

Catherine Hemingway

For the creation of the WEstjustice Migrant and Refugee Employment Project, which provides free legal assistance and financial counselling to multicultural community members vulnerable to exploitation at work.

Dr Fiona Hill

For her work as the Director of Almanar Consultancy, which provides cultural diplomacy and intercultural awareness training for businesses and organisations seeking to develop links in the Middle East and North Africa.

Dr Raj Khillan

For the development of the Overseas Medical Graduate Association, and for encouraging open discussion about intellectual disability and mental health in the Indian community.

Jamuna Parajuli

For her extensive contributions to the development of culturally-appropriate health and social services for refugees and asylum seekers.

Dr Lata Satyen

For her work with culturally diverse women and children who have experienced family violence, and for improving the cultural competence of family violence prevention and intervention professionals.

INDIVIDUALS – VOLUNTARY WORK

Highly Commended

Dr Gurpreet (Sonia Singh) Cheema

For her commitment to strengthening interfaith understanding, including through her coordination of dialogues between students of Islamic, Christian and public schools in the northern suburbs.

Paraskeva Laholat

For establishing the Ridniy Kray Senior Citizens Club. Ridniy kray means "my endearing homeland" in Ukrainian, and the club welcomes older people from all cultural backgrounds.

Halima Sheikh-Mohamud Mohamed

For her work with the Somalian community, including the establishment of an organisation which provides basic education classes to African women and advanced sewing courses in partnership with RMIT University.

Sarah Williams

For supporting young African-Australians in the Dandenong area to develop their hip-hop and spoken word skills, as well as other projects for multicultural youth run through her organisation, Footprints Enterprises.

Commended**Katerina Abramoff**

For her contribution to the Russian and wider Orthodox community, particularly as a volunteer Russian language teacher who has helped young people stay connected to their heritage.

Faizullah Ashna

For his support of the Afghan community, including finding accommodation and employment for newly arrived refugees and helping them settle into the local community.

Maria D'Amico

For her contribution to the Italian community through her work of over 25 years with the Societa' Isole Eolie, including her support of women within senior levels of the organisation.

Donato Di Fabrizio OAM

For his commitment to promoting multiculturalism in the Latrobe Valley for more than 50 years, including spearheading the creation of Morwell's Immigration Heritage Park.

Dana Lynikas

For her leadership and dedication to the Lithuanian scouts in Australia and Melbourne's Lithuanian choir, Dainos Samburys, to which she has continued to volunteer her time into her 80s.

Walid Markas

For his work with Victoria's Chaldean community, including the establishment of several community organisations which provide immigration and wellbeing advice and addresses issues facing women and young people.

Sambo Meng

For overseeing and raising funds for support services for more than 1,000 elderly Cambodians, including help with housework, meals-on-wheels, and group activities to overcome isolation.

Nawal Kishore Moudgil

For teaching and promoting Indian music and organising cross-cultural events, particularly the Satrangi 7 Colors Arts and Film Festival, which brings together Indigenous, Indian, Australian and other performers.

Quan Nguyen

For his dedication to his local Vietnamese senior citizens group, including organising Lunar New Year events, English classes, computer classes and forging links with other Asian community groups.

Boris Oiberman

For his work as the President of the Victorian Association of WWII Veterans from the Former Soviet Union, and his support in assisting holocaust survivors living in Victoria to claim compensation.

Nicholas Piperis

For his commitment to supporting migrants from the Greek region of Arcadia, and their descendants, through nearly 40 years of volunteering with the Panarcadian Association of Melbourne and Victoria.

Adel Salman

For promoting objective media reporting and improving Victorians' understanding of the Muslim community as Vice President and media spokesperson for the Islamic Council of Victoria.

Koula Teo

For her commitment to the preservation of Greek language and culture in Victoria through her writing, and particularly through the plays she produced with her late husband Christopher.

Reverend Thich Phuoc Thai

For his ongoing support of the Vietnamese community as Abbot of Braybrook's Quang Minh Buddhist temple and his work with Vietnamese-Australian prisoners.

Michael Kwok Leung Tse

For his leadership and involvement in numerous community groups organising Chinese cultural events and fundraising for causes including Taiwan earthquake relief efforts and the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital.

Beyhan Yilmaz

For volunteering to ensure Turkish-speaking people with disabilities are able to live fulfilling lives with as much independence as possible, and that their carers receive the support they need.

COMMUNITY INNOVATION AWARD

Recognises projects that apply innovative solutions for the benefit of a community and which improve understanding of a culture with a wider audience.

Winner

Kaye Graves

Kaye Graves, who manages the cultural diversity team at Bendigo Community Health Services (BCHS), was integral in combating the anti-Islam sentiment that erupted in response to a 2015 proposal to build a mosque in the regional city. In partnership with a group called Believe in Bendigo, BCCHS held six "Understanding Islam" sessions throughout 2016 and 2017. As well as fostering greater intercultural understanding among everyday community members, the sessions provided health workers and other service providers with useful insights which have improved the way they support Muslim families.

The success of the original sessions led Kaye and BCCHS to coordinate a session targeted at local hairdressers, acknowledging the central role they play in conversations in the community. The hairdressers involved reported that the session was extremely beneficial in building their understanding of diverse cultures.

Highly Commended

Dandenong Youth Services

The City of Greater Dandenong's youth services team offers an annual leadership program where 25 participants are assigned the task of researching community needs and developing a project in response to a priority issue. In 2016, the young leaders undertook a project to promote the benefits of multiculturalism. Their aim was to promote the message that communities thrive when people of all cultures are able to fully participate in economic, social and political life.

This message was conveyed to the public through the powerful medium of story-telling. The young leaders interviewed 20 migrants and refugees from 13 countries to find out about the key factors which helped them settle and feel like they belong in Australia. These personal stories were the subject of an exhibition at Dandenong's Walker Street Gallery and were shared on the Dandenong Youth Services' Facebook page where they reached more than 28,000 people.

Robinvale District Health Services

The town of Robinvale, in North West Victoria, is home to people from 44 different cultural backgrounds. Robinvale District Health Services (RDHS) identified a need to improve the town's level of cultural tolerance through multicultural community events. Realising the toll that intolerance took on the psychosocial health and wellbeing of multicultural community members, in 2016 RDHS launched a project titled The Ripple Effect of Ethnicities (TREE).

One aspect of the project included a 16 week cultural skills exchange program where participants nominated a skill inspired by their culture and taught it to the rest of the group. The program reduced social isolation, increased intercultural understanding, and reinforced participants' sense of identity and self-worth.

POLICE AWARDS

POLICE ANNUAL MULTICULTURAL AWARD

Recognises police employees who have established relationships with multicultural communities by developing innovative strategies.

Leading Senior Constable Albert Fatileh

Very well-known in community policing circles, Leading Senior Constable Albert Fatileh is a proud Australian of Lebanese heritage who has used his background to build bridges, not only with Muslim communities, but with all migrant and refugee communities. His self-effacing and low-key manner has been an outstanding advantage in working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds. He is an ornament to Victoria Police and represents its changing face.

Inspector Stephen Mutton

Inspector Stephen Mutton is a long-standing member of Victoria Police having served for 38 years including spending the past three years as Community Engagement Inspector in the North West Region. He has worked hard to establish positive relationships between police and the Muslim and South Sudanese communities and has played a key role in a stakeholder forum committed to solving and lowering youth crime in the region.

Leading Senior Constable Gabrielle Tyacke

Leading Senior Constable Gabrielle Tyacke has been a Police Officer for more than 16 years and has spent the last eight years as the only full-time LGBTI Liaison Officer with Victoria Police. She has prioritised working with various religious, migrant and refugee communities to ensure diverse members of the LGBTI community are able to confidently contact the police with the knowledge that they will be treated with sensitivity and understanding.

Senior Constable Andrew McLachlan

Senior Constable Andrew McLachlan demonstrates an outstanding level of care for migrants and refugees in rural and regional areas. Serving in multicultural Robinvale, Andrew has worked strenuously to cultivate the trust of Asian community members and to overcome their under-reporting of crime. He has also shown dedication to improving road safety after several fatalities involving drivers on international driver's licences. Andrew has also distinguished himself through his work with the local Aboriginal and Pacific Islander communities.

Sergeant Ben McWilliam

Sergeant Ben McWilliam was nominated by the Gippsland Australian Muslim Community and the United Muslim Sisters of the Latrobe Valley in recognition of his many initiatives to make local Muslims feel part of the Gippsland community. Ben established the LaTrobe Police Multifaith Advisory Council and is admired for his friendly and informal manner. Whenever an international terrorist incident takes place, he goes out of his way to reassure the local Muslim community and ensure continued community harmony.

POLICE MULTICULTURAL MEDIA AWARD

Recognises police employees who communicate police and multicultural issues via ethnic and/or mainstream media outlets.

Danielle Fleeton

Communications Manager Danielle Fleeton works tirelessly to promote Victoria Police's multicultural strategies and engagement events such as the Chief Commissioner's Iftar dinner. She is described by police colleagues as "indispensable," and works hard to get community safety, emergency and recruitment information out to multicultural audiences in their languages through ethnic media outlets.

Inspector Andrew Markakis

Inspector Andrew Markakis is an excellent example of productive diversity, using his own Greek-Australian bilingual and cultural skills to liaise with the Greek community through 3XY Radio Hellas and various Greek newspapers. Such media relationships have allowed him to keep his community informed on important and relevant topics. He is a great example of what community policing is all about.

PROTECTIVE SERVICES OFFICER MULTICULTURAL AWARD

Recognises Protective Services Officers who have established relationships with multicultural communities by developing innovative strategies.

PSO Joseph Simonelli

PSO Joseph Simonelli has an impressive record with multicultural communities, especially in his work at the Broadmeadows Magistrates' and Children's Court. There, he has been of particular assistance to Arabic-speaking court users as well as users of the Koori Court, and is to be commended for his networking role in referring people to relevant organisations such as Safe Steps and the Arabic Welfare Agency.

PSO Nicoletta Anaston

As LGBTI Liaison Officer, PSO Nicoletta Anaston has done much to build up the relationship between Victoria Police and the LGBTI community over the past two years through women's soccer matches. She has been especially successful in making women from various cultural and faith communities feel included in these soccer matches, thus ensuring that they will be more comfortable in dealing with police and PSOs in the future.

POLICE COMMUNITY EXEMPLARY AWARD

Recognises police, community groups or individuals who have developed innovative strategies and initiatives that promote positive relations between police and multicultural communities.

Victoria Police North West Metro Region – Somali Community Engagement Plan

Since the appointment of a Community Safety Inspector, Victoria Police's North West Metro Region has developed several innovative and worthwhile programs for multicultural communities. These have included the Social Cohesion Leadership program with Somali youth, the Youth at Risk Discretion program, the Enhanced Youth Cautioning program, the Court Engagement program at the Heidelberg Children's Court, and High Risk Youth Management panels which link in with police and other services.

East Preston Islamic College

East Preston Islamic College exemplifies how a school community can demonstrate commitment to social harmony. By hosting annual Victoria Police Muslim Association Iftar Dinners, the college has created a very positive relationship with police, and by extending invitations to other school principals, has contributed greatly to local social cohesion and harmony.

Victoria Police Southern Region – Alcohol Diversion Program

Victoria Police's Southern Region initiated an Alcohol Diversion Program after their timely identification of alcohol-fuelled public order issues amongst recently-arrived migrants and refugees. The program developed participants' personal skills and improved their health through partnerships with local health services. It engaged 44 participants and led to reduced arrest rates, reduced court presentations and improved police-community interaction.

YOUTH AWARD

Recognises the outstanding contributions young people make to a diverse and inclusive Victoria.

Winner

Martha Metuisela

A youth worker with Brimbank City Council, Martha Metuisela works tirelessly to support Pasifika youth in Melbourne's western suburbs by highlighting their abilities and potential. Through her own experience of growing up Tongan in Australia, Martha is able to identify with the challenges faced by young people from minority groups. Her advice and encouragement inspires them to have confidence in themselves and to embrace participation in their local communities.

Martha co-founded Westside Pasifika, a youth advisory group that runs strengths-based programs, forums, and cultural competency training. The group also runs events such as My Island Dream, a 2016 cultural performance which brought together Pasifika high school students, their parents and communities.

More recently, Martha has been involved in projects for Pasifika and African youth which aim to foster intercultural understanding and provide a forum to discuss common strengths and challenges in the areas of health, wellbeing, education and employment.

Highly Commended

Wilson Poni

Wilson Poni is committed to ensuring young people in the Fitzroy and Collingwood area can reach their full potential and avoid antisocial behaviour and crime. Prompted by concerns that local kids might be recruited by criminal gangs, Wilson recently started a program called "I Speak Football".

Supported by Melbourne City FC, "I Speak Football" is run at the Atherton Gardens housing estate in Fitzroy and brings together disengaged young people and children from culturally diverse backgrounds. As well as improving their health and fitness, Wilson builds a culture of respect and team-work within the group through their shared love of football (soccer).

Alex Tigani

Alex Tigani has been promoting the achievements of the Lithuanian community from a young age. He has been the primary sports writer for Lithuanian-Australian newspaper Teviskes Aidai since he was 15, a role which has seen him cover the achievements of Lithuanian-Australian sporting stars like Andrius Belkus (golf) and Rebecca Wiasak (cycling).

In 2013, Alex and the rest of the Geelong Lithuanian basketball team travelled to the city of Klaipeda for the Lithuanian World Games, a four-yearly tournament involving Lithuanian athletes from around the world.

Alex is a keen member of the Geelong Lithuanian folk dance ensemble and is a troop leader with the Lithuanian Scouts.

MEDIA AWARD

Recognises outstanding reporting of issues of importance to diverse communities, and reporting which contributes to Victorians' cross-cultural understanding.

Winner

Abby Dinham

SBS journalist Abby Dinham tells the stories of new migrants and refugees who are kicking goals on the sporting field, and off. She has profiled South Sudanese AFL hopeful Buku Khamis, Turkish-Cypriot horse trainer Saab Hasan, and the first Victorian police officer to wear hijab, Maha Sukkar. Her stories have also highlighted local sporting clubs that are giving newly-arrived Victorians a sense of purpose and belonging. Clubs such as ACE FC – whose players are mostly girls who have come from Afghanistan as refugees – and the All Nations Cricket team – which is helping asylum seekers in Melbourne's east to beat the waiting game blues.

Abby places great emphasis on building trust within multicultural communities to ensure her stories are reported fairly, accurately and with sensitivity to the group in question. Her reports touch on the racism and stereotyping often experienced by her subjects, and aim to overcome readers' prejudices by giving multicultural community members a platform to talk about their achievements and aspirations.

Highly Commended

Olivia (Ngoc) Nguyen and Trinh Nguyen

Olivia Nguyen and Trinh Nguyen are the SBS journalists responsible for a story that uncovered the exploitation and underpayment of migrant workers in Vietnamese restaurants in Australia. Their investigation revealed the deliberate and ongoing exploitation of Vietnamese students, and how some cultural values were perpetuating the cycle of mistreatment and silence.

The story raised awareness of intra-community exploitation within the Vietnamese-Australian community, and started a productive discussion about the importance of respectful, fair and lawful working relationships.

Dorcas Utkovic

Dorcas Utkovic is the founder and presenter of Oz African TV, which gives voice to the emerging African Australian community and challenges the stereotypes that can be perpetuated by their representation in mainstream media. Beginning in 2015, Oz African TV's half-hour episodes are streamed online and broadcast on Foxtel Aurora and Channel 31.

Born in South Africa, Dorcas came to Australia in 2006. She is dedicated to showcasing the inspirational achievements of African people in Australia, with guests including writer and activist Tasneem Chopra, musician N'fa Jones, and youth employment facilitator Lorraine Ngwenya.

MULTICULTURAL BUSINESS AWARD

Recognises businesses which provide outstanding service to multicultural communities in Victoria and are leading the way in encouraging diversity in their workplaces.

Winner

National Australia Bank (NAB)

NAB has demonstrated its commitment to building a diverse and inclusive workforce through its African-Australian Inclusion Program. A partnership with Jesuit Social Services, the program began in 2009 and provides six months of fully paid and supported work experience to qualified African-Australians. Of the 300 participants who have taken part, 75% have found ongoing employment in their chosen field and more than 65% are still employed at NAB. Participants have come from a diverse range of African countries – 23 in total.

Experience in a large Australian corporate environment has helped participants to develop their technical, cultural and interpersonal skills. NAB and Jesuit Social Services recognise the importance of caring for and supporting participants and setting them up for success. As such, they are supported by a volunteer team of leaders, mentors, coaches and buddies, who provide day-to-day guidance, skills development and networking opportunities.

Highly commended

Swinburne University of Technology

International students make up around 15 per cent of Swinburne's student population, and its local students and staff come from a range of cultural backgrounds. The university recently appointed a Director of Multicultural Engagement and is understood to be the first Australian university to commit to a Charter and Objectives of Cultural Diversity.

Swinburne offers Welcome Scholarships to people on bridging and temporary protection visas, which allows these often vulnerable members of our community to study without paying international student fees. The scholarships cover undergraduate, diploma, certificate and foundation level courses.

In 2017, Swinburne partnered with the Victorian Multicultural Commission to pilot a summer program for film students to explore stories of migration. Several of the films were screened at Federation Square during Cultural Diversity Week celebrations.

GOVERNMENT AND CIVIC LEADERSHIP AWARD

Recognises government bodies for major initiatives that meet the needs of their culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities.

Winner

Dental Health Services Victoria

The Department of Health and Human Services, through Dental Health Services Victoria (DHSV), grants refugees and asylum seekers priority access to dentists. But priority access is only one aspect of improving the oral health of this vulnerable group. Through a partnership with the Victorian Refugee Health Network (VRHN), DHSV is also building relationships with refugee and asylum seeker communities and assisting public dental clinics to identify their level of oral health risk.

The factors leading to poor oral health within refugee and asylum seeker communities are unique and complex. Some people have experienced injury to their mouth and teeth, and many have been deprived of oral health necessities while living in or fleeing conflict. Upon arrival in Australia, language barriers and a lack of familiarity with the local health system can prevent refugees and asylum seekers from seeking treatment. DHSV and the VRHN developed a toolkit that takes such factors into account, to assist clinicians in identifying a patient's level of oral health risk and their need for priority access.

The project has also highlighted the importance of explaining the treatment process to those who aren't familiar with Australia's health system, and giving them options in order to establish trust, provide a sense of control and reduce discomfort or anxiety.

Highly commended

City of Darebin

Darebin is a municipality in Melbourne's inner north where 28 per cent of residents come from countries where English is not their first language, and the local council takes a proactive and collaborative approach to engaging multicultural communities.

Since 2005, Darebin has received guidance from a Multifaith Advisory Council comprised of representatives of 11 religious denominations, and in 2016 the municipality hosted the Victorian Interfaith Conference. With the Islamic Society of Victoria (ISV) headquartered in the municipality, Darebin partnered with the ISV and the Victorian Board of Imams to develop a resource for Muslim faith leaders to prevent violence against women.

The council has co-developed a training course in how to take safe and constructive action when witnessing racism. The training has been delivered to Council and state government staff, as well as local school students.

Darebin also facilitates Welcome Dinners to connect newly arrived migrants with established residents over shared meals.

EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD AWARD

Recognises outstanding educational practice which enhances intercultural understanding and meets the needs of students from diverse communities.

Winner

Victorian Cooperative on Children's Services for Ethnic Groups (VICSEG)

VICSEG has a thirty-year history of supporting migrant and refugee families in raising and educating children and young people in Victoria. One recent program that has been a particular success is the

Refugee Student Engagement and Support Program. Originally piloted in 2014 with the Sudanese community in Melton, the program has been expanded to take in more than 150 students from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, including Samoan, Iraqi, Iranian, Karen and Chin Burmese.

The program aims to enhance participants' academic performance, school attendance and career opportunities, but also focusses on building individual resilience, connections within the community, and leadership skills. Participants also have the opportunity to lead school-based projects that benefit the community. The success of the program is demonstrated by the high proportion of participants who return to act as mentors to a new cohort of young people.



PREMIER'S AWARD FOR COMMUNITY HARMONY

Recognises an individual or organisation whose work has brought together different cultural or religious groups to increase understanding, acceptance and cooperation.

Winner

Batul Gulani

Batul Gulani is the founder and director of the not-for-profit AMAFHH Federation, which provides counselling for culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Melbourne. The federation has a particular focus on young people and women, including those experiencing domestic violence and abuse. Batul's vast knowledge of the issues facing recent migrants and refugees has allowed her to make a meaningful impact on their level of inclusion in the wider community, and to increase understanding between different cultural groups.

A professional psychotherapist, Batul has established counselling programs specifically for Shia Muslims.

Over the past five years Batul has worked to establish the Islamic Shia Council of Victoria, bringing together more than 20 Shia organisations. She recently joined the Victorian Government's Multifaith Advisory Group, which includes members of all major faiths represented in the state.



VICTORIAN MULTICULTURAL HONOUR ROLL

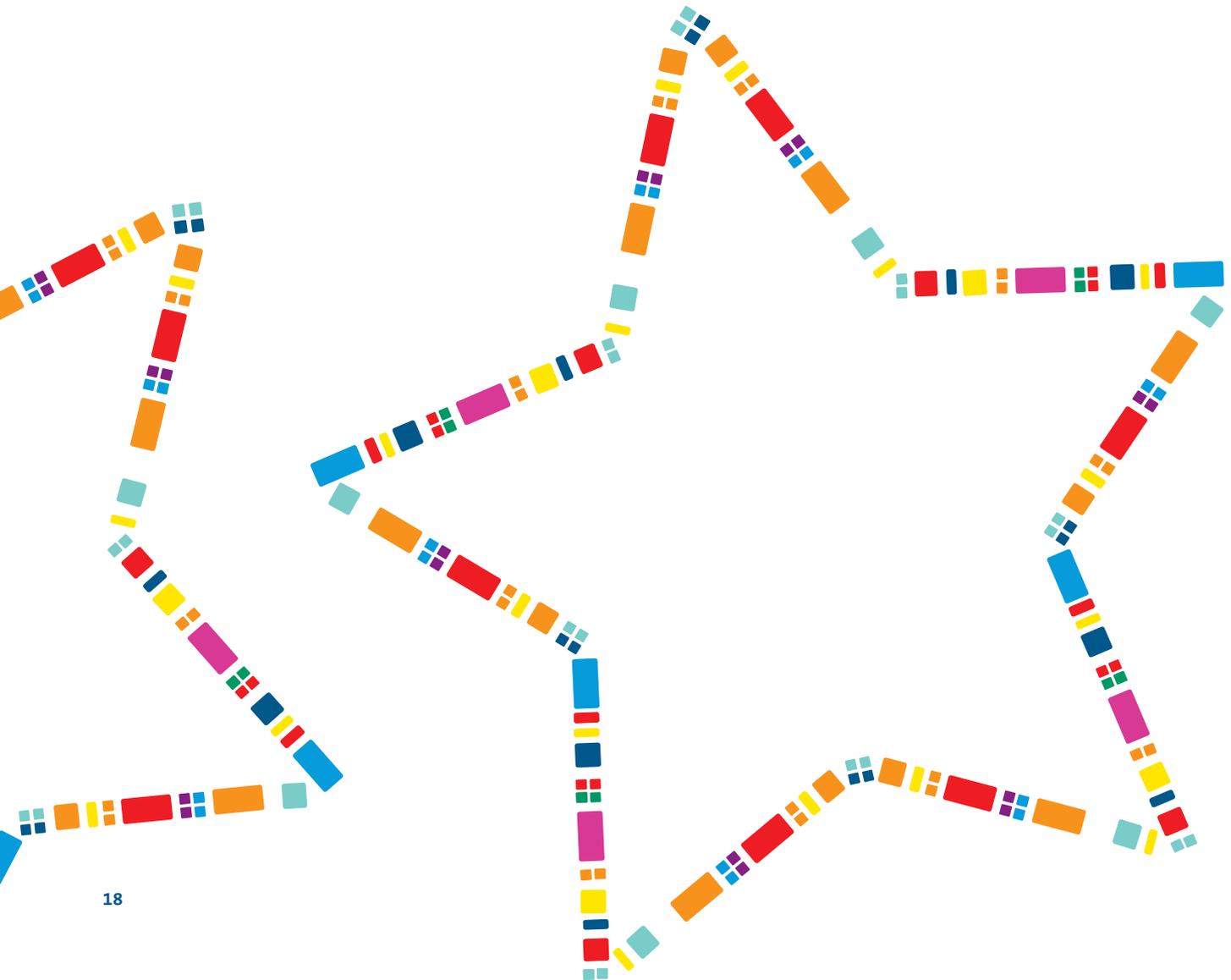
Recognising a newly-arrived migrant or refugee who is a leader in their community and volunteers their time towards initiatives which strengthen our multicultural state.

Winner

Dr Matin Ghayour Minaie

Dr Matin Ghayour Minaie is a psychology researcher at Deakin University's Geelong campus who volunteers her time to help migrants, refugees and international students settle into the local community. Originally from Iran, Matin co-founded the Geelong Iranian Society in 2007 and established the first Persian-language program on local community radio station 94.7 The Pulse.

Matin is particularly interested in helping parents from migrant and refugee backgrounds to bring up their children in harmony with Australian culture while respecting and embracing their own cultural values.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Victorian Government, Victorian Multicultural Commission and Victoria Police thank all who participated in Victoria's 2017 Multicultural Awards for Excellence; the presenters, the nominators, referees and most of all, the recipients.

We would also like to thank the musicians who have volunteered their time and talent to entertaining guests at Victoria's 2017 Multicultural Awards for Excellence ceremony.

Highvale Secondary College Chamber Strings Ensemble

The Chamber Strings Ensemble from Glen Waverley's Highvale Secondary College was established in 2013 under the direction of music teacher Janet Govan. A group of passionate young musicians, they perform regularly at school concerts and out in the wider community. Over the last two years they have enjoyed the opportunity to entertain guests at a variety of functions at Government House. They play a diverse range of music styles, incorporating a blend of classical, Celtic, contemporary and ethnic music into their program.

St Paul's Lutheran Church Choir

St Paul's Lutheran Church Choir (Shepparton) began approximately nine years ago when former refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and South Sudan expressed a desire to sing songs of faith in their own languages during regular Sunday worship services.

From these humble beginnings the choir has grown in number and stature. While continuing to see their primary role as serving the congregation each Sunday, the choir's passion for singing and the gospel has seen them perform at the State Library of Victoria, the Premier's Multicultural Gala Dinner, the Spiegeltent at the Melbourne Arts Centre, the SheppARTon Festival, numerous Emerge festivals, and more. The choir sings in Kiswahili, Kirundu and English.



VICTORIAN
multicultural
commission
strengthening our community



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